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BUDDHISTS WITHOUT BORDERS: TRANSNATIONAL PILGRIMAGE, SOCIAL
ENGAGEMENT, AND EDUCATION IN THE LAND OF ENLIGHTENMENT

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BOUDDHISTES SANS FRONTIÈRES : LE PÈLERINAGE TRANSNATIONAL, L'ENGAGEMENT SOCIAL ET L'ÉDUCATION AU PAYS DE L'ÉVEIL

THÈSE
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure

RÉSUMÉ

L'importance de Bodhgayā sur le plan mondial est attribuable à son association avec le Bouddha, qui y aurait atteint l'illumination il y a environ 2550 ans. La plupart des bouddhistes considèrent Bodhgayā comme le site de pèlerinage le plus important du monde, qui doit être visité au moins une fois dans la vie d'un bouddhiste. Ce site sacré se trouve au Bihar, l'état le plus pauvre de l'Inde, situé au centre de pays.

Ces dernières années, après des siècles d'existence en quasi-obscurité, Bodhgayā a refait surface et attire des millions de visiteurs internationaux. Cela transforme le simple paysage agricole en un village cosmopolite en plein essor, lequel se rempli de monastères et de temples bouddhistes exotiques, d'hôtels, de restaurants et de centres commerciaux ainsi que d'organismes de santé, d'établissements d'enseignement et de coopératives villageoises. Depuis que le temple Mahābodhi s'est mérité une place sur la liste du patrimoine mondial de l'UNESCO en 2002, le statut de Bodhgayā sur la scène internationale a explosé : plusieurs groupes bouddhistes se ruent vers le site pour y accomplir des rituels, pour acquérir des terrains, pour développer des réseaux d'aide internationale, pour favoriser le tourisme ainsi que supporter les initiatives de développement urbain. Le caractère ouvertement international du site a transformé la vie des habitants locaux bihari qui se retrouvent dans un monde nouveau sur plusieurs plans : économique, social, culturel, linguistique, religieux, politique et imaginaire. Conséquemment, ces changements influencent la façon dont les pèlerins, d'une part, se déplacent dans les paysages physiques et imaginaires de Bodhgayā et, d'autre part, comment ceux-ci forment des récits entourant ces paysages. Bodhgayā, comme d'autres centres importants de pèlerinage et de tourisme, est devenu un carrefour culturel entre le local et le mondial.

Après s'être heurtés, à Bodhgayā, à des défis sociaux, financiers et éducatifs, plusieurs pèlerins bouddhistes venus de diverses confessions ont adapté leurs pratiques traditionnelles dévotionnelles, telles que la méditation, la prière et les offrandes. Ils se sont ainsi engagés dans des services sociaux, comme le témoigne le développement d'écoles parrainées par les pèlerins, de cliniques de santé et de centres de formation professionnelle pour les communautés locales hindoues et musulmanes. L'augmentation du nombre d'organisations non-gouvernementales (ONG) bouddhistes à Bodhgayā est, d'une part, une réaction à l'échec du gouvernement en matière d'éducation, d'alimentation de santé, et de besoins de première nécessité. D'autre part, plus particulièrement en matière d'éducation, il s'agit d'une réponse à la perception bouddhiste selon laquelle l'éducation est un outil primordial de la transformation personnelle, sociale et spirituelle. Le travail social n'est pas perçu par ces pèlerins « engagés » comme étant opposé à leurs activités spirituelles. Au contraire, il fait partie intégrante de celles-ci. De cette manière, les pèlerins n'orientent pas

leur sentier spirituel seulement vers la réalisation de leur propre libération. Leurs démarches visent également la guérison et la transformation de soi et de l'autre.

Cette thèse étudie la façon comment le mouvement transnational de pèlerins bouddhistes privilégiés et les pratiques spécifiques de ces derniers, leurs images, leurs idées et leurs objets ont un impact sur le système local d'éducation. Plus précisément, j'étudie comment les pèlerins bouddhistes changent le terrain éducationnel en ouvrant des écoles privées et alternatives d'inspiration bouddhiste à Bodhgayā. J'étudie aussi comment la communauté agraire locale, composée surtout de biharis hindous et musulmans, perçoivent ces changements et comment ils y réagissent. J'analyse aussi comment ces écoles, entre autres les discours ainsi que les pratiques bouddhistes de celles-ci, sont assimilées, transformées, et légitimées *et* contestées dans le contexte local de l'éducation au Bihar, lequel est non bouddhiste et défavorisé socio-économiquement.

Pour arriver à cette fin, j'ai poursuivi ma recherche en tant qu'observateur participant à Maitreya Universal Education Project School, l'une des premières écoles à Bodhgayā qui ait été fondée et qui soit toujours dirigée par une ONG bouddhique occidentale. J'ai aussi porté mon attention sur d'autres organisations étrangères d'inspiration bouddhique actives depuis longue date et qui ont eu des impacts sociaux considérables sur la communauté locale. En mettant en oeuvre une approche académique qui intègre l'histoire et l'ethnographie, ainsi que des perspectives théoriques issues des domaines de l'anthropologie, des études des pèlerinages, des études bouddhiques, des études du développement international, de l'éducation holistique et de la pédagogie critique, je cherche à comprendre comment Bodhgayā s'est transformé d'un village agricole bihari pauvre et d'un lieu de pèlerinage bouddhique peu fréquenté en un centre cosmopolite sacré où apparaissent continuellement de nouvelles formes et significations associées aux pratiques religieuses.Je vise également à mettre en lumière comment la situation socio-économique actuelle de Bodhgayā influence ou n'influence pas les manières dont les pèlerins bouddhistes perçoivent, pratiquent et expérimentent le pèlerinage. Il est aussi question d'observer comment ces conditions contemporaines participent à produire de nouvelles formes de relations entre les pèlerins bouddhistes et les indiens locaux, l'éducation et le changement social étant maintenant au coeur de ces relations.

Ma recherche révèle comment le discours et la pratique bouddhiste sont utilisés par les institutions locales à des fins sociales, économiques et culturelles. De ce fait, cette recherche révèle comment la communauté locale perçoit les bouddhistes : comme une menace, comme une intrusion coloniale à laquelle il faut résister ou comme une culture à laquelle il faut se plier par nécessité économique. Ces attitudes ne sont pas mutuellement exclusives. Elles révèlent un modèle complexe de relations sociales qui contribuent à la construction de la communauté locale du Bihar moderne et la communauté bouddhiste mondiale.

Bien que le pèlerinage, le bouddhisme et les investissements étrangers en éducation soient tous des thèmes familiers en anthropologie et en sciences des religions, ceux-ci n'ont jamais étés juxtaposés dans une seule et même étude. Cela est encore moins le cas dans le contexte de Bodhgayā, un des sites les plus sacrés pour les bouddhistes. Cette analyse interdisciplinaire contribue à la compréhension de la migration transnationale.

Mots-clés : Bouddhisme, Inde, pèlerinage, éducation, engagement social, mondialisation

ABSTRACT

Bodhgayā's global significance is derived from its association with the Buddha, who is believed to have attained enlightenment there approximately 2550 years ago. Most Buddhists regard Bodhgayā as the "navel of the earth," and this most important pilgrimage site in the Buddhist world that ought to be visited at least once in a Buddhist's lifetime. This sacred site is also situated in the central Indian province of Bihar, the most impoverished state in India.

In recent years, after centuries of existing in relative obscurity, Bodhgayā has resurfaced to the world, attracting millions of international visitors, changing the simple agricultural landscape to a burgeoning cosmopolitan town filled with exotic Buddhist temples and monasteries, hotels, restaurants, and shopping plazas interspersed with health organizations, educational institutions, and village cooperatives. The site's overtly foreign Buddhist character has transformed the lives of the local Bihari residents who now experience the world in economically, socially, culturally, linguistically, religiously, politically, and imaginarily new ways. In turn, these shifts influence the ways pilgrims move around the physical and imaginary landscape, and inhabit the narratives which they form around them. Bodhgayā, like other prominent centres of pilgrimage and tourism, has become a cultural hub between the local and the global.

Encountering Bodhgayā's social, financial, and educational challenges, several Buddhist pilgrims from various denominations have begun shifting their spiritual focus from traditional forms of expressing devotion—such as meditation, offerings to social service, exemplified by pilgrim-sponsored schools, health clinics, and vocational training centres for the local poverty-stricken Hindu and Muslim communities. The increase of Buddhist-operated non-government organizations (NGO) in Bodhgayā is partly a response to the notorious failures of the Bihari government to provide adequate education, food, medicine, clothing, and in some cases shelter, and partly as a response to the perception that education is a primary tool needed to lever personal, social, and spiritual transformation. Social work for these "engaged" pilgrims is not perceived as being opposed to their spiritual activities, but forms an integral part of it. In this manner, the journey is not only directed towards the quest to realize their own individual liberation, but is motivated instead by healing and transformation of both self and other.

This thesis investigates how the transnational movement of Buddhist pilgrims and their practices, objects, and ideas influence the local non-Buddhist education system. More specifically, I investigate how foreign Buddhists visiting Bodhgayā affect the town's educational terrain by opening private, alternative schools promoting Buddhist values, and how these changes are received and responded to by the local agrarian Bihari Hindu and Muslim community. In doing so, I analyse how migrating forms of privileged Buddhist

culture are assimilated, transformed, and legitimated *and* contested into the local, socio-economically deprived non-Buddhist educational context.

To accomplish this aim, I conducted participant observervation at the Maitreya Universal Education Project School, one of the first schools founded and operated in Bodhgayā by a Western Buddhist NGO, as well as at other long-standing Western Buddhist institutions which have had deep social impacts on the local community. By engaging in an academic process that combines an appreciation of history, ethnographic data, and theoretical perspectives from the fields of anthropology, pilgrimage studies, Buddhist studies, international development studies, holistic curriculum, and critical pedagogy, this multi-disciplinary thesis examines how Bodhgayā's fluid and dynamic existence has shifted from a poor Bihari agricultural village and infrequently visited Buddhist pilgrimage site to a cosmopolitan sacred centre where new forms and meanings of religious practice continuously emerge. I also investigate how Bodhgayā's current socio-economic state of affairs affects (and does not affect) the ways in which Buddhist pilgrims perceive, practice, and experience pilgrimage, and how the contemporary context has produced a new type of relationship with local Indians based on education and social change.

Thus, I demonstrate that the discourses and practices of socially engaged pilgrims in the post-colonial frontier break down social, cultural, educational, and political barriers while simultaneously build new ones as (relatively) wealthy visitors interact with economically-deprived locals, who may, at different times, find the Buddhist stream of activity as a threatening intrusion to be resisted, an economic necessity to be submitted to, or an optimistic escape from the cycle of poverty and oppression. These multiple responses coming from the local community are not mutually exclusive, revealing a complex pattern of transnational socio-economic relationships that are factors in the construction of both the local Bihari community and the global Buddhist landscape.

While pilgrimage, Buddhism, and foreign-aid in education are all familiar themes to anthropologists, scholars of religion, and education specialists, they have never been juxtaposed together in a single study. This inter-disciplinary analysis contributes to the understanding of transnational migration.

Key Words: Buddhism, India, pilgrimage, education, social work, foreign-aid, globalization

INTRODUCTION

The sun had just set and night was falling upon the lonely and dark road surrounded by paddy fields. I spotted a rickety bicycle rickshaw carrying a Western woman dressed in a *salwar khameez*. She was a Spanish nurse volunteering at the Shakyamuni Buddha Community Health Clinic and generously let me share the transport with her. It had been a long airplane ride from Montreal to Patna via Dubai and New Delhi, followed by a grueling three-hour taxi ride to Bodhgayā, and I was anxious to visit the Mahābodhi Temple. My wife Michelle and our fifteen-month old Jai slept in our room at the Root Institute.

As Angelina, the nurse, and I walked across the plaza I soaked in the familiar shops and faces of peddlers and beggars. Angelina ducked into a cyber-café before doing her Medicine Buddha practice aimed at freeing all beings of sickness and disease, and I entered the grand Mahābodhi Temple Complex, checked-in my hiking boots and umbrella amidst the piles of sandals organized into various cubbies. I made my way down the stairs—the damp marble felt cold on my warm bare feet as I waded through a large group of smiling Sri Lankan pilgrims clad in white cotton *kurtas* and *saris* who were holding a large Buddhist flag. It was drizzling lightly and the droplets cast a magical glow as they fell through the shafts of light illuminating the temple, like a misty, protective aura.

The nights were cool following monsoon and I decided to meditate in the temple's inner chamber. The small room was already packed with two dozen Indian and Thai monks sitting at the very front, and behind them was a group of reverent white cotton-clad lay-devotees. At the very back were a couple of camera-toting French sight-seers wearing jeans and multi-pocketed travel vests. I wasn't certain, but I thought that I recognized one of the Indian monks from my last visit to Bodhgayā. He taught at *Pañca Sīla*, one of the rare charitable schools for local children that did not rely on Western Buddhist support. To my surprise, the three Tibetan monks in flowing maroon robes who had been reading scriptures near the front entrance of the shrine had gotten up, performed the triple prostration to the golden Buddha statue draped in an ochre robe that had been donated by a Burmese pilgrimage group, uttered a prayer, and joined the saffron-robed Theravādin *bhikkhus*. As I wrapped my *khadi* wool shawl around me and squeezed into a spot in the corner of the room next to the large donation box, the monks began to chant rapidly in Pāli. I closed my eyes, folded my hands in my lap, and observed my respiration. The echoing Pāli sounds flooded my entire body and a deep calm enveloped me. The clamour of a South Korean Pure Land pilgrimage group led by a priest chanting a Mahāyāna Sūtra through a megaphone, throwing rice onto the South

Asian chanters, and who were leaning and bumping against me while stuffing rupee notes into the donation box didn't matter; nothing did. Amongst the diverse practices I experienced stillness. I had arrived at the site where Prince Siddhartha conquered all internal turmoil and gained peace, wisdom, and compassion, and where I was about to embark on my own personal and academic journey.

Bodhgayā[1] is venerated by Buddhists from all traditions as the "navel of the earth," the place where all Bodhisattvas attain Enlightenment and become a Buddha. While these pilgrims travel to Bodhgayā for *multiple* reasons, as demonstrated by my above narrative, all of them share the desire to pay homage to the Buddha at the Mahābodhi Temple and Bodhi Tree (*ficus religiosa*), under which Siddhartha Gautama attained full realization 2550 years ago. However, as my above narrative demonstrates, the ways in which they do so and the motivations supporting their pilgrimage activities are not always homogenous. The pilgrims' journeys change not only the lives of the pilgrims but also the lives of the local, mostly poor, Hindu and Muslim Indians whom the pilgrims encounter along the way.

Bodhgayā is a small town in the central Indian province of Bihar, notorious for its prevailing poverty. In recent years, after centuries of existing in relative obscurity, Bodhgayā has resurfaced, attracting millions of international visitors, changing the simple agricultural landscape to a burgeoning cosmopolitan town filled with exotic Buddhist temples and monasteries, hotels, restaurants, and shopping plazas interspersed with health organizations, educational institutions, and village cooperatives. Since the Mahābodhi Temple earned a spot on the World Heritage Site list in 2002, Bodhgayā's profile on the world map has exploded as international Buddhist groups rush to the site to perform ritual activities, acquire land, develop networks of international aid, and support tourism and urban development initiatives. The site's overtly international Buddhist character has transformed the lives of the local Bihari residents who now experience the world in economically, socially, culturally, linguistically, religiously, politically and imaginarily new ways. In turn, these shifts influence the ways pilgrims move about both the physical and imaginary landscape, and the narratives

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[1] The name Bodhgayā has been spelled differently throughout history as Boodha Gaya, Buddh Gya, Bauddha Gyah, Bodhi Gaya, Buddha Gaya, Bodh Gaya. Buddhist historian Shravasti Dhammika (1999; 1996) explains that the name Bodhgayā is not old and first appeared in the inscription of Amaradeva, a document of uncertain but recent date. At the time of the Buddha, the village was named Uruvela. For the purpose of standardization and pronunciation, I use "Bodhgayā" throughout this dissertation.

which they form around them. Bodhgayā, like other prominent centres of pilgrimage and tourism, has become a cultural hub between the local and the global (see Appadurai 1996).

In the last decade or so, a new type of Buddhist pilgrim has appeared in Bodhgayā. In response to local socio-economic turmoil, "socially engaged Buddhists" have decided to expand their efforts toward spiritual transformation by offering their assistance to the Biharis through philanthropic enterprises. In addition to the traditional forms of devotion including meditation, offering, and prayer, socially engaged Buddhists donate money to local organizations or extend their visits to Bodhgayā to volunteer at local grassroots organizations such as health clinics, vocational institutes, schools, etc. Spiritual transformation during pilgrimage remains an important goal for most pilgrims, but the means towards, and perhaps the meaning of, this transformation is changing. This movement of socially engaged Buddhist pilgrimage highlights the importance of analyzing the construction of religious meaning and experience, as the journey of these socially engaged pilgrims seems to be motivated by healing and transformation of *both* self and other, which for them represents the spirit of the pilgrimage experience. In this regard, this project seeks to verify the difference between the experience of the socially engaged pilgrim and the standard variety. Is this new form of practice significantly different from traditional forms of practice? Or, is it simply an additional layer of compost spread over old terrain? If it is new, whose interests are best served? What are the unpredictable implications of these Buddhist practices on the local population?

This thesis investigates how the transnational movement of Buddhist pilgrims and their practices, objects, and ideas influence the local non-Buddhist education system. More specifically, I investigate how foreign Buddhists visiting Bodhgayā affect the town's educational terrain by opening private, alternative schools promoting Buddhist values, and how these changes are received and responded to by the local agrarian Bihari Hindu and Muslim community. In doing so, I analyse how migrating forms of privileged Buddhist culture are assimilated, transformed, and legitimated *and* contested into the local, socio-economically deprived non-Buddhist educational context.

The last decade has witnessed a dramatic increase of foreign, Buddhist non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that are opening schools in Bodhgayā. This increase is partly a response to the notorious failures of the Bihari state government to provide adequate education, food, medicine, clothing, and in some cases shelter (Ramagundam 2006; Weiner

2006; Giacomin 2000; Sainath 1996), and partly a response to the perception that education is the primary tool needed to lever personal, social, and spiritual transformation (Miller 2008; Girox 2005; Leed 2005; Seymour 2204; Noddings 2004; 2003; Goss 2000; Giacomin 2000; Thurman 1996; Dalai Lama 1995; hooks 1994; Freire 1971). Welch (2000) and Habte (1999) question the quality of basic education in Third World states and argue that international funding agencies for education confront numerous challenges: false data; misappropriated funds; dilapidated classrooms; unqualified, over-worked, and underpaid teachers; lack of instructional materials and textbooks; absence of local participation; and unmotivated and corrupt leadership. In such contexts, and with a curriculum that fails to connect to the daily experiences of the children, "schools often succeed in little more than producing unemployed and poorly adapted young people" (Welch 2000, 6-7). McCloskey (2003) recommends that aid agencies develop solutions with people-based strategies that "enhance understanding about development, address poverty-related issues, promote social justice and bring about change" (180-1). However, despite the noblest of intentions of some NGOs, Elu and Banya (1999), Escobar (1992), and Dubois (1991) challenge the notion of foreign-aid, whether mainstream or alternative, as the prevalent discourses and practices associated with this assistance tend to represent the 'Other' as backwards, impoverished, and in need of "salvation" by the developed First World.

To address these post-colonial critiques of education and foreign-aid, I examine not only the meaning of education and pilgrimage for socially engaged Buddhists, but also how Buddhist pilgrims transform the impoverished town's educational and religious terrain by opening private, alternative schools promoting Buddhist values, and how these changes are received and responded to by the local Bihari community. My principle field site was at the Maitreya Universal Education Project School, one of the first schools founded and operated in Bodhgayā by a Western[2] Buddhist NGO. I also examine other foreign-run Buddhist-inspired organizations such as the Alice Project, Akshay School, Pragya Vihara School, Maitri Charitable Trust, as well as the Shakyamuni Buddha Community Health Clinic —all of which are long-standing Western-operated, Buddhist institutions which have deep social

[2]Although the *Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahāyāna Tradition* (FPMT) is truly a global organization with branch centres and members in North America, Europe, Australia, and Asia, most of the social projects in Bodhgayā are developed and operated by Westerners. However, as I discuss in Chapter Two, a significant portion of the funding for these projects comes from East Asia.

impacts on the local community. I contextualize the Maitreya Universal Education Project School (henceforth Maitreya School, as what all locals and visitors call it) and its association to the Root Institute of Wisdom Culture, a socially engaged Buddhist centre in Bodhgayā representing the *Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahāyāna Tradition* (FPMT), the umbrella organization that currently has the longest running and largest number of social projects in Bodhgayā (both officially and unofficially linked to the FPMT). I focus on how the discourse and practices of Buddhist pilgrims get moulded and used by locals involved with these social institutions, and whether or not the local community perceives the Buddhists as a threatening, colonial intrusion to be resisted, a culture to be submitted to out of economic necessity, or a socio-religious movement to be embraced that will help alleviate poverty. These attitudes are not mutually exclusive, revealing a complex pattern of social relationships that contribute to the construction of both the local Bihari community and the global Buddhist landscape, or as I refer to it and explain below, the *Buddhascape*—a landscape transformed by transnational, migratory Buddhists and their specific practices, images, ideas, and objects.

In what follows, I provide the reader with an overview of the theoretical perspectives that have informed my field research and analysis. I begin with a review of the leading anthropological theories of pilgrimage in an attempt to locate the meanings of pilgrimage activity in Bodhgayā: I begin with Victor Turner's (1974; 1969) structural conceptualization of pilgrimage. Next, since all pilgrimage experiences do not neatly fit into Turner's framework, I use John Eade and Michael Sallnow's (1991) constructivist approach to argue that analysis must go beyond the description of structure and include a critical investigation of individual and group dynamics, interpretations and motivations. This approach will permit a clearer understanding of the orchestration of behaviours and construction of meanings of various pilgrims visiting Bodhgayā. Finally, I consider Coleman (2002) and Coleman and Elsner's (1995) non-deterministic theoretical stance aimed at discovering the unique and diverse ways in which sacredness at a pilgrimage centre is constituted.

To help explore the multiplicity of discourses that leads to the construction of differing, and often conflicting, perceptions of sacredness, it is useful to analyze the ways in which spaces are turned into sacred places. To do so, I explore the theoretical discussion informed primarily by anthropology on the concept of place construction (Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Massey 1994; Rodman 1992) to better understand the development of

Bodhgayā as a Buddhascape in general, and of educational institutions such as the Maitreya School in particular. These ideas help articulate what happens to a space when differing ethno-religious cultures interact on uneven socio-economic and political ground.

In focusing the analytical lens, I examine the debate surrounding "engaged Buddhism" in an attempt to understand how it may relate to pilgrimage activity in Bodhgayā, and specifically to my ethnographic analysis of the Maitreya School and its Buddhist-influenced educational environment. I then examine theories interpreting the relationship between education and globalization with respect to neo-liberalism, critical pedagogy, and holistic curriculum.

INTERPRETATIVE FRAMEWORKS FOR UNDERSTANDING TRANSNATIONAL PILGRIMAGE, SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT, AND EDUCATION IN BODHGAYĀ'S GLOBAL LANDSCAPE

Turner's Operative Definition and Framework

A pilgrim is typically understood as a person who travels to a sacred place as an act of spiritual devotion. Using Arnold Van Gennep's seminal work on rites of passage, Victor Turner set a trend for anthropological analyses of pilgrimage by developing the conceptual models of *liminality* and *communitas*. The term *liminal* is derived from the Latin *limen*, meaning threshold, brink, or limit. It refers to the condition of the pilgrim who leaves his mundane, structured social role and enters into a world of anti-structure; or in Turner's words "betwixt and between" two social worlds. During this period of liminality, the pilgrim undergoes some sort of initiation, purification, and subsequent transformation. Thus returning home, the pilgrim is a different person (1974; 1969).

Turner explains that the most noteworthy feature of liminality is its ability to generate *communitas*—a social bond among participants that combines the qualities of "lowliness and sacredness, homogeneity and comradeship" (1969, 96). The relations amongst the pilgrims change as class or caste divisions are temporarily abolished. A symbol of this egalitarianism is often expressed when pilgrims avoid displaying explicit status differences by wearing special pilgrimage clothing, such as simple white cotton clothes as Theravadin Buddhists are prone to do. For Turner, this "anti-structural," egalitarian drive towards

communitas is the aim of pilgrimage. By traveling to a far-off sacred site, the pilgrim leaves the conventional world he is used to and enters a world where s/he becomes both geographically and socially marginalised, which is what enables him to experience a sense of communitas with the other pilgrims.

At the Mahābodhi Temple in Bodhgayā we witness Buddhist pilgrims from around the world who share several common attributes that mirror Turner's ideas. First, they leave their familiar home environments. Second, they cross a threshold first into India, which is an entirely different world from the rest of Asia or the West where most pilgrims come from; and then enter the pilgrimage space of Bodhgayā, which is believed by all Buddhist pilgrims to arouse spiritual inspiration and Awakening. Pilgrims often feel a sense of unity that transcends sectarian differences as seen in activities such as circumambulating around the Mahābodhi Temple together, meditating together, making offerings in the same spots, and as I demonstrate in this thesis, participate in social projects together to help alleviate local poverty. Third, the pilgrims usually return home with an altered perspective, deepened faith in the Triple Gem,[3] or a renewed understanding of their positions in the world.[4]

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[3] These central Buddhist pillars are the Buddha, his teachings (*Dharma*), and his community of practitioners who have realized enlightenment (*Saṅgha*).

[4] To further his argument concerning liminality, Turner indicates that pilgrimage shrines are usually found in politically and economically peripheral, non-secular areas; thus being spatially liminal and representative of "a place and moment 'in and out of time'" and appropriate for the "direct experience of the sacred, invisible, or supernatural order" (1974, 197). Bodhgayā may be located in Bihar, India's poorest state, and far from Patna, its financial and administrative capital, but it is also the Buddhist geographical omphalos where the performance of spiritual practice is said to yield significantly greater fruits (Lama Zopa 2002; 2001; see Eicher 1999; Goldberg and Décary 2009). Turner also notes that as a peripheral site becomes more popular with pilgrims settling near the area, its status can shift to a position of centrality (1974, 227). Over the last decade since the Mahābodhi Temple has been designated a World Heritage Site (see Geary 2009) the Bihari state government has sold tracts of land surrounding the Mahābodhi Temple to Buddhist groups from around the world who come to Bodhgayā to build temples, monasteries, and non-government organizations (NGOs). Since its growing popularity in recent years, Bodhgayā has shifted towards the Buddhist centre stage and sites in the area that were virtually unknown such as the Mahākala Cave where Siddhartha Gautama (the Buddha-to-be) undertook severe austerities before discovering his middle path approach towards enlightenment, the Sūjāta Stūpa where Siddhartha ate his last meal before Enlightenment, and Gayāśisa Mountain where the Buddha converted the famous fire-worshipping Kassapa brothers and their 1000 disciples have become auxiliary pilgrimage sites for visiting Buddhists to perform traditional homage, as well as create social and economic ventures for the local population.

Beyond Turner: A Multiplicity of Actions, Meanings and Motivations

While Turner's concepts represent a highly interesting discourse about pilgrimage and are also useful for shedding light on particular anthropological situations, the major flaw with this paradigm is that it is difficult to support ethnographically, especially when considering people's personal motivations, interpretations, and backgrounds. The innovative structure may easily be seen in the experiences of *some* groups of pilgrims, but it is impossible to claim that all pilgrimages universally contain the same structure and content, and that all pilgrims in all cultural settings derive meaning through the experience of liminality and communitas. While Bodhgayā might be fixed in place, it is not fixed in meaning, rendering it important to study the juxtaposition of differing perceptions of sacredness.

Anthropologists John Eade and the late Michael Sallnow (1991) propose a pluralistic theoretical approach for interpreting pilgrimage. In their introduction to *Contesting the Sacred: The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage* the authors argue that each pilgrimage event needs to be investigated in its particular social context to understand its particular historical and cultural activities and implications. They write,

> The theoretical discourse *about* pilgrimage becomes more diversified and discrepant, being less concerned to match empirical instances with a preconceived ideal— whether analytically or theologically inspired—than to deconstruct the very category of 'pilgrimage' into historically and culturally specific behaviours and meanings. (3)

So paying attention only to the display of collective, mutual piety can be misleading as experiences may be framed by the same rituals and occasion, but pilgrims' perspectives are formed by their position in the crowd, their expectations, and their cultural backgrounds. For this reason, Eade and Sallnow write: "The sacred centre, then, can assume many different forms. The thrust of our analytic endeavour should be not towards the formulation of ever more inclusive, and consequently, ever more vacuous generalizations, but instead towards the examination of the specific peculiarities of its construction in each instance" (9). Eade and Sallnow's constructivist approach views contemporary culture not as structurally determined with no room for diversity, but as an intersection of boundaries that are constantly shifting.

According to this method of analysis, a pilgrimage site need not be examined as an arena hosting a single religious discourse, but as a field where several, and often, conflicting discourses are played out and where pilgrimages often reinforce, rather than blur, social

boundaries. Eade and Sallnow contend that each group associated with the process: pilgrims, locals, and religious specialists (and I would also include the ethnographer in this list) continuously construct their own understanding of the ideological significance of the journey and destination. I would also add that these various actors construct the significance of the other categories of actors participating in the process. From this perspective, the pilgrimage process *may* contain elements of communitas and concord for certain groups at certain times while segregation and discord *may* be the situation at other times, thus it is essential to investigate all perceptible vantage points.

Despite the shared activities pilgrims experience in Bodhgayā which I noted earlier, there are also motivations and activities in which pilgrims do not share, such as social work. In addition, interpretations of these common performances and the sacred powers of the site may differ. The multiplicity of discourses makes it necessary to investigate not only structures, but the differing—and often conflicting—constructions and perceptions of sacredness, as well as the varying motivations that attract people to Bodhgayā. For example, the differing perceptions of sacredness include opposing interpretations of the Theravāda, Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna traditions, as well as the interpretations of the Hindu Śaivite sect who occupy a section of the Mahābodhi Temple Complex (see Doyle 1997). Moreover, and more relevant to this thesis, are the various ways in which the Maitreya School is understood to be a sacred space in terms of education, social opportunity, and spiritual liberation. Tensions arise not only from diversity in interpretation between the engaged pilgrims and the local teachers and students, but also within these groups, indicating an absence of homogeneity.

In their book *Pilgrimage Past and Present in the World Religions*, anthropologist Simon Coleman and art historian John Elsner (1995) agree with Eade and Sallnow's (1991) pluralistic approach; however, they attempt to balance this analysis by warning against a narrow focus on social and political struggle, over-emphasizing the lack of intrinsic meaning, and ignoring how the sacredness of a place is orchestrated. They argue that Eade and Sallnow's interpretations may lead to a misunderstanding of how pilgrimage sites constitute a spiritual reality for the pilgrims and what structural similarities arise within and across religious traditions (see also Coleman 2002). In this way, it is important to acknowledge whatever parallels may exist across time and culture, even if the implications and meanings of such actions may vary. Despite pilgrimage "trafficking" (Coleman 2002, 359) found

through discrepant discourses, idiosyncratic forms of worship, diverse cultural backgrounds, or differing lineages found in Bodhgayā, many pilgrims still feel a heightened spiritual freedom and sense of solidarity with each other, especially among those who participate in community affairs. This commonality renders it important to research their common pursuit of the elimination of human suffering and the cultivation of wisdom and compassion, as well as the motivations behind social work that is undertaken (either together or independently) irrespective of sectarian differences.

Exploring pilgrimage using Coleman (2002) and Coleman and Elsner's (1995) non-deterministic insights enables me to invoke both Eade and Sallnow's pluralistic approach, as well as Turner's structuralist categories, without rigidly imposing them as a singular, universal, preconceived theoretical framework. By invoking these rich theories from pilgrimage studies, yet not remaining bound to them, I move beyond the limitations that they place on the research observation process. Rather than focusing only on the extent to which Bodhgayā is a pilgrimage site, I break free from the "pilgrimage ghetto" (Coleman 2002, 363) and broaden my research lens to investigate Bodhgayā's spatial environment which possesses a diverse set of meanings and is continuously formed by several complex and intersecting social and educational forces that are an integral part of the place's construction (see also Dubisch 1995). In an effort to expand the field of pilgrimage and tourism studies, or rather connect it to other sub-fields that touch upon social work, education, economics, and globalization, I explore the socially engaged dimensions of pilgrimage as it intersects with constructions of place/trans-national space.

Bodhgayā's Multilocality: Constructing Global Buddhist Places from Local Bihari Space

In recent years there has been a growing critique from anthropology and religious studies of the conjecture that religion and culture are limited to a group of people bonded by a system of shared meanings within a geographical space (Welsch 1999; Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Appadurai 1996; Massey 1994; Rodman 1992). These social theorists argue that culture can only be properly understood in terms of complex, trans-national, social, and historical relationships.

In her critical work on the relationship between space, place, and gender, cultural theorist Doreen Massey (1994, 155-156) identifies four main features of place that are relevant to my analysis of Bodhgayā and the Maitreya School: First, places are dynamic and conceptualized in terms of social relationships. Second, places are not isolated by borders. Third, places do not consist of homogenous, conflict-free identities. And finally, none of the above three features deny the distinctiveness of place; in other words, a place's particularities cannot be reproduced. This broad perspective has informed the way I look at the trans-national—and often imbalanced—exchange of ideas, relationships, and material objects that flow throughout Bodhgayā and its social institutions, particularly at the Maitreya School, and how these exchanges are reproduced at other schools around Bihar and globally.

In *Culture, Power, Place: Explorations in Critical Anthropology*, Gupta and Ferguson (1997) highlight the importance of examining discontinuities of space to understand and discuss "contact, conflict, and contradiction between cultures and societies" (33-34). This approach positions us to recognize, or become aware of, what elements of space have been left alone, swept under the carpet, or deemed "natural." They argue that by assuming the isomorphism of space, place, and culture (and religion) into a single narrative, several conceptual challenges arise.

First is the "disjuncture of place and culture" as in the case of those who cross borders regularly, carrying their cultural baggage with them (34). Pilgrims anywhere exemplify this well, and in the context of this thesis, so do the socially engaged pilgrims who travel frequently to Hindu majority Bihar and participate in community affairs, and in doing so, instill Western Buddhist views of individual and social change. The challenges connected to this disjuncture are discussed primarily in chapters four and five that investigate the insertion of Buddhist-inspired pedagogy, religious discourse, and ritual art and architecture into the Bihari educational landscape.

I also discuss this disjuncture between place and ethno-religious cultures by exploring the concept of *Buddhascape*. Departing from Appadurai's (1996) concept of *ethnoscape*, I introduce the notion of Buddhascape—a transformed landscape by foreign, migratory Buddhist actors and their specific practices, images, ideas, and objects. Although Appadurai makes no specific reference to pilgrims or missionaries, these people constitute an important globalizing force as they travel from all different parts of the (developed) globe to serve impoverished communities inhabiting the Buddha's homeland. Non-government

organizations affiliated with *Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahāyāna Tradition* (FPMT) such as Root Institute, Maitreya School, Alice Project, Maitreya Project, Maitri Charitable Trust, and Akshay School are all part of the FPMT's transnational network and the heart of the wider trans-sectarian Buddhascape located in Bodhgayā. Bodhgayā is the centre of the Buddhascape as it has the ability to both manifest sectarian particularities *and* transcend all traditional particularities because of its historical significance and material potency to draw together Buddhists of all kinds. The aim in discussing this altered, complex, and unique landscape is to understand its dynamic, disjunctive and interactive nature. In doing so, I hope that the reader will be in a better position to appreciate the more analytical features of the remaining chapters examining the associations between transnational Buddhist pilgrimage practice and social engagement.

Another major challenge that Gupta and Ferguson (1997) highlight regarding the conceptual collapse of space, place, and culture is the difficulty in recognizing, understanding, and working with cultural differences that occur within a particular area affected by cultural hybridization. The authors assert that cultures in pluralistic societies lose their traditional bearings and are forced to conform—rather messily—to fit into some dominant framework (35). Upon close inspection, this challenge is readily apparent in Bodhgayā on several levels that I investigate throughout this thesis. For instance, molding Buddhist principles into conceptual and practical frameworks claiming "universality" has not been free of obstacles. As I demonstrate in chapters three, four, and five, Biharis attending or working at one of the Buddhist charitable schools must adapt to—and to some degree, embrace—socially, economically, and culturally dominant structures to enjoy the benefits of foreign assistance in the form of education and health-care.

This messy lack-of-fit becomes all the more complicated when there exists a lack of homogeneity of views and experiences of both emerging forms of Buddhist pilgrimage and the local responses that it instigates, thus requiring an investigation into Bodhgayā's many voices involved with pilgrimage and education. In doing so, I ask questions about the construction and re-construction of educational spaces, and to the extent these spaces are deemed sacred, and investigate the various discourses and behaviours that emerge when differing cultures meet in those spaces. I inquire as to how spaces can be interpreted in diverse ways, whose voice is heard most and least, and who has the most capital to make places of spaces. According to Margaret Rodman (1992), places are not "inert containers" but

are socially constructed in ways that are "politicized, culturally relative, historically specific, local and multiple" (641). These "clusters of interaction," as Gupta and Ferguson (1997) call them, host trans-national relationships and serve as distinctive points of intersection where social meaning is produced in diverse ways. In other words, different stories can be told about a single place. For Rodman (1992, 644) it is crucial that the multiplicity of voices and meanings be heard, and that understanding "multilocality" entails a critical examination of the relationships of power that underlie the social construction of place.

The third challenge that Gupta and Ferguson caution is the confusion that hybrid cultures face in terms of identification to or solidarity with a particular place (35). Where is home for the Western Buddhist who has lived in Bodhgayā for five, ten, or more than twenty years and whose life is dedicated to serving the poor? While it is difficult to still consider these social workers as pilgrims, as long as they still intend on making the journey home, whenever that may be, they can still be considered pilgrims (see Fife 2005). Posing questions regarding displaced, or in this case, *re-placed*, people are important for understanding the dangers of throwing space, place, culture, and religion into a fragile melting pot.

Fourth is that the "presumption that spaces are autonomous has enabled the power of topography successfully to conceal the topography of power" (Gupta and Ferguson 1997, 35). Gupta and Ferguson suggest that examining cultures as "naturally disconnected" should be abandoned. Viewing cultures as "hierarchically interconnected" can be useful in "rethinking *difference* through connection" (35). Gupta and Ferguson illustrate this point by demonstrating how articulation models have been problematic because they focused on the autonomy of "pre-existing" local groups that were affected by the international division of labour. Isolating a culture does not acknowledge the processes that create space in relation to place in previous instances before the contact between the "global" and "local" (36). To avoid these blind spots, Gupta and Ferguson suggest that scholars need to look at the formation of the "pre-existing" communities "out of the interconnected space that always already existed" (36). In attempt at understanding the cultures of education, I discuss in chapter three native and Gandhian approaches in rural Bihar and how they change when they interact with systems directly influenced by both neo-liberal economic and Buddhist agendas. This approach enables processes of colonialism and globalization to be understood not as unique events in history, but simply as one form of structural imbalance that replaced other forms.

Engaged Buddhism and Socially Engaged Buddhist Pilgrimage

In the sections above I examined theories that can be used to understand the various ways in which Bodhgayā and its institutions are constructed as sacred places and how this sacredness is constituted by different people. Below I provide an analytical framework to help define the term 'socially engaged Buddhist pilgrim,' and also to understand the way Buddhist social institutions conceive of and value the individual and community in resonance with the complex, dynamic, and colourful backdrop of Bodhgayā's Buddhascape.

Engaged Buddhism has become a prominent subject in the field of Buddhist studies and its definition took shape around the turn of the millennium. Buddhist ethicist Sallie King defines engaged Buddhism as "social and political activism based upon Buddhist principles, concepts, values, and practices" (2009; 2005). Buddhist translator and commentator Robert Thurman (1996) defines Buddhist social action as "total activism, an unswerving commitment to complete self-transformation and complete world-transformation" (79). Buddhist scholar Robert Goss (2000) suggests that engaged Buddhism is not merely an interaction with social institutions, but a critique and transformation of them (328). Engaged Buddhism scholar Christopher Queen (2000) defines the term socially engaged Buddhism as "the application of the Buddha's teachings to the resolution of social problems" (1), and that the various styles of ethical practice that fall under this rubric may even be considered as a new model for Buddhist liberation, or as he calls it, the *fourth yāna* (2). [5]

Queen (2000; 2003) interprets the engaged Buddhist movement to represent an ontological shift from the notion of individual liberation from the three poisons (craving, aversion, and ignorance) to include social and political freedom. This position reflects the religious orientation that recognizes the value in each individual being, the collective nature of experience, and the need for collective action to address socially related problems. For these theorists, engaged Buddhism is perceived not only as a modern expression of the Buddha's quest to discover the origins and cessation of suffering, but contains a soteriological shift towards social, political, and economic transformation. This "outer" transformation is on equal footing with "inner" transformation, and the realization of a

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[5] *Yāna* translates as vehicle. From a Tibetan standpoint, the three vehicles are Hīnayāna (Small Vehicle), Mahāyāna (Great Vehicle), and Vajrayāna (Diamond Vehicle).

materially prosperous and peaceful society that is based on conquering the three inner poisons.

However, Buddhist scholars such as David Loy (2004; 2000), Thomas Yarnell (2003), and Bhikkhu Bodhi (2005; 2009), as well as Asian trained Buddhist teachers such as the Dalai Lama, Thich Nhat Hanh, and Sulak Sivaraksa (see Henry 2006) argue that Buddhism has always been socially engaged, and that there is little that is new, or especially modern, about engaged Buddhism in the way that Queen describes. From this perspective, the notion that engaged Buddhism constitutes a *fourth yāna* is inaccurate. Moreover, this categorization of social engagement as something distinct from the practices of daily life fails to understand the totality of religious life, or as what religion scholar Malory Nye (1999, 193) calls "religion-as-embodied practice." Yarnell (2003) maintains that Buddhists do not categorize the world socially and spiritually, and Loy (2004; 2000) asserts that the belief in a distinct form of socially engaged Buddhism relegated to its own category is a fallacy held by Western thinkers rooted in Protestant notions of the private-public sphere distinction. These scholars argue that to suggest that Buddhism has not always been engaged is to accept the Western colonial view that Buddhists are escapist and quietist (see Weber 1958). Likewise, Pāli translator and commentator Bhikkhu Bodhi (2009; 2005) stresses that from a Buddhist scriptural perspective the ethical principles regarding social conduct including charity, education and health-care have always been an important feature of Buddhist life.

I argue that while social engagement has always been an important part of Buddhist praxis in general, it is a new and emerging form of pilgrimage activity that is becoming increasingly present in Bodhgayā and at other sites along the Buddhist pilgrimage circuit. Today, frameworks of dual liberation (Bond 1996) and Buddhist ethics (Keown 2005; 2000; 1992; King 2009; 2005) make explicit socially related goals. This is evident in the works of Bodhgayā's engaged Buddhist pilgrims as traditional forms of expressing devotion such as meditation, offering, and prayer have expanded to include social service, exemplified by pilgrim-sponsored primary and secondary schools emphasizing both academic and contemplative programs, as well as health clinics, self-help groups, micro-lending schemes, and vocational training centres for the local poverty-stricken Hindu and Muslim communities. This idea finds resonance in Malory Nye's (1999) argument that religion scholars must go beyond Western, generic categories of religion that do not account for the totality of experience.

Education and Globalization in Bodhgayā

Educational challenges commonly found in rural north Indian socio-economic spheres are tied up with issues of child labour, caste inequality, reproduction of power inequalities, and gender imbalances. Since 1991, these challenges have been aggravated by neo-liberal economic reforms and have provided few realistic solutions (see Ghosh 2008; Weiner 2006; Muralidharan and Kremer 2006; Ramagundam 2006; Govinda 2003; Kingdon and Muzamil 2001; Apple 2000; Sainath 1996; Drèze and Sen 1995). Moreover, progressive education scholars Leed (2005), Orr (2004), Meier (2004), among others, argue that instrumentalist attitudes promoting competition and independence over-emphasize employment opportunities and socio-political status, often resulting in individual and social disconnection, a lack of motivation and skill for civic engagement, and an overly-consumeristic attitude.

The education theorists mentioned above assert that the purpose of the dominant, utilitarian, neo-liberal approach to education is to transmit knowledge and skills that permit students to become productive contributors to an existing socio-economic structure. From this perspective, development is understood to mean economic growth. However, following these authors, I demonstrate that this narrow educational approach generally signifies "development" for a particular social group as it tilts the socio-economic scale in favour of middle and upper-class children to the detriment of those who are poor and marginalized. As an aside, while this approach is created to prepare students to be contributors to the work force, there is little evidence that what they do in school actually prepares them to be productive, responsible, problem-solving workers enhancing financial wealth.

An alternative approach to education, which I touch upon in chapter three, but elaborate in detail in chapter four, addresses social inequalities and injustices, promotes basic literacy, encourages students to think critically, and generate knowledge and skills that are vital to transforming underlying structures responsible for maintaining socio-economic prejudice and segregation (Maclure, Sabbah, and Lavan 2009; Giroux 2006; 2005; McCloskey 2003; hooks 1994; Freire 1971). This transformative outlook also places emphasis on cultivating self-esteem, personal integrity, and satisfaction in both personal and public life (Miller 2008; Leed 2005; Noddings 2004; 2003; Seymour 2004). Contemporary education and development discourses in developing countries often attempt to combine these two seemingly contradictory perspectives. However, as noble as unifying utilitarian and

transformative perspectives may seem, Maclure, Sabbah, and Lavan (2009) contend that any semblance of the transformative approach is consistently rendered subordinate to the hegemonic perspective favouring economic development.

In chapter four, I examine the theoretical and methodological contours of "Universal Education," a holistic curriculum practiced at the Maitreya School that strives to connect every aspect of human knowledge and experience (see Miller 2008) by focusing not only standard academic subjects but also creative arts, spirituality, and community service. Throughout the chapter I analyze its distinctive strengths which position it to meet the school's primary educational objective of helping students develop a "good heart" (www.maitreyaproject.com 2009). At the same time, I interpret the transformative capacity of Universal Education by drawing upon tools from the field of "critical pedagogy," a broad theoretical field that uses diverse strategies to confront social and historical contexts in transition. In spite of the fact that critical pedagogy is usually more concerned with the transformation of authoritarian social structures than holistic curriculum, much overlap exists between the two educational approaches as both maintain that social transformation begins with the individual.

I draw upon the writings of critical pedagogues such as Paulo Freire (1971; 2007), bell hooks (1994), Henry Giroux (2006; 2005), John Taylor Gatto (2000), among others, to understand how their views of "reading the world" may illuminate the social aspects of the Universal Education curriculum, which is designed to develop ethical integrity, an understanding of the interrelatedness of all phenomena, and a sense of "universal responsibility" (www.maitreyaproject.com 2009). While political struggle is not at the forefront of the Maitreya School's curriculum, there is a strong sense of community-building evident by its service learning projects. From both educational perspectives personal growth, as well as cultural and social literacy, form the ground for a harmonious and just society (Giroux 2006; 2005; hooks 1994; Freire 1971; 2007).

During my fieldwork I inquired into the ways that the work at Maitreya School can be categorized as a form of engaged Buddhism, as it not only teaches its students how to understand the interrelationship between the mental and physical universe but also teaches them how to live in the world as social actors promoting positive transformation. This practice coincides with what education scholar and cultural critic Henry Giroux (2005) describes as "engaged civic pedagogy" characterized by "educated hope—the precondition

for individual and social struggle, involving the ongoing practice of critical education in a wide variety of sites and the renewal of civic courage among citizens who wish to address social problems" (178). More than mere optimism, positive thinking, or faith in the intervention of a higher power, educated hope demands engaged struggle and is, in Giroux's opinion, a "subversive force" (178).

Giroux's insights point towards the primacy of public spheres as sites for necessary engagement, whether it be political, social, cultural, or religious. Participation in this way offers the genuine possibility of individual and collective transformation, but only if vibrant public spheres in which to accomplish this are created and sustained in face of our global, consumeristic society. Maitreya represents this educated hope in the public sphere as it provides free education to village children from poor families. Beyond academic achievement, Maitreya offers a unique curriculum that emphasizes ethical and spiritual development. Maitreya's educational project is a response to Bihari poverty and low-quality academic resources (see Ramagundam 2006; Weiner 2006; Welch 2000; Habte 1999; Sainath 1996). The educational project also stems from the Buddhist notion that education is the primary tool needed to facilitate individual, social, and religious reform (see Learman 2005; Goss 2000; Thurman 1996). In his reading of Nagarjuna's *Jewel Garland of Royal Counsels,* Thurman (1996) suggests that the aim of a Buddhist inspired educational system is not material, but to be a gateway to liberation (82). In addition, schools should be more than mere facilities to preserve and enrich a free society; instead they should be the very expression of it (84). In spite of the high costs of a good education, Nagarjuna insists that it is a necessary investment for the healthy future of society (85).

In keeping with the theoretical perspectives referred to in the above section "Bodhgayā's multilocality," I consider how the Maitreya School's Universal Education discourse and practices are rooted primarily in Buddhist thought. I also reflect upon how Universal Education exemplifes modern global trends of transculturality—a consequence of transnational patterns of migration and movement where the amalgamation of diverse cultural elements causes initial cultural and religious constitutions to change (Welsch 1999; Appadurai 1996). The juxtaposition of Buddhist discourse and sacred objects in Hindu predominant Bodhgayā indicates how contemporary cultures intermingle, transform spaces into places, and contribute to the evolution of imbalanced power dynamics (see Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Massey 1994; Rodman 1992). In this way, pedagogical and spatial conflict at

the school are generated by several factors: Buddhist wishes to create conditions for future enlightenment, local desires for an education that promotes personal well-being, social harmony, and upward financial mobility, both of which are not disconnected from Bodhgayā's rapid economic development under globalization.

In the following chapters I draw upon these various theoretical perspectives to analyse the emerging processes and practices related to pilgrimage that underlie Bodhgayā's socio-educational transformation. I examine how the site is influenced by various engaged pilgrims, Buddhist institutions, and local actors who all have differing visions of education and social change. Throughout this dissertation, I pay attention, to the best of my ability, to the multiple voices involved with the pedagogical and spatial evolution of Bodhgayā's complex educational terrain. By paying attention to these voices, I begin to address some of the complex power relationships that are produced within charitable organizations possessing transnational connections.

OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

In chapter one I provide a general historical and ethnographic description of Bodhgayā. Entitled "Heart of the Buddhascape," I examine Bodhgayā as a site venerated by Buddhists from all traditions as the "navel of the earth," the place where every Bodhisattva has attained Enlightenment and become a Buddha.

I begin the exploration of the Buddhascape with the story of the Buddha's awakening because it is a common narrative accepted by pilgrims from all the Buddhist traditions. I then shift from telling the story of Buddhism's founder to the story of Buddhism's most sacred site, the Mahābodhi Temple, which I find is a helpful opening to investigate Bodhgayā's complex interchanges that occur amongst Buddhist pilgrims, global and grassroots social organizations, and the local population. The chapter serves as a Geertzian 'thick description' by illustrating the town's contemporary setting which draws international engaged Buddhists who wish to practice the Buddha's teachings of compassionate action into concrete practice.

Following the depiction of Bodhgayā's centre point, I extend the discussion towards the margins, examining how the Buddhascape manifests throughout the marketplace and surrounding villages whose religious and cultural landscape has taken on a distinct global Buddhist tone with the recent construction of Buddhist temples, monasteries, retreat centres,

and guest-houses. The proliferation of these foreign Buddhist institutions, as well as the eruption of hotels, restaurants, and shops by competing local entrepreneurs, have impacted the town's infrastructure, local economy, and Buddhist imagination.

To spatially and conceptually interpret the Maitreya School, as well as the other charitable organizations in Bodhgayā, within their transnational Buddhist network, I provide an overview of these organizations with the intention of contextualizing the Buddhist spaces that are discussed throughout the dissertation. I also offer a brief overview of the FPMT because having some knowledge of the organization's historical and transcultural functioning is essential for understanding the contemporary behaviours and motivations of most of the socially engaged pilgrims and institutions within the town's Buddhascape. I also provide a life history of the enigmatic Lama Kyabje Zopa Rinpoche, the foundation's spiritual director. Examining what Eade and Sallnow (1991) refer to as the "person-centred sacredness" element of pilgrimage sites helps clarify not only how charismatic leaders reinforce a sacred landscape, but transform it completely as their behaviour subsequently changes the motivations and actions of future pilgrims (see also Dubsich 1995).

Having contextualized the Buddhascape, in chapter two I investigate how the fusion of ideas and practices concerning enlightenment and social engagement has manifested in the framework of Buddhist pilgrimage to Bodhgayā. While concepts such as education, civic engagement, environmental protection, and human rights are not usually associated with classic models of Buddhist pilgrimage, I contend that these budding socially directed activities challenge assumptions concerning the contemporary nature of pilgrimage and its objectives. My enquiry into these new modes of interpretation and practice of pilgrimage begins with an examination of Buddhist visions towards personal and social liberation, and how these ideas are reproduced through community engagement, primarily, but not limited to, education and healthcare. Here, I examine how Buddhist teachings that blend notions of individual and social change speak directly to modern Buddhist travelers to India who claim that their spiritual aims are to create welfare and happiness for all sentient beings. By responding to the anguish associated with Bihar's highly visible poverty, the spiritual action of these pilgrims manifests in the creation of social organizations addressing peoples' outer and inner needs.

In this chapter I interpret the engaged pilgrimage experience through a framework of Buddhist ethics comprised of moral discipline (*saṃvara śila*), cultivation of virtue (*kuśala-*

dharma-saṃgrāhaka śila), and altruistic conduct (*sattva artha kriyā śila*).[6] The first is concerned with the meticulous observance of monastic and lay moral precepts, while the second involves developing wholesome, positive qualities essential for awakening such as those listed in the practices associated with the 'divine abodes' (*brahmavihāras*) and 'perfections' (*paramitas*). The third consists of putting the first two modes into concrete action with the aim of relieving the suffering of others. Together, Buddhists, in most traditions, believe these distinct, yet overlapping and interdependent modes of ethical practice contribute towards the construction of productive and harmonious relationships in civil society.

Whereas the first chapter describes Bodhgayā's complicated landscape affected by trans-national flows of people, ideas, and objects, chapters three to five analyze how these flows affect the meaning and practice of education. By highlighting this context, the reader can better assess the specific conditions from which these pilgrims work towards individual and social transformation. In chapter three I describe the educational context in which socially engaged Buddhist pilgrims operate, and analyze the social challenges connected to public, private, and charitable education in Bihar. Over-population, poverty, illiteracy, gender disparity, violent caste oppression, and imbalanced development opportunities are all causes and effects of substandard education. Furthermore, the economic reforms of 1991 have forced India, in general, and Bihar, in particular, to interact transnationally in new social, economic, political, and educational terms. The human costs of these relationships, however, are becoming increasingly high as the socio-economic divide rapidly widens. Specifically, while the top 20 per cent of India's population progresses rapidly along the route of material prosperity, the rest of her people fall deeper into a quagmire of social and economic poverty, lacking adequate nutrition, sanitation, education, democratic participation, and fair wages (see UNDP *Human Development Report 2007*). These issues point to questionable international economic and political structures and raise serious doubt concerning the route of development maintained by contemporary globalization.

To address the road of unequal development directly associated with education, I investigate three areas that I identify as obstacles to the UN's description of the "full

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[6] These categories were originally derived from Asanga's *Mahāyānasaṃgraha* and formed the basis for further texts on Buddhist ethics (see Keown 1992; 2000; 2005; Prebish 1993).

development of the human personality" in rural Bihar: first, I consider common educational challenges situated in the rural north Indian socio-economic spheres: child labour, caste inequality, reproduction of power, and gender imbalances. Then, I examine the ways in which the education system is influenced by instrumentalist neo-liberal economic policies and practices. I assert that the neo-liberal approach to education has aggravated the existing educational challenges and has provided few realistic solutions for alleviating them. Finally, I surmise that top-down learning methodologies that force Hindi speaking students to be instructed through English instruction and which are fostered by instrumentalist attitudes of competition and independence create barriers to learning.

The Maitreya School is a direct result of the transnational flow of material and ideological culture that attempts to address the educational challenges presented in chapter three. In chapter four I examine the theoretical and methodological contours of the holistic Universal Education curriculum developed by Buddhist pilgrim educators at the Maitreya and Alice schools which are linked to the FPMT. Here, I analyze the curriculum's distinctive strengths to meet the school's primary educational objective of helping students develop a "good heart." Like other holistic and progressive pedagogues, the Buddhist teachers and administrators at the school assert that promoting and developing civic responsibility and emotional maturity in children requires a multi-faceted approach that takes into account the intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual needs (see also Miller 2008; Seymour 2004; Noddings 2004; 2003; 2002; Miller 2004; Palmer 1998; 1993; Montessori 1984; 1966; Krishnamurti 1974; 1953).

After discussing the relative nature of the standard term "quality" used in education discourse, I turn the reader's attention to a critical analysis of multicultural and anti-biased pedagogical approaches used towards eliminating caste prejudice and discrimination. The ability to embrace differences is considered by the school administration, as well as education thinkers (Giroux 2006; Suarez-Orozco and Qin-Hillard 2004; Brown 2004; Brown 2003; Young 2001), as a necessary step towards positive social transformation. I also study the school's activities concerning literacy and democratic participation through the critical lens of what Freire (1971) calls "problem-posing" education. Promoters of both critical pedagogy (Freire 1971; Giroux 2005) and holistic education (Miller 2008; Noddings 2004; 2002) believe that this dialogical approach to learning is indispensable for training in social literacy and creating a compassionate learning atmosphere. I follow that with an examination of

Gandhi's view of "real education" based on self-understanding and pragmatic, hands-on learning. Although Gandhi is better known for his spiritually-based political work that led to the termination of British colonial rule, education was the foundation of his thinking on non-violence, truth seeking, and self-rule. I analyze how local teachers and students influenced by the modern global economic system and the material desires it creates respond to the school administration's Gandhian ideals.

Following my critical investigation into the theoretical and methodological contours of Universal Education, I examine how local Bihari Hindu teachers are trained in a Buddhist inspired "universal" curriculum. I present various issues and responses to curriculum development and teacher training raised by local, non-Buddhist teachers themselves. This discussion leads to an inquiry of what the term "universal" in Universal Education actually signifies. On the one hand, the school's founders and current management are all Buddhists and inadvertently construct a curriculum through a Buddhist interpretation of the world. On the other hand, the majority of the teacher and student population is Hindu with a significant Muslim population. I explore how the curriculum is perceived and enacted by foreign Buddhists and local Hindus and Muslims, and how a series of cross-cultural and inter-religious dialogues resulted in revising the curriculum in an effort to strive towards a greater sense of religious equity, inclusiveness, and non-sectarianism.

The final chapter examines what it means when socially engaged Buddhist pilgrims expand their interests beyond meditation and worship to include the construction of, and engagement with, charitable organizations aimed at *re-creating* the sacred space tainted by local poverty, corruption and religious intolerance, as well as natural and human-caused environmental degradation. But what happens to the local people who already inhabit that space and belong to a different religious culture? I inspect how migrating forms of privileged Buddhist culture are assimilated, transformed, and legitimated or contested into the local, non-Buddhist educational context. I begin the chapter with an examination of how both international Buddhists and local Hindus possess divergent interpretations of the Maitreya School as a sacred space. The visiting Buddhist pilgrims view social engagement at the school as a method for practicing wisdom and compassion; the local non-Buddhist students and teachers perceive the property less as a site for Buddhist-related practice and more as a refuge from the surrounding poverty, oppression, and pollution, and as a site of opportunity for upward social and economic mobility.

I then consider how the Maitreya School, adorned with Buddhist sacred objects and spiced with Hindu and other world religion imagery, is part of the global Buddhascape and exemplies modern trends of transculturality (Welsch 1999; Appadurai 1996). The juxtaposition of Buddhist sacred objects in Hindu predominant Bodhgayā indicates how contemporary cultures intermingle and change form and meaning. Here, I ask why do the Western Buddhists at the Maitreya School desire sacred objects in the school, especially a Tibetan Buddhist *stūpa*, and how are these objects perceived by the local teachers and students. To dive further into the transcultural nuances of Bodhgayā's Buddhascape, I then explore how Lama Zopa, the spiritual director of the FPMT, is perceived by all those who interact with him. While foreign Buddhists often view Lama Zopa as an enlightened esoteric Vajrayāna master who saves all beings, most locals perceive him to be a compassionate, social worker working towards uplifting the poor.

As evidenced in the previous chapter, the Buddhist-inspired pedagogy—Universal Education—has been developed by foreign Buddhist pilgrims to make Buddhist concepts and practices employable by the local population. By utilizing this curriculum, the local population does not generally feel that their religious culture is threatened in any major way. But what happens when Buddhist objects are displayed throughout the school in greater quantity, quality and size than objects and images from other, local religions? I conclude the chapter with a critical analysis of the divergent reactions to the FPMT's religious art and architecture, and how it is accepted, albeit ambivalently, as long as it remains useful. The discussion concludes with an analysis of how these conceptual and material domains contribute to both explicit and implicit forms of religious conversion.

I now turn the reader's attention to the methodological approaches and considerations that influenced the ways in which I conducted my research and analyzed my data.

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND APPROACHES

Prior to explaining and reflecting upon my methodological approach to fieldwork, I contextualize my research strategies by providing a brief personal background that led me to this particular research topic. This context will help the reader to understand how I approached the research terrain. After discussing the methods used for conducting field

research, I reflect upon what it means to be a participant observer writing about culture from a post-modern perspective.

Background to Fieldwork

Since 1996 I have returned to Bodhgayā on several occasions lasting between two weeks and seven months. Each journey was a sort of pilgrimage, but with a different incentive to return, whether as a researcher, writer, student, teacher, meditator, or social activist. I have attended meditation retreats, prayer sessions, Dharma talks, political meetings, demonstrations, Hindi classes, and study groups at different times and at various venues. In September 2007, I travelled to the Maitreya School in Bodhgayā as an ethnographer to conduct participant observation for nearly eight months. I chose the Maitreya School as my primary field site because it was one of the oldest and most established foreign-operated social organizations in Bodhgayā that attracts many volunteers from within the FPMT, as well as non-Buddhists and Buddhists from other traditions.

With the exception of my first visit to Bodhgayā when I went alone as a curious traveller while on Christmas break from the University of Minnesota's international development program in India, each sojourn to Bodhgayā after that was with my wife Michelle, and our last stay included our son Jai, who was fifteen months old when we arrived. During our earlier visits, we stayed in various Buddhist monasteries and meditation centres; on this last stay, however, we lived with an Indian family close to the Maitreya School and Root Institute. We developed intimate relationships with members of Bodhgayā's socially and economically diverse local community, as well as with a number of foreign Buddhist pilgrims who come to Bodhgayā for various social or ritual reasons.

The seed of this doctoral research project was sown during my visits to Bodhgayā between 2002 and 2004 when Michelle and I were researching and writing *Along the Path: The Meditator's Companion to the Buddha's Land* (2009). Our text is an anthology of stories connected to the Buddha's life and also a travel guide to the Buddhist sites in India and Nepal where those stories are believed to have transpired. My experience choosing a school as a research site arose unexpectedly when we befriended a man stricken with polio who lived in a tent by the river with his wife and seven children. At his request, we sponsored his two sons aged five and seven to go to a residential school so that they could get a good education and

stay out of the streets. We had also offered to send the eldest daughters who were of school age to day school (no residential opportunities exist for girls in the Bodhgayā area), but the parents refused, saying that they needed their daughters to help with the domestic chores (see chapter three).

After some minimal research, we sent the boys to Sujata Bal Niketan, a day and residential school in Pacchati village on the outskirts of Bodhgayā. The school had been recommended by a few local young men who had also attended that school. We felt disheartened by the school's unfinished building that was already decaying and whose teacher-student ratio was approximately 50:1. We did not have much choice since our remaining time in Bodhgayā was constrained by other personal factors and the number of schools within the vicinity of where the parents camped was also limited. In any event, we figured the school was preferable to the streets. However, during subsequent visits to Bodhgayā, we spent more time researching educational opportunities and discovered a wide variety of approaches to education being offered (as described in chapters three and four), and after their second school year ended we transferred them to the Alice Project school where the facilities were constructed with care, the teacher-student ratio was approximately 30:1, and the holistic curriculum seemed to address the multifaceted dimensions of a child's life. During this time I investigated a number of foreign-assisted and/or operated schools (and other non-governmental organizations). This initiated my questioning the relationship between the socio-educational context and Buddhist pilgrimage practice. On my initial visits to the alternative schools promoting a holistic curriculum, I was bedazzled, as were most foreign visitors; however, once the "romance" period fizzled I began to notice the various internal tensions, and competing visions of pedagogy and place. I soon realized that investigating this off-the-beaten setting in the Buddhascape could contribute to the field of knowledge of pilgrimage, education, Buddhist studies, and anthropological understanding of space and place.

Methodological Approach

While the findings in this dissertation are partly informed by my observations in Bodhgayā spanning twelve years, they are primarily derived from my last visit between September 2007 and April 2008. During this time, I drew upon a range of ethnographic methods including

participant observation,[7] conversations and informal interviews,[8] unstructured and semi-structured interviews,[9] and archival research. To ensure privacy and enhance the security of my subjects, I have used pseudonyms for all of my informants or refer to them in general way to protect their anonymity. I have retained the actual names of institutions and internationally recognized figures like Lama Zopa because they are integral aspects of the global Buddhascape.

Immersing myself in the daily life of the school my approach to participant observation took on an element of "engaged research" (George 2000) as I volunteered as a conversation English tutor,[10] mindfulness instructor, religion and culture teacher,[11] and researcher for curriculum development and teacher training. I also observed teacher and administration meetings, joined school field trips, and participated on mobile clinics to remote villages with staff and volunteers at the Shakyamuni Buddha Community Health Clinic.

I engaged in these activities partly to observe the daily operations and cultural interactions between foreign Buddhists and local Hindu and Muslim teachers and students, and partly to contribute to the school's innovative educational project. My approach was

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[7] By this I mean living in a particular context for an extended period; learning and using the local language of that context; taking part in daily activities and conversations; "hanging out"; recording observations in field notes; and using explicit and tacit information in analysis and writing (Dewalt and Dewalt 2001; Bernard 1995).

[8] According to Dewalt and Dewalt (2001), notes are jotted down after conversations while they are explicitly taken during informal interviews. In both these instances, questioning and probing is kept to a minimum and the informant speaks freely. While I used both methods, I used the conversation method far more frequently as I was uncomfortable taking out my note pad as people spoke to me, which made me feel as if it blocked the flow of the dialogue. I usually jotted my notes down immediately after my conversations took place, be it in my room, in a restaurant or chai stall, on a park bench, in the teacher's lounge or an empty classroom, and so forth.

[9] The unstructured interviews consisted of keeping a brief interview guide that included topics to be addressed in an open-ended way. Respondents spoke at their own pace and I exerted minimal control. This style was usually used in conjunction with informal interviews and was limited to a handful of engaged pilgrims and teachers with whom I spoke throughout the course of my research. This approach enabled me to see how people's attitudes and behaviours changed with time. The semi-structured interviews were similar to the unstructured ones, with the exception that I generally followed a stricter list of written questions and probes based on my observation, informal interview, and unstructured interview data. The semi-structured interviews were best used when I could only speak to a person on a single occasion (see Dewalt and Dewalt 2001; Bernard 1995).

[10] I taught English five mornings a week to students at the Maitreya School and four afternoons a week to staff at the Shakyamuni Buddha Community Health Clinic.

[11] These activities were taught to classes on a rotating basis during Special Program (see chapter four).

participatory: whereas my earliest pilgrimages to Bodhgayā were part of my personal exploration of Buddhism, the later visits were more academic and activist in nature as I spent an increasing amount of time there, becoming increasingly aware of the various research opportunities related to the trans-national movement of Buddhism, specifically engaged Buddhism, as well as holistic and alternative education.

In conducting participant observation, I also observed pilgrimage activity in and around the Mahābodhi Temple Complex, local Buddhist and Hindu shrines, and non-government organizations (predominantly those affiliated with foreign Buddhist organizations). I spoke with pilgrims (to both those who were socially involved and those who were not), and with local teachers and townspeople to find out their stories and opinions about the pilgrimage industry and its role in influencing local identity, shaping education, and contributing to the local economy. I communicated with temple employees to find out their views about the temple's history and present situation as a World Heritage Site. I observed the differences between tourism and pilgrimage in Bodhgayā, and read local documents and newspaper articles to learn about local matters, especially when they involved education. I visited nearby temples and monasteries and spoke with their caretakers. I encountered merchants asking them about religious objects for sale. I traveled to other Buddhist sites on the pilgrimage circuit and spoke with Indians there about their visits to and impressions of Bodhgayā; and I conversed with other scholars of India (both Indian and non-Indian). In general, I talked to people, listened to their conversations, and watched activities as occasions arose.

During the time of my field work, my key interlocutors, were mostly, but not limited to, volunteers at the Maitreya School and Root Institute, teachers at the Maitreya School, and staff at the Shakyamuni Buddha Community Health Clinic. I also had in-depth informal conversations and interviews with volunteers at other schools, as well as local social workers, teachers at other schools, and entrepreneurs. The informal, unstructured, and semi-structured interviews with pilgrims focussed on Buddhist discourse and practice, religious and economic migration, as well as perceptions of the local Hindu community. I also selected thirty engaged pilgrims for more in-depth interviewing. The interviews were semi-structured and open-ended, encouraging the interviewees to speak about how their personal spiritual

practices have changed during their pilgrimage and how their relationships to locals have changed since they first came to the area.[12]

A similar process of informal conversations occurred at Maitreya School; however, the questions with teachers, parents, and children concentrated on education, Buddhist and local belief-systems, and local culture.[13] I spent extensive time working with those who are involved with the school, learning their worldviews and methods of spiritual and educational pedagogy. I selected twelve local teachers involved with the school for more in-depth, semi-structured interviews that asked them about how their lives have changed since they began their involvement with Maitreya School and how their relationships to other locals have changed since they began their involvement with the Buddhist project. In eliciting their stories, I inquired as to how these histories resonate with larger scale social concerns.

I was aware of the potential dangers of not being able to critically analyze the field when remaining too close to my subjects; however, I felt that embracing the subjective through "shared practice" (Strauss 2005, 10) was the best way for me to properly understand my topic of study. To maintain a critical distance, my family and I did not live at the Root Institute or at the Maitreya Project headquarters where most of the socially engaged pilgrims resided.[14] I used my bedroom or kitchen as my base of operations where I typed up field notes every evening. With the exception of my last six weeks in Bodhgayā when Michelle and Jai went to Goa to recover from our recurrent bouts of stomach illnesses and typhoid, I spent every evening with my family and two hours during the day with Jai while Michelle taught yoga classes to pilgrims and retreat participants at the Root Institute (during this time Jai would accompany me on outings to the temple, school, or to the homes of local friends and informants).

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[12] It should be noted that in spite of the fact that a few pilgrims and teachers mentioned that they did not understand how their experiences could be of any use, several subjects commented that they enjoyed the interview process because it made them feel as if their work was important enough to research and/or that the interview process enabled them to reflect deeply upon their experiences in new and meaningful ways.

[13] My interviews, especially with Indians, were always conducted in quiet, yet public spaces as not to give any wrong impressions to those who may have observed us.

[14] We did eat most of our meals at the Root Institute for three primary reasons. First, it was where the volunteers from the school, clinic, and retreat centre usually ate, thus giving me ample opportunity to converse with them and learn about their experiences. Second, the international cuisine was to the taste of my family. And, third the kitchen staff was very attentive to hygiene (unlike the majority of the restaurants around Bodhgayā).

Every evening before going to sleep I typed up my field notes based on both memory and my notes jotted down in my notebook. At times, I would also include Michelle's observations in my field notes. I generally tried to follow Dewalt and Dewalt's (2001) suggestion of dividing up my field notes into five sections: description, methodology, diary, log, and analysis;[15] however, my experience of writing revealed that these categories were not always mutually exclusive and easily distinguishable. In the first month or so I clearly demarcated "objective" description and analysis sections from my "subjective" diary section. However, these realms are closely interrelated and forcefully separating them in my field journal often produced inaccurate and lifeless accounts of what I was observing and experiencing. As I became more comfortable with the process, I still kept these categories apart, but also allowed them to penetrate each other, enabling my description and analysis to embrace a narrative style that evoked the sensual aspects of my observations.[16]

Post-Modern Methodological Reflection

In pursuing research for this thesis, it was not my intention to follow the stereotypical anthropological practice (or popular representation of it) where the anthropologist immerses him or herself in some distant, exotic site, returning to produce an authoritative monograph detailing matters such as kinship structures, modes of subsistence, religious systems, etc. Instead, my methodological attitude was to examine culture as ''spatially dispersed phenomena'' (Gupta and Ferguson 1997, 34) and as processes of transculturation (Welsch

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[15] Descriptive notes describe the context, people, and conversations with verbatim quotes from the day, and are as accurate, objective, and detailed as possible. Methodological notes consist of the way things were discovered, which methods used, what basis they were chosen by, how they were implemented, and what outcomes and problems were found with those methods. Diaries contain personal reactions and concerns throughout the day. For instance, they include frustrations, illnesses, pains, elations, and so forth. The point of acknowledging these emotions is to assist in the process of reflexivity. Logs are chronological records of events, thoughts, and finances. They also may contain notes on readings and documents, along with people to meet and things to do and the unanswered questions concerning those people and things. Lastly, analytical notes include impressions, thoughts, and explanations of the day's happenings. It is a commentary on other notes and a summary of the evidence for the arguments, preliminary interpretations, and questions for further research. (Dewalt and Dewalt 2001, 148-163).
[16] Post-modern ethnographer of pilgrimage Jill Dubisch (1995, 6, 28) suggests that the researcher be constantly aware of his or her emotions and attempt to do the same of the people around her. Dubisch's work does not ignore her emotional responses from other sorts of "data," but uses them to demonstrate what occurred. In this manner, the "distance" between observer and observed is reduced.

1999; Appadurai 1996). I also experimented with post-modern and post-colonial forms of cultural anthropology that champion reflexivity and argue that it is inappropriate to take authoritative, imperialistic, and omniscient stances in ethnographic description (see Said 1978; Clifford 1986; Chakravorty-Spivak 1988; Homi Bhabha 1994; Haberman 1999; Dubisch 1995; Young 2001; George 2000; Vallely 2002; Strauss 2005).

Throughout the dissertation, I weave my daily experiences into the descriptions of the sites, Buddhist belief systems, and contemporary theoretical analysis. I acknowledge personal accounts as a researcher, volunteer, educator, pilgrim, meditator, male, father, and husband, and interlace them with conversations and interviews with pilgrims and locals; as well as sources on Buddhist philosophy, Buddhist history, Indian history, Hindu mythology, and theories of cultural anthropology, pilgrimage, education, and globalization.[17] This multifaceted "experiment in ethnography" (Dubisch 1995) not only places pilgrimage in its proper cultural and historical/mythological context,[18] but also depicts the various ways of contemporary life surrounding the pilgrimage site and how the site itself may be viewed as a way for analyzing the wider social, cultural, educational, and political processes in the Buddhascape. Furthermore, the fruits of this "experiment" also help reveal the wide range of behaviours, aims, and meanings associated with pilgrimage, and are perhaps, both a producer and product of other aspects of globalization. In this way, it is rather difficult to separate the pilgrimage site from other aspects of life. This is especially true in a place like Bodhgayā where Buddhist pilgrims hail from all corners of the globe and partake in highly varied series of events in a politicized arena that is both mirrored in and shaped by the events happening there.

