CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Bodhgaya is the most holy place on Earth for the followers of the Buddhist faith all over the world. Situated by the bank of river Nerañjana the place was then known as Uruvelā. Bodhgaya is the place where Gautama Buddha attained unsurpassed, supreme Enlightenment. It is a place which should be visited or seen by a person of devotion and which would cause awareness and apprehension of the nature of impermanence.

Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha-to-be, had been dwelling on the banks of the Nerañjanā River with five ascetic followers for six years practicing austerities. Realising that austerities could not lead to realisation he abandoned them. His five ascetic companions disgusted at his seeming failure, deserted him and left for Sārnāth. He then moved towards the village of Senani where he was offered rice milk by a Brahmin girl, Sujātā. Accepting from a grass-cutter a gift of kusa grass for a mat, the Bodhisattva took a seat under a Pipal tree facing east. Here he resolved not to rise again until enlightenment was attained.

In the area of Enlightenment place, there are numerous interesting spots for Buddhist pilgrims as follows;

1. Vajrasana or the Diamond Throne; It is situated between the Bodhi-