Throughout my research and the crafting of this dissertation I could not help but reflect upon the paradoxical tension between observation and participation by attempting to combine a monograph about the Other with a memoir of the Self. Following post-modern, reflexive ethnographers such as Clifford, Haberman, Dubisch, George, Dewalt and Dewalt, Vallely, Strauss, and others, I have tried to include my prejudices, feelings, background, theoretical orientations, training, and personal traits that were present prior to my research

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[17] I also had privileged access to a wealth of written FPMT materials, including books, personal musings, newsletters, web sites, and magazine articles. Many of Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa's talks, including transcripts, were readily available at the Root Institute.

[18] Haberman (1999) stresses the difficulties of accurately separating myth from actuality.

and that arose during the research because these are all part of the relationship with the other and influence our interpretations of the information. Making these explicit allows the reader of the final product to judge the work being presented. But as Strauss (2005), Dewalt and Dewalt (2001), and Dubisch (1995) assert, these reflexive acknowledgments are simply a starting point, not a final product, as balance needs to be found between self-reflection and social scientific analysis concerning human behaviour.

The reader will notice that the writing styles I employ throughout the text change according to the material presented. Dubisch (1995, 4) refers to these shifts in writing styles and perspectives as "necessary uncertainty," which highlights the notions of objectivity in the humanistic-scientific debate.[19] For Dubisch, blending "objectivity" with personal narrative highlights the contradictions within anthropological work and as a post-modern response to this debate, intentionally blurs the boundaries between professional-personal, subject-object, autobiography-anthropology, self-other, emotion-reason, history-myth, sacred-secular, etc. (4-5, 19). The goal of being self-reflexive, Dubisch argues, is not to present a confession, but to illuminate the relationships between the discipline of anthropology and the research field, and between the discipline and the theory (6). It is clear from her text that these relationships impinge upon the way we comprehend and portray others. Moreover, the point is not simply to dissolve the boundaries, but to question them (19).

Wanting to avoid the mistake of misrepresenting their subjects, Vallely (2002), George (2000), Dubisch (1995), and Clifford (1986) assert that the experiential approach to research requires the ethnographer to be conscious of the subjectivity of those being studied and that one's own representations of the community in question are formed by one's own perceptions and experiences. The ethno-hermeneutical method we see employed in the work

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[19] In his essay "Anthropology as Pilgrimage, Anthropologist as Pilgrim," Colin Turnbull (1992) outlines the debate between scientific and humanistic approaches. The former tends to be objective, impersonal, analytical, external, and focuses primarily on group dynamics and secular activities; the latter allows for subjective involvement and recognizes obstinate individual emotions, beliefs, and attitudes towards the Sacred. Although he embraces the scientific approach, Turnbull also critiques it for its heavy emphasis on the "physical, material, social, structural, and functional aspects of travel" and its virtually absent deliberation on "the rational, intellectual, and, above all, spiritual considerations that make pilgrimage all that it is" (260-261). Capturing and reporting personal human experiences (both our own and of others) makes the study holistic by allowing the "forces of human society and factors of social organization" (259) to reveal themselves. Turnbull observes that not only is investigation into both approaches essential for a revealing and significant treatment of human society, but also respect, sensitivity, and appreciation for whichever approach is not ours (258-261).

of these authors shifts analysis away from "explanation" towards empathetic understanding of meaning, feelings, self-other relations, and the experience and interests of the ethnographer. Like these ethnographers, I am acutely attuned to experience in order to understand the way different people construct, value, and transform their worlds.

Throughout the dissertation I acknowledge my own process as a participant observer and the personal interests that shaped my research questions and interpretations. This awareness is not only important for my own growth as a research scholar, but also for my audience who needs to be aware of the process and the results affected by my presence, position, and history vis-à-vis the culture being studied. Part of the reflexive process requires a clarification of the multiple positions that one holds with regard to those who are being written about (Dubisch 1995, 19, 107). In my case, my identity seen in the eyes of others took on the shape of a Westerner/Canadian, white male, researcher, friend, colleague, teacher, tourist, pilgrim, meditator, father, and husband—depending on the context. Sometimes I was one of these things; other times several of them. These positions also changed with time, as I grew as a person and as my relationships with people changed. My relationships with certain individuals evolved, and often the information given to me differed as we became closer. Dubisch explains that by being conscious of one's position, the reader becomes aware of the author's idiosyncrasies, strengths and limitations, and also forces the writer to take responsibility for what is being researched. In this way, as Clifford (1986, 6) points out, ethnographies are not objective monographs written by a detached and transparent observer peeking into a foreign culture, but are actually fictions ''in the sense of something made or fashioned'' and that they are ''partial'' because they are incomplete and inextricably shaped by the observer's worldview.

Dubisch (1995) and George (2000) both find inspiration in Lila Abu-Lughod's work that challenges dichotomous notions of "home" (familiar, west, academia, inside) and "field" (exotic, east, popular, outside). Abu-Lughod's "halfie anthropologist" concept provides space for analytical reflection on personal experience and identity, which enhances our comprehension of culture by revealing the complex relations that underpin these two sides that are not mutually exclusive, especially for those scholars affiliated with the other (indigenous, women, religious practitioners, etc.). During my field research, the insider-outsider, observer-observed, practitioner-scholar relationship often became blurred. Shortly after I arrived at Maitreya School, I felt that some of the teachers' anti-colonial attitudes

emerged, highlighting unspoken social tensions about foreigners who come to the school and think that they have all the answers to Bihar's social and educational problems. Moreover, the contradictory nature of being a "participant observer" illuminated the position that both the local teachers and Western volunteers felt as objects of interest and subjects of study. For the locals, I always was and always will be a privileged white outsider. For the Westerner Buddhists, however, it was more complicated than that. Even though I consider myself a practitioner of the Buddha's teachings and therefore identified with several of the pilgrims I observed and interviewed, some of the Western Buddhists never fully trusted me, partly because I did not consider myself to be a disciple of Lama Zopa and partly because I had an agenda that was not entirely the same as theirs. While I gradually moved inwards with both groups, it was not (and could not) be what George calls a "total crossing" (2000, 15). The insider-outsider dialectic had me shuffle between personal and academic involvement, having sometimes participated in Maitreya School and Root Institute of Wisdom Culture activities as part of my own personal journey, at other times feeling as if I was a somewhat distanced and skeptical observer. Being aware of the complexity surrounding the insider-outsider distinction not only made me more conscious of my similarities and differences with the others, but it also helped me understand the diverse and distinct ways that educational culture is constructed and interpreted.

CONCLUSION

By engaging in an academic process that combines an appreciation of history, ethnographic data, and theoretical perspectives from the fields of anthropology, pilgrimage studies, religious studies, Buddhist studies, education, international development studies, and globalization, my goal is to understand how Bodhgayā's fluid and dynamic existence has shifted from a poor Bihari agricultural village and infrequently visited Buddhist pilgrimage site to a cosmopolitan sacred centre where new forms and meanings of religious practice continuously emerge. I seek to understand how Bodhgayā's current socio-economic state of affairs affects (and does not affect) the ways in which Buddhist pilgrims perceive, practice, and experience pilgrimage, and how the contemporary context has produced a new type of relationship with local Indians based on education and social change. The site of the Buddha's Awakening has recently witnessed a resurgence of trans-national Buddhist

pilgrimage and practice involving the establishment of foreign Buddhist institutions who not only play a proactive role in recreating Bodhgayā as a "World Buddhist Centre," (see Geary 2009; Doyle 2003) but also precipitate new forms of social interaction. On the one hand, foreign pilgrims inevitably encourage local Biharis to enter the race of socio-economic dependence, exploitation and competition over the tourist trade; on the other hand, in response to Bodhgayā's economic poverty, caste violence, cultural degeneration and rapidly decaying political structure, several foreign pilgrims have started charitable organizations as part of their pilgrimage experience to combat these social problems and balance the impacts on this rapidly emerging cosmopolitan town. These two phenomena are not mutually exclusive, revealing a complex pattern of social relationships that contributes to the construction of both the local Bihari community and the global Buddhascape.

CHAPTER I

THE HEART OF THE BUDDHASCAPE

Bodhgayā is a small town[20] in the central province of Bihar located two-thirds of the way between Delhi and Kolkata (formerly Calcutta), and 13 km south from Gayā, the district capital and a major Vaiśnava pilgrimage centre. Bodhgayā's global significance is derived from its association with the founder of Buddhism, Gautama Buddha, who is believed to have attained enlightenment here over 2550 years ago. Due to its historical importance and ability to attract thousands of Buddhists, both lay and monastic, from every tradition around the world, as well as curious tourists and research scholars, Bodhgayā acts as the centre of the global *Buddhascape*—a landscape transformed by foreign, migratory Buddhist actors and their specific practices, images, ideas, and objects.

The aim of this chapter is to provide the reader with a brief description of this complex landscape so that s/he can appreciate the more analytical features of the remaining chapters examining the associations between transnational Buddhist pilgrimage practice and post-colonial social engagement. I begin by telling the story of the Buddha's awakening because it is a common narrative accepted by pilgrims from all the Buddhist traditions. Next, I provide a brief historical outline and succinct ethnographic depiction of the Mahābodhi Temple, the principle site that pilgrims from around the globe travel to for paying homage to the Buddha and engaging in spiritual activities. I do not offer a detailed critical historical or anthropological analysis of the temple's rich, complex, and contested history since this has

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[20] The centre of town is about 2 sq. km, but Bodhgayā's municipal area encompassing 17 administrative blocks (*panchayat*) composed of 129 villages is 17 sq. km.

been done elsewhere (Geary 2009; Trevithick 2006; Asher 2008; 2004; Allen 2000; Kinnard 1998; Doyle 1997). Instead, I limit myself to a general exposé to depict the contemporary backdrop of the town which draws engaged Buddhists from around the world who desire to put the Buddha's teachings of compassionate action into concrete practice. Thus, the Mahābodhi Temple acts as a useful entry point to explore Bodhgayā's complex interchanges that occur amongst Buddhist pilgrims, global and grassroots social organizations, and the local population.

I then shift the discussion from Bodhgayā's central point to its peripheries, examining how the Buddhascape manifests throughout the marketplace and surrounding villages whose religious and cultural landscape has taken on a distinct global Buddhist tone with the recent construction of Buddhist temples, monasteries, retreat centres, and guest-houses. In describing the proliferation of these foreign Buddhist institutions, as well as the explosion of businesses by competing local entrepreneurs, I consider notions of trans-national relationships in the construction of space (Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Appadurai 1996; Massey 1994) in my investigation of how these pilgrimage-related developments impact the town's infrastructure, local economy, and Buddhist imagination.

The central point of this thesis is to examine the foreign Buddhist discourses and practices that take place at Maitreya School, one of the first schools founded and operated in Bodhgayā by a foreign (Euro-American-Australian) Buddhist non-government organization (NGO), as well as other foreign-run Buddhist-inspired organizations such as the Shakyamuni Buddha Community Health Clinic, Alice Project, Akshay School, Pragya Vihara School, Jean Amitabha School, and Maitri Charitable Trust—all of which are long-standing foreign-operated, Buddhist institutions which have deep social impacts on the local community. In the final segment of this chapter I contextualize the Maitreya School and the aforementioned organizations within the framework of the Root Institute of Wisdom Culture, a socially engaged Buddhist centre in Bodhgayā representing the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahāyāna Tradition (FPMT).

To spatially and conceptually locate the Maitreya School, as well as the other charitable organizations in Bodhgayā related to the FPMT, within their transnational Buddhist network, I provide an overview of their operations. This outline will help contextualize the dissertation's later interpretive work examining how the socially engaged pilgrims perceive their own activities and how they identify the Buddhist spaces they create

in relation to the spaces outside the school where students are exposed to poverty, malnutrition, drugs, and caste conflict. I also provide a brief synopsis of the FPMT's operations locally and worldwide because having some knowledge of the organization's historical and transcultural functioning is essential for comprehending the contemporary performances and motivations of most socially engaged pilgrims and institutions within the town's Buddhascape. I also supply a life history of the mystifying Lama Kyabje Zopa Rinpoche, the foundation's spiritual head. Examining what Eade and Sallnow (1991) refer to as the "person-centred sacredness" element of pilgrimage sites helps clarify not only how charismatic leaders reinforce a sacred landscape, but transform it completely as their behaviour subsequently changes the motivations and actions of future pilgrims.

1.1. THE NAVEL OF THE EARTH

1.1.1. Bodhgayā's Buddhist Beginning

Buddhists believe Bodhgayā to be replete with spiritual wealth, as it is home to the celebrated Bodhi Tree where Siddhartha Gautama attained Enlightenment 2550 years ago.[21] According to various Buddhist sources, Siddhartha wandered for six years throughout the Indian plains seeking a way out of existential suffering. After mastering the seventh and eighth absorption meditations (*jhānas*) taught to him by the well known meditation masters Āļāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta, Siddhartha remained unsatisfied. He realized that despite entering a deep concentration, latent psychological defilements remained deep inside his consciousness. Siddhartha then went to Uruvelā where he joined a group of five ascetics (*pañcavaggiya*) who believed that the route towards Truth was one of practicing severe bodily mortifications.

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[21] While impossible to know the precise dates due to the differing chronologies of the Buddha's life found in ancient texts, most scholarly sources state that the Buddha's Enlightenment was 528 BCE. Most Buddhists, on the other hand, follow the Sri Lankan chronicle the *Mahāvamsa* and believe the event to have taken place in 588 BCE. See Heinz Bechert's "The Date of the Buddha Reconsidered," *Indologica Taurinensia* 10 (1982): 24-36.

Self-torture, however, did not produce the desired results for Siddhartha. On the verge of starvation, Siddhartha accepted a bowl of rice pudding (*khīr*) offered to him by a village girl named Sujātā. Feeling re-energized, Siddhartha sat under the canopy of the Bodhi Tree and vowed not to rise from his seat until he understood the nature of suffering and its root causes that plague all sentient beings. The Buddhist scriptures describe this final event leading towards enlightenment as a battle with, and victory over, the deep psychological processes of craving, aversion, and ignorance. On the full moon of the lunar month *Vesak* (mid-May), Siddhartha's sublime concentration, mindfulness, and detachment enabled him to purify his mind and attain enlightenment. It is said that Siddhartha gained the knowledge of all his past lives (*pubbenivāsānussati ñāna*), knowledge of divine sight (*dibbacakkhu ñāna*) which enabled him to see the lives of all beings of the universe and how they passed away and reappeared according to their actions, and knowledge of the chain of cause and effect that conditions the universe (*paticcasamuppāda ñāna*).[22] Experiencing this final form of knowledge destroyed the last traces of craving, aversion, and ignorance. He joyfully uttered:

> For countless births I travelled through this cycle,
> Seeking in vain the builder of this houseIn my search over and over,
> I took new birth, new suffering.
> O house-builder, now I have seen you,
> You cannot make a new house for me;
> All your rafters are broken,
> The ridgepole is shattered;
> The mind is freed from all past conditionings,
> And has no more craving for the future. [23]

Siddhartha, now the Buddha, spent the next seven weeks meditating in the vicinity of the Bodhi Tree before going to Sārnāth (near Varanasi, in the present-day province Uttar Pradesh) where he delivered his famous first discourse on the four noble truths.

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[22] *Majjhima Nikāya*, 36. See also Dhammika (1999); Ñanamoli (2003); Goldberg & Décary (2009).
[23] *Dhammapada*, 153-4; translation my own. It is not uncommon to hear Theravādan pilgrims chant this verse while circumambulating the Mahābodhi Temple.

1.1.2. The Mahābodhi Temple: An Overview

At the time of the Buddha, Bodhgayā was called Uruvelā, but was soon replaced with other names evoking the great event, such as *Mahābodhi* (Great Awakening), *Bodhimanda* (Area of Awakening), and *Vajrāsana* (Diamond Throne). When King Aśoka visited around 260 BCE, he referred to it as *Sambodhi*. The name Bodhgayā seems to have come about some time in the 18th century, probably to distinguish it from neighboring Gayā, a prominent Hindu Vaiśnava pilgrimage centre. Although the site of the Buddha's enlightenment was not a significant pilgrimage centre during the Buddha's life, disciples of the Buddha gradually visited and transformed it into a living center of Buddhist worship and sacred veneration (Dhammika 1999; 1996; Asher 2008; 2004).

1.1 Mahābodhi Temple

Linked to the establishment of Bodhgayā as a Buddhist pilgrimage centre is the principle monument—the Mahābodhi Temple, or the Temple of "Great Awakening." Towering over the Bihari agricultural plains and a small, but thriving bazaar, the 170-foot high sandstone, pyramidal Mahābodhi Temple is a symbolic space and common place for

worship for all sects of the Buddhist religion.[24] More than any other site sacred to Buddhists, the Mahābodhi Temple attracts pilgrims and tourists from around the globe who come to pay homage to the place where the Buddha attained Enlightenment, receive blessings from the seat of Enlightenment (*vajrāsana*), experience the temple's tranquility, or simply appreciate the magnificent architecture. While there is no precise evidence as to who first built the Mahābodhi Temple, most Buddhists attribute the temple's original construction of a commemorative shrine (*Bodhighara*), diamond throne (*vajrāsana*), and protective stone railing to the Mauryan Emperor Aśoka in the third century BCE.[25] As part of the emperor's campaign to promote the *Dhamma* in its homeland, Aśoka is often credited with helping legitimize the practice of pilgrimage and royal patronage to these sacred sites of Buddhist memory. The temple that we see today crowned by a pointed spire and flanked by four corner steeples, however, bears no resemblance to Aśoka's monument, as it has been destroyed and reconstructed many times over throughout the centuries (see Asher 2008; Trevithick 2006; Allen 2000; Dhammika 1999; 1996; Doyle 1997).

The temple's inner shrine, housing a gilded Buddha statue in the earth-touching pose, is said to be the exact spot where the Buddha sat when "vision arose, knowledge arose, wisdom arose, understanding arose, light arose."[26] For the next seven days, the Buddha remained sitting on the "Victory Throne" (*Aparajita*), "experiencing the joy of liberation." Behind the temple is the celebrated Bodhi Tree—a descendent of the original Bodhi Tree that has travelled many kilometres before returning home. The nun Saṅghamitta, daughter of King Aśoka , is said to have brought a branch of the sacred tree to Sri Lanka and planted it in the ancient capital Anuradhapura. In the nineteenth century, a branch from the Sri Lankan tree returned to Bodhgayā and was planted behind the temple. The present tree continues to flourish and is claimed by the temple's management to be the oldest documented tree in the world.

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[24] For detailed descriptions of the Mahābodhi Temple's layout and its surrounding shrines, see Goldberg and Décary (2009) and Dhammika (1999; 1996).

[25] The earliest record crediting the original temple is from Xuanzang's travelogue *Records of the Western World*. Mitra (1972 [1876], 247) and Barua (1975, 2), however, date the foundations of the temple that we see today to the Kushan period towards the end of the first century BCE due to the architectural similarities with the Bālāditya Temple in Nālanda. See also Asher (2008).

[26] *Majjhima Nīkāya*, 36. The Buddha often described his awakening in this manner.

1.2 Bodhi Tree

1.1.3. *Saṃsāra* in the Land of *Nirvāṇa*: Bodhgayā's Pilgrimage Cycle

From September until March when the weather is most hospitable (i.e., below 40 degrees centigrade and not constantly pouring rain) the Mahābodhi Temple, as well as Bodhgayā's secondary Buddhist temples and shrines, buzz with pilgrimage activity. Every dawn at 4:00 am when the front gates of the Mahābodhi Complex swing open and the recording of *Buddhaṃ saranaṃ gacchami, Dhammaṃ saranaṃ gacchami, Saṅghaṃ saranaṃ gacchami* ("I go for refuge to the Buddha, I go for refuge to the Teachings, I go for refuge to the community of enlightened monks and nuns) blares out of the PA system located at the front entrance, pilgrims flood the premises and begin circulating the temple in a clockwise direction. Buddhist pilgrims of all ages, classes, and traditions, as well as some locals wishing to get a brisk morning walk in before work, walk along the upper, middle, or lower rings that encompass the Temple. The lower ring, which is at the same level as the Bodhi Tree, is filled with pilgrims walking slowly and quietly, sometimes muttering a prayer or chanting a mantra. Buddhists pay their respects to the temple by circumambulating it, or as Vajrayāna Buddhists say, 'doing *kora.'* Circumambulation is performed by Buddhists from all traditions and refers to walking clockwise around the temple either in meditative silence, or while reciting prayers or mantras. While the lower ring contains pilgrims practicing in silently, the upper circumambulation ring is filled with people doing *kora* alone, or in small groups, walking mindfully or chatting away. In a teaching given to students at the Root Institute, Lama Zopa (2002, 1) asserts that pilgrims travelling to and doing Buddhist activities

in Bodhgayā are immediately empowered: "You are receiving blessings from this holy place where already the four Buddhas descended and so many other enlightened beings, yogis, great bodhisattvas, throughout all those past years, for hundreds of years, thousands came for pilgrimage to pray.... Therefore, it is very good, while we're here to do as much circumambulation and prayer under the Bodhi Tree as possible."

Initiating the first wave of Buddhist pilgrimage activity in late September are large, well- coordinated groups[27] of white-clad Buddhists from Sri Lanka, Thailand, or Myanmar. These pilgrims are a visible presence, especially during September and October or February and March since the climate at these times of the year are similar to what they are accustomed to at home, encouraging them to be outdoors. These groups usually come for a few days and spend most of their time meditating under the Bodhi Tree's branches or circumambulating the temple and tree while chanting Pāli verses for taking refuge in the Triple Gem (Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha), vowing to undertake the five or eight lay precepts,[28] or asking protection from ill-health and malevolent spirits. It is not uncommon for lay Theravāda Buddhists to take temporary or even permanent ordination while in Bodhgayā. While sitting on a grassy knoll by the Unblinking Shrine (*Animisa Cetiya*) and watching the flurry of pilgrimage activity around the Mahābodhi Temple, I entered into a conversation with a *bhikkhu* from Myanmar. He recounted his ordination experience under the Bodhi Tree while his family and friends watched on:

> I remember the feeling of the razor on my scalp, watching the tiny hairs fall to the ground, like an offering of my life to the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha, and the Bodhi Tree as my witness. My family donated the robe and begging bowl—the sole possessions for the rest of my life. I felt so proud to enter the Saṅgha, and sincerely wished that I would reach *nibbāna* in this very lifetime.

As October rolls into November, Bodhgayā's global flavour becomes increasingly conspicuous as pilgrims and tourists descend upon the small urbanizing town, and serve as

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[27] Since 2002, pilgrimages from these countries have increased due to the construction of the Gayā International Airport that hosts a regular schedule of flights between Gayā with Bangkok, Colombo, Yangon, and Bhutan.

[28] The five lay precepts are to abstain from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and taking intoxicants. On special religious days and usually while on pilgrimage, lay Buddhists from Theravāda countries take an additional three precepts: to abstain from taking food after noon, sensual entertainment, and sleeping on high and comfortable beds. See chapter two for a discussion on the relationship between the precepts and social engagement.

evidence to the Mahābodhi Temple's ground as a site for pluralistic worship and recreational activities (see Geary 2009; Doyle 2007; Eade and Sallnow 1991). Buddhist pilgrims from various traditions practice *Kathina-dāna*, a ceremony marking the end of the rainy season and celebrated by offering the Saṅgha traditional requisites such as new cloth for robes, food, medicine, books, and money.[29] Some groups celebrate *Kathina-dāna* by making offerings to the Buddha image in the main shrine room at the Mahābodhi Temple. October and November also coincides with several local festivals: *Dasahra, Durga Pūjā,* and *Diwali* for Hindus; and, in recent years due its place on the lunar calendar, *Eid ul-Fitr* marking the end of Ramadan for Muslims. A week after *Diwali,* Biharis celebrate *Chāth Pūjā,* where virtually every village woman and her family marches to the nearest river after three days of fasting to offer prayer to the ancient solar deity, Surya.

By December, the Buddhist pilgrimage season is in full swing and almost every Buddhist tradition becomes visible. Zen and Pure-Land Buddhist groups from East Asia generally arrive in large groups and stay for a day or two at one of Bodhgayā's luxury hotels or monasteries before moving on to their next destination. These pilgrims can be heard chanting classic Mahāyāna texts such as the "Heart Sūtra," "Diamond Sūtra," or "Lotus Sūtra" in the main shrine, under the Tree, or while circumambulating the Temple. A unique practice of East Asian Buddhists is to leave scrolls of paper with the names of dead relatives on them at the feet of the main Buddha statue.

During the peak months from December to February, pilgrims from the Himālayan regions trek to Bodhgayā, escaping their harsh winters at home. These Vajrayāna Buddhist pilgrims—mainly from Tibet, Bhutan, and Nepal, but also from the West[30]—are by far the largest in attendance at the Mahābodhi Temple's compound during this time. These practitioners come to Bodhgayā to listen to teachings from senior ranking lamas, participate in *monlams* (peace prayer festivals), or perform what are commonly referred to as

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[29] See Ariyesake (1998) for a detailed description and analysis of what and how lay people are supposed to properly support Theravāda Buddhist monks and nuns.

[30] For an analysis of the emergence of Buddhist practice in North America and Europe, see Donald Lopez's *Prisoners of Shangri-La: Tibetan Buddhism and the West* (1999), Stephen Batchelor's *The Awakening of the West: The Encounter of Buddhism and Western Culture* (1994), and Rick Field's *How the Swans Came to the Lake: A Narrative History of Buddhism in America* (1992).

"preliminary practices," comprised of sets of one hundred-thousand full-length prostrations,[31] deity visualizations, mandala offerings, and mantra recitations. Advanced practitioners may perform all of these simultaneously, but most practitioners do one at a time. Due to the physical space that these practices require, most pilgrims do not perform them under the Bodhi Tree's branches, but in the grassy area of the complex near the votive *stūpas*[32] that surround the main Temple.
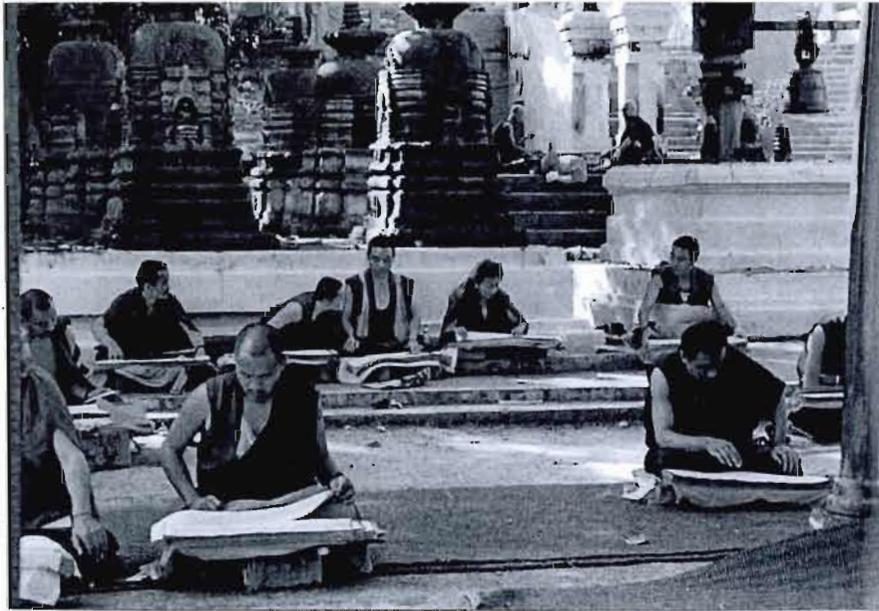
1. 3 Tibetan Monks perfecting Their Scriptural Knowledge

On any given winter day, Vajrayāna pilgrims are seen doing their prostrations on wooden boards about eight feet in length and three feet in width. All the boards face the temple, the iconic Buddhist symbol of Enlightenment. The devotee places folded hands over the head, then at the throat, and finally in front of the heart, symbolizing an offering of the mind, speech, and body. Then s/he gets down on his or her knees and stretches out the entire

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[31] While these pilgrims generally use the number one-hundred thousand, the exact number usually varies according to the practitioner's particular sect. Some may perform one-hundred and two-thousand, one-hundred and eight-thousand, one-hundred and ten-thousand, or whatever number had been prescribed by their lama.

[32] Votive stūpas were built by devotees before the 13th century who had taken some personal vow and were striving to develop their religious merit. These stūpas usually contain small statues of the Buddha, copies of Dharma texts and/or clay tablets inscribed with the Buddha's words.

body so that it is flat on the board, with the hands folded over the head. These pilgrims will often stay in Bodhgayā for several months to complete the practices prescribed by their gurus. Lama Zopa (2001, 33-36; 2002, 3-4) recommends to his students that they engage in a variety of practices while under the Bodhi Tree or inside the temple. He advises the contemplation of the qualities of the Guru, Buddha, Dharma,[33] and Saṅgha; reflection upon the Buddha's life story; reading important Buddhist scriptures; recitation of various prayers, mantras and *sūtras*; and the practice of meditations on *bodhicitta*, emptiness, and compassion. These Enlightenment-directed activities are vital elements that contribute to the site's "Buddhist memory" (Geary 2009), and as I discuss in chapter two, also form the foundation for social engagement.

1.4 Prostration

By late February as the Bihari sub-tropical climate reaches temperatures into the high-thirties centigrade, the Buddhist pilgrimage season wanes as the crowds of pilgrims disperse, and the tent restaurants (see next section) and Tibetan market are taken down. By the time *Holi* or 'festival of colors' arrives in early March with temperatures climbing up to the mid-forties, Bodhgayā and the rest of the sites along the pilgrimage circuit, for that

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[33] *Dharma* is the Sanskrit for the Pāli term *Dhamma*.

matter, transform from busy hubs of Buddhist and agricultural activity to times of weddings and celebrations as farming and tourism-related work are low, and the fermentation process of palm tree sap is near complete.

During the hot season, Buddhists and other visitors are rarities, except during *Vesak*, the full moon of the lunar calendar's second month, which commemorates the Buddha's birth, death, and enlightenment. Numerous celebratory events are organized at the Mahābodhi Temple by the temple management committee and various, mostly Indian, pilgrimage groups. At this time of year, Dalit Ambedkar Buddhists, mostly from Maharasthra, often protest the Hindu jurisdiction over the temple (see Doyle 2003; 1997).[34] The monsoon season arrives with violent lightning and thunder storms and short, intense downpours of rain. As such, June to August is the most laborious period for peasant farmers and agricultural laborers who harness the water through irrigation canals to support rice paddy cultivation and other crops in the coming months.

Besides being the site of a thriving international Buddhist centre, Bodhgayā is also considered one of the forty-five pilgrimages sites where for two weeks Vaiśnava Hindus from all over India travel the *Gayā-Śrāddha* pilgrimage route during the waning of the moon in the lunar month of Ashwin (September-October).[35] At this time, the Hindu pilgrims perform *pitṛ-dāna*, or donation—usually in the form of balls of food—to the father, commemorating their deceased fathers. The *Gayā-Śrāddha* route symbolizes the body of *Gayasur*, the Vaiśnava demi-god, and Bodhgayā, as a satellite site, is situated symbolically at the feet of Gayasur.[36]

I do not wish to replicate Geary's (2009) and Doyle's (1997) detailed ethnographic analyses of the multiple meanings that are assigned to the temple by its various actors; however, I would simply like to point out that although the temple is a shared religious space, segregation between the Hindu pilgrims and the Buddhists is readily apparent. Firstly, at this time of year the Buddhist population is a significant minority and the Mahābodhi Temple

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[34] Doyle (2003; 1997) examines the Amdekarites' active legal and political contestation of the Hindu association with the temple, and the local, national, and international responses to these protests.
[35] I did not conduct in-depth research on these pilgrims or their activities in this thesis because they generally visit for only a few hours at most, and do not engage in any of the social activities happening in the Bodhgayā region. Consequently, it is very difficult to observe them from an ethnographical perspective because of their transitory nature and diverse languages.
[36] See Holt (2004) for a discussion on the ways in which Buddhism has been absorbed into Hindu discourse and practice. See Geary (2009) and Doyle (1997) for a detailed ethnographic analysis of the multiple meanings that are assigned to the temple by its various actors.

becomes primarily a Hindu Vaiśnava site. An overwhelming majority of Buddhists with whom I spoke (mostly Indian, South Asian, and Western) felt as if their sacred space was being invaded by "ignorant" outsiders who "blindly worship false gods." Many of these Buddhists expressed their disapproval of having Brahmin priests exploit their clientele on Buddhist property for large sums of money. One Buddhist monk from Kolkata criticized, "These people doing foolish rituals that Lord Buddha spoke against and paying too much, and all on this sacred Dhamma Land!" Second, as previously mentioned, the Hindu pilgrims generally come for a few hours, which is insufficient time to get acquainted with Buddhist pilgrims and the local population. Moreover, several local residents and members of the business community (who are primarily Śaivite Hindu and Muslim) observe that the Vaiśnava pilgrims make paltry contributions to the social and financial well-being of the town. Generally, the Hindu pilgrims bring their own food and supplies and do not stay in hotels, leaving before dark or camping outside on the side of the road instead of staying in one of the numerous hotels and guest-houses. "They come, make too little purchases in market, leave too much dust, rubbish, and then go. Better for us if they don't come, I think" grumbled Babloo, one shopkeeper who also works at a foreign-operated school as a physical education and art teacher. He added, "These people also not giving to charity or NGOs. All the money goes into pockets of fat *pūjāris*." It is also interesting to note the absence of beggars at this time. I asked Bhim, a polio-stricken beggar from a nearby village why he did not beg during *pitr-dānaaa*. He explained that it was not worth his time. Since most of these pilgrims had little money to spare because they were required to pay high priestly fees to the Brahmins at all the other *śraddha*-performing shrines. Moreover, he earns enough during the winter season when the wealthy and generous foreign Buddhists provide donations.

Manish, one of fourteen official Mahābodhi Temple tour-guides with ten years experience further mentioned that unlike the Hindus who are primarily interested in helping their deceased ancestors reach the heavenly *Brahmā-loka*, the Buddhists are focused on developing their merit of generosity by giving money to beggars in a holy place. Manish added that he was not fond of the presence of the Hindu pilgrims. He feels that the Brahmins overcharge their clients for their services and create a disruptive atmosphere when they fight over the "business" of pilgrims. Moreover, he does not appreciate that these ritual specialists provide tours to their clients, taking away the business of tour operators and providing

misleading narratives to the pilgrims. Thus, we see that Bodhgayā and the Mahābodhi Temple is a shared religious centre laden with internal tension due to the multiple ways in which visitors approach the site (see Eade and Sallnow 1991). While the Buddhists regard the place as the most important in the world, the Vaiśnavas perceive it to be of minor significance and therefore do not invest themselves in the social and economic growth of the town. The above feelings shared by these pilgrims mirror the fact that the Mahābodhi Temple itself is interpreted on religious, political, and economic levels of meaning.

Similarly, despite the feeling of *communitas* amongst Buddhists that Turner (1974; 1969) argues exists at all pilgrimage sites, there are also feelings of difference (Eade and Sallnow 1991), as sectarian, cultural, and linguistic barriers prevent prolonged interaction between the various Buddhists. Despite the variation in practices or discourses deemed correct, segregation is generally mitigated by an acknowledged sense of solidarity, especially by those circumambulating or meditating in silence with the aim of eliminating human suffering (see Coleman 2002; Coleman and Elsner 1995). One socially engaged pilgrim from the United States explained that although he is generally inspired by what goes on and tends to seek out parallels that transcend time and culture, at times he finds the diverse Buddhist activities to be disturbing:

> Sometimes there's so much commotion there that I find it distracting, but at other times I feel very connected. I have always liked to watch other people practice because I think that watching other people practice can help our own practice and every practitioner can be a teacher for us, so I think that it is important to be mindful and to observe other people practice... So, yes, at the Mahābodhi Temple, under the Bodhi tree, I do feel a connection to other pilgrims because I enjoy and benefit watching their practice. Sometimes I just sit there in awe of their practice, their serenity, their peacefulness. But it's not always serene there, at this time of year it can have a carnival atmosphere.

Another socially engaged pilgrim from Spain commented that she too feels close to the other pilgrims, even if she does not share their religious ideology. She focuses on unification of practices and meanings, even if the implications and meanings of such actions may vary:

> I feel connected because all of us are in same path, same teachings, same intention, but I feel distance from all the guru devotion, but connection still... Anyways, I feel happy if they are happy, but I don't share their understandings of the Dharma. Anyways, this doesn't matter, because we are all in same path; differences are not important, they are secondary.

1.2. NAVEL OF THE EARTH EXPANDING: THE GROWTH OF BODHGAYĀ

To have a clear picture of Bodhgayā's cultural and religious landscape, we must explore not only the focal point—the Mahābodhi Temple—but also the plaza and villages surrounding it. Contemporary pilgrimage to Bodhgayā has transformed the rural agrarian landscape to a budding international town composed of Buddhist architecture, modern hotels and restaurants, and shopping plazas interspersed with charitable organizations, educational institutions, and village cooperatives. The town's evident Buddhascape not only changes the experiences of visiting pilgrims but also changes the lives of the local Bihari residents who now experience the world in new ways (see Coleman and Elsner 1995; Massey 1995; Appadurai 1996; Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Geary 2009). The aim in discussing this altered landscape is to provide a foundation for the remainder of the thesis which investigates the dynamic, disjunctive, and interactive nature of socially engaged Buddhist pilgrimage practice in Bodhgayā—the heart of the Buddhascape.

1.2.1. The Growth of Bodhgayā's Buddhascape

Although the transnational flow of people, ideas, and objects across regional, national, and geographical boundaries may be perceived as a recent historical phenomenon, pilgrimage to Bodhgayā has always been an important feature of Buddhism and numerous inscriptional, historical, and literary sources reinforce the location's importance as a centre of knowledge, culture, art, and pilgrimage (Trevithick 2006; Allen 2000; Dhammika 1996; 1999; Doyle 1997). Since the time of Emperor Aśoka (304 - 232 BCE), Bodhgayā has hosted an institutional presence of Buddhist followers. The establishment of Buddhist monasteries (*vihāra*) that manifested around the Mahābodhi Temple was integral to the maintenance of the central shrine, the transmission of the Dharma, and the economic life of the surrounding villages (Dhammika 1996).[37] The monasteries were derived primarily from royal devotees practicing generosity, or *dāna*, and the buildings accommodated not only resident monks but

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[37] Dhammika (1996, 47-49) suggests that the monasteries were initially temporary abodes during the rainy season for wandering monks, but eventually became important centres of royal patronage and religious practice. The managerial skills necessary to handle the substantial endowments and daily operations of the monasteries probably forced monastery abbots to be involved in both mundane and religious matters.

visiting pilgrims coming from abroad. For instance, in *Records of the Western World*,[38] a vivid and detailed account of Indian culture, history, and society, the famous seventh century Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang describes staying at the massive 900-year old Mahābodhi Vihāra established by the 4th century royal patron, King Meghavanna of Sri Lanka.

Since the "rediscovery" of Bodhgayā by the global Buddhist world at the turn of the nineteenth century,[39] the first monastery built in Bodhgayā was the Burmese Vihar in 1877 by King Mindon of Burma.[40] The second was built in 1891 by the Sinhalese Mahābodhi Society[41] led by the Buddhist reformer Anagārika Dharmapāla (see chapter two). Once Buddhists regained partial control of the Mahābodhi Temple in 1953, several more monasteries were built (see Geary 2009; Trevithick 2006; Doyle 1997). International interest in Bodhgayā skyrocketed with the 1956 celebration of the Buddha Jayanti, the 2500th anniversary of the Buddha's enlightenment. The commemorative event included numerous pilgrimages to the sacred sites, and other milestones included publications, conferences, historical dramas about the Buddha's life and teaching, all of which served as historical markers for the revival of Buddhism at Bodhgayā and revitalized inter-Buddhist connections to the sacred geography (see Doyle 1997; Trevithick 2006; Geary 2009).

Shortly thereafter, several royal Buddhist dignitaries, beginning in 1957 with Bhumibol Adulyadej, the King of Thailand, were granted land for the construction of

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[38] *Ta Tang Xi You Ji* was written in 648 AD and translated into English by Samuel Beal in 1884.

[39] Buddhist activity in Bodhgayā ceased after the 12th century Turkish invasions. In the sixteenth century, a Śaivite Mahant from the Giri order moved into the deserted Mahābodhi Temple, established a small monastery, and replaced the temple's Buddha image in the inner sanctuary with a Hindu deity. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Sri Lankan Buddhist leader Anagarika Dharmapala spent much of his life battling for Buddhist control over the temple (Asher 2008; 2004; Trevithick 2006; Allen 2000; Kinnard 1998; Doyle 1997).

[40] Due to its proximity to the Mahābodhi Temple (about 80 metres), the rest-house was demolished in preparation for the 1956 Buddha Jayanti celebrations. In 1936, a second Burmese monastery/rest-house was constructed by the Burmese monk, Nandamala. Located by the Nirañjanā River, this monastery is the principle Burmese Buddhist centre, housing approximately 400 pilgrims during the winter season. However, after the military coup d'etat which restricted Burmese national from travelling between the 1960s and 1990s, the Burmese Vihāra found new forms of financial and spiritual support by opening up its facilities to meditation teachers such as S.N. Goenka and Anagarika Munindra who led retreats primarily to Western spiritual seekers until the 1980s, as well as to Antioch College which has held its annual four-month long Buddhist Studies abroad program since 1979. When Burma's political situation stabilized in the 1990s Burmese pilgrims have continued to visit Bodhgayā and have built three more institutions (see Geary 2009).

[41] To celebrate its centenary anniversary in 1991, the Mahābodhi Society led various processions around the Mahābodhi Temple and inaugurated a charitable homeopathic clinic and school.

temples, monasteries, and pilgrim guest-houses. The Royal Wat Thai became the first Buddhist institution in Bodhgayā to exist under the jurisdiction of a foreign head of state. Despite having their own property, pilgrimage by Thai Buddhists was limited, primarily because of the dearth of accommodations and challenges of transport. This changed in 2002 when direct international flights from Bangkok to Gaya led to a surge of Thai Buddhist activity, including the construction of four more monastery/pilgrim rest-houses primarily for Thai nationals. Being a spiritual magnet attracting Tibetan pilgrims desiring to pay homage and engage in practices in "the holiest place in world," as one Tibetan pilgrim stated, thirteen different Tibetan institutions have acquired land between 1973 and 2007 to provide accommodations and facilities for their pilgrims. From the early seventies to the early nineties, the Japanese, like the Tibetans, have had an enormous impact on Bodhgayā's religious and economic development. In addition to the two temples, three high-end guest-houses, a pagoda, and 80-foot tall Buddha statue, Japanese pilgrims have created extensive economic links and opportunities for Biharis to travel to and work in Japan. Since the early nineties when the Bihari government made a conscious decision to promote religious tourism, the Vietnamese, Taiwanese, Koreans, as well as a group of Ambedkar Buddhists have also established their respective institutions.[42]

Today, walking down any of the roads off Domuhan Road, the pilgrim encounters this rich diversity of extravagant temples and monasteries with brightly decorated, three-dimensional sculptures and manicured gardens; a colossal 80-foot tall Kamakura-style sandstone Buddha statue; cheap guest-houses and restaurants; lavish hotels; public and private schools; and non-governmental organizations promoting sustainable social development. The more artistic religious edifices containing exquisite murals and statues, such as the Tergar Karmapa Monastery, Royal Thai Temple, Royal Bhutanese Monastery, Indosan Nipponji Temple, Daijokyo Temple, among others, are all becoming important destinations on pilgrim itineraries. Most Buddhist pilgrims also visit the other shrines and *stūpas* connected to the Buddha's life: Sujātā Stūpa and Shrine, Bowl Shrine, Mahākala Cave, and Brahmājoni Hill (see Goldberg and Décary 2009; Doyle 1997). Consequently,

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[42] For an extensive historical and ethnographic account of these transnational Buddhist institutions, see Geary (2009).

Bodhgayā's religious landscape has taken on a World's Fair-type atmosphere, or as a few long-term Western pilgrims have cynically remarked, the "Buddhist Disney Land."

Beyond the ancient sites and modern architecture and décor, Bodhgayā, especially during the busy winter season, also offers pilgrims several opportunities to partake in various Buddhist activities: alms-giving to monks (*saṅgha-dāna*), ordination ceremonies, meditation retreats, and Dharma talks by leading Buddhist teachers from around the world. Bodhgayā also serves as a stopover for many travelers seeking spiritual solace. Meditation courses are offered at the Dhamma Bodhi Vipassana Centre, the Insight Meditation Centre, and the Root Institute of Wisdom Culture (see next section), while Christopher Titmuss's Insight Meditation course[43] and Ayang Rinpoche's *Phowa* course[44] have been regular features of Bodhgayā's winter season since the 1970s and 1980s respectively.

1.2.2. The Buddhascape's Global Bazaar

Rather than inscribe the marketplace as the principal expression of Bodhgayā's cultural landscape, anthropologist David Geary (2009) understands it as a mediating force between "a broader and diverse set of themes that are central to the anxieties and opportunities that define the globalization of Bodh Gaya's spatial environment today" (131). Geary uses the term "global bazaar" as a guiding metaphor that accentuates transnational links, global networks and extensions which constitute the place as an international pilgrimage destination (see Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Massey 1994). For instance, throughout the year, several small shops and street merchants use public spaces to sell their goods to meet local needs. However, from November until February Bodhgayā's Buddhascape becomes alive with

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[43] After living as an ordained monk in Thailand for eight years, 1975 marked the year that Christopher Titmuss began teaching meditation every winter in Bodhgayā. He is the co-founder of Gaia House, an international retreat centre in England, author of numerous books, and has been influential in the global dissemination of Vipassana meditation. In addition to his Bodhgayā retreats he has been an active member of the Pragya Vihar School and the Bodhgayā Social Forum through which he has organized a number of peace demonstrations (see chapter two).

[44] Phowa, or "transference of consciousness," is the Vajrāyana method for attaining liberation, or a better rebirth, at the moment of death, or in the after-death, known as the *Bardo*. Advanced meditators are said to also use this practice on others at the time of death, helping them navigate the mysterious *Bardo*.

multi-coloured Buddhist uniforms and a swelling marketplace catering to the religious and commercial interests of pilgrims and tourists.

Small businesses, along with vegetable sellers and trinket hawkers, concentrated around the Mahābodhi Temple and on the road to Domuhan, serve in a haphazard manner, the commercial needs of the local and foreign populations. Surrounded by the congested traffic filled with taxis, private cars, tour buses, motorcycles, cyclists, bicycle rickshaws, auto-rickshaws, horse-carts, tractors, wild dogs, and pedestrians, these small businesses have become key features of the Buddhascape, and have multiplied since my first visit to Bodhgayā in 1996. During my early visits, the shops all sold similar cheap paraphernalia— rudimentary wood, stone, or plastic Buddha images; posters of the Buddha or of depictions of his life-story; plastic beads, dried Bodhi leaves, Kashmiri shawls, post cards, CDs, and other Buddhist trinkets. Now several of these shops are higher end, featuring sophisticated Buddhist art, ritual implements, and jewelry. These pricier shops cater to wealthier pilgrim-tourists and/or art-dealers who can distinguish fine art objects and antiques from cheap replicas. In 2007, there were more than a dozen of these shops on the main plaza, and about half-dozen more in the lobbies of the expensive hotels. Almost all of these shops are run by local businessmen, and exist alongside shops crammed with cheap curios. Many vendors in the plaza who cannot afford to pay the exorbitant rents sell their wares on tarps, bamboo mats, or folding tables. Pilgrims, tourists, and locals sit around the various kiosks watching the flow of the crowd and enjoying steamed dumplings (*momos*), chai, biscuits, and a wide variety of Indian sweets such as *gulab jamun* (brown deep friend dumplings soaked in sugar syrup), *jalebi* (tiny whirlpools of batter deep fried and soaked in sugar syrup)*, rasgulla* (white cheese dumplings soaked in sugar syrup), and *ladoo* (round sweet balls made from chick pea flour). Along Domuhan and Gayā-Dobhi roads, peddlers sell their wares from mobile handcarts. It is not uncommon to see tailors also using these carts to sell their creations: shoulder bags, meditation cushions, shawls, T-shirts with Buddhist symbols, etc. Broadband internet cafés adjacent to the temple and along Domuhan Road are recent additions to the bazaar that attract pilgrims, travelers, and locals, keeping them linked to the transnational networks (see Geary 2009; Appadurai 1996; Massey 1994) of the Buddhascape.

The bazaar vibrates with local, Tibetan, Bhutanese, and recently Thai, street peddlers and restaurants, as well as tour guides and beggars who seek opportunities from this narrow

window of time of pilgrimage and tourism. During this dense period of activity in 2007-8, thirty-one caravan style tent-restaurants constructed from dried mud and brick and sheltered by a canopy of plastic tarps materialize adjacent to and north of the main temple. The interior of all these restaurants generally had wooden benches and tables with low light fixtures whose light was easily replaced by candles when the electricity failed (which was quite often). In the corners were miniature refrigerators selling soft drinks and mineral water, whose cases often doubled as a TV stand for televisions blasting the latest films and music videos from Tibet and Bollywood. Buddhist iconography and photo-shopped pictures of Mount Kailash, London Bridge, idyllic Swiss cottages, and litters of cute puppies underlined by messages such as "home is where the heart is" and "best friends forever" decorated the mud walls. These caravan restaurants are owned and operated by locals, Tibetans, Bhutanese, and Thai entrepreneurs who enrich Bodhgayā's global cuisine by offering pilgrims and tourists dishes with ingredients flown in from around the world. With the exception of the Siam restaurant that served Thai cuisine with seafood flown in from Bangkok and Mohammed's and Om Café with their interpretations of Western dishes like spaghetti, mashed potatoes, banana pancakes, and apple strudel, all of these restaurants generally served the same food: *momos, thukpa, thenthuk, chow mein, chop suey*, and omlettes. Some of these restaurants also provided shoestring sleeping quarters for Tibetan pilgrims. Most of the tent restaurants have become popular meeting spots for Western and Tibetan visitors, and as Geary (2009, 17) observes, "on any given night, you can engage in discussions about consciousness, overhear Rinpoche gossip, or eavesdrop on the colourful banter of travel tales across India."

Across from the string of tent restaurants on the edge Pacchatti village is the Tibetan Refugee Market. Since the early 1980s, this market enclosed by metal and plastic walls has opened every winter season. With the exception of a few Indian families, most of the 50-plus booths are rented out by Tibetan merchants from Darjeeling, Mysore, Dharamsala, Siliguri, Dehra Dun, and Nepal. The shops offer a range of items from all over South Asia and China such as sweaters, jackets, hats, socks, scarves, shawls, blankets, pants, footwear, underwear, luggage, radios, and flashlights. Most of the customers are middle-class Indians who come from the surrounding districts for shopping and tourism. Buddhist pilgrims generally ignore these goods and shop instead on the main plaza and on Domuhan Road.

Linked to the market's seasonal and global nature is the considerable number of informal commercial employment that is generated by the international traffic. In the villages surrounding the town, the pilgrimage and tourist industry has generated various informal micro-industries such as butter lamp wick preparation, incense manufacturing, lotus flower cultivation, dried Bodhi leaf production, and to the astonishment of many pilgrims who hear about it, a toy soldier export enterprise. In this way, Bodhgayā's rapid metamorphosis into a global Buddhist marketplace contributes significantly to the local economy, made up considerably of the informal sector. According to the Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDCO) survey of Bodhgayā's informal sector, eighty percent of the workers are local residents and twenty percent from the neighboring regions. On average, each informal sector worker operates in about 32 sq. ft. of space, works alone or with his family for about thirteen hours a day. They have little access to services or facilities and the working conditions are generally poor. During the high season, an average informal sector business makes Rs. 4300 per month, whereas the rest of the year it makes approximately Rs. 2030 per month, thus highlighting the close economic link between the informal sector and pilgrimage-tourism (HUDCO 2006, 50). Conversely, the teachers and staff at the Maitreya School earn between Rs. 2000 and Rs. 5000 per month, depending on their level of education and experience. These numbers are slightly higher than most private school teachers (see chapter three); however, all of these teachers, including those in the highest income bracket, argued that these salaries were too low to allow for any real purchasing power in the inflating market.

Beggars inflicted by polio and leprosy sit in a line on the plaza, the west side lane of the temple, and on Domuhan road hoping to get donations from sympathetic pilgrims. These beggars, along with young touts who roam the footpath and main roads are additional features of Bodhgayā's informal economic sector. These young men, or "friendly guides" as they often call themselves, eagerly offer pilgrims their tour guide services or opportunities to donate funds to Bodhgayā's various charities and social projects. In addition to bringing pilgrims on day-long trips around Bodhgayā or overnight trips to Rajgir,[45] the touts will slip

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[45] Rajgir, or 'royal residence', is one of India's oldest inhabited cities and is a popular Buddhist and Jain pilgrimage site. During the Buddha's time, Rajgir was the capital of the Magadha Empire and the site of the first Buddhist monastery (see Goldberg and Décary 2009).

in charitable trusts such as schools, orphanages, and self-help organizations on the itinerary. These institutions, usually suffering from neglect, are generally products of foreign sponsorship like the hotel and restaurant industry, and function exclusively during the pilgrimage season when visibility of beggars is at its peak. These 'charitable trusts' can be launched quite easily and quickly, and it is not uncommon for them to be opened in somebody's home. Many of these charitable trusts are also managed by former street touts who have turned to social work among the destitute as a means of ensuring long-term financial sponsorship (see chapter three).

Thus, the above description of Bodhgayā demonstrates that the seasonality characterizing the agricultural landscape[46] also reflects a significant portion of the local population which increasingly relies on the influx of pilgrims and tourists during peak periods of the annual cycle.

1.2.3. *Saṃsāra* Unchecked: Woes of Haphazard Development

While Bodhgayā certainly conjures a beautiful and sacred space in the imaginations of many pilgrims, the reality does not necessarily match the ideal. Almost all foreign pilgrims, and several locals with whom I spoke, complained about Bodhgayā's pollutions that dominated the landscape. The stench of sewage, garbage and diesel fumes, and loud and obnoxious horns are common causes of distress and disturbance for foreigners and locals. Many of these pilgrims have conflicting feelings about Bodhgayā. In one breath they speak enthusiastically about its spiritual brilliance; in the next one, they lament about the poverty and mounds of trash. Some Western pilgrims and locals connect the pollution and garbage to Western materialism and modernity, which they believe has encroached upon Bodhgayā's sacred space.

Locals and pilgrims alike complain about the town's traffic congestion, poor infrastructure,[47] and haphazard development with the construction of temples and

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[46] Bodhgayā has an agrarian economy where close to fifty per cent of employment is agriculturally related. Most of the crops are subsistence based and are sold in Bodhgayā or across the river in Bakraur. As tourism increases in Bodhgayā, dependence on agriculture decreases (HUDCO 2006).
[47] See HUDCO (2006) for a detailed report of Bodhgayā's water supply, sewage and waste management, water drainage, road conditions, and electric supply.

monasteries by Buddhists and guest-houses and restaurants by Indian entrepreneurs. The road access among surrounding villages and neighboring towns is poor, and there are no special provisions for cyclists and cycle-rickshaw pullers. Inadequate parking lots around the Mahābodhi Temple Complex have also caused numerous traffic jams and accidents amongst automobile, bus, and rickshaw drivers. I do not have any statistics regarding road accidents in Bodhgayā, but I had personally witnessed numerous minor accidents on a daily basis and heard from first-hand witnesses of six accidents that resulted in serious injury or death over a three-week period. "This not good for us people and not good for foreigners. They will not be wanting to come back. Sign near temple says 'Be proud to be Bihari' but look how the government is neglecting!" said Jayesh, a teacher from the Maitreya School. Continuing with his criticism of the town's infrastructure, Jayesh, as did several other local residents, asserted that Bodhgayā seriously lacks public health[48] and educational services,[49] and is consequently becoming dependent on private NGOs to cover these amenities. These informants believe that the Bihari government ignores its problems, leaving them to foreign Buddhists to discover solutions and contribute to the infrastructure costs, as was the case with the Japanese government and development institutions who have been providing financial assistance to the state government for town infrastructure and development along the Buddhist circuit. The Japanese have recently built a new paved road with speed bumps between Bodhgayā and Rajgir (an important Buddhist pilgrimage site).[50] Furthermore, Jayesh complained that the remains of Bodhgayā's rich archeological heritage are not properly protected, and that villagers use ancient bricks scattered in the fields to build their homes because they cannot afford new materials and the government does not offer any support.

The Government of India 2001 census estimated that 210 000 visitors came to Bodhgayā that year, 31 000 of them being foreign (HUDCO 2006). To accommodate the

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[48] Bodhgayā has one public walk-in clinic, two charitable clinics run by foreign Buddhist organizations, and a few private doctors. Most patients are referred to the hospital in Gayā, about 15 km from the centre of town (one hour by public transport).

[49] The Bodhgayā block (17 sq. km) has 16 public primary schools and 6 public high schools, most of which are within 5 km of the town centre. The number of private and charitable schools is approximately the same but it is difficult to count due to their instable nature that depends on the influx of foreign capital (see chapter three).

[50] Prior to the completion of the road in 2006, the journey over the narrow and heavily pot-holed road by car took nearly three hours, whereas with the new paved road—with speed bumps—takes just over one hour.

large number of pilgrims and tourists that saturate the small north Indian town each year, local property owners and foreign Buddhist institutions transform the little remaining forests and swathes of paddy fields situated beyond the expanding main plaza into suburban-type neighbourhoods filled with monasteries, guest-houses, hotels, and restaurants. While the guest-houses and hotels are locally owned and resemble standard concrete buildings found all over modern India, the monasteries and their adjacent temples are foreign owned and architecturally designed to match those found in Buddhist countries. While Bodhgayā's development began after the Buddha Jayanti celebrations in 1956 and continued at a slow rate through the seventies, the vast majority of the town's growth took off in the early nineties, and has seen exponential growth with the new millennium. Unregulated development has led to the construction of more than fifty guest-houses and as many monasteries, and many more are on their way despite the lack of sufficient infrastructure to cater to the growing needs associated with the pilgrimage industry (Geary 2009; HUDCO 2006). Overcrowded roads, lack of electricity and water, and absence of garbage, recycling, and sewage systems puts a heavy stress on both locals and visitors. For instance, during the annual eye camp held at the Nyingma monastery that can house 5000 people at a time, hundreds of patients were forced to defecate in the surrounding paddy fields due to lack of toilets, causing a sickening stench in the entire neighbourhood.

Local property owners who cater to the pilgrim-tourist industry are putting up brick and concrete buildings wherever they can, renting out rooms in their homes, or even entire homes, to foreigners. While property owners and those directly associated with the pilgrimage industry obviously benefit economically from this development, many locals who do not participate in the pilgrimage sphere of activity are less content with how (relatively) wealthy foreign Buddhists encroach upon the local territory, driving real estate prices above affordable levels for the local population.[51] For instance, a local informant purchased one *katta*[52] of land within 3 km of the Mahābodhi Temple in 1987 paid Rs. 6000 (approximately

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[51] According to the Government of India's 2001 census, the Bodhgayā block contains 4672 households living in 4423 houses, and only 27 households without any house (the number is not much higher due to India's joint family system). However, the survey indicates that 3500 of these houses are considered as slums (approximately eighty per cent) without access to water, plumbing, or waste collection (HUDCO 2006, 55-6).

[52] One *katta* is the equivalent to 1/27th of an acre.

$ US150). In 2007, he was offered approximately four *lakh*[53] rupees (approximately US$10 000) for that plot of land. In 2004, a wealthy local friend of mine had purchased a *katta* for 1.6 lakh (US$4000), and in 2003, his neighbour paid one *lakh* for the same size parcel of land, thus indicating the rapid increase in land value. Furthermore, the increase in land value also affects the rates for renting rooms, apartments, and homes. For instance, foreigners renting a single room with attached bathroom and a shared kitchen in a building newly constructed for foreigners within 3 km of the Mahābodhi Temple pay between four and ten-thousand rupees per month. Locals living in similar, yet older apartments (although usually without private bathrooms) pay between Rs. 300-1000 per month. These local rent payers are outraged about this situation, partly in disgust that foreign guests are so easily taken advantage of, but mostly in fear that their own rents will eventually climb that high, forcing them to move further outside of town (the average monthly salary of people living in those apartments range between Rs. 1500-5000 per month).

When I visited Natraj, a former municipal official of the *Nagar Panchayat*,[54] I asked him to explain why the state government did not invest in the town's infrastructure or regulate construction. He responded that a major problem was that there was no clear indication of the actual population. According to the 2001 census, Bodhgayā's population is 30 883 people and includes a high growth rate with the population increasing 40 per cent within the last two decades (HUDCO 2006). However, this figure is inaccurate because it neither accounts for the transient pilgrim and tourist population, nor the floating population who seek employment in Bodhgayā during the agricultural and pilgrimage high season. Natraj claims that the current population (in 2008) had risen to 36 000, and if including the floating population during the pilgrimage season, the number raised to 50 000. By 2031, the stable and floating population is projected to rise to 120 000 people (HUDCO 2006).

A major concern echoed by several local residents and social activists was that the out-dated, or in some cases total absence of, irrigation canals to divert excess monsoon flood water into the rivers caused thousands of fertile acres that could be used for agriculture or

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[53] One *lakh* is the equivalent to 100 000.
[54] The *Nagar Panchayat* is the municipal political body responsible for the town's development related to health, education, roads, and sanitation.

local housing to become swampy and unproductive.[55] Moreover, during the dry months when water is badly needed, much of Bodhgayā (and most of rural Bihar) lacks proper tube wells needed to harvest the ground water (see Ramagundam 2006). Locals have no choice but to drink unsanitary water while foreigners continue to purchase plastic bottled water, which social workers claim is a major problem because there are no recycling facilities anywhere in the province. For most local residents, however, the escalating land prices, lack of access to basic services, and expanding population are directly equated with the proliferation of Buddhist monasteries and temples. The expanding number of extravagant Buddhist centres that have replaced paddy fields and simple villages with homes made from mud and straw are a harsh daily reminder of the economic disparities and cultural differences between the foreign Buddhists and the local community.

Several pilgrims who had been coming to Bodhgayā for more than twenty years became nostalgic in their reflections of Bodhgayā. Many of them lamented that they witnessed a steady decline of the town's general environment, indexed by indicators such as decreases in public safety, air quality and sanitation, and increases in litter, noise, rent, crime, and population. Many of these pilgrims further complained that modernity was causing the town to lose its authenticity as a spiritual centre. Anthropologist Peter Moran (2004) suggests that these types of "discourses of degeneracy" are common in tourist destinations, especially Buddhist sites in Asia which operate as "markers of purity (outer and inner) in Western traveler's imaginings" (126). For several of these long-term visitors and pilgrims who have been coming to Bodhgayā since the 1960s and 1970s, the "Land of Enlightenment" degenerated from a spiritual refuge to a tourist site filled with commercial activity and greed. Being a serious practitioner of the Buddha's teachings, my own biased sympathy towards these discourses is evident. The first time I visited Bodhgayā in 1996 I remember meditating under the Bodhi Tree at any time without any problems or restrictions, and my relationships with the locals seemed to be genuinely filled with goodwill. Today, as access to the Bodhi

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[55] One exception to this trend, however, was in the area by the 'Big Buddha Statue' where a canal was being built to solve the swampland crisis there. Most locals, however, believe that this was done not for the benefit of agriculture or local housing, but for the creation of space for more foreign Buddhist temples and monasteries.

Tree is limited[56] and locals who I do not know quickly perceive me as a source of income, I try within the best of my ability to be a detached observer. At times, as is the case with many veteran visitors, I sensed that feelings of nostalgia and lament for the recent past is accompanied by frustration and growing criticisms about the present.

To conclude this section, I quote at length David Geary's (2009, 30) observation of the tensions that are produced and negotiated within Bodhgayā as it emerges as a cosmopolitan town hosting significant social, economic, political, and religious disparities amongst the local and foreign participants:

> The town's entry into the global circuit of mass tourism and international pilgrimage brought rapid development and social change to Bodh Gaya that was not only affecting the spatial environment of the town but more importantly the "peacefulness" that many humble pilgrims were seeking. Unregulated development and new international airstrips had brought a massive explosion of hotels, guest houses, monasteries, seasonal charity trusts and shops, all within close proximity to the Mahabodhi Temple. Slum villages, trash heaps, contaminated pools of dead water, inefficient water and electricity, and regular complaints of noise pollution had increased. Alcohol, drugs and illegal activities were also on the rise and many locals feared it would not be long until sex tourism arrived on the scene. For the first-time visitor to the place of enlightenment, in order to have their moment of peace under the Bodhi tree, they had to wade through aggressive shopkeepers, street vendors, touts, hustlers, pestering youth and swarms of beggars along the footpath. Even the main temple precinct presented challenges. In recent years, it is has not been uncommon for "sly monks" or "beggars-in-robes" to request money and food in their begging bowls only to remove their robes at the end of the tourist season. There was also talk of golf courses, chair lifts to the nearby Dhungeshwari caves, light and sound shows and other major tourism initiatives that would bring unfathomable contamination to this hallowed site where Buddha obtained enlightenment. Common to all the accusations, rumors and finger-pointing was a general unease surrounding the recent accelerated pace of development at Bodh Gaya from a small rural town in south Bihar into a major global destination.

1.2.4. Lama Zopa and the FPMT: Key Agents in Bodhgayā's Buddhascape

The Shakyamuni Buddha Community Health Clinic and the Maitreya School—the organizations primarily examined in this thesis—operate on the property and under the direction of the Root Institute of Wisdom Culture, which functions under the auspices of the

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[56] Direct access to the tree is now blocked by a gate and pilgrims must now pay a hefty fee to meditate and pray in the Mahābodhi complex at night.

Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahāyāna Tradition (FPMT), an international network of Buddhist centres aligned to the *Gelug* sect of Tibetan Buddhism of which the Dalai Lama is the figurehead. Lama Thubten Yeshe founded the FPMT in 1975 and Lama Kyabje Zopa has been the spiritual director of the FPMT since Lama Yeshe's death in 1984.

Lama Zopa, like his predecessor, is a round, chubby man with a magnanimous, jovial and gentle demeanor. He was born in 1946 in a remote village in the Solo Khumbo region of Nepal, near Mount Everest, and at the age of three was recognized as the famous Buddhist master Lawudo Lama. As a teenager, Lama Zopa began his monastic training at Dung-kar Monastery in North Sikkim. Intending to complete his studies at Sera Je Monastery, he was forced to flee to India due to political circumstances. While stationed at a refugee camp in Buxaduar, northern India, he met his guru Lama Yeshe, and the two of them formed a relationship that would soon have an effect on Buddhism worldwide. In 1965, together they began teaching Westerners upon the request of Zina Rachevsky, a Hollywood starlet who became the first Western nun in the Tibetan tradition, and who in 1975, donated to them a significant amount of money to purchase land for a monastery at Kopan, Nepal (see Mackenzie 1989).

In November 1975, Lama Yeshe decided that it was necessary to create an organizational structure because the number of students requesting teachings from him and his disciples was increasing exponentially. The name of the organization he chose, FPMT, encapsulates its motivation to preserve the ancient wisdom teachings of Tibet's Mahāyāna Buddhism. Within a short time the organization blossomed in numerous ways: community centres opened up in cities where people could learn the Dharma on evenings and weekends; residential country centres were established to provide longer courses and retreats, as well as a space for people wanting to raise their families in a spiritual environment; monasteries were founded to train monks and nuns; remote retreat centres were built for meditators needing a more serious and removed atmosphere for their spiritual practice; and a publishing company was created as a means of disseminating Lamas Yeshe and Zopa's teachings. Mackenzie (1989, 57) depicts the organization as a mandala, a unified, functional system where different branches serve the various needs of the community and helps to create a universal family. Universal Education and health programs in poor countries (see chapters three and four) are further, evolving offshoots of this mandala. While each centre is run independently, there is a

central office in Kathmandu which acts as a link between the long chain of centres and Lama Zopa.

1.5 Buddha Statue at Root Institute

In 1987, Root Institute for Wisdom Culture was established at a time when minimal development surrounding Bodhgayā was occuring. Following his guru's wish to "repay the historic kindness to the Indian people" for being the place where Buddhism arose and for welcoming the Tibetan refugees fleeing from the Chinese, Karl, a disciple of Lama Zopa, followed his teacher's guidance by purchasing land and constructing rudimentary buildings for the centre. According to Root Institute's website, it was Lama Yeshe's intention that the Root Institute be a "dynamic centre where the Buddhist ideals of universal responsibility and education could be taught and practiced. . . [a place to] preserve and spread the rich variety of India's ancient wisdom culture in its religious, philosophical, educational and cultural manifestations." Since its inception, the Root Institute has become a prominent non-profit charitable society that offers opportunities to study and practice Tibetan Buddhism, as well as become involved with socially engaged projects at the Shakyamuni Buddha Community Health Program, Maitreya School, Alice Project School, and the Maitri Charitable Trust. Root Institute offers introductory and intermediate-level courses in English by Western Dharma teachers and Tibetan Lamas, as well as introductory courses in Hindi. As part of the FPMT, Root Institute receives visitors from the FPMT's various branches, which today numbers 140 around the globe. A 15-minute walk from the Mahābodhi Temple, Root Institute is one of Bodhgayā's most popular meditation centres for Westerners. Several meditation and philosophy courses are offered each pilgrimage season, and courses generally

last between five and twenty days long. If space permits, Root Institute also provides guest-house facilities, providing accommodation in single, double and quadruple rooms. While the centre is open to the monastic community, most of the teachers and students are lay people.

In 1991, Root Institute established a home for the destitute and in 1996, opened the homoeopathic clinic and polio rehabilitation workshop where orthopaedic devices are designed and built to assist those with disabilities. Today, the clinic claims to use a holistic approach to healing and health as allopathic and homeopathic doctors, as well as physiotherapists, serve approximately three-thousand patients per month, either at the clinic itself or at one of the remote village sites along the mobile clinic route where there are inadequate health services. While the homeopathic segment focuses on general health care, the allopathic medical practice concentrates on the management of tuberculosis, diabetes, HIV/AIDS, heart disease, polio, cerebral palsy, and other chronic and complex problems. The clinic has also launched health education and awareness programmes in attempt to reduce the number of recurring patients. The health promotion and disease prevention programmes specifically target women and children by managing acute and chronic diseases and monitoring the growth of children through a computerized data-base that tracks their visits, diagnoses, treatments, and progress. The clinic also has a four-bed nursing home unit which provides extended care for persons requiring wound management, ongoing physiotherapy, nutritional rehabilitation, and management of other chronic diseases (www.rootinstitute.com). While the clinic is primarily operated by a dozen local staff members, the direction is always supervised by a foreign Buddhist, and Western medical volunteers often come to provide training workshops for the local staff (see chapter two).

In 1997, FPMT members established the Maitreya School on the Root Institute compound (where the present dining hall is located), and then in 1999, shifted the project to a newly purchased plot of land across the road. In 2000, Vince, an Italian disciple of Lama Zopa and the director of the Alice Project school in Sarnāth, opened another branch of his school in a remote village 10 km outside of Bodhgayā. The Maitreya School employs twenty-two local teachers and six staff members to facilitate 500 students and the Bodhgayā branch of the Alice Project employs 10 teachers for 250 students.[57] At present, the holistic

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[57] The Sārnāth branch employs approximately 30 teachers for 750 students (90 of which are residential).

curriculum at both schools, designed primarily by Vince, provides an integrated programme of learning activities and experiences that address the physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual aspects of the student. By developing an understanding of the nature of the mind and cultivating positive qualities of loving-kindness, compassion, tolerance, equanimity, and universal responsibility, children are said to learn to walk the path of individual and social transformation (see chapter four).

Maitri Charitable Trust runs various educational, health, and veterinary programs in the villages surrounding Bodhgayā. It delivers programmes aimed at eradicating leprosy, TB and aids; physical rehabilitation for the disabled; pre- and post-natal care for mothers and infants; birth control; immunizing children; and promoting adult literacy and vocational training. It has an ambulance that provides rescue care services. The organization also operates four schools, each with approximately 250 students and 3 teachers. The schools do not have a holistic curriculum as other FPMT-affiliated schools such as the Maitreya School and Alice Project (see chapter four), but according to Maria, Maitri's Italian director, ethical integrity and religious literacy are discussed in some of the classes.

The FPMT-affiliated organizations generally have a good reputation in Bodhgayā for their services. Unlike many of the charitable trusts operated by locals that I discussed earlier, the foreign-operated organizations have won the trust of most local residents and seasoned pilgrims. Like the local non-government organizations, the Buddhist ones are also dependent upon Bodhgayā's seasonal cycles. The major difference, however, is that these organizations maintain greater and stronger links across the transnational networks of the global Buddhascape, and thus have greater access to social and financial capital. Moreover, as I discuss in chapters three to five, unlike the majority of local residents who engage in charitable trusts for financial reasons, most of the socially engaged pilgrims do so to increase their spiritual wealth, thus highlighting further economic and religious differences amongst the Bihari and Buddhist agents in Bodhgayā.

1.3. CONCLUSION

In this chapter I offered a sweeping picture of contemporary Bodhgayā which draws Buddhists from around the world who come to pay respect to the Buddha at the place where he is believed to have attained enlightenment. I examined the Mahābodhi Temple and the

emerging Buddhist landscape around it as an entryway into exploring Bodhgayā's complicated relationships that occur between Buddhist pilgrims and locally operated social organizations and economies.

As with many tourist and pilgrimage sites in the midst of accelerated social change, the institutional growth of monasteries in Bodhgayā can be interpreted as a by-product of globalization, or an example of "transnationalism from above" (Geary 2009). However, as Geary (2009) observes, in a place such as Bihar which is notorious for its poverty, hunger, political corruption, and inter-caste violence, it is important to not only consider the power associated with the circulation of images, people, capital, objects, ideologies, and technology but also to address the ways in which these global flows reproduce and perpetuate forms of exploitation, uneven development, and social conflict (Brennan 2005, 45; cited in Geary 2009). In recent years, several scholars have criticized cultural imperialist models of globalization and have begun to investigate the multifaceted and versatile types of creolization, hybridity, and disjuncture that constitute place-making, especially in post-colonial societies (Campany 2003; Nye 1999; Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Appadurai 1996). In what is to come in the rest of this thesis are questions examining how transnational Buddhist discourses and practices concerning social engagement and education become transformed as they interact with specific local contexts, and how, in turn, these discourses and practices are simultaneously resisted and embraced by the local population.

CHAPTER II

SOCIALLY ENGAGED BUDDHIST PILGRIMAGE

In recent decades a trend of movements has emerged from diverse spiritual backgrounds, especially amongst Buddhists, with the intent of integrating spiritual values with social engagement. When Eastern spirituality first became of interest to the West, 19th century scholars and Christian missionaries (see Masuzawa 2005),[58] and more recently, the influential Max Weber (1958), depicted Buddhism as escapist, fatalistic, pessimistic, and socially destructive. However many contemporary Buddhist teachers (Dalai Lama, Lama Zopa, Thich Nhat Hanh, Chogyam Trungpa, Sulak Sivaraksa, Joanna Macy) and scholars (Damien Keown, Charles Prebish, Christopher Queen, Sallie King, Robert Thurman, Charles Jones, George Bond, Robert Goss, David Loy, Jan Willis, Bhikkhu Bodhi)[59] insist that Buddhist contemplative practice is not an escape from society, but an instrument that facilitates harmonious and responsible living. These teachers have encouraged socially engaged practice to become central to their students' lives by addressing not only personal dissatisfaction and despair—core features of the Dharma, but suffering caused by social injustices and subsequent feelings of hopelessness and powerlessness. For these teachers, compassion moves from the realm of thought to action.

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[58] In her book *The Invention of World Religions*, Tomoku Masuzawa (2005) depicts the various ways that Western scholars between the 16th and 20th centuries have represented Christianity vis-à-vis other religions, displaying how numerous scholars have had their own religious agendas tied into their research in one manner or another. Most pre-20th century Western scholars portrayed Christianity as a superior, universal religion while all others were ethnic and political in nature. As a result, these non-Christian religions were deemed philosophically inferior.

[59] This distinction between teachers and scholars may not be entirely accurate since most of the names listed above are *both* Buddhist teachers and scholars (i.e. scholar-practitioners)

Engaged Buddhism has become a key subject of discussion in the field of Buddhist studies and its definition took shape around the turn of the millennium. Sallie King defines engaged Buddhism as "social and political activism based upon Buddhist principles, concepts, values, and practices" (2009; 2005), while Robert Thurman (1996) refers to it as "total activism, an unswerving commitment to complete self-transformation and complete world-transformation" (79). Robert Goss (2000) suggests that engaged Buddhism is not merely an interaction with social institutions, but a critique and transformation of them (328). Christopher Queen (2000) proposes that socio-political dimension of contemporary engaged Buddhism may even be regarded as a new model for Buddhist emancipation, or as Queen calls it, the *fourth yāna* (2).

Queen (2000; 2003) reads the engaged Buddhist movement as an ontological shift from personal freedom from the three poisons (craving, aversion, and ignorance) to include social and political liberation. This stance reflects the religious orientation that recognizes the value in both the individual and the community, and also acknowledges the need for communal responses to address socially related problems. Queen (2000) muses that socially engaged Buddhism "has emerged in the context of a global conversation on human rights, distributive justice, and social progress.... As a style of ethical practice engaged Buddhism may be seen as a new paradigm of Buddhist liberation" (2). In other words, engaged Buddhism, for Queen, is viewed not only as a progressive expression of the Buddhist path seeking to experientially understand the origins and cessation of human dissatisfaction, but implies a soteriological shift towards social, political, and economic transformation. In this way, "outer" liberation is equally important with "inner" liberation, and the achievement of a wealthy and harmonious society is based on eliminating the three inner poisons.

However, Buddhist scholars such as David Loy (2004; 2000), Thomas Yarnell (2003), and Bhikkhu Bodhi (2005; 2009), as well as Asian trained Buddhist teachers such as the Dalai Lama, Thich Nhat Hanh, and Sulak Sivaraksa (see Henry 2006) argue that Buddhism has always been socially engaged, and that there is little that is new, or especially modern, about engaged Buddhism in the way that Queen asserts. From this perspective, the notion that engaged Buddhism constitutes a *fourth yāna* is inaccurate. At the recent *Western*

Socially Engaged Buddhism Symposium,[60] David Loy asserted that the belief in a distinct form of socially engaged Buddhism relegated to its own category is a fallacy held by Western thinkers rooted in Protestant notions of the private-public sphere distinction. Buddhist scholar-practitioners Robert Thurman and Jan Willis affirmed the position that Buddhists throughout history have not only disseminated the teachings of wisdom, but have manifested compassion by offering various public services. These scholars argued that to suggest that Buddhism has not always been engaged is to accept the Western colonial view that Buddhists are escapist and quietist. Likewise, Theravāda scholar-monk Bhikkhu Bodhi stressed that the ethical principles regarding social conduct including charity, education and health-care have always been an important feature of Buddhist life.

In the introduction to the chapter entitled "The Happiness Visible in This Present Life" in his book *In the Buddha's Words: An Anthology of Discourses from the Pāli Canon*, Bhikkhu Bodhi (2005) discusses the canonical roots of engaged Buddhism. Bodhi contends that the view of Buddhism as a vehicle for world-renouncing liberation, detachment and personal inward meditation is rooted in misunderstanding of the function of a Buddha. Bodhi calls the reader's attention to the Pāli literature's references to the Buddha as a *Dhamma Raja*, or "King of Dhamma," a person who discovers, realizes and proclaims the *Dhamma* in its full range and depth, including its applications to human life in all dimensions. While the Buddha illuminates the path towards total liberation from suffering, he also guides his followers who are immersed in the world to navigate through it and create conditions for social harmony (107). In this way, Bhikkhu Bodhi suggests that the Buddha's *raison d'être* is to serve human society.

Bhikkhu Bodhi organizes the Buddha's teaching according to three categories: welfare and happiness directly visible in this present life, welfare and happiness pertaining to the next life, and the ultimate good or supreme goal. Whereas the second and third categories refer to practices and teachings aimed at personal liberation, the first category focuses exclusively on moral commitment and social responsibility. Bodhi argues that many Western Buddhist writers, scholars and teachers have limited their emphasis of the Buddha's teaching to its "transcendent pinnacle," ignoring a vital facet of the Buddha's thinking. Bodhi finds

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[60] August 9th-14th, 2010 at the Mother House of Zen Peacemakers, Montague, MA

this imbalanced emphasis problematic because it disregards the foundation for awakening. He writes,

> From the Nikāyas, it is clear that while the Buddha principally aimed at guiding people toward moral and spiritual progress, he was fully aware that their capacity for moral and spiritual development depends upon the material conditions of the society in which they live. He acutely realized that when people are mired in poverty and oppressed by hunger and want, they will find it hard to hold a path of moral rectitude. (111)

In other words, the absence of basic necessities and employment is a guarantee to create conditions for social, political, and spiritual instability.

In the various *suttas* of Bodhi's anthology, we see a common thread explicating that social cohesion relies on members of the community fulfilling their social responsibilities in a spirit of respect, kindness, and sympathy. Bodhi writes, "social stability and security necessary for human happiness and fulfillment are achieved, not through the aggressive and potentially disruptive demand for 'rights' posed by competing groups, but by the renunciation of self-interest and the development of a sincere, large-hearted concern for the welfare of others and the good of the greater whole" (110). The Buddha is depicted prescribing ethical conduct, mutual respect and selflessness as the foundational requirement for the sustenance of a vast network of interdependent familial, social, economic, spiritual, and political relationships in civil society. It is from this standpoint that most of socially engaged pilgrims in Bodhgayā claim to think and act from.

In the last chapter describing Bodhgayā's development from a rural Bihari village into a bustling cosmopolitan town, I discussed how the landscape is altered by vast networks of transnational relationships involving international Buddhist pilgrims, grassroots and global non-government organizations, and the local Bihari community. A major implication derived from these relationships is the way in which Buddhist pilgrimage activity is reconceived as foreign Buddhists from relatively privileged backgrounds interact with a community possessing a history of poverty and oppression. As an increasing number of these pilgrims connect with this community, they shift their attention away from inner activities by responding to the highly visible suffering by establishing, supporting, and/or actively participating in local and trans-local educational, health, and financial organizations. In this chapter I argue that while social engagement may not be new to Buddhist practice in general,

it is a new and emerging form of pilgrimage activity that is becoming increasingly present in Bodhgayā and at other sites along the Buddhist pilgrimage circuit. Today, socially related goals are made explicit in the works of engaged Buddhist pilgrims in Bodhgayā as traditional forms of expressing devotion such as meditation, offering, and prayer have expanded to include social service, exemplified by pilgrim-sponsored primary and secondary schools emphasizing both academic and contemplative programs, as well as health clinics, self-help groups, micro-lending schemes, and vocational training centres for the local poverty-stricken Hindu and Muslim communities. Conducting meditation retreats for the local community and foreign pilgrims may also be included in this list. On the one hand, these social projects are a response to the failures of the state government to provide basic education, clean water, nutritious food, adequate medicine, clothing and shelter, and meaningful employment (see Weiner 2006; Ramagundam 2006; Sainath 1996); on the other hand, these undertakings arise from the notion that education is a primary resource for personal, social, and spiritual upliftment. Social work for these "engaged" pilgrims is not in conflict with their spiritual activity, but is a vital part of it. In this way, the pilgrimage journey is not only directed towards individual liberation, but is motivated by healing and transformation of *both* self and other.

In what follows, I investigate how the mingling of concepts and practices of awakening and engagement have manifested in the context of Buddhist pilgrimage to Bodhgayā—the site of the Buddha's illumination and a town that is plagued by poverty, corruption, and caste prejudice (see Weiner 2006; Ramagundam 2006; Giacomin 2000; Sainath 1996). While concepts such as education, civic engagement, environmental protection, and human rights are not usually associated with classic models of Buddhist pilgrimage, I argue that these emerging socially-oriented patterns challenge assumptions regarding the contemporary nature of pilgrimage and its goals. To investigate these new modes of interpretation and practice of pilgrimage, I divide the chapter into two sections. First, I examine Buddhist outlooks towards liberation and society and how they are replicated in the widening of pilgrimage activities. Here, I examine how Buddhist teachings that blend ideas of awakening and engagement speak directly to modern travelers to India who believe their spiritual aims are to create welfare and happiness for all sentient beings. By responding to the anguish associated with Bihar's highly visible poverty, the spiritual action of these

pilgrims occurs in the creation of social organizations addressing peoples' outer and inner needs.

The second part of this chapter analyzes the experiences of socially engaged pilgrims through the framework of Mahāyāna ethics made up of moral discipline (*saṃvara śila*), cultivation of virtue (*kuśala-dharma-saṃgrāhaka śila*), and altruistic conduct (*sattva artha kriyā śila*).[61] The first is most concerned with the meticulous observance of the moral precepts, the second involves developing wholesome qualities essential for awakening, and the third consists of positive actions aimed at helping others.[62] Together, Buddhists, in most traditions, believe these practices contribute towards the construction of productive and harmonious relationships in civil society.

2.1. DUAL LIBERATION: PILGRIMAGE RE-ORIENTED

2.1.1. Inner Liberation to Outer Liberation: Old Path, New Shoes

> Everything we do is our practice...my work here with the health program is my practice, my teacher even talks about going to the toilet as a practice. If we do whatever we do mindfully then it is our practice. That is the goal of our practice, to understand that our practice is not just sitting on a cushion, but taking what we have achieved in terms of peacefulness, mind-transformation, through our study of the Dharma, and integrating that with everything that we do. If we are not successful at that, then the practice is just academic. And so I have a practice that includes sitting and walking, mindful movements or yoga, but those are only a part of the greater practice of everything I do.

Mark, the above speaker, is a tall young-looking sixty-year old American nurse-practitioner who spent most of the last four years as the program director at the Root Institute's Shakyamuni Buddha Community Health Clinic, located across the road from the Maitreya

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[61] These categories were originally derived from Asanga's *Mahāyānasaṃgraha* and formed the basis for further texts on Buddhist ethics (see Keown 1992; 2000; 2005; Prebish 1993).

[62] Prebish (1993) notes that Theravādin thinkers have responded to this Mahāyāna elaboration (as well as to Western misconceptions of Buddhism as I discuss elsewhere in this thesis), considered to be an implicit critique of earlier systems of Buddhist thought as being unconcerned for the wellbeing of others. Prebish cites the Sri Lankan scholar Walpola Rahula: "The *bhikkhu* is not a selfish, cowardly individual thinking only of his happiness and salvation, unmindful of whatever happens to the rest of humanity. A true *bhikkhu* is an altruistic, heroic person who considers others' happiness more than his own.... Buddhism is built upon the service of others" (59).

School. Although he works for an organization led by Lama Zopa Rinpoche, Mark identifies himself as a student of the Vietnamese Zen monk, Thich Nhat Hanh, whose famous exhortation: "All Buddhism is engaged" inspires him deeply. For engaged pilgrims like Mark, a central feature of practice is addressing and eliminating human suffering. Social work is a part of that process of compassionate action, not a departure from or addition to it.

Socially engaged practice in Bodhgayā challenges the notion of what it means to be a twenty-first century Buddhist pilgrim. If "all Buddhism is engaged" then what does the term "engaged" actually entail for those pilgrims who limit their stay in Bodhgayā to formal practice at the Mahābodhi Temple? Are these pilgrims considered to be irresponsible and uncompassionate towards the plight of the poor Biharis because they are not involved socially or politically? Thich Nhat Hanh's non-dualistic statement makes it difficult to distinguish between an "engaged" versus an "unengaged" pilgrim practitioner. As American Zen teacher Bernard Glassman states, "The private meditator is as engaged as the social worker when that practice embraces the wholeness of life, promotes healing, and reconnects him or her to a larger community of living beings" (cited in Queen 2000, 24). Buddhist monk and activist Khemadhammo exposes the challenges of defining engaged Buddhism. Despite the fact that he conforms to Queen's definition of an engaged Buddhist that I cited earlier, Khemadhammo rejects the term "engaged Buddhist" arguing that it poses a false distinction between everyday practice and social engagement (cited in Bell 2000, 401). While most of my informants in Bodhgayā took no issue with the term, some had similar reactions as Khemadhammo. Launching an argument from Thich Nhat Hanh's catchphrase, Geraldine, a British pilgrim in Bodhgayā insisted, "I am always engaged, as long as I try to maintain mindfulness. Whether I am lecturing at the university, volunteering here at Maitreya, sitting on my meditation cushion, or walking around the temple—there's absolutely no difference at all. The outer form doesn't really make a difference; it's the attitude, the motivation that counts."

Most Buddhists have never perceived a divide between spiritual and social domains (Yarnell 2003), and as Henry (2006) points out, most traditionally trained teachers such as the Dalai Lama, Thich Nhat Hanh, and Sulak Sivaraksa understand the spiritual life to encompass the social world, and that it is only a modern Western interpretation of the

Buddhist experience that perceives it otherwise (see Weber 1958; Dumont 1970; Spiro 1971).[63] For these aforementioned Buddhist leaders, as well as a significant majority of my informants, the Dharma has always had a socio-political dimension, varying according to individual interpretations. In other words, socially engaged Buddhism is simply an adapted continuation of Buddhism in the modern context (Bodhi 2009; 2005; Loy 2004; 2000; Yarnell 2003), and not an entirely new, modern phenomena (Queen 2000; 2003). Despite cultural shifts that emphasize different elements of a tradition and which re-cast them in a different light, none of my fifty-plus informants believed that one could be a "disengaged Buddhist." As several pilgrims shared, whether one is on retreat, travelling to the sacred sites, or working with the community, it was all engagement.

One morning while sitting at the Mucalinda pond in the Mahābodhi Temple Complex with my son, who was feeding bread crumbs to the catfish, I overheard a discussion between two Western pilgrims. The first, an ardent Vajrayāna practitioner dressed in a white robe usually worn by Tibetan yogis, boasted of the numerous prostrations he was able to complete in a day; the second, a Buddhist charity worker at a children's orphanage, responded that his path of compassion was found in taking care of homeless children. Viewing religion with a Western presupposition that maintains a standard of what is religious practice and what is not, or rather, what is "engaged religious practice" and what is not, the second fellow might have been ignored from the study of religious experience since looking after children generally does not fit into a standard category of religious behaviour (such as prayer, meditation, etc.). By working with what Malory Nye (1999) refers to as "religion-as-embodied practice" (193) all aspects of human agency are included. This approach to the study of religious experience, or what Nye (1999) calls "religioning" is a conceptual shift from examining 'religion' as a thing to investigating dynamic religious and cultural expressions. He writes, "diverse cultural forms, located within the specifics of relations of power, intracultural (or subcultural) and intercultural dynamics are produced through multiple agents in diverse ways within any given milieu" (213). From this broad perspective

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[63] Spiro (1971) distinguishes "nibbanic Buddhism" from "kammic Buddhism." The former refers to the "total rejection of the spatiotemporal world... and renunciation of the sociocultural world" and aims at eradicating rebirth (66). The goals of the latter, on the other hand, are to improve worldly status and achieve positive rebirths in the future. For Spiro, nibbanic Buddhists are the "true Buddhists" who understand that all "involvement in the world is... religiously perilous" (427).

that includes multiple viewpoints and ways of being in the world, Nye argues that it is impossible to categorize or claim any culture or religion as being "pure" or isolated from the rest of the world (213). Nye (1999), along with Gupta and Ferguson (1997) and Massey (1994) assert that any position attempting to claim independent existence usually emerges in reaction to perceived threats from processes of hybridisation.

From the standpoint that engaged Buddhism is nothing new, a Buddhism that is true to its founder's teachings is not bound to any particular form or practice, but is flexible and adaptable to any time or place. In his study of A.T. Ariyaratne and the Sarvodāya Śramadāna movement in Sri Lanka, George Bond (1996) suggests that this Buddhist social movement, and others like it, are not disjunctures from the past, but part of an evolving process common to all religious traditions. He says, "religious traditions such as Buddhism are not static or monolithic but represent cumulative historical movements whose identities are continually being reinterpreted and reconstituted" (121).

In a presentation given in 2010 at the *Buddhism in Exile* conference at the University of Toronto, Scarborough, Buddhist studies scholar Victor Hori (2010a; see also Hori 2010; Soucy 2010) asserted that assigning any fixed identity to Buddhism is like "mistaking the finger for the moon." In reference to the academic reification of Buddhist identity through taxonomies such as inherited/ acquired, ethnic/Western, or traditional/modern, Hori (2010a; 2010) argued that these are false designations that do not apply to the reality of the many Buddhisms. The contours of these categories are actually malleable and constantly changing, and as such, Hori argues that there cannot even be an authentic Buddhism because, in reality, what people consider to be the "true" Buddhism is little more than an individual or cultural interpretation occurring in a historical moment. In this way, perhaps all forms of Buddhism are "true Buddhism" (or, rather, no forms are!).

To avoid constructing essentialist fallacies and ferreting out the diverse ways in which people express their religiosity, Nye (1999), and I think Hori would agree with him, proposes that religious expressions need to be examined in terms of agents, who "can only be understood by references to places, people, their experiences, and their actions" (214). Moreover, constitutional factors—gender, class, race, age—should always be viewed according to circumstances that are "performed and contested according to the context of the person," (215) as these are indicative of the person's cognitive ideas related to body, place, and time (216). Nye's stance on the rigid categorization of religion and Hori's analysis of the

conceptualizations of Buddhism may be applied to the debate on socially engaged Buddhism. To assert in a general way that engaged Buddhism is a new phenomena is to ignore historical evidence within and across traditions. Bodhi (2009; 2005) acknowledges that throughout history, particular traditions have been more or less socially engaged depending on the moment's political and economic conditions. The same can be argued for individual agents. Can we assert that the Buddhist who is active in her community but who refrains from explicit social participation while on pilgrimage in India is not an engaged Buddhist? Or, is the person who works full time in his home country but then volunteers for two weeks at a charitable institution in Bodhgayā suddenly "engaged"? To be socially engaged or not are designations that may apply to a particular moment, but prove to be problematic if used as an inherent, permanent identity.[64] And from a Buddhist perspective, Geraldine, an engaged pilgrim volunteering at the Maitreya School, commented, "Even though forms may change, it's all empty in reality; whatever we do, it's just empty."

At the (coreless) core of the engaged Buddhist worldview held by my most of my subjects is the non-duality between the spiritual and the profane.[65] This concept finds its roots in the common Mahāyāna statement, "Form is Emptiness and Emptiness is Form." Form represents *saṃsāra*, or the familiar relative world; whereas emptiness signifies *nirvana*, or transcendence of that world. In the introduction to his translation of the *Vimalakīrti Sutra*, Buddhist scholar Robert Thurman (1975, 1) interprets this statement:

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[64] In connection to this point, it should be noted that while most literature on Buddhism maintains the conventional, and arguably artificial, distinctions between the Theravāda, Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna traditions, closer examination of the historical and sociological context paint a different picture. In his analysis of Theravāda, Mūlasarvāstivāda, and Mahāsāṅghika legal texts, Gregory Schopen (1992) demonstrates how the application of certain monastic requirements prove that the various traditions were not independent from one another, but engaged in mutual borrowing of rules, regulations and social activities (104-5). Paul Harrison's (1987) work illuminates the lack of tension between the schools and depicts a certain fluidity and co-existence amongst the practitioners of each. Initial distinctions within the Saṅgha during the first thousand years after the Buddha's passing lay more in an individual's emphasis in particular doctrines and practices, not in name (73, 80), and perhaps not in robe either. Distinctions between the Theravāda "arhant" and Mahāyāna/Vajrayāna "bodhisattva" paths may also be considered as a state of mind. One lama from Himāchal Pradesh who is a direct disciple of the Dalai Lama told me that the categories of Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna had nothing to do with the colour of one's robes or of one's affiliation to a specific tradition, but instead, to one's attitude.

[65] Most of my informants held some variation of this view, even if they practised in a Theravāda tradition whose texts categorize reality dualistically (i.e., wholesome/unwholesome, mundane/transcendence, merit/demerit, etc).

It means that all finite things are interdependent, relative, and mutually conditioned, and implies that there is no possibility of any independent, self-sufficient, permanent thing or entity. An entity exists only in relation to other entities. It must be composed of parts, which came together when it was produced and which separate at the time of its dissolution. All things that can be observed, imagined, or conceived by our finite minds are relative insofar as they are limited at least by having a point of contact, hence a relationship...

Thurman (1975) and Williams (2001) explain that the idea "form is empty" does not negate the relative world, but defies the notion that any form can exist as an ultimate, inherent, or independent reality. Thus, from the Buddhist perspective, all people, things, and events are inter-related, and any view that perceives duality is a delusional mental construction. In this way, the belief that the "social" and "spiritual" are separate domains leads to incompleteness because both are inextricably linked. Similarly, Buddhist writer Norman Fischer (2008) proposes that "the essence of sacredness need not be exclusivity but rather particularity," thus enabling the practitioner to transcend boundaries and pay careful attention to whatever is at hand. Fischer asserts that this open and inclusive approach to the "sacred" allows for a freedom not based on individual projections, but grounded in clarity and insight, "the union we find within the particularity of each moment of our lives" (135). In other words, the sacred does not transcend the mundane, but is located within its every fibre.

Fischer (2008) comments that from a Buddhist standpoint it is irrelevant which type of path of liberation one chooses because "leaving home and staying home, renouncing the world and accepting the world, are seen as parts of a seamless whole" (137). From this vantage point, what is important is not one's object of practice, but the way in which it is carried out. Practice—whatever that may be—is "engaged" as long it is performed with awareness, appreciation, and equanimity.

Similarly, Christopher Titmuss, a Buddhist teacher and writer who has led an annual retreat in Bodhgayā for the last thirty years argues that social and spiritual are erroneous categories. During an interview with him, Titmuss responded to my inquiry about the relationship between these two domains,

It's exactly the same event. The two, I mean spirituality and social work, are in a way western constructs to determine and define movements of the heart. The difference between oneself and others is so miniscule; it's hardly worth referring to. We all share the same nature, the authentic nature of our being. It's like making a good meal, we just want to naturally share; we naturally want others to taste it...If we

explore our practice, we see that love and compassion emerges very naturally. It's up to all of us to serve the Dharma and remind people that we're all in it together.

Titmuss's words reveal a twofold, interconnected teleological process prevalent for Bodhgayā's engaged pilgrims: one is to achieve liberation from suffering for the benefit of all sentient beings (i.e., the bodhisattva ideal) and two, to respond effectively to Bihar's oppressive socio-economic context. This dual liberation composed of both the individual and society reflects a direct, mutual relationship. Without one, the other is impossible (see Bond 1996; Jenkins 2003; Puri 2006). Based on this line of thinking, individual liberation and social liberation are intricately interdependent. While a society benefits when its citizens are happy and secure; its citizens benefit intellectually, recreationally and spiritually when its society enjoys peace, prosperity and justice. As such, the Dalai Lama asserts that just as Buddhists must occasionally withdraw from the world to purify the mind; they must also actively participate in society. He writes:

> Sometimes we need isolation while pursuing our own inner development; however, after you have some confidence, some strength, you must remain with contact, and serve society in any field—health, education, politics...This is important because the very purpose of practising the great vehicle is service to others...in order to serve, in order to help, you must remain in society." (cited in Puri 2006, 125)

Elsewhere he explains:

> Buddhism and social activism can contribute to each other....While the main emphasis of the Buddha's teaching is on inner development that is no reason for Buddhists not to participate in the society in which they live. We are all dependent on others and so responsible to others. The fundamental aim of Buddhist practice, to avoid harming others and if possible to help them, will not be achieved simply by thinking about it. The phenomena of social activism is an attempt by like-minded people to alleviate social problems through drawing attention to them and trying to change the attitudes of those in a position to affect them" (cited in Puri 2006, 9).

Most engaged Buddhists perceive liberation from mental defilements as the ultimate goal of human existence; however, this task is difficult to practice in an oppressive environment. Thus, the process towards *nirvāṇa* begins with altering present social conditions. Or, as Jenkins' (2003) analysis of Mahāyāna texts indicates, this alteration is a prerequisite for moral and spiritual development. Engaged Buddhist leaders insist that Buddhists must acknowledge and attend to mundane issues if they are to understand the

deeper relevance of the Buddha's teaching. Moreover, Thai Buddhist writer and activist Sulak Sivaraksa (2005, 48) emphasizes that structural social injustices are not only perpetuated by physical violence, but are also maintained "by our selfishness and tacit consent." Individual and social suffering, then, results from "the interpenetration of external and internal causes," and therefore must be eliminated on both the personal and communal level. In other words, transforming greed, hatred, and ignorance into generosity, compassion, and wisdom is a natural corollary to transforming systemic social oppression into social welfare (61). Similarly, in his study of the Sarvodāya movement in Sri Lanka, George Bond (1996) explains the interconnectedness of dual liberation,

> If persons can awaken to the mundane truths about the conditions around them, then realizing the need for change they can work in society in the spirit of the Divine Abidings [i.e. loving-kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity]. As society is changed, the individual is changed. One who addresses mundane problems with compassion, finds the mundane world more compassionate. And in a more compassionate world it is easier to develop wisdom. (130)

In this way, resistance to social oppression is not separate from the struggle against the mental defilements of greed, hatred, and ignorance, but is an integral part of the path. In other words, social action is a means to an end. Addressing current material poverty is one of many steps on the long path towards liberation.

Several pilgrims in Bodhgayā acknowledged that the impoverished material surroundings offer them possibilities to work on one's own inner turmoil as well as to contribute to creating, maintaining, and improving local social conditions. Despite this opportunity for self and other transformation, a few pilgrims felt disquieted at times, as if their work was dependent on the perpetual poverty of these people. As one Australian woman who has been volunteering in Bodhgayā for the last twenty-five years described this paradoxical situation, "I am uncomfortably grateful—confusing isn't it?" Nevertheless, most pilgrims rationalize the complicated situation by saying that they are not personally responsible for the past bad karma of the Biharis, and that furthermore, they are here now to help create a better future for these people.

For instance, Geraldine, an English woman who has been practising various forms of Buddhism for the last twenty-two years, said that "practising" in Bodhgayā has helped her expand her consciousness and has also facilitated a greater self-understanding:

> Bodhgayā has helped me grow immensely as an individual. Besides my daily practices at the *Stūpa*, I've had many insights from living with a group of people at Root. You see, I had lived on my own and not had a serious relationship for the last nine years, so there were many things I did not see about myself that I saw here. Living in this context helped me overcome issues around vulnerability. Being in Bodhgayā and working at the school has made me see that I do not want to become a nun. Like with my teacher [guru] who is a lay person, I feel that the talents I have cannot be best utilized in a monastic or hermit-like setting, living like some ethereal being living up in a cave, but best in an earthy, hands-on, engaging atmosphere.

Geraldine's attitude is quite common amongst engaged pilgrims. The majority of these practitioners told me that they found it essential to wrestle with their inner suffering while simultaneously combating the suffering of the other. From this perspective the external is simply a reflection of the internal, in accordance with the Mahāyāna maxim that *nirvāṇa* is not separate from *saṃsāra*. Through the various social ventures such as the construction of schools, clinics, and vocational training centres, and especially when there are educational opportunities presented to locals to directly address the mind and emotions, many socially engaged pilgrims feel that they are beginning to scratch the surface of the poor Bihari landscape as the despair, at least for a few locals, is slowly changing into social and spiritual empowerment.

And as noted above, this empowerment is not a one-way street. Socially engaged foreigners in Bodhgayā have reported feeling nourished by their work, especially when the fruits of their labour are visible. However, many foreign pilgrim-volunteers expressed their frustration and discouragement working in an atmosphere completely ensnared in the web of poverty and corruption, causing it to seem as if their social visions have no possibility for success. However, Karl, Maitreya School's principle, reported, "Fortunately I feel emboldened by my vindication in instances where I feel my message gets through." He cited examples when he witnessed children speaking kindly to and acting generously with each other, appreciating school resources and facilities, passionately engaging in social and ecological activities at school, or creating artwork that demonstrates an understanding of healing emotions. So while local children benefit from the efforts of the school's foreign Buddhist administrators and volunteers, the latter rejoice in seeing the fruits of their actions. As Karl recounted, "it's living with compassion for the benefit of others that gives meaning to my life."

2.1.2. A Different Perspective

Since she was 19-years old, Arlene, a 30-year old Swiss woman volunteering at the Maitreya School, considered herself to be a dedicated student of Lama Zopa's. For ten years she participated on numerous retreats at Kopan Monastery in Nepal and at meditation centres in Europe, the United States, and India. In 2005, she wrote a letter to Lama Zopa explaining that she wanted to reduce her time devoted to formal tantric practices so that she could concentrate more on volunteering to assist underprivileged children. Lama Zopa responded that while her intention was noble she would gain less merits by taking that course of action. Arlene was highly offended, feeling that he had belittled her intelligence and ability to direct her own life. For Arlene, the motivation to help others is critical, more than the activity itself. Feeling that she needed to belong to a community that shared her worldview, she gradually withdrew her association with the organization (in fact, while she still supports some of the FPMT's socially-oriented projects, she recently re-discovered her Christian roots and has abandoned her Buddhist practices).

Similarly, Mark, the program director at the Root Institute's Shakyamuni Buddha Community Health Clinic, expressed his dissatisfaction with the organization because even though the clinic was struggling to keep itself alive financially, he was not allowed to fund-raise at the 150-plus FPMT centres worldwide. Moreover, this inability to fundraise was incongruent because he was permitted to do this with other Buddhist organizations. "The directors of the FPMT want their donations to be directed towards the construction of temples, monasteries, retreat centres, *stūpas*, and *pujas*," Mark observed. Another pilgrim commented: "They're probably scared that people will want to spend their money on alleviating material poverty—which is highly visible—rather than on alleviating spiritual poverty—which is less visible."

As I noted above, most engaged pilgrims perceive their social work as inseparable from and equivalent to their spiritual work. However, not all these pilgrims view their practice in this way. A handful of pilgrims place greater value on their prayers, meditation, and construction of holy objects more than on their worldly engagements.[66] Ironically, many

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[66] Anthropologist of Buddhism Peter Moran (2004) explains that temples, monasteries, and *stūpas* have become the cultural and religious symbols of the Tibetan community in exile, and play a

of these Buddhists are also those who are most connected to the FPMT—the umbrella organization that shelters many of Bodhgayā's most successful Buddhist social projects.

Before attending Lama Zopa's evening teachings at the Root Institute, I proceeded to the dining area for a quick cup of chai. The walls were plastered with requests for donations to construct prayer wheels, a new dining hall, and a dormitory. Other desired items included new solar water heaters for the residences, compensation for the travel expenses of meditation teachers, and the printing of more prayer books. Not one flyer on the wall targeted funds for the clinic or school. This absence was telling: while many of the pilgrims working at various FPMT charitable organizations in Bodhgayā had a particular view about their spirituality, this view did not necessarily coincide with the FPMT view that perceives social engagement as important, yet secondary to explicit Dharma practices such as meditation and prostration, circumambulation of and offerings to holy objects, guru and deity supplications, etc. On Christmas Day I attended a talk that Lama Zopa gave to a group of nearly three-hundred pilgrims. He explained that one should not think about satisfying people's temporary happiness, but should focus on ultimate happiness instead. Giving shelter and medicine are important, but not nearly so as creating the causes and conditions for generating enlightenment. This attitude is explicit in the Mahāyāna text *Large Sūtra on Perfect Wisdom* that unambiguously distinguishes between the importance of material and spiritual activity, because the material realm must be addressed before spiritual progress can occur (Jenkins 2003). From this perspective, engaged pilgrims involved with the FPMT participate in the creation of material conditions such as schools, clinics, and so forth since these are essential building blocks for the development of higher, spiritual activity.

2.1.3. Social and Spiritual: A Balancing Act in the Conventional World

Rita, a middle-aged Australian yoga instructor, spent most of her three weeks in Bodhgayā at the Maitreya School teaching yoga several hours a day to teachers and students. The school had a four-day break half-way through her stay in Bodhgayā, affording her the opportunity to

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significant role in maintaining important links to the past and in preserving the precarious tradition facing extinction. With this point in mind, it is clearer why Tibetan lamas and their close disciples place greater emphasis on donating to these projects over socially-oriented ones.

visit and meditate at some of the local Buddhist sites. She was accompanied by Tiffany, a Buddhist volunteer from England. Rita was glad to have the break from teaching six one-hour classes per day because she was beginning to feel burnt out and frustrated from not having enough time to do her formal meditation practices and prayers at the Mahābodhi Temple.

After eating a Westernized Indian *thāli* of rice, boiled vegetables and spiceless *dahl* at the Root Institute, Rita and I biked along the dusty dirt roads out to the village of Bakror to visit the Sujātā Stūpa and Sujātā Temple. Rita, a former tri-athlete who owns a fleet of high-end bicycles at home, was amused by the standard one-speed "Hero" bicycles that I had arranged for our trip. "If only my husband could see me now," she said appearing rather amused. Within seconds of our arrival at the Sujātā Stūpa, we were bombarded by three young men asking for donations to support their charitable school located across the road from the *stūpa*. I thanked the men for their information and told them that I would visit their school another time. Behind the front line of these English-speaking men was a small group of young children begging for money and making hand gestures rubbing their bellies and scooping food into their mouths. "Those people have lots of money, go ask them," I told the children, pointing to a group of Indian tourists who just arrived in a new Sumo, Tata Motor's latest sports utility vehicle. Rita smiled in relief as the children scurried off, and we continued the last few moments of our circumambulation around the massive brick structure in silence.

As we exited the waist-high rickety and rusty gate of the Archaeological Survey of India site, I warned Rita that our experience at the Sujātā Temple would be as "peaceful and contemplative" as it was here at the *stūpa*. Beggars and young men soliciting her for money generally make her feel uncomfortable; however, she was determined to continue with the day's itinerary. "I've come all this way to Bodhgayā, so I might as well visit these sites…besides, who said pilgrimage was meant to be easy." Whatever challenges she faced along the way were part of her journey and gave her the opportunity to practice tolerance and compassion. As we walked through the narrow dirt mounds that acted as pathways demarcating the plots of rice paddy, we were followed by a young boy, perhaps eight or nine years old, who persistently tugged at the corners of our shirts and had one palm stretched out, repeating his mantra *"rupee, rupee, rupee."* Since I had been to the Sujātā Temple on numerous occasions, the boy recognized me and knew I was able to tolerate his intentional annoying behaviour (it is typical of children beggars to act like that with tourists and scurry

off laughing as soon as they get some money) so he focused his attention on Rita. Despite feeling uncomfortable, Rita was very patient and polite, and told him to go away. Once we reached the temple complex, the guard shooed him off. To our surprise, we were the only pilgrims there. After the temple attendant gave us a brief introduction to the complex, we sat under the massive banyan tree with our eyes closed; appreciating the tranquility the site had to offer. Twenty minutes later we were awoken from our blissful state by a large group of about thirty white-clad Sri Lankan pilgrims tailed by at least a dozen local children shouting out their begging list: *rupee, pen, chocolate*. "Impermanence," said Rita, smiling as she dusted off her pants and feet before slipping her sandals back on.

Bicycling back to town across the wide concrete bridge built to accommodate "tourist buses" we saw a Hindu funeral about 100 meters away on the bank of the Nirañjanā River. Rita and I pulled over for a few moments to observe the burning corpse. "Life is so impermanent…life is full of suffering," she murmured. We hopped back on to our bikes and continued our way to our friend Radha's house who invited us for dinner to celebrate *chaat*, an important local Hindu festival.

At the end of the evening, Rita thanked me for taking her to the *stūpa* and temple, sharing that the excursion, along with her excursion to Rajgir the previous day provided a balance to the intensive work she was doing at the school. Rita's experience, similar to most other engaged pilgrims, reinforced the idea that while their daily activities are vital to their spiritual life, moments of quiet contemplation are also necessary to energize their work in society. This view correlates with the Dalai Lama's (1990) suggestion that spiritual practitioners strike a balance between contemplation and social activism. The former without the latter will be of little use in helping liberate sentient beings; the latter without the former makes one's work sterile and can lead a person to generate negative emotional states like anger, hatred, and frustration (cited in Puri 2006, 6, 125). When spiritual and social work are united, an attitude of cognitive detachment while serving others is generated, and the individual does not get dragged down by harmful psychological states. Cultivating the good heart—a term commonly used by both the Dalai Lama and Lama Zopa Rinpoche, as well as engaged pilgrims and local teachers at the Maitreya School—then signifies not only individual peace and contentment, but balancing between inner contemplation and outward activity, as both components are necessary for a healthy spiritual life.

This message articulating a balance between inner spiritual work and outer social action was also part of the discourse at Dhamma Bodhi, a non-sectarian meditation centre in the tradition of S.N. Goenka, surrounded by stretches of fertile paddy and located about four kilometres away from the Mahābodhi Temple. Occasionally, Maitreya School students go to Dhamma Bodhi for one-day meditation courses. On one of these occasions, I chatted with one of the volunteers during the lunch break. Andreas, a pilgrim from the Netherlands, was helping at the centre for two weeks, mostly by serving food, sweeping the pathways, ringing the gong, and attending to the needs of the meditators. He explained, "sitting and serving are like two wings of a bird. Both are necessary for flying!"

During my time in Bodhgayā I had the opportunity to speak with many engaged pilgrims volunteering at Dhamma Bodhi. Almost all of them mentioned that serving during a 10-day course was an ideal opportunity to learn about themselves in ways that differed from being purely a retreatant who did little more than meditate in a sitting position for twelve hours per day. They claimed that the social experience at the centres while serving is just as important as the inner meditative experience, as it alters the intense personal experience on the meditation cushion to a communal experience that is more easily integrated into one's daily life. These engaged pilgrims reported that they had found it difficult to incorporate the practice into their daily life as familiar surroundings and interactions at home often seduced them into their old habit patterns. Serving a course, or at the centre between courses, provides a novel setting that catalyzes awareness through outward activity.

By giving service, an opportunity for the ripening of compassion arises, thereby benefiting the individual and those whom the individual is associated with. Yet, like anything else I am told by these pilgrims, if done without proper awareness, it could stir up emotions of an exulted opinionated ego. This danger is recognised at Dhamma Bodhi and is responded to by setting aside three meditation periods per day for volunteers, and periods of longer intervals for those who commit to longer periods of service than ten days. These compulsory sessions of meditation allow the person to achieve a better understanding of not reacting to habitual issues that are frequently encountered in life, providing an opportunity for growth in situations normally deemed as obstacles. By learning to purify the mind from its various afflictive states, a person becomes conscious and empowered, thus in a better position to naturally assist in the positive transformation of the community. As an American volunteer put it: "My experience at Dhamma Bodhi was very dynamic. As a result, I feel like I have a

more informed sense of the practice and my relationship to the practice." He continued, "I like that this tradition offers both options to meditate intensively and serve others as well. Their presentation of the Dhamma allows for both spiritual practice and service to go hand-in-hand. What's better for oneself is better for others, for a more harmonious, less conflicted world."

Thus, so far, I have argued that while engaged Buddhism is not necessarily a modern and distinct phenomenon, and that Buddhism has always had a socio-political dimension to it, it is a relatively new form of pilgrimage activity in Bodhgayā. Throughout history, and today as well, approaches to social engagement amongst Buddhists have differed, even when there is agreement that the social and spiritual domains are not distinct. While some groups view social liberation on equal footing to individual liberation; others see it as less valuable, but as an important foundation for awakening. In any event, teachers such as the Dalai Lama assert that a balance between work in the "outer" and "inner" fields is necessary for a mentally healthy life. In what follows, I discuss how the three-fold practice of discipline, virtue, and altruism manifests in the lives of Buddhist pilgrims in Bodhgayā.

2.2. BLENDING BUDDHIST PILGRIMAGE AND ETHICS

Despite Buddhism's long history extending over two and a half thousand years and covering almost every part of the globe, three distinct, yet overlapping and interdependent modes of ethical practice exist: discipline, virtue and altruism. To locate the various dimensions of socially engaged Buddhist pilgrimage it is important to interpret this phenomenon with respect to Buddhist ethics. The objectives of these ethics are found historically in both Theravāda and Mahāyāna texts on training towards perfection. As Keown (1992; 2000; 2005) and Queen (2000) explicate, these practices are performed by observing monastic and lay discipline; meditating on the 'divine abodes' (*brahmavihāras*) and 'perfections' (*paramitas*); and putting those meditations into concrete practice by relieving the suffering of others.

2.2.1. Ethics of Discipline:

Precepts:

Throughout the day, swarms of lay pilgrims from almost every Buddhist tradition sit under or near the massive Bodhi tree to formally express their gratitude to the Buddha, his teachings, and his community by vowing to follow a practice of ethical discipline. This commitment is the foundation of the Buddha's path towards awakening, rooted in the five precepts for lay followers (abstinence from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, false speech, and intoxicants). Buddhist ethicist Sallie King (2009; 2005) explains that the negative formulation of these precepts indicates that they are the starting point of Buddhist ethics. The practice of self-restraint from disruptive behaviours evolves to more refined levels of morality and virtuous behaviour steeped in loving-kindness and compassion, as discussed below. Pious pilgrims often extend the number of precepts to eight—the first five plus abstinence from food after noon, sensual entertainment, and using luxurious seats and beds. On the full and half moon days monks and nuns can be seen sitting on their knees reciting the hundreds of precepts that guide their lives.[67] Buddhist ethics scholar Damien Keown (2005) suggests that the lay and monastic precepts are common to the various Buddhist traditions and transcend the multiplicity of beliefs, customs, philosophies and practices. He writes:

> The core is composed of the principles and precepts, and the values and the virtues expounded by the Buddha in the 5th century BCE and which continue to guide the conduct of some 350 million Buddhists around the world today. (3)

Buddhists generally express these ethical commitments in the form of these guidelines open to interpretation that assist the practitioner on the path towards awakening rather than as fixed divine laws (King 2009; 2005; Keown 2005; 2000; Saddhatissa 1997; Gunaratana 1985; King 1964). A salient feature of the Buddha's moral teaching is the absence of an inherent concept of sin such as that found in the Judeo-Christian traditions. Actions are seen as skilful or unskilful in so far as they perpetuate mental suffering, and hence constitute a barrier on the path of enlightenment (see King 2009; 2005; King 1964). By the tolerance of shortcomings, the determination to overcome them is made easier. Buddhist scholar Winston King (1964,

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[67] The total number of precepts for Buddhist monastics varies according to tradition, ranging from 218 to 262 for monks, and 279 to 380 for nuns. In his analysis of Buddhist lay and monastic ethics in modern society, Charles Prebish (2000) provides an important distinction between morality (*śila*) and monastic code (*vinaya*) as the former is a self-enforced ethical guideline, while the latter is an externally imposed framework for maintaining both inner discipline and a specific image for the wider lay community.

77) writes:

> The accommodation of absolute standards and distinctions to relative situations is not
> admitted surreptitiously through a side door in the religious edifice...but the principle
> of accommodation to human weakness is welcomed at the front door as an honoured
> and beloved guest.

An interesting expression of this accommodation is during the Theravadin *uposatha* ritual on full and half-moon days whereby monks and nuns admit their transgressions of the code of discipline in front of the elders. By confronting their mistakes and meditating to develop equanimity, the underlying motivations of these aberrations gradually dissolve. This aspect of practice involves the avoidance and prevention of behaviour stemming from harmful mental states such as craving, aversion and ignorance.

The Buddhist program for cultivating concentration (*samādhi*) and wisdom (Pali: *paññā*; Sanskrit: *prajñā*), in turn, requires the support of a moral discipline (Pali: *sīla*; Sanskrit: *śīla*) as well. Buddhist scholar-monk Gunaratana (1985, 15-16) states that:

> ...a moral foundation is needed for meditation follows from an understanding of the
> purpose of concentration. Concentration, in the Buddhist discipline, aims at
> providing a base for wisdom by cleansing the mind of the dispersive
> influence of the defilements. But in order for the concentrative exercises to
> effectively combat the defilements, the coarser expressions of the latter through the
> instruments of bodily and verbal action have to be checked. Moral transgressions
> being invariably motivated by defilements—by greed, hatred, and delusion—when a
> person acts in violation of the precepts of morality he excites and reinforces the very
> same mental factors his practice of meditation is intended to eliminate.

Hence, the Buddha preached ethical principles consisting of an abstinence from harmful mental, vocal, and physical actions in order to promote peace within oneself and in one's relations with others. Without these self-imposed moral guidelines, it would not be possible for the practitioner to progress in basic meditation practice, which for a Buddhist, is an essential tool for individual and social transformation (Saddhatissa 1997; Gunaratana 1985; Aronson 1980). Moral development in the Buddha's teaching evolves from an initially prescribed behavioural code to one that is a natural act. At the outset one follows the precepts out of self-interest as they are beneficial for personal liberation, but as the practitoner progresses on the path of purification, following them becomes an effortless second nature (Keown 2005; Queen 2000). Keown (1992) and Prebish (2000), however, propose that the

relationship between morality and the other soteriological elements of the Buddhist curriculum for achieving liberation is more complex than what the above authors assert. Rather than perceiving morality as merely a preliminary stage along the path, Prebish insists that morality, along with concentration and wisdom, are not part of a linear process, but are part of an interrelationship, that when each one is perfected, liberation is attained. In this manner, Keown (1992) insists that effort is made in the development of morality, concentration, and wisdom until they "fuse in the transformation of the entire personality in the existential realisation of selflessness" (111-112).

Selflessness:

Renunciation is integral to Buddhist discipline. In his essay "Homo Viator: From Pilgrimage to Religious Tourism via the Journey," anthropologist Luigi Tomasi (2002) argues that efficient travel and communications have changed the face of modern pilgrimage from a journey of penance and piety to one of leisure and recreation. However, Turner (1974) notes that hardship and sacrifice are common features of pilgrimage; these are conspicuous in Bodhgayā. By traveling to India in general, and Bihar—the most poverty stricken and lawless state in India—in particular, pilgrims experience varying degrees of personal sacrifice and adversity, which Rita Gross (1998), a Tibetan Buddhist scholar-practitioner explains are the foundation of meditation practice. In her analysis of the Vajrayāna supplication chant "renunciation is the foot of meditation," Gross argues that renunciation is not limited to any specific Buddhist form or content; rather is an attitude central to self-transformation (97). British Buddhist meditation teacher and pilgrimage leader Christopher Titmuss also explains how travelling to Bodhgayā strengthens the practice of awakening for both himself and his (mostly Western) students because of the personal sacrifices that are made. In an interview with me, he commented,

> My general perception of Western life is a kind of a pathological problem in terms of wanting, wanting, wanting, desire, desire, desire; there's never enough. It's a breeding ground for divisions, unhappiness, and violence... Being in Bodhgayā, being in India, brings out appreciation and joy for the simple things of life. The sheer austerity of pilgrimage brings an appreciation for the ordinary in the everyday life. When one goes back home, we are grateful for Western life and mindful of how important inner contentment is and not about getting what we want.

Besides the confrontation with jolting Bihari poverty, the hassles of prevailing corruption and

the harsh environmental pollution that all Buddhist pilgrims must endure, an increasing number of pilgrims also give of themselves by committing time, energy, and money, well above the price of travel and accommodation, to establish and support educational and charitable enterprises.[68] Underpinning the pilgrim's altruistic behaviour to renounce one's personal comforts is the Buddha's classic doctrine of *anattā* (Sanskrit: *anātman*), often translated as insubstantiality, selflessness, or no-self (see Puri 2006; Queen 2003; Keown 2000). This precept does not undermine a moral concern towards socio-economic development, as argued by Weber (1958). Quite the opposite, it is the theoretical foundation supporting altruistic, "self-less" action. Harvey (2000) suggests that the doctrine of *anattā* is meant to collapse the distinction between altruism and egoism, and King (2009; 2005), Puri (2006) and Keown (2000) suggest that this shift away from an individualistic perception denotes a reduction in greed and avarice, thus potentially encouraging cooperation and peace.

The doctrine of no-self asserts that there is nothing permanent or essential about the individual, who is constructed and conditioned by past actions and present presumptions. The "self" is a fluid, flexible and ever-changing collection of memories, thoughts, temperaments, and experiences. In spite of this view, Puri (2006) observes that Buddhist institutions are challenged to construct a praxis that is "in the world", but not "of the world." In other words, the engaged practitioner must physically and intellectually enter into the core of a social problem without getting drawn into the negative emotions that often accompany these problems. To do so, Sivaraksa (2005) insists that people must "recognize that we as individuals cannot distinguish ourselves from one another or assume to be above anyone else" (42). From this stance, enlightenment then, refers to the abolishment of the belief that we are independent and separate, and that we are all interconnected (42). Similarly, the Dalai Lama (1999) maintains that from a Buddhist perspective since the self has no "real" or "intrinsic" identity, it is logically impossible to refer to oneself existing in isolation from others. He writes, "self and other can only really be understood in terms of relationship, we see that others' interest and self-interest are closely interrelated...[and] in a deep sense they converge" (47). To illustrate the depth of what she refers to as a "nonadversarial stance" of

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[68] Not only socially engaged pilgrims make sacrifices, however. Poor Himālayan Buddhist pilgrims cross mountains by foot to get to the Buddhist sites. Therefore, the question are wealthy pilgrims who fly into and spend time and money in Bodhgayā doing something more "enlightened" than poor pilgrims who walk for several weeks to get there?

no-self, King (2009) demonstrates how engaged Buddhist leaders such as Thich Nhat Hanh and Cheng Yen have encouraged their students to think not only logically about this lack of separation as the motivating force behind altruistic and engaged action, but to *feel* the interrelationship between their happiness or suffering with that of others. For all these Buddhist teachers, this comprehension of no-self and interconnectedness, whichever way it is achieved, is the cornerstone of peace, justice, and security, and should be the focus of all education systems.

To be "in the world," but not "of the world" requires the individual to serve others without any desire for a particular reward, and according to Trungpa (1991, 65-73) is the only manner to act in accordance with the Dharma. Genuine, selfless compassion has little to do with outward behaviour, and is located in the practitioner's "selfless warmth," writes Trungpa. Discussing how an absence of a perceived self is a requisite for compassion, Trungpa writes,

> He doesn't even think in terms of his own psychological benefit; he doesn't think, "*I* would like to see him not suffering.' '*I*' does not come into it all. He speaks and acts spontaneously, not thinking even in terms of helping, or fulfilling any particular purpose. He does not act on 'religious' or 'charitable' grounds at all. He just acts according to the true, present moment, through which he develops a kind of warmth...He is not really aware of *himself*, so compassion has greater scope to extend to and develop, because here there is no radiator, but only radiation.

Several of my informants adhere to this view, or are at least striving towards it, yet it does not prevent them from taking responsibility. On the contrary, they maintain that this approach of selflessness enables them to act without any specific attachment to the results of the actions, which in "topsy-turvy Bodhgayā," Karl says, "is important because you never know when a project can get shut down." Trungpa (1991) calls this attitude, "generosity without possessing." In this way, all actions, whether appearing to be helpful to others or not, are a form of natural engagement, and as Geraldine, a Tantric practitioner, says: "Teaching and helping others is very natural for me, I'm not doing it to gain merits, like others around here do, but because it just feels natural, it just feels right."

2.2.2. Ethics of Virtue:

Beyond conforming to externally imposed guidelines, Keown (2005; 2000; 1992) notes that

several Buddhist texts emphasize the importance of developing positive habits and dispositions so that ethical demeanour becomes "the natural and spontaneous manifestation of internalized and properly integrated beliefs and values" (2005, 12). Similarly, Queen (2000) identifies the ethical practice of virtue as one that "moves from a restrictive sensibility to a constructive one" as the practitioner's relationship to others becomes more evident (13). In other words, ethical conduct does not arise solely from self-restraint, but from good moral character and feelings of love and compassion towards others (see King 2009; 2005; Dalai Lama 1999). It is true that none of my informants claimed to act perfectly in accord with this ideal; they do claim that they are striving to perfect their virtuousness at the mental, vocal, and physical levels through various trainings. In what follows, I identify several trainings such as generosity, compassion, joy, and contentment that are believed by engaged pilgrims to be crucial for preparing themselves towards a manner conducive for cultivating a "good heart," the foundation for dual liberation.

Generosity (Dāna):

"Are you coming to the *pūjā* tonight?" Melanie, a Root Institute volunteer, asked, referring to *Katina Purnima*, the commemoration ceremony celebrating the Buddha's descent to Sankasya from Tuśita Heaven where he spent the rainy season teaching the *Abhidharma* to a retinue of *devas*, including his mother who was reborn as a celestial being. My wife Michelle and I were planning on going to the Mahābodhi Temple, as we often liked to do in the evenings to watch the flurry of activity and take turns meditating and playing with our son Jai. Tonight was the October full moon marking the ceremony and we anticipated watching diverse Buddhist groups offer robes to the *Saṅgha*.[69] I was unaware that Root Institute had planned to make an offering, so I was delighted to receive the invitation as it offered an opportunity to observe this curious Western community in religious action.

After a typical light Root Institute dinner of vegetable soup and homemade bread, Michelle, Jai and I biked over to the Temple to join the Root Institute's group of retreatants and volunteers in offering a silk ochre robe, along with butter cookies and Cadbury chocolates to the golden Buddha statue at the Mahābodhi Temple. We sat among the group as

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[69] *Katina purnima* also marks the end of the monsoon retreat season and is often celebrated by offering robes, books, toiletries and other monastic necessities.

they recited special prayers in English written by Lama Zopa honouring the Triple Gem. Melanie, the program coordinator, helped Venerable Ngawang, the hefty English monk, lead the ceremony by passing around prayer booklets and ensuring that everyone was on the right page. Jai performed his own ceremony by crawling between the participants giggling and chanting "Buddha, Buddha, Buddha." To everyone's amusement, except Venerable Ngawang's who was sweating profusely from the heat and agitated that the air-conditioner was broken, Jai concluded the ceremony by peeing on the floor—"a very special *dāna*," joked Melanie.

The term *dāna* is usually translated as generosity, but refers more specifically to the act of "giving." Traditionally, lay Buddhists supply the community of monks and nuns with material necessities such as food, cloth for making robes, shelter and medicine because the ascetics are entirely dependent on the laity for material support. *Dāna* also implies donating funds for the construction and maintenance of temples, monasteries, retreat centres, and holy objects. Donation boxes dot the temple complex, providing opportunities for people to share their capital and gain merits, helping them reap positive karma for the future.

For many of my informants, especially Asian ones, providing to the needy and constructing Buddhist monuments is indicative of one's spiritual devotion and development. There is no dearth of *stūpas* and statues at the Root Institute, and upon close inspection, one observes that an overwhelming majority of the donor inscription plates contain Asian names. This is ironic because the majority of retreatants, visitors, and volunteers are Western, not East Asian. Peter Moran (2004) suggests that underlying the generosity of East Asian Buddhists is that they are born into a Buddhist tradition and are already familiar with the importance of the concept and practice of *dāna* as a way for engaging the subsequent *paramitas* of morality, patience, effort, concentration and wisdom, and are thus naturally inclined to give as much as they can.[70] One Singaporean practitioner explained, "building

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[70] Furthermore, East Asian *jindaks* often request their lamas to perform rituals that will bring them abundant wealth and good health. If the rituals are successful in terms of material prosperity for the *jindak*, then the donations will increase and more temples, monasteries, *stūpas*, and to some degree social projects will be built. Thus, the survival of Buddhist projects depends heavily not only on sponsorship, but on the ability of the lama to "perform." Similarly, in his discussion on the role of the Buddhist lama in the survival of Kathmandu's monasteries, Moran (2004, 63) writes: "Without the presence of a *tulku* of repute, who serves as the object of largesse, the *gompa* is less likely to appear as a suitable place for donors to offer financial and material support. The frequent trips...to the USA,

these things and helping the needy is a sign of egolessness.... There are many ways to practice. I am spoiled and cannot live like a monk in a cave, but I can practice renunciation by sharing my money and property." In this way, detachment, a corollary of generosity, can be performed in any number of ways.

Puri (2006), Keown (2000), Jenkins (2003), and Strensksi (1983) have noted that, in turn, monks and nuns also practice *dāna* by offering the laity teachings on harmonious and productive living.[71] From the Buddhist perspective, everyone—including monks and ascetics—are responsible for the preservation and perpetuation of social harmony. The Buddhist canonical literature is replete with examples of the Buddha instructing his monastic disciples to wander and share their spiritual knowledge and experiences by teaching the Dharma and affording opportunities for lay people to generate merit by offering donations. In the *Vinaya Mahāvagga*, the Buddha instructed:

Europe, and especially Taiwan, Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong to give teachings and perform religious rituals are vitally important to the economies of Bodhnath's *gompas*. By acting in their religious roles, and as representations of the Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha incarnate, *tulkus* are the most suitable recipients of donations from pious lay Buddhists; hence they are able to raise significant funds for their monasteries and for other religious work." The unique relationship between a religious teacher and his lay disciples can feature the practice of generosity which maintains religious and economic connections, contributing to the structure of what is perceived as normative Buddhist discourse and practice.

This bond between the wealthy *jindak* and the lama is also essential for organizational development; however, many Western disciples are unwilling or unable to match large East Asian donations and find it difficult to reconcile the material within the realm of the spiritual. In theory, then, the only benefits that donors receive are spiritual merits. However, from a practical perspective, as I noticed at Root Institute, large donors received more access to Lama Zopa. Shuyan, for example, a very large donor and fund-raiser from Singapore, had several private meetings and dinners with Lama Zopa, and received a beautiful "blessed" *thangka* as a gift from him. In his discussion on the economic relationship between the *jindak* and the spiritual preceptor, Moran (2004) writes, "Chinese Buddhists expect very *immediate* rewards for their generous offerings: special ritual empowerments from Tibetan lamas, more attention from them, and material blessings in the form of consecrated substances and amulets" (73). Teachers like Lama Zopa have extremely busy teaching schedules and do not have time for intensive one-on-relationships that many students crave. The idea that the lama gives more time to others because of financial contributions is disturbing to some disciples.

[71] In his investigation of religiously-interpreted material exchange, Ivan Strenski (1983) compares the simple, reciprocal restricted form of exchange versus the complex, all-inclusive generalised method. Strenski reveals how the latter has enabled the *Saṅgha* to not only maintain its unique status as a monastic institution free of commercialism and casteism, but also prevent it from falling out of existence (471-473). He argues that the *Saṅgha* fits primarily into the category of generalised exchange (with some overlap into the restricted) because its function for the laity is to exist as a "field of merit". This does not entail a direct exchange (i.e. the *Saṅgha* does not pay for their food and property with merit), but means that the *Saṅgha*'s mere existence provides opportunities for the laity to produce karmically beneficial actions (see also Jenkins 2003).

> Go now and wander, *bhikkhus*, for the good of many, for the happiness of many. Shower the world with compassion, for the welfare, good, and happiness of both gods and men. Let no two of you go in the same direction. Teach the Dhamma which is beneficial in the beginning, beneficial in the middle and beneficial in the end. Explain both the letter and the spirit of the holy life, completely fulfilled and perfectly pure (tr. Goldberg and Décary 2009).

Hence, monks were never intended to remain entirely aloof from society. Renunciation may be a central practice for Buddhists, there is also a simultaneous aim of establishing and maintaining a social framework based on wisdom, thus being "in the world", but not "of the world."

Both lay and monastic forms of *dāna* are widely practiced around Bodhgayā, evident by the incessant construction of temples and monasteries and the presence of Buddhist meditation masters offering philosophical discourses and meditation instructions. However, a new form of *dāna* has manifested in the sacred town as fund-raising and sponsorship activities by foreign pilgrims features not only traditional forms of generosity directed towards the construction of religious monuments and feeding religious professionals, but coheres with the new Taiwanese Buddhist view of charity, which Buddhist scholar Charles Jones (2009) identifies as "modern scientific charity." This practice—heavily endorsed by the engaged Buddhist organization *Tzu Chi*—consists of investing money in the latest medical, social, and educational technologies that will help eliminate the sources of immediate suffering.

The day after Christmas I was walking down the lane of Root Institute on my way to Maitreya School, I noticed Angelina, a Spanish nurse volunteering at the clinic for one-year and Dr. Santosh, the director of the clinic, with an Asian man unknown to me watching over some clinic staff members serve *kicharee* to about 50 locals. Shuyan is a *Feng Shui* and financial consultant from Singapore. He had collected funds to purchase "vita-meal," a blend of genetically modified rice and mung beans fortified with over 25 vitamins and minerals. He purchased 150 20-kg bags for the clinic, spending US $10 per kilo (about 10 times the price of standard beans and rice in the local market). Shuyan explained that Nuskin, a US-based bio-tech company, designed the product with the intention of selling it to rich sponsors for donating food to poor communities in the developing world. "This year my friends and I brought the food over in shopping bags instead of a big container to avoid paying duty," he said, feeling proud of his clever thinking.

On the last morning of 2007, Shuyan and I had a good opportunity to speak without being disturbed by his fellow pilgrims who often desired his attention for one reason or another. Lama Zopa's prayer session the previous night had continued until 4:00 a.m., so most people skipped breakfast that morning to sleep in. Sipping light, Western-style chai, Shuyan and I sat on the upper terrace of the dining area overlooking the vast paddy fields dotted with traditional village hamlets and modern Buddhist temples, monasteries, and guest-houses. Shuyan is a devout Buddhist and disciple of Lama Zopa, and has made a pilgrimage to Bodhgayā most winters since 1992. In Singapore he is on the board of trustees at Lama Zopa's FPMT centre and has also helped raise about US $150 000 for Maitreya School. This year he intends to travel for five days to the principle Buddhist pilgrimage sites and then undertake a personal three-week retreat in silence at Root Institute. After his retreat, Shuyan will return home and deliver a report to his fellow donors regarding the Maitreya School's progress.

In addition to Shuyan's contributions, most of the donations to Maitreya School and the Shakyamuni Buddha Community Health Clinic are from pilgrims staying at the Root Institute or who are affiliated with FPMT, although some donations do come from itinerant pilgrims passing by. Many people also donate on-line or by mail from abroad.[72] Most of these are single donations, although many people donate on an annual or monthly basis. The size of these donations range between US $25 per month to several thousand dollars per year, and every donor, regardless of the size of their contribution, receives a thank you note by email or mail. Most of the regular donors (*jindak*) who offer substantial contributions are Buddhists from Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan but the most significant donor is Lama Zopa himself who directs money offered to him to these projects. Some donors also come from outside the tradition as well. For instance, Mark recounted that last year a Theravāda monk showed up to the clinic with a group of twenty-five Burmese pilgrims. When the monk saw that they were not practising generosity, he chided them saying that they spend their money on futile devotional activities like putting gold leafs on pagodas instead of using their money to concretely help others. Within a matter of minutes, Mark chuckled, all the pilgrims pulled

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[72] There are three methods that people can donate from abroad: on-line, by cheque to a FPMT branch in the United States, or by depositing a bank draft to a special account (an option that loses the least money, but has impediments in terms of paperwork and tracing the draft).

out their wallets and amassed approximately $US 1000. Mark added that one of the largest regular donors to both the clinic and the school is not even a Buddhist, but a wealthy American Buddhist sympathizer who appreciates the social work carried out by the FPMT.

In his ethnographic study on Western Buddhists living in Kathmandu, Peter Moran (2004) observes that Western followers are generally more willing to donate to social projects with concrete goals rather than to the construction of monuments with abstract meanings. Unlike the great number of Tibetan and East Asian Buddhists I observed offering money to anyone with an outstretched palm, Westerners tended to have a tighter grip on their *rupees*. Shuyan explained that giving freely is a practice of detachment, "We try to give without judgement of the beneficiary's worth; we just give without thinking." Western donors, on the other hand, are more inclined to critically assess their recipients, fearing that they will be cheated for personal gain by scoundrels exploiting the local poverty. One Swiss pilgrim explained that he had a critical attitude towards giving for two reasons: financial and textual. While rich in the eyes of locals, he drives a taxi at home and has elderly parents and a daughter in university to support. He also believes—based on Buddhist texts that he has read—that there is a connection between the merits a donor accrues and the spiritual and moral worth of the recipient. In the *Anāthapiṇdikovāda Sutta*, the Buddha reportedly says:

> Giving gifts to anyone brings benefit; however the merits are greater in some cases than others. For example, giving food to a hungry animal is meritorious, but giving food to a hungry person is even more so. Similarly, giving food to a hungry person walking along the path of purification is more worthy than giving to a hungry immoral person. Because the fruits of the offering ascend higher and higher according to the integrity of that person, offering something to a fully enlightened being is the most meritorious. Since offering to the Buddha and offering to the *Saṅgha* is synonymous, giving something to any member of the *Saṅgha* is just as meritorious as giving something to the Buddha. (Tr. Goldberg and Décary 2009)

Following this advice, as many Western Buddhists do, it becomes evident why most Westerners felt more comfortable giving to charitable social organizations that have a longstanding reputation. Keeping this critical attitude in mind, many Western pilgrims are interested not only in offering concrete "modern scientific charity" (Jones 2009), but a system of "enlightened education" that will transform society at its roots. By contributing towards a Maitreya School type of holistic education that encompasses not only standard academic subjects, but a curriculum that includes teachings of self-awareness, the role of the

mind, interdependence and compassion (see chapter four), these socially engaged pilgrims believe they are developing generosity in the highest form, signified by the Buddha's teaching in the *Dhammapada*: "The highest donation is the donation of *Dhamma*." As one Vajrayāna practitioner explained, "a pilgrimage means travelling to a special place to meet with and practice the Dharma. The highest form of pilgrimage, then, is doing exactly what we are doing right here, right now, at the school." By offering an "enlightened education," these pilgrims believe that they are cultivating the root perfection (*paramita*) of generosity, which Keown (2005; 2000) and Trungpa (1991) propose is the foundation for the subsequent five perfections: morality, courage, patience, wisdom, and equanimity. Together, these practices, which Trungpa refers to as "transcendent actions" are aimed not only at perfecting the individual practitioner, but the society in which s/he lives. The person seeking to cultivate these perfections or actions is usually said to be a *bodhisattva*, a practitioner who is inclined to tread the path of compassion for the sake of all sentient beings.

In any case, whichever approach of *dāna* the pilgrim chooses, all informants agreed that sincerity of intention behind the act of giving was of utmost importance. A disorientated Western woman stepped into my conversational English class that I held twice a week for local health-care workers in the clinic's waiting room. Embarrassed by her intrusion, she meekly asked where she could find Dr. Santosh's office to leave a donation. "His office is just in front of you," I said pointing to the padlocked door with the large nameplate indicating the doctor's name, "but he's gone for the day. "Can I leave a donation with you?" she asked shyly. "Just put it in the donation box and he'll get it in the morning." She clumsily pulled out a large wad of cash consisting of thousand rupee notes—about as rare for an Indian as a thousand dollar bill for a North American. "I'm sorry it's so little, but that's all I can afford at the moment," she said as she stuffed a note in the donation box. "Don't worry," I said, mimicking numerous Buddhist teachers I had heard in the past tell their students, "it's the motivation to help others that counts, not the amount you give." Lama Zopa teaches his students that the practice of unconditioned generosity is the first perfection central to Mahāyāna Buddhism, and when combined with the sincere desire to attain enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings, becomes a cause of Buddhahood. In this way, the merits accrued from giving are not calculated by the amount given, but by the attitude in which it is given.

Generosity is the groundwork for virtue, and from it compassion flows. An American pilgrim who had recently finished the annual three-week Vipassana-Mahamudra course at Root Institute led by an Italian Vajrayāna monk said: "Every time I give something away, whether it is to a beggar, a friend, to the Dharma centre, whatever, I feel that I am letting go of insecurity and opening up to the world... For this alone, I am eternally grateful for coming to this wonderful, yet wretched place!" This feeling of gratitude is common to those who penetrate the Buddha's teaching. Goenka (1997) suggests that there are two ways to measure whether one has understood the *Dhamma*. One feels a sense of gratitude and cultivates a desire to serve others and help relieve them from their suffering by offering something material or even just one's time. Similarly, hooks (2006, 90) asserts that the act of giving enables a person to extend oneself to others. She writes, "Giving enables us to experience the fullness of abundance—not only the abundance we have, but the abundance in sharing. In sharing all that we have we become more. We awaken the heart of love." One afternoon I was in the office at Dhamma Bodhi and I overheard a conversation between two young meditators and a senior after a 10-day retreat. The smiling elderly man, asked the first woman for her to share her merits with him. "Oh no, I can't, it's so exhausting, I already have to share with my parents, my sisters, my neighbours, so many people I have to think about, it's too much." The old man turned to the other woman, "how about you?" he asked, his sparkling eyes looking into hers. "You can have all my merits!" the young woman said giggling. "Very good, my dear, you have understood the Buddha's teachings well." The old man was referring to what hooks meant by "abundance in sharing." The more that we give, the more that we receive; the more that we hold on to, the less room we have to accept life in all its forms. hooks (2006) asserts that people are caught in the web of oppression by their pervasive feeling that they are missing something, causing them to continuously grasp. Like the old man, hooks calls our attention to the idea that giving ourselves is the first step towards ending suffering, and that by "loving ourselves, extending that love to everything beyond the self, we experience wholeness."

Similarly, Sivaraksa (2005, 50) defines *dāna* as a "consciousness that stresses giving more than taking" and Trungpa (1991, 73) professes that generosity is to "free oneself from possessiveness, continual wanting." From this perspective, generosity is the basis of love, humility, and simplicity. Beyond giving material wealth away, these Buddhist writers perceive *dāna* as the courage to give up one's ego, to serve society, and to speak out against

injustice. In this way, *dāna* is interpreted as the giving away of fear. Sivaraksa believes that when an individual no longer fears the repercussions of speaking truth or even of losing one's life, then that person will be to serve society to the best of his or her ability (56-7). Ish, an American Tantric practitioner who has spent most of the last fourteen years meditating at Bodhgayā's Mahābodhi temple insisted that generosity has little to do with giving wealth to the poor. "Giving money to beggars and constructing all these buildings and monuments is very nice, but it is not the highest type of *dāna*, the type practiced by *bodhisattvas*...*Bodhisattvas* may give to charity, but that is not what makes them a *bodhisattva*. To become a *bodhisattva*, you need to give away your ego! This is the real practice."

Compassion (Karuṇā):

"How do you deal with the poverty?" I asked Fran, an Australian engaged pilgrim who has been coming semi-regularly to Bodhgayā for the last twenty years.

"I stopped thinking about myself," Fran replied softly. "In the early days, I easily got overwhelmed. Each time I went into a village, it felt like I was hammered into the ground. I was totally helpless, totally. It was awful, because I was here to help others!"

"So what changed?" I asked.

"With practice and guidance from Rinpoche I learned to lose myself, my own pettiness, and became open to their suffering. Sure, frustration and anger still arise when I see how in some ways so little has changed, but now I am more aware of myself, and this makes me more aware of others, and my heart opens." She paused for a few moments and continued, "The more I open up and act compassionately, the better I feel. And when I feel good, a connection is there, it's so tangible. I'm present, open, and loving, and whatever I do, whether giving an English lesson or just listening to a person's story over a cup of chai, I feel so connected. It's very natural"

Compassion, or *karuṇā*, the deep positive feelings of respect for other sentient beings, is a virtue common to all schools of Buddhism. In their published dialogue entitled *The Art of Happiness*, the Dalai Lama and clinical psychiatrist Howard Cutler (1998) insist that developing compassion is deeper than simply cultivating feelings of warmth and affection, and improving relationships with others. It consists of a non-violent state of mind

"based on the wish for others to be free of their suffering and is associated with a sense of commitment, responsibility, and respect towards the other" (114). The Dalai Lama calls Cutler's attention to the notion that genuine compassion is neither tangled up with attachment nor expectation, both of which can cause a relationship to be partial, biased, and unstable. While feelings of closeness may exist in these relationships, the Dalai Lama insists that as soon as a disagreement arises then mental projections associated with that relationship will shift from friend to enemy, love to hate, and so forth (114). A genuine, universal compassion, on the other hand,

> is based on the rationale that all human beings have an innate desire to be happy and overcome suffering, just like myself. And, just like myself, they have the natural right to fulfill this fundamental aspiration. On the basis of the recognition of this equality and commonality, you develop a sense of affinity and closeness with others. With this as a foundation, you can feel compassion regardless of whether you view the other person as a friend or an enemy. It is based on the other's fundamental rights rather than your own mental projection. Upon this basis, then, you will generate love and compassion. That's genuine compassion. (115)

Like Fran, most pilgrims claim that cultivating compassion in the way interpreted by the Dalai Lama is their primary aim of practice. Only by transcending one's own desires can a practitioner experience express sincere compassion and serve others selflessly. Lama Zopa tells a group of pilgrims visiting Shugatse:

> Pilgrimage is for the benefit of every single sentient being, every single hell being, every single hungry ghost, every single animal, every single human being, every single sura being, asura being, intermediate state being, and it also includes Bin Laden, and the person who hates you or who doesn't like you, or whom one doesn't like. So whatever you do is for the benefit of every single sentient being. (Lundberg, dir, 2007)

In this way, an aim of pilgrimage is not limited to expressing devotion to some higher force, but is a practice for transforming oneself and others. Several informants mentioned that coming to Bodhgayā has helped them understand the value of compassion towards both oneself and others, and has helped them strengthen their conviction of its efficacy and determination to deepen it within themselves and help others do the same.

Most pilgrims I spoke with used the language of compassion in their daily spiritual discourse. It was evident that compassion was something that they often thought about and put into practice by volunteering with some organization aimed at assisting the local

community in poverty alleviation. However, I wondered in what ways did these Buddhists cultivate the compassionate mind described in the various Buddhist texts, and what relationship did these abstract formal practices have with the concrete practical work in which they were immersed.

A common meditative exercise to generate compassion practiced by engaged pilgrims is the method of the 'divine abode' (*brahma-vihāra*).[73] This practice involves the cultivation of loving-kindness (*mettā- bhāvanā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), appreciative joy (*muditā*) and equanimity (*upekkhā*) where the practitioner directs these sublime qualities towards oneself, cultivates and enhances them, and then projects them outwards to others. By doing so, the practitioner frees him or herself from enmity, ill will and distress, and invokes generosity and happiness. Once these feelings are strongly rooted within, the practitioner can then direct them outward towards loved ones, acquaintances, enemies, and finally, all sentient beings. In this way, the practice of the *brahmavihāras* becomes a vital gesticulation for the support of social engagement. After repeated practice, the practitioner will experience these positive qualities and then act them out in society. Mona, a pilgrim from the Netherlands who has volunteered at numerous schools during the last fifteen years as an English, math, and science tutor comments, "I need to do this every evening, without it I am hopeless. Tuning in to the *brahmavihāras* is so cleansing....helps me connect to the people I'm working with, especially those who I get frustrated with!"

However, as Harvey Aronson (1980) points out in his classic *Love and Sympathy in Theravāda Buddhism* the practice of these *brahmavihāras* were traditionally performed in seclusion because they require a high degree of concentration. The perfection of these states, then, emerges by withdrawing from the world, not engaging in it. As meditational subjects, they are intended to produce a calm and tranquil mind that can radiate the four sublime qualities of loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity into the world, not to produce an ethic for social participation (see Aronson 1980). Still, as Bond (1996, 126) observes with the Sarvodāya movement in Sri Lanka, and further maintained by several of my informants, these practices help them cultivate a positive state of mind in face of all

[73] Traditionally this is a Theravāda Buddhist meditation; however it is not uncommon to find Mahāyāna Buddhists (at least Western ones) also practising this meditation, or some variation of it, as I observed at the Root Institute and with practitioners in Chogyam Trungpa's Shambhala tradition.

challenges and empower them to continue with their social action. A.T. Ariyaratne, Sarvodāya's leader, argues that using the *brahmavihāras* purely as a meditation exercise is insufficient, they should be a motivational tool for compassionate action (cited in Bond 1996, 127). Thus, while the classical formulation of the practice may have a specific implication, contemporary engaged Buddhists have widened the meditation's meaning and enactment.

Not only are the *brahmavihāras* practiced as meditations and "compassionate actions" by engaged pilgrims, but also by local Maitreya School teachers and students as well. During *Chāth Pūjā*, a local holiday celebrated a week after the national new-year holiday, *Diwali*, Divesh, from class 9, had lost an eye when a faulty firecracker exploded in his face. The next morning during assembly at school all the children practiced the *brahmavihāras*, keeping Divesh in mind, sending him loving-kindness and compassion. All the students then made him "get well soon" cards, and some of his classmates offered to tutor him at home so that he would not fall too behind in his studies. These children demonstrated the *brahmavihāras* not only as meditative exercises, but as concrete actions as well.

In his numerous books and lectures, Lama Zopa constantly emphasizes the *brahmavihāras*, especially kindness and joy, as "meditations in action" to be cultivated on the path towards Awakening. In my readings of his work and of the behaviour of his disciples, I try to understand how these qualities actually manifest beyond mere contemplation and discourse. On Christmas Day in 2007, I hopped on to the rickety bus that the school had arranged to take the student performers and supporting teachers to the upscale Renaissance Theatre in Gayā. This year, the students were putting on an extra performance of the annual cultural program to an audience of approximately fifty local politicians and education officials, foreign social workers and dignitaries, and Maitreya School teachers, volunteers and sponsors. Lama Zopa was visiting at this time and Karl had convinced the theatre's owner to allow the students to use the venue for their program (the students usually perform the program in the school playground). I sat in the front of the bus with a boy in class four. From the moment I visited his class and spoke about Canada early on during my time at the school, the boy was fond of me and always wanted to talk to me. As we rode along the pot-holed road, he lovingly held my hand and excitedly and proudly pointed out almost every object that we passed, as if they were all his toys. "*Dekho, chowel dekho* (look paddy field)! Now look, *chai-wallah*! You see, *dekho*, look, Gayā jail!"

Karl opened the cultural program at the Renaissance Theatre by introducing Lama Zopa Rinpoche. Lama Zopa sat in a beautiful wooden chair carved with floral patterns, surrounded by all the student performers. As Karl introduced his guru, Lama Zopa had his eyes closed and hands in the *añjali mudra*, as if he were praying for the welfare and happiness of everyone in the audience. Lama Zopa spoke of the importance of developing the qualities of kindness and joyfulness, which he believes should be central to any education system. His sentences were punctuated with fits of coughing and throat clearing sounds. Several of the Rinpoche's disciples believe that his bodily sounds are not the ordinary suffering of old age, but "manifestations of Buddhahood" that test his audience's patience and discipline. I tried to keep an open mind when I first heard this mystical interpretation during Lama Zopa's teachings at Root Institute, but found this over-zealous reading difficult to validate when I heard him speak to the group of people at the Renaissance theatre who were not his devoted Buddhist followers but a multi-faith audience.

For the next forty-five minutes, Lama Zopa spoke about the history and philosophy of Universal Education (see chapter four), its importance due to religious diversity, and that a teacher-training manual should be available for wider circulation. The goal of the curriculum, he said, was to understand the causes, conditions of, and ways to eliminate human suffering. The main emphasis of Lama Zopa's lecture was that to bring about world peace all people, but especially children from an early age, must learn to develop the qualities of kindness and joyfulness:

> Practising kindness is a cause for success. When you make others happy and when you see others happy, you become happy. Practising joyfulness means when you see good things happen to other people, like them getting a beautiful house, 7-star hotel; then you also rejoice. When you hear someone gets a million dollars, you feel happiness. When you see suffering people have friends, you feel happy. This creates the cause for one-hundred thousand times more success and wealth. Through kindness and joyfulness you eliminate not only poverty of wealth, but poverty of spiritual attainments.

Prebish (2000) theorizes that the ethical framework of the *brahmavihāras* should be used as a resource to become involved with modern manifestations and reconfigurations of Buddhist ethics. Upon hearing Lama Zopa's words, I immediately thought of the previously mentioned enthusiastic young boy from class four. On every occasion that I saw him at school he projected a wide smile and acted graciously to others. I once asked this eight-year old boy

whose parents were near the bottom of Bihar's social ladder why he was so happy. With his characteristic Indian head wobble, he beamed a smile, "good education *matlab* [means] good heart." In this way, these *brahma-vihāra* qualities are considered essential for providing the nutrients required for eliminating "subtle negative imprints" on the mind, or as Buddhist scholar Peter Hershok (2009, 159) claims, enable practitioners to live "radiantly unconflicted lives" by stopping negative mental patterns that "impede relational immediacy and responsive acuity." Lama Zopa concluded his talk by asserting that these qualities, as well as other positive qualities such as tolerance, patience, forgiveness, and contentment are essential wholesome elements of a child's basic education in order to bring peace, harmony, and freedom in oneself, one's family, and the world. These qualities translate as *kusala*, and as Hershok (2009) elucidates, do not simply mean to do what is "wholesome," but to *excel* at what is "wholesome." Doing so may not necessarily empower practitioners to control external situations, but empower them to think, act and relate to others freely, even in oppressive situations that most people face in Bihar. In this way, perfecting the "good heart" is the Maitreya School's primary objective.

Other methods used by engaged pilgrims wishing to develop compassion, especially those practising in the Vajrayāna tradition, are those associated with the Medicine Buddha. One afternoon I joined a group of retreatants on a typical clinic tour that happens after every retreat. We were guided around the clinic by Mark who spoke about the clinic's activities. After Mark was finished, we all sat in the upstairs waiting room where Ram, a local nurse, described the typical patients who come to the clinic. Above Ram was a *thaṅgka* of the Medicine Buddha, who resembles the Tibetan image of the historical Śakyamuni Buddha, with the exception that he is bright lapis blue and that he has a bowl of healing herbs in his lap, rather than a begging bowl. His palm facing outward, in the *mudra* of giving, seemed to be blessing Ram's audience. When he completed his talk, Venerable Ngawang, the burly English monk, who had led the previous retreat taught the group a Medicine Buddha meditation. "Close your eyes and visualize the Medicine Buddha radiate healing energy. If you do not feel comfortable visualizing the image of the Buddha then choose any religious icon, Jesus, or whatever you wish, or simply a universal, pure energy. In whatever form or non-form this energy takes, now direct it towards yourself...the patients in this clinic...the health-care workers...the volunteers...the people of Bodhgayā...Lama Zopa Rinpoche...all

sentient beings." After the practice, the monk distributed little autographed cards with a Tara image and mantra inscribed on it *Om Tara Tutare Tare Sohā*; he then instructed the group to chant the mantra twenty-one times. He closed the session by rapidly reciting the Medicine Buddha mantra: *Tādyatha Om Bekhandzye Bekhandzye Mahā Bekhandzye Radza Samudgate Svāhā*.

Afterwards many of the students expressed their appreciation for Ngawang's generosity and inclusiveness to allow room for everyone to participate in the compassion practice. One student excitedly shared, "That was really powerful. My mind was focussed and clear and now I feel fresh." His companion said, "The energy was awesome, I'm totally buzzed right now." Hearing about their experiences, Ngawang told us that Lama Zopa often teaches that the more energy we give, the more we get back.

Ngawang then took the retreatants to visit the newly constructed Tegar Karmapa monastery, with stunning paintings. I stayed behind to chat with Angelina, the Spanish volunteer, who came in on her day off to visit a patient and her baby who were both infected with AIDS. I asked her if she ever did the Medicine Buddha practice and she explained how every morning she practices *ānāpāna-sati*, or awareness of respiration, for about 45 minutes. "It's very good for me, but very difficult to control my mind, it wanders all over the place. I like much better my Medicine Buddha," the short woman with piercings in her eyebrows and lip says. Later I learned that this Medicine Buddha mantra and visualization practice is common amongst many engaged pilgrims, especially those working in the field of health.

In her translation and commentary on the mantra, Buddhist writer Lillian Too (2003, 92) writes,

> *Tadyatha* means "like this." *Om* is composed of the three pure sounds that signify the holy body, speech, and mind. *Bekhandzye* means "eliminating pain." What eliminates pain is medicine. But this is not ordinary medicine: the first elimination is the pain of true suffering, the second is the true cause of suffering. The medicine is to take two paths that are part of the path to enlightenment. *Maha Bekhandzye* means "great eliminating pain" and refers to the graduated path of the higher capable being, which eliminates the subtle defilements. So *Bekhandzye Bekhandzye Maha Bekhandzye* contains the whole path to enlightenment: the ultimate medicine. *Radza* means "king." *Samudgate* means "he who has come forth." *Svaha* means establishing a foundation in the heart: the blessing, the devotion from which the devotion comes.

Reciting the Medicine Buddha mantra, then, may have a dual purpose. On the one hand, it is believed to contribute to the alleviation of physical, mundane suffering of both the reciter and

the people it is directed towards. On the other hand, the mantra is also believed to help the practitioner attain enlightenment and then elevate others to that state. Too continues,

> So the Medicine Buddha mantra implies that, by actualizing the path contained in *Bekhandzye Bekhandzye Maha* Bekhandzye – the whole *Lam Rim*, or graduated path to enlightenment – a person is able to cease all defilements (both gross and subtle) and purify and transform the ordinary body, speech, and mind into the vajra holy body, speech, and mind. After this, one is able to perfect work for other sentient beings.

Lama Zopa further explicates the power of this mantra,

> Reciting even one mantra or hearing just once the Medicine Buddha mantra is much more precious than the sky filled with gold, diamonds, wish-fulfilling jewels. So with full trust in Medicine Buddha you recite the mantra, knowing that Medicine Buddha will completely take care of your life, heal you. With full trust know how Medicine Buddha is always with you, in your heart, on your crown, in front of you. There is not one second that Medicine Buddha does not see you or have compassion towards you. With the Medicine Buddha mantra you can liberate numberless sentient beings from oceans of suffering and bring them to enlightenment (cited in Too 2003).

With this sort of trust both Mark and Angelina recite the Medicine Buddha mantra most evenings while circumambulating the Mahābodhi Temple, saying they do so for the benefit of patients at the clinic in particular and for all beings in general. Both explained how in addition to the mantra, they also visualize the Medicine Buddha hovering above the person as he pours healing nectar from his bowl into the crown of the person's head, making him or her feel well and happy. The visualization then continues with the Medicine Buddha emanating cooling blue light beams that reach all sentient beings, including themselves. The Medicine Buddha then melts into them, becoming one. After such a practice, they feel refreshed and strengthened for another day of intense work at the clinic.

Every day a recording of Lama Zopa chanting the mantra is played at high volume in the clinic because it is believed that anyone who hears it, whether they have faith in the Dharma or not, will overcome their suffering and never be reborn in a lower realm again. Angelina further explained that the mantra increases the power of the medicine in the clinic. Similarly, a Singaporean woman said that she chants it every day in her home and plays Lama Zopa's recording when she is out, believing that her pet cat and goldfish will never again be reborn as an animal—a status believed by Buddhists to continuously live in a state of fear, which impedes attaining liberation.

This Medicine Buddha practice described by the above informants is a well-articulated form of *sādhana*, or self-transformation, along the Tantric path. Buddhist scholar Janet Gyatso (2002, 184) elucidates the procedure where the practitioner visualizes oneself as a Buddha or a deity:

> Sometimes the self is transformed when visualized buddhas or deities appear in the space in front of the meditator and grant blessings and powers. Sometimes they instead sit on the meditator's head and squirt transformative substances into his brain. The most thoroughgoing self-transformation is called self-creation. The meditator actually becomes the enlightened Buddha deity. The visualization of the meditator's body, speech, and mind in a new guise is then supported by mantric chants, along with a revisioning of inner organs as well as experience as such.

While many engaged pilgrims practice this complex procedure, only a minority of adept meditators are thought to effectively carry it out. Most pilgrims were reserved about discussing their practice, although one pilgrim whom I got to know well shared her experience with me.

> After breathing deeply and concentrating my mind, I visualize my body dissolving into emptiness. Then I visualize a mantra-seed syllable given to me by my guru, from which he appears. At first I had to keep a photograph of him to help me remember the details of his robes, his physical features, his penetrating gaze, but now his image is strongly fixed in my mind. When my mind is very concentrated, I visualize, and even feel, the guru's energy flowing through me, which intensifies when I chant particular mantras and prayers. It's like we are one, in fact, we are one! I conclude the session by dissolving the guru's image, like I did with my own image at the beginning of the practice.

Her rituals and formal practice last about 30 minutes per day. She feels that her guru, a Tibetan Rinpoche living in South India is an emanation of wisdom and compassion. She compared him to a powerful and charismatic businessman who "has everyone at his fingertips, except that his motivation is *bodhicitta*, not economic profit and power... He has a raw energy that allows him to work incessantly and effortlessly, an energy that I wish to tap into," she says. To do so, the woman calls upon her guru's energy to enter her and enable her to become a manifestation of him. "It's similar with deity yoga where I invoke a particular deity depending on what I need. I usually invoke the Medicine Buddha because I am a healer. People always come to me with their problems. It comes natural to me to soothe people, and when I have the Medicine Buddha with me my skills are that much more effective." Trying to

understand this practice which is entirely foreign from the observation-based Vipassana practice that I am familiar with, I inquired how this type of mantra and visualization helps her in her daily life. She explained, "for one thing, it helps me realize emptiness at an experiential level. Without this realization, genuine compassion cannot arise. By having my guru or the Medicine Buddha enter me, unify with me, I feel stronger and more competent to continue with the challenges faced on my journey towards liberation."

This pilgrim's experience corresponds with Gyatso's (2002, 185) description of the three-dimensional map of self-transformation where the meditator "learns to see him- or herself as looking like the Buddha-deity from outside, appropriates the speech patterns of the deity by chanting its mantras, and learns to feel the experiences of the deity within." Similarly, in considering Lama Zopa's continuation of his guru, Lama Yeshe's religious and humanitarian work as described by Mackenzie (1991), advanced practitioners are said to also identify with the historical guru's personality and mission. Gyatso (2002, 191) maintains that beyond visualizing the guru's body, speech and mind, advanced meditators may "assume and carry out the guru's writing projects...visionary, educational, or building projects, and especially, take on the guru's institutional position and property" (191). For advanced Vajrayāna meditators, this complex, reflexive, and transformative practice requiring sustained concentration and imagination manifests realizations of emptiness identical to the guru or deity, and for those meditators with an explicit socially engaged ethic, this practice is the bedrock of their participation in social affairs.

2.2.3. Ethics of Altruism—and Engagement

Palmo, a Western Buddhist nun, discovered in the streets a leper who was on the verge of death. His wounds all over his body were exposed and covered with flies. None of the other beggars wanted to sit next to him and none offered him any food or water. Feeling compassion for the man, the nun decided to bring him to a hospital. She called over a rickshaw driver, but he refused, not wanting to have his vehicle sullied by the leper. She asked several drivers, but they all shook their heads. Finally, without much choice, she picked him up and carried him on her back to Root Institute. She was sweating profusely as the old man must have been about one-hundred pounds. Fortunately, after a few minutes of this laborious task, a polio-stricken beggar named Ram who rides around town in his arm-

operated tricycle, felt pity and offered to help take him to the clinic, where she cleaned his wounds and fed him before he died a couple of days later. Palmo was not what one typically called an "engaged Buddhist" since her religious life had been composed primarily of meditations, prostrations, prayers, and study. Her unselfish regard for the beggar, however, signified the results of years of discipline and virtuous behaviour, and is an example of the ethical practice of altruism, and by association, engagement.

As Palmo's story exemplifies, it is problematic to distinguish between altruism and engagement. In the ethnographic examples that follow, most of the cases I cite deal with altruistic activity on an individual or grassroots organizational level. While authors such as Queen (2000; 2003) may contend that however noble these actions may be on their own, they would not constitute "engagement" because they do not directly address the complex and pervasive political oppression, socio-economic injustice, and ecological destruction that Bihar faces today. Following the positions of Buddhist teachers and scholars such as Thich Nhat Hanh, Robert Thurman, David Loy, and Bhikkhu Bodhi, I understand that the actions of Palmo and of the other Buddhist pilgrims I cite are as engaged as those who confront violence and oppression on structural levels. In Bodhgayā, several of the foreign actors institute social changes in alignment with the social, political, and economic capital that they possess. Palmo observed actual suffering and immediately responded to it in whatever manner she could. It would be inaccurate, and even insulting, to judge her behaviour as disengaged simply because she did not explicitly challenge Bihari political figures for allowing such abuses of human rights to exist. From the Buddhist perspective, one's level of engagement is not measured by one's level of political clout but by the dedication to the ethical practices of discipline and virtue which provide force to the altruistic responses to the suffering of sentient beings facing abuse, injury, or death. From the Buddhist standpoint, altruism rooted in discipline and virtue is the bedrock of a harmonious and productive society composed of wise and compassionate individuals.

As the various social activities in Bodhgayā reveal, the array of concerns that motivate Buddhist pilgrims to community service encompass is vast, touching upon education, health-care, environmental destruction, lack of employment, alcoholism, domestic abuse, among others. To investigate the ways in which these concerns are approached from the Buddhist perspective of altruism, I turn the reader's attention to an overview of the work of Anagarika Dharmapala, arguably the first socially engaged Buddhist pilgrim in Bodhgayā.

I then move on to discuss contemporary actors beginning with the work of Buddhist teacher Christopher Titmuss, followed by volunteers at the Maitreya School and Shakyamuni Buddha Community Health Clinic. All of these engaged pilgrims face enormous challenges in their work, providing them ample opportunity to put their Buddhist reflections into concrete practice. It is one thing to have an altruistic intention and carry it out to the best of one's ability; it is another to do so where the details of altruism—such as no-self—are maintained.

Anagarika Dharmapala and the Mahābodhi Society[74]

Anagarika Dharmapala, a charismatic advocate of Sinhalese independence from British colonial rule and the founder of the Mahābodhi Society, was arguably Bodhgayā's first socially engaged Buddhist of the millennium. This pioneer's work in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century in Bodhgayā and Sārnāth was a living testimony of practical ascetic spirituality, justified by his role of an *anagarika*, or homeless one. In reference to Dharmapala's work in Sri Lanka, Bond (1996, 123) explains, "Since an *anagarika* was neither a monk nor a layman, this status enabled Dharmapala to pursue the religious life and be active in the world without having the restrictions of the monastic life." Dharmapala's social campaigns were a response to criticisms by Christian missionaries that Buddhism was negligent, backwards, and other-worldly, and as Bond points out, a tool for which Christian missionaries justified their religious and educational presence. To counter arguments that Buddhism lacked a social ethic, Dharmapala's approach to activity and service found inspiration from the *suttas*. He wrote, "To build a rest house for the public good, to build a bridge,...to help the poor, to take care of parents and holy men,...to establish free hospitals...all these are productive of good karma" (cited in Bond 1996, 124).

In Bodhgayā, Dharmapala is best known for his campaign to revitalize Buddhist practice at the Mahābodhi Temple and his organization's health and education projects. For today's pilgrim or tourist briefly stopping over in Bodhgayā, the Mahābodhi Temple, on the surface, seems to be a celebration of peace. From a historical perspective of the temple,

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[74] For a detailed history of Dharmapala's struggle to reassert Buddhist control of the Mahābodhi Temple, see Alan Trevithick's (2006) *The Revival of Buddhist Pilgrimage at Bodhgayā: Anagarika Dharmapala and the Mahābodhi Temple*. The narrative presented here is taken from Trevithick, as well as Kemper (2005), Asher (2004), Kinnard (1998), Doyle (1997), Bond (1996), Barua (1975), Mitra (1972), and Sangharakshita (1952).

however, serenity has not always been evident. The temple has a long socio-political history of neglect, renovation, destruction and reconstruction, laying the ground for bitter contestation over control of the temple.

Shortly after Turkish forces ransacked Bodhgayā[75] in the 12th century, a Burmese Buddhist faction attempted to restore the site.[76] Nonetheless, the site was ill-maintained due to a lack of pilgrims and financial support, and fell into desolation for the next four-hundred years. In the sixteenth century, a Śaivite Mahant from the Giri order[77] moved into the deserted Mahābodhi Complex, established a small monastery, and replaced the temple's Buddha image in the inner sanctuary with a Hindu deity. Respecting the image, the Mahant did not discard it, but placed it outside near a Śivalingam. By the time Buddhist attention refocused on Bodhgayā in the nineteenth century, the monastery had increased its size and the Śaivites had no intention to abandon their niche. During the Mahant's occupancy, the temple greatly deteriorated until 1877, when another group of Burmese Buddhists funded by King Mindon Min of Burma initiated a project, with permission from the Śaivite Mahant, to restore the seat of their spiritual heritage. Shortly thereafter in 1880, in response to archaeologist Rajendralala Mitra's concern that the Burmese cared more about the site's sanctity than its archaeological value, as they used materials from ancient artefacts to construct a new wall and "sticking foolish heads on to ancient torsos" (Mitra 1972 [1876], i), Alexander Cunningham of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) returned to Bodhgayā for a third time[78] to oversee and "scientifically" guide the Burmese through their restoration and excavation process.

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[75] Asher (2004) observes that there are no records confirming that it was the Turks who invaded Bodhgayā, but given the fact that the area was plunged into chaos at that time, pilgrimage to Bodhgayā was significantly limited (66). However, the *Biography of Dharmasvamin* (tr. G. Roerich 1959) recounts the Tibetan monk's adventures of fleeing from the Islamic armies and hiding out with four other monks in the Mahābodhi Temple after it was pillaged.

[76] In 1298, King Mindi of Arakan left a donative inscription that recorded the history of the temple's restoration work by the Burmese. The inscription also evoked details of his own work and the donations for the maintenance of temple rituals. See Barua (1975) for a historical list of Burmese sponsorship of the temple.

[77] Giri is a sub-sect found in each of the ten schools (*Dāsnāmi*) of the Śankarācarya lineage.

[78] Cunningham visited Bodhgayā in 1861 to draw diagrams and illustrations of the site. He revisited in 1871, leading to recommendations to the government to undertake excavations, and a publication about Bodhgayā's antiquities (Mitra 1972 [1876], v). While the term "Great Temple" is employed in Mitra's book, Asher (2004) writes that it was in Cunningham's 1892 monograph where the name "Mahābodhi" first appeared (63).

By the time the Burmese arrived, the Śaivite Mahant was one of the largest landholders in the area, so his conversion of the temple and subsequent neglect was never contested. In 1891, however, Śaivite control was contested. After reading Sir Edwin Arnold's celebrated *Light of Asia* an emotional essay about Bodhgayā's dismal state of affairs, Dharmapala travelled to Bodhgayā and was dismayed at what he saw: Buddhist images worshipped as Hindu gods,[79] ancient artefacts used as building components (as did the Burmese!) or submerged in garbage. In response to what he felt as a religious devastation of the sanctuary, Dharmapala founded the Mahābodhi Society to promote the Buddhist teachings around the globe in a non-sectarian fashion, but more importantly at that time, to reclaim the ancient Indian Buddhist sites.[80]

One of Dharmapala's first political acts in Bodhgayā was his attempt to install a Buddhist image, donated by Japanese Buddhists, in the temple's sanctuary. Almost immediately, Dharmapala and his associates were assaulted by thugs hired by the Mahant and the image was tossed into a nearby pond. Until his death in 1933, Dharmapala waged a series of unsuccessful legal battles against the Śaivites over temple control. Ultimately, however, Dharmapala's efforts at generating public support were not entirely wasted as they had generated public sympathy not only in India, but worldwide. In 1949, the Bihari state government mediated the dispute by removing the Mahant's absolute power over the temple and proclaimed the Bodhgayā Temple Act assigning Buddhists partial control of the temple. While the balance of power of the new temple management committee still favours the Hindus (five Hindus, four Buddhists), the Mahābodhi Temple Complex became (and still is) fully accessible to both Buddhists and Hindus to worship however they like.[81] Moreover, a

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[79] Appropriation of Buddhist images is still a common practice in villages near ancient Buddhist sites. The most notable example is in Lumbinī where the sculpture depicting the Buddha's mother, Queen Māyā holding a branch of the sāl tree while giving birth to her son is worshipped as a local Hindu goddess Mahāmāyā.

[80] Kemper (2005) adds that at that time, a primary aim of the Mahābodhi Society in Sri Lanka was to return Sri Lanka to what they assumed was a pre-colonial, Buddhist way of life (29).

[81] In his study on the religious and legal strife between Dharmapala and the Śaivite sect, Jacob Kinnard (1998) suggests that Dharmapala's main problem was that he was unable to transcend what he perceived to be Bodhgayā's pure and original identity, and could not accept that the signification of this identity evolves over time (834). In short, he was unable to see that Bodhgayā, like most historical sites, constantly operates through a process of negotiation and reinterpretation (see Davis 1998; Orr 1998; 2000), and that the historical interreligious experience at the Mahābodhi Temple had been a story of peaceful co-existence.

Buddhist share of power, I was told by a middle-aged Buddhist monk from Kolkata who has worked at the temple for the last number of years, has also led to an increase in Buddhist pilgrimage activity, thus increasing the temple's revenue, as well as the tourist industry in the area. He commented "Without Buddhist management of Buddhist holy place, foreign people would not come to Temple and Temple would disappear. Without Temple, Bodhgayā would be too much poor." The swelling numbers of Buddhist pilgrims has also led to a deluge of pilgrims concerned with local socio-economic issues, thus providing a context for socially engaged Buddhist practice.

Today, the Mahābodhi Society's activities have expanded to include a free medical clinic and school for local children. Unlike in Sri Lanka where one of the primary aims of the organization was to re-establish Buddhist identity, the school at Bodhgayā's branch, like other Buddhist-influenced institutions in the region, possesses a "universal" approach to education and does not attempt to explicitly convert students and patients to Buddhism. Similar to the FPMT institutions, almost all of the local health-care workers and teachers at the Mahābodhi Society are not Buddhist. Nevertheless, it can be argued that the Buddhist values promoted and the Buddhist architecture and pervasive paraphernalia implicitly expresses the belief that the Buddhist approach is an efficient, and perhaps superior strategy for creating a productive and harmonious society.

Christopher Titmuss:

One of the longest standing engaged pilgrims in Bodhgayā today is Buddhist writer, activist, and meditation teacher Christopher Titmuss. He differs conspicuously from most other engaged pilgrims by courageously and forcefully advocating structural change. Every year since 1975, Titmuss has travelled to Bodhgayā to lead a 10-day meditation retreat for about 150 international participants at the Royal Thai Temple. Besides conducting retreats, he has founded the Pragya Vihara School, a primary and secondary school for local children whose mission statement reads "to foster interreligious understanding as a contribution to the diversity of religious faith in India." Titmuss has also embarked on letter writing campaigns

protesting the town's new development plan, as well as its current high levels of pollution. In January 2008, on the last morning of the retreat he led, I interviewed Titmuss. Sitting outside on a veranda, we sipped chai and complimented each other on our identical *khadi* clothes. "You're the first person I've seen with a vest in that shade of brown," he said. "I know, you don't see this style and colour vest in any of the Gandhi cooperatives anymore. I bought this vest in Varanasi ten years ago," I replied, proud of preserving a garment for so long. He smiled, "I've worn this vest for the last *thirty* years!" Titmuss is living testimony of the simplicity that he preaches.

Titmuss explains how his activities in Bodhgayā bring financial benefits to the local community. "The Dharma retreat itself supports the village economically: we hire the cooks from the village, all the foodstuff, the internet, countless domestic items, the medical, the travel. Many shops in the village benefit enormously from our group because we are the largest and stay the longest. And of course, Westerners come before the courses and stay afterwards, the local guesthouses and hotels and restaurants all benefit," he says.

In 1990, Titmuss founded the Pragya Vihara School in a rented room with a single teacher and twenty children. After every retreat he conducts in Bodhgayā, as well as abroad, he fundraises for the school by speaking about it and showing a video that he produced of Bodhgayā and the Pragya Vihara School. Today, the school is located on its own property and its population has grown to about 550 children and fifteen teachers. As with the Maitreya School, Alice Project, and the Mahābodhi Society School, Pragya Vihara School recognizes the multicultural nature of Bihar. As such, it does not attempt to convert the local population to Buddhism, but rather translates Buddhist thought into universal, non-sectarian principles. Titmuss explains, "I did not want a Buddhist school, I think communalism is vulnerable. Divisions between Hindu, Muslim, and Buddhist communities are dangerous, so we came up with the 'Pragya Vihara Interreligious Educational Society'. A mouthful! The purpose of the school, or one of them, is to ensure that all the religions are respected." To ensure that religious diversity is respected, the administration hires staff and faculty from various religions and ethnicities. "The head teacher is a Catholic nun. We have Hindu, Muslim, and Catholic teachers, and on the board we have a Tibetan monk, two Theravādin monks, and the abbot of the Burmese Vihara. All that gives a religious feeling; religions working and cooperating together," Titmuss said. All these foreign-led schools encouraging pluralism and acceptance are a response to religious and caste discrimination that prevails in the region. By

creating schools based on ethical values, most engaged pilgrims believe that the children will learn to make ethical life choices rooted in wisdom. As with Titmuss, Dave, the director at Maitreya School, is a Gandhian and rationalist at heart and believes that training students along the Western mainstrean model of education that emphasizes individualism and competition will lead the local children into a more precarious situation than they are already in. "Essentially, they need to learn two things," he says in an unambiguous manner. "First they need to understand how the nature of their minds work, and the ways it projects images onto reality; and second, they need to learn how to work in a cooperative manner. As an educator, if I can accomplish these two things, then I will feel as if my time was well spent."

Titmuss insists that culture and education "nourishes the inner life extraordinarily," and are essential features for promoting a healthy individual and community. Titmuss, like many engaged pilgrims with whom I spoke, believes that education based on spirituality and culture is fundamental to the community's evolution because each child that goes to school will influence and teach their family members. Titmuss recounts how Mastipur, a village next to the school, had a terrible reputation for alcohol and child prostitution. As the school's population from the village increased and these children began bringing their moral values home along with their acquired knowledge in health, hygiene, and literacy, Titmuss claims that many of the social problems have decreased.

Most pilgrims believe that an education including moral values and mental training is the backbone for a dual transformation of the individual and society to occur, and is thus the reason why more schools are seen than any other charitable project in the Bodhgayā region. Indeed, education is central to the Buddha's method aiming towards liberation (Goss 2000, 328). Through the Universal Education curriculum, and other similar ones, contemporary engaged pilgrims promote the application of Buddhist principles such as wisdom, compassion, interdependence and universal responsibility, as well as contemplative practices, educational strategies, social participation, and the development of grassroots networks for social and educational engagement. Goss (2000, 329) observes that engaged Buddhist educational practice has a social edge to it. He articulates,

> It not only instructs students in how the mind shapes experience, how emotions are understood and transformed, and how to awaken the potentialities of enlightenment, but also teaches them how to live in the world as an agent of social change.

By teaching students the fundamental principles of ethical and harmonious living on an increasingly wide and interconnected scale, engaged pilgrims hope that the students will develop strength and confidence not only in their personal affairs, but in their ability to think critically and resist oppression—the building blocks for structural transformation (see chapter five). As with Titmuss, Sivaraksa (2005) believes that a Buddhist-inspired approach to education would "foster a culture of peace, which entails, among others, subduing the rising tide of human insecurity, structural violence, and terror through compassion, humility, generosity, mindfulness, and wisdom" (44). By setting out with this goal in mind, Sivaraksa believes that students will be empowered, and subsequently, empower others in the struggle against oppression and exploitation (63). Like Gandhi and Sivaraksa, Titmuss calls for a progressive and holistic education that is not separate from life to be the basis of positive social change. In this way, Titmuss finds affinity to Thich Nhat Hanh's teaching that "All Buddhism is Engaged."

On a direct political level, Titmuss generates awareness about local issues in two primary ways. First, at the end of the Bodhgayā retreat he invites local NGOs to present their work to the retreatants in hope of generating awareness, sympathy, and donations. The following day, he facilitates a dialogue amongst NGOs to discuss pressing local problems. He also helps organize a village tour for the retreatants, so that they may observe some of the problems and solutions occurring in the villages. Titmuss also perceives land, water, and air pollution to be urgent matters that require immediate attention. He explains, "Due to building all these hotels, the irrigation scheme has completely collapsed over the last ten years or so, this is called widespread flooding, this is a loss of rice paddies, farmland, loss of gardens, loss of village beauty. The second form of pollution is air, and that is due to the trucks, coaches, vehicles. People have to wear facemasks and this discourages people from coming to Bodhgayā. We have a campaign against that. The third form of pollution is waste, there are no services to collect waste, plastic and junk and rubbish are everywhere. I met with the Chief Minister Nitish Kumar last year to speak about these problems, and he seemed to understand what I was saying. Our school is three-quarters under flood water. Finally, yesterday, the commissioner Ramaya, ordered the person in charge of the block, to take care of it, and hopefully some steps will be taken in the next two or three months. We've had some assurances, but we shall see."

Another area that Titmuss is involved in is combating Bodhgayā's current town Master Plan developed by HUDCO, a Delhi-based development firm. The plan's intent is to transform Bodhgayā into a tourist park where all homes and businesses within a three kilometre radius of the World Heritage Site Mahābodhi Temple will be demolished (see Geary 2009). To preserve the original environment and protect the local community, Titmuss has started a petition that he hopes Buddhists from around the world will sign. "The shopkeepers and stallholders are part of the current vibrancy and it will make the area dead if they are pushed out of the village. We also want to express appreciation to the temple management committee for the lovely beautification of the Mahābodhi Temple, and the grounds and gardens on either side of it. We credit them for doing a great job, but it's the larger vision which is of real concern...I'll give you a small example: My barber, who I've been going to since 1975, has one chair and a couple of razors and pairs of scissors. Before he used to be right in the heart of the village and now he's been pushed out to the edge. Business is bad. Now, he has very few customers because he's been pushed out. Same with my chai-wallah, who I've been going to for more than thirty years; the other day his stall was smashed, turned over, under the pretext that everything must be clear and clean for some VIP who is arriving. This just breeds fear, resentment, and unhappiness amongst the locals. There is this atmosphere like a heavy cloud hanging over the village because of the insecurity and the uncertainty, and this really needs attention by the western community. I want to make sure that local people realize that we support the shopkeepers...so to sum up...the primary focus should be on the clean-up of Bodhgayā's land, water, and air; stop all the motorized transport and let people use rickshaws or horse and cart; and restore flooded lands to growing food from vegetables, rice paddies. That with small shops would make it beautiful and alive with colour."

Titmuss' activities, and in fact, all of the pilgrimage-related activities in Bodhgayā act as a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it can be argued that the sheer presence of foreign Buddhists are contributing factors of several of the problems that Titmuss complains about regarding space, politics, and pollution. On the other hand, Titmuss and other engaged pilgrims acknowledge and attempt to address Bodhgayā's multifaceted and insidious problems in terms of political oppression, socio-economic inequality and environmental degradation, and does so with the understanding that he and the other engaged pilgrims cannot fix any of the problems independent of local input. As with many engaged Buddhists,

he strives to balance the scale of access to resources by providing educational and employment opportunities. At the same time, providing these opportunities to some creates further imbalances because not everyone is able to receive the same assistance—a major dilemma in the world of NGO assistance (see Kamat 2000; Sooryamoorthy and Gangrade 2001). While Titmuss' altruistic activities are directed towards the creation of alternative social institutions and relationships, his primary aim is to help both pilgrims and locals understand these social challenges regarding the inner obstacles of greed, hatred, and ignorance.

Volunteers at the FPMT's Maitreya School and Shakyamuni Buddha Community Health Clinic:

Maitreya School was on a 10-day term break when I first arrived in Bodhgayā. To occupy my time I joined the Shakyamuni Buddha Community Health Clinic's mobile team that visits remote villages three times per week. I sat in the back seat of the clinic's Tata Sumo with Anna, a nurse mid-wife and mother of three from the Netherlands, who for an hour and a quarter spoke about her trips to India and her Buddhist work. Anna's previous five trips to India were more cultural in nature, while this visit was motivated primarily to volunteer at the clinic.

A loving Dutch woman with shiny blue eyes, Anna came to Bodhgayā to share her midwifery knowledge with local traditional birth attendants (TBA). Anna explained that about ten to twenty women die every year due to bleeding during childbirth with a TBA. "The village women say that after death these women go to a better world where they will not experience the suffering of this world. They believe that women who die early are fortunate because anything is better than these horrible living conditions," she says. Working in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, Anna is organizing six two-day workshops for approximately two-hundred TBAs in six different locations. Anna raised the money herself in Switzerland (where she has been living the last seventeen years) for these workshops. She was especially motivated to do this since Mark, the director of the Shakyamuni Buddha Community Health Clinic, had told her that the workshops were valuable but that there were insufficient funds to offer them. As a resourceful woman, Anna immediately began fund-raising at her local FPMT centre (which she helped found) and within a matter of weeks had raised enough money.

Anna has conducted extensive research on childbirth in India, and has observed that women living in poor rural areas risk their lives every time they get pregnant. Before facilitating her workshops, she planned on spending the first few weeks touring the villages to learn more about the local health context and to gain a better understanding of the TBA's birthing knowledge. At present, there is a dearth of documentation about these women's folk knowledge and skills, which they have acquired mostly from their mothers and grandmothers. From what Anna has observed, she believes that their skills are limited, and are a major cause of the high mortality rate amongst both women in labour and their infants. Anna believes that the TBAs need additional training and are key actors in changing this high mortality trend. "The goal of these workshops is not to simply provide more skills, but to teach how to recognize problems during pregnancy, and also to provide information and skills in sanitation and nutrition," Anna says. Another aim is to have the TBAs dialogue with nurse-midwives in primary health centres whom they can refer to when complications arise. Dialogue, she believes, will increase the knowledge of both the TBAs and nurses, and reduce mortality rates.

Several weeks later, once her workshops were finished, Anna and I went for dinner at Mohammed's Restaurant—a popular tent restaurant amongst Western pilgrims. We sat next to a large group of blissed-out Russian devotees of Trinley Thaye Dorje, the 17th Karmapa based in Kalimpong. Trying to be heard over the loud Russian voices, Anna confided her doubts of the workshops' efficacy, feeling that she was unable to get through to the TBAs in the ways she had hoped. She complained that many of the women seemed bored and sleepy during her lectures, and she felt that they were unable to grasp what was being said. Moreover, she perceived them to be slightly on edge because they felt that their jobs were at stake as if the government nurses would take their work away if they did not know what they were "supposed to." These attitudes depressed her, and she wondered, at times, if coming to Bodhgayā was a waste of time. Many of her colleagues tried to reassure her that even if one woman was inspired to improve her practice that it was all worth it. She seemed only partially convinced. Nevertheless, Anna, who is an experienced Buddhist, looked into my eyes and smiled, "My motivation was pure and I did the best I could. It is out of my hands now; whatever shall be; shall be." "Would you do it again?" I asked. "I'm not sure," she said, "the future is unknown. Probably not, unless the TBAs ask for more workshops covering a specific item that they want addressed"

One morning after Special Program (see chapter four), Geraldine, Tiffany, and I met with Karl in his office to discuss how our volunteer service was going at the school. Michelle was teaching yoga at the Root Institute and it was my turn to watch our son Jai. I was concerned that his unpredictable 15-month old behavior would disrupt the meeting, but fortunately, he sat quietly on my lap eating salty biscuits and soaking in all the Vajrayāna paraphernalia that decorated Karl's office. Tiffany, a social science teacher from Wales, began describing her experience at the school. She is volunteering at the Maitreya School for one month before she goes to Dharamsala in northern India to study Tibetan language and philosophy. At the school, she assists teachers with course planning and classroom management. Tiffany seemed introverted and disinterested in speaking with me, so I appreciated the meeting because it afforded me a small glimpse into her life and work in Bodhgayā. As Tiffany spoke about her relationship with a few of the teachers with whom she is working, Jai began to "uh-uh," signalling he had needed to urinate—preventing me from learning more about Tiffany. After attending to his call of nature, I left Jai outside to play with some teachers and students while I returned to the meeting. It was Geraldine's turn to speak. She is a British university psychology lecturer and researcher who has been a practicing Buddhist for the past twenty-two years. Geraldine had been distressed the last few days, not really understanding what she was supposed to be doing at the school. She believed that she would be doing some type of teacher training, but this failed to transpire. She had to contend with her feelings that she was wasting her time. With Karl's agreement, Geraldine switched her focus to non-academic subjects such as Special Program and social outreach activities to see how these programs affect the children psychologically and emotionally (see chapter four). In return, she agreed to write a report for both the administration and teachers detailing her observations. Despite this shift in focus, Geraldine continued to be available to teachers if they wished to work one-on-one with her for their course preparation. These pedagogical activities allowed Geraldine to feel as if she were putting her Buddhist practices of virtue and compassion into concrete action aimed towards improving social and educational opportunities for the local population.

Unlike Anna, the midwife I spoke about above, Geraldine grasped her work problems early on and changed her strategy accordingly. Her new approach to serving the school was beneficial for both her and the school. At the end of her three-month stay she wrote up a useful report of her findings, outlining particular behavioural traits in some

children, as well as some realistic courses of action to address these behavioural issues. Before she left Bodhgayā, I interviewed Geraldine on the small terrace outside of her room where we usually had our Hindi lessons with Jayesh, one of the Maitreya School teachers. I asked her if she thought her time was well spent here. "Of course it was! I felt that I've grown immensely and I've made a lot of important connections with people." "What about your work at the school?" I asked. "It's hard to say. Who knows if they will take my suggestions seriously? I know that I've worked from a place of compassion, and that's what's important for me. I gave 100 percent; the rest is up to karma."

As with many other engaged pilgrims, Anna's and Geraldine's attitude resembles Trungpa's (1991) concept of "generosity without possessing" (see above). Both these women came to Bodhgayā to offer their knowledge and services. While unsure of their work's effectiveness, they strove to maintain their equanimity and compassionate intentions. On the one hand, their balanced attitude prevented them from feeling egotistical and proud when their work went well and people complimented them on their knowledge and generosity. On the other hand, they did not become depressed or feel inadequate when they observed that their work was not received as expected. Rather, these engaged pilgrims claimed to give from the heart and did not attach themselves to the results of their offerings.

A couple of months later when a new batch of volunteers arrived at the school, a similar meeting to the one described above was held to get a sense of what everyone was doing and how they were feeling. Shiv, a Hindu ascetic with Master degrees in English literature and Western philosophy volunteered at Maitreya School for four months as an English literature teacher for classes 10-12. He dressed in all-white cotton clothing and spoke fluent English. Shiv worked with two teachers, assisting them by teaching four consecutive classes while the teacher observed him, and then he observed the teacher at work for four consecutive classes. Shiv's approach had been successful in terms of teaching and classroom management. He felt that the best way to train the teachers was to speak with them and ask them what they wanted to learn. Helga, a German woman living in Nepal, followed a similar approach as Shiv. "I don't want to impose anything on the teachers," she said, "Many of them have been teaching for a long time. I don't want them to have a 'here we go again, another foreigner coming to teach us something' attitude." Sheila, an Anglo-Indian working in California as a high school social science teacher, also preferred working one-on-one with teachers. It was her second "tour of duty" at the school and she had fostered close friendships

with certain teachers, especially those who understood her intentions to help support teachers in their work. "Unlike the training that I've received back in the US, most of these teachers have not had proper formal training and often feel lost in the classroom, so I see my role here as a teacher-aid, I prefer being in an egalitarian relationship where we learn from each other." She continued, "Like last year, I intend on sitting in on classes to help me connect with the teachers and see in what ways they could use my support. I try to be sensitive so that I don't impose anything like some colonial intruder. I only want to help them in areas where the teachers feel that they need assistance." Sheila felt more comfortable working with women, partly because she is half-Indian and understands the cultural prohibition of developing intimate relationships with members of the opposite sex. In 2007, Sheila volunteered at the school for two months and in 2008 she was there for three more. In addition to working with individual teachers, she facilitated workshops on how to prepare a class at the beginning of term, classroom management, and on techniques for applying Howard Gardner (1993)'s theory of multiple intelligences. Sheila preferred working one-on-one. She explained, "There is no universal prescription for teaching and a teacher's effectiveness depends on the individual."

Shiv, Helga, and Sheila all acknowledged that they were not enlightened beings who have all the answers. Nevertheless, they all intended on assisting in any way they could, as long as the help given was driven by the teachers themselves. They all mentioned that this approach was most effective for both the local teachers, as well as for themselves, because it helped prevent them from getting overly emotionally involved in an utterly foreign context. This attitude also demonstrated an aspect of the practice of no-self as the pilgrims were not interested in establishing their own particular views and methods, but desired the local teachers to improve themselves in ways that were authentic and according to their own context and needs.

Thus, engagement for these volunteers operated on many levels as their involvement helped manifest dual liberation. One the hand, they were learning to put their comprehension of Buddhist theory and meditation into practice; on the other hand, they were teaching children and teachers to discover the inner workings of their minds on emotional and social levels (see chapter four), thus laying the groundwork for positive social change. All the educators mentioned that they hoped that the minds of the local would become stronger,

wiser, and more critical so that they would be able to discover solutions to both individual and social problems.

2.3. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS ON ENGAGED PILGRIMAGE AND ALTRUISM IN BIHAR AND BEYOND

The information age, modern transportation and telecommunications have created conditions for enabling people to interact with a myriad of social, cultural, political, economic, religious, and environmental organizations around the world. This interdependent complexity, in conjunction with the competition over depleting ecological and social resources, is a major factor for the growth of social activism. In Bodhgayā, as an increasing number of people have increasingly less access to clean water and air, nutritional food, basic education, adequate health care and meaningful employment, the hearts of some globe-trotting Buddhist pilgrims open, causing them to swing the pendulum of their practice towards constructing a community where the Buddhist pilgrims create social opportunities where there are none.

Nonetheless, Buddhist scholar James Deitrick (2003) argues that engaged Buddhists are missing out on the profundity of the Buddha's teaching by mistaking the "boat" (social engagement) for the "shore" (awakening). Deitrick's criticism is partially valid, because what people say and what they do are often at odds. Anna, a nurse-mid-wife and mother of three from the Netherlands, was in Bodhgayā volunteering at the Shakyamuni Buddha Community Health Clinic. It was her first time in Bodhgayā and she felt fortunate to visit the sacred Buddhist land. However, she lamented that more than two weeks have passed since she had arrived and has had little time for formal practice. "I am in the Buddhist holy land, the best place in the world to practice, but I have no time. I work so hard six days a week for almost 12 hours per day. I am too exhausted to do anything else. I hope to keep Sundays open to just do some minimal practice at the [Mahābodhi] Stūpa." Similarly, Karl discussed the difficulties involved with worldly life. He mentioned that he does about an hour of rituals every morning, but regretfully has little time to meditate. Karl expressed his contentment that a new principal will be replacing him since this break will hopefully permit him more time for solitary retreats. Karl's guru, Lama Zopa, like many Buddhist teachers, recommend that

practitioners do at least one retreat per year. However, Karl's manifold responsibilities with the school, leading courses at Root Institute, and working on the Maitreya Project[82] in Kushinagar, have prevented him from doing so. Karl will remain with the school, but limit his time to teacher training, overseeing the construction of the school's *stūpa*, and establishing the monastic school at Maitreya Project (his last retreat was seven years back and two years have passed since he gave up this post and his new responsibilities still prevent him from going on retreat). Likewise, Bob commented that it was impossible to keep up any sort of formal practice during his tenure as director of Root Institute. "Practice became cultivating tolerance and compassion in daily life and also fulfilling the guru's wishes," he said casually. Dressed in a t-shirt and Bermuda shorts, the balding Englishman explained that while meditation practice was important, mindfulness and compassion for others in daily life is most crucial. During his period as director, his formal practice was limited to a short prayer twice a day which he did briefly while walking around the centre. "When I first took on the role as director I thought that living in Bodhgayā would be great. I'd get to practice all the time and maybe even travel some. [Laughing] I quickly realized that it was a seven-day-a-week job, ten to twelve hours per day. I quit after a year!" Despite claims of "mindfulness in action," Bob, Karl, and Anna all realized they needed more introspective work if they were to fulfill their Bodhisattva vows of helping others.

Resisting the sort of critique put forth by Deitrick (2003), scholar-practitioners such as Loy (2004; 2000), Bodhi (2009; 2005), Fischer (2008), Thurman (1996), and Yarnell (2003) contend that social engagement and contemplative work are not mutually exclusive. Perceiving these domains to be distinct is a hallmark of dualistic western thinking (Loy 2010; see also Nye 1999). Despite distractions from their quiet, contemplative work, most of my informants did not lose sight of the ultimate aim of their Buddhist practice: liberation from existential suffering. The social work these pilgrims do is an integral part of their practice for cultivating love and compassion, but it does not substitute for practices designed for developing discriminatory insight into the nature of impermanence and emptiness. The engaged pilgrims I discuss in this chapter recognize the four noble truths to be the basis for awakening, and as Henry (2006) asserts, most engaged Buddhists understand these truths to

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[82] The Maitreya Statue is planned to be the tallest Buddha statue in the world, proposed to stand at 500-feet.

be part of "a lifestyle that cannot be reduced to the personal, social, political, individual or collective" (30). In other words, practice is a holistic experience. Bond (1996, 129) analyzes the engaged Buddhist worldview of dual liberation in Sri Lanka: "An individual living in society that is poor materially as well as spiritually will have great difficulty awakening to the reality of his or her own greed, hatred, and delusion. But unless some individuals awaken to these problems, social change and alleviation of poverty will never be sought." Sheila expressed a similar attitude towards dual liberation, "I must become enlightened to help others become enlightened; and others must become enlightened to help me get enlightened!"

In the film *Mystic Tibet: An Outer, Inner, and Secret Pilgrimage*, Lama Zopa elucidates this connection between pilgrimage and dual liberation to a group of pilgrims visiting the 12th century yogi Milarepa's cave in Tibet: "Pilgrimage is to subdue one's own mind.... The creator of *saṃsāra* is one's own mind; the mind is also the creator of *nirvana*, creator of hell, creator of enlightenment. So the mind is the root of all this" (Lundberg, dir, 2007).

The actions of the socially engaged Buddhist pilgrims represent the Buddhist ethic of altruism, and dispel Weberian illusions that Buddhism is narcissistic, apolitical and other-worldly (Weber 1958). As Puri (2006) notes, a characterisation of self-involvement is simply an inaccurate representation of the Buddhist worldview steeped in ethics that encourages participation in socio-political culture and confronts stratified structures founded upon injustice and ascribed privilege. Engaged Buddhists in general, and those in Bihar in particular, challenge assumptions that regard Buddhism's practice of (temporary) retreat from the world and teleological aim of liberation from cyclical existence as ethically compromised and socially negligent (see Puri 2006; Keown 2005; 2000; 1992). Instead, examples of engagement in Bodhgayā, and worldwide, address these erroneous claims through the refinement of its social ethic.

With the exception of a handful of engaged pilgrims such as Japanese Ambedkarite Surai Sasai (see Doyle 2003) and to a minor degree, Christopher Titmuss, most of Bodhgayā's engaged Buddhist pilgrims and the charitable organizations in which they work refuse to directly advocate for structural changes in Bihari society. This may reflect the Buddhist teaching on altruism that an individual's purification is all that is required to construct a virtuous society, but it may also signify a lack of political capital that can be ventured in this area. At the same time, however, the lack of political involvement by these

organizations may also be more calculating. While they may not depend on the government for financial support, they certainly need the state's cooperation in other respects such as construction permits, accreditation of its educational institutions, and so forth. To ensure the smooth functioning of current and future projects, leaders of these organizations believe that it is beneficial to cooperate with whoever is in power. On the surface, these organizations may not fit perfectly into Queen's model of "engagement," but in terms of their impacts on the community one cannot deny their role in social transformation.

One example that comes to mind is how S.N. Goenka, the Indian Vipassana meditation teacher, refrains from taking a political stance and asserts that all he does is teach meditation freely to anyone who is interested. However, several of his students are high-ranking Indian government officials and leaders of the business community who affect government policy, as seen by the penetration of his meditation courses into the public school system, prison system, and the manner in which government officials in several states are allowed to take paid leave every three years to partake in a 10-day Vipassana course. Thus, while Goenka's organization does not directly call for institutional change, it may be having one of the most significant impacts in India as his students positively affect the ways in which several schools, prisons and government departments function.[83] Similarly, but less pervasive than the Vipassana movement in India, the Maitreya School no longer affects the education of only its own students, but of students from many other schools in the region and even worldwide. For instance, many schools such as Akshay and Divine Land have sent their teachers to Maitreya for training in Special Program (see chapter four)—the core of the school's holistic curriculum, and numbers of other schools have expressed the interest to do the same. Moreover, several teachers from the West have volunteered at Maitreya School partly to help out, but also to learn more about the curriculum so that they can adapt to their respective schools back home such as the Tara Redwood School in California that has integrated Maitreya School's Universal Education curriculum into its Montessori pedagogical approach. Hence, this holistic method attracts many curious pilgrims because on the one hand, they are eager to get involved with a school which has aims that they fundamentally believe are essential elements for eliminating suffering and creating a better society. On the

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[83] See the Vipassana Research Institute's (1994) *Vipassana: Its Relevance to the Present World* for its collection of anecdotes on the impacts of Vipassana practice on various social institutions.

other hand, many of these pilgrims are keen on learning more about the curriculum so that they can take home knowledge and skills to apply at the schools in which they work. Moreover, several informants reported that they had unsatisfactory learning experiences as children and are excited to be involved with a radical alternative to what they had been exposed to as children. In this light, what seems to be simply an "altruistic" response, in fact, may have "engaged" effects on global scales.

Another reason for the absence of direct activism in Bodhgayā results from the precarious situation that foreigners find themselves in as "foreigners" who can easily be evicted from the country. Engaged pilgrims wish to alleviate suffering of the local population and wish to improve conditions toward a just society; at the same time, they do not see themselves as the appropriate people to bring about that change. Partly due to the pilgrim's transitory nature, but mostly as mentioned by some of the Maitreya volunteers above, they perceive their roles as supporters and sympathizers for change, not direct activists. In other words, as one pilgrim put it, "we want to help the locals help themselves." Dave, a pilgrim who has been in Bodhgayā for the most of the last seven years explained, "No matter how long I stay here with them, I'll always be an outsider. Sure, I've made lots of very close friends, but I am not Bihari, and if Bihar is going to change, then Biharis need to instigate and carry out the work." This attitude is widely held by Bodhgayā's engaged pilgrims, who see themselves as teachers who can provide locals with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to change inefficient and oppressive social, educational, political, and economic structures. These pilgrims attempt to empower the locals to challenge existing conditions and create new ones based on social justice and welfare. While they do not necessarily directly and publically criticize the state, their involvement with social projects implicitly does.

What we see in Bodhgayā, and perhaps everywhere else where Buddhist practice is actualized, is an interpenetration of discipline, virtue, and altruism, with each one supporting the other. As evident from the engaged Buddhist literature and the narratives of engaged pilgrims in Bodhgayā, one needs to be disciplined and virtuous to be altruistic and engaged. Cultural critic bell hooks (2006), whose broad scholarship is informed by her Buddhist practice writes that an ethic of love and wisdom is central to engagement:

> Because of the awareness that love and domination cannot coexist, there is a collective call for everyone to place learning how to love on their emotional and/or spiritual agenda. We have witnessed the way in which movements for justice that

denounce dominator culture, yet have an underlying commitment to corrupt uses of power, do not really create fundamental changes in our societal structure. When radical activists have not made a core break with dominator thinking (imperialist, white supremacist, capitalist patriarchy), there is no union of theory and practice, and real change is not sustained. (62)

Understanding that for any transformation to be genuine, compassionate love needs to be the foundation of all action. The engaged pilgrims, as well as locals who have been influenced by them, at the Buddhist-inspired schools attempt to live a life of introspection, analyzing their minds and behaviour to understand their motivations behind everything that they do. As we will see in chapter four, this contemplative trait is also the basis for the Maitreya School Universal Education curriculum that has been developed by Western students of Lama Zopa. Unlike the instrumentalist neo-liberal educational agenda which aims at producing competitors and employees on the global market, which I examine in the proceeding chapter, the objectives of the Universal Education curriculum are to help students cultivate the "good heart," meaning the qualities of kindness, compassion, and wisdom. When the good heart is the ground of a person's being, love and compassion become the basis for all actions. And, as hooks (2006) contends, this is essential for sincere and ethically-based civic participation.

CHAPTER III

LOCATING EDUCATION IN BODHGAYĀ

> Everyone has a right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available, and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on a basis of merit.
>
> Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.
>
> - Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948, adopted by the United Nations, Article 26

On the surface, this declaration seems incontestable and straightforward; however, in practice providing free and quality education in India has been a major challenge. The country suffers from over-population, financial limitations, illiteracy, gender disparity, imbalanced development opportunities, and injurious caste wars—all causes and effects of substandard education. Since the economic reforms of 1991, globalized India has experienced accelerated rates of contact between communities and nations in social, economic, political, religious and educational terms. The human costs of these relationships, however, are becoming increasingly high. Specifically, while the top twenty per cent of India's population progresses rapidly along the road towards material affluence, the rest of the population descend deeper into social and economic poverty, lacking adequate nutrition, sanitation, education, democratic participation, and fair wages (see UNDP *Human Development Report 2007*). These facts point to questionable international economic and political structures and raise serious doubt concerning the route of development maintained by contemporary globalization.

The socio-economic problems accelerated by trans-national dynamics pose a major challenge to the field of education in rural India in general, and Bodhgayā, Bihar particularly, where the literacy rate is at 59.68 per cent for men and 33.12 per cent for women, and nearly one-third of school-aged children do not attend school. Out of approximately seventy-two million Biharis, twenty-three million women and twelve million men are illiterate, composing about ten per cent of the entire nation's number of illiterates. Bihar is unique in India for being the only state to have its number of illiterates increase from 31.98 million in 1991 to 35.08 million in 2001 (www.india.gov.in 2009). In the face of these disturbing numbers, I inquire if those children who do go to school learn how the process of globalization operates? Are they equipped with the skills necessary to meet the above UN mission statement regarding "full development of the human personality"? Do they learn how to confront global challenges and affect appropriate social change? Does globalization "force" the educational system to reproduce social inequalities by replicating the existing social order?

To address these questions, this chapter integrates research findings of contemporary educational and economic theorists with personal field observations and conversations with administration, teachers, and students at the Maitreya School in particular, but also at other schools in and around Bodhgayā. I investigate three areas that I identify as obstacles to the UN's description of the "full development of the human personality" in rural Bihar. First, I examine common educational challenges situated in the rural north Indian socio-economic spheres: child labour, caste inequality, reproduction of power, and gender imbalances. Next, I analyze the ways in which neo-liberal financial policies and practices affect the education system through its instrumentalist, economic viewpoint. While the neo-liberal approach to education has not necessarily created an entirely new set of problems within the local education context, its approach has exacerbated existing challenges and provides few realistic solutions for alleviating them. Finally, I theorize how English-medium instruction and a top-down learning methodology fostered by instrumentalist attitudes of competition and independence create barriers to learning.

The first chapter of this dissertation provided a thick description of Bodhgayā, highlighting the historical and social transformations that have contributed towards the construction of a global Buddhascape. Departing from this depiction of the town's development which is intricately connected to a web of transnational relationships, the second chapter supplied a discussion on the nature of the increasingly popular engaged

Buddhist pilgrimage activities. These socially oriented activities change the way pilgrimage is perceived and practiced, and impact the ways in which the Buddhascape is constructed and experienced.

Two main objectives underlie this chapter: First is to depict the educational context in which socially engaged Buddhist pilgrims operate so that the reader can better assess the specific conditions from which these pilgrims work towards individual and social transformation in the Buddhascape, and perhaps, beyond. And second, to portray what education means and how it is experienced by local north Indian communities. Acknowledging features of this educational culture and how it is "hierarchically interconnected" (Gupta and Ferguson 1997, 35) to both local and global socio-economic structures can assist in the academic depiction and reflection of understanding of unequal development. In doing so, I investigate the conceptual and practical links between education and development.

The purpose of the dominant, utilitarian, neo-liberal approach to education (in India and beyond) is to transmit knowledge and skills that permit students to become productive contributors to an existing socio-economic structure. From this perspective, development is understood to mean economic growth. However, as I demonstrate, this narrow educational approach generally signifies "development" for a particular social group as it tilts the socio-economic scale in favour of middle and upper-class children to the detriment of those who are poor and marginalized. On an aside, while this approach is created to prepare students to be contributors to the work force, there is little evidence that what they do in school actually prepares them to be productive, responsible, problem-solving workers enhancing financial wealth.

An alternative approach to education, which I touch upon in this chapter, but elaborate in detail in the next, addresses social inequalities and injustices, promotes basic literacy, encourages students to think critically, and generate knowledge and skills that are vital to transforming underlying structures responsible for maintaining socio-economic prejudice and segregation (Maclure, Sabbah, and Lavan 2009; Giroux 2005; 2004; McCloskey 2003; hooks 1994; Freire 1971). This transformative outlook also places emphasis on cultivating self-esteem, personal integrity, and satisfaction in both personal and public life (Miller 2008; Leed 2005; Noddings 2004; 2003; Seymour 2004). Contemporary education and development discourses in developing countries often attempt to combine

these two seemingly contradictory perspectives, exemplified by the UN statement opening this chapter. However, as splendid as combining instrumentalist and transformative perspectives may appear, Maclure, Sabbah, and Lavan (2009) argue that any veneer of the transformative approach is unfailingly rendered subordinate to the dominant attitude favouring economic development.

Before I begin my analysis, I must note that for this chapter I neither conducted quantitative studies nor relied heavily on published data from international financial organizations. Most of my data is derived from ethnographic and participant observation, as well as critical scholarly literature. I chose this route because the deep data that I sought could not become apparent by trying to control just a small number of variables. Secondly, it is difficult to measure or make any conclusive remarks concerning enrolment, attendance, literacy and completion since statistics reported in international publications such as the *World Development Reports* and *Human Development Reports* are generally misleading and overly optimistic (Drèze and Sen 1995; McGrath 1999; Welch 2000). And, even though data may be more reliable from the Government of India census (Drèze and Sen 1995), the statistics can neither be equated with educational quality nor do they mean that children actually attend school (see Weiner 2006; Bloom 2004).

3.1. SOCIO-ECONOMIC STRATIFICATION AND THE PRACTICE OF "EDUCATION" AS A BARRIER TO DEVELOPMENT

In this section I examine the relationship between the rural Bihari socio-economic context and the actual practice of education as a barrier to development. To do so, I assess a variety of fields: I begin with an analysis of child labour, social stratification and education in relation to the reproduction of power relationships. While the Bihar government in many ways disregards the educational needs of the lower castes and classes, parents of these children are also not keen on sending their children to school either. I investigate two primary explanations for this common parental attitude. First is the high opportunity cost of losing out earnings in wage labour and help with domestic chores. Second is the belief that public schools and most low-end private schools are worthless because they do not seriously promote the alleviation of poverty and suffering, but reproduce a system maintaining unequal access to socio-economic opportunities. After addressing these two explanations of why

children are not motivated to attend school, I move on to examine the latter position by analyzing how power is reproduced through the distribution of teaching resources, resulting in the educational imbalances of rural Indian children, especially girls.

It is important for the reader to be aware that there are a number of different types of schools. In this thesis, I use the terms "government schools" or "public schools" to refer to government-funded public schools run by the government, but which does not include the government-aided schools that are privately managed and typically prohibited from charging tuition fees. These latter schools are referred to as "private-aided schools." Both "private schools" and "charitable schools" refer to schools that do not receive any financial support from the government. The former, however, charges tuition while the latter do not. With the exception of a few public schools, a large majority of the academic institutions in and around Bodhgayā fit into the "private" and "charitable" school categories.

The under-funded public schools, as they currently operate, are problematic as they reinforce social inequalities, do not build children's self-esteem, are often led by unmotivated and absent teachers, and promote a utilitarian-oriented curriculum that is disconnected to local realities. The other schools I refer to—private-aided, private, and charitable—vary in quality. Some are on par with the public schools; others are privileged and afford their students social and educational capital.

3.1.1. Child Labour and the Myth of Compulsory Education

In 1880 the British passed a law requiring local authorities to make education compulsory. In spite of this, no state today forces local authorities to ensure that its children attend school. International Development researcher Myron Weiner (2006) articulates,

> There are no enforcement authorities, no provisions for the compulsory registration of names and birthdates of children, no enumeration registers, no procedures for issuing notices to parents and guardians whose children are not attending school, and no penalties for failing to send children to school. No cases against parents or guardians are brought before administrative agencies or courts. Nor have elected or appointed officials in the state or central governments pressed for the enforcement of compulsory-education legislation. (58)

As schools are not accountable to students nor perform any of the above actions such as registering students and monitoring them, the current system leaves the responsibility in the

hands of the parents. However, in Bodhgayā many of the foreign-run charitable schools attempt to address the issue of absenteeism by charging parents a fee. Parents, most of whom are quite poor, are subject to penalties of ten rupees per day if their children miss classes. This rule exists mainly in theory, as only a few materially comfortable parents pay the fee when their child skips school or arrives late.

Poor children mostly coming from low-caste families forgo school due to the high opportunity cost of losing out earnings in wage labour and helping their families with domestic chores. Investigative reporter Palagummi Sainath (1996) argues that the biggest factor for dropping out of school is economic. The lower children find themselves on the economic ladder, the greater is the likelihood of leaving school. Sainath's research indicates that sixty per cent of lower caste children between classes six and eight drop out, seventy per cent if they are *Dalit* and eighty per cent if they are *Adivasi*. *Dalits*, or literally, the oppressed, and the *Adivasi*, a tribal group, comprise approximately thirty per cent of India's population and are considered to be beneath the hierarchical caste system, and are treated as sub-human by India's majority as a result. These "scheduled castes," as they are now legally referred to, usually perform the most menial labour such as cleaning toilets, building roads, and handling corpses. They generally live in segregated areas and have negligible access to education and health care. I asked a ten-year old girl at Maitreya School why she missed class so often. "My mother-father is too much poor," she said shyly, "not possible for me come every day, too many works." Once children turn five or six years of age they assume family responsibilities, and as they get older, they have less time for school work.

Lower-class children in Bodhgayā are often seen walking around carrying loads of wood on their heads, sometimes weighing up to thirty or forty kilograms. I once tried to lift a bundle of wood on to my head that a teenage girl was carrying, and much to everybody's amusement I almost toppled over. Not only do they have to carry these heavy loads up to five kilometres through muddy and rocky terrain, sometimes they also have to cut the wood first, which presents other difficulties. Bodhgayā is no longer Uruvela, the dense jungle of ancient times, and children and women need to travel longer distances to find wood. There are some government tree-planting schemes in the region, but these will take a while before they can be harvested and the local population may be denied access to them.

Besides collecting firewood, children also learn to gather cow dung and make dung paddies for fuel, bring the animals to graze in the fields, fetch water, cook meals and clean

the dishes, and care for younger siblings. Learning to do these activities well, for many parents, constitutes an education more important than what is learned in school, especially if the formal education renders them useless in domestic or craft skills. The American philosopher and poet Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote,

> We are shut up in schools and college recitation rooms for ten or fifteen years, and come out at least with a belly full of words and do not know a thing. We cannot use our hands, or our legs, or our eyes, or our arms. We do not know an edible root in the woods. We cannot tell our course by the stars, nor the hour of the day by the sun. (cited in Orr 2004, 136)

It is difficult to say whether Maitreya School teachers regard these chores as education (the ones influenced by Gandhian ideals, as explained in the following chapter, certainly do), nevertheless they understand these family needs and rarely complain about the students being absent. During roll call, for instance, some teachers may admonish a student who was absent, but it is left at that.

Many children in Bodhgayā work in hotels or restaurants, where they receive an income and a place to sleep at night. Typical of most cities and towns, some children are involved with the recycling trade, sorting out junk from whatever can be sold for recycling. While smaller children usually learn the trade by working with their mothers, older children usually work with small groups of friends. Bhim, a *Dalit* Buddhist public school teacher who is also working towards a doctorate in Buddhist philosophy at Bodhgayā's Magadha University, explained to me that this work for them is valuable,

> ... because *this* is their education, not school. If they went to school instead, they believe that they would lose precious time and survival would not be possible. If they go to school, but then not college, they will be suited for unemployment only.

From this perspective, children learning a trade while being part of their families may not be deemed as "child labour." Instead, this argument could be considered "apprenticeship," which many scholars of education have argued is a legitimate form of the educational process (see Gatto 2000). Childhood employment is also said to teach children to cultivate the proper work habits and attitudes that are necessary for a life of working: commitment, attentiveness, compliance to authority, flexibility, etc (Weiner 2006). In many cases, children working in their parents' shops or farms, or even children working in factories, as garbage-pickers, or in

the homes of the upper-middle classes are considered to be productive members of society and an important part of the family economy.

There are also many instances where children surpass adults at certain jobs that require speed and dexterity rather than physical strength. Arvind, my landlord in Bodhgayā who is also the manager of an upscale hotel, adheres to this view. Many of his friends who share his middle-class lifestyle and ideology are members of the local business community. Picking up a pack of *bidis* belonging to a house-painter who was painting a new room for long-term paying-guests, Arvind explained, "nimble little child fingers rolling these Indian cigarettes are best only; for packing matches into match boxes also." He argued that without child workers, these jobs would be performed inefficiently.

Another common justification articulated by the local business community is that child labourers strengthen the economy because since they are paid less, prices for goods such as carpets and handicrafts are kept low and remain competitive on the world market. One shopkeeper explained that if it were not for children rolling *bidis*, machine-made cigarettes would crumble the *bidi* industry. Weiner (2006, 188; Giroux 2006) notes that this attitude is widely held by the middle-class, who, ironically, would never desire a working life for their children whom they regard not as "hands," but "minds." Incidentally, as seen above, this attitude has taken on an inverse relationship where most lower-castes see themselves as "hands" that enable them to survive in a world. For them, the lower-caste person attempting to enter the world of the "mind" leads to a lack of employment and basic survival skills in a hierarchical society.

3.1.2. Lack of Educational Resources and State Funding in Bodhgayā

Most public, private, and charitable schools I visited around Bodhgayā were dilapidated. During the monsoon season, the classrooms were mouldy and had leaky roofs. The driest rooms were kept for storing grain. The classrooms lacked basic instructional materials, perhaps equipped with a blackboard and maybe a few worn-out posters, but not much more than that. Children sat on recycled burlap bags or on worn-out bamboo mats. Most of the schools had neither drinking water facilities nor toilets. Textbooks I went through were marked-up and outdated. Rarely did I see a playground. The buildings were mediocre quality and the public schools often doubled as a community hall, so that during festival season the

school was usurped for days on end. I have been told that in some areas the public school buildings also are used to store extra cattle by wealthier community members.

While fear of losing an income and the need for domestic assistance are major causes that prevent poor children from attending school, another major reason is due to the absence of acceptable educational resources and relevancy to the individual's life at all levels of education. Several scholars and activists believe that the primary reason behind this neglect towards education is to keep a stratified socio-economic structure intact (Weiner 2006; Ramagundam 2006; Drèze and Sen 1995; Sainath 1996). Sainath (1996, 50-52) observes that private-aided schools in 14 states, including Bihar, receive approximately 60 per cent of the public funding available for education, which, in other words, is provided to schools educating children belonging to the elite.

Similarly, universities in Bihar are also heavily under-financed causing pervasive irregularities throughout the examination and certification procedures. The Bihar government is notorious for its tolerance to cheating, plagiarism and grades awarded through bribery and caste affiliation. One university student explained that his institution had a shortage of resources, the library books were out-dated, and textbooks were generally unavailable. Like many of his peers, his rationale for cheating was that if he did not then it would be impossible for him to compete with students from other states in the standardized national exams. In 2007, when the government declared that they were no longer tolerant to cheating, a student riot broke out in Patna, the capital of Bihar, and several trains were hijacked and set ablaze.

While public schools and many private schools receive financial assistance from the government, most charitable and low-end private schools do not. Despite his numerous attempts at securing several government grants, Dave, the director at Maitreya School, thinks this is because the government believes that Maitreya already receives much financial assistance from foreign donors and that the public money can be distributed to other, more needy places. In other words, as Dave said, "they're passing us the buck!" Or, in light of Sainath's (1996, 52) analysis, Maitreya School is not a place the government wishes to serve because the majority of the school's students are from the lower and scheduled castes. Sainath contends that the major reason the governments refuse to help the lower classes with adequate education is that it would gradually eliminate child labour, a practice widely used around the country.

Schools, in whatever form they take, are both causes and effects of a complex network of external forces concerning economics, politics, education and culture that contribute to the perpetuation of an enduring social system. While there are various classes of government and private schools in India, Bodhgayā's education system is comprised of public primary and secondary schools which are drastically underfinanced and underequipped, several private-fee paying schools of various standards with more stringent English and science than the public system, and even more free private schools with a wide range of standards and resources. Most of the schools that do not levy any charges from the parents are administered by locals and sponsored by transient foreign Buddhist pilgrims and tourists. A few, such as the Maitreya School, Alice Project, Akshay School, Sujata School and Pragya Vihara are run primarily by outsiders. Several locals and pilgrim-educators suggested that the free charitable schools run by locals are inferior and are really intended to make a profit off the foreign donors. The schools that actually have foreigners in residence, on the other hand, are considered to be some of the better schools offering a higher quality education.

Middle and upper-class children usually attend the private fee-paying schools offering better quality teachers and resources, while those in the lowest socio-economic echelons tend to go to the unsatisfactory government or charitable schools. The dismal record of public education and the growing middle-class has increased the demand for good private schools to outweigh the meagre supply. In Bodhgayā few people have the contacts or the money to send their children to elite schools like the franchise Dayanand Anglo-Vedic School (DAV) found in the wealthier parts of India, and most of the other cheaper or free private schools are little better than the public schools. This trend of substandard schools causes the demand for good, free, or inexpensive, foreign-managed schools to be extremely high.

Muralidharan and Kremer (2006, 16) observe that children in rural private schools generally have higher attendance rates hovering around seventy-five per cent compared to sixty-four per cent in public schools. Because many people believe that the state has failed to provide both quality and quantity of education, most private schools, as well as Maitreya School, considered to be one of the leading charitable schools, have a low-dropout rate. Maitreya School's day program has about three-hundred and fifty students from Kindergarten to Class twelve. When parents admit their children into Kindergarten, they receive

explanations that they are required to keep their child at the school for the child's entire academic career because the curriculum requires a long-term commitment. If parents do not agree with the school's mission, then they should send their children elsewhere. The evening program (a condensed version of the day program) has one-hundred and fifty students, mostly children who either work during the day or attend another school with a substandard curriculum. These children are only permitted to enter the day program after a few years of dedication to the evening program, and proving their interest and sincerity. Dave, the school director, explained that it is challenging for him to be strict, especially for the poorest children who live under such harsh conditions; yet, he feels it is essential if the school is to be successful.

One morning, I walked into the school principal Karl's office where he and Rishi, the senior teacher, were sorting through approximately one thousand applications for admittance into the day and evening kindergarten classes. Karl, looking a little pale, said that it takes them about one week to reduce the pile to about two-hundred and fifty candidates: one-hundred and twenty-five for day and one-hundred and twenty-five for evening. The applicants that are eliminated are generally those who are too old for kindergarten or who live more than three kilometres away from the school. Proximity to the school matters. The further a child lived from the school, the greater the chance that s/he would be late and not even show up during the monsoon and winter seasons. Rishi further explained that they strive to get an equal number of boys and girls, and children from a range of social and economic backgrounds. Another week is spent interviewing the children and administering entrance exams which test the child's skills in drawing and writing. At the end of the process, twenty-five children are chosen for each of the two programs. Karl laments that the entire process is extremely difficult, "Some of the younger children are easily distracted and highly disruptive; others have sharp concentration and listen to their teachers and pay them respect…When testing five and six year olds, the selection is really hit or miss." Karl's comments coincide with Apple's (2000) claim that schools are sites "of struggle and compromise" and are forced to assume a surrogate role for what larger state institutions are supposed to do and who they are to serve (58). In this way, the current education system is both a conditioned and a conditioning factor involved in the continuation of an unrelenting social system that keeps the poor in place.

3.1.3. Issues with Substandard Teaching and Teachers in Bodhgayā

At present, there are few incentive structures for teachers to improve their teaching performance. Most teachers in public, charitable, and low-end private schools around Bodhgayā have the reputation of being highly unmotivated. They are blamed by parents and educators alike for being indifferent to the high dropout rates, for considering teaching as an unrewarding job rather than a noble calling, not caring whether their students understand the course material, and disregarding the well-being of their students. Daljit, a retired public school math and science teacher, bragged that only forty or fifty per cent of his students attended class on a regular basis because he had brutally beat them. "Today, teachers not allowed to give thrashing to students, but still do, but not too much. I used to beat too much!" Daljit said laughing as he pretended to beat a child with a stick. Several parents believed that the majority of teachers do not care about their professions and would rather be at home. Daljit recalled how he would often cancel class when there would not be enough students to teach. He would send them back to their homes and then go off drinking with friends—some of whom were also school teachers.

These teachers are generally unaccountable for their actions. Unlike in the public schools, head teachers in private schools are generally more apt, and able, to take disciplinary action against teachers shirking their responsibilities than their public school counterparts. Kingdon and Muzamil (2001) discuss the power of public-school teacher unions in the state of Uttar Pradesh (Bihar's neighbour), thus protecting teachers no matter how unruly. Mulidharan and Kremer (2006, 13) observe that only one principle in nearly three-thousand public schools reported ever dismissing a teacher for repeated absence whereas thirty-five principles in a sample of six-hundred private schools reported dismissing a teacher due to absenteeism and laziness. They write, "private school teachers are approximately one-hundred and seventy-five times more likely to have disciplinary action taken against them" (Mulidharan and Kremer 2006, 13). In other words, public school teachers have no fears of losing their jobs and little incentive to improve their classroom and school community (hence, a good neoliberal argument against unions!).

A more subtle example demonstrating a lack of motivation to improve the conditions of the school community stems from the teachers' absence of identification with their school, especially if the schools were foreign and/or Buddhist operated. Gramsci (1971, cited in

Kamat 2002, 187) referred to this lack of connection as the "objectification of the organization," where members regard themselves as separate from the organization which has its own internal mechanisms that enable it to function. From an organizational standpoint, this inhibits productivity and efficiency because members do not want to assume responsibility or engage deeply with whatever problems arise; always thinking that the "school" will take care of it. One time a photo project I led[84] went awry due to a teacher's lack of attention, which cost me to lose seven-hundred rupees (approximately twenty US dollars). He was remorseful for his error, but a couple of his colleagues chuckled, "don't worry, Maitreya School will take care of it." Similarly, when I introduced an environmental project for the Special Program that all the teachers seemed quite satisfied with, none of the teachers wanted to get involved because, I believe, it entailed further preparation on top of their current responsibilities. "It's a wonderful project for Maitreya," I was told, and left at that. A major frustration of the school's administration is the lack of "deep commitment" they receive from the teachers and staff. They believe that most of the teachers appreciate and enjoy working at the school, but are not necessarily loyal to it and would leave as soon as a higher paying job became available elsewhere. This disloyalty is especially challenging for an organization like Maitreya School because its socio-spiritual agenda (see next chapter) requires exemplary teachers who are adherents of the philosophy and are confident that the pedagogical tools work. As one volunteer commented, "If Maitreya is to really going to be a success, then *everyone* must practice what they preach."

Absenteeism is a major dilemma in the rural Bihari education system (see Thakur 2007). During their nationwide study on teacher absenteeism in 3700 public and private schools where the researchers had made three unannounced visits to each school in the sample, Kremer et al (2004, 2) note that Bihar's rate was at 37.8 per cent. This figure was the highest after Jharkand (the state which recently separated from Bihar) which was at 41.9 per cent. Maharashtra scored the lowest rate at 14.6 per cent, and the over-all rate of teacher absenteeism was at 24.8 per cent. Moreover, only 45 per cent of the teachers who were present were actually engaged in a teaching activity (4).

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[84] I was the school's unofficial photographer. I took photos at all the school functions. Photos I took of events were printed and donated to the school, and photos I took of students who wanted personal copies were charged at cost.

In most schools—public, charitable, and private (lower-end), teacher morale is generally low and teacher absenteeism is often high, especially in rural areas, a phenomena possibly explained by minimal wages, inadequate training, low status associated with the profession due to ingrained caste prejudice.

Minimal Wages:

Most teachers in Bihar's public, charitable and low-end private school system belong to the lower middle class. Bihar's new educational policy has led to an increase in salary for public school teachers, but these teachers comprise a small number of the teaching population in the region. Moreover, these teachers complain that their salaries are not enough to meet the rising prices in the local market. In contrast to public schools, private schools pay much lower salaries to their teachers. In their survey of rural Indian schools that occurred in 2003, Muralidharan and Kremer (2006, 12) note that private-school teachers typically earn between one-fifth and one-tenth the salary of regular public-school teachers. During my period of research in 2007-2008, I observed that public school teachers received between two and three times the salary of a private school teacher in Bodhgayā. I compared five teachers with similar educational backgrounds and years of teaching experience. The public school teacher earned Rs.10 000/month (approximately US $250),[85] the elite private school teacher earned Rs.8 000/month (approximately US $200), the high standard charitable Maitreya School teacher earned Rs.5000/month (approximately US $125), and the two low-end private and charitable school teachers earned Rs.2000/month (approximately US $50). Due to these low salaries, Muralidharan and Kremer (2006, 12) assert that private schools can "hire more teachers, have lower pupil-teacher ratios, and reduce multi-grade teaching," all features appreciated by parents. It is important to note that although these salaries seem low, they are still higher than what the majority of Biharis earn.

It is important to understand who the private school teachers are, and the reasons why they are willing to work at such low salaries. Is the desire to be around higher-caste children a sufficient reason for accepting much lower wages? The situation is more complex than that. I observed that most of these inexpensive teachers in the villages agree to work under the

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[85] The salary of a public school figures even higher if benefits and retirement pension are included. Private school teachers typically receive no benefits or pension.

conditions they do because they do not have much choice. Most of the private schools are staffed by local educated youth who are generally unable to find employment, disinclined to work in agriculture (and with the advent of mechanized farming—not needed), and do not view teaching as a long-term career (Muralidharan and Kremer 2006, 15). For the time being, teaching suits the needs of these youth because they are not bound by any long-term commitments and the working days are short (about four to six hours per day). This enables them to pursue other jobs on the side and/or the time necessary for further education, either at Magadha University, a vocational training centre in Gayā, or via a correspondence course. Also, whereas public school teachers may be assigned to a school far away from their home, private school teachers usually do not have to travel far to work. Finally, teaching also provides them with some measure of respectability in comparison with the many youth who engage in criminal activity not uncommon in and around Bodhgayā.

As prices in Bodhgayā's market continue to escalate, these teachers' low salaries force them to supplement their incomes. A common side-job for teachers is offering "tuition" classes where they tutor students for a fee. This practice forces them to divide their working time, often leaving them insufficient time to properly prepare their daily lessons. Despite the common image of these teachers being lazy, Mahindra was one of the hardest working men I had ever met. He began his day "coaching" students in math from 5:00 am to 7:45 am every morning, Monday to Saturday. He would dash over to Maitreya School for the 8:00 am morning assembly. He taught math and Hindi until 1:00 pm, after which he would go home for lunch, nap, and if possible, sell various insurance policies in his neighbourhood. From 3:00 pm to 5:20 pm he taught math at Shakyamuni College, and then back to Maitreya School to teach in the evening program, which finished at 8:00 pm. At 9:00 pm he would eat dinner quickly and then work on his doctoral thesis until he collapsed into sleep around 11:30 pm or midnight. Sundays he divided his time between his thesis and his wife and child. Mahindra confided in me that he would like to spend more time with his boy and feels slightly ashamed for not preparing his Hindi or Special Program classes as well as he knows he could (In fact, he rarely prepares his classes in advance but teaches them "on the fly." For his math classes, he follows a textbook). While most teachers are not as overworked to the same extreme as Mahindra, it can be said that most are forced into double, and sometimes triple employment, thus preventing them from adequately carrying out their teaching responsibilities.

Inadequate Training:

A common complaint heard about all types of teachers in Bodhgayā is the low level of training they receive. On the one hand, teachers working in the charitable schools may have experience in their respective fields, but have no formal training as teachers. Maclure, Sabbah and Lavan (2009) and Davies (1993) assert that this lack of training is common in most developing countries due to budgetary constraints and minimal access to pedagogical resources. On the other hand, teachers with formal education degrees often work in public schools, but have little regard for their students, who are mostly from the lower castes. I was told by many educators, parents and students that teachers in private schools, even if they have smaller remuneration and less training, have more concern for their students because the students come from higher castes and economic classes, and are therefore regarded as more intelligent.

The rage for English-medium instruction in the private schools—whether elite or charitable—also compels teachers to teach in a second or third-language to a classroom of students who have trouble grasping the language in which they are schooled. Each time I entered a classroom, teachers displayed their teaching skills by having the students recite English poems or shout out class chorused answers to militaristic-fired questions. If I were to then ask the students the meaning or a Hindi translation of the poem, the children would usually remain silent. I discuss the issue of English-medium in greater detail in the last section of this chapter.

Govinda (2003) argues that qualified and caring teachers are critical for meaningful social change to occur. While good facilities—books, computers, buildings, etc—are important for improving the quality of education, they are less consequential than providing educators fair wages and adequate training, which should be the core of educational reform efforts (see Bloom 2004, 72). In Bodhgayā cost-saving measures have invariably forced schools to hire poorly qualified teachers who accept wages even below the minimum. Govinda (2003) argues that this trend will have dangerous implications as the hiring process becomes irreversible and self-perpetuating. He states, "Low quality teachers adversely affect the learning achievements of several generations of students and therefore, have the potential to create an unending spiral, producing future teachers within the locality with low levels of learning" (10). From this perspective, attention to both the financial and professional needs of

the educator is essential for constructing an education system geared towards effective social transformation.

Low Status and Caste Prejudice

Bhim and I in sat on his King-sized family-bed/couch that serves dually as a place for sleeping and hosting visitors. Bhim, a public school teacher, explained that in addition to his teaching duties, teachers were also expected to work, for no extra compensation, as census collectors, election officers, and health test administrators. While he enjoyed the diversity of tasks at times, he believed that the government treated their teachers as if these other duties were more important than teaching. Davies (1993) asserts that when teachers are not perceived as intellectual, moral and community leaders, their morale decreases and they tend to take their job less seriously. From the critical perspective that claims the education system reproduces economic and cultural hegemonic relationships (Weiner 2006; Ramagundam 2006; Drèze and Sen 1995; Sainath 1996), it can further be argued that the academic roles of these teachers is not taken seriously because they are, in essence, teaching children who are not intended to play intellectual and ruling roles in society, but those of lowly, menial servants.

Dissatisfaction on the part of both public school teachers and students is further perpetuated by the fact that class sizes are so large. Compared to private schools, public schools usually have higher student-teacher ratios. When I visited one of the public primary schools I counted forty-three students, and according to the teacher, fifteen were absent that day. At Maitreya School, the largest classes have twenty-five students registered, and about eighteen to twenty in attendance on any given day. The senior grades—Class eleven and Class twelve, considered to be pre-college classes, had seven and twelve students, respectively. These figures correspond with Muralidharan and Kremer's (2006, 13) study which discovered that the average student to teacher ratio is 19.2:1 in private schools and 43.4:1 in public schools. In this way, children in public schools rarely get close contact with their teachers.

Several informants repeated the idea that public schools are not meant to provide adequate education to its students, and that the teachers are not sufficiently motivated to help their students succeed academically. Bhim grumbled,

> Most teachers do not care. They have no love for the children or the desire to impart knowledge to the students. Students in government schools are from poor families and lower castes, teachers are from middle-class and usually higher-caste. They have big ego, look down on students, like stupid animals.

I asked him what he thought the common attitude of educated *Dalit*s, like himself, were towards lower-caste children and education. He responded, "They are the same, they don't care. When *Dalit* children go to good [i.e., private] school they want to become like *babu* [white collar clerk]. They don't want to help their community." "All of them have this attitude?" I asked, "No, not all; but many. Most do not care, very greedy, controlled by *Mara* only."[86]

I asked Bhim if he sent his daughters to a private school rather than a public one because of a higher academic standard. Fixing his thick wool shawl wrapped around his shoulders, he responded, "Private schools don't always have best quality teachers, but these teachers are more caring, more open in communication with parents." "Why is it that?" I asked. "The students come from parents with more education; they understand great importance of education only. Also, they take more interest because students are coming from higher castes only; they believe they are better people." This attitude towards the upper-caste reflects the structured hierarchical values and norms that are mirrored in the social dynamics of the classroom experience. Through these classroom encounters, teachers infuse their students with temperaments and behaviours required to accept the imperatives of a caste-based society, corresponding to a caste-based version of the theory of the "hidden curriculum," stating that required school was developed to ensure a passive, malleable workforce that would not rebel. In the Western context, Gatto (1991; 2000) argues that this meekness is achieved by teaching children to become intellectually and emotionally dependent on corporations for their finances and psychological well-being, and that life's meaning is found through the production and consumption of material goods.

The stratified system of education reflects traditional Hindu notions of social rank and hierarchy, and distinguishes institutions created for the children of those who perform manual work and those who are in business and services (Weiner 2006, 188). In this manner, today's Indian education system is similar to a modern "Law of Manu," preventing the lower

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[86] *Mara* is the Buddhist personification of evil.

castes from rising up to higher socio-economic standings (Weiner 2006, 189). Consequently, education does not level the playing field, but perpetuates differentiation of one social class from another, ensuring inequity (Apple 2000). Those who attend the private schools learn to dress and speak differently, as well as methods of exercising power over those who have received inferior education. Evidence of this behaviour is observable in the way the educated middle and upper castes commonly bark commands to the "uneducated" and receive obedience, deference, and obsequiousness in return.

The pedagogic suppression experienced by poor Biharis is based upon the elitist notion that education is inappropriate for the lower castes, indicating how a particular cultural struggle is a product of class power and affiliation (Apple 2000, 58). When the belief that access to and quality of education should be caste-based becomes ingrained in the collective lower-caste mind, educational aspirations diminish, as does parental and social support (Drèze and Sen 1995, 130). In addition, Hindu religious groups do not usually endorse mass education, except in areas where they are competing with education-promoting Christian groups. A few exceptions to this norm are Sanatan Dharma, Ramakrishna Mission, and the Arya Samaj in several locations throughout the country. For the common Hindu, mythology is the primary mode of understanding the tradition. Theology and mastery of texts is restricted to the upper-castes, whereas myths are transmitted via devotional activities including story-telling, songs, dances, and dramas. Further, many orthodox Brahmin groups deem it blasphemous for the lower-castes and women to even consider reading sacred texts. The idea of lower-castes receiving an education is traditionally despicable to a large number of upper-caste teachers. This is an even stronger sentiment in the modern context given that a newly educated lower class would abandon menial work for office work (Weiner 2006, 196). The Jennifer School on the outskirts Bodhgayā clearly exemplified this attitude. The school was sponsored by a famous Hollywood film director. The school was designed primarily for 700 lower-caste and tribal children. The upper-caste director of the school hired teachers and staff only from his caste, and cordoned off a piece of the school for fifty children from his caste (without the sponsors' permission of knowledge). Upper-caste teachers refused to pay attention or even feed the lower-caste students, believing, as a former administrator at the school once commented to me, that they were "dogs" who did not deserve quality food, let alone education. Within two years of the school's opening, lower- caste children were no longer permitted to attend class except during the tourist season when foreigners would visit

the school and donate money. All funds and food not spent beyond the fifty upper-caste children were reserved for the local director's personal use. In the school's fifth year when the sponsor discovered what was happening, all the funds were withdrawn and the school shut down permanently.

Caste inequalities pervade India's very structures, and lower-caste youth confront psychological, and often physical, abuse. In addition to receiving the poorest educational facilities and inferior employment opportunities, lower-caste Biharis are also subject to cultural violence perpetuated through the stereotypes of being lazy, ignorant and stupid substance abusers (Ramagundam 2006). These attitudes, in turn, "justify" the lack of opportunity and participation afforded to them in the social structure. Facing this form of cultural oppression, children and their parents see no reason to send their children to these inhospitable institutions which neither empower nor provide them with skills, but reproduce the existing oppressive order (see Weiner 2006; Ramagundam 2006; McCloskey 2003; Sainath 1996). As such, the infusion of neo-liberal regimes of knowledge and economic practices into educational institutions has not terminated older forms of caste-based power.

In Bodhgayā, there is a blend of despair, cynicism and hope among the poor regarding education. Many parents perceive education to be a potential vehicle that will help raise their children from destitution. However, as foreign and government development rapidly alter the town's poverty, displaying dreamy affluence, many Bodhgayāns anguish over not receiving their due portion of the finances from tourism that flow into town, causing some anger, resentment, and despair. The conspicuous material imbalances between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' simultaneously produce a desire for an education that empowers, as well as a sense of hopelessness when the education they receive fails to deliver.

Foreigners (Westerners and non-Bihari Indians) build schools thinking that with education the children will get better jobs than occasional cheap labour; however, they usually do not perceive the local realities that prevent socio-economic mobility, thus do not understand parents' ambivalent attitudes towards education. Most poor parents believe that when good jobs do become available they go to the upper-castes or those with money. In many instances, good government jobs require a "down-payment" that is beyond the means of most lower-caste people. Ganga, a thirteen-year old Maitreya School student, regularly argued with her parents so that she could continue going to school. According to her, her parents believed that it is better to be illiterate and occasionally employed than literate and

unemployed. I asked one Bihari widow who worked in her uncle's tea stall if she felt that an education would help her son get a regular job and have more money in the future to take better care of her. She scoffed, telling me that regular employment is so rare that no amount of schooling would help her son. Besides, she said, she probably would not live to be much older than forty or fifty. It was astonishing that a twenty-first century woman in her early thirties who lives in a democratic state that "guarantees" the welfare of its citizens could utter such a statement. But as a local restauranter and friend commented, "The worst part of her words is that they are true."

3.1.4. Women and Education

In addition to the challenges surrounding child labour, dearth of educational resources and funding, poorly trained and unmotivated teachers, and the reproduction of caste prejudices, another major impediment to social justice is connected to the typical subaltern status of women and the absence of equal educational opportunities for girls. On the one hand, despite India's population growth of approximately 2 per cent per annum, education has become a fundamental right in the Indian Constitution (www.india.gov.in 2009), and the government's literacy campaigns have helped literacy increase from 18.33 per cent in 1951 after Independence to 65.38 per cent in 2001 (about 9.41 per cent per decade) with female literacy rates (14.9 per cent) surpassing male rates (11.7 per cent) in the last decade (www.india.gov.in 2009; *Human Development Report 2005*, cited in Ghosh 2008, 9). On the other hand, India still has the world's largest number of unlettered women: 245 million Indian women cannot read or write. Ghosh (2008) contends that "low literacy levels for women means high levels of fertility, high mortality, lack of nutrition and low earning power which also mean lack of power in decision making in the family" (10). In other words, low literacy among women perpetuates a vicious cycle of socio-economic oppression. To address these gender inequities, most of the charitable schools in and around Bodhgayā reserve at least half of the available seats for girls.

Economists Jean Drèze and Amartya Sen (1995) assert three gender related features responsible for prejudice attitudes towards educating girls. First, the gender division of labour generally minimizes the apparent advantages of female education. Most girls, especially in rural areas, are expected to lead a life of domestic toil, child-rearing, and, in some situations,

participation in agricultural activities. Ghosh (2008) demonstrates that the needs of mothers and daughters often collide as the mothers require their daughters to stay home and work. Unless a mother has received a basic education herself and understands the benefits of basic literacy and numeracy, even in the limited domestic sphere, the aforementioned social expectations cause parents to perceive education for their daughters to be relatively futile (134). Some of the girls I spoke with who regularly attended Maitreya School told me that their mothers had also received basic education; the girls who missed a lot of school often came from families where the mother was illiterate or dead. Ghosh (2008) writes, "Illiterate girls become illiterate women. Powerlessness is perpetuated inter-generationally. Parents' attitudes towards education have a major effect on children's education" (9). In this way, education and literacy are directly associated with the reproduction of identity and social capital.

When poor people receive decent wages they will generally send their children to school rather than work because they do not depend on their children for extra income. When families have educated members, especially women, then there is a greater chance that they will not pull their children out of school. In this way, adult education programs may indirectly affect primary and secondary school enrolments because the adults in these programs recognize the value of education for both them and their children (Weiner 2006, 74).

The second gender related characteristic attributable to the lack of importance given to educating girls may originate from the practices of village exogamy, patrilocal residence and patrilineal property ownership. These practices undermine parents' economic incentives to send their daughters to school. Many parents debate why they should invest their scarce resources in someone who will eventually leave to benefit another household. To put it bluntly, from the perspective of parental self-interest, there is little motivation to educate girls (Drèze and Sen 1995, 135). As a Bihari man with three daughters sighed, "raising a girl is like watering someone else's plant."

Third, dowry practices make female education a liability. Since it is preferred for an educated girl to marry a *more* educated boy, and that dowry payments increase in relation to the boy's education, then a better educated girl will be more expensive to marry off (Drèze and Sen 1995, 135). This issue of girl's education and increased dowry payments became apparent to me when I tried to help a friend educate his wife and two adolescent daughters by

sending them to a tutor three days a week for an hour so that they could gain basic skills in literacy and numeracy. He reluctantly agreed, but after three weeks prohibited them from continuing. He later explained to me that there was too much work at the vegetable stall to let them go. Another local friend later commented to me that the father probably feared it would increase his daughters' worth and make it difficult for him to marry them.

Thus, we see the prevailing attitude towards female education and how it reproduces socio-economic power relationships and prevent development of individual and community participation and growth.

3.2. NEO-LIBERAL POLICIES AND PRACTICES AS A BARRIER TO DEVELOPMENT

While the previous section focused on some of the ground-level challenges to education what follows is a discussion on how neo-liberal policies and practices accelerate those challenges. I begin with a brief background of neo-liberal economic reforms in India, and how they have influenced both public and private policies and practices towards education. Then, I examine how these policies have widened the economic divide between the classes and what the impacts of neo-liberal individualism entail for the education system. The section concludes with a critique of the economic perspective on education that treats schools as economic resources and children as financial investments.

3.2.1. A Brief Background to Neo-Liberalization in India

When India achieved independence in 1947 the nationalist government chose a protectionist route that regulated and restricted business, a practice inspired by Gandhi's promotion of self-sufficiency, Nehru's socialism, and a deep-seated fear of foreign competition (Khilnani 2004, 34). India's isolationist policy was a reaction to and a critique of European colonial exploitation, whose long hegemonic history created an acute Indian hostility and suspicion towards free market policies championing foreign investment and trade. As Khilnani (2004, 34) observes, India was conquered not by a foreign military, but by foreign traders and merchants.

From the 1950s to the 1980s, India's strict market regulations resulted in an almost unshakeable economic stability with a slow annual growth of approximately three per cent,

an avoidance of serious industrial recession and an evasion of high foreign debt—all features common to most developing countries during this period (Khilnani 2004, 35). However, economist Gurcharan Das (2002), a proponent of the dominant neo-liberal perspective calling for a free-market economy, believes that India's implementation of an inward-looking path deprived the country a share in international trade and the wealth that it brought in the post-war era. India also established a large, inefficient, over-regulated and monopolistic public sector to which it denied economic autonomy and global market competition (xii). Towards the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s, excessive government subsidies created high fiscal deficits, thus leading to sharp increases in financial borrowing at a time when interest rates rose steeply. By May 1991, the nation found itself in a major economic recession and by July 1991, was forced to turn to the International Monetary Fund, who demanded a liberalized economy in exchange for immediate assistance (Khilnani 2004, 35; Das 2002).

Today, most economists working in India hold neo-liberal views, believing that the private sphere is beneficial and the public is detrimental to the common good. Gurcharan Das (2002) repeatedly stresses that privatization, foreign investment, low taxes, reduction/elimination of import controls and custom duties and keeping a devalued currency—all economic practices that were set in motion in India with the economic reforms of July 1991—is the only viable path to free the country from the shackles of the old centralized bureaucratic system in India that prevented not only economic growth, but development in every sense of the word.

As a result of these reforms, India is emerging as a knowledge super-power as multi-national companies outsource their customer services and technical support to India's cities and towns. As the eleventh largest world economy and the fourth largest economy in purchasing power parity, India is the second fastest growing major economy. Its Gross Domestic Product growth rate is close to 9 per cent and its stock-exchange has more than doubled (Ghosh 2008, 2). As the country becomes one of the world's leaders in the knowledge revolution, many Indians belonging to the emerging middle-class feel a new sense of wealth and optimism.

Das (2002) contends that a "quiet and gradual economic revolution" is unfolding, partly based on the growth of social democracy, but more due to the continued annual economic growth of five to eight per cent that India has experienced since the economic

reforms. Since India has opened its economy, prosperity has become increasingly visible and the Indian middle-class has tripled to about fifteen per cent of the billion person population (Das 2002; Khilnani 2004). Throughout his book *India Unbound*, Das (2002) paints a picture of how young Indians are realizing that the government's economic reforms are not just relevant to industries and large corporations regarding tariff regulations, deregulation, and structural adjustment, but affects their lives by giving them the freedom to choose how they want to run their lives economically. Today, Das claims that the son of a weaver no longer needs to weave if he does not want to, but can open a small shop, work at a call centre, or establish a steel factory (243). For Das, these reforms have created a revolution by changing the ideas, attitudes, and hopes of the common middle class person—the new image of India. In Bodhgayā, the relevance of this "revolution" is most obvious not in the ever-changing political parties and scandals that seem to obsess many of my Bihari friends and informants, but in the opening of vocational training centres, social services, and businesses related to the tourist industry that directly impact the ways in which people lead their lives. Currently, Indians enjoying middle-class status have more disposable income and a wider choice of consumer goods on which to spend their money than in the days prior to liberalization.

At the same time, the gap between the rich and poor is widening faster than ever before as the global forces become increasingly apparent in all domains. India's post-secondary educated workforce is larger than ever before, yet its illiteracy rates continue to climb; India is the home to two of the ten wealthiest people in the world, but also shelters a third of the world's poorest (World Bank 2009; Government of India 2005).[87] In Bodhgayā, the majority of Biharis do not benefit from the town's economic "prosperity" from tourism as more than a quarter of the population lives on the threshold of poverty, earning little more than Rs. 12 per day (approximately US$ 0.25). The odds of a weaver's son doing any of the things that Das proposes are remote. Dasgupta (2004, 88) comments on the widening disparity between the rich and poor,

> Being able to purchase French wine or Pierre Cardin shirts in New Delhi does not mean that the purchasing power among the rural poor has risen, nor indeed does it

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[87] In 2005, the Government of India's Planning Commission stated that 27.5 per cent of its population lived below the international poverty line of US $1.25 per day; whereas the World Bank claimed the number to be at 42 per cent, encompassing some 456 million people.

imply that illiteracy has reduced, that drinking water is available to all citizens or that at least one meal is guaranteed to everyone

Furthermore, Welch (2000) argues that World Bank and IMF structural adjustment policies championing "domestic austerity and export promotion" are not a good trade-off for development loans (15). According to Welch, the implementation of these programs entails,

> The introduction of more regressive taxation policies, sharply reduced public sector spending in areas such as welfare, housing, public transport, food subsidies, and public schooling (but notably not other major areas of public sector spending, such as defence) and policies to deregulate the labour market: a euphemism for anti-trade trade-union policies, lax health and safety standards for workers, and inadequate wages and conditions, including salary freezes, especially in the public sector. (15)

Neo-liberal structural adjustment programs funded by the World Bank and the IMF have eroded social welfare. Under these programs, tax incentives are provided to corporations, and foreign investment, deficit reduction, inflation control and privatization of public services increase citizen's costs (Welch 2000). Rich and poor people alike do not need to make equivalent levels of sacrifice under such programs. For example, removing food subsidies, eliminating healthcare provisions and privatizing education has a far greater impact upon the majority of poor people than it does upon the minority of wealthier citizens who are able to forge ahead without government assistance (Welch 2000; Apple 2000). It is also worth noting that in Bodhgayā, educational and healthcare centres are generally funded by foreign donor organizations and individuals, hence creating deep relationships of dependence rather than freedom, the stated aim of liberalization (Sooryamoorthy and Gangrade 2001; Kamat 2000).

The rapid and imbalanced economic growth experienced since the reforms has caused not only a sharp social and economic disparity between the lower and upper classes and castes, but has led to a regional unequal distribution of growth and investment. Khilnani (2004, 35-6) observes that while Delhi, Maharashtra and Gujarat—containing about 15 per cent of the Indian population—secure approximately 40 per cent of the foreign investment; Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar—about thirty-two per cent of the population—only

secure 3.5 per cent of the foreign investment.[88] Moreover, the Government of India Planning Commission (2005) locates Bihar's poverty rate at 41 per cent and the International Food Policy Research Institute (2008) places the state's level of malnutrition lower than Ethiopia and Sudan.

Thus, we see that while a minority of India's citizenry benefit from the neo-liberal policies and practices encouraging privatization of public resources and services, a large number of people, like those in Bodhgayā, Bihar are caught in a system that reinforces stratified socio-economic structures and processes designed to perpetuate positions of affluence and privilege.

3.2.2. Neo-Liberal Economic View of Education: Boon or Barrier to Development?

Utilitarian Views of Education:

The role of education in a competitive, free-market state is often designed to help increase economic growth and global competitiveness. This neo-liberal utilitarian perspective on education dominates Indian policy discourse, asserting that the *raison d'être* of education is to transmit knowledge and skills regarded to be essential for both a working life and to accomplish the wider aims of national (and global) economic growth. Governments and international lending agencies endorse this instrumentalist perspective because it is rooted in the belief that education is a social investment that will enable students to adapt and contribute to a country's social and political stability, as well as its financial security

The notion that education is an important factor in generating higher incomes for its graduates and thereby diminishing poverty and enhancing human well-being is cited by a number of economists (see Bloom 2004; Das 2002; Govinda 2003; Drèze and Sen 1995). Drèze and Sen (1995) and Govinda (2003) highlight this connection by pointing out that the East Asian countries that had significantly invested in education have experienced higher rates of economic growth and have reduced their poverty levels because formal education

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[88] Incidentally, these three states in conjunction with Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh make up 48.12 per cent of India's non-literates (www.india.gov.in 2009).

fosters the development of skills necessary to guarantee a productive workforce that would increase a country's Gross Domestic Product. India, on the other hand, despite acting as an inward-looking state for more almost forty-five years, neglected—and continues to neglect—investments in education, thus impeding its economic development. Countries such as China, South Korea, Thailand, and Sri Lanka that invested in massive expansion of education and subsequently health care broke through their high poverty rates and eventually became actors in the global market (Das 2002; Govinda 2003; Drèze and Sen 1995).

The above cited economists adhere to the World Bank's technocratic means-ends strategy for education where an "economic analyses of education—in particular rate of return analysis—is a diagnostic tool with which to start the process of setting priorities" (World Bank, *Priorities and Strategies for Education* 1995, cited in Welch 2000, 15). By this method, Bloom (2004, 10) believes that proper education will prepare students

> to operate more effectively in the increasingly competitive global economy. Competing in global markets and attracting foreign investment requires high productivity, as well as the flexibility to use new technology to upgrade to higher value goods and services. Education both raises people's productivity and provides a foundation for rapid technological change.... Each year of schooling in developing countries is thought to raise individual's earning power, which is closely linked to productivity by about 10 per cent. (68)

Increasing knowledge, skill and productivity are reasons why owners and managers of large corporations generally support mass education in developing countries where they are operating an industry. Hiring workers who are able to read manuals and follow written instructions on machines is a key feature to a successful operation (Bloom 2004). Along these lines, the last few years have seen international corporate investors finance educational projects in Bihar. Kamat (2002, 22) argues that regional and national governments and foreign corporate sponsors in India do so for purely economic reasons, recognizing that income generation schemes and development projects will be most successful if the people to be employed (for low wages) have basic education, health care and vocational training (especially accounting, management skills, knowledge of rules and laws, etc.).

In most developing countries, neo-liberal supporters hail from a wide spectrum of the business class and they do not all have the same views regarding education. International development scholar Myron Weiner (2006, 195) observes that small-business owners in India often oppose compulsory mass education because they benefit from low wage, non-

unionized, malleable workers, whether they are children, uneducated women, or migrants. Small businesses either hire children directly or depend on the cheap products they can get from subcontractors who employ children. Small business owners use popular sympathy for the "locally-owned" cottage industries to influence legislation to prohibit compulsory education and to not regard child labour as exploitation, but as a vital element of the country's economy.

Whether workers have received a basic education or not may also bear little relevance. Gatto (1991; 2000) and Apple (2000, 64) assert that employment opportunities associated with market growth worldwide are not highly technological, but are for low-skilled, low-paid, non-unionized jobs that require minimal levels of education. Indian children (about 25 per cent) who go beyond domestic labour and enter the wage labour force work in restaurants or hotels are easily stuck in their jobs with no hope for a brighter future. They do not gain complex skills because of the simple and repetitive tasks they are assigned, and children who work in brick kilns, stone quarries or cotton-ginning factories do not learn skills for future careers and are meagrely compensated. As soon as these children get older they try to find something better, but find it difficult to do so because they generally lack technical training. In this way, whatever amount of education these workers have they are caught in a system that ensures socio-economic subordination and dependency.

Shifting Responsibility and the Myth of "Choice":
The pressures of structural adjustment and the ethos of neo-liberalism promoting market-driven development eclipse the ideal of education as a force for social change by promoting the instrumentalist notion that education must produce middle-class students with a competitive edge. Imbedded in this pedagogic ideology leaving individuals and communities vulnerable and exposed to the elements of the market is the legitimization and perpetuation of socio-economic privilege for affluent groups (Maclure, Sabbah and Lavan 2009, 371). As governments continue to neglect education, members of the elite class tend to view schooling as a private affair. When I asked a man who owned a three-star guest-house and successful cloth shop if he would ever consider sending his sons to the public school, he laughed saying, "Only if I want to guarantee failure! High quality education coming when you pay high prices only!" In this way, successful entrepreneurial and governing elites steeped in the neo-liberal worldview perceive education as a valued commodity and to be trusted only to a

private institution. The shop owner continued sharply, "not sending my sons to DAV [Bodhgayā's most elite private school] would be irresponsible."

In and around the Bodhgayā region, as well as in other poorer regions in India, private fee-charging elementary schools are becoming increasingly predominant. Twenty-eight per cent of the rural Indian population has access to private fee-charging schools in the same village, but most of these are located in poorer states with lower per capita incomes because the public schools are horrendous (Muralidharan and Kremer 2006, 7-8). Most of the rural private schools I visited have been established for less than seven years, indicating the rapid growth of education in and around Bodhgayā. Muralidharan and Kremer (2006) suggest that private schools are more common in poorer states where public school performance is substandard, thus explaining why I found only three public (two primary and one secondary) and dozens of private schools in the Bodhgayā area.

Neo-liberalism, as a body of knowledge, strategies and practices of governance "seeks to divest the state of paternalistic responsibility by shifting social, political and economic 'responsibility' to privatized institutions and economically rationalized 'self-governing' individuals" (Lemke 2001 cited in Nadeson 2006; also Apple 2000, 59). This definition illustrates how the state attempts to exempt itself of responsibility to its citizens by recasting them as rational and free agents who are able to make the best decisions for guiding their lives. What this means for schools is that risk and responsibility is left to individual schools and parents to provide the best educational experience possible for their children, as seen in the above narrative. Furthermore, as Apple (2000, 66) points out, by shifting the responsibility to the private sphere social services are depoliticized and dismantled.

India's burden of debt, structural adjustment practices and embrace of neo-liberalism caused it to reduce expenditures on education, hence shouldering the responsibility on families and municipalities to pay the costs of education such as tuition fees, textbooks, construction and renovation of buildings, etc. In Bihar, one of the poorest states in India, this move has destroyed the educational hopes for a large number of people. While tuition in public schools is free, course materials are not. Slate boards for writing on are becoming a relic of the past, and notebooks and pencils are expensive and get used up quickly. As one peasant farm labourer recounted, "How could I send my children to school? I can barely afford enough rice and lentils." In addition to the fees for school materials is the cost of matriculation exams, which are expensive even for those families with a steadier income.

These costs affect a child's academic career. Most village children quit school before reaching high school because their parents cannot afford the various fees and require that the children contribute to the family income. Those children who do continue generally come from wealthier families. Rocky's father provided him with a tutor to help him pass his Class 12 matriculation exams, which he succeeded only after his third attempt. Rocky is now in college studying management. Harsh, on the other hand, a bright student who always received high marks on his exams could not afford to stay in school past Class 10 and currently works at his father's roadside food stall (*dhaba*). Harsh tutors younger students and hopes to save enough money to finance further education in the future. He is not confident, however, when he calculates how much he earns in contrast to what it costs to go to college.

The neo-liberal attitude towards education incorporates "not only direct intervention by means of empowered and specialized state apparatuses, but also characteristically develop [s] indirect techniques for leading and controlling individuals without at the same time being responsible for them" (Lemke 2001, 201 cited in Nadesan 2006). By this method of control, the state is able to maintain class and caste based status quo via the routes of distribution, or lack of distribution, of educational resources. The key feature of the neo-liberal rationality is the congruence it endeavors to achieve "between a responsible and moral individual and an economic-rational individual" (Lemke 2001, 201 cited in Nadesan 2006). In other words, this strategy attempts to rationalize the purpose of education in economic terms and influences the manner in which resources are distributed according to this rationale. Thus, access to education is justified in terms of how it contributes to the economic needs of the nation. Although steeped in a universal discourse of rationality, this position is not a neutral description of the social world, but is a value construct of a particular socio-economic class (Apple 2000, 60). Nikolas Rose (1993) explains that the neo-liberal state does not seek to "govern through 'society,' but through the regulated choices of individual citizens" (285; cited in Nadesan 2006), or in our case, local level educational institutions. Moreover, Rose (1999, 141) states that "all aspects of *social* behaviour are reconceptualized along economic lines – as calculative actions undertaken through the universal human faculty of choice," and choice is itself articulated with a rational calculus of costs and benefits (cited in Nadesan 2006; see also Apple 2000, 60, 72).

"Freedom" and "efficiency" are common terms found in neo-liberal language, and are believed to be the basis for respecting individual choice. However, an outcome of this

liberty to choose generally results in the assignment of blame "from the decisions of the dominant groups onto the state and onto poor people" (Apple 2000, 60). In the Indian case, culpability is neither linked to the upper caste political-religious platform that has oppressed the nation's majority nor is it attached to businesses benefitting from the neo-liberal framework. People have the "choice" to stop attending a substandard school, or to not go to school at all, or to work for meager wages. As the state withdraws support from the public domains and the poor find themselves in undesirable financial, educational and medical situations, they are blamed individually and collectively for making "bad choices" (Apple 2000, 73). From this perspective, those who do not thrive economically, even in circumstances where prospects for employment are weak, can be said to have received a poor education. In contrast, individuals who have achieved economic success attribute their accomplishments to their education, regardless of their embedded positions of power and wealth (Maclure, Sabbah and Lavan 2009, 368, 380). Thus, it can be argued that education systems are largely responsible for maintaining the vested interests of beneficiaries while simultaneously depoliticizing the challenges of the social groups who are politically and economically marginalized (Maclure, Sabbah and Lavan 2009; Apple 2000). In this way, the neo-liberal regime reconfigures access to education as a "choice" within an economic context of meaning and inequalities in education and health care are sustained and expand.

Challenging Neo-Liberal Utilitarian Views of Education:
Notwithstanding the concrete evidence of growing poverty and social differentiation connected to neo-liberal policies affecting education identified by scholarly and activist literature (Ghosh 2008; Giroux 2006; 2000; Weiner 2006; Nadesan 2006; Welch 2000; Kamat 2000; Mies 1993) the World Bank, related organizations and supportive academics hold steadfastly to their economic view of education. Bloom (2004) and Das (2002) promulgate the myth of "catching-up development" (Mies 1993), and neglect to analyze whether the Western economic and consumeristic model is something worth "catching-up" to. Unfortunately, mainstream economists are stymied to find an alternative model that is sensitive to the particular contexts of developing countries, and also fail in addressing the need for Western nations to begin limiting their belief in unlimited growth and material accumulation.

Giroux (2006) argues that when education policies and practice are dictated by market pressures rather than educational excellence, dignity and respect for educational institutions is diminished (181). Moreover, these neo-liberal forces construe students as expendable commodities (Giroux 2006, 190; Apple 2000, 60). This attitude is evident by structural adjustment policies implemented by international aid institutions. In his review of the World Bank's *Priorities and Strategies for Education*, Welch (2000) contends that the text is,

> largely concerned with finance, economic returns, human resource development, efficiency, effectiveness, costings, private funding and the like, which although perhaps predictable for a bank, is evidently less willing to acknowledge non-economic dimensions, or other forms of scholarship, than previous bank policies in education...most of the bank's recommendations and much of its rhetoric is based on rate-of-return analysis...and takes little or no account of non-economic factors and does not allow for regional or cultural differences and diversity. (17)

Welch argues that this economic perspective on education fails to consider other advantages from attending school that are not directly related to income: decreased fertility rates, improved health, active citizenship, etc. (17). Welch criticizes this econo-centric approach to education on two primary levels. Firstly, World Bank findings are generally insular as they justify their own financial agendas. Refusing to engage with scholars who have opposing views results in a self-fulfilling research that shapes their own policies. Second, there is no real attempt on the World Bank or IMF's part to determine what is actually transpiring in the schools that they survey (17). There is neither discussion regarding the learning process nor the wider aims of education:

> There is little or no attention to fostering an inquiring and critical orientation among learners, eliminating discrimination and reducing elitism, promoting national unity, preparing young people for the rights and obligations of citizenship, equipping them to work cooperatively and resolve conflicts non-violently, or developing among learners a strong sense of individual and collective competence, self-reliance and self-confidence. Yet these features have all featured prominently in statements of Third World leaders and ministers of education over the last three decades. (Samoff 1996, 7-8, cited in Welch 2000, 18)

The economic stance on education and the dearth of critical dialogue between the state and the local school systems in India not only exemplifies the impossibility of achieving the UN's declaration on education noted at the outset of this chapter, but it may also reveal the

complex operations of how power is utilized to retain the status quo. This is the paradox of neo-liberalism: while it purports to govern through individual, or in this case, educational freedom, it simultaneously uses the market's "invisible hand" to preserve "a comprehensive normalization of social, economic and cultural existence" (Dean 2002, 129 cited in Nadesan 2006). In this way, unequal access to social and educational resources is normalized and instances of social injustice are depoliticized. Thus, Nadesan (2006) asserts that the primary problem with neo-liberal policy is that it presupposes an impossibility: "the equitable and totalizing production of rational, self-governing neo-liberal agents who always act in accord with neo-liberal value orientations." The separation between noble statements issued by political leaders and what actually transpires on the ground manifests the impracticality of the neo-liberal dream. This rupture results in the control over people through "invasive efforts" (Nadesan 2006); or perhaps in the case of the lower caste in Bihar, no effort at all.

Policy Discourses Coupling Economic Growth and Social Justice:
An alternative to the utilitarian discourse is one that calls for social equality and justice as the foundational aim of education. According to this position rooted in social change, the principle aims of education should be to teach children to think critically and prepare them for civic engagement that will enable them to transcend the barriers of poverty and discrimination and move towards creating broad social reform (Maclure, Sabbah and Lavan 2009, 368; Giroux 2006; Seymour 2004). This counter-hegemonic stance illuminates the role that education has for empowering marginalized communities to transform the existing structures and processes that buttress their disenfranchised ranking.

The last decade has witnessed an official trend incorporating the utilitarian and transformative perspectives into educational policy discourses throughout the developing world (Maclure, Sabbah and Lavan 2009). Statements like the one that opens this chapter put forth by world leaders exemplify how these divergent positions are intertwined throughout the developing world and have constructed a discourse linking education with development in the public imagination. Maclure, Sabbah and Lavan (2009) observe that the reason these opposing viewpoints co-exist is a result of the blending of discourses and aims by governments who perceive education as the basis for economic success and their supporting international organizations who wish to address prevailing social inequalities and promote democratic ideals. Therefore, as Maclure, Sabbah and Lavan (2009, 369) assert,

> Official policy discourse generally embraces the notion of education as an agent of social change and social justice. Yet this rhetorical reconciliation of utilitarian and transformative perspectives almost never leads to an upset of the established bureaucratic structures and the competitive, selection-oriented processes of national school systems. Instead, the incorporation of the ideal of education as a catalyst for societal transformation in official policy pronouncements has essentially served to depoliticize the concept of educational change and to render it in the popular imagination as a process that reinforces officially sanctioned development strategies.

Thus, official pronouncements articulating the juncture between utilitarian perspectives aimed at economic growth and transformative viewpoints directed towards social equity are, in reality, a fiction since the latter is always rendered submissive to the former (Maclure, Sabbah and Lavan 2009, 369). While key terms such as "empowerment," "democratic participation," and "social justice" are commonly found in official policy statements on development and education, Maclure, Sabbah and Lavan (2009) assert that political conservatism, resource scarcity and massive debts and dependencies on neo-liberal international lending agencies render it impossible for a genuine merging of these two philosophies. In this way, the altruistic and noble discourse is a myth that does little more than depoliticize important social issues.

3.3. PEDAGOGICAL ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES AS BARRIERS TO DEVELOPMENT

In this section I examine the influence of attitudes such as competition and independence as educational goals, and what sorts of effects they have on the individual. Following this, I analyze the individual and social impacts of Freire's (1971) "banking" approach in mainstream education systems, as well as the influences of foreign culture and English-medium language instruction on the learning process.

3.3.1. Competition and Individualism as Goals of Education

Educational scholars Jeremy Leed (2005), David Orr (2004) and Deberah Meier (2004) argue that the modern education system over-emphasizes competition and individualism. Even though these authors refer primarily to Western educational systems, their ideas are equally applicable to the Indian educational context, which has largely been influenced by the British model. Whether students seek higher education, better employment opportunities, or socio-

political status, their capabilities and worth are constantly ranked by some external measure that supposedly reflect one's qualities and achievement. This utilitarian emphasis on individualism and competition in formal educational settings brings about three major results: individual and social disconnection, a lack of motivation and skill for civic engagement, and an overly-consumeristic attitude.

Disconnection:

In mainstream Western thought, individualism is generally perceived as a positive characteristic conveying confidence, independence, superiority and strength. However, these characteristics also hide feelings of loneliness or weakness, and often lead to a sense of alienation and disconnection (Leed 2005; Noddings 2002). Social psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979, 53 cited in Berman 2004, 108) contends that a focus on individualism leads to social fragmentation. He writes,

> It is now possible for a person eighteen years of age to graduate from high school without ever having had to do a piece of work on which someone else truly depended ... without ever having cared for, or even held, a baby; without ever having looked after someone who was old, ill, or lonely; or without ever having comforted or assisted another human being who really needed help ... No society can long sustain itself unless its members have learned the sensitivities, motivations, and skills involved in assisting and caring for other human beings.

According to Berman (2004), Bronfenbrenner's argument explains that these absences in education prevent conditions for the development of caring attitudes. Berman (2004) and Noddings (2004; 2002) maintain that this sort of absence leads to social disintegration because students lose a sense of connectedness that provides them with the skills to cultivate emotional and ethical sensibilities.

Orr (2004) asserts that the typical school curriculum does not foster a sense of connection. Disciplines and subjects are neatly divided, giving students the impression that the world is made up of disconnected parts, as if economic policy had nothing to do with ecology and geography had little relation to history. Orr argues that it may be necessary to divide these subjects for temporary convenience of analysis and study, but they should also be integrated into a whole system where patterns and connections are highlighted. Noddings (2004) argues that this sort of compartmentalization leads to a society that is dysfunctional both pragmatically and morally.

Orr (2004) and Gatto (1991; 2000) assert that this disconnection manifests due to an unsatisfactory education where students are forced to memorize and regurgitate facts; study subjects that do not relate to their life; experience humiliation, boredom, too many rules and heavy emphasis on grades; neglect interactions with nature; and lose a sense of wonder and mystery. In his seminal work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, critical theorist Paulo Freire (1971) argues that individual and social oppression begins with schools that rely on the "banking" approach to education where students are perceived to be empty bank accounts and teachers are the "bankers" who deposit information into the students' "bank accounts." In this way, students do little more than receive, memorize and repeat information on demand (58). For Freire, banking education is generally marked by oppressive pedagogical attitudes and practices where the teacher teaches and the students are taught; the teacher knows everything and the students know nothing; the teacher disciplines and the students are disciplined; the teacher rules and the students comply; the teacher acts and the students have the illusion of acting through the action of the teacher (59). In this setting, the teacher is the subject of the learning process, while the pupils are mere objects (59). Gatto (1991; 2000) asserts that in this scenario the teacher is usually more concerned with maintaining order and enforcing authority than transmitting knowledge.

Freire characterizes banking education as "narration sickness" where the authoritative teacher transmits information totally incomprehensible to the students, and speaks about the real world as if it were static, motionless, predictable compartmentalized, and dead (57-8). In this approach to education, information is totally disconnected to the student's reality and has little, if any, meaning at all. One instance that exemplifies narration sickness was when I observed a male teacher speaking to a group of adolescent girls about how he went swimming in the Bay of Bengal during a family visit. To begin with, this teacher never intended on taking these girls swimming as it is an activity that people generally do not do in that area, and in rural areas it is an activity deemed inappropriate for women. Anyway, the only people I had ever seen go in one of the small watering holes were boys who were fishing or washing their buffalo. Regardless, the teacher continued lecturing to his students about the pleasures of swimming. All of these girls work when not in school and they have never had the opportunity—and maybe never will—to even see a lake or ocean, nor ever entertained the thought of ever swimming. Discussing swimming was meaningless because it is completely outside of the students' frame of reference.

Similarly, in his classic work *Democracy and Education*, John Dewey (1916) criticizes utilitarian approaches to education that focuses on ends rather than the process. He contends that educational and moral theories focusing on ends disconnect their students from reality and limits intelligence.

> They are not the expression of mind in foresight, observation, and choice of the better among alternative possibilities. They limit intelligence because, given ready-made, they must be imposed by some authority external to intelligence, leaving to the latter nothing but a mechanical choice of means. (79)

The type of learning I observed in public and most charitable and low cost private schools did not seem to actively engage students, but drilled them with information that they would later be tested on. The standard curriculum they follow is what Dewey calls "externally supplied ends;" they are not created internally dictated by the needs of the students. Though created supposedly to prepare students as contributors to the work force, there is little evidence that what they do in school truly prepares them to be better workers and helps promote economic growth. Even if the utilitarian approach to education is what is truly needed for socio-economic development, the type of education these children receive based on memorization and regurgitation does not necessarily produce productive, responsible, cooperative, problem-solving individuals. Since minimal, if any, dialogue occurs between policy-makers and educators, curriculums are not designed to provide opportunities for developing skills in critical thinking, risk-taking, project planning and application, and civic engagement.

In December 2006, *India Today* published the findings of a study examining elite schools across India. Despite the privileged positions held by the students compared with students in public schools, the elite students seem to experience the type of education that Freire and Dewey denounce. The report said that students learned their course material mechanically through repetition and memorization, and were able to successfully recall the information that was asked of them or produce solutions through standard procedures. However, their performance on questions examining their comprehension and application of concepts was substandard. Because of the "banking" practices that they had been exposed to, most students could not apply what they learned in different contexts, and were unable to make connections between the course material and their daily lives, even if this material was used by the students outside the academic context. Furthermore, most students were

unskilled in practical competencies and problem-solving. This study exposed the dysfunctionality of schools by producing students unable to make connections between different forms of knowledge, despite having the ability to remember and recall information presented in their textbooks. The results of this study demonstrate Freire's "narration sickness," which does not help students develop in to critically thinking and responsible social beings (Giroux 2005; Suarez-Orozco 2004; Suarez-Orozco and Qin-Hillard 2004; Freire 1971 Dewey 1916).

Many volunteer educators in Bodhgayā observed that schools rarely impart lessons in critical thinking. As a result of this passiveness to teacher knowledge and authority, most of the children neither know how to ask the right questions nor are encouraged to do so. Foreign volunteers and some exceptional local teachers often complain that most local teachers themselves do not possess these critical thinking skills, making it impossible for students to learn them. "When the students do not understand the material, the teacher repeats the same lesson in a louder voice!" social activist and educator Vinod Raina contends. Raina argues that classroom activity must be relevant to, not alienating from, the daily lives of the students. Education must confront the social realities: classism, casteism, anti-tribalism, and so forth. Following Gandhi's ideal of practical, hands-on learning (see next chapter), Raina writes, "Just as nature must be the laboratory for learning science, the village must be the laboratory for understanding society in order to build the bridge between school and the community. In this way, education becomes a natural process" (from Dalai Lama et al. 1995, 124).

Effects of Utilitarian Attitudes and Goals on Education and Civic Engagement:
Modern education systems in India, not dissimilar from the West, tend to be material and career-oriented, encouraging students to discover their careers before finding their calling or life purpose (see Orr 2004). This process inhibits students from developing an aptitude for community action.

This instrumentalist orientation implicitly contrasts "inferior," manual work with "superior" white-collar work (Weiner 2006; Govinda 2003). Families who seek the middle-class lifestyle for their children make various sacrifices to send their children to private schools, which give the impression that the white-collar life is essential to acquire a good, stable job in an urban area. These beliefs invariably increase the competition for such employment. Children as young as four-years old are instilled with this vision of the good

life. My middle-class host family in Bodhgayā sent Hari, their four-year old son, to a pre-school every morning where rather than playing games all morning, he was forced to sit in front of a little table where he would learn alphabet and numbers. Time for drawing and outdoor games was limited and assigned little importance. After lunch and a nap at home, Hari would be subjected to spending the next three hours with a private tutor repeating what he learned in school. I asked his father why he thought it was necessary for a four-year old to study so much. Arvind, the father, replied, "Our society is too much competitive. If Hari doesn't make his studies now like other boys, he will fall behind in life."

Hari is not alone in this competitive environment characterized by what Noddings (2004, 96) refers to as a "poisonous pedagogy." Most children I know from middle-class families, but also some mired in poverty, follow this instrumentalist worldview. In Bodhgayā, those children whose families cannot afford private tutors send their children to Maitreya School's evening program, when approximately one-hundred and fifty children come to the school between 5:00 pm and 8:00 pm to get help with their studies, free of charge. However, as Bhave, a Maitreya School teacher, chuckled, "Most of parents of evening program children think we are doing tuition class only, but half the time we do Special Program[89] and games also. Too much mind work is no good for them; nor for us!"

It is difficult to evaluate the benefits that children gain from intensive intellectual study. However, two major drawbacks are apparent according to certain education scholars: First, as Maria Montessori (1966; 1984) suggests, learning must come naturally from within, not imposed by a teacher or parent. She maintains that a balanced system of education must equally develop—at the child's own pace—intellectual, sensorial and practical skills. Excessive concentration in any one area prevents a person from reaching one's potential. And, as Noddings (2002) and Berman (2004; 1997) suggest, this inability to develop one's inner resources contributes to a lack of social cohesion and participation.

Second, this trend of concentrating on the intellect to the exclusion of other human capacities leads to a serious proliferation of an over-educated, unemployed young adult population whose unfulfilled expectations may lead to a massive destabilized and disruptive social element (Weiner 2006; Govinda 2003; McCloskey 2003). In Bodhgayā, I know several

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[89] Special Program refers to the contemplative aspect of the curriculum. See the next chapter for details.

literate and jobless youth who have turned to various forms of criminal activity to sustain themselves and their families. These young men justify their actions by saying that this is the quickest way to provide food on the table and to enjoy the "modern gadgets" offered by the market.

Myron Weiner (2006) argues that the current education system in India trains its students for "white-collar" jobs while manual work is disparaged. It is not that there are inherent problems with "white-collar" labour, except that the demand for these types of jobs outstrips the supply, so the more time children spend in modern schools, the more time they waste because they could be learning a productive trade. Furthermore, it is ironic that in an educational context that is career oriented, millions of lower-caste children have traded in the route of apprenticeship for public schooling, at their socio-economic peril to become poorly educated and unemployed members of society. Thus, as Maclure, Sabbah and Lavan (2009, 371) assert, instrumentalist arguments promoting education as a means for developing human capital still result in high instances of unemployment and that "national economies are unable to accommodate the productive *use* of human capital." The challenges arising from a utilitarian process of education illustrates the disconnection between the school curriculum and the daily realities and occupational prospects of the students. This process is further problematized considering that adolescents in India constitute close to twenty-three per cent of the population. The aspirations of these youth are increasingly captivated by dreams offered by the media, but few are likely to find a stable place in the global economic structure that will enable them to capture those fantasies. As such, life opportunities in India are generally far removed from those in the developed world.

Manifestations of this progress-oriented perception are quite clear with respect to the common modern belief that science and business academic streams are superior to social science, and "folk" pedagogies are relics of the past. As Jayesh, a teacher critical of the modern education system put it to me, "we have traded in the Hindu mantras for the science ones." With respect to modern education, Humanities scholar Kiran Seth observes, "Engineering, medicine, business administration and the administrative services are attracting the brightest of our students these days. Areas like philosophy, literature, pure science, classical music and classical languages are seldom chosen by bright students" (from Dalai Lama et al. 1995, 123). Giroux (2006, 187) refers to this attitude as a "crisis" in the humanities, which is undermining opportunities for students to develop knowledge and

critical thinking skills necessary for civic engagement. In Bodhgayā, an increasing number of secondary school students opt into the science stream, since they believe that social studies will not lead them to a productive career. Many students believe that social sciences are for the less motivated and less intelligent who cannot achieve good results in their exams. Social science teachers lament that these students no longer see the value in history, literature and poetry, and that they believe that a CV with arts on it is inferior. At Maitreya School, the majority of the students (about eighty per cent) are lower class, but most strive towards a modern, middle-class lifestyle. This is evident as found not only in their statements, but also in the fact that only six of twenty-four Class 12 students selected the social science stream (and five of these were students struggling to pass). I often wondered if the students in the science stream enjoyed what they were studying. Most of the science students I asked admitted that they were not exactly keen to spend their time with these subjects. However, most believed that regurgitating a series of facts was not too difficult and that a transcript with science courses on it would permit entry into a good college, and subsequently, a good job.

In Class 11 only one of seven students (an atypical small class, most had about twenty-five students) opted for the social science path. Since there was no teacher for Swati, a 16-year old student, I was asked to guide her in her economics and political science course. Did Swati choose social science over science because she believed it would better prepare her for future civic engagement (her father is a political science professor and active in local politics) or because it would help her better comprehend subtle and abstract philosophical and religious concepts (her father is also a Hindu preacher)? Interestingly, Swati replied she would have preferred to join the science group but did not think she was smart enough. Her brother, a science student in college, reinforced this belief, by constantly telling her that she was not bright enough for science. Based on several conversations I had with senior high school students from both lower and middle classes, I gathered their formula for achieving an ideal middle-class life: follow the science stream, go to a good college, get a job in consulting or financial services, and hopefully start and/or manage a company.

Giroux (2006) argues that a strong instrumentalist view of education with its lack of concern towards the social sciences may prevent people from developing the skills for good governance and deep civic engagement. To assist with the development of skills in civics, several foreign school administrators in Bodhgayā wish to eliminate the biased perspective

that the sciences result in a better future. To accomplish this task, Vince, the Italian founder and director of the Alice Project and also one of the early teacher trainers of the Maitreya School teachers, comments that he does not allow his teachers to delude students with false hopes for the future. He remarks,

> I am not training these kids to become rich scientists or professionals. There is no hope for that, in most cases. Look at how they live here! No chance. I am giving them the basics and training them to be poor and happy social workers. How will they help their village if they are off in the rat race in Delhi or Mumbai? They need to stay here, with bright minds, and get rid of all this ignorance.

Vince maintains that the students must know from a young age the relationship between oneself and the wider community, as well as one's relationship with money. "I tell the kids earning money is important to buy what we need—soap, toothpaste, clothing...there is a big difference between what we need and what we want." A major focus in the curriculum is for the children to learn that contentment does not come from outside, but from within. For Vince, true life satisfaction is derived from having a clear mind and helping free others from misery and false attachments.

The Drive towards Consumerism

While social fragmentation and an absence of skills and motivation for civic engagement are the first two major effects of an emphasis on individualism and competition, the third effect is the development of consumerist attitudes and behaviours. Suzanne Hudd (2005) proposes that schools need to develop strategies for addressing worldwide increases in youth violence, disrespect for parents and teachers, use of vulgar language, dishonesty, substance abuse, suicide, and consumerism (30). Of all these indicators, she points to consumerism—instant gratification, self-absorption, and the belief that happiness is derived from money and shopping—as probably the most overarching ones which have transformed into a global cultural norm (30). While this trend has greater resonance with middle-class youth, it is increasingly becoming a reality for lower-class youth who generate desire for the material culture they are exposed to by the wealth that they see in the media and that surrounds them in Bodhgayā. In reaction to this process of indulgence (or the desire for it), engaged Buddhist writer and activist Sulak Sivaraksa writes, "consumerism implies that we are chronically needy and unhappy and the way to escape this gnawing dissatisfaction is to buy product X or

use service Y" (60). Hudd argues that modern-day consumerism corrodes youth's values, specifically in terms of loss of self-confidence and inability to develop or follow one's principles and conclusions (31). She argues that this inability to think critically renders it difficult to evoke one's true character, cultivate intuition, or discover one's calling because consumerism makes people respond primarily to external cues that cause life choices to become defined by market forces and consumer trends (32).

This conspicuous consumeristic attitude is readily apparent in Bodhgayā. Peter, an American volunteer at the Pragya Vihara School who has worked with and for many schools and charitable organizations in Bodhgayā over the last twenty years explained that while the students in the Buddhist-inspired schools learn how to observe their minds, cultivate healthy mental emotions and attitudes, and even participate in local social projects, rarely do they receive lessons on consumerism. Times when I was asked to lead Special Program classes (see next chapter), I often tried to generate discussion to deconstruct the motivations and effects surrounding materialism and consumption. At the end of a period, students often remarked that this was seldom a subject of discussion in their classes. They seemed enthusiastic to discuss this topic because the desire to consume products, which were becoming increasingly available from the local markets, became overwhelming at times. Many students, especially those from poorer families, acknowledged that the desires for certain goods they saw on television, especially those that they could never afford, intensified when wealthier children and foreign pilgrims proudly owned these objects.

One Maitreya School volunteer thought that the hunger for objects was based on the material deprivation of the locals. Other foreign volunteers contended that the feelings of material deficits related to a lack of awareness that craving towards objects generates. For example, Arlene, a Swiss volunteer, criticized the school teachers for being poor examples of the lofty spiritual teachings that they are paid to teach. As such, these teachers created profound disjunctures and confusion for themselves and their students. Similarly, Satish Inamdar, the director of the Krishnamurti School in Bangalore suggests that transformative education requires "a sense of austerity *vis-à-vis* massive consumerism". However, educators cannot make this happen through preaching, but by humbly presenting and helping students understand information regarding the present state of affairs, allowing students to draw their own conclusions about the world (from Dalai Lama et al. 1995, 112).

Thus, based on the above arguments, it is evident that the prominence given to cultivating a sense of individualism and competition in formal educational settings manifests a sense of disconnection and social fragmentation, a self-advancing attitude indifferent to community participation and a belief in consumerism as a gateway to happiness.

3.3.2. English-Medium Instruction: A Channel for Intercultural Communication or a Symbol of Dominance?

Besides the fact that private schools have teachers who generally show more affection for their students and are more enthusiastic with and engaged in their teaching activities, a major attraction of private schools is that they either offer English-medium instruction or, if they are Hindi-medium, they have stronger English language courses. In spite of this desire by parents, language medium is a contested subject in academic circles.

During a series of interviews with Indian teachers at the Maitreya School, I asked about their perceptions on the medium of language instruction. About a quarter of the teachers believed that an English-medium system was superior to a Hindi-medium one. They based their arguments in terms of assisting the students to gain future employment (locally, in Indian cities, or abroad), foster relationships with people from around the world, help them with their future undergraduate and graduate studies, or develop "good personalities." Every teacher I spoke with believed that English is a language that connects people. Teachers were keen to point out that if they did not know English we would not be speaking with each other,[90] and as one teacher said, proficiency in English symbolizes interdependence (a common theme discussed at the school, as I will consider in the following chapter). One teacher bluntly stated that switching to Hindi-medium would be seeking an easy way out from a difficult challenge and run the risk of "collapsing the lives of the children." His prediction is based on the belief that English is an essential instrument for material prosperity.

Education scholar Ilghiz Sinagatullin (2006) explains that the global functions of English has made it easier for people from different countries to "communicate with each other, conceptualize vital ideas, design plans, and solve problems common to people

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[90] My interviews and conversations were either in English or an English-Hindi hybrid.

worldwide" (85). As the teachers pointed out, the English language supports intercultural communication in educational spaces, and as Giroux (2006) asserts, learning a foreign language—when it is not an elitist task—is a humanistic affair that serves an "empowering, emancipatory, and democratic function" (192; see also Gupta and Ferguson 1997). Nevertheless, Derbel and Richards (2007), Sinagatullin (2006), Brown (2004) and Gandhi (1980) argue that promoting English as the global language, local languages are often ousted from the curriculum at all levels of schooling. Today, as modern English language and culture spreads to the masses, and English-medium instruction in the school system becomes predominant, the destruction of folk and rural education is accelerated and local languages displaced (Derbel and Richards 2007; Sinagatullin 2006; Brown 2004; Gandhi 1980). Giroux (2006) comments that understanding and engaging with a language is how "people negotiate the most fundamental elements of their identities, the relationship between themselves and others, and their relationship to the larger world" (192). From this standpoint, the use of language is not merely a technical issue, but is deeply connected to self-understanding and social agency. Relating to the primacy of language for social interaction, Gandhi (1980) perceived the limitations of studying through a foreign language. Gandhi argued, "The English medium created an impassable barrier between me and the members of my family, who had not gone through English schools. I was fast becoming a stranger in my own home" (140). In this way, English discards local languages and culture as youth increasingly identify with the dominant global culture. This became apparent to me early on in my field work when students always wanted to meet me in a public space—the market, the park, or at the Mahābodhi Temple. I often wondered if they wanted to be seen hanging out and speaking English with a foreigner, if they were ashamed of their poor and non-modern home, or somewhere in-between.

English-medium instruction may fit in to a framework which perceives *globalization* as a "transcultural postmodern condition whereby ideologies continuously flow between the culturally dominant and less dominant, though more insistently from former to latter, and are conveyed primarily by means of English in any of its countless world varieties" (Derbel and Richards 2007, 2). Derbel and Richards (2007, 2) argue that a common feature of globalization is its linguistic medium, and that the ascendancy of English as a "global language" has been driven by both the centre *and* periphery. A great number of people in India believe that by sending their children to English-medium schools their children will

learn proper English, thus be in a better position to interact with the rest of the world and have a greater opportunity to become wealthy. Das (2002, 15) demonstrates that when English was first introduced, only the wealthiest top ten per cent had the privilege of learning it. Today, the number has grown exponentially and has given what Das perceives to be the "common person" the competitive edge on the world market and is an essential factor for the success in the information economy. In Bihar, however, I observed that most people do not have access to quality English-language instruction and technology required for the participation that Das speaks of. Furthermore, while many parents, teachers and administrators believe in its usefulness as a tool to help students "get ahead," Brown (2004, 26) argues that this sort of thinking reflects a cultural bias that is not universally embraced. Moreover, it legitimizes an unequal division of power and access to resources, easily identified in the Indian educational context where those who have access to quality English instruction are primarily those from the elite classes, thus perpetuating power imbalances.

While a few teachers advanced strong arguments in favour of English-medium, I noticed several challenges evident in the schools I visited. The level of English used in the textbooks seemed too advanced not only for the students, but for the teachers as well. However, when I asked them if it was difficult to teach in English, most said that they were university graduates so they either did not find it too difficult, or if they did, they felt up to the challenge to improve their English. When they encountered words they did not understand they would consult dictionaries and discuss difficult concepts with their colleagues or foreign volunteers.

However, two teachers admitted that the experience of teaching from an English text was embarrassing and even de-motivating at times. When asked if it was difficult for the students, the teachers responded that it was difficult in the lower classes, but by the time they got to Class ten, reading and writing in English was more fluid. My observations and interactions with the senior students, however, pointed to the contrary. Most students seemed to be at ease conversationally, but had trouble grasping the meaning of the more complicated terminology in their textbooks. According to Tiffany, a British volunteer working with senior English teachers, "few of the students were actually literate in English." Gandhi (1980, 140) was perturbed about his own experience of studying through English:

> We had to learn many things by heart, though we could not understand them fully and often not at all. My head used to reel as the teacher was struggling to make his exposition on geometry ... I now know that what I took four years to learn arithmetic, geometry, algebra, chemistry and astronomy, I should have learnt easily in one year, if I had not to learn them through English but Gujarati. My vocabulary would have been richer.

From a Girouxian perspective, Gandhi's deceleration of the educational enterprise could be interpreted as an obstacle to the expansion and deepening of active citizenship. If Gandhi—a profound, world-historical intellectual, accomplished attorney and mastermind politician was challenged by this forced process of acquiring English, the masses undergoing a similar process must be experiencing tremendous difficulties of language and identity as well.

Teachers who continue to identify with these challenges put forth by Gandhi more than seventy years ago contend that the entire curriculum should be changed to the Hindi language. They argue that Hindi is the mother-tongue of the teachers and students, and using it will enable them to study their subjects more deeply. Sita, a kindergarten and Class seven teacher, expressed that it was rather frustrating when she invested time preparing her lessons in English and the students would not understand what she was talking about. Now she prepares all her lessons from the English textbook in Hindi so that the students have some understanding of what is being discussed. She believes that this approach increases the students' ability to learn and does not waste the time they spend in school.

Ramdass, a senior civics and economics teacher, said that the school should teach its students in Hindi because that is their local language, the language in which they speak at home with their families. "English is ok, but as side subject, second language, not first," he argued. Jayesh argued against the idea that English-medium instruction is the only way to prepare the students to progress in life. He explained, "Most countries of world use own their language in schools. China, Russia, Germany, Japan—they are all developed countries now and do not depend on English." He pointed out that when he asks a question to the class in English, only a handful of students understand the question and offer satisfactory replies. When he asks the same question in Hindi, many more students understand what is being asked of them and provide deeper and more intelligent answers.

Another complaint repeated by arts and social science teachers was that the heavy emphasis on English was causing children to learn improper written and spoken Hindi. Jayesh lamented that modern India no longer produces talented poets and writers on a large

scale, and that the most famous Indian writers today are those who write in English. On the other hand, most local English teachers at the various schools (public and private) did not have a strong command over the language. In many of the English classes that I observed teachers made numerous spelling and grammatical errors. I am well aware that this is not the case everywhere, especially in cities like Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata which have bred great writers of the English language such as Rabindranath Tagore, Salman Rushdie, Rohinton Mistry and Arundhati Roy. However in places experiencing cultural hybridization (see Gupta and Ferguson 1997) and where poor language transmission occurs, dispossession happens on both sides of the language divide: students are losing their heritage language and gaining a faulty one. For this reason, Gandhi (1980) envisioned that English-medium "has caused incalculable intellectual and moral injury to the nation" (140).

What we see in the case of English-medium instruction as described by both Gandhi and these teachers is an impediment to learning, thus reinforcing education as a tool of subordination. To address this challenge, critical pedagogue Douglas Brown (2004) claims that English language instructors have a duty to "subvert" attitudes, beliefs and assumptions regarding the language they teach. Brown's argument applies not only to native English speakers teaching English, but also to non-native English speakers such as Jayesh and Ramdass who use English as a primary medium of instruction to non-native English speakers because their teaching methodology—whether they are conscious of this or not—is based on a hegemonic assumption privileging a particular culture. For education to be a practice of freedom (hooks 1994), Brown (2004) asserts that teachers must subvert the assumption that language teaching is "neutral, sterile, and inorganic... has nothing to do with politics and power" (23). From this critical perspective, teachers who do not illuminate the relationship between power and language cannot be successful in helping their students become agents of social change.

It is evident from the teachers' observations that learning through the English language makes it difficult for the students to think and behave for themselves without coercion from a powerful elite (Giroux 2006; Brown 2004). English-medium instruction poses a challenge for both teachers and students to respect their native beliefs, traditions and cultures without the threat of forced change. Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (1994; cited in Brown 2004) argue that English "linguicism" through worldwide English language teaching has served to "legitimate...an unequal division of power and resources," as "the dominant

language [English] is glorified, [and] dominated languages are stigmatized" (24). While this stance may seem over-simplistic, Brown insists that English language teachers take heed, "lest we become the inadvertent perpetuators of a widening of the gap between haves and have-nots" (24). Language is a living discourse of power, and an English emphasis in multi-lingual settings may contribute to an unequal distribution of power.

Is there a middle path between this instructional divide? The majority of the Maitreya School teachers believed that there is. Understanding the benefits of both linguistic outlets for instruction, they suggested a mixed-medium curriculum where social science subjects taught in Hindi with Hindi textbooks while science and commerce subjects are to be read in English and taught in Hindi or English (depending on the teacher and students). English, Hindi and Sanskrit language classes would continue in the accustomed fashion. This shift was not insignificant as it required a sizable investment of US $1000 of new textbooks to be purchased. Laxman, a social science teacher, believes that this mixed-medium method is beneficial because the social science subjects are difficult in English since neither the teachers nor the students are able to express themselves properly in this non-native language. Science courses are different because most of the terminology is in English so courses can be taught in a Hindi-English hybrid, or as Jayesh called it, "Hinglish"! From the perspective of these teachers, changing language instruction could be what Young (2001) calls a "gesture of liberation." Since the methodological changeover, informants have reported an increase in teaching and learning quality.

3.4. CONCLUSION

While part of the Indian population has benefitted from the post-independence economic upsurge, most Indians, including most of those living in Bihar, still live below the international poverty line. The purpose of this chapter was to investigate common educational issues found in the rural Bihari socio-economic context, and to understand how these problems are connected to neo-liberal policies and practices. These issues are complicated and touch upon many fields such as child labour, social stratification, insufficient educational resources and gender inequity. All these factors directly contribute and perpetuate the reproduction of local, national and global power structures based on wealth and affluence as the social injustices become normalized and depoliticized. I have also shown how the

conditions laid out by these contextual relationships affect school children psychologically and behaviourally through the implementation of particular pedagogical attitudes and methodologies breeding individualism and competition.

Despite the various issues concerning education, it must be noted that they do not always remain uncontested as there are a number of local critical programs and possibilities which aim towards creating social justice and equal opportunity. As Apple (2000, 73) asserts, "the processes and conflicts involved in globalization also constantly generate possibilities for other, more critical engagements." Understanding that relying on the government to provide free, quality education to its children is hopeless within a neo-liberal paradigm, Buddhist-inspired charitable schools have emerged in and around Bodhgayā to fill the educational void. In many ways, these schools strive—with various degrees of success—to merge utilitarian and transformative educational perspectives and practices. The next chapter examines one such engagement at the Maitreya School where a unique pedagogical system—Universal Education—is implemented to help students develop academic, artistic and technical prowess while simultaneously generating self-knowledge for the purpose of individual and social transformation.

CHAPTER IV

FROM LOCAL EDUCATION TO UNIVERSAL RESPONSIBILITY

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The Maitreya School and its educational counterparts in Bodhgayā promote progressive, holistic educational approaches to learning. At present, socially engaged pilgrims volunteering at the Maitreya School are developing a holistic educational method known as "Universal Education." These pilgrim-educators recognize that cultivating civically responsible and emotionally mature citizens requires a holistic approach that takes into account not only the intellectual needs of students, but the emotional, social and spiritual dimensions as well (see Miller 2008; Seymour 2004; Noddings 2004; 2002; Miller 2002; Palmer 1998; 1993; Montessori 1984; 1966; Krishnamurti 1974; 1953).

John Miller (2008, i), a pioneer in the study of holistic curriculum, defines it as an approach concerned "with connections in human experience: connections between mind and body, between linear and intuitive ways of knowing, between individual and community, and between the personal self and the transpersonal self." Universal Education, which fits neatly into this framework, has an important role to play in the search for new methods of education that will advance individual and social transformation, shifting away from a paradigm of oppression, violence and fear toward a new paradigm of justice, peace and compassion. To accomplish its aims, Maitreya School has re-fashioned Buddhist ideals and activities to make them employable by the local Hindu and Muslim population. In chapter one I discussed the rapid process of globalization occurring in Bodhgayā, and chapter two examined the prevalent academic impoverishment stemming from misappropriated funds, dilapidated classrooms, unqualified, over-worked, and underpaid teachers, dearth of instructional

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materials and textbooks, absence of local participation, and unmotivated and corrupt leadership. This chapter describes and analyzes a holistic strategy addressing these issues.

In what follows, I examine the theoretical and methodological contours of the Universal Education curriculum developed at Maitreya School and analyze its distinctive strengths which position it to meet the school's primary educational objective of helping students develop a "good heart" (www.maitreyaproject.com 2009). At the same time, I interpret the transformative capacity of Universal Education by drawing upon tools from the field of "critical pedagogy." Critical pedagogy is a broad field of theory and practice that explores diverse strategies to confront social and historical contexts in transition. While critical pedagogy is generally more concerned with the transformation of authoritarian social structures than holistic curriculum, there is much overlap with a holistic curriculum which maintains that social transformation begins with the individual. The alternative nature of both disciplines can be considered, at times, as transgressive, and even subversive, as their missions are to transform and empower members of society. This criss-crossing of disciplinary boundaries blurs their distinctions, enabling significant knowledge generation.

I draw upon the writings of critical pedagogues such as Paulo Freire (1971; 2007), bell hooks (1994), Henry Giroux (2006; 2005), John Taylor Gatto (2000), among others, to understand how their views of "reading the world" may illuminate the social aspects of the Universal Education curriculum designed to develop ethical integrity, an understanding of the interrelatedness of all phenomena, and a sense of "universal responsibility" (www.maitreyaproject.com 2009). While political struggle is not at the forefront of the Maitreya School's curriculum, there is a strong sense of community-building evident by its service learning projects. From both educational perspectives personal liberation and the development of a worldview that embraces multiple perspectives are essential first steps towards developing a critical consciousness necessary for transforming oppressive social conditions and creating a more harmonious society (Giroux 2006; hooks 1994; Freire 1971; 2007).

I analyze the Maitreya School and its unique curriculum by weaving ethnographic observations and interview data together with theoretical insights by leading thinkers in the fields of holistic education and critical pedagogy. The chapter is divided into four major sections. The first section explores the relationship between education and social opportunity through seminal notions of development education, which is intended to "encompass an

active, participative approach to learning that is intended to effect action toward social change" (McCloskey 2003, 179). I then provide a brief discussion on the relative nature of the term "quality" as used by foreign pilgrim-educators in the educational discourse to help the reader appreciate the neo-colonial and post-colonial context in which the school operates.

The second section which focuses on curriculum begins with a discussion of multicultural and anti-bias pedagogical approaches that are geared towards eliminating caste prejudice and discrimination. The ability to embrace differences is considered by the school administration, as well as education thinkers (Giroux 2006; Suarez-Orozco and Qin-Hillard 2004; Brown 2003; Brown 2002; Young 2001), as a necessary step towards positive social transformation. Next, I analyze the school's activities concerning literacy and democratic participation through the critical lens of what Freire (1971) calls "problem-posing" education. Promoters of both critical pedagogy (Freire 1971; Giroux 2005) and holistic education (Miller 2008; Noddings 2004; 2002) believe that this dialogical approach to learning is indispensable for training in social literacy and creating a learning atmosphere based on care. I follow that with an examination of Gandhi's view of "real education" based on self-understanding and pragmatic, hands-on learning. Although Gandhi is better known for his spiritually-based political work that led to ousting the British Empire from India after hundreds of years of colonial rule, education was the foundation of his thinking on non-violence, truth seeking, and self-rule. Here, I analyze how local teachers and students influenced by the modern global economic system and the material desires it creates respond to the school administration's Gandhian ideals.

The third section begins with an investigation into the theoretical and practical ways in which the teachers at Maitreya School were trained in Universal Education, and then continues with an examination of postcolonial issues and responses to curriculum development and teacher formation. The final section of the chapter examines what is signified by the term "universal" in Universal Education. On the one hand, the school's founders and current management are all Buddhists and inadvertently construct a curriculum through a Buddhist interpretation of the world. On the other hand, the teachers and students are Hindu and Muslim. In most instances, these teachers and students find the curriculum easily employable and adaptable to their own needs and circumstances. At other times, the curriculum's theory and practices are odds with their worldviews. To address this complexity, I explore how the curriculum is perceived and enacted by foreign Buddhists and

local Hindus and Muslims, and how a series of cross-cultural and inter-religious dialogues resulted in revising the curriculum in an effort to strive towards a greater sense of religious equity, inclusiveness, and non-sectarianism.

4.1.   MANY PATHS, MANY DEVELOPMENTS

To grasp the primary pedagogical positions towards the postcolonial context in which the Maitreya School functions, I begin with an investigation into the association between education and social opportunity to understand the extent to which this relationship encourages behaviours and attitudes directed towards social change. Thereafter, I explore the relative nature of the term "quality" commonly used in the discourse of foreign pilgrim-educators, and what this term refers to with respect to education in a multi-cultural, multi-religious, and multi-class location such as Bodhgayā.

4.1.1.   Social Opportunity as a Development Index

My work-day began every morning at 8:00 am at school assembly. This was the only time of day when the entire school came together to practice the contemplative dimension of the curriculum, and also for the administrators, teachers, or students to make public announcements. During assembly, I enjoyed participating in the meditations, contemplations, prayers and songs. These practices helped me to connect with the school community on a level that seemed meaningful to them, judging by the pervasive harmony and contentment amongst the students and teachers. Once I became more accustomed to the morning assembly routine, it even started having a therapeutic effect on me, invigorating me for my long and taxing days. Typically, because of limitations with my spoken Hindi, I refrained from taking part in the wider discussions. On the rare occasions I did participate, the younger students either had a confused look on their faces or they howled at my awkward pronunciation and syntax.
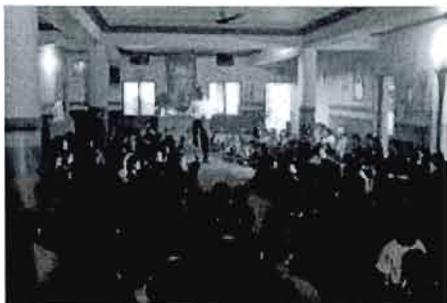
4.1. Morning Assembly

The musical and contemplative elements of morning assembly made it the most popular time of day for curious foreigners to observe the school in action. By sitting close together on the floor, folded legs slightly overlapping, amongst several hundred children singing, meditating and radiating joy, visiting Buddhist pilgrims were easily convinced that their donations were well spent. One of these pilgrims was Rafael, a short, middle-aged Spanish woman. In the last two years Rafael has made two pilgrimages to Bodhgayā to worship at the Mahābodhi Temple and participate in retreats with Lama Zopa. Towards the end of her second pilgrimage, she met a local teacher at the Divine Land School, a small school funded and directed by an English Buddhist. Charandas, a local man who had been teaching at Divine Land for several years, now wanted to open a school for *Dalit* children in his village. Rafael was sympathetic to his cause but did not have the finances or the time to assist him.

A few months later, Rafael received an email from Charandas explaining that he and his aunt had started teaching basic literacy and hygiene to a group of *Dalit* children. He requested that she send him some money to purchase notebooks, pencils and textbooks. Rafael was hesitant, but sent a small amount anyways to see what would transpire. Locals scamming money from pilgrims in the name of some school, clinic or 'micro-lending' scheme was common practice in Bodhgayā. To her surprise, Rafael received a letter from Charandas, acknowledging his gratitude as well as copies of all the receipts detailing how he had used the money. Rafael was impressed by Charandas's honesty, motivation and dedication, and began collecting funds to open a school in Amwa, Charandas's village. She had already seen a successful operation with the Maitreya School, why could it not happen again she mused.

Several months later Rafael returned to Bodhgayā, and with Charandas's help, rented a small house where she would hold classes. Within a few days, she found herself running a school whose population went beyond its maximum capacity with eighty-eight students (half girls, half boys). She hired four teachers who had been trained by senior Maitreya School teachers (one of the four was a Maitreya School graduate). Due to local necessities, Rafael quickly realized that for her project to be successful she needed to provide the children, free of charge, morning snacks and mid-day meals, vaccinations and medications, and books, pens and uniforms.

Rafael gave me a tour of the school. She showed me the school's three classrooms filled with cheerful children singing songs, reciting "ABC," and tackling arithmetic problems. We then walked around the *Dalit* section of the village. Trash and human waste littered the walkways between the mud houses, and the children scampering by were filthy. We encountered a young woman in her early twenties who sends one of her six daughters to Akshay School. She flashed us a wide smile.

"*Namaste*," we exchanged before she returned inside her hut.

"The men are busy in the fields all day and usually drunk at night. The women are busy collecting water and firewood and cooking when there is food. The children are neglected," Rafael said.

Along our walk we met three children playing on the veranda of an unfinished government community building. Spotting us, the two smaller ones began jumping up and down, "*Topee dehdo*" (give us candy), but the older one told them to be quiet. I smiled, joking with the smallest child, telling him to give *me* some candy. The child laughed at my silliness. His knotted light brown hair (the colour being a sign of malnutrition, Rafael tells me), thick layers of dried mud caked on to his skin, and snot glued to his nose were a stark contrast to the clean and tidy children I had just been with at the school. His little companion, fascinated by this odd looking *videshi* (foreigner), had a broken comb in one hand and a dead mouse in the other. Rafael said that the brother of these two boys went to her school.

"He, like many of the children here, has diseases: worms, dysentery, even TB [tuberculosis]. If my plans work, then the education about hygiene and disease prevention will spread from the children to their families. This is why I can only take one child per family."

On the way back to Charandas's house where Rafael was staying and which she shared with thirty of Charandas's family members, several villagers begged her to admit their children in her school. Even though the both of us wore simple Gandhian homespun cotton clothing (*khadi*), the colour of our skin and our use of English symbolized the vast social and economic divide between us. One mother grabbed on to her shirt, pleading, "I'm so poor, please take my daughter." Rafael looked at me and grieved,

> I am used to this. It hurts very much. I go through this almost every day. I want all the children to come, but there is just no room. Maybe next year I can raise enough money to build a much bigger school, but I know that too will not be enough. There are so many of them. I want to give all of them the same opportunities; it's impossible.

We sat in Rafael's room/office for a cup of tea. Charandas joined us,

> Now you see this place, the real Bihar. Government does nothing for these people. No education, no healthcare, not even food or clothing. They are treated worse than animals. They are too much grateful for Akshay because they see big changes in children. With Rafael-madam's help, they learn about sanitation, hygiene, respect, and good language. We are giving good chance for future, good opportunity for jobs. We are doing government work because government is useless. This work will change everything...now and in future.

Developing basic capabilities that enhance well-being refers to the opportunity to generate private income, and the positive feelings associated with it. When people are destitute, feelings of self-worth, protection from violence and oppression, and the facility to engage in social and civic affairs are compromised (Drèze and Sen 1995). When inequalities persist and people are deprived of these capabilities, as evident in much of Bihar, social tensions emerge leading to violence, corruption, and crime.

Reaching the full development of the human personality as advocated by the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (see chapter three) surpasses economics and is deeply connected to social opportunities. Paulo Freire (1971), the Brazilian founder of critical pedagogy, argues that poverty stems not from intellectual paucity or lethargy, but asymmetrical access to social opportunity. Economists Jean Drèze and Amartya Sen (1995) propose that economic growth depends on the government conceiving and implementing policies concerning social opportunities for individual access to quality education, health care and social security amidst a local democracy (8). These social opportunities are unavailable

when economic policies concentrate on income growth. The authors assert that the central process of development should focus on the expansion of human capability in an Aristotelian sense where individuals are in a position to freely choose what kind of life they want to lead and have the opportunities to develop the skills to do so (10). They write,

> Poverty of a life lies not merely in the impoverished state in which the person actually lives, but also in the lack of real opportunity—given by social constraints as well as personal circumstances—to choose other types of living. Even the relevance of low incomes, meagre possessions, and other aspects of what are standardly seen as economic poverty relates ultimately to their role in curtailing capabilities (that is, their role in severely restricting the choices people have to lead valuable and valued lives). Poverty is, thus, ultimately a matter of 'capability deprivation', and note has to be taken of that basic connection not just at the conceptual level, but also in economic investigations and in social or political analyses. (11)

This broad view of poverty as 'capability deprivation' needs to be understood in relation to the absence of basic freedoms of education and health. The Maitreya School administration grasps this, as do some other schools that they have influenced, evident by Charandas's comments noted above. Therefore, the primary aim of development must not be rapid economic growth to increase the country's Gross National Product, but enhancing the potential of individual human capabilities and social capital. In this light, the success of development programmes cannot be measured in terms of production but the gradual increase in the range of possibilities that increase the overall quality of life. Before examining the Maitreya School's praxis with respect to the opportunities for enhancing social, cultural, academic, emotional, and spiritual capabilities, I discuss the complexities involved with the term "quality" with respect to education in a multi-cultural, multi-religious, and multi-class location such as Bodhgayā.

4.1.2. Quality is in the Eye of the Beholder

During a leisurely bicycle ride through the villages situated off of the main road, Arlene expressed her dissatisfaction with the Maitreya School for failing to live up to her expectations. Arlene is a private primary alternative-school teacher from Switzerland. She came to Bodhgayā to volunteer at the school and learn about how an English language school operated for *English as a Second Language* (ESL) students. This interested her because she

was about to undertake a similar teaching assignment back home in Switzerland. A former student of Lama Zopa, Arlene had recently rediscovered her Christian roots. She had been to Bodhgayā several times before on pilgrimage, but only for a few days at a time, never with sufficient time to volunteer.

On this trip, Arlene volunteered at the school for six weeks. As with several other Western volunteers who stayed for brief, irregular periods and did not understand any Hindi, she had very strong views regarding the functioning of the school. Most short-term visitors either thought the school was a children's paradise or substandard. The latter perspective was usually maintained by professional educators from private, Western institutions. Geraldine and Tiffany, both European Vajrayāna practitioners who volunteered at the school for about two months, often complained about the mediocre textbooks, poor classroom management skills of the teachers, and excessive extra-curricular activities. Arlene concluded that most of local teachers were:

> ...incompetent in their roles as educators, both academically and spiritually...were Buddhist and Hindu preachers in disguise and had no understanding of the principles of Universal Education...had no skills in classroom management...did not place enough emphasis on English language... .How does the school ever expect these students to get ahead? They are giving them false hopes.

Dave, the school's Australian director who had been living in Bodhgayā for the last seven years, was irritated by these types of comments. He observed:

> One of the most challenging things for me is dealing with these snooty Western volunteers who have very simplistic, egotistical and colonial attitudes towards the local context and our school. They come for a few weeks and think they've got it all figured out. They don't know anything about our students and teachers, nor their harsh living conditions.

Comments put forth by volunteers like Arlene who stay for short periods of time often reinforce colonial stereotypes depicting locals as inferior and unable to learn. This attitude echoes what postcolonial theorist Robert Young (2001) asserts is more a reflection of the person's assumptions than what is actually felt and perceived by those being evaluated. On the other hand, volunteers with long-term teaching experience at Maitreya School, as well as long-term volunteers at other schools (many of whom also worked at Maitreya School at some point in their lives) believe that the local context is extremely challenging, and they

require intense periods of immersion to comprehend it. Anna, an Italian disciple of Lama Zopa's who has been socially engaged in Bodhgayā for more than twenty years, argues that "only Biharis can understand Bihar...we are all doing Rinpoche's work. We are doing the best we can. It is not perfect because we are not perfect, the people here are not easy...but still we continue to serve the best we can." Shiv is a South Indian with a Master's degree in European philosophy who uses his spare time to translate Buddhist Sanskrit texts into his native Malayalam. He has worked in orphanages and schools all over India as an English teacher, and he feels that Maitreya School is one of the best schools, especially considering its socio-economic circumstances. Dave and Karl, two other volunteers, both mentioned their desire to see Maitreya Schools all over the country. Nonetheless, they admitted that such an expansion would be constrained by funds, and the need to maintain sufficient quality of teachers.

Most of the informants interviewed for this study proposed that expanding education is the first step towards creating social and psycho-spiritual opportunities. However, international development scholars Aklilu Habte (1999, 48) and David Bloom (2004, 72) both assert that increases are needed not only in quantity, but in quality. But what does "quality education" actually entail? This question is especially relevant in an era when, for many Third World countries, expanding populations and heightened demand clash with increasing fiscal restraint; such a pattern makes it increasingly difficult to address basic aspirations for education. Education reformers wonder if quality is to be found in curricula which provide enhanced options and skills to all young people in society.

International development scholar Anthony Welch (2000, 5) claims that notions of quality are inextricable from the dominant set of values and form of culture in a society—which means that constructions of quality are socially indexed—and that they change over time, and vary according to political and cultural context. In this sense, quality may be understood as a relative term dependent on one's worldview or ideology. As discussed in the last chapter and elaborated below, opinions on what constitutes quality differ amongst various relevant constituencies, including children's parents, teachers, and the school administrators at Maitreya. Whereas the parents conceive it in terms of academic achievement, administrators consider academic achievement as secondary to the development of loving-kindness, compassion, wisdom, and a sense of universal responsibility. Leed (2005), Suarez-Orozco and Qin-Hillard (2004), Banks (2004) and other education scholars I

refer to in this thesis argue that a quality global pedagogy is rooted in the development of technical skills, cross-cultural communication, and critical thinking. This pedagogy is taught by competent teachers who take a student-centred learning approach that uses context-dependent methods and solutions to problems.

Bearing these competing wishes and understandings in mind, the next section of this chapter describes and analyzes the philosophy and practice of the Maitreya School in attempt to understand what quality education means to the foreign Buddhists and local Biharis involved at the school. My analysis is done with consideration of the Bihari socio-educational context, its relationship to neo-liberal policies and practices, and conventional pedagogical methodology, as discussed in the previous chapter.

4.2. UNIVERSAL EDUCATION: TOWARDS SOCIAL OPPORTUNITY AND DEVELOPMENT

Most of the pilgrims visiting Bodhgayā who are interested in education issues believe that quality education in Bodhgayā is equated with the Universal Education holistic curriculum taught at the Maitreya School, and in one form of the curriculum or the other at Buddhist-influenced schools such as the Alice Project, Akshay School, Divine Land, and Pragya Vihara School. In this section I describe the Universal Education holistic curriculum, and discuss the experiences of local teachers and students. In trying to understand the Universal Education praxis within a wider educational framework, I analyze its curriculum through perspectives on multicultural and anti-bias pedagogy, democratic participation, and "problem-posing" strategies, all of which aim at generating social literacy. The section concludes with an examination of how local teachers and students respond to the Gandhian model of "real education," an educational approach that has influenced Universal Education.

4.2.1. Universal Education: An Educated Hope for the Future

The Buddhist view of progress is a strikingly different perspective from the obsession with the modern material outlook. In his reading of Nagarjuna's *Jewel Garland of Royal Counsels*, Buddhist scholar-practitioner-activist Robert Thurman (1996) suggests that the aim of a Buddhist inspired educational system is not material, but rather a gateway to liberation (82). Schools should be more than mere facilities to preserve and enrich a free society; instead they

should be the very expression of it (84). In spite of the substantial costs of a good education, Thurman insists that it is a necessary investment for the healthy future of society (85).

Bearing this in mind, Anandalakshmy (1995) argues that a limitation with modern secular education in India is its rejection of the divine. He laments,

> We are forced to educate, to convey the deepest values, without ever mentioning anything sacred. Our sense of the sacred has to be kept implicit. In such a situation the teacher has to convey this sense of the sacred, this holistic relationship of human life and the life of the universe, without explicitly referring to any of these concepts, because 'modern' education has to meet the demands of 'secular' values. (from Dalai Lama et al. 1995, 87)

The Maitreya School departs from India's British-influenced educational approach by explicitly acknowledging, and more importantly, embracing, the various forms of what constitute the sacred. Rather than mere talk to provide intellectual awareness and understanding, teachers attempt to *show* the sacred through exercises and by example.

To do so, the Tibetan spiritual leaders Lama Thubten Yeshe and Lama Kyabje Zopa established a curriculum, which was further developed by their disciples, known as Universal Education. The pedagogy seeks to help students "live happy and fulfilling lives by cultivating a 'good heart,' a sense of universal responsibility and wisdom." The good heart concept was initially developed by the Dalai Lama (1984) who asserts that even though this philosophy is based upon central Buddhist principles of compassion, it is also in line with the ethical values of all religions. While the methods for attaining the good heart in an educational, non-sectarian context are an experiential process, the guiding theoretical aims of the curriculum are as follows:

- Foster the qualities of loving-kindness, compassion, tolerance, and universal responsibility, that is, taking responsibility for the peace, happiness, and freedom from suffering of all living beings.
- Cultivate respectful behaviour toward all living beings.
- Present a balanced and integrated programme of learning activities and experiences that address the physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual aspects of the student.

- Transmit the universal elements of wisdom from different cultures and traditions through an understanding of both the material (external) and spiritual (internal) aspects of reality.

- Develop ethical behaviour based on an understanding of the interrelatedness of all phenomena.

- Develop an understanding of the nature and functioning of the mind, and the nature and source of emotions and how to work with them. (www.maitreyaproject.com 2009)

The Universal Education curriculum is conveyed every morning during school assembly and during a class period entitled Special Program. The ideals are also transmitted through standard subjects, which include: language (Hindi, English, Sanskrit, Urdu), mathematics, science (physics, chemistry, biology), social studies (history, geography, economics, political science), physical education (sports, yoga), and creative arts (art, crafts, music, dance, drama). The academic program is associated with the Indian Certificate of Secondary Education (ICSE) curriculum, and senior students take national examinations conducted by the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS).

The Universal Education program extends beyond working with children, attempting to penetrate into the wider community: The objectives include:

- Conduct social outreach/work experience programs for older children and vocational training relevant to local needs.

- Offer community education programs for adults promoting literacy, good health, hygiene and environmental awareness.

- Promote traditional art and craft forms and cottage industries employing women from village communities.

- Train teachers in the principles and practices of Universal Education and good management practice. (www.maitreyaproject.com 2009)

Judging by their description, it seems evident that the school sees itself as a driving force committed to transforming the substandard educational conditions with the intention of contributing to social improvement. With its holistic thematic approach that includes

intellectual and applied ethics and empathy, character development, civility and social responsibility are mainstays of the educational experience (see Berman 2004; 1997). Just as the Maitreya School tries to promote the "good heart" as a pedagogical goal, education theorist Nel Noddings (2003) examines the notion of "happiness" as a primary aim of education. She promotes this idea by exploring "how it connects to human needs, what it means in the society we inhabit, how it might transform that society into a better one, and how it fits with a host of other legitimate aims" (83). What follows in this chapter is an examination of how the school's emphasis on developing a good heart is an essential feature of their view of human development.

In an earlier chapter I inquired into the ways that the work at the Maitreya School can be categorized as a form of socially engaged Buddhism, which Buddhist scholar Christopher Queen (2000, 1) defines as "the application of the Buddha's teachings to the resolution of social problems." At the Maitreya School, and at other like-minded institutions, the foreign Buddhist administrators and volunteer teachers not only teach their students how to understand the interrelationship between the mental and physical universe but also teach them how to live in the world as social actors promoting positive transformation. This practice coincides with what critical theorist Henry Giroux (2005) describes as "engaged civic pedagogy" characterized by "educated hope—the precondition for individual and social struggle, involving the ongoing practice of critical education in a wide variety of sites and the renewal of civic courage among citizens who wish to address social problems" (178). More than mere optimism, positive thinking, or faith in the intervention of a higher power, educated hope demands engaged struggle and is, in Giroux's opinion, a "subversive force" (178). In a similar vein, globalization theorist Carola Suarez-Orozco (2004) writes,

> The social trajectories of youth are more promising for those who are able to actively maintain and cultivate a sense of hope for the future. Whether they are resigned, oblivious, or resistant to the reflections in the social mirror, those who are able to maintain hope are in fundamental ways partially inoculated to the toxicity they may encounter. These youth are better able to maintain pride and preserve their self-esteem. In these circumstances, their energies are mobilized in the service of day-to-day coping. Some may not only focus on their own advancement but also harness their energies in the service of their communities by volunteering to help others, acting as role models, or advocating and mobilizing for social change. (184)

Giroux (2005) and Suarez-Orozco's (2004) insights point towards the value of public spheres as sites for participation, whether they are political, social, cultural, religious, or educational. In this fashion, engagement offers opportunities for personal and social change, but only if active public spheres are created and sustained in a global, consumeristic society. In the public sphere, the Maitreya School represents this educated hope as it provides a free, quality, and socially compassionate primary and secondary education for 500 village children whose parents are mostly farmers, field labourers, rickshaw pullers, and small shopkeepers. Beyond academic achievement, Maitreya School's curriculum is designed to help children develop "the good heart," meaning the qualities of kindness, compassion, sympathy, equanimity, and responsibility towards all beings. This is—more or less—achieved by integrating specific elements with standard, spiritual and ethical subjects. Maitreya School's aim is to inspire students to become compassionate and responsible leaders in their communities.

Days at Maitreya School are packed with activities designed to meet the broad range of needs of the students. Generally, the daily timetable includes:

- 6:45am-7:30am: yoga for senior students and breakfast for students in need
- 8:00am-8:30am: assembly
- 8:30am-9:15am: Special Program
- 9:15am-10:45am: class
- 10:45am-11:15am: recess and snack
- 11:15am-12:45pm: class
- 12:45pm-1:00pm: Special Program
- 1:00pm-2:00pm: lunch at home (or at school for students in need)
- 2:00pm-2:15pm: assembly
- 2:15pm-4:45pm: class or music/dance/drama rehearsals
- 4:45pm-5:00pm: karma yoga

The curriculum's ethical and spiritual elements are featured every morning during the 30-minute assembly where the school community gathers to sing the national anthem, chant a universal prayer, and then practice a meditation and motivation chosen, led, and sometimes developed, by a student. These activities are usually followed by a group of students singing a song, reciting a poem, telling a story, acting out a short drama based on a moral theme, or listening to a brief moral and/or spiritual discourse by one of the teachers. These activities

generally surround a monthly theme that emphasizes a positive human quality (honesty, patience, respect, compassion, non-violence, etc.). These lessons continue during "Special Program" where each class individually reviews the subjects practiced and discussed during assembly.

> One day a woodcutter dropped his axe in the river. The river goddess appeared with a silver axe in her hand, "Is this yours?" she asked. He shook his head no. She then procured a gold axe and asked, "Is this yours?" The woodcutter admired the gold axe, but shook his head no. The river goddess then showed him a regular metal axe and asked, "Is this one yours?" The woodcutter smiled and said it was. Impressed with his honesty, the river goddess gave him all three axes. Later, the woodcutter's friend heard this bizarre tale, went to the river and dropped his axe in it, hoping that he too would get the same treasures as his friend. The river goddess appeared and asked him if the gold axe was his. "Yes, yes, it is," he said. The river goddess called him a liar and disappeared, and the man lost his axe forever.

The above story was narrated and acted out by a group of 10-year old students during morning assembly one morning. Rishi, the school's senior teacher, then announced that a few photographs had been stolen from the board and that they should be put back or left on his desk, especially considering the monthly theme was honesty. Rishi's lesson demonstrates the creative ways in which teachers blend school activities with practical, moral issues. Half the photos were returned. I asked Rishi if he was disappointed that some students still had not returned the stolen pictures. Smiling and giving me a characteristic Indian head wobble, "Glass is half full; very nice!"

The assembly usually ends with the dedication of the merits of one's good actions. This practice can be specifically directed to a family member, friend, or a person who is ill or hurt, as was the case when the children dedicated their merits to a teacher who had broken his leg in a scooter accident; or it can be as general as dedicating them to all sentient beings.

After assembly each class attends a 45-minute period of Special Program, which is "designed to impart an understanding of the nature of the mind, cause and effect, impermanence and interdependence" (www.maitreyaproject.com 2009). Depending on the day, the students practice meditation, yoga, awareness games, role-play, art, journal writing, storytelling, debate and discussions based on the monthly theme or the discourse from the assembly. According to Dave, the school director, "By familiarizing themselves with the nature of their minds, students, and the teachers too, gain a better understanding of their positions with the external world." Dave was usually in charge of representing the school to

potential donors. Speaking to a group of pilgrims from Singapore, I overheard him say that the aim of these activities is to "develop a peaceful mind, good concentration, and critical awareness." The pilgrims all smiled in approval, commenting that they wished that their children were blessed enough to attend a school like this one.

During my first week at school, I joined Bhave's Special Program classes. On my first morning there, Bhave, a senior faculty member who teaches science, art, and yoga classes, tried a new tactic during Special Program with his Class 9 students. After leading a short meditation on the observation of the breath, he pulled out a metal cup from his bag and asked his students what it was.

"Cup," they responded. He had a student fill it with water and then asked the students what it was.

"Cup of water," they shouted in unison. He drank the water and then put some flowers in it.

"Is it is still a cup?" he asked them.

One student called out, "no, it's a vase!"

Bhave then removed the flowers and put in some pens, "What is the object now?" "Pen holder," "basket of pens," "pen container," students bellowed.

Bhave explained to them that the object does not have a permanent status. We simply apply labels to objects according to its relationship with other objects. "These labels, like all labels we apply in the life, our mental projections, projections of the mind. Everything is created by our minds...inner happiness needs this knowledge...this knowledge reveals our interdependence." After a long silence, he dismissed the students, telling them to reflect upon his words.

The following morning, Bhave continued with his lesson on interdependence. He had the students act out the various elements that contribute to the growth of a flower. One student pretended to be the sun, another, the rain, the wind, the earth and so on. Afterwards, the students reflected on the role play, and shared their findings with each other. The discussion identified interdependent relationships in their own lives by recognizing the various elements connected to the clothes they wear, the food they eat, and the bicycles they ride.

During the 30-minute morning recess, Bhave and I chatted while having a cup of tea in the teacher's room. He told me that he is inspired by the Dalai Lama's teachings,

especially those on interdependence. He tries to incorporate lessons of interdependence in all his subjects:

> If the students cannot establish connections, they will not see reality and not make good decisions like in the school, family, job, society. If they see connections, they will not be fooled by media, by cheats. But most important, they will understand compassion and have good heart.

Environmental education theorist David Orr (2004) asserts that when schools explicitly reveal interdependence in their curriculum, students learn how to recognize patterns and connections in the real world, and learn how to ask important questions, instead of trivial ones. With this approach students may recognize how the "invisible hand" of globalization affects the economy; media, information, and technologies; large-scale immigration and travel; and cultural production and consumption (Suarez-Orozco and Qin-Hillard 2004, 8). By understanding interdependence they will understand how their internal worlds shape and are shaped by the external world.

This exploration finds resonance with what education scholar Jeremy Leed (2005) calls "mature interdependence," which refers to learning the types of imagination and empathy suitable to all kinds of social interactions. Mature interdependence can be realized by emphasizing intellectual, emotional and social development; and de-emphasizing coercion and competition. In other words, the aim of education is to develop a realistic understanding of the importance and difficulties of relationships. When students learn to improve their relationships in school and at home, when they learn how to manage within the relationships, not just escape them and their difficulties, they achieve balance instead of destruction. From this social perspective of interdependence, Vishwa, a physics and Hindi teacher, states,

> Special Program is very good thing because we talk freely in this class about awareness, concentration, morality, how to exist in society, how to behave with elders, youngers, friends, how to feel inside, self-awareness, how to give good thoughts, and share with others. In this class we teach very good things to build good society, family, neighbourhood, and in this we can make good world.

Vishwa, like the others, spoke about his appreciation towards the pragmatism of Universal Education,

> They teach us many methods about the emotions, how to control anger, how to control jealousy, how to maintain patience. Once we can control our minds, slowly

good things coming to us... If we know benefits of reducing anger, reducing ego, reducing jealousy, we can change our lives...It depends on our perception, if our perception changes, then whole atmosphere will be nice.

These teachers all acknowledge that the curriculum which they are teaching enables students to develop their emotional intelligence and increase their abilities to sympathize and have empathy towards others. These features enable the students to build their characters in ways that are empowering.

Laxman, a math and computer teacher, feels that Special Program is an important time for the teachers and students to connect on a relational level. He explains,

> We sit together and talk about social problems, internal problems. Suppose a person is very ill, we can pass them good energy, help them take care. We also learn to think about our mother, father, grandmother. We learn why we need to support our friends, our society...Universal Education and Special Program time is like good medicine to understand students, how they are feeling, are there problems in house, have they taken breakfast. If I see not, I send to kitchen for food.[91]

From Laxman's comment, we see an understanding that intellectual, emotional and spiritual nourishment can only occur after basic material needs have been met. Or, perhaps, as Noddings (2003, 91), who puts it differently, that we do not simply feed hungry children because they cannot learn, but because they are hungry! Addressing hunger allows educators to direct attention to social problems beyond the classroom.

Laxman's words demonstrate the care that many of the Maitreya School teachers have for their students. While the teachers rarely theorized that their teaching professions were a strategy of resistance towards the dominant political paradigm that keeps oppression in place, this is exactly what they were doing. Rather than simply passing on information, teaching, especially during Special Program, was a way in which students were provided with tools that would uplift the self. These tools were not only the ones they learned from the Universal Education strategies, but were the ones that came from deep inside themselves that desired a better future for these children. This mission was fulfilled by inquiring into the students' lives, about their families, their living conditions, their religious orientation, and so

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[91] Laxman has observed that at least three children from every class have not eaten breakfast before coming to school.

forth. It is through the time allotted to Special Program that the capacity to reflect and care for others develops the most.

Ashwini, a math and biology teacher, told me that Special Program encourages the students to be honest with themselves and others. We were sitting on plastic mats on the concrete roof of the school where his students were sitting under the warm winter sun and tackling math problems. Ashwini lets them figure out the problems by themselves and encourages them to tutor each other. At the end of the session, he reviews the answers. Observing three students debate an answer, Ashwini laughed and said he encourages them to speak up. For him, Special Program is a time for the class to speak about their problems at school, at home, and in their minds. He tells them that the only way he can be useful to them is if they are open and honest with him. He maintains that in comparison with the students from the former school he taught at, the Maitreya School students are rarely late for class, keep silent in class, and behave calmly, all of which he believes are results of the Universal Education curriculum. Ashwini further commented how the school encourages independence, self-reflection, morality, and honesty:

> Children here don't tell lies too much. In former school where I taught 5 years students will try to get out of class by saying I have to go to toilet or drink water, and then stay out for 20 minutes. Here, the students tell truth. 'I'm bored' or 'I need air' or 'I need to go for a walk', so I give permission to go.

Most of the students I spoke with on a regular basis seemed to be highly satisfied with Maitreya School and recognized how fortunate they were compared to many of the other children in their villages. In general, Special Program was a positive element in their school life although many did note that there is room for improvement because the classes can easily become monotonous if the teacher does not vary the activities. Sanjay, a Class 12 student, told me he enjoys Maitreya School and would not prefer another school. Specifically, he likes the high quality of academic education compared to the other schools around Bodhgayā. He asserts that Special Program activities "help concentrate my mind and make me feel peaceful." Sanjay says that he tries to meditate for a few minutes every morning at home when there is no school, but is often unsuccessful because it is very difficult doing so by oneself, especially when the temperature is too cold or too hot outside (he, like most others, do not have the luxury of controlled temperature in his home).

One morning after a Special Program class that was held on the roof, I sat with five students from Class 11 because their teacher for the following period was absent that day. I asked them what they thought about Special Program. Nanda and Manoj, two boys who have been at the school since kindergarten, said that they appreciate the skills they learned for developing awareness and emotional control. Still, they share that some years are better than others, depending on who the teacher is. They especially like Special Program when foreign volunteers attend the sessions because it gives them an opportunity to practice their English and consider different points of view. For example, the other day there was an impassioned discussion on the ethics of following tourists around in the market. Begging and cheating is what comes up in many minds about being pursued by local youth. These youth do not beg, rather it is common for these youth to befriend foreigners to practice their English and learn about other parts of the world. Many of them also hope that these interactions will lead to an employment opportunity abroad or enable them to get some foreign hand-me-down goods. The foreign visitor from the U.S. that day explained to them that it did not make him feel good when boys did that (it becomes quite obvious after a while) and that from a Buddhist perspective the boys are generating greed in the mind. He explained that there is nothing wrong with befriending or working with tourists or foreign NGOs, but that they should just do so with honesty and awareness to make the situation positive for everyone. The conclusion of the discussion was that it was ok to engage with foreigners, as long as one is respectful towards others and honest about one's intentions.

Neela and Geeta find Special Program to be boring, except when there are games and music. They are both excellent musicians and dancers, and the school's pedagogy enables them to pursue their passions, as well as understand the theoretical and spiritual dimensions at the core of the arts. Both of them feel that they would have never been exposed to such precious opportunities elsewhere. The two adolescent girls said that they appreciated some of the discussions, usually when there were foreign guests because they made the program more interesting than the teachers (especially their current one).

On another occasion while acting as Bhave's substitute during Special Program for Class 9 I asked the students how they felt about Special Program. The class was neatly divided. Half the class claimed to really like the meditation and various contemplative exercises and discussions; the other half provided a similar response as Neela and Geeta. This group complained that the meditations were challenging and that the discussions were

repetitive and not always relevant to their lives. Noddings (2004) and Berman (2004; 1997) believe that the discontent with these type of lessons arise because virtues cannot be taught directly through didactic instruction, but as "interventions" in immediate situations. These students claimed that they found the classes most fascinating when foreigners visited and provided them with alternative ways of looking at the world. In these instances, the discussions and activities were "fresh" and "spontaneous." Sita from Class 9 mentioned that some of the foreigners had more experience and spiritual knowledge than their teachers, and gave them new things to ponder. Sometimes she felt foreigners' discussions were enriching, other times confusing, but always interesting. Sita's comments about learning other perspectives may have a greater impact than she is aware of.[92] Jaylynne Hutchinson (2002) asserts that learning other people's worldviews is one of the most important aspects of education as it enables the student to cultivate a rich and ethical sensitivity towards those who are different, as well as an appreciation for "ambiguity, complexity, and paradox, rather than concrete rights and wrongs, simplicity, and singular worldviews" (324). To illuminate her point on the importance of inclusiveness and self-reflection, Hutchinson uses the metaphor of cracking a mirror to reveal the social reflections of our world, thus "allowing us to see ourselves in the different reflections and refractions of the broken pieces" (325). This process is essential to grasp the depth of multiple perspectives and the importance of questioning how our actions affect others.

Tied to the awareness of the consequences of our thinking and behaviours, Asha, a student fond of the Special Program, says, "Special Program helps me connect my world inside with my outside world. It helps me concentrate my mind and calm down the mind." When asked to describe a specific activity that she enjoyed, she mentioned that she enjoyed when one of the volunteers read from a Krishnamurti book and the group reflected upon the theme on what it means to have feelings and care for others. All the students said they care for their families, expressed by the way they feed them and give them medicine when they are sick. Asha noted that the Special Program activities taught her how to care more deeply

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[92] It is worth noting that the consistent praise that the students had for foreigners in the classroom was being offered to a foreigner. At first, I was more suspicious of these claims, wondering how my own position as a foreigner stimulated this praise to meet the needs of some personal agenda. However, after several months of participant observation in the classroom I noticed that the interactions with foreigners were generally much different and more alive than the standard classes without an international guest, leading me to believe that the appreciation extended to these people was sincere.

because it helped her to see how she is interrelated with everyone in her community and the world.

Branching out from his philosophical investigation of interdependence, the Dalai Lama (1995), the school's patron, asserts that "universal responsibility" is a natural corollary of the comprehension of interconnectedness. The Dalai Lama suggests that education must equip students with the skills to not only discover solutions for their personal problems, but must also inculcate a sense of proper motivation and responsibility towards others (83). He explains that the leading factor inhibiting social harmony is selfishness. It is not wrong to have a strong sense of self in order to look after oneself and accomplish one's goals; however, when that sense of self is narrow-minded it becomes destructive and does not lead to personal and social happiness. Therefore, to achieve happiness, one must pay attention to, or have a sense of happiness of others (98). "The sense of concern for others is the key factor in our own happiness and future success" (99). "My happiness cannot develop independently... others' interest is also my interest. When I say 'interdependence' this is what I mean" (141). From this perspective, since no being exists independently and everyone is interconnected, it is the individual's responsibility to respect the rights of others and look after their welfare as much as possible. This view of respect is closely tied to the Buddhist view of dignity, which understands that all humans have the potential to reach perfection of goodness. For the Dalai Lama, awakening to perfection is dependent on basic rights and freedoms. Since the potential for self-realization is alive for every human being, attaining perfection is both a matter of social context (basic education, freedom of religion, etc) and personal effort (Puri 2006, 58-60). Thus, Universal Responsibility is a viable stance that is independent of one's religious affiliation as it entails a compassionate and wise response to all forms of suffering.

The Dalai Lama's view of interrelatedness and universal responsibility provides momentum for Giroux's (2006, 183) notion of global citizenship, which is not simply a political issue of entitlements and obligations, but an "ethical challenge" that goes beyond the individual towards positive world transformation. For global citizenship promoting social responsibility to manifest, public spheres such as schools and the media require critical care and attention. A sense of responsibility emerges from an education that nurtures physical, spiritual and cultural life because it allows for a "deep-rooted understanding of the relational nature of global dependencies" to emerge (183). For Giroux, understanding interconnectivity

requires people to become "multi-literate" in ways that allows them to access and process different forms of information and technology, as well as enable them to be "capable of engaging, learning from, understanding, and being tolerant of and responsible to matters of difference and otherness" (183). The multi-dimensional elements of the Universal Education curriculum and the access that the students have to a wide range of international perspectives seem to provide a knowledge starting point necessary for Giroux's global citizenship aimed at self-knowledge and social agency.

After assembly and Special Program, the rest of a Maitreya School morning is dedicated to the standard academic curriculum; however, each period begins and ends with a short motivation and dedication of merits. When applicable, teachers are encouraged to bring in the monthly theme into the regular classroom so as to integrate the moral and spiritual concepts with whatever is being taught.

One mid-morning on my way home to watch my eighteen-month old son Jai while my wife Michelle taught yoga at Root Institute, I noticed two classes being held outside in the courtyard. One senior group was learning physics from Vishwa, while a younger group was learning history from Jayesh. I listened in on both classes for a short while and noticed that both teachers were attempting to incorporate the theme of courage into their lecture. Under the shade of an old neem tree, Vishwa explained Newton's second law stating that the first law of continuous motion is broken if external force is applied. He rolled a ball towards a tree, explaining that it stopped rolling because its motion was disturbed by another object, i.e. the tree. Vishwa then began relating the theme of courage to the second law, "Just like friction or force is necessary to stop the motion of the ball; courage is necessary to stop acts of violence. Violence will continue non-stop unless there is something available to stop it. In life, if possible, we should try to be that force."

I then went over to Jayesh's group. Jayesh was passionately lecturing about Gandhi's courage to practice civil disobedience against unjust British laws, even if it meant risking imprisonment. Later that day, during one of our tangential conversations from our Hindi lessons, Jayesh mentioned that he becomes inspired most as an educator when he figures out new ways to integrate positive human qualities into the standard curriculum. One of his motivations as an educator is for his students to develop critical thinking skills so that they will be able to challenge the status quo "intelligently, effectively and courageously....like did the greats Mahatma Gandhi-ji and Karl Marx-ji."

Afternoons at Maitreya School are generally devoted to creative subjects such as arts and crafts, music, dance, and drama. Special emphasis is also given to fostering and maintaining some of the indigenous cultural, artistic, and musical forms. School officials feel that this is crucial to the children's sense of cultural identity, which they believe is quickly degenerating with the rapid influx of foreign materialism. When the clock strikes 2:00pm, the entire school turns into a series of performance halls as sounds from tablas, harmoniums, Bihari songs, and Kathak bells waft through the hallways. This creative element of the curriculum is demonstrated by the way every classroom has wall-sized murals painted by teachers and students together, and not a single wall in the school is bare or painted the generic off-white found in most schools. Instead the multi-coloured walls are filled with paintings of Hindu and Buddhist deities, traditional Madhubani drawings,[93] and decorative flower and geometric designs.

Twice a year the students put on a cultural performance for the community. Each one they perform twice. The first they perform once for the eye camp (see below) volunteers who hail from all over India and a second time during an intercity school artistic competition. The second performance, usually more elaborate than the first, is performed once for the local community and a second time if Lama Zopa and/or other foreign dignitaries and sponsors are in Bodhgayā around the New Year.

On Christmas day the students performed their annual drama at the Renaissance Cultural Centre in Gayā. The audience was comprised of Lama Zopa and a group of his East Asian disciples who are large donors to the school, Root Institute and several other projects initiated by Lama Zopa. Other audience members included several foreign social workers and philanthropists who work in Bodhgayā, as well as local dignitaries. Karl wrote the drama, which told a fictional account of Gandhi's spirit returning to this world. Gandhi was highly disappointed with the way India had evolved, until he met the Dalai Lama who had sent him to witness the good works occurring at the Maitreya School. After the event, I drove home from Gaya in the school's jeep with Karl and a couple of local administrative assistants, Jaggi and Bisu. Karl told me that he was inspired to write the play because it embodied the school's

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[93] Madhubani are two-dimensional art forms that originated in the Mithila region of Bihar and depict scenes from Hindu lore. The colours are generally made from plant-based materials and drawn on freshly plastered mud walls, but today the paintings are also done on paper, cloth, and canvas.

ideals, rather than just doing the usual song and dance, which are fun, but less spiritually relevant. The next day, Divesh, one of the most senior teachers at the school and who also participated in the drama as himself, commented that when the students take on roles such as Gandhi and the Dalai Lama, they actually take on those personalities during those moments. "These boys were so great. I felt like I was in presence of real Gandhi-ji," Divesh recounted, continuing about how he was impressed with the way the boys acting as Gandhi and the Dalai Lama shaved their heads—"not a small feat for two teenage boys who are usually obsessed with the way their hair looks." I later asked the students how they felt in those roles. They did not go as far as claiming to feel as if they embodied those personas, they did acknowledge that they had felt inspired to be better people and that they saw the potential spiritual strength within themselves. Karl, who happened to walk by at that moment, chuckled, "it's like they were practising deity yoga!"[94]

Typically, a day closes at Maitreya School with fifteen minutes of selfless service (*karma yoga*), during which students clean up the school and prepare it for the next day. *Karma yoga* is a practice derived from the *Bhagavad Gita* and was promoted heavily by Gandhi for teaching the value of work and of helping others. Vineeta, a class four teacher, and I watched the children sweep the assembly hall, carry a bucket of vegetable scraps to the neighbour's cow, and burn a pile of trash. She told me that the school does not regard these activities as work, but as an important part of their education. Through service, the students develop good working habits and learn to be a part of a community. "*Karma yoga* lets them not think about self, but about others. This is very important lesson. I also learn this here," she says smiling.

This idea of service mirrors the Montessori pedagogical strategy that mundane, practical life activities like cleaning, preparing and serving food, dressing, etc are the foundation for physical, mental and social development. From the Montessori perspective, practical life exercises help children develop a sense of responsibility, attention and meaning. The good working habits that follow from these exercises are an increased respect towards resources and the environment, and oneself and others (Wolf 2009). Furthermore, Berman (2004; 1997) explains that performing service within the school community helps them feel

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[94] In deity yoga, the practitioner imagines, and in some sense imitates, the mind and body of the Buddha or some bodhisattva. By doing so, it is believed that the person imbibes those qualities.

more connected to it, and is also effective in fostering moral growth and a feeling of significance because the tasks were directly related to their daily lives.

On my way to lunch at the Root Institute's dining area during my first few days in Bodhgayā, I was in the middle of a conversation with a Spanish volunteer at the Shakyamuni Buddha Health Clinic when I noticed an adolescent assisting a confused-looking elderly farmer with the registration process. What a helpful grandson I thought to myself. A few minutes later I noticed him explaining to a young mother with her two children how to take the homeopathic remedy prescribed by the doctor. I thought that he looked a little young to be working at the clinic, but made nothing of it and then proceeded to lunch. I was intrigued with this helpful youth and looked for him each time I passed the clinic, but I never saw him again. The following week when I started my work at the school, he was sitting in the assembly hall. Before Special program I asked him what he had been doing in the clinic the previous week. He told me that he had had a cough and received some medicine. He was familiar with the clinic because he had volunteered there in the past, and naturally helped a couple of people who were in need. This youth's selfless assistance to those in need demonstrates the lived nature of the Universal Education curriculum in action.

4.2 Maitreya Students and Volunteers

Indeed, social outreach projects for senior students are part of Maitreya School's curriculum. These activities, referred to as service learning (Seymour 2004; Noddings 2004; 2002; Berman 2004; 1997), not only connects students to the community, but enables them to

develop skills through community-based projects. Seymour (2004, 86-7) writes that socially beneficial community-based projects that are well-designed and managed provide opportunities for "hands-on learning, a meaningful connection between what they are studying and real life, and a sense of the importance of the place where they live. Kids learn that there are lives and issues beyond their own that are worth caring about, and they experience empowerment in actually being able to make a difference." For Maitreya School students, these projects consist primarily of volunteering at Root Institute's Shakyamuni Buddha Health Clinic and the Banshali Trust eye camp. At the clinic, students help patients by giving them massages, telling stories, listening to their problems, singing and helping with common chores. These activities further demonstrate the experiential component of the school's pedagogy, as well as the effects, or community perception of them. One nurse commented that the students were very responsible and mature, and that this experience is teaching them to be effective caregivers.
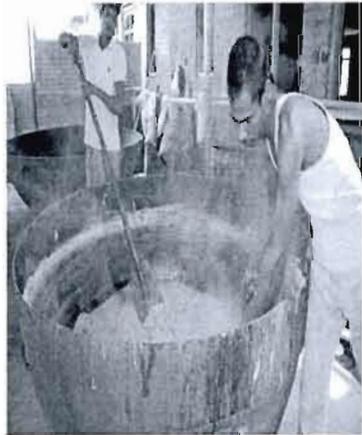
4.3 Serving and Cooking Dal to Eye Camp Patients

The Banshali Trust holds a tri-annual "eye camp" where volunteer doctors spend two weeks performing over one thousand free operations per day for those suffering from glaucoma. Interestingly, Maitreya Students are the only students in Bodhgayā permitted to volunteer. One evening, during a cultural performance by Maitreya School students for the eye camp's volunteers and staff, I briefly met with Mr. Banshali, the famous diamond dealer from Gujarat who sponsors the event. I asked him why he only consents to Maitreya School students serving at the eye camps. He told me that he found these students exceptionally mature, responsible and compassionate. At first he admitted some children from other schools, but he was dissatisfied with their dedication and performance. Mr. Banshali reminisced how when Karl first approached him about volunteering, he replied that the students would not be happy there because they would spend most of their time cleaning latrines. "Fine," Karl replied with a confident smile. Mr Banshali said that he reluctantly agreed, but was pleasantly surprised with the student's execution of the tasks. Today, the expanded list of chores includes ensuring that patients go to the appropriate places before and after the operation, assist nurses with undressing wounds, perform urine analysis, help the cooks prepare chapattis and chop vegetables, and enter patient data into the computers.

These activities are important for the children's education in three major ways. First, they provide them with the opportunities to understand experientially the pedagogical themes of compassion and universal responsibility that they hear about and discuss on a regular basis. Second, exposure to a huge number of poor patients all at once permits the more reflective children and teachers to question the structural inequalities that require such eye-camps in the first place. Finally, these tasks enable them to learn practical skills that can be later adapted to other working environments.

These social outreach activities represent Giroux's educated hope, which not only anticipates, but mobilizes. Rather than turning away from the troubles of the world, educated hope stares at them in the face. Arising from critical reflection, educated hope calls for practical engagement with daily activities and institutional establishments. "Hope in this context does not ignore the worse dimensions of human suffering, exploitation, and social relations; on the contrary, it acknowledges the need to sustain the capacity to see the worst and offer more than that for our consideration" (Giroux 2005, 179; see also Freire 2007). Maitreya School may be considered as an example of how this hope goes beyond caste and

gender politics by providing equal access to students from various backgrounds and ensuring half the available seats are reserved for girls. Prejudices are confronted head on and during Special Program (and in some cases, social science) older students openly discuss them in ways that they can relate to the effects of caste and gender stratification in their particular contexts, enabling students to grapple with these problems in a direct way. In this way, educated hope manifests in a pedagogical and performative manner, providing the foundation for its students to learn about their potential as ethical, spiritual, and democratic actors for positive change. Hope is not explicitly taught, but is the result of its pedagogical activities and contextual social struggle (see Freire 2007). This combination helps the student connect personal responsibility with a progressive notion of social transformation.

4.2.2. Embracing Difference: Strategies for Destroying Prejudice

Increased international trade and mobility has made nations progressively more economically, socially, and politically interdependent. From the perspective of modern education, the tightening of these connections must promote cross-cultural communication skills and encourage students to broaden their knowledge and experiences. Education theorists Marcelo Suarez-Orozco and Howard Gardner write,

> Children growing up today will need to develop—arguably more than in any generation in human history—the higher order cognitive and interpersonal skills to learn, to work, and to live with others, which are increasingly likely to be of very different racial, religious, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds. (cited in Bloom 2004, 69)

From this globalized perspective on education, all the students in Bodhgayā who attend schools that have a steady influx of foreign volunteers may be speeding by other students in India, including the middle- and upper-class children in private schools. Students at Maitreya School are not only developing self-awareness and social outreach skills, but they are also in regular contact with people from around the world who expose them to divergent world views.

In many of the classrooms I joined, students and teachers always asked me to speak about Canada. Pointing to a map,[95] I would show how far away India was from Canada. Typically, I spoke about the various provinces and their cultural, geographical, and ecological particularities. I also showed students some photographs of life at home in Québec, Canada: snow, maple syrup, ice skating and log-cabins.

Education thinker Brad Brown (2003) asserts that a modern non-biased curriculum must concern itself with equity and inclusiveness. Brown finds multicultural activities—such as my class on Canada—to be interesting and enjoyable in a non-threatening way as it demystifies some perceptions of the other. However, Brown asserts that this humanizing process is not enough as it does little to "dispel notions of superiority or social stratification" (47). In my descriptions of Canada I wanted to show them rural simplicity rather than the cosmopolitan cities because they were already exposed to glamourous city images in the media. However, as I later reflected deeper on my experience, I realized that I neither used this procedure to reveal the wide socio-economic gap between myself and the local students that allowed me to travel back and forth between Canada and India, nor to discuss the socio-economic disparity that enabled me to have a home—simple by Canadian standards, but extravagant compared with the bamboo and mud dwellings that most of the children lived in. In doing so, I would have practiced what Brown refers to as "anti-bias education," which is a pro-active process in "identifying prejudice, examining its causes and origins, acknowledging the injustice, and exploring solutions for eliminating it" (47; see also Gordon 2004). The multicultural approach that I used in those instances certainly helped broaden the children's knowledge; however it failed in establishing dialogue to understand the conditions of systemic inequality.

Besides the intercultural exchanges between foreign Buddhists and local Hindus and Muslims, Maitreya School students and teachers also have the opportunity to learn first-hand about other castes and religious groups that exist within their own community. One morning, I sat in the dusty storeroom with Ramdass where he was on-duty. Ramdass is a social science

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[95] Having a map in each classroom was significant. Many of the schools I visited did not have maps at all, or had maybe one for the entire school, let alone in the classrooms. Some schools, like Alice Project or the Krishnamurti School in Varanasi, had maps only in the geography classrooms (students change classrooms according to subject rather than staying in one room and having the teachers come to them).

teacher and Brahmin priest and has been with the school since its inception. I agreed to help him edit parts of his doctoral thesis that he had been working on for the past seventeen years and was now almost ready to submit (he had five children and worked two jobs six days a week, leaving only Sundays open for his graduate studies). Fearing that I would not understand the awkward and archaic English in which it was written, he sat close to me with his hand gently resting on my shoulder, making sure I understood everything I read. When I came to a section dealing with caste issues and local politics, he interrupted my reading to tell me that his attitude towards lower castes has changed since joining Maitreya School, and that he has been passing on these new values to all his family members who hold him in high esteem. Another time, over a cup of tea and snacks at his home, he narrated:

> In India, Brahmins do not eat food made by lowest caste. Before working at Maitreya School I eat only in home, not in restaurant. But when I join Maitreya School, first fifteen days I not took lunch because I saw lower caste making food. At that time I feel I am a Brahmin and my father advise me not to take food from lower caste. Slowly, slowly my heart changed, because all people are children of God—lower caste, upper caste, backward caste, all! Then I changed and now take food here.

The caste system, as mentioned in the previous chapter, is a complex and rigid structure that is difficult to crack as the higher castes in power maintain that the system is divinely sanctioned and not to be tampered with. While caste discrimination is theoretically illegal in the public space, examples abound of its existence in the form of social opportunity and attitudes towards those who are culturally and economically marginal (see Gupta and Ferguson 1997). Ramdass's comments above reveal how the Universal Education training has the potential to alter deep-rooted views regarding social roles and relationships. This resonates with historian Susan Bayly's (1989) argument that India throughout its history was never static and homogenous, but rich, diverse and dynamic. She demonstrates not only how the continuous movements of population, swift changes in the political orders, ecumenical forms of religious expression, and trans-regional commercial enterprises render it difficult to make generalizations about a particular region, but also reveals the inaccuracies of 'Sanskritizing' (or even Islamisizing) a place merely because it is located in "timeless" India or because it neatly fits into an already established way of looking at the world. Bayly provides examples documented from the 10th to 17th centuries how caste and non-caste based communities interacted with each other and organized themselves in unstratified systems that

were free to follow different social and religious conventions. According to Bayly, it was only after the 18th century certain groups began to emphasize and impose a particular and rigid divinely sanctioned social status. While certain nationalist discourses that are fundamentalist in nature, as well as Orientalist writing, perpetuate an unyielding caste structure (see Pollack 1993), grassroots organizations such as the Maitreya School are attempting to establish the supple and non-oppressive attitudes towards others.

One of the objectives stated on the organizations website is to "provide Universal Education schools for disadvantaged children regardless of religion, caste, sex or economic status" (www.maitreyaproject.com 2009). Muslims and Hindus freely mix and learn about each other's religions during Special Program, as do Hindu students from the various castes. Maitreya School is one of the few schools that integrate students from different caste backgrounds (in practice that is; in theory caste segregation is illegal). This integration aims to dissolve social barriers as children from different castes and religious groups study and work together. This is the hope, anyhow, and the process is not without its challenges.

Sonali was a tribal (*adivasi*) from Jharkhand who left Maitreya School for two reasons. First, Sonali, a bright and eager girl striving for ranking in the competitive educational environment, complained to her father that Maitreya's English and science classes were substandard and impeded her to maximize her academic potential. Sonali's father had a wealthy friend (by Bihari standards) from the United Kingdom who agreed to sponsor her in an all-girls' residential school in Ranchi. Second, Sonali felt ostracized by the other children in her class because of her caste. She was one of the few *adivasi* children in the school and never felt comfortable mixing with the other children who came from families that mistreated hers. She recounted how one time in physics class a girl told her to get out of her seat and sit in back of the room where backward castes belonged. Rather than reprimanding the offensive student, the physics teacher laughed. Rather than the teacher "intervening" (Noddings 2004) and effectively using the moment to tackle casteism, he permitted a situation that resulted in the perpetuation of Sonali's resentment, alienation and marginalization.

Tackling engrained racist prejudices is an enormous and daunting task, but the school administrators believe they can diminish it if children begin the Universal Education curriculum from Kindergarten. Dave and Rishi once explained to me that in classes nine, eleven and twelve where children studied together since kindergarten, racist and caste issues

rarely arose. Bigoted remarks, however, were more common in classes five, seven and ten (Sonali's grade), classes which many of the children had entered the Maitreya School stream at later stages. To help prevent discriminatory attitudes develop in the formative stages of the children, the administration recently instituted a policy to deny entry to students after kindergarten unless they participated in the evening program for a minimum of two years and demonstrated sincerity and a strong understanding of the Universal Education ideals. This practice finds resonance with Montessori's (1984; 1966) belief that children around six years of age begin their stage of development where they begin to explore their surroundings, develop of a sense of morality, and ponder their roles in society. Children in this stage begin asking existential questions and are easily influenced by their elders, thus it is essential for children to be supported by caring and capable teachers over a long period of time. Brad Brown (2002, 45-6) puts forth a similar case for children requiring a strong, moral environment during their early primary school years. Brown believes that the earlier a child begins what he calls "anti-biased education," the easier it will be to prevent negative attitudes from developing or preventing any negative attitudes that are already present from becoming deeply ingrained prejudices.

Managing caste differences is a major challenge in Bodhgayā's schools, thus requiring a new educational agenda to be developed (the old/current one generally has lower castes in public schools and higher castes in private ones, as explained in the previous chapter). Children raised in Bodhgayā and attending a foreign-run school, more than any other generation in Indian history, are required to confront a life with those from different national, linguistic, religious and ethnic backgrounds (perhaps not to the same degree as children growing up in a multicultural North American city, but the challenge is still present nonetheless). Foreign Buddhist administrators, volunteers, and local teachers and students are now forced to traverse conflicting relational models of kinship, gender, language (monolingual and multilingual), and ethnicity that have never been necessary before. Education thinkers Marcelo Suarez-Orozco and Desirée Baollan Qin-Hillard (2004) assert, "it is by interrupting 'thinking as usual'—the taken-for-granted understandings and worldviews that shape cognitive and meta-cognitive styles and practices—that managing difference can do the most for youth growing up today" (4). When cultures cross-pollinate as they do in a conscientious atmosphere like the Maitreya School where students are taught to examine, solve, and communicate problems from multiple angles, and who are exposed to people from

multiple ethnicities and nationalities, they (as well as the foreign visitors) learn that there is nothing inherent in a particular way of life or seeing the world. From a postcolonial perspective, Giroux (2006), Brown (2002) and Young (2001) suggest that multi-cultural literacy entailing a rejection of all forms of discrimination is the basis of transforming oppression into positive, intercultural social diversity and is a bridge towards effective democracy. When this occurs, Giroux (2006, 191) elaborates that differences and exclusions are illuminated so as to comprehend the dynamics of power as "part of the historical process of struggle and negotiation." Giroux insists that this critical, multicultural awareness steeped in history forms the basis for dialogue, and is thus an asset rather than a threat to democratic social change.

In the sections that follow, I discuss how the Maitreya School's multicultural and anti-biased pedagogical strategy, along with social outreach activities, provides opportunities to develop critical thinking skills and active citizenship.

4.2.3.   Literacy, Democratic Participation and Problem-Posing Education

When people do not participate in the political process, either directly or through elected representatives, then their needs and aspirations are ignored (Habte 1999, 48). The quantity and quality of primary education in India that affects the most disadvantaged classes and castes is rarely contested publically because they lack voice, whereas pressure groups from higher castes and classes favouring tertiary education exert a strong voice and to a great extent affect policy decisions in their favour, thus perpetuating a self-sustaining circle (Drèze and Sen 1995, 91). While higher education is well established for the higher classes, much of the Indian population remains illiterate. Thus, we see that considerable disparities of levels of education are a dominant form—and cause—of social inequality in India (Drèze and Sen 1995, 96).

Drèze and Sen (1995) provide an example indicating that there is a direct link between the absence of basic social welfare and widespread illiteracy in northern India. While literacy is not a prerequisite for effective political involvement (as in West Bengal where rates of illiteracy soar), it is a constructive tool for engagement. A literate person can better understand how a system operates, navigate through government bureaucracy, be

aware of his or her rights, and acquire other skills essential for active engagement. Drèze and Sen (1995) claim,

> Literacy is a basic tool of self-defence in a society where social interaction often involves the written media. An illiterate person is that much less equipped to defend herself in court, to obtain a bank loan, to enforce her inheritance rights, to take advantage of new technology, to compete for secure employment, to get on the right bus, to take part in political activity, in short, to participate successfully in the modern economy and society. (109)

Politically active lower-caste groups in southern and western India who have achieved a basic level of education have been relatively successful in forcefully demanding increases in primary education, health care, social security, and other forms of public support. In northern India, the heavy absence of education has not prevented the political arena from being dominated by lower-caste leaders, demonstrated by the leadership of Laloo Prasad and Rabri Devi (the state's former chief minister who was illiterate) in Bihar and Mayawati in Uttar Pradesh. Nevertheless, despite these shifts in political figures who have stopped the political agenda from being dominated by middle and upper-caste issues, these politicians have done little to alter the oppressive conditions of the masses. In this regard there exists a direct relationship between educational achievement and social transformation. While providing education to all groups empowers people to engage in civic affairs and surmounts traditional inequalities of caste, class, and gender, participating in local politics and overcoming these inequalities in turn acts as a catalyst for further expansion of education.

Reflecting on Drèze and Sen's (1995) ideas on the relationship between basic literacy and civic engagement, critical literacy is insufficiently addressed. As I show below, knowing how to read and write is an essential first step towards change; it is not an educational end in itself as students living in a so-called democratic society need to learn how to question authority to clearly articulate what they see the problems to be and how to overcome them. From this perspective, India's literacy campaigns should be considered successful only when girls [and boys] not only learn to read and write, but also raise awareness of and protest against unjust policies.

The seminal work of Brazilian pedagogue Paulo Freire (1971) has been the source of pedagogical inspiration for many educators working in poor and oppressed communities, including several Western pilgrim-educators I spoke with in Bodhgayā. *Pedagogy of the*

Oppressed was one of the first books to assert that students living in any oppressive context caused by unequal access to social, cultural and economic capital can transform themselves and their environment through critical awareness and activity.

In Freire's problem-posing method of education the teacher-student relationship is horizontal, rather than vertical, enabling a sense of equality and reciprocity to occur. The association is mutual, respectful, and based upon cooperation, not coercion. This horizontal liaison is not teacher-student, but teacher-student and student-teacher where each person has the opportunity to teach and learn from the other (59). In this classroom situation, the teacher also learns and the learner also teaches, and the classroom itself is envisioned as a location where new knowledge is grounded in the experiences of students and teachers alike. This innovative process occurs not through lecturing, but through meaningful dialogue where everyone is trying to understand other people's viewpoints rather than fighting against their viewpoints (66-7).

Chogyam Trungpa (1991, 70-82) founder of Naropa Institute, the first accredited Buddhist-university in the United States, expresses a similar sentiment regarding the teacher-student relationship. For Trungpa, it is essential that teachers be open to learning from their students if their students are to progress in their education, and not merely want to reproduce images of themselves in their students. Trungpa writes, "Exchanging takes place all the time; then as you teach the pupils don't get bored with you, because you develop as well. There is always something different, something new each moment, so the material never runs out." An essential element of this constant rapport is critical listening: deferring judgments, paying attention, asking questions to clarify. By critically listening, we make ourselves and others significant (Freire 2007; 1971; Trungpa 1991; Gatto 2000). In this manner, teachers and students are "critical co-investigators in dialogue": everyone develops the skills to intelligently and creatively change themselves and change society (Freire 1971, 68). Similarly, Giroux (2005) writes that educated hope depends upon a "culture of questioning" to keep the doors of human potential open and prevent social agency from exhausting itself (181; see also Freire 2007). This is causal, because after all, how is agency exercised without voice and a critical perspective? Status quo depends on those who do not feel "entitled" to question that "way things are." In this way, education is a dynamic, transformative and continuous process; as soon as education is declared finished, the possibility for growth is dead.

Satish Inamdar, the director from the Krishnamurti School in Bangalore suggests that transformative education cannot arise from "soap-box preaching," but by unpretentiously sharing information regarding current affairs. This approach to teaching permits students to construct their own opinions and views of the world (from Dalai Lama et al. 1995, 112). This method requires teachers to have the courage to cease traditional banking methods of teaching and allowing a problem-posing, dialectical approach to flourish. Inamdar wonders if schools can provide the space for students to cultivate observation, awareness, and sensitivity. "They have to feel free to learn, and they have to learn without prejudices which come from the capacity to listen and see. The question is not what to learn, but how to learn?" (112). Students need to learn how to make decisions for themselves, and not be dictated by external authority regimented by a system of rewards and punishments (112; see Krishnamurti 1953; 1974). Moreover, when students are part of the decision making process regarding curriculum, they feel that their voices are heard and are taken seriously, contributing to their development as socially responsible citizens (Meier 2004; Noddings 2004; Berman 2004; 1997).

Thus, the aim of problem-posing, or liberatory, education is to develop a critical consciousness, or what Freire (1971) refers to—*conscientizacao*: the process of perceiving social, political, and economic oppression, and learning how to formulate action against that oppression (19, 61). Freire (1971; 2007) taught that problem-posing education aimed at raising a critical consciousness must assist students to recognize connections between their individual problems and experiences and the social contexts in which they are embedded. Coming to consciousness is the link between theory and action, or in Freire's words, "praxis." For Freire, any system which did not develop consciousness of one's condition and which did not lead to action is not education in the real sense. To be educated is to question and act to change oppressed situations. Within the school environment, education must teach youth how to make their voices heard and encourage them to involve themselves in local self-governing institutions and management of the commons, thus becoming stakeholders in the communities. Positive social change is an outcome of praxis at the collective level.

Freire's thinking is similar to John Dewey's (1916) education philosophy that views learning as an active process in which students construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world through action and reflection. For Dewey, experience and active inquiry are the foundations of education. The role of critical pedagogy not only gets learners

to think critically in new and diverse ways, but it provides them with "the skills and knowledge to expand their capacities to both question deep-seated assumptions and myths that legitimate the most archaic and disempowering social practices that structure every aspect of society and to take responsibility for intervening in the world" (Giroux 2006, 185). In this way, a critical pedagogical approach affords new possibilities for thought and action.

In Special Program, beyond the meditations, the teachers use Deweyian and Freireian approaches[96] through problem solving games, dialogue, role-play, etc. to introduce students to contemporary issues and then encourage students to think about and express their opinions about what they did and how their understanding is changing. Ideally, the teacher makes sure s/he understands the students' pre-existing conceptions and guides activities to address and build on them. Freire (1971; 2007) and Dewey (1916) argued that the learning process rests on the fact that educators need to be in touch with the views and experiences of their students. This awareness assists with seeking after truth, and applying it to whatever issues arise in the students' lives.

I was keenly interested in how, if at all, Maitreya School's curriculum replicated Freire's groundbreaking ideas regarding transformative education, a term often used by foreign volunteers. Is it possible for a community to contest oppression without a Freireian-styled dialectical approach to learning? Maitreya School has a pedagogical agenda that offers its students opportunities to develop themselves in ways that are quite unique not only in India, but perhaps the world, as remarked by most pilgrims who visit the school and who are educators themselves. However, when it comes to the regular academic curriculum, I observed the teaching situation to be similar to most schools: lecturing, memorization, rote repetition, regurgitation, test-taking. Reflecting back on my own experience as a student and observing the students around me, I see how these methods caused emotional upheaval: humiliation, competition, stress, anxiety, and so forth. This was especially evident at the end of the academic year when students were preparing for the examinations.

This imbalance between the desire for positive transformation and conventional pedagogical approaches creates a tension between "education as a practice of freedom" and "education as a reinforcement of domination" (see hooks 1994). Some volunteers at Maitreya

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[96] These resonances are either coincidental or because some early teacher trainers have been influenced by these approaches. In either case, these approaches are not articulated as such.

and other schools expressed dissatisfaction with the local teachers not being open to changing their top-down teaching styles. The volunteers felt this apprehension because the teachers did not want their positions of authority over the students to be challenged. Other volunteers countered that while this may be the case for some, the teachers are overworked and do not have the time to seriously overhaul their methods. Sheila, an Indo-American ecumenical Buddhist observes, "It is one thing to incorporate Universal Education ideas and practices into one's teaching practice; it is another thing to change one's entire configuration of teaching."

Whatever the case, the above critiques—even though they seem motivated to activate social change—exemplify colonial, egotistical attitudes that do not honour other forms of knowledge or teaching methods, even if they do not seem—through a Western lens—to fit into a postcolonial, critical pedagogical strategy. For one thing, many of these volunteers assume to be true Freire's idea that critical reflection upon oppressive conditions will necessarily lead to social engagement. Romantic as this thinking is, it assumes a static reality to be discovered and comprehended in the same manner. Despite discourses on embracing multiple perspectives and ways of being, such critiques disregard different perspectives and interpretations of reality, and also ignore the diverse formulations of how to (or not to) act in response to what is perceived. I am in no way attempting to show disdain for the Freirian approach to learning and acting in the world, I am attempting to depict the ways in which those who claim to critically engage often fail to turn their gaze upon their own essentialist perceptions and interpretations of how things are and should be. From the Buddhist perspective, social change is best realized when acted upon from an understanding of impermanence and emptiness. Then, in the educational context, volunteer Buddhist pilgrims who also view themselves as critical educators will understand that the diverse student body will have very different responses to class discussions, and that student unwillingness to adopt particular positions (Buddhist, Gandhian, etc.) should not be seen as a failure on anyone's part. Instead, these moments can be taken as productive spaces that acknowledge, and depending on the context, celebrate difference (see also Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Rodman 1992).

Quite a few of the volunteer educators felt that most of the local teachers lacked the training and skills in generating critical discussion relating to structural inequalities, and that the rare and short workshops that touched upon critical pedagogy given to them did not

produce any lasting effects. Karl, Maitreya School's principle, was instrumental in starting Maitreya School and Root Institute for Wisdom Culture. He is an Anglo-Indian Vajrayāna monk who has travelled to and worked in Bodhgayā for almost thirty years. He was a dedicated student of Lama Zopa and worked in Bodhgayā because it was his guru's wish. One afternoon, we left school early to listen to Chokyi Nyingma Rinpoche, the famous Tibetan Buddhist master based in Kathmandu, give a Dharma talk at the Burmese Vihara. We travelled on his old Vespa scooter, which he was slightly embarrassed of, often remarking to me how it was un-monk-like to be zipping around town in a hurry on a scooter. He felt he had no other choice because in addition to his work at Maitreya School, he also had several responsibilities with other organizations. Weaving around rickshaws, cows, puddles, and children, Karl mentioned that many of the teachers and students did not truly grasp the neo-colonial structure that dominated their lives and thus did not really know how to change these constraints. He sighed about how the school recently began vocational training programs in tailoring, carpentry, and electrical repair, but most of the students were not interested, and as Karl figured, they thought it was beneath them (despite the fact that most of the students come from agricultural and working-class families). Education theorist Nel Noddings (2003) demonstrates how the perception that places academic activity above manual work is derived from a Platonic legacy that still has influence over the modern, global world. In India, this hierarchical view is further strengthened by caste system discourse that generally places the intellectual work of the Brahmins higher on the socio-religious ladder than the physical work of the *śudras*.[97] Today, barriers to these fields of activity are less restrictive, but judging by Karl's comments above, the value associated with these activities remains. The implications of this shift may cause delusional attitudes and behaviour amongst the majority of students as they chase untenable socio-economic fantasies perpetuated by media-driven messages of material prosperity.

Following Dewey, Noddings asserts that different people require different forms of education to help them excel at whatever comes "naturally" to them. On the surface, in an Indian context, this could be used as a justification for caste stratification that argues certain activities are only suitable to specific caste groups, and that these groups should receive an education aligned with their social position (see chapter three). However, for Noddings,

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[97] See above discussion on Bayly's historical interpretation of the caste system.

selected forms of education should not be ascribed to or standardized for entire groups of people, but instead, follow the needs of the individual child. Thus, ideally, children who possess intelligence for manual work should be able to follow a curriculum designed to help them maximize their capabilities (80; see also Gardner 1993). Bearing this in mind, all lines of work—including manual labour—that contribute to socio-economic well-being and growth should be sufficiently commended and adequately compensated. In this way, Noddings (2003) contends that youth will choose their occupations proudly rather than "fall" into them because they could not succeed in other "higher" occupational domains championed by society (92). The failed attempt at creating programs aligned with the socio-economic realities of the local student population demonstrates a limitation of the execution of the Universal Education curriculum, or perhaps the curriculum itself.

Karl believes that the students are heavily influenced by modern media and "desire the acquisition of an unsustainable middle-class lifestyle—an untenable dream for most of our students." He lamented that the teachers perpetuate a materialistic dream by reinforcing the belief that the students can achieve it, as long as they work hard at it. Breathing in the diesel fumes from a transport lorry stalled in front of us, I reflected upon Karl's thoughts, and noted that with the exception of a couple of social study teachers, I had not witnessed or heard of any teachers lead classroom discussions on how structural inequalities are related to failure, and how these inequalities prevent upward social and economic mobility.

Judging by my many conversations with and observations of lower-class Indians, I have noticed that failures in obtaining a rise in social and economic status often results in feelings of personal failure, lack of confidence, lack of self-esteem, and depression. A few graduates and senior students expressed these feelings to me; however, most of them also recognized that all the contemplative work they did at the school helped them cope with their socio-economic realities. Shashi, a recent graduate, confided that he and his peers were unable to find honest, well-paying work, and did not feel comfortable scamming tourists like so many young men do around Bodhgayā (see chapter one). He added that it did not matter as long as they had food, shelter and that satisfaction of being useful. Most of these graduates entered some form of post-secondary education while supporting themselves by working as teachers, social workers or joining their family trade—all honest forms of employment, but insufficient for realising the middle-class dream. Towards the end of our conversation, I tried to prompt Shashi regarding his views of the systemic inequalities which may be responsible

for keeping poverty in place. Promptings aside, he was unable, or disinterested in doing so. However, he admitted that unlike many of his friends who went to other schools and who find themselves in a similar situation, he does not locate the blame on himself or on his family but simply says "this is reality as it is."

Maitreya School's administrators and teachers are becoming increasingly aware of critical pedagogy, and are constantly experimenting with new ways to re-imagine the significance of education and development in such a complex setting (see Escobar 1992). The current curriculum does seem to reveal an epistemic shift in the standard Indian education system (see previous chapter) towards a holistic knowledge structure. Through various contemplative practices and group discussions, students in regular attendance gradually realize that even if they do not have total control of their external circumstances, they do have power over their internal ones. In this way, students are believed to learn about themselves, the world, and the interconnection between the two. The present effects of these lessons are seen in the way the students ambivalently cope with their socio-economic dreams and realities. At times the students are able to understand, and even resist, the global messages of success and prosperity; at other times, there is a burning desire to access that material wealth and its trailing pleasures. And because these students are still young and are the first generation to participate in this pedagogical experiment, the long-term social and personal implications of these lessons are yet to be seen.

4.2.4. Gandhian and Vocational Education

After spending twelve years working as a social worker in South India, Akash returned to his native Bihar to serve his community as a teacher and social worker at the Samanway Ashram orphanage in Bodhgayā. He lived there for about two years until he could no longer handle what he perceived to be corrupt activities at the ashram. He explained that the saintly founder's mind became weak in his old age and was unable to do anything about the orphanage guardians who were stealing donations, organizing gambling on the ashram premises, selling drugs and bootleg liquor, and prostituting young girls. Akash now teaches Karate and runs a general store, and loves to chat with pilgrims, monks, and tourists about the town's problems, hoping that some sincere foreigners will come to Bodhgayā and open up a

Gandhian type school or ashram. "Schools in Bodhgayā are terrible," Akash once told me during a conversation on the patio of his shop. He continued,

> The people who run the schools are selfish, caring about themselves only. Parents are forced to buy costly books that teach nothing. We need ancient Gurukul system that teaches students to build character, gives skills for self-employment. Schools need to teach what is important only. No social values, anymore. No teaching how to work, how to discipline, equality, love the Nature.

Akash's main criticism is that neither the public nor the private school systems in Bodhgayā mentally or physically prepare children for the real world. His ideas mirror the sentiments of Dewey's (1916) progressive education and Gandhi's (1980) "basic education" or "real education" which view practical, hands-on skills in agriculture, carpentry, and handicrafts as an integral part of the curriculum. Furthermore, both Dewey and Gandhi promoted an integrated approach to education where the students learned the historical, cultural, economic, mathematical and geographical lessons related to whatever they were doing with their hands. Curriculum specialist Vibha Parthasarathi, a follower of Gandhi and a high school principle in New Delhi, describes how his school learns about the spring season (*vasant*).

> [Musicians] talked about how *vasant* has affected classical music and dance; a *vaidyaraj* [health-care specialist] talked about what this season means in terms of health, ill-health and nutritional requirements...available herbs. There was a visit to the Ayurvedic Museum, as well as collecting various statements and *shlokas* [verses] pertaining to herbs...The children collected *tesu* flowers and made dyes out of them...In language classes they collected and read poems on various aspects of spring, and in movement workshops they experimented with the ways in which the body reacts to and sends messages about *vasant*, imitating animals, showing their emotions...there were forty-four such activities for children from two to eighteen years old...this was the 'real' thing. (from Dalai Lama et al, 1995, 108-9)

For Gandhi (1980), "real education" develops a healthy balance between "mind, body and soul." Gandhian education also contributes towards eliminating upper-caste prejudices towards manual labour and lower-caste suspicions and resentments towards intellectual work. For Gandhi, this sort of training surpassed vocational training for the poor, as he believed that all social classes should take part. He asserted that this approach would eliminate the sharp distinction between those who work with their hands and those who work with their minds (see Weiner 2006, 61; Cenkner 1976).

Like Gandhi who promoted agriculture as part of the curriculum, Orr (2004) insists that farming not only strengthens the body, but also provides intellectual lessons in "natural history, ecology, soils, seasons, wildlife, animal husbandry, and land use" (117). Orr argues that the precipitous decline in the number of small, ecologically diverse farms and the shift towards industrialized farming is largely responsible for the modern person's apathy towards the environmental crisis, ignorance of how ecosystems function, and patterns of conspicuous consumption. These deficits of experiences, he argues, have had a serious impact on our "collective ecological intelligence" (117). Orr claims that practising small-scale organic agriculture teaches students the importance of protecting biological diversity. Although students may find that farm work is tedious and difficult at times, it can teach them about the relationship we have with our food, as well as the planet's natural cycles and importance of biological diversity. Patience, self-reliance, responsibility, discipline, physical stamina, hard work, parsimony, cooperation, and ecological competence are all skills that young people can gain from working directly with the land (Orr 2004, 118-120). Orr argues that agriculture should be part of every school's curriculum so that students would not suffer from the "debilitating separation between abstract intellect and practical intelligence" and where "learning is an indoor sport taking place exclusively in the classrooms, libraries, laboratories, and computer labs" (120). This Gandhian way of thinking destroys the belief that intellectual work is the only worthy work and that manual labour is something to be disparaged.

If agriculture and other productive skills are mastered by students, they can use them to not only gain income after graduation, but to generate income for the school while they are studying. Gandhi wrote, "Literacy in itself is no education. I would, therefore, begin the child's education by teaching it a useful handicraft, enabling it to produce from the moment it begins its training. Thus, every school can be made self-supporting, condition being that the State takes over the manufacture of these schools" (1980, 138). In this way, schools would have the opportunity to become self-sufficient economically and students would develop their practical skills in creative and imaginative ways.

For Gandhi, educating students was important insofar that it led to the development and maintenance of the ideal, self-sufficient village, or *village swaraj*. Gandhi was strongly opposed to industrialization that created unemployment and that led to the impoverishment of the masses. He insisted that the "ideal village" required the entire populations' support. Prime (2002, 87) describes Gandhi's ideal village:

> The ideal village would have perfect sanitation of the traditional kind, based on local recycling of human and animal manure. The cottages, built of materials found within a five-mile radius, would be light and well-ventilated. They would have courtyards where householders could plant vegetables and house their cattle. The lanes and streets would be clean and free of dust. There would be adequate wells accessible to everyone. There would be places of worship, a common meeting place, a village common for grazing, a cooperative dairy, primary and secondary schools where the main subjects would be practical crafts and village industries. It would have its own *panchayat* (the five-man body of elders) for settling disputes. Finally, it would produce its own milk, grains, vegetables, fruits, and *khadi*.

We see that liberation branches out not only to the political, but touches every facet of life. Gandhi saw education that focused only on the intellect and individual achievement as problematic, arguing that it had nothing to do with the piece of paper one received at the end of a course. Gandhi advocated that education should be viewed as a process, not an outcome. In fact, he argued, that education transpired over a person's entire life, from birth to death. Education at his ashrams comprised all of life's experiences: hygiene, health, active citizenship, work, meditation, prayer, play, relaxation, and so forth (Gandhi 2005; Cenkner 1976). Maitreya School is gradually implementing Gandhian ideals into its curriculum, and even has plans on creating an ideal village once enough finances are secured to purchase land and equipment, and enough capable and sincere people present themselves.

At present, however, since students come from various caste and religious backgrounds, the administration is inundated with different sorts of demands by parents, which often reflects the dichotomy of attitudes between intellectual and manual labour. Potters, tailors, embroiderers, painters, sculptors come from the local villages to teach their traditional skills that are the core of visual culture, but merely at the hobby level and not in any serious way due to opposition from the parents. For example, in each class, students may learn pottery once a week for a semester and then move on to sculpture the next, adhering to the maxim "jack of all trades, master of none." Karl, a Gandhian adherent, complained during a lunch time conversation at the Maitreya Project headquarters where he resided. Scooping spicy *dahl* with a piece of *chapatti*, he commented,

> There is this false belief in India that science is superior to the arts and humanities. We can offer quality vocational and artistic training taught by experts, yet most of the parents, and by default their children, prefer to have science classes taught by amateurs. This science craze is absurd. These subjects are taught on a daily basis and bear little impact on their lives.

Thinking about David Orr's ideas, as well as the integrated approach of Gandhi's "basic education," I retorted that this "science craze" can be practical and meaningful if the school incorporated agricultural practices in their study of ecology, physics, chemistry, and biology. Agriculture can also help students open their doors to the worlds of solar technology, business management, rural sociology, and environmental philosophy. Just as schools like Maitreya engage in social outreach activities, engaging in agriculture may contribute to the protection of biological diversity at the local level and can help revitalize small ecologically diverse farms in the region that are jeopardized by development. Finally, by seeing the fruits of their labour, students will be in a better position to understand their capabilities in problem solving in flexible and imaginative ways.

After lunch, we strolled through the Project's gardens before heading back to school. I asked Karl why it took so long to fully implement the Gandhian approach that so captured his being. Karl bemoaned that, on the one hand, most of the parents, were illiterate and did not always know what constituted a good school. This lack of knowledge has made it very easy for children to fall prey to materialistic teachers and administrators. On the other hand, most parents did not understand or believe in the social benefits of Gandhi's approach. "Forty-five years of politically twisting Gandhi's ideals, along with the recent bombardment of Western cultural desire, have destroyed most people's faith in simplicity." He added,

> Unfortunately, most of our teachers, who are honest and decent people—not easy traits to come by in Bihar—are unable to genuinely play the role of a Gandhian educator. They all say they love Gandhi's ideals, but most of them want their children to get white-collar jobs and transcend the "backward" village.

Krishna is a local Maitreya School teacher who believes that the Universal Education pedagogy has immense potential, if executed properly. He is critical of the "polluted mind" that destitute Bihar breeds. He argues that his colleagues are neither critical thinkers nor good examples of the Universal Education agenda because they do not put serious effort into individual and community transformation. Echoing hooks' (1994) and Palmer's (1998) call for teachers to be self-reflexive, he offers this analogy,

> Just as a successful garden requires proper sunlight, wind, soil and water, our school needs improved teachers and resources to produce successful students... teachers need to *really* know good heart and be wise... Maitreya School is better than other schools, but still has leakage problem that needs fixing.

This tension between the socialistic, Gandhian motivations of foreign Buddhist social workers (and some teachers) and the rising modern, consumer aspirations of most of the students may be a formidable obstacle for organizations such as Maitreya to successfully implement their agendas. The foreign administration at the Maitreya School, and a few other foreign-run organizations in Bodhgayā, are composed mainly of people who feel that the competitive drive of capitalism is undemocratic and socially, culturally, economically and ecologically destructive, and requires socialistic (moral and aesthetic) controls to ensure equality and justice. A successful implementation of Gandhi's vision of social change depends on individual renunciation, self-control and resistance to all forms of craving. In Gandhi's (1990, 303) words, "Passive Resistance is the noblest and best education. It should come, not after the ordinary education in letters of children, but it should precede it...should know what the soul is, what truth is, what love is...that in the struggle of life, it can easily conquer hate by love, untruth by love, violence by self-suffering." According to Gandhi's philosophy, current environmental, economic and social problems are deeply rooted in individual attitudes and behaviours. During his struggle for political independence from the British, Gandhi contended that it was wrong to blame all of India's problems on the British alone. If Indians truly wanted freedom, they needed to withdraw their cooperation in a non-violent fashion. "The English have not taken India...we have given it to them" (cited in Prime 2002, 81). Keeping this perspective in mind, the finger for contemporary problems should not be only pointed towards on an unjust caste system, corrupt government or greedy corporations, but towards oneself as well. Thus, independence, or *swaraj*, is not only a political act, but a personal one. Gandhi wrote "Swaraj is a sacred word meaning self-rule and self-restraint, not freedom from all restraint" (cited in Cenkner 1976). *Swaraj* from systematic socio-economic oppression then requires personal sacrifice and public commitment, instead of chasing after personal and material pleasures. Hindu ecological thinker Ranchor Prime (2002, 83) replicates this message for the modern context, "It is not enough to voice our disagreement with the global order; we have to make significant changes in our own lives to make ourselves less dependent on its outcomes....adopting a simpler lifestyle that does not demand consumption of the earth's resources at the present nightmare pace." Thus, self-transformation derived from sacrifice is a necessary condition for changing society.

Despite the high regard that most Indians have for Gandhi judging by the pictures of him in public spaces, a significant majority of locals do not share the Gandhian view and strive towards the middle-class lifestyle trumpeted by mass media and view capitalism as the way to achieve it. Even Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of independent India and a close follower and friend of Gandhi, wrote that Gandhi's ideas on machinery and modern civilization were "utopian and largely inapplicable to modern conditions" (cited in Prime 2002, 91). If the early political leaders of India were not prepared to take on Gandhi's ideology seriously, how could it be expected that most Indian citizens would do so today (Prime 2002, 91)?

Maitreya School's broad curriculum and attention to detail is often criticized by parents who do not understand the motivations behind the school's agenda: to produce ethically integral, psychologically strong, and civically caring and engaged citizens. I am told that most parents disapprove of the curriculum's heavy emphasis on creativity, social work, and spirituality. Instead, they prefer that the students follow the standard pedagogy that focuses almost entirely on "academic" content. The motivation for these views is the parents' belief that success in post-graduation employment relies primarily on academic achievement.

This friction is also felt between the administration and a few of the teachers, who are more sympathetic to the parents' criticisms. Bhave is a talented artist who enjoys sharing his skills and techniques with his students. Even so, he feels that there is not enough emphasis on academic study and too much concentration on arts, crafts and music for students who do not intend on becoming professional artists. According to Bhave's calculation, only twenty-five to thirty per cent of the school day is dedicated to academic subjects. "This is very sad for me. I am for arts, but not too much time for it. We harm our students who come for knowledge, to make good future." Bhave feels that more time should be devoted to learning math and science, which for him are "important subjects for now and for future, but too much difficult, so we need to give more classes." He continued,

> Music is for entertainment only; not to make happy... Suppose you are dancing or playing *tabla* for two and a half hours, it is not easy. Children are young, not professional. Music class is too long and art class is too long. So we should decrease these classes. And instead of these music and arts classes we could do more yoga, and some practical laboratory classes, not theory only... Practical classes only start in class 10, we need to start with class 7 because then the students will understand more clearly, more precisely. It will benefit them.

Laxman also believes that there should be more emphasis on obtaining better academic results, which he thinks is what the teachers, students and guardians really desire. He says, "students are seeing in the society that the student who have very good academic know how to serve family, how to find good job like air force, IIT engineer, lawyer, CA. This is a foundation time, class 1-12. If foundation no good, then can't do better." Laxman's feelings are valid as they represent a common modern attitude towards education, and to the aspirations felt by the majority of locals in his community, and probably in most places around the modern world. However, education thinker Nel Noddings (2003, 85) criticizes this manner of thinking that believes all children should be aiming for these middle-class types of employment. Noddings contends that narrow standardized educational goals are not in the best interest of children because they often lead to failure and dissatisfaction, and are a distraction from the social problems that cannot be solved by schools such as healthcare, housing, honest employment and fair wages. She writes,

> It is shortsighted and even arrogant to suppose that all people can escape these problems through better education, particularly if that education favors those with specific academic talents or resources. The jobs that today pay only poverty wages will still have to be done and, so long as we measure success in schools competitively, there will be losers. (85)

From this perspective, Laxman's "foundations" will only become stable when self-worth derived from equitable social and financial opportunities become pedagogical aims.

Interestingly, the most common questions posed to me by Maitreya School students related to gainful employment after graduating. The Gandhian in me would often be inclined to lecture on organic agriculture, grassroots activism, and handicraft production. But I learned very quickly that this discourse was not of interest to them. They desired not the ideal village that Gandhi, and many of the volunteers at Maitreya School, dreamed of, but an urban lifestyle that they saw everyday in the media and from the international tourists who were pervasive in their town. These discussions usually made me uncomfortable because they also highlighted the social, economic and educational inequalities that enabled me to be there in the first place. Where did I, a privileged Westerner, possess the moral right to dissuade the yearnings of underprivileged youth wanting a higher standard of material living that I naturally acquired by simply being born in Canada? During this last field trip to India I became more aware of the importance of establishing appropriate educational aims

(Noddings 2003), but also sensitive to why people embrace modernization. As economic analyst Gurcharan Das (2002) puts it,

> To eschew modernization is to condemn the masses to degrading poverty and the injustices of caste in our traditional society. It is easy for the top 20 per cent in society to decry the evils of modernization from the comfort of their upper- and middle-class lives. But ask the people. They will any day put up with Coca-Cola and KFC if it means two square meals, a decent home, and a job....The daily migration into cities is adequate testimony. (303)

Even as I find Gandhian ideals of creating idyllic self-sufficient villages relying on "appropriate technology" to be satisfying, I also understand that Gandhi's way of life is not necessarily desirable, or realistic, for most people I met in Bodhgayā. However, this does not mean that all of Gandhi's ideals are rejected by locals as many do praise and adapt ideas of non-violence, simplicity and *swaraj* to their own lives and dreams. As one student who has been at the Maitreya School since Class Two and was nearing graduation explained, "I am not interested in farmer job only, any job with good pay and not harm others is good enough. I don't need all these foreign things from market, just good food, good clothes and good house, enough." This boy's words shed light on Gandhi's (1990, 346), "Real wealth does not consist in jewellery and money, but in providing proper food, clothes, education, and creating healthy conditions of living... A country can be called prosperous and free only when its citizens can easily earn enough to meet their needs." Universal Education may not be creating Gandhi's village dream for the time being, but his foundational teachings on self-transformation are slowly taking root at Maitreya School in ways that were perhaps unimaginable to Gandhi himself.

Retaining (or perhaps, re-inventing) "traditional culture" that Gandhi spoke of will not come from rejecting globalization, but will emerge from a good education where students are free to choose which elements of Indian culture to hold on to and which to reject. Most Western idealists coming to Bodhgayā to engage in social work are ignorant of these desires, and are often regarded by locals as self-righteous and mighty people who have difficulty grasping what is in front of their faces. Why should foreigners, they ask, do their "social work for the poor" and then dine in upscale restaurants where a single meal is the equivalent to the average local person's pay for the week, and that locals should remain poor and accepting, keeping benign smiles on their faces.

Is there a solution to the pedagogical impasse between what foreign Buddhist administrators (and donors) desire and what local teachers want and/or have the skills to perform? I am unsure but whatever it is needs to be developed by and for the local population. Foreigners can provide all the input they want, but for a significant impact to be made in changing existing ideas about development and education, solutions must come from within the local population. The education these students receive at Maitreya School may provide them with the skills to maintain their ethical integrity, cope with the stresses of a competitive and demanding lifestyle, and cultivate a sense of responsibility and compassion towards their communities. These timeless debates were not resolved during the time of my study; the answers to these questions will play out over time.

4.3. EDUCATING THE EDUCATORS

I now turn the reader's attention to the theoretical and practical ways in which teachers were trained in Universal Education. Following this description, I investigate the teachers' diverse responses to the curriculum, their formation as educators, and critical perspectives and actions that begin shifting a colonial, missionary-like pedagogical paradigm towards a postcolonial, inclusive paradigm.

4.3.1. Overview of Teacher Training: Towards the "Good heart"

Maitreya School's teachers primarily live in the Bodhgayā area, but a few also commute from Gayā, about 15 km away. There are twenty-one full-time teachers (15 men, 6 women). Five of the teachers have been with the school since it opened in 1999, and seven others joined at least five years ago. About half of the teachers are trained in social studies and half in the sciences. Most of the creative arts are taught by local artisans, but some are also facilitated by the regular teaching staff. Half the teachers have master degrees, and only one of the teachers has a formal degree in education. Most teachers possessing a degree in education generally work in the public school system or elite private schools where the salaries are two to three times higher (see chapter three). Two of Maitreya School teachers are working towards obtaining a B.Ed so that they can find employment with a better paying institution. These teachers claim that they are happy at Maitreya, but that their salaries are insufficient for a

modest lifestyle. Likewise, during my fieldwork the teacher holding a B.Ed sought employment in the public system. Two teachers are working towards doctorates and one teacher is studying law.

Since the school's inception in 1999, the administration has offered a series of teaching workshops to the faculty. The early workshops ranged between ten days and three months, but today they are rare. The teachers had received the most training between 2002 and 2005 when Marge, an Australian who was a key figure in designing the Universal Education curriculum, lived in Bodhgayā and dedicated her energy to the school. The trainings fall into three categories. The first category focuses on Universal Education philosophy, and is generally taught by Karl or some other dedicated student of Lama Zopa. The second covers general teaching issues like classroom management, course preparation, etc. and is usually been led by a Western education scholar or an experienced teacher. The last category concentrates on improving English language skills and is usually led by an English Second Language (ESL) teacher. Most of the workshops given were from the first category, since this is the core of the curriculum and an entirely new field for the teachers. The emphasis on Universal Education, I believe is connected to what bell hooks (1994) calls "education as the practice of freedom." This occurs when teachers are provided with the opportunities to grow alongside their students, and are willing to be vulnerable in the classroom. hooks explains teachers need to be committed to working towards "self-actualization that promotes their own well-being if they are to teach in a manner that empowers students" (15). Moreover, "Professors who embrace the challenge of self-actualization will be better able to create pedagogical practices that engage students, providing them with ways of knowing that enhances their capacity to live fully and deeply" (22).

Similarly, education thinkers Sam Intrator (2004) Parker Palmer (1998) assert that "we teach who we are." This means that an educator's relationship with the classroom material and with the students is an indication of what the convolutions of his or her inner life resemble. In Palmer's (1998, 2) words, "knowing myself is as crucial to good teaching as knowing my students and my subjects...in fact, knowing my students and my subjects depends heavily on self-knowledge." For Palmer, a teacher who is not in touch with his or her inner world will be distanced from the subject—whatever it is—and not convey the deeper levels of embodied meaning. To explore what Palmer calls "the inner landscape of the

teaching self," teachers must go beyond asking the 'what,' 'when,' and 'why' questions by probing deeply inside and discover 'who' is teaching (4-7). Palmer believes that the teacher's quest of self-discovery will reveal important insights into one's intellectual, emotional and spiritual landscape, resulting in a harmonious relationship with oneself and one's academic community.

As time progressed the management listened to teachers' requests for more training in practical teaching and management skills. The management agreed insofar these issues affected the way the Universal Education theory and practice was implemented. However, the administration constantly stressed that learning about oneself will naturally produce better teachers, regardless of what techniques they may learn. Palmer (1998) mirrors this idea by emphasizing that teaching is not a matter of method or formula, but experience. He writes, "Good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher" (10). Palmer's clarion call for self-understanding mirrors the Maitreya School administration's wishes for its own teachers.

One afternoon while a number of students were playing cricket, I sat on the school veranda with a few teachers who I had closely befriended. On the days leading up to the annual school drama, classes are usually more informal because each class may have up to half the students absent. Teachers use that time to review material with the students or simply turn that period into a "free play," allowing students to play games outside. I asked them, "How do you think the Universal Education philosophy and practice has influenced you?" I had already interviewed them privately about this a couple of months earlier and now wanted to see if the answers they gave me when alone or after knowing and trusting me better were different if discussed in a group context. They were not. I received the typical answers, explaining that it helped purify and concentrate their minds, deepened their personal awareness and care about others.

Most of the teachers said that they used to be angry, irritated, selfish individuals, but since joining Maitreya School they have learned to become better, more caring and calm individuals. They all looked around nodding at each other, confirming what they were saying was true and shared by all. I was not entirely convinced as I wondered if they were simply giving me standard answers that they thought I wanted to hear or felt that they needed to say because I was a foreigner who might impact their jobs. Postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha (1994) labels this form of diplomacy, or rather subtle resistance, as the "sly civility" of

various forms of accommodation and avoidance. However, as the weeks and months passed and I became more connected with the school community, I gradually began to feel that people were authentic with me. These relational changes point to Dubisch's (1995) suggestion that ethnographers pay attention to the ways in which their roles, and the way they are perceived by others, evolves throughout one's fieldwork. As time elapsed, I felt as if they were no longer only performing for me their roles as Bihari school teachers hired by a foreign organization, but were transcending the formal context of our relationship and sharing human aspirations and experiences of friendship, parenthood, socio-political involvement, contemplative practice, and so forth. As travellers along the spiritual path, like myself, they were imperfect human beings; nevertheless, I perceived sincerity when they spoke about how they were slowly changing in positive ways as they experienced the therapeutic benefits that follow from contemplative practices. My detection of their honesty is based on my own twelve years of insight meditation practice, which helped me to identify with the experiences that they talked about.

One morning I sat with Sita in the teacher's room. In my fourteen years of visiting India, working at this school was the first time I spent time alone with Indian women who were not old enough to be my mother. Of course, these interactions always occurred in public places and there was never any physical contact. Yet, an unprecedented intimacy arose with women in these contexts. Was it due to Bodhgayā's global landscape and the regular contact with foreigners that this environment afforded? Were Biharis less socially restricted by gender? These were questions that I sometimes grappled with. After a formal interview in the courtyard's bamboo and mud-brick gazebo, I asked Radha, a social science and crafts teacher, about this lack of inhibition on the part of women. She replied, "Here we are like big family. We all know each other and are comfortable with each other, trust each other. We talk freely and feel ok, don't feel like in village where everyone gossiping and backbiting!" Judging by the numerous comments I received, it seemed tha the school community is organized around "care" (Noddings 2004; 2002) and practicing what Leed (2005) calls "mature interdependence," an experiential growth that affects people's ways of relating to each other. Bhave, like several others, articulated that Universal Education has helped him develop a deep rapport with other teachers and students. It has taught him how to speak and act in friendly ways, which is appreciated by the students who feel comfortable to talk with him about both academic and personal matters. This fits with the perspective of care theory,

where everyone involved is a "carer" and is "cared-for" (Noddings 2004; 2002). Feeling more in touch with his students has made Bhave more self-reflective about his actions. Similarly, Vishwa commented,

> Now I understand how to exist with people properly. Before when people say something I not like, very frequently I got anger, but now I know how to control the anger. I develop some patience, I analyze, and I react in positive ways. Sometimes I still react in wrong way, but not like before. Before I was really agitated, really in angry mood. Now I breaking the ego, slowly, slowly minimizing these emotions.

I assisted Sita plan some of her English classes. After the students bustled out of the class, she handed me a cushion and we moved from sitting at our desks to sitting on the floor as the students usually do during Special Program. We talked about teaching and about her experiences with Universal Education. Like Bhave, she explained that Universal Education helps her "feel" the students, to understand them on an intuitive, motherly level that enables her to love and care for them. She continued, "I have seen many changes in myself. I stopped criticizing people and try to see them in a positive way. When I see people be like how I want to be, I think do I do like this and try to change. Also, I think about others more. Life is important. I do what I feel is correct, not just what others say is correct." Sita came to Bodhgayā from a small village in the neighbouring state of Uttar Pradesh. Most girls from her village do not leave home until they are married. Her parents were somewhat radical in their thinking by permitting her to follow her heart and come to Bodhgayā to join the school after her application was accepted (she discovered the school through a newspaper advertisement placed by the school). She attributes her independent thinking partly to her family, but her thinking has further developed at school. Sita's experience, as well as the experiences of most of the teachers, indicates that the curriculum that they use for their students actually helps them develops themselves as well.

Like Sita, a few other teachers suggested that the more that they develop a "good heart," the more they felt that they were touching those around them in positive ways and attracting like-minded people to their lives. Ajay stated, "I was very rude in past. I was fully selfish, fully rude. I was always thinking for me only, for my life only. School is turning point in my life. Many changes like good character, good morality. Now I always attract other good hearts to me." Similarly, Vineeta observed, "The effects are real effects because I am affected, and so are others. When I changed then others also changed. Others are like

reflection in mirror." Vineeta added that the Maitreya School students are fortunate to be gaining the tools they do, and regrets that when she was a child she did not have the opportunity to learn these things in her school or from her mother. She believes that if she had learned these skills earlier in life, she would not have developed some of her negative habits and personality traits.

Sita, Ajay, and Vineeta's reflections coincide with Freire's (1971) belief that people are naturally inclined to become more fully human if they develop a consciousness emancipated from oppression. By becoming empowered through self-reflection and critical discussion and action, people shift away from being "dehumanized" towards becoming "humanized...subjects of decision" (27). When this occurs, the oppressed not only learn to liberate themselves, but their oppressors as well, who are also dehumanized through the very process of oppressing others.

These teachers' manners of perceiving the world are rooted in the Buddhist view of the mind. The process of self-reflexivity and relationship with others connects not only to the ways in which they think of themselves as cultural, social or political beings, but reaches down to a deeper level that transcends convention by paying attention to the various forms of consciousness that arise from contacting outside objects. In Buddhist psychology, a person does not directly react to apparent external events, but to the feelings that arise in the mind and body. For example, an alcoholic is not addicted to alcohol, but to the sensations that manifest on the body. By analyzing oneself in terms of a continuous flow of impermanent and empty consciousnesses in relationship to outside objects which are also transient and empty of inherent existence, one begins to understand that conflict and dissatisfaction arise from one's own mental projections. According to this Buddhist understanding of the mind, this insight into reality is the root cause for happiness, liberation and compassion towards others. Based on what several of the teachers convey about their experiences working with the Universal Education curriculum, it seems that their lives are changing in concrete, positive ways.

4.3.2.   In Progress: Post-colonialism and Teacher Training

Most teachers expressed an overall appreciation and enjoyment towards the teacher training workshops because they were exposed to familiar religious and cultural concepts and

practices such as yoga, meditation and compassion but had never had the opportunity to study and work with them. Others complimented the workshops, saying that they provided them new ways for approaching their classrooms. Nevertheless, after probing deeper, I discovered latent tensions felt by some teachers.

After Marge left in 2005, the trainings at Maitreya School faded out mostly because there were no skilled volunteers willing to invest their time and energy in the school's mission. Moreover, while most of the teachers felt close to Marge, they were getting tired of the numerous workshops that she organized, whether put on by her, Dave, or Karl, but especially those put on by transient pilgrims who would come for short periods of time, give their workshops and then leave without any follow-up. The phasing out of these seminars made it difficult for the newly hired teachers to understand, implement and embody the Universal Education ideology because they did not receive the same amount of rigorous training. Though Marge and Dave compiled a Universal Education handbook for teachers that outlines the school's philosophy and also includes several teaching resources, the book is only available in English. While all the teachers do speak English, reading a philosophy and methodology—even though it is not overly jargonistic and abstract—in one's second or third language is challenging. In relation to a lack of translation and the amount of English used in the classroom, Ramdass remarked, "Too much English. These English people no understand local needs. Very problem!" This linguistic barrier for some of the teachers was alienating and overwhelming, creating further obstacles in grappling with an unfamiliar and intricate pedagogy that is the core of the curriculum. Keeping in mind that the Universal Education curriculum is still in its nascent phase and is considered to be an experiential process, these barriers create a context for education that reinforces subordination (see hooks 1994) as it prevent the teachers from contributing to the discussion that is ostensibly a guiding set of principles of their own lives at the school.

Without understanding the history or context of the teachers' formations, several Western volunteers have criticized the teachers for their lack of depth, as evidenced by Arlene's quote early on in this chapter. However, pilgrims who have spent more time in Bodhgayā have defended the teachers, arguing that most of them received little in-depth formal spiritual training and were doing the best they could. (Besides two teachers who had done 10-day Vipassana meditation retreats, none of the teachers have experienced a serious contemplative retreat.) The teachers find it highly offensive when Western pilgrims come to

their place of work and criticize the way things are done. "How do they know what is going on? They don't speak our language and don't see us evolve on a day-to-day basis," asserted Laxmi.

Laxmi complained that she learned nothing new in any of the workshops; moreover, the foreign volunteers offered nothing of value regarding her teaching skills. She argues, "all they do is confuse the teachers and students, and interrupt the classes, making us fall behind schedule...they come and feel that after short period of time they will magically improve the school." Laxmi feels that the foreign volunteers are overly critical about the teachers and students but do not really offer realistic ideas to improve the practice. She objects that many volunteers eagerly give their opinions, but are not open to learning anything new themselves. The teachers never raise their voice in protest because they fear losing their jobs. This lack of voice, often referred to as a "culture of silence" on the teacher's part often leaves many of them to internalize their negativities, thus feeling helpless without a sense of agency (see Chakravorty-Spivak 1988; Freire 1971; 2007). Laxmi does not appreciate how the foreigners operate by their own educational and cultural rules which are usually unacceptable to these teachers. Laxmi's comments indicate her feelings towards those she believes have an insidious desire to exercise power over others. While none of the teachers' comments were as extreme as Laxmi's, I think that many would concur to some degree with her emotions.

Most of the teachers (except the few newly hired ones) found that the majority of the training workshops on Universal Education became repetitive and tedious. While they were helpful in the beginning stages of their careers, now they prefer to have workshops in the second and third categories because these will help with their day-to-day teaching. They feel they have covered the Universal Education theory, and that now the rest must come from their experience as they implement it into their lives and share it with their students. As Sheila, an American volunteer sympathetic to the needs of the locals pointed out, "you can't say to someone be good, be compassionate. These qualities come naturally from within, after much study and practice."

Pilgrim-educators who have worked at the school for longer and repeated periods are keen on implementing their agenda, but do not expect immediate results. Karl mentioned that at first, and to some degree, still today, he finds it frustrating working with local people who he is not sure are sincere, but after some years of living in the local community, he realizes

that the school has had a positive impact on many of the teachers, finding them to be more genuine than most other members of the local community.

In 2008, a month-long series of workshops was planned shortly after I established a dialogue between the management and teachers, where the latter was given a space where they felt comfortable to articulate their financial and pedagogical needs that were not being met. While the foreign administration at the school holds on to power and privilege, they are also open to listening to and implementing the strategies of their employees. Freire (1971; 2007) asserts that real social change occurs first when those in power grasp the idea that social harmony depends on cooperation instead of coercion, and then, are sincerely willing to enter dialogue with the oppressed. From this perspective, this willingness on the part of the administration is essential for the accomplishment of the school's objectives outlined earlier.

My involvement in this process was an example of how the boundaries between outside researcher and inside participant became blurred, and how my own research activities became a tool to be utilized by the subjects. During these discussions, it was decided by administrators and teachers that future seminars would cover areas where teachers felt that they needed improvement, and not only in areas that suited the administration or the volunteers who happened to come at that time. I produced a report that was approved by local teachers to be read by the administration and other foreign volunteers so that they would understand some of the issues local teachers were grappling with. The report provided a voice for the teachers as it provided them a space in which they felt comfortable to express their views while withholding their names, detailing how they viewed and grasped Universal Education, what areas they felt they needed improvement in, and how they perceived their interactions with foreigners. My goal as an "engaged researcher" in this context was to help empower those who were marginalized, enabling them to share and generate their own knowledge to be seriously considered by those in a privileged position (see Young 2001). I hoped that this would lead to the creation of what hooks (1994, 15) calls "participatory spaces for the sharing of knowledge." This recognizes and respects that individuals are experts on their own lives and "have intimate knowledge of the things with which they are engaged" (Wilmsen 2008, 14). For Giroux (1992), it is by these terms that the subjects are accepted and extended the possibilities for "creating and enabling conditions for human agency."

While teachers felt that they gained enormously from several of the workshops in the early stages of their careers, the later workshops became stale and the teachers became dissatisfied, feeling as if they were passive recipients talked down to by condescending foreigners possessing the knowledge of the correct way to teach and manage a class—in a context that they do not live in on a daily basis. To change this negative pattern, I suggested a methodological reorientation where the teachers are active in the design stage by specifying the issues and collectively sharing their skills to address the problems (Giroux 2006; Intrator 2004; Noddings 2004; hooks 1994; Palmer 1993). Giroux (2006) insists that teachers be given the time and power to shape the curriculums they teach, thus empowering them by integrating the "economic and political conditions that shape their work" (184). In providing real agency to the local teachers, I hoped they would increase their confidence and pedagogical and political capacities, thus altering a structure responsible for maintaining unequal power dynamics by connecting their work to wider social issues (see Giroux 2006; Noddings 2004; Young 2001; hooks 1994).

Before the workshops began, I was asked by the administration to meet with the volunteer educators and facilitate discussions on how to go about the workshops in culturally, linguistically and politically sensitive ways. Given some of the teachers' feelings of inferiority regarding power dynamics, the volunteers acknowledged that they did not want the teachers to feel as if these workshops were externally driven, and did not want the workshops to mirror the dysfunctional social relationships that the administration claims they want to dispose of. The workshops needed to benefit the teachers in ways that they themselves deemed useful. bell hooks (1994, 12) explains, "More than ever before... educators are compelled to confront the biases that have shaped teaching practices in our society and to create new ways of knowing, different strategies for the sharing of knowledge." This entails rethinking a variety of approaches to educational, including who makes the decisions about what and how to learn, who gets to talk, and who takes charge of learning. It also involves reassessing who and how learning is measured.

A feature of my discussions with the volunteers examined how the use of English did not truly facilitate the forging of cross-cultural communication, but more often than not, served as a vehicle of cultural domination (Derbel and Richards 2007; Sinagatullin 2006; Brown 2004; Gandhi 1980). Following Guilherme's (2002 cited in Derbal and Richards 2007) alternative to the "normative" use of English, an alternative approach was proposed

that recognizes the wide variety of Englishes used throughout the world. Guilherme suggests that an intercultural speaker who "crosses frontiers" will effectively assist students develop a historical and cultural awareness, knowledge and appreciation of the global varieties of English. Once these native English speaking teachers understand the multiple ways that English is used, and recognize that these varieties are valid, cross-cultural understanding will emerge.

Our meetings resembled very much what Derbal and Richards (2007) contend is necessary for an understanding of postcolonial perspectives on English language and culture. Our goals were to discuss alternative views of the non-Western world. Unlike many volunteers I had met earlier on in my research, this group seemed to be experienced in non-Western settings and educated to some degree in postcolonial thought, informed primarily by the writings of Edward Said, Paulo Freire, bell hooks, and Henry Giroux, as well as literary figures writing about colonialism and migration. Over several lunches we had long discussions concerning issues of power and representation in the context of English-medium language instruction, and how dominant Western development paradigms were inappropriate for the Indian context. After seeing the differences in the levels of knowledge amongst the volunteers throughout my field research, I recommended to the administration that a reading list be sent to volunteers before they arrive so that they become familiar with cultural and development issues in postcolonial contexts.

A month before the workshops were held, the three Western volunteers, and one Indian volunteer who had an elite British education, conducting the upcoming workshops agreed to sit in on classes to connect with teachers and see in what ways they could help. Two of these volunteers came for the first time, one of the volunteers lived in Bodhgayā for many years, and it was the fourth volunteer's second engagement at the school. They all agreed about the importance of not imposing their beliefs and authority, and only helping the teachers in ways that the teachers wished. After a month of observing and gently supporting, the volunteers then offered participatory workshops based on the teacher's suggestions.

The volunteers and teachers decided that on a daily basis each volunteer would offer a workshop. The themes were based on what interested the teachers, instead of the previous practice of having the trainings imposed on them. The names of the workshops were also changed from "teacher training" to "skills sharing." Each of the four volunteers had a different specialty. One gave workshops primarily in Universal Education and religious

diversity, one on classroom skills and integrative education, and two on teaching English. Blurring my role as participant and observer once again, I led two workshops for the teachers who wanted to learn how to coordinate the "Green Schools" program, a curriculum designed by the Centre for Science and the Environment in New Delhi. The program enables students to conduct a series of assessments of their school's environmental performance in terms of waste management and resource use. Teachers were also encouraged to lead a workshop, but only two volunteered to do so on two of the days. Most claimed that between marking exams and looking after other non-school related duties, they did not have the time to prepare anything (again, revealing a major disparity between the teachers and volunteers: the former over-worked, the latter having the opportunity to leave their conventional routines, come to India and work for free).

While I lack the space to describe the workshops, it is sufficient to say that the teachers' feedback was positive overall. They enjoyed the participatory nature and lively discussions, and appreciated the fact that they were not condemned if they skipped out on some days. While there were a few who mentioned that they did not learn as much as they had hoped, the entire atmosphere was cordial, relaxed and pleasant, and to the best of my knowledge, no one felt threatened or belittled.

4.4.   CONCLUDING THOUGHTS ON "UNIVERSAL" EDUCATION

All domains of human activity are intertwined with education. The better the education is in ·developing ethical integrity, the more skilful a person or people will be in their child-rearing, teaching, occupation, political decision-making, and so forth. Education both nurtures and is nurtured by social, political, economic, and religious structures. Thus, changes in these structures invariably affect the education system, and vice versa, indicating a co-dependent relationship. This is clearly seen in the ways in which Bodhgayā's tourist and pilgrimage industries have affected the schooling of local children as changes in the socio-economic and spiritual domains refocus principles of education management and teaching. Since the tourist

and pilgrimage industry have re-introduced Bodhgayā to the Buddhist world[98] foreign
Buddhists have begun streaming into Bodhgayā. Those pilgrims with personal practices of
social engagement and who commit themselves to their work for extended periods alter the
town's educational terrain regarding methodology, organization, curriculum content,
language policies, and multicultural and inter-caste relationships.

This concluding section examines to what degree the term "universal" can be deemed
accurate in a multi-cultural learning atmosphere. While the school's foreign administration
and volunteer-base is primarily Buddhist, the teachers and students are composed of a Hindu
majority and Muslim minority. I begin with an investigation into what "universal" claims
mean in terms of curriculum development and knowledge transmission. Then, I examine
some solutions developed towards generating a greater sense of religious communication,
inclusiveness and non-sectarianism.

4.4.1. Challenges towards the "Universal Education" Ideal

Maitreya School's Universal Education curriculum promotes the development of an
experiential worldview based on concepts such as interdependence, cause and effect,
impermanence, and compassion. In essence, these are fundamental Buddhist principles.
However, most of the Hindu teachers and students shared that they have no discomfort with
the Buddhist orientations and symbols that permeate the property.[99] For them, Buddha was an
avatar of the Hindu god Vishnu, thus no religious or cultural imposition existed. Two
teachers disagreed with this view, however. Jayesh, a Gandhian and Marxist, holds little
regard for religion, including Hinduism and Buddhism. One Sunday afternoon while on a
bicycle ride through the village dirt roads we had a long conversation about religious
conversion and "scheduled castes" (*Dalits*) as we meandered around giant potholes and the
occasional herd of goats or cows. Jayesh had done a lot of social work in southern Bihar with
indigenous people who had converted to Christianity. I asked him about his impressions

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[98] There was a hiatus in Buddhist pilgrimage from the time of the Turkish invasions in the 13th century
to the 1950s when Buddhists reclaimed shared management of the Mahābodhi Temple with the Śaivite
Mahant. See chapter one for more details.
[99] See the following chapter for a detailed analysis of the social and political implications of having
Buddhist imagery in a Bihari Universal Education school.

regarding Buddhism and Buddhist paraphernalia at the school. Jayesh explained that religion was a part of public life, but is never imposed because all religions are respected and tolerated. If a religious group tried to force itself on others in a public place, "they would get big trouble," he said. While the school never explicitly attempted to convert students or teachers to Buddhism, Jayesh claimed they take "the long way to turn us into Buddhists." Not only through the school's philosophy and practices, but "by giving good job, good facilities, good money....With all these things, they hope people will convert to Buddhism eventually. This is my opinion." Jayesh expressed equal concern about some of the higher caste teachers who used the classroom as an opportunity to give Hindu discourses and coerce children into performing religious rituals that they did not understand.

A few teachers and older students expressed similar views about the Brahmanical practices; although none felt that the Buddhists were attempting to convert them. However, several Muslim students reported other issues with the curriculum. While teachings from all the major religious traditions are included, many Muslim students reported that they felt there was an imbalance favouring Buddhist and Hindu thought and practice. They did not feel comfortable repeating prayers and mantras from other religions, or practicing visualizations of deities. Doing so, from the Muslim perspective, is against one's credo and has serious spiritual implications in the afterlife. Moreover, Laxman, a Hindu teacher, echoed this belief by arguing that asking a child to do a practice that s/he does not feel comfortable with will not produce any positive effects, and may contribute to resentment. He explains, "Suppose some students come from Muslim families and they are told to chant Mahā Mantra Om or Gayātri Mantra and fold hands like that. If I give pressure, he will do; but by pressure only, not from heart." Helpful in integrating these radically different views are some of the foundational themes for the Universal Education curriculum: honesty and integrity. While students engaged in activities that ran contrary to their worldviews, leading to discomfort, some of the teachers and volunteers believed that certain teachers promoting their own personal agendas hindered the school's agenda.

One of my roles at the school was to create "bridges" for dialogue between the foreign administration and local teachers. After a series of formal and informal interviews and conversations with members of the school population, I was asked to lead a workshop for teachers and administrators on non-sectarian approaches to learning about religious diversity. During the workshop, I observed two primary responses to this situation. The first faction

consisted of a small group of Hindu teachers who desired to teach in a way that corresponded to their beliefs. The Hindu teachers believed that the children reciting Hindu prayers and mantras and practicing Hindu meditations should continue. Indeed, these teachers argued that if the children failed to partake in these activities at school, they would not learn them elsewhere because their parents were either too busy or not accustomed to these ritual practices and Hindu temples did not teach them regularly, especially to people from the lower castes. Moreover, the Muslim students were a minority and should just remain silent if they were uncomfortable. They claimed that they did not have any problems if Muslim teachers came to share their knowledge as well. For them, an aspect of Universal Education entailed the freedom to perform one's religious practices. It was not their problem if members from other religions were absent. This attitude reflects these teachers' fear of losing their Hindu culture to modern material trends, and perhaps to Buddhist religious culture, whose agnostic view of life, they argued, "is inferior to the Supreme words of Krishna."

4.4.2.   In Progress: Towards Inclusivity

The second group comprised the principle administrators and most of the teachers. These participants articulated their desire to overcome religious biases in the curriculum and methodology, and discover a true "universal" characteristic that does not manipulate people to adhere to a particular reality. This attitude reflects the Dalai Lama's assertion that a universal spirituality is not the propagation of the Buddhist Dharma or an attempt to convert people to Buddhism since this would imply a lack of respect towards the religious beliefs of others. The Dalai Lama generally maintains that people should remain with their native tradition (cited in Puri 2006). This anti-proselytization attitude recognizes that people have different dispositions and require different paths and practices towards achieving a state of balance. Despite the differences that various religions have with each other in terms of beliefs, rituals, practices, and philosophical doctrines, the Dalai Lama believes that all religious traditions are similar in their quest to "improve the human condition, to enable and to uplift human life, to affirm respect for human dignity, and to see the interrelatedness of all life and of all constituents of the universe" (Puri 2006, 120). This worldview is the bedrock of the Universal Education curriculum.

After much discussion, the administrators and teachers agreed that the Buddhist-specific practices should be removed; only leaving non-sectarian practices such as awareness of breathing, loving-kindness, daily motivations, and so forth. They concluded that these practices were not threatening because they did not invoke any specific religious discourse or imagery, and seemed sufficient to reach the school's aims of helping students understand the nature of the mind-body relationship. The group also maintained that specific Hindu "preacher-teachers" would be asked to control their religious zeal to avoid harming students who did not share their particular ideology. They also agreed that it was important to teach about the diverse religious traditions found in India and throughout the world, but not through imposing any specific practices. In her study on teaching religion in public schools, curriculum scholar Dianne Moore (2009) underscores the civic value of learning about religious diversity as an avenue to dispel misconceptions that may foster prejudice, intolerance and antagonism towards those who are seen as "other." Ignorance about religious expression and the role it plays in human social, cultural and political life is a hindrance to "peaceful coexistence and cooperative endeavours in local, national, and global arenas" (27).

Following the workshop, I helped several of the teachers find materials in the library and on the Internet that would help them increase their own religious literacy, which Moore (2009) articulates is the knowledge regarding the basic tenets of the world's religious traditions, the diversity of beliefs and expressions within traditions, and the acute role that religion has played throughout human cultural, social and political history (27-8). Several of the teachers reported that the workshop and resources helped them teach in ways that engaged the students, and also made themselves feel better as educators because their own knowledge and interest increased. However, some teachers who were more fundamentalist in their outlook refused to change their teaching styles. With these few cases, the management felt that they were constrained by these unyielding teachers. On the one hand, these teachers were not adhering to teaching in a non-sectarian fashion; on the other hand, these teachers were talented, loyal and valuable assets to the school community in many other ways. They taught their secular subjects well, displayed care and affection to the students and were ethical role models—all difficult traits to find in a teacher, I was told. Moreover, the school was already short staffed. The management decided to keep reminding them that they were in a diverse setting (for India) and that they should try to teach accordingly. The management

did acknowledge that in the future, they would pay more attention to the styles and attitudes of newer teachers to ensure that they understood what was expected of them at the outset.

Maitreya School, like any other, has its challenges. Systemic inequalities persist due to a long history of both internal (i.e., caste oppression) and external (i.e., European) colonialism and neo-colonialism, and pedagogical tensions surface in these early stages of the school and its curriculum. But as Dave, the director, said, the school is an "experiential process" towards improving the fates of those who attend the school and those who manage it. From the Buddhist perspective, intention is the most important feature behind any action and the challenges faced today result from past negative volitions. Thus, as Karl pointed out, "as long as the intentions of those operating the school on a daily basis are aimed at benefitting the children, the community, and all other sentient beings, everything eventually will fall into place. We hope!"

4.4.3. Possibilities: The Future of Universal Education

In this chapter, I analyzed Maitreya School's holistic curriculum referred to as Universal Education in reference to its task of individual and social transformation. Drawing from the field of critical pedagogy, I investigated the extent to which foreign Buddhist pilgrim-educators, local teachers, and local students raise questions about the various forms of power dynamics that affect the everyday lives and learning process of everyone involved. Exploring the diverse and complex relationships from a critical perspective through dialogue forms an integral part of a student's (and teacher's and administrator's) socially transformative education.

A careful and critical embrace of post-colonial reflection could promote and forge relationships based on mutual respect and exchange, and a greater capacity to accomplish the school's objectives. It would lead to a greater sensitivity towards both the transnational and the local historical, cultural and educational contexts, and how they have been shaped around categories of caste, class and gender.

Moreover, while every community has its formally recognized "experts," a Universal Education curriculum explicitly informed by critical pedagogy would affirm that these authority figures are not the only producers and maintainers of knowledge, but would recognize that everyone involved—volunteers, teachers and students—has a wealth of

knowledge and wisdom to share. As Giroux (2006) put it, "everybody is an intellectual in that we all have the capacity to think, produce ideas, be self-critical, and connect knowledge (wherever it comes from) to forms of self and social development (188). From this perspective, students would discover that they have as much to learn from the stories of each other's lives as they do from their teachers, foreign visitors, school books, and sacred texts. Such an approach would promote diversity of thinking in what it means to cultivate the good heart. As Catherine MacKinnon (cited in hooks 1994, 75) asserts, "we know things with our lives and we live that knowledge beyond what any theory has yet theorized"

The mingling of these two branches of education reaching up towards liberation would further ground the school by constructing collaborative, methods of learning. This would allow, as Palmer (1993) asserts, to gain "knowledge through a collaborative, communal process...used in cooperative, not manipulative ways" (38). From the Buddhist standpoint of interdependence, we are relational beings by nature and consequently cannot know or do anything independently or in isolation. Thus, from this perspective, building relationships based on mutual respect and cooperation must be at the heart of Universal Education praxis.

CHAPTER V

CREATING AND CONTESTING SACRED SPACES

Since the Buddha's Enlightenment 2550 years ago, Buddhist pilgrims have journeyed to Bodhgayā to pay homage to the Buddha and his discovery in the place where it transpired. As I have demonstrated in the previous chapters, this journey changes not only the lives of the pilgrims but also the lives of the local, mostly poor, Bihari Hindu and Muslim Indians the pilgrims encounter. In recent years, Bodhgayā's presence on the world map has taken a new birth after centuries of existing in relative insignificance. Every year tens of thousands of international visitors add to the constant construction and reconstruction of the place as the rural north Indian landscape rapidly changes into a booming urban town overflowing with international Buddhist temples and monasteries, hotels, restaurants, and shopping plazas interspersed with health organizations, educational institutions, and village cooperatives. The site's overtly foreign Buddhist character has transformed the lives of the local Bihari residents who now experience the world in economically, socially, culturally, linguistically, religiously, politically and imaginarily new ways. In turn, these shifts influence the ways pilgrims move around the physical and imaginary landscape, and the narratives which they form around them.

In the first chapter I explored the notion of *Buddhascape*—a landscape transformed by foreign, migratory Buddhist actors and their specific practices, images, ideas, and objects. In Bodhgayā, these people constitute an important globalizing force as they travel from all different parts of the (developed) globe to serve impoverished communities inhabiting the Buddha's homeland. The non-government organizations affiliated with *Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahāyāna Tradition* (FPMT) such as Root Institute, Maitreya School,

Alice Project, Maitreya Project, and Maitri Charitable Trust are all part of the FPMT's Buddhascape in Bodhgayā, as well as the wider trans-sectarian Buddhascape.

An objective of this thesis is to contextualize the relationship that many socially engaged Buddhist pilgrims have with Bodhgayā. The manner in which these relationships manifest exposes the ways in which socially engaged Buddhism operates. On the one hand, as shown in chapter one, travelling to rural Bihar allows these pilgrims to root themselves in their historical religious tradition, connect with some of the tradition's oldest material symbols, and interact with modern, global forms of different Buddhist cultures. On the other hand, as I discussed in chapter two, going to Bodhgayā also affords pilgrims the opportunity to engage with charitable projects where they can concretize certain Buddhist concepts regarding the relationships between the individual and the outside world, thus forming the core of their spiritual lives. In this manner, charitable Buddhist organizations have re-fashioned Buddhist ideals and activities and influenced the ways pilgrimage to poverty-stricken Bodhgayā is perceived and practiced by pilgrims. Many foreign, socially engaged Buddhist pilgrims are interested not only in meditating and worshipping at Bodhgayā's celebrated shrines, but in establishing charitable organizations aimed at *re-creating* the sacred space tainted by local poverty, corruption and religious intolerance, as well as natural and human-caused environmental degradation.

But what happens to the people who already inhabit that space and belong to a different religious culture? The underlying objective of this chapter is to examine how migrating forms of elite Buddhist culture are assimilated, transformed, and legitimated or contested into the local, non-Buddhist educational context. I commence the chapter with an examination of how both international Buddhists and local Hindus possess divergent interpretations of the Maitreya School as a universal, sacred space. At the Maitreya School, education is provided for free to poor village children from Bihar. The Buddhist pilgrims perceive social engagement at the school as a means for practicing wisdom and compassion; the local non-Buddhist teachers and students view the property not as a site for Buddhist-related practice, but as an asylum from the impoverished conditions in which they live and as a learning environment that will provide them with the skills required for achieving personal growth and upward social and economic mobility.

Next, I consider how the Maitreya School, adorned with Buddhist sacred objects and spiced with Hindu and other world religion imagery is part of the global Buddhascape, and

illustrates modern global trends of transculturality, where the impacts of transnational patterns of migration and movement provoke the fusion of sundry cultural elements, thus changing initial cultural and religious constitutions (Welsch 1999; Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Appadurai 1996; Massey 1995). The juxtaposition of Buddhist sacred objects in Hindu and Muslim Bodhgayā provides insight into the ways contemporary cultures interact and influence each other's discourses and practices. Here, I investigate the reasons the foreign administration at the Maitreya School desires sacred objects in its school, especially a Tibetan Buddhist *stūpa*, which FPMT members assert is a "universal" symbol of, and ritual element for developing, peace and well-being. I then shift the reader's attention to how Lama Zopa, the spiritual head of the FPMT, is viewed by all those who are involved with his network. While his foreign Buddhist disciples generally view Lama Zopa as an enlightened esoteric Vajrayāna master who saves all beings, most locals perceive him to be a compassionate, social worker aiming to uproot poverty.

As evidenced in the previous chapter, the Buddhist-inspired pedagogy—Universal Education—has been developed by foreign Buddhist pilgrims to make Buddhist concepts and practices employable by the local population. By utilizing this curriculum, the local population does not feel that their religious culture is threatened in any major way. But what happens when Buddhist objects are displayed throughout the school in greater quantity, quality and size than objects and images from other, local religions that are actually more likely to be embraced by the school's students? The final section of the chapter analyses various Buddhist, Hindu, and to some degree, Muslim, reactions to the presence of the FPMT's religious art and architecture, and how it is ambivalently accepted as long as it remains functionally efficacious. The discussion closes with an analysis of how these conceptual and material domains contribute to both explicit and implicit forms of religious conversion.

5.1. MAKING THE MUNDANE SACRED

In conversations about my research with friends and colleagues, I have often been asked whether it is valid or accurate to suggest that a school be labelled as sacred space. Earlier, in chapter two, I suggested that from the Buddhist perspective, especially the particular socially engaged angle, there is no separation, as many of these pilgrims state, "between work *on* and

off the cushion." Unlike India's British-influenced public school system that is unambiguously secular, several of Bodhgayā's charitable schools make explicit the relationship between education and spirituality, especially at the Maitreya School whose primary objective is not academic, but the cultivation of the "good heart."

One afternoon while sitting in Karl's office waiting for him to return from a brief discussion with one of the administrators across the veranda, I stared at a large painted portrait of a smiling Gandhi. Images of India's historical leader abound in most NGOs and schools I visited in Bodhgayā and all over India. Despite being a major inspiration to both foreign and local social workers and educators, most of Gandhi's ideas on development do not correspond with the modern, mainstream global economic vision that most people desire (see chapters three and four). Waiting for Karl and looking around the office at the various Buddhist objects intermingled with school textbooks, administrative files, and Buddhist, education, socialist and Marxist literature, I reflected upon the co-mingling of the spiritual and secular domains here at the school, and thought about a quote by Gandhi I once read: "You cannot divide social, economic, political and purely spiritual work into watertight compartments. I do not know any religion apart from human activity" (Cenkner 1976). From this perspective, this non-duality enables every sphere of life to be considered sacred. Lama Zopa (2002) articulates this lack of distinction by summarizing a discussion between the famous scholar-monk Nagarjuna and King Sengyal.

> King Sengyal asked Nagarjuna, "I am so busy that I cannot study, meditate or do retreat. Please instruct me in some Dharma practice that I can do." Nagarjuna then explained three practices: the motivation of *bodhicitta*, the practice of rejoicing, and dedication. Nagarjuna advised the king, "Practice rejoicing again and again while you are eating, while you are working." Even though the king could not stop his work in order to do practices with his body and speech, he could practice rejoicing while he was working and thus accumulate infinite merit. (23)

Similarly, students are encouraged to practice in the same manner. They begin each class with a *bodhicitta* motivation (i.e., the intention to help all beings overcome their suffering) and dedication of merits, and are often encouraged by their teachers and volunteers to focus not on the negative and challenging atmosphere around them, but to rejoice in whatever is positive in their lives, including the opportunity to attend such a unique and special school. In this way, students and teachers are encouraged to perceive all their activities, even those that seem mundane, spiritual.

The school principle, Karl, an Oxford-educated English Vajrayāna monk and close disciple to Lama Zopa, explained to me that the term 'good heart" refers to common human qualities of love, compassion, forgiveness, etc. Cultivating a 'good heart' in the school population is the foundational aim of the school's curriculum, and all the sacred objects located throughout the school are believed to support the achievement of that aim. On a more profound level, however, the good heart also refers to *bodhicitta*, or the mind of enlightenment that is generated to liberate all sentient beings. Thus, the students are implicitly being trained to develop *bodhicitta*. Lama Zopa (2002, 2) narrates the legend of when one of the images in the Mahābodhi Temple asked Lama Atisha a question, "What's the quickest way, the best way to achieve enlightenment?" The Tara statue responded, "*Bodhicitta!*" The students, then, whether aware of the fact or not, are gradually being trained along the path towards enlightenment. From the Buddhist perspective, this training is the highest form of assistance a person can be given; everything else, while important, is secondary to spiritual liberation.

When I asked Karl if he considered the school as a sacred site, he replied, "certainly, any place where one learns to cultivate a strong and compassionate mind, a mind bent on developing and actualizing *bodhicitta* is a sacred place." Even though there is no alleged distinction between the sacred and mundane, some places and people are understood to possess more spiritual power or energy than others. For them, a benefit of increasing a place's sacred power is that it can be used, as Lama Zopa asserts, "to purify our mind of the negative karma and defilements, and to collect extensive merit, to plant the seeds of the whole path to enlightenment" (2002, 2). From this perspective, everything contains the kernel of enlightenment, and certain activities, as well as the intention supporting those activities, assist that kernel to maturation. In his essay "Extending the Metaphor: British Missionaries as Pilgrims in New Guinea," historical anthropologist Wayne Fife (2004) suggests that definitions of pilgrimage include not only travel to sites that are already considered sacred, but also sites that become sacred through spiritual activity. Socially engaged Buddhist pilgrims who operate in Bodhgayā are not only interested in meditating and worshipping at the town's celebrated shrines, but are also involved in *re-creating* the sacred space that has been tainted by poverty, corruption, caste violence, and religious fundamentalism, as well as ecological deterioration in the forms of deforestation, drought, floods, contaminated water,

infertile soil, and air pollution. On the one hand, many Buddhist pilgrims are interested in restoring Bodhgayā's pristine landscape as described in early Buddhist texts and in the seventh century Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang's travelogue *Record of the Western Regions*; on the other hand, many pilgrims wish to transform the impoverished atmosphere into one that will permit social, educational, economic, and political justice. Maitreya School's concept of holistic education includes the integration of academia, creativity, spiritual cultivation, and social action (see the preceding chapter). For many of my informants, both local residents and foreign pilgrims, the Maitreya School itself is a sacred space which provides meaning (and power!) to their spiritual development.

In their analysis of pilgrimage centres, anthropologists John Eade and Michael Sallnow (1991) investigate various ways in which sacred power is derived. In exploring the angle of a specific location where the divine and human worlds meet, they assert that place-centred sacredness may allude to the view of an inherent, timeless sanctity of a place, but may also refer to a location that becomes sacred over time due to a particular association. For instance, most Buddhist pilgrims perceive Bodhgayā as being the centre of the universe and the only location where the *Dhamma* can be rediscovered by a *sammāsambuddha*.[100] For these pilgrims, the site derives its power from the Buddha's celebrated moment of Awakening and all the subsequent spiritual work that has occurred there by centuries of visiting pilgrims. The site is believed to be charged with a religious power worthy of paying homage to and may also serve as a sort of geographical microcosm of Buddhist morality, wisdom, and compassion; while the rest of Bihar (other than where the secondary Buddhist pilgrimage sites are located) is at the other end of the spectrum with its profane and, arguably, immoral character.[101]

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[100] One who becomes a Buddha by his own efforts without any guidance.
   Pilgrims who are more agnostic and sceptically minded (coming from various, mostly Western traditions), often regard those canonical writings as historical fabrications, metaphors, or mythological tales. Buddhist scholar-practitioner Stephen Batchelor (2006) argues it is memory that provides a place with its power. He writes: "I very much doubt that the Buddha thought these places were somehow imbued with special vibrations or resonances of his person that were mystically embedded in the earth and stones. I suspect it is because he understood how, for human beings, the memory of a person and what he or she stood for is strangely enhanced by association with the physical places where that person once moved" (xi-xii).
[101] Although Bihar is also home to several Jain and Hindu pilgrimage shrines where morality, wisdom, and compassion may also be the norm (ideally or realistically), I am unsure how Buddhists perceive these other sites.

Fife (2004) and Walters (1992; cited in Learman 2005) argue that nineteenth century Christian missionaries viewed their compounds as spaces of purity and God's grace where the "savages" could transform themselves. Similarly, in *Of Other Spaces*, Foucault (1967) discusses European colonies as *heterotopias*—sites which represent, contest, and invert dominant cultural spaces. These sites are distinct from, yet reflective of culture spheres that are "outside of all places." The role of the heterotopia is "to create a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled." For Foucault, these heterotopic spaces are "not an illusion, but of compensation" as they provide concrete opportunities for transformation. This place-centered approach (Eade and Sallnow 1991) is useful to not only analyze how socially engaged Buddhist pilgrims perceive and interpret the location of Bodhgayā and the Mahābodhi Temple, but the specific places where they actually perform their social service. Similar to the compounds discussed by Fife and Foucault, Bodhgayā schools such as Maitreya, Alice Project, Akshay School, Pragya Vihara School, Jean Amitabha School, and Divine Land School are also spaces of difference that dot the Buddhascape. Not unlike the Christian missionaries attempting to construct spaces that would lead to human perfection, the Maitreya School, situated amidst agricultural fields and village hamlets, through its sacred imagery and Universal Education curriculum, attempts to lift the student's (and pilgrim's) mind to a higher consciousness.

The nineteenth century missionaries discussed by Fife (2004) and Walters (1992; cited in Learman 2005) embarked on a quest towards personal transformation as they aspired to become perfect evangelical Christians through personal sacrifice and hard work, while simultaneously converting the "dark" and "heathen" natives to the path of Christ and to the British system of social organization. Fife (2004) writes: "The sacred journey to New Guinea was conceived of in the contexts of both self-improvement and other-improvement, with no strong differentiation made between the spiritual and the material benefits that were to come from these personal and social transformations. The sign of God's grace was to be seen through the transformation itself" (146). While it is difficult to argue that the socially engaged Buddhist pilgrims are rooted in the same ethnocentric starting point aimed at undermining local custom and culture as were the British evangelicals, the Buddhists are also driven by a desire for dual transformation, although the definitions of transformation differ (see discussion below and chapter three). On the one hand, most Buddhist pilgrims seek

perfection by gradually eliminating the three poisons of greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*) within themselves; on the other hand, those with socially oriented goals claim to want to help the local Biharis in the eradication of their suffering, whether it is done through educational institutions, providing health-care facilities, or giving meditation instruction. Furthermore, the large, imposing Maitreya School building with Buddhist symbols painted on its front gate, as well as the Root Institute for Wisdom Culture located across the dirt road, are marks of difference, contrasting with rural Bihari society, which today, is often characterized by the media as a region suffering from poverty, malnutrition, drugs, and caste conflict. At the school, life is regulated by a holistic curriculum that includes academic study, creative arts, spiritual introspection, and social action—all pursuits, at least in the way they are performed, distinct from the common activities practiced by children on the other side of these walls.

5.1 Front Gate at Maitreya School

These spaces—which are free of cost and accessible to anyone regardless of race, gender, or religious affiliation—where one can explore the terrain of the "self" are not dissimilar to what bell hooks refers to as "homeplace," which are "site(s) where one can confront the issue of humanization, where one could resist" (hooks 1990, 42; cited in Haymes 1995, 112). As spaces of care and nurturance, these homeplaces are locations where people can be subjects, rather than objects. hooks states that for oppressed people, these places afford opportunities where "we could be affirmed in our minds and hearts despite poverty, hardship, and deprivation, where we could restore to ourselves dignity denied us on the outside in the public world" (1990, 42; cited in Haymes 1995, 112). In this light, many local teachers and students, as well as foreign volunteers, perceive the Maitreya School, a site which encourages social change through inner change, to be an essential component for

building a community of resistance against caste and gender violence, as well internal self-perpetuated suffering. In this fashion, the Buddhist inspired schools see themselves as refuges from the poverty and corruption prevalent in Bihar, and thus "sacred" in the sense of containing an element of "salvation," although different from the Christian sense. Conversely, it is important to bear in mind that the duality of sacred and secular leads to a false distinction for Buddhists, especially socially engaged ones, who understand these categories to be interconnected and inseparable.

As children and teachers are continuously exposed to the repercussions associated with transnational financial links, above the routine poverty they face on a daily basis, places increasingly become spaces for authentic meaning and rootedness (Massey 1994, 154-155). In this way, many local teachers identify the school as a sacred site because it affords many of the children a break from the habitual poverty which they face on the other side of the school's boundary. A teacher named Ajay described the school as follows:

> Maitreya is very special place for children. They have too much nourishment here, nourishment for mind and nourishment for body, very good fortune in this too much hard place. During school hours, they forget outside problems, outside difficulties they experience at the home. They learn how to develop 'good heart so that they can help others. The local community recognizes the good qualities in Maitreya students, like being respectful and kind. They also play the sports, the music and the dance. They get good chance for entry in the college. This place is good for teachers also, Special Program [i.e., contemplative aspect of the curriculum] changed my life. I was so angry and greedy person before. Now I am too much calm, peaceful, strong.

November 14th in India is "Children's Day," a national holiday celebrated on the birthday of Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of independent India, as an accolade celebration of his love for children.[102] During morning assembly that day at Maitreya School, Ramdass, one of the teachers, reminded the students to reflect upon and emulate Nehru's good qualities, and to thank God[103] for blessing them to receive the opportunity to go to such

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[102] Whereas September 5th, "Teacher's Day" was created to honour Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, philosopher and second president of the country.

[103] While it is not my intention to commence a theological discussion, the reader should note that Buddhists believe in neither a creator God nor an Absolute entity. At the school, however, the foreign Buddhists do not challenge the notion because they are not interested in "correcting" what they perceive as a "wrong view," but instead wish to create conditions for personal and social liberation. With that said, Mahāyāna cosmology envisages the Buddha's three existential bodies (*trikāya*): earthly (*nirmāṇakāya*), celestial (*sambhogakāya*), and transcendent (*dharmakāya*). The earthly body was the

a wonderful school. After the prayers and meditations, the teachers distributed *ladoos*, pens, and notebooks to the students as they left the building in single file. The cheeriness in the air was tangible that day. The children were excited: the day was dedicated to games, music, and art. Ramdass later told me that he feels joy on such days because it makes him appreciate how much the students have that he lacked growing up as a poor child. He wants the children to feel special and appreciated, so that they will in turn make others feel the same. Karl, overhearing our conversation, added with a smile, "Giving out these goodies also adds to our merit basket!" For Karl, nurturing children and making them feel special was one way he could practice the Buddhist activity of generosity (*dāna*) and accumulate merits that will help him along the path towards positive rebirths in future lives, and ultimately, liberation from the cycle of *saṃsāra*. In this manner, we see how the school can be interpreted as a sacred space from both the foreign Buddhist perspective—i.e., a place to gain merits from performing good deeds, and the local perspective—i.e., 'a temple of education' where students receive a divine blessing in the form of a holistic, progressive education that aims at personal growth and social change, as well as language, artistic, and computer skills that will contribute towards future employment and an improved standard of living. The former aspect of this temple resonates with Appadurai's (1996) notion of an *ideoscape*—the trans-national stream—and translation—of images, ideas and terms from one culture to another (36-37; see also Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Massey 1994). At the various Buddhist-inspired schools, for example, we see how the flow of Buddhist ideas of awakening and social engagement, as well as terms such as compassion (*karuṇā*) and wisdom (*prajñā*) affect the behaviour, worldviews, and language of the local Hindu and Muslim population. The latter feature of the sacred school is also marked by the ways in which the engaged pilgrims have altered the *financescape* (Appadurai 1996) as foreign dollars donated towards the construction of schools have provided opportunities for education that may lead to future employment in the global economy.

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body of Siddhartha Gautama, the historical founder of Buddhism. The celestial body is of the Buddha who abides in a Biblical-like heavenly realm above and beyond the earthly world. The transcendent body of the Buddha is considered to be identical with ultimate or absolute truth, and is not dissimilar to references of God made by Christian and Hindu mystics. For a detailed analysis of the *trikāya*, see Williams (1989).

5.2. INTEGRATING BUDDHIST OBJECTS INTO "UNIVERSAL EDUCATION"

The first thing I noticed when I stepped on to the verandah of the school's main building for the first time were the welcoming images of the Dalai Lama, Lama Zopa, White Tārā, the Buddha, and a computer-generated image of the proposed Maitreya Statue in Kushinagar, the site of the Buddha's passing. Seeing me approach, Karl stepped outside of his office, smiled and offered a tour of the school. Entering inside the building, we stepped into its centre—the bright, multi-coloured assembly hall surrounded by classrooms. The walls of the assembly hall were covered with religious imagery, photographs, and student art work. On the left wall is a larger-than-life sized mural of Saraswatī, the patron Hindu goddess of education, art, and music, and below her a framed image of Durgā, the mother of the universe. Every morning, as I would come to observe, Ramdass, a teacher who is a devout Hindu, offered bowls of flowers and incense to these images. A few feet over from these icons are two boards with various paintings done by students. On the wall opposite the Saraswatī and Durgā images are a collection of photos of teachers, students, past volunteers, and a few of Gandhi as well. On the first rafter of the building are symbols of the major religions found in India—Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, Sikh, and Christian (although no Jain, Parsi or Jewish symbols are present).

At the helm of the assembly hall is the school's altar which students maintain, pray at, and reflect upon its contents. Every week, classes rotate the responsibility of taking care of the altar by lighting incense, and offering water and flowers at it. In the centre of the alter is a large photo of Lama Zopa, with smaller photos and images of Lama Zopa, Lama Yeshe, the Dalai Lama, Gandhi, Medicine Buddha, the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, Jesus Christ, and Maitreya Buddha. In front of the images are incense holders and steel bowls for water offerings. Above the altar are two large *thangkas*—one red Medicine Buddha and one blue. On the wall to the left of the altar are several drawings done by students of the Buddha, Jesus and Guru Nanak; on the opposite wall is a large mural of Ram painted by Bhave, a class nine science teacher. All of this diverse religious imagery, which is also found throughout the corridor and classroom walls of the school, reflects Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa's belief that an ideal environment promotes religious unity and universal education.

Maitreya School's ecumenical approach is also found at the Alice Project schools in Bodhgayā and Sārnāth, the site where the Buddha was believed to have delivered his first

discourse that resulted in the listener attaining enlightenment. Vince, the Italian founder and director of the Alice Project and a student of Lama Zopa's, created a "spiritualized pedagogy" aimed at getting students involved with various religious projects. For instance, Vince built a small Hindu temple a few metres beyond the school's main entrance where a local Hindu *pujari* comes every day to recite the Gayātri mantra for a few hours each day. Students are encouraged, but not forced, to join the ritual priest in the recitation during hours outside of class. Vince claims that many students, as well as their parents, appreciate this Gayātri Mantra Project, as it is demonstrative of the respect the school holds towards Indian culture. In 2005, Vince initiated the Tara Project, beginning with the construction of a large temple dedicated to the Tibetan Buddhist deity Tara. The temple is filled with exquisite *thangkas* and statues of Tara, as well as the "35 Buddhas," the Medicine Buddha, and Guru Padmasambhava. Every day, a team of Tibetan nuns rotate to chant the Tara Mantra several hours a day, and the plan is to eventually have the chant continue around the clock. As with the Gayātri Mantra Project, students are encouraged to join in the activity. Vince chose Tara because he believes that the Hindu students and teachers can also worship her as *Shakti*, or the cosmic female energy, thus not feeling as if they are engaging in a practice outside their tradition. He says, "Tara unites the wisdom and compassion that will bring the whole world peace and happiness." Vince has also constructed a small shrine dedicated to Mary, and plans to build a small mosque where his Muslim students can perform their daily prayers under the guidance of an Imam. This ecumenical approach is believed to provide additional, or rather multiple, spiritual forces to both schools' atmospheres.

At Maitreya School, many of the foreign Buddhists believe that the school's spiritual power is enhanced not only by the religious imagery described above, but also by the newly constructed, reddish-pink sandstone *stūpa* of the Kadampa tradition—an icon of the FPMT's Buddhascape. The monument's foundation, or the "Lion's Seat," is a square whose four sides reference the four sublime qualities of mind: loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity.[104] The Lion's Seat of a *stūpa* is usually filled with jewels, Buddhist texts and mantras, and/or relics of an enlightened being; however, at the Maitreya School it simply contains mantras and images of the Buddha, Medicine Buddha, and Maitreya Buddha. The

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[104] See chapter three for a discussion on these states in relation to Buddhist ethical practice.

structure is decorated with a carving of the eight auspicious symbols of Tibetan Buddhism[105] and each of the five steps that connect the Lion's Seat to the upper part of the *stūpa* symbolize the mind's progress towards enlightenment. The rounded form built on top of the steps, the *bumpa* also contains sacred objects. The *bumpa* on this *stūpa* has a grotto carved into it, containing an image of the Buddha. According to Karl, the spire rising out of the *bumpa* symbolizes liberation from all mental impurities, the goal of the Buddhist path. The author of www.stupa.org, a student of Lama Zopa, writes,

> In much the same way as the *stūpa's* outer manifestation mirrors that of pure mind, so too must its inner contents. Great emphasis is placed on the consciousness with which the objects within its form are made. The tradition is very particular in the way it states exactly what should be placed inside and in what manner they must be crafted to ensure the utmost purity.

The monument was built with the intention, Karl explained, consistent with every other site where the FPMT builds such monuments, "to provide a refuge of peace, prosperity, and well-being for all." Maitreya Project International's promotional website describes the *stūpa* in characteristic Buddhist terms as "the most sacred monument in the Buddhist world. It is a symbolic representation of the fully enlightened mind and the path to enlightenment. As the sacred texts are the verbal expression of the Dharma, so the *Stūpa* is its architectural expression." The website then lists several objectives for the *stūpa*, the first of which is to "inspire people to seek a peaceful and spiritual path." Tibetan Buddhists believe that holy objects such as *stūpas* represent the enlightened mind of a Buddha, and thus, they are perceived as playing a vital role in eliminating the root causes of suffering. In this manner, the presence of a *stūpa* is said to have a calming effect on people; whether they are Buddhists are not. By merely seeing the object, a "seed" of enlightenment is sown in the observer's mind (see McAra 2007). While the *stūpa* and the other sacred objects around the school are not necessarily venerated by all those who are involved at the school, they are believed by the

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[105] The eight symbols are the treasure vase (symbolizes the contents of the Dharma), endless knot (symbolizes interdependence and love); victory banner (symbolizes the victory of Buddhism and the victory of virtue over sin); Dharma wheel (symbolizes the teachings and the dynamic nature of Buddhism); golden parasol (symbolizes the protection that the Dharma gives); golden fish with open eyes (symbolizes knowledge of obstacles and how to overcome them); white conch (symbolizes the propagation of the Dharma); and a Lotus (symbolizes non-attachment to the world).

school's foreign Buddhist administrators to provide protection from evil forces and offer positive karma for all those who simply view them.

5.2 Maitreya School Stūpa

In the world of Tibetan Buddhism, *stūpas* serve as a mandala, a cosmographical representation of the universe, and its structure corresponds to phenomena of inner and outer realities, sacred and profane worlds. In addition, some Vajrayāna informants have referred to it as a sentient monument, a structure containing a life force that heals and protects its devotees. Buddhist scholar Yael Bentor explains this phenomenon, "*Stūpas* and images are considered to be types of emanation bodies, that is to say various *yi-dams* [Tantric tutelary deities] appear in the world as *stūpas* and images for the sake of sentient beings. According to the Tibetan tradition, those endowed with higher realization are capable of seeing these *stūpas* and images in their exalted state—as *yi-dams* themselves" (1996, 6; cited in Moran 2004, 35). Lama Zopa (2002, 2) comments that practitioners with pure minds are able to communicate with holy objects, and provides examples of "pure" beings like Lama Atisha who, as mentioned above, is believed to have communicated with the images on the walls of the Mahābodhi Temple.

The earliest references to the form and function of a *stūpa* are in the Pāli texts, describing the monuments as mounds of earth placed over the remains of saints or royalty, topped with a wooden umbrella. After Buddhism took hold in Tibet, *stūpas*, or *chortens* in Tibetan, assumed additional meaning to that of the reliquary, as they became iconic representations of the Buddha's transcendent body (*dharmakāya*)[106] and symbolic images of the universe (see Bentor 1996; cited in Moran 2004, 35). The school's *stūpa* neither holds

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[106] See note 103.

relics of the Buddha nor any other enlightened being; however, it serves as a symbolic representation of Enlightenment, and being in Bodhgayā, acts as a historical reminder of the Bodhisattva's journey to Enlightenment.[107] Similarly, Buddhist scholar Robert Thurman (2001, i) writes that *stūpas*

> …. have gone beyond being mere funeral reliquaries. They are memorials, rather, to the immanent possibility of freedom from suffering for all beings. They signal the triumphal reality of nature that enables beings to evolve to experience the ultimate fulfilment of bliss, beyond death and unsatisfying life…*Stūpas* stand as an eloquent testimony to the higher purpose of life, beyond competing and struggling, getting and spending. Consciously or subliminally, they help turn people's minds away from their frustrating obsessions and towards their own higher potential.

Tibetan Buddhists pay their respects to a *stūpa* by circumambulating it, or as Vajrayāna Buddhists say, 'doing *kora.*' Circumambulation is performed by Buddhists from all traditions and refers to walking clockwise around the monument either in meditative silence, or while reciting prayers or mantras. A Tibetan lama who now resides in England once commented to me that performing *kora* in this way enables the practitioner, "to offer oneself to the Buddha completely: physically, verbally, and mentally." Lama Zopa (2002, 21), in a teaching given to students in Bodhgayā, comments:

> Circumambulating is a very powerful practice, and the very root of the practice is to circumambulate with strong devotion, and with an undistracted mind. Since we need to accumulate extensive merit in order to generate realizations and achieve enlightenment quickly, we should attempt to circumambulate as perfectly as possible. Circumambulations should be done with body, speech, and mind. If your mind is distracted and you are gossiping while you are circumambulating, there is no great benefit.

Students at the Maitreya and Alice Project schools are encouraged to circumambulate the *stūpa* because, according to Lama Zopa Rinpoche (2001, 9-18), doing so provides several mundane and spiritual benefits. The former include obtaining a good memory, good complexion, having many friends, and receiving many gifts; the latter include the

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[107] Lama Zopa (2002, 33) suggests that the Mahābodhi Temple—"the *stūpa* of *stūpas*," as one pilgrim stated, is a manifestation of the Buddha himself.

development of wisdom, insight and psychic powers, as well as obtaining fortunate future rebirths.[108]

Maitri Charitable Trust, another FPMT-affiliated NGO in Bodhgayā, is one of the longest running organizations to operate various educational, health, and veterinary programs in the villages surrounding Bodhgayā. The organization maintains four schools, each with approximately 250 students and 3 teachers. The schools do not have a holistic curriculum as other FPMT affiliated schools such as the Maitreya School and Alice Project (see chapter four), but according to Maitri's Italian director, there are classes aimed at developing ethical integrity and religious literacy. Maitri's presence is a vital part of the social aspect of Bodhgayā's Buddhscape, symbolized in its campus's *stūpa* complex with nine monuments. During his annual visit to Maitri, Lama Zopa spoke to the organization's staff of more than one-hundred people about the pragmatic importance of *stūpas*. "The brain [i.e., mind] of the Buddha has come in the form of a *stūpa*…and that by making offerings to the object, one generates good karma… Everything is merit, without merit there is no happiness. If you plan to make a house or buy a car, you need money, and money comes only from merits, good karma." He concluded his lecture by saying, "If you move around the *stūpa*, you do *kora*, or offer something like flowers to the *stūpa*, all sorrows diminish, you will get everything you wish." Similarly, on the FPMT website, Lama Zopa is quoted as saying:

> There is a need in the world to develop compassion and a warm heart. Building stupas helps develop so much peace and happiness for numberless sentient beings. As a result, wars, disease, and desire will all be pacified. Instead of feeling hopeless, people will gain courage. This is about peace – for the beings who see it, for the whole country, for the entire world, for all sentient beings.

Elsewhere, Lama Zopa (2002, 19) literally expands on the various benefits derived from the practice of *kora* by quoting the *Circumambulating the Stūpa Sutra*,

> By circumambulating *stūpa*s, one avoids being born in the *naraks*, as a *preta*, an animal, a barbarian, a long-life god, a heretic, a fool, or in a place where Buddha has not descended. One receives a *deva* or human body, and one has a long life. One is not harmed by *pretas*, cannibals or other creatures. For hundreds of aeons one is not born blind, or crippled with arthritis. By circumambulating *stūpa*s, one receives

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[108] For an exhaustive list of the benefits derived from circumambulation believed by Tibetan, see Lama Zopa (2001, 9-18).

perfect power and perseverance; because there is no laziness, one is able to develop the mind quickly. One receives the six clairvoyances. One also becomes an *arhat*, having abandoned all delusion and possessing great psychic power. Finally one achieves the golden holy body of Buddha, adorned with holy signs.

According to an undated pamphlet found at Root Institute, Lama Zopa writes that a person should think that "by circumambulating a *stūpa* one will create the causes for liberation from suffering, both oneself and all sentient beings." Similarly, Lama Zopa (2002, 19) continues,

> Any being who does one circumambulation of or one prostration to a *stūpa* is liberated completely from the karma to be born in any of the levels of hell. One becomes a non-returner, and achieves highest enlightenment.

In a May 2000 newsletter from the Root Institute, an extract from a talk given by Lama Zopa in 1994 at the Chenrezig Institute describing the benefits of building a *stūpa*:

> The *Stūpa* represents Buddha's holy mind, *Dharmakaya*, and each part of the *Stūpa* shows the path to Enlightenment. Building a *Stūpa* is a very powerful way to purify negative karma and obscurations, and to accumulate extensive merit. In this way you can have realizations of the path to Enlightenment and be able to do perfect work to liberate suffering beings…leading them to the peerless happiness of Enlightenment, which is the ultimate goal of our life.

Contrary to his view regarding the *bodhisattva* intention behind *kora* practice, Lama Zopa says in a Maitri Newsletter that being in the presence of *stūpa* generates merits that lead to happy futures, even if one does not understand what it is. "Even the flies that have no idea of this object, when they go around it, all their sins finish. It stops their karma of going to hell." Lama Zopa explains that the *stūpas* contain the relics of enlightened beings and/or powerful mantras that have a purifying effect. "Even the wind that comes on them and then touches us nullifies our sins, the rain drops that come down on them and then go onto the ground nullify the sins of the insects inside the mud. It helps everybody to achieve happiness and peace. Even if human beings move around the *stūpas* with anger, they will be helped…will take you towards nirvana." As mentioned earlier, most Tibetan Buddhists believe that when a person circumambulates a *stūpa*, whether the motivation is purely spiritual or not, will still create the causes necessary for enlightenment.[109] Lama Zopa

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[109] This is not the first time I have come across such a perplexing teaching regarding motivation—a key factor in Buddhist thought behind spiritual practice. There is a tale of when Nanda, the Buddha's

explains that the possibility for this to occur lies in the power of the *stūpa*: "Even when there is no virtuous motivation, any circumambulation of a holy object becomes a virtuous action because of the power of the holy object" (2002, 21). He confirms this statement when he says, "Due to the power of the holy object, not because of your motivation, but the power of the holy object, it becomes virtue, cause of enlightenment" (2002, 11). Melanie, a long-term volunteer at the Root Institute, narrated the story of Jinpa Pelgye, a great monk endowed with psychic powers who only began practising the Dharma at the age of eighty and quickly became an *arhat* based on the conditions established in one of his previous incarnations as a fly when he pursued an odour of cow dung around a *stūpa*.

Based on the beliefs concerning the power of holy objects, the foreign administrators at the Maitreya and Alice project schools believe that every time a student walks around the holy object—whether his or her mind is directed towards liberation or not—they will reap positive merit for the future. Lama Zopa further claims that this practice of generating good karma through circumambulation not only brings benefit in the future, but in the present moment as well: "All the difficulties and problems of health – sickness, life danger – all the difficulties come from negative karma. [Circumambulation] purifies negative karma, even if you are not thinking of the benefit of this life...these practices take care of this life in that you don't have to experience the obstacles or at least they become smaller" (2001, 11). In this manner, students at these schools are given the impression that by circumambulating the school's *stūpa* they may generate sufficient positive karma to overcome not only their inner problems, but the outer social problems in which they have inherited from birth. Thus what we can derive from Lama Zopa's various passages regarding the power of *stūpas* is that activities connected to the monument embrace both the spiritual and mundane worlds, which

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younger half-brother, felt dissatisfied with living a monastic life. Lustful thoughts constantly invaded his mind; every night he dreamt about his ex-fiancée and all the royal luxuries that he had abandoned to become a monk. The Buddha sensed Nanda's perturbed mind and brought him to a celestial realm inhabited by 500 beautiful, pink-footed nymphs. The Buddha told Nanda that if he succeeded in his meditation practice these celestial angels would satisfy all his desires. Nanda resolved that he would practice diligently. When the other *bhikkhus* found out what happened, they were appalled by Nanda's ulterior motives for practice. Nanda was so embarrassed that he could no longer face anyone in the monastery. He sat alone in his room and meditated. Within a day, he attained arahantship and all his desires for acquiring the nymphs disappeared (Dhammapada Attagatha, 1:9; see Goldberg and Décary 2009)

from the Buddhist perspective, are not separate (see chapter three). *Stūpa* related practices, in this way, are believed to be beneficial for both the present life (and moment), as well as future lives, and their growing presence in Bodhgayā contribute towards the enlargement of the centre of the globe's Buddhascape.

At the Alice Project and Maitreya School, students are instructed to simply walk quietly in a clockwise direction around the *stūpa*. Older students are instructed to recite Avalokiteśvara's mantra of compassion *Om Mani Padme Hum*, Śakyamuni Buddha mantra *Tayata Om Mune Mune Maha Muneye Soha*, and Green Tara's mantra of liberation *Om Tare Tuttare Ture Svaha*. Students are also encouraged to visualize golden beams of light entering the crown of their heads and then reaching out to and healing the suffering of all sentient beings, followed by a dedication of the merits of their practice to the liberation of all sentient beings. If forgotten, they are told, the benefits of this practice will be significantly less. Despite this advice, most students and teachers who walk around the *stūpa* (as well as the Mahābodhi Temple) do so primarily as a form of exercise. In their book *Pilgrimage Past and Present in the World Religions*, anthropologist Simon Coleman and art historian John Elsner (1995) assert that understanding the various attitudes towards movement, especially in the vicinity of a sacred object, helps locate the diverse ways in which sacredness is constituted. For instance, in the local Hindu non-dualistic perspective between the sacred and secular, exercising the body is a necessary prerequisite for exercising the mind, as well as the spirit. In the Buddhist sense, movement around the *stūpa* carries a particular meaning, as discussed above, and also illuminates Turner's (1969; 1974) notion of *communitas*, as the circumambulation enables geographically scattered peoples of a common religious persuasion to be united in the heart of the Buddhascape, sharing an experience of movement regardless of their backgrounds. The practice also incorporates other complimentary "trans-local activities" such as material and conceptual exchange. Coleman and Elsner (1995, 206) assert that these activities break the limits imposed upon by a specifically defined contour as the experience of movement allows for "the constant possibility of encountering the new." This is even true when foreign Buddhist volunteers and local teachers and students walk around a *stūpa* together (either at the school or at the Mahābodhi Complex), exchanging and developing ideas, and breaking the boundaries of "traditional" practice. In this fashion, Maitreya School and other institutions decorated with *stūpas* and other Buddhist art and

architecture that are used in the generation of subjective experience contribute to the development of the global Buddhscape. Due to these potentials for changing practices and interpretations, Coleman and Elsner assert that it is important to acknowledge whatever parallels may exist across time and culture, even if the implications and meanings of such actions may vary. Despite the discrepant discourses, idiosyncratic forms of spiritual practice and differing cultural backgrounds at the Buddhist-influenced schools, many foreign volunteers and locals still feel, at times, a sense of solidarity amongst each other. This development occurring in the centre of the world's Buddhascape demonstrates not only the difficulties with trans-cultural movement, but also the possibilities of adaptation, refinement, and renewal.

5.3. LAMA ZOPA: SACRED SITE IN A HUMAN BODY

For many religious practitioners the sacred power of a site can be derived from its connection to a living (or dead) saint (Eade and Sallnow 1991). In the cases of this person-centred sacredness, the site is either sanctified by the mythic divinity of a holy person such as the Buddha, or of a "focal personality, the saintly mortal or god incarnate" (7) such as the Tibetan Buddhist leaders His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama and Lama Kyabje Zopa Rinpoche, Vipassana meditation master SN Goenka, and Buddhist reformer Anagarika Dharmapala. To this list of important figures associated with Bodhgayā, I would add particular Śaivite Mahants like Chaitanya Giri whose charisma and religious power were known to attract devotees from all over northern India, including Muslims (see Narayan 1987). Whenever the Dalai Lama travels to Bodhgayā it is certain that his followers from Tibet, Bhutan, and Nepal will cross dangerous Himalayan mountain-passes to reach Bodhgayā so that they can receive the Dalai Lama's blessings, empowerments, and wisdom teachings. While most of these Himālayan pilgrims recognize the historical importance of Bodhgayā, the primary reason they come to the site is to meet their *Bodhisattva*, believed to exude a spirit far more powerful than the place itself, which they believe is dirty, poor, and barbaric (see Zangpo 2001). Similarly, despite the hardships of travel to Bihar hundreds of Lama Zopa's disciples from North America, Europe, Australia, Nepal, and East Asia travel to Bodhgayā every year to receive teachings from their *Rinpoche*, the personification of the Dharma who is responsive to their spiritual needs and goals. Lama Zopa's annual pilgrimage to Bodhgayā is

not limited to offering formal teachings to those seeking the Dharma, but to bless the various social projects carried out by his students.

Most of Goenka's students, both Indian and non-Indian, only visit Bodhgayā when Goenka himself goes, which is very rare. Although Goenka has urged his students to visit the sacred places connected to the Buddha's life and institution (see Goldberg and Décary 2009), most students prefer to meditate at Dhamma Giri, Goenka's principle Vipassana meditation centre in Igatpuri, or at some of the other branch centres in Jaipur (Dhamma Thali), Kutch (Dhamma Sindhu), and Hyderabad (Dhamma Khetta)—all places that have had nothing to do with the Buddha but are all centres where Goenka himself is most likely to be found teaching and meditating. These Vipassana centres are prime examples of what Eade and Sallnow (1991) call the "spatialization of charisma: the power of the living person is sedimented and preserved after his death in the power of place" (8). This phenomenon is already occurring before Goenka's death as his veteran students from around the world flock every year to Igatpuri for meditation retreats in the same place where Goenka himself goes on retreat, regardless whether they see him or not.

As mentioned in chapter three, Anagarika Dharmapala was one of the key players who had revitalized the sanctity of Bodhgayā. While visiting the site in 1891, Dharmapala was horrified by its dilapidated condition and resolved to have it restored, even though it entailed facing verbal and physical abuse from local residents and a lengthy legal battle with the Śaivite group.[110] Living in and working out of a small rest-house funded by the Burmese government, Dharmapala founded the Mahabodhi Society, whose aims were to publish journals describing Bodhgayā's dismal state and its need for renewal via the physical presence and financial contributions of Buddhists from around the world, along with articles on Buddhism and education (see Doyle 2005; Trevithick 2005; Kemper 2005).

While all pilgrims who visit Bodhgayā contribute to its sanctity by their sheer presence, powerful figures such as the Dalai Lama, Lama Zopa, Goenka, and Dharmapala

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[110] In 1949, the Bihari state government mediated the dispute by removing the Śaivite's absolute power over the temple and proclaimed the Bodhgayā Temple Act assigning Buddhists partial control of the temple. While the balance of power of the new temple management committee tipped in favour of the Hindus (five Hindus, four Buddhists), the Mahābodhi Temple Complex became (and still is) fully accessible to both Buddhists and Hindus to worship in any way they please. Nevertheless, certain Buddhist political groups such as the Mahābodhi Liberation Committee still agitate to win full possession of the temple (see Doyle 2003).

have the ability to not only reinforce the Buddhascape, but transform it completely as their behaviour subsequently changes the motivations and actions of future pilgrims (see Coleman and Elsner 1995, 204). In what follows, Eade and Sallnow's (1991) category of person-centred sacredness is used to understand how socially engaged pilgrims involved with Maitreya School, as well as those affected by the institution, perceive the school's founder Lama Zopa Rinpoche. Lama Zopa is the current spiritual director of the FPMT, a trans-national Buddhist organization promoting the integration of traditional Mahāyāna Buddhist teachings with social outreach activities. As with Dharmapala's organizational ingenuity with the Mahābodhi Society (see Kemper 2005), Lama Zopa has created a socially engaged Buddhist network with modern organizational forms that has arguably had one of the strongest impacts on the emergence of Bodhgayā as the core of the global Buddhascape. Lama Zopa's influence has contributed to the growth of the Buddhascape not only through the activities at the Root Institute and the Maitreya Statue, but to the extent it has penetrated into the collective life of the local Bihari community via his charitable schools and health institutions. These social organizations have also created new activities available to pilgrims that alter their incentives and experiences of pilgrimage.

The last time that I was in Bodhgayā Lama Zopa had visited twice. The first time was to conduct his annual course on traditional Tibetan teachings, and the second time was to perform a series of rituals to bring success to the Maitreya Project. During both occasions he visited FPMT-related social projects at the Maitreya School, Shakyamuni Buddha Community Health Clinic, and Maitri Charitable Trust. The course he gave at Root Institute was attended by approximately one-hundred Western students, thirty Asians, and a handful of Tibetans and Indians. The majority of the Westerners had come to Bodhgayā expressly for this retreat, while others were either long-term socially engaged pilgrims or pilgrims who had planned on staying in Bodhgayā for an extended practice. Some were not necessarily dedicated students of Rinpoche but had heard about the teachings and come.

Before and after each teaching that Lama Zopa gave in the main *gompa*, [111] Roger, a senior ranking monk in the FPMT and who is Lama Zopa's personal secretary, conducted guided meditation sessions and reviewed the complicated Buddhist texts that Lama Zopa was

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[111] A *gompa* (Sanskrit and Pali: Vihāra) usually refers to a monastery, but in some cases it may refer simply to a meditation hall.

teaching from. Upon entering the *gompa*, veteran disciples performed the typical triple prostration in the direction of the main statue and Lama Zopa's empty seat. Newer students either imitated the older ones, or simply folded their hands awkwardly. Participants sat on flat maroon cushions on the floor, and propped themselves up by round meditation cushions (*zafus*), pillows, camping pads, and blankets. Those who could not handle sitting on the floor for long hours sat in chairs along the walls or outside the *gompa*. One of Lama Zopa's attendants recorded the lecture for posterity, and another attendant sat nearby at a soundboard to ensure that the tone and volume were suitable for Lama Zopa's voice to be heard.

Each time Lama Zopa entered the *gompa* everyone stood up, put their hands together at chest level, and bowed their heads. After Lama Zopa mounted his throne, all the experienced students immediately began their triple prostration. Lama Zopa would then commence his teaching with a prayer, which students followed in the prayer book if they had not already memorized it. Lama Zopa's teaching lasted between two and five hours. Early on during the seminar, Lama Zopa reminded the audience how to cultivate the proper motivation while listening to a Dharma teaching. While teaching, he tactfully wove in references from various texts and his own experiences to reinforce his main ideas.

One morning, during a recess period, Lama Zopa announced that he was going to visit the Maitreya School and address the students and teachers. The entire morning was spent making the school spotless. There was a joyfulness in the air as everyone seemed to be excited that the patron saint, the *raison d'être* that enables the school to exist would soon be there blessing the premises. When Roger, Lama Zopa's secretary, called Dave to say that Lama Zopa was on his way, all the students were instructed to sit in the assembly hall and begin chanting the Śakyamuni Buddha Mantra *Oṃ muni muni mahāmuni śākyamuni svāhā*, which basically translates as "Om wise one, wise one, great wise one, hail to the wise one of the Śakyan clan!" Entering the school premises, Lama Zopa began blessing all the teachers, staff members, and foreign pilgrims who were standing in the courtyard with folded hands at the heart, a sign of respect. He then walked through the assembly hall, blessing all the children, and then sat down in the seat prepared for him. Several of the foreigners volunteering at the school, the clinic, or at Root Institute immediately began the triple prostration. Volunteers and locals who did not consider Lama Zopa as their guru simply folded their hands. For the next two hours he spoke in English, with Karl translating into

Hindi, and the importance of cultivating the good heart (that talk was very similar to what he had given on the previous evening at the Renaissance Theatre in Gayā, see chapter three for a summary and analysis of that speech).

To my surprise, there were a group of participants, some of whom were engaged pilgrims at FPMT projects who were not Lama Zopa's devotees. One British informant confided that she did not find him inspiring: "His lectures and books do not resonate with me. They are not concrete and lean towards the realm of blind belief rather than direct, empirical observation, which is the aspect that attracted me to Buddhism in the first place." Many other attendees complained that the elderly lama constantly coughed and cleared his throat (Lama Zopa contracted tuberculosis when he first arrived in India upon fleeing from Tibet). The combination between his poor English pronunciation and constant cough made listening to him a challenge. When I asked his disciples how they understood anything he said through all his illness-related noise, the standard response was that those who could not perceive his words clearly did not have the karma to do so. They claim that those who are his true students 'tune in' and understand everything he says. "Only those who are not ripe for the teachings do not realize how eloquent he is," one disciple told me. When I queried why most people in the *gompa* were asleep during Lama Zopa's long discourse that lasted until 2:00 am the previous night, I was told that at that particular moment, only those who were awake were meant to hear his precious teachings. Not all of the disciples had such mystical responses. One Australian man said, "If you can keep an open-mind and persevere through the cough and peculiar pronunciation then you will naturally tune in to what he is saying." Most of Lama Zopa's foreign disciples participating in the course and/or volunteering for one of the social projects perceived this short Tibetan monk to be of immense stature, equivalent to that of a Buddha. With strong qualities of both authority and humility, Lama Zopa has a profound influence over most socially engaged pilgrims in Bodhgayā, even those not affiliated with the FPMT. Rumors often circulated that Lama Zopa had extraordinary psychic powers and required no sleep. For these disciples, Lama Zopa has become somewhat of an object of devotion, and pictures of him abound throughout the FPMT-related schools, health clinic, and even in a few shops and restaurants, making his image a visual and influential presence in the Buddhascape of Bodhgayā.

Most local teachers and staff at the Root Institute and Maitreya School were fond of Lama Zopa's spiritual stature, and as one teacher remarked, "This guru-ji is too much

powerful, too much compassionate!" However, for most of these locals, appreciation for Lama Zopa was not specifically as a Dharma master with super-human status as is the case amongst the monk's close, foreign devotees. Instead, his spiritual stature is located in the practical, social domain—the building of schools, health clinics, vocational training centres, and animal shelters, as well as the "material blessings" of increased standards of living and economic prospects that are associated with the tourist industry. Lama Zopa's "good heart," in this sense, can refer not only to an inner, abstract spiritual quality, but to the way in which he created vital social and physical opportunities for a poverty-stricken community. This alternate appreciation for Lama Zopa demonstrates how attitudes towards a religious figure are determinately formed by people's social, economic, religious, and political backgrounds (Eade and Sallnow 1991; Coleman and Elsner 1995). Lama Zopa's perceived sacredness is not only as a Buddhist monk, but in his ability to appeal to and respond to the complex plurality of meanings and activities in Bodhgayā's complicated landscape.

For Lama Zopa's devotees, as well as many locals who have been in contact with him, his Buddha-like nature leaves the impression that he is "neither here nor there," as one Australian pilgrim remarked. This description resonates with Victor Turner's (1969; 1974) concept of *liminality*, or as he writes, "betwixt and between." Turner (1969, 108-111) writes that individuals who have entered a *liminal* state may appear as "dangerous and anarchical" in the eyes of those desiring to maintain the status quo, and often symbolize the moral values of the society. They strip away any signs of pretension and rank, and reduce and align themselves to the sentimental level of common humanity. Some socially engaged Buddhist pilgrims who have been in Bodhgayā for extended periods of time such as Karl, Dave, and Mark articulated that they felt that local politically motivated upper caste Hindus living in the Bodhgayā region saw them, and especially Lama Zopa, as a threat to the status quo.[112] Indians who have converted to Buddhism[113] mostly come from the lowest castes and have left

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[112] A few of Lama Zopa's students commented that the Maitreya Statue Project did not win political support in Bodhgayā because the government, the disciples believed, feared that if education, wealth, and health were distributed on a large scale then the most oppressed castes and classes would be empowered to resist injustice. The plan for the 500-foot tall statue has been moved to Kushinagar; however, a 50-foot high statue of Maitreya Buddha has been erected and a plan is still underway to construct a Buddhist monastery, and educational and health-care facilities around the statue.

[113] Until Dr. Bimrao Ambedkar, social activist and head of the committee that drafted the Indian constitution, publicly converted to Buddhism in 1956 with half a million other *Dalits*, there were few

the Hindu fold to escape its oppressive grip and create a society based on moral integrity and equal opportunity. Some pilgrims believe that there is often a sense of distrust by upper caste Hindus in Bihar when they see Buddhist pilgrims conversing with low caste Biharis, for they fear that their prime scapegoats and subordinates will be influenced to mobilize, empower and free themselves from caste domination.[114] While Lama Zopa's organizations have been the most successful in the region, his foreign students leading these projects often complained that unnecessary obstacles are often encountered. Some of these pilgrims regard these barriers as markers of ignorance and discrimination; others, however, believe that a certain segment of the community does not want the Buddhist projects to succeed because they undermine the existing hierarchical power structure that is already shrinking due to the growth of the various Buddhist institutions wielding social, economic, and political power.

5.4.   CONTESTING THE SACRED: DIVERGENCE AND RESISTANCE

Tibetan Buddhist traditions emphasize the propitiation of local deities and spirits when building new religious structures. At the end of November 2007, Karl invited four Tibetan monks from South India known for their ritual expertise so that they could perform a three-day long *pūjā* to prepare the site for the 6-metre high *stūpa* by propitiating and taming the spiritual forces thought to inhabit the land. According to Karl, these austere monks were quite "pure in their practice." Before the monks arrived, tension arose between Karl and Dave over where the *stūpa* should be located. A few teachers stood around watching. None of them offered an opinion, wanting to stay out of what seemed to be a 'Buddhist' argument. Dave, a pragmatist, wanted the *stūpa* to be aligned with the main building and closer to the main entrance. This way, he argued, none of the yard's dozen trees or their branches would be cut, nor would the see-saw have to be transferred to another location. Karl, on the other hand, wanted the *stūpa* to be a little back, even if it meant cutting some trees down. A *stūpa*, he reasoned, should never be obstructed by a tree. He further argued that from a *Feng Shui*

Buddhists in India other than a handful of communities living in the Indian Himalayan region and the recently arrived Tibetans fleeing Chinese persecution.

[114] It should be noted that economic prosperity does not necessarily correlate to caste status as not all upper caste Hindus are wealthy and not all lower castes are poor. Many Brahmins live hand-to-mouth as cooks and cultivators, while many Vaiśyas own profitable businesses.

perspective, no objects should be placed directly in line with the school's entrance. Rishi, the senior teacher, acting as the local voice, meekly stepped in to the battle, agreeing with Dave. Karl further reasoned that a *kora* path would later be built around the *stūpa* and hopefully some prayer wheels as well, for it was Lama Zopa's wish that the children circumambulate the *stūpa* every day. If the prayer wheels were to be realized, then Dave's suggestion is untenable. Dave understood Karl's logic, and eventually concurred. Two trees, some large branches, and a see-saw would have to go. The on-looking teachers were silent, not wanting to press the issue. For them, their jobs were more important than the trees. It is difficult to say whether their fears about losing their jobs for speaking up were based on realistic concerns, but it did point to the financial and political insecurity they feel in relation to the foreign Buddhists.

The site was chosen and the *pūjā* began for preparing the ground for the *stūpa*. The monks chanted for about two hours, whereupon they made a geometric grid on which an image of an earth spirit, or *nāga*, would be created from crushed stones dyed with various opaque natural inks. The lines were sketched using a variety of funnels and scrappers, some made from metal, others made from yak horns and bones. The monks drew an image of a *nāga* to partake of the Dharma treasures, recited prayers, and asked that they become guardians of the *stūpa* and the land on which it will sit. The monks seemed to enjoy this job, as did the stream of curious students and teachers who came to watch the activities. It was difficult for me to speak with the monks for they spoke neither English nor Hindi. When I attempted to ask them what they were doing, one of them, throwing back his upper robe, said, "*pūjā...dulwa.*" Huber (1999, 219-220; cited in McAra 2007) explains that the Tibetan term *dulwa* refers to the acts of converting, taming and civilizing forces hostile to the Dharma and their energies are channeled for its service. While the monks proceeded with their task, Karl scrutinized the FPMT's manual on the traditional ritual requirements for *stūpa* construction which includes extensive instructions on how to request permission from resident spirits. According to the manual, if the inauguration ceremony was improperly performed, the patron's family would die an untimely death. Karl, an Oxford-educated Englishman turned Vajrayāna monk, often felt himself caught between his ascribed, rationalistic worldview and his acquired religious views infused with ritualistic religious devotion. He explained that he had complete faith in his guru's instructions and never questioned him. However, "the

conditioned, rationalistic, questioning mind is sometimes hard to switch off," he says. His body language and facial expressions while reading the manual aloud to me demonstrated that on the one hand, a part of his mind thought this unbelievable; on the other hand, the devotional part of his mind cried out, "these guys better know what they are doing." Shrugging his shoulders, Karl said that he had confidence in these monks because they had performed this ritual on numerous occasions.

In explaining the ritual process to me, Karl referred to the story of Padmasaṃbhava, the Indian Buddhist master who is credited as the carrier of the Dharma to Tibet by esoterically subduing and converting the indigenous spirits, who, in turn, under Padmasaṃbhava's influence, became the country's Dharma protectors. "And, hopefully, we'll do the same by converting the troublesome Bihari spirits here," he said grinning—half-joking, half-serious.

The next morning, after a long and sleepless night because my son Jai suffered from teething and worms, I was forced to skip breakfast and arrived at school fifteen minutes late. Rather than disturbing the morning assembly, I joined the teachers Bhave and Raj, and the Swiss volunteer Arlene, who were admiring the image of the *nāga*. I took several photographs for the school before the image would be washed away by the weather and buried under concrete for the *stūpa*'s Lion Seat foundation. Bhave mentioned that Hindus also perform ceremonies to placate and seek blessings from *nāgas* when they are about to construct something on land, except that they put simple clay images and stones rather than paint an elaborate image made from expensive materials. Another difference, he added, is that the Hindu *pūjās* are also not nearly as long, just a few hours instead of a few days, at least for the average person who could not afford to pay a *pūjāri*, or ritual professional, for such a long ceremony. Although there were no disputes over levels of sacredness and interactions with the spiritual forces at the Maitreya School as there were when the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order constructed a *stūpa* on indigenous land at the Atisha Centre in Australia (McAra 2007), the idea of taming local deities through a newly imported ideology re-enacts India's colonial encounter with foreign powers. For instance, the local teachers Laxman and Jayesh each mentioned on separate occasions that they associated the *stūpa* project in particular, and the school in general, with foreign money and power. On the one hand, the exponential increases in land value due to tourism and pilgrimage in and around

Bodhgayā prevent most locals from purchasing land—the most valuable commodity in Bihar, either for themselves or for community projects (see chapter one). On the other hand, the materials and services required for such a religious monument (even a comparable Hindu one) is beyond the financial means of the vast majority of locals. In effect, most locals conveyed the message that while they were impressed by the artistic value and cultural capital of the *stūpa*, they were dissatisfied about lacking the financial capital necessary to build anything analogous due to the imbalances of economic power that continue to multiply as the forces of globalization increasingly bombard their region. The construction of the *stūpa*, and perhaps even the visits to the school by foreign pilgrims able to travel from abroad, reinforces socio-economic boundaries.

Many Western Buddhists also voiced displeasure with the *stūpa* project. Dave, the school director, later confided that he felt uncomfortable with the size of the *stūpa*, but it was Lama Zopa's wish that it be that size. He mentioned that he preferred the "non-imposing" *stūpa* at the Alice Project School because it was smaller and located at the back of the property, away from primary activities, instead of being in the middle of the children's playground. Moreover, Dave was skeptical regarding the spiritual powers of a *stūpa*, as outlined above. His position towards the Buddhist "myths" surrounding sacred objects also followed a more psychological interpretation; and to him, the taming ceremony described above symbolizes not the subduing and controlling of spirits, but of the human mind (see McAra 2007). Dave's critical perspective further illustrates how the multiplicity of discourses and practices that manifest at a sacred site call our attention to the absence of homogeneity that may exist even within a single tradition (see Eade and Sallnow 1991).

One morning over breakfast at the Root Institute, a group of socially engaged foreign pilgrims from Europe and Australia articulated their disapproval of the *stūpa*. In spite of being devoted Buddhist practitioners who adored *stūpa*s and found them to be "inspiring," "peaceful," and "powerful," they were dissatisfied with this particular *stūpa* project, arguing that it was not the appropriate place for a *stūpa* and that the money spent could be better used for educational purposes. "The school spends *lakhs* of rupees on a *stūpa* when there wasn't even enough pencils for all the Class 4 students writing their math test yesterday...It's not right that there is so much emphasis here on campaigning to sponsor a *stūpa* in return for infinite merits when there is hardly any support for the school," one woman said. While her

complaint does not represent all foreign, Western Buddhist views about the *stūpa* (a significant minority tightly affiliated with the FPMT did demonstrate support for it), her words did illustrate the ambivalence felt towards the monument by many Westerners and locals.

The presence of the *stūpa* in the school's playground changes the relationship that the school's population has with the property. While engaged Buddhist pilgrims closely associated with the FPMT find the object an inspiring reminder of their Buddhist mission in Bodhgayā—to help all sentient beings attain enlightenment, locals (and many foreign Buddhist volunteers who are less connected to the FPMT) do not. Dozens of local teachers and students I spoke with commented upon the beauty of the *stūpa*, although they did not understand why it was placed in the middle of the playground, especially considering that the area was already limited in space. Ramdass, a devout Hindu ritual specialist and teacher at the school, had no problem with the *stūpa* and admired it for its aesthetic beauty. What bothered him, however, was the "space problem." Similarly, Jayesh, another teacher, complained, "What is of greater importance for child? To do the walk around *stūpa* or to play the cricket, the football, the badminton, and the other games also?" Some teachers confided that they found the *stūpa* to be a physical impediment, cultural imposition, and a waste of precious financial resources. A unanimous dissatisfaction was expressed amongst the teachers concerning their meager salaries, and many of them were upset when rumors circulated about how much the monument cost and how much the ritual specialists were paid to inaugurate the monument.[115] Nevertheless, the refusal by locals to speak out against the construction is indicative of the underlying power structure at the level of the foreign-local relationship, which manifests on several levels in the contemporary pilgrimage setting and in many ways denies, or takes advantage of, the lack of financial, and even social, capital possessed by the local population.

Moreover, the construction of the *stūpa* is telling of the challenges associated with transculturality (Welsch 1999) and the emergence of ethnoscapes (Appadurai 1996). While the foreign Buddhists use terms like "peace," "healing," "compassion," and "liberation"

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[115] I was unable to confirm the project's costs. Dave and Karl would simply tell me "a lot" and Dave once remarked, "You're not supposed to ask that kind of question." Local teachers did not know and always responded, "*lakhs* and *lakhs rupees*" or "very too much!" A *lakh* is one hundred thousand units.

when referring to the *stūpa*, the locals and critically thinking Westerners see the *stūpa* as an obstruction to the freedom and joy of children playing, the opportunities to access educational resources, and the availability of higher salaries for local teachers. Thus, the *stūpa* has had unanticipated social, cultural, and political effects demonstrating that the monument's intended symbolism of enlightened consciousness is not shared or self-evident to all (see McAra 2007; Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Massey 1994; Rodman 1992; Eade and Sallnow 1991).

A particular incident further illustrates the divergent, ambivalent, and indifferent views locals held towards the Buddhist objects and symbols. One morning, during Special Program (see preceding chapter), Bhave oversaw his class nine students in repainting the front gate of the school. The yellow and blue concrete posts supporting the metal gate and arch with the school's name is decorated with the eight auspicious symbols of Tibetan Buddhism.[116] Momentarily distracted by the uniformed guard who was practising his English skills with one of the students, Bhave told me that the symbols were initially drawn by a lama, but every year he brings his students to redo the paint after the monsoon mould has laid siege to the artwork. "Beautiful entrance to school is very important for students and visitors," he remarked. Watching the students at work with Bhave, who had been at the school for the last seven years and who has been responsible for keeping these symbols intact, I asked him what they meant. He did not know, and I did not receive clear information on the meaning from the dozens of other teachers and students I asked who see these symbols on a daily basis. The one exception was Rishi, the senior teacher who knew that the endless knot signified interdependence. What I found even more astounding was that not one person, other than an administrator from Nepal who worked in the office, asked me what they meant after I had questioned them. This disinterested attitude signifies the multiple meanings of the school's sacred objects, and perhaps the school itself, carry for those associated with it (see Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Massey 1994; Rodman 1992; Eade and Sallnow 1991). For most engaged pilgrims, the school acts as a physical location in the Buddhascape where one can practice the Buddha's teachings of compassion by teaching the Universal Education curriculum and displaying sacred objects intended to plant seeds of enlightenment in everyone who views them. It is also a site, along with Root Institute across the road, where

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[116] See note 105.

they may come in to contact with Lama Zopa, whose semi-regular visits contribute to the construction of the Buddhascape. For the locals, the school is a place of education, security, and the possibility of a better future for material well-being, and to some degree, personal growth. While the iconography and sacred objects carry immense weight for the Buddhists, they have little value for the locals, and only become objects of dissatisfaction, and to some degree resistance, if they hinder their own educational and political agendas.

Ambivalence towards the other is a common reaction amongst all parties touched by religious migration (Holt 2004). Maitreya School teachers and students have expressed how concepts and practices directly related to personal growth and social change such as interdependence, the good heart, compassion and universal responsibility have fundamentally influenced their perceptions and ways of behaving in the world. At the same time, however, the Buddhist images and objects are still a foreign presence, and many of the Hindus and Muslims find the disproportionate representation to be destabilizing. For instance, despite the Buddhist administration's claim of being "universal" in outlook and practice, the images found on school premises are primarily Buddhist, secondarily Hindu, and only a few token symbols from other major religions. Photographs of the Dalai Lama and Lama Zopa, Tibetan *thangkas* depicting Vajrayāna deities, murals with Buddhist symbols, and several Buddhist shrines are found throughout the school, including the 6-metre high *stūpa*. Lama Zopa has instructed the administration that every classroom display images of the Dalai Lama, White Tārā, and the Buddha. Images of Hindu gods and goddesses are displayed in some of the classrooms and in the hallways, but these are few in number compared to the Buddhist paraphernalia, and are always placed lower than the Buddhist images when in the same area. The Dalai Lama (2009) explains that images on an altar must be placed in a proper hierarchical order with nothing above an image of the Buddha, even if the Buddha image is made from less expensive materials. While this practice in a strictly Buddhist context is appropriate, the placing of objects in a particular order can be perceived as an insult in a "universal" setting. The hermeneutics of an inclusive universalism—both in the school's pedagogy and display of objects—creates an "us-versus-them" distinction, and is therefore an act of exclusion. The universal language presented at the Maitreya School may provide feelings of unity at the surface level, but ultimately this discourse entails authority and hierarchy, and thus political, and even, cultural polarization.

When I first began my acquaintance with the local Hindu teachers and students, most of them did not divulge any reservations they might have had regarding the imbalance of representation referred to above. I was repeatedly told that the Buddha was the god Vishnu's ninth *avatar*, or incarnation (see Holt 2004). With time, however, a few teachers developed a trusting relationship with me, and began to express alternate views. Some people problemetized the term "Universal Education" as hypocritical. Jayesh, who has been with the school almost since its inception, commented, "I am born Hindu, but I do not really practice Hindu things, I do not believe in the God, only in the natural way, the socialist way, the scientific way. I don't care for these Buddhist pictures everywhere. If really secular, if really universal; then no pictures, no *stūpa*. Do not mistake me, Maitreya is very good school, I like it here very much, but these Buddhist things are not necessary for developing the good heart." On another occasion, Jayesh complained, "Why call this school Universal Education? They should just call it Buddhist education." In this manner, no matter how constructive, creative, or helpful the school may be in developing the good heart, an ambivalent reaction seems inevitable as the mere presence of foreign Buddhist images (and people) indicates a certain disadvantage that seems impossible to surmount. These contradictory attitudes held by the local teachers call attention to a genuinely enthusiastic sentiment towards this foreign presence for the social opportunity that it affords, especially compared to the other, less desirable schools in the area (see chapter three); at the same time, feelings of resentment and discomfort pervade. Holt (2004, 6) observes, "Some assimilations, and the resistances they frequently engender, are a refraction of social and political dynamics occasioned by a heightened awareness of communal, national, or ethnic consciousness." Thus, a 'like-dislike' ('love-hate' is too strong a term in this situation) emerges when two religious cultures interact on unequal socio-economic playing ground.

In reaction to the dominant educational and religious space that the Buddhists hold in the school's landscape, several of the Hindu teachers attempt to operate under and within the shadow of an ancient tradition that now possesses a firm position within global society. Carving a Hindu niche, in turn, results in subordination of the school's Muslims.[117] For

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[117] Several Muslim students commented that they would have preferred if the Buddhist imagery were not there, but sitting in front of the images was a small price to pay for receiving free, quality education. The main problem that the students had was neither the abundance of photographs and

instance, a few devout Hindu teachers who lead Special Program classes have established Hindu shrines in their classrooms. In Bharat's Class 7 classroom, alongside a large map of the world, a chart of India's historical timeline and a chart explaining basic scientific concepts, the teacher placed a shrine dedicated to the Hindu deities Durgā, Ram, Hanumān, and Saraswatī. Every morning during Special Program, all the students, including the non-Hindus (about twenty per cent) are expected to recite the Gayātri Mantra before doing any other activity. When I asked him why he had the students perform this ritual every morning, he became defensive, saying that the children must preserve their heritage. When I questioned him about the heritage of the Muslim students who did not have the opportunity to practice anything related to Islam,[118] he responded that they can go to the mosque if they wish. Bharat's response demonstrates an attitude of religious bias not dissimilar from that of the foreign Buddhists; another confirmation that the school has become a site for multiple and contesting religious discourses and practices.

Before concluding this section, I investigate the notion of self and other transformation (see chapters two and four) with respect to missionary aims and local ambivalence. In his discussion on 19th century British missionaries traveling to New Guinea, Fife (2004) notes that these people were not interested in visiting a particular sacred space, but rather involved with constructing a site as the base of their evangelical work. The missionaries perceived their Christian compounds as "places of 'light' that were surrounded by the dark night of 'savagery'" (156), and whose spiritual work would someday result in the conversion of the entire local population. For the missionaries, these compounds acted as a sacred shrine that justified their process of evangelization. Moreover, Fife suggests that the protestant missionaries were considered as pilgrims traveling on a journey of transformation: transforming self and transforming other. On the one hand, the missionaries sought to become perfect Christians themselves by imitating the actions of Jesus; while on the other

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paintings nor the *stūpa*, but the Buddhist and Hindu practices that they were obliged to do every morning during assembly and Special Program (see chapter four).

[118] There was only one Muslim teacher, a young unmarried woman who I was unable to speak with. She refused to look at me or talk to me, except on one brief occasion at the school drama when she played with my son Jai. Other teachers told me that she came from a strict Muslim family who did not approve of their daughter working in a school, especially one run by foreign Buddhists. Rumour had it that she threatened to refuse marriage and fast until death if her parents denied her permission to work at the school. She taught social sciences, and to my knowledge, did not teach anything about Islam.

hand they aimed at converting the "dark and heathen" natives lost in a primitive, pagan world of hunting and gathering to the higher Christian religion and superior British social system. In this pilgrimage towards personal and social reformation, the "sign of God's grace was to be seen through the transformation itself" (146).

Buddhist Studies scholar Linda Learman (2005, 10) identifies two separate, yet not mutually exclusive, processes that highlight Western usages of the term 'conversion' when referring to Buddhist missionary activity: transformation of character and identification as a Buddhist. Unlike in Sri Lanka, Brazil, Taiwan, and numerous other countries that begin with the latter (see Learman 2005), experience in Bodhgayā, especially amongst the Mahābodhi Society and FPMT-affiliated organizations, demonstrate a predilection towards self and social change through the propagation of "universal" wisdom that neither insists on a Buddhist identity nor exclusive allegiance (see Kemper 2005). Some of the foreign educators want the students to discover the positive, universal traits of all religions, and, above all, to value their own religions. This non-dogmatic attitude resonates with the Dalai Lama's anti-proselytization stance that perceives the explicit attempt at religious conversion as a lack of respect of other traditions that will ultimately provoke hostilities and clashes (see Puri 2006).

Yet, for many of Lama Zopa's students there is an underlying, implicit aspiration that locals will someday commit themselves to Buddhism. Karl, like many engaged pilgrims I interviewed, confessed that even though the school does not explicitly proselytize non-Buddhists, he personally dreams that the students will someday be swayed to become Buddhists and engage in "merit-making activities," which he claims, "are far more wholesome than what the typical Bihari does, you know, drinking, gambling. By becoming Buddhist, they would eventually become enlightened and compassionate, transforming the whole society here." Similarly, Bob, the former director of the Root Institute, said that while the aim of the clinic and Hindi Dharma program was not to convert people to Buddhism, the Buddhist atmosphere (i.e., *stūpa*s, Buddha images, and pictures and recordings of Lama Zopa chanting mantras playing over a loud speaker) creates a tranquil environment and may leave a (Buddhist) imprint on the mind for future practice. Karl and Bob's missionary-like views indicate that the FPMT's schools, health centres, and other socially-related projects serve as outreach methods for the transformation of both the participants and the community. In addition, the organization provides an implicit, gradual model that fosters interactions between the Buddhists and the rest of the local community; through this engagement, the

locals are taught only as much as they are willing to accept. In this way, we see that whereas the dozens of magnificent Buddhist monasteries and temples that manifest each year in Bodhgayā are intended to support visiting Buddhist pilgrims and arouse the curiosity of non-Buddhist tourists, the FPMT organizations are created for the purpose of interacting with and gradually transforming the local population towards enlightenment in a uniquely modern, Buddhist way (see Learman 2005; Kemper 2005).[119]

5.5. CONCLUSION

Bodhgayā's recent social transformations from a derelict, rural Bihari town into a major international destination attracting millions of Buddhist pilgrims and tourists each year construct and re-construct the ways in which Bodhgayā is perceived and developed as both a global Buddhascape and a local Bihari rural community. As people intermingle and connect across national, ethnic, religious, economic and political boundaries, the aspirations of everyone who visits and inhabits Bodhgayā change (see Appadurai 1996). In this chapter I have demonstrated how foreign Buddhist pilgrims can transform an impoverished town's educational and religious terrain by opening private, alternative schools promoting Buddhist values and practices, and how these changes are received and responded to by the local agrarian Bihari Hindu and Muslim community. Sacredness at the Maitreya School is constructed primarily by integrating Buddhist rituals and practices, displaying sacred objects, hosting visits of renowned Tibetan masters, and providing opportunities for international engaged Buddhists to exercise their tenets. All together, these practices contribute to Bodhgayā—and the school itself—emerging as a complex global Buddhascape that affect both Buddhist and Bihari experience and imagination. In this way, the social activities of trans-national, elite Buddhist cultures are assimilated, transformed, legitimated *and* contested into local, socio-economically deprived non-Buddhist contexts. In other words, while the pilgrims see education, personal transformation, and social change as all intricately connected

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[119] In the introduction to her edited volume of *Buddhist Missionaries in the Era of Globalization*, Linda Learman (2005) argues that modern Buddhist missionary methods may have been influenced by earlier Christian models; it would be overly simplistic to contend that they are mere imitations of those practices.

to the underlying tenets of Buddhist discourse and practice, the locals see these things as positive that can be enjoyed *despite* the Buddhism.

Beyond Bodhgayā's developments as a cosmopolitan, yet bucolic pilgrimage town, sacred space is continually re-created and re-negotiated through international Buddhist religious, cultural, social, and educational aid projects. Foreign Buddhists translate the charitable schools as opportune spaces for practicing the Buddhist tenets of wisdom and compassion in a place that becomes increasingly sacred as participants progress on the path towards liberation; local non-Buddhist students and teachers interpret the schools as asylums protected from worldly (and/or divine) affairs responsible for poverty, violence, and oppression. They also serve as creators for upward social and economic mobility. While both interpretations are significant at the individual level, an imbalance of political, religious, and cultural capital enables one side's agenda to possess greater influence and emphasis. For instance, the building of the *stūpa* at the Maitreya School, along with all the other Buddhist paraphernalia, demonstrates how Buddhist cultural imports that mark the land can have social, cultural, financial, and spiritual implications for local people. The discourses and practices informing these donor-recipient relationships tend to represent the latter as "backwards," indigent, and in need of "liberation" by the privileged Buddhists from developed countries. In this way, the presence of Buddhist monuments is not only indicative of transculturality (Welch 1999; see also Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Appadurai 1996; Massey 1994), but of how multi-layered power relations form the often invisible backdrop to the establishment of religion in Bodhgayā, and other neo- and post-colonial societies.

Bearing in mind both the imbalance of power between the donors and the recipients, as well as the school's general atmosphere of harmony, we can observe how the activities of socially engaged pilgrims in the post-colonial frontier break down social, cultural, educational, and political barriers while simultaneously building new ones as (relatively) wealthy visitors interact with economically-deprived locals, who may, at different times, find the Buddhist stream of activity as a threatening intrusion to be resisted, an economic necessity to be submitted to, an optimistic escape from the cycle of poverty and oppression, or something in-between.

CONCLUSION

After eating a greasy vegetable *chow mein* that some friends treated me to at the Oṁ Restaurant for my last dinner in Bodhgayā, I decided to take a brisk walk around the outer *kora* ring before a final meditation sitting under the Bodhi Tree. Walking along the plaza on my way to the temple, I saw Kailash, a 14-year old boy who is in Class 7 at the Maitreya School selling postcards. He shared that lately he had been selling about five to ten postcards for Rs.5 per day, about half the number he was selling a month ago. Even though that seemed meager, it equated to about half the salary of a school teacher possessing a bachelor's degree. I asked Kailash whether he preferred working or going to school. "Oh, sir, it is no comparison. Market is good, but very busy place, no happy like Maitreya, no *śanti* like Maitreya." For Kailash, the school serves as a peaceful and educational refuge. "Like in my home, I am treat with love and respect at school, and I learn how to love also and respect my friends and teachers also." That evening Kailash did not sell anything, although that did not seem to bother him. "If I sell many postcards then I am happy; if I don't sell I am also happy." Kailash was on his way home to do his math homework. I asked him to come join me for 10 minutes of *Ānāpāna* meditation (awareness of the breath) and he agreed.

As we descended the steep stairs towards the main shrine and Bodhi Tree, I noticed that the marble slabs retained the warmth from the day's heat. The warmth contrasted with the coolness my feet felt when I first arrived (see opening narrative), causing me to reflect on my changes in perception of myself and the pilgrimage site. The cool and calm air was a relief after a hot and sweaty day spent running around saying goodbye to friends and doing two last minute interviews. Kailash and I ended up meditating together for more than one hour. The mosquitoes that evening were particularly ferocious and after 45 minutes I asked him if he was ok, "oh yes, Kory-sir, I am very happy sitting here with you," and then he closed his eyes and continued observing his respiration. Afterwards, I asked him if he

meditated at the Mahābodhi Temple often. It had been his first time ever, although he meditates every morning at school. When I inquired into how he fared at school, Kailash explained that he is a weak student because he has to work after school and on weekends, thus not permitting him the time to complete his homework. I noticed that his spoken English was better than the average student at Maitreya, leading me to conclude that it is probably because he gets to practice with foreign pilgrims and tourists in the market. Kailash said that he wanted to go to college and get a job at a call centre in Patna or New Delhi, but he doubted that this dream will ever transpire because of his low grades and the high college tuition fees. Nevertheless, Kailash says that he feels neither discouraged nor upset. "I am happy now and later I will be happy also," he said smiling. After a long pause, he continued, "I am responsible for my happy and my *dukkh*, I have the power only."

Kailash's accepting, and even delightful, attitude is influenced by the complex . interaction between privileged and mobile Buddhist pilgrims offering mental training, social services and the embodiment of material prosperity, and disadvantaged Biharis at the receiving end of the Buddhist charitable activity and discourse. Kailash would certainly enjoy the observed affluence; yet, he does not deeply long for it, and this detached attitude, from the Buddhist/Universal Education perspective, is the key to liberation. However, as locals digest unequivocal Buddhist discourses and practices, or in the form of Universal Education pedagogy, with its explicit spiritual teachings of the "good heart" and implicit attitudes and behaviour displaying the material "good life," Bihari and Buddhist cultures coalesce, forming mixed messages regarding liberation and the different ways that it can be obtained. For some locals, especially students like Kailash, adverse external circumstances are not worth losing one's internal balance over; for others, happiness and freedom depend on a materially prosperous life. For most students and teachers, however, the good heart is important as long as it is developed alongside material well-being.

In Bodhgayā, only a minority of its people enjoy the economic upsurge from the pilgrimage industry, as the majority of its people subsist near or live below the international poverty line. Despite Buddhist messages of renunciation and selflessness, the affluence exhibited by foreign Buddhists, in conjunction with the flood of media images promoting middle and upper-class fantasies, unsurprisingly encourages most members of the poor local community to enter relationships of socio-economic dependence, exploitation and competition over access to, and transaction with, the pilgrimage trade. At the same time,

several foreign pilgrims respond to Bodhgayā's context of economic deprivation, caste violence, cultural degeneration, and the mental anxieties that trail these challenges by establishing and engaging with charitable organizations aimed at eradicating these problems. The financially-based attitude is resultant of dominating neo-liberal economic "freedom" discourses and practices; the latter response is derived from Buddhist approaches to liberation. In Bodhgayā, these paradigms are not mutually exclusive, and the stories of students like Kailash reveal a complex and delicate pattern of social relationships that contribute to the construction of both the local Bihari community and the global Buddhascape.

Developing Self, Developing Selflessness: A Paradox in Bodhgayā

Throughout this dissertation I have demonstrated how Bodhgayā's recent social transformations from a derelict, rural Bihari town into a major international destination attracting millions of Buddhist pilgrims and tourists each year construct and re-construct the ways in which Bodhgayā is perceived and developed as both a global Buddhascape and a local Bihari rural community. These shifts have stimulated new forms and meanings of religious, psychological, educational, economic, and political activity to transpire. As people interact and connect across national, ethnic, religious, educational, economic and political boundaries, aspirations of everyone who visits and inhabits Bodhgayā change (see Welsch 1999; Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Appadurai 1996).

A primary aim of this thesis was to investigate how Bodhgayā's socio-economic circumstances affect the structures, motivations and activities of Buddhist pilgrimage, and how these changes, in turn, affect the local educational experience. I have described and analyzed the diverse ways several Buddhist pilgrims interact with the Bihari community through educational, as well as health projects, either by donating money to local or transnational organizations or by actually volunteering at the grassroots level. For these socially engaged pilgrims spiritual transformation is intricately connected to social transformation, evident by the ways in which pilgrimage activities are no longer limited to meditation, circumambulation, offering, and prayer, but include service to the poor. This development highlights the evolving constructions of meaning and experience in a sacred space visited by socio-religious agents coming from various traditions and denominations. In Bodhgayā, the

journey for many of these socially engaged pilgrims seems to be motivated by healing and transformation of both self and other, which for them represents the spirit of the pilgrimage experience.

The charitable enterprises in Bodhgayā are rooted in Lama Zopa's wish to create institutions that care for both the social and spiritual domains, which from the Buddhist perspective are deeply interdependent (see chapter two). For Lama Zopa, if social activities are not rooted in and arise from Buddhist insight, then the potential benefits will be minimal. In reference to the FPMT's various social programs in Bodhgayā, Lama Zopa is quoted saying in Root Institute's May 2000 newsletter:

> ... along with these social services you add something for the mind, advice how to think, how to live the life, develop a good heart, you educate people like this along with social service...by offering both together there's a possibility, by transforming their mind and developing a good heart, more loving kindness, more compassion for others, their positive actions naturally create more good karma, the cause of wealth, prosperity, and health.

Lama Zopa further emphasizes that it is not only the locals at the school who must learn and practice the ways of developing a good heart, but the Buddhist volunteers engaged in these social services as well. The engaged pilgrims cannot merely erect *stūpas* and Buddha statues, and provide lessons, and then not follow what they teach. They must also integrate their spiritual practice into their social service, which Lama Zopa states "makes a very special social service...provides the real medicine." In this fashion, students, as well as local teachers and foreign volunteers at these Buddhist-influenced schools learn to understand their inner and outer worlds, providing opportunity for self-transformation, which from the Buddhist perspective, is the cornerstone of social change.

The Maitreya School is part of a mushrooming educational movement in Bodhgayā that is, on the one hand, a response to the state government's failure to provide adequate education for all of its children; and, on the other hand, connected to the contemporary Buddhist notion that schools are an essential device required for individual and social liberation. By opening charitable schools influenced by Buddhist principles, engaged pilgrim-educators alter Bodhgayā's educational terrain in terms of methodology, organization, ·curriculum content, language policies, and multicultural and inter-caste relationships. These

changes are developed in attempt to address the daily experiences of the children that will help them adapt to the rapidly coalescing global community.

In most cases, foreign-assisted educational systems are also influenced by the neo-liberal position that places primary value in material growth. As I have discussed in chapter three, this ethos exacerbates existing socio-economic challenges such as caste discrimination, gender inequality, and child labour, all of which affect, and are affected by, the educational terrain in rural Bihar. Furthermore, the implications of the instrumentalist position on these issues directly contribute to and perpetuate the reproduction of local, national, and global power structures based on wealth and affluence. As social injustice becomes normalized and depoliticized, socio-economic divides on local, national, and global levels increasingly widen.

At the Maitreya School and other like-minded, foreign-operated institutions, as discussed in chapter four, pedagogical systems emerge from a Buddhist worldview that ultimately seek spiritual liberation for all. However, whether neo-liberal or Buddhist—or a combination of the two—the prevalent social, economic, and religious discourses and practices embedded in the educational assistance at these schools tend to represent the locals as backwards, impoverished, and in need of liberation by developed First World organizations (see Elu and Banya 1999, Escobar 1992, and Dubois 1991). As with many pilgrimage and tourist sites in the midst of accelerated social change, the institutional growth of socio-religious organizations in Bodhgayā can be interpreted as a by-product of globalization, or as Geary (2009) puts it, "transnationalism from above." The power associated with the transnational flow of people, objects, ideas, and money reproduces and perpetuates forms of uneven development and social tension. In this manner, Bodhgayā is representative of the multifaceted and versatile types of transculturation and the disjuncture they often produce when spaces take on new meaning (Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Appadurai 1996; Massey 1994).

In Bodhgayā, modern transportation and telecommunications juxtaposed with the competition over depleting social and environmental resources, is a contributing factor for the increased popularity in the engaged pilgrimage movement. As an increasing number of Biharis are deprived of access to clean water and air, nutritional food, basic education, adequate health care, and meaningful employment, many Buddhist pilgrims, whose very presence both aggravates and ameliorates these problems, attempt to create solutions through

their social organizations aimed at providing opportunities for individual and social transformation. By engaging in the process of dual liberation, that is the liberation from both existential and material suffering, as discussed in chapter two, engaged pilgrims employ ethical practices rooted in discipline, virtue, and altruism. However, doing so, in Bodhgayā, is paradoxical because on the one hand, the very conditions that enable them to be there reinforce and are reinforced by global systemic inequity. On the other hand, the compassionate work employed is aimed at reducing, if not eliminating, the very structure that maintains this disproportionate distribution of socio-economic and political resources.

Despite tensions associated with implicit conversion and embedded messages of cultural and social superiority of Buddhism and the West (see chapter five), institutions such as the Maitreya School counter the hegemonic system that perpetuates socio-economic inequality by offering locals a number of possibilities, which aim at creating conditions for personal growth and social change. Understanding that relying on the state government to provide free, quality education to its children is futile, Buddhist-inspired charitable schools in and around Bodhgayā attempt to fill the educational void and in doing so becomes a significant factor for addressing local economic and political challenges. From this perspective, education both nurtures and is nurtured by social, political, economic, and religious structures, and changes in these structures invariably affect the education system, and vice versa, indicating a co-dependent relationship.

Buddhist-inspired schools display a simultaneous disparity and harmony on multiple levels, as neo-colonial and post-colonial performances of Buddhist social actors paradoxically tear down social, cultural, educational, and political barriers as they concurrently erect new ones. As the Buddhist donors enter into relationships with the local aid-recipient community, their perceptions of the other become strangely filled with both suspicion and compassion, depending on the time and space. Similarly, the Buddhist presence causes the local, aid-recipient community to simultaneously resist the perceived, neo-colonial cultural imposition, surrender to it out of financial necessity, and embrace the assistance that provides opportunities for personal growth and upward socio-economic mobility. These multiple responses coming from the local community are not mutually exclusive, revealing a complex pattern of transnational socio-economic relationships that are factors in the construction of both the local Bihari community and the global Buddhist landscape.

Śantideva's Exchange and the Buddhist Imagination

Victor Turner (1974) includes personal transformation as a central feature of the pilgrim's task. I propose that for any religious movement whose message advances engagement as a central theme, the definition of pilgrimage needs to be expanded to include social transformation. In growing pilgrimage sites such as poverty-stricken Bodhgayā, where the Buddha's teachings on suffering are prevalent, discourses about and practices of spiritually motivated social work become more widespread for pilgrims. In the Buddhist literatures on compassion, there is a common notion that liberation is not an independent act. Śantideva, the 8th century Buddhist poet and meditation master, reflects this point in his exposition on meditation where the self and other are considered equal:

> And other beings' pain
> I do not feel, and yet
> Because I take them for my own
> Their suffering is likewise hard to bear.
>
> And therefore I'll dispel the pain of others,
> For it is simply pain, just like my own.
> And others I will aid and benefit,
> For they are living beings, just like me.
>
> Since I and other beings both,
> In wanting happiness, are equal and alike,
> What difference is there to distinguish us,
> That I should save myself and not the other? (Tr. Padmakara

Translation Group)

From this noble standpoint, when a person liberates herself, she liberates others; when a person liberates others; she liberates herself. During this act of dual transformation, 'self' and 'other' are said to eventually become indistinguishable. For socially engaged pilgrims in Bodhgayā, this transformative encounter is believed to be the heart of the pilgrimage experience.

But, in light of all the material presented in this dissertation, to what extent, especially in a country with a strong colonial history, can the foreign Buddhist and Bihari Indian ever truly become indistinguishable? As I have shown in chapter four, claims regarding universality with respect to curriculum development and knowledge transmission

in a multi-cultural, multi-caste and multi-class learning atmosphere, are not without fault as certain discourses and practices carry more weight than others. Systemic inequalities persist due to a long history of both internal (i.e., caste oppression) and external (i.e., Western) colonialism and neo-colonialism, and pedagogical tensions persistently surface. But, as Dave, the director, observed, the school is an "experiential process" towards improving the lives of those involved with the school. Furthermore, as an increasing number of engaged pilgrims from diverse traditions, who are sensitive to the colonial history and current neo-colonial hegemony that persists, venture to the school to participate in its holistic activities, issues surrounding what it means to be universal were more openly discussed in a democratic and sensitive manner. In these moments where critical thinking became present during teacher meetings and Special Program class, people used the insights into interdependence to reflect upon their social and political relationships to the wider world. Moreover, as teachers become more comfortable using their voices and be a part of the decision making process regarding methodology, the curriculum gradually moved towards its stated ideal of being a universal approach addressing the human mental and social condition.

However, as my analysis of universal education in chapter five extended to material culture, it became evident that the sacred objects of the Buddhist culture are interpreted to have higher spiritual value. Whereas ideas and methods regarding the implementation of curriculum are more fluid and dynamic as they operate on a grassroots level and are influenced by a number of pilgrims coming from various Buddhist traditions who have different perceptions of transformative education, conceptions regarding material culture are deeply embedded into the FPMT worldview and are less flexible. Decision-making regarding the use and display of sacred objects is not democratic since direction always come from above, indicating the power imbalances in the transnational and transcultural relationship.

To recapitulate from chapter five, sacredness at the Maitreya School is constructed primarily by integrating Buddhist rituals and practices, displaying sacred objects, hosting visits of renowned Tibetan masters, and providing opportunities for international engaged Buddhists to exercise their tenets. All together, these practices play a role in Bodhgayā—and the school itself—emerging as complex global Buddhascapes that affect both Buddhist and Bihari experience and imagination. In this way, the social activities of trans-national, elite Buddhist cultures are assimilated, transformed, legitimated *and* contested into local, socio-economically deprived non-Buddhist contexts. While the pilgrims see education, social

change, and spiritual enlightenment as all interconnected to the fundamental tenets of Buddhist discourse and practice, the locals see these as possibilities that can be realized in spite of the Buddhism. While the interpretations from both sides are relevant and important at the individual level, unequal political, religious, and cultural capital permits one agenda to hold greater sway than another. Universal, or rather, Buddhist, as well as international-aid discourses and activities that support these asymmetrical relationships, are predisposed to represent the local side as backwards, destitute, and in need of liberation by the other, powerful Buddhist side. Moreover, while there is an apparent non-dogmatic attitude that alleges respect towards local cultures and religious traditions, the strong predisposition towards Buddhism at these charitable institutions is pervasive. Despite the liberal attitude, there is an implied feeling amongst the engaged pilgrims, especially those who are closely linked to the FPMT, that the Buddhist tradition possesses universally applicable insights that can spiritually and mentally enrich other, "less advanced" traditions. Thus, the prevalent foreign attitudes and dominating presence of Buddhist sacred objects juxtaposed with a smattering of Hindu and other world religious symbols is not only indicative of how cultures interact and influence each other, but also how multifaceted associations involving power shape the indiscernible backdrop to the establishment of the Buddhascape, as well as the impossibility of identifying the self with other. Kailash, the boy from my opening narrative, will never be made equal or identical to any of the Buddhists in Bodhgayā, at least not in this lifetime, as a Buddhist would say. As long as these inconsistent positions that invoke a specific religious discourse and imagery as superior prevail, Śantideva's clarion call will remain limited, at best, to the engaged pilgrim's imagination.

Post-script

One morning in April 2009 the students and teachers were unable to enter the school for morning assembly. The front gates of Maitreya School were pad locked, everyone looked around at each other wondering what was happening. Don, the new principle, a Canadian who had replaced Karl, announced that there was no longer enough money to maintain the

school.[120] Children were bawling and teachers were stunned with disbelief. The students were told to go home until places in other schools were found for them.

A few months prior to the school's closure, Dave, the school's director and major fundraiser, suddenly died after being diagnosed with brain cancer. Karl surmised during one of our Skype conversations that without Dave's global fundraising expertise, in conjunction with the recent global economic collapse, the administration could no longer afford to run the school. Other informants commented that the school's largest donor, an American man, withdrew support for the school, yet, continued providing money to other charitable projects around India. He stopped giving to the school not because Dave passed away or because he lacked capital, but for the reason that he had lost confidence that the Maitreya curriculum was able to help the students become effective actors in the global economy. He preferred a standard curriculum that did not involve so much time and energy dedicated to non-academic subjects. This donor's attitude highlights how transformative and holistic pedagogies aimed at personal growth and social justice are rendered subordinate to the hegemonic instrumentalist perspective favouring economic development. It is ironic that just as a group of foreign Buddhist pilgrim-educators, local teachers, and some older students began to raise questions about the various forms of power dynamics that affect their everyday lives, a time where the transformative potential began to sprout, the school closed.

In January 2010, the school property, which is owned by the Root Institute, turned into a residential facility for another FMPT-affiliated mission, the Tara Children's Project, which commenced a year earlier at the Shakyamuni Buddha Community Health Clinic to provide fifteen local children infected or affected by AIDS with healthcare and basic education. Now, with the school closed and an empty building awaiting a new project, a single donor[121] was able to transform the facility into a home for the Tara Children's Project children. The first occupants were three children and two trained care-givers, and were shortly after followed by six Bihari children who were living in an orphanage in Delhi. At present, ten children ranging in age from six to twelve live on campus. According to the Tara

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[120] Ironically, across the road at Root Institute, there is a significant demand to sponsor the construction of *stūpas* on the property, as well as to purchase more land specifically for the purpose of creating a "Garden of Stūpas" (see chapter two for a discussion on attitudes towards sponsorship of sacred objects in the Tibetan tradition).

[121] I have been told by a foreign social worker in Bodhgayā that this is the same donor who withdrew his substantial support from the school.

Children's Project website, the aim of the venture is to provide a stable and nurturing environment for the children. The children attend local schools and receive private lessons in Universal Education at the Root Institute by Buddhist volunteers. What does the future hold for these children growing up in the centre of the global Buddhascape? Only time will tell.

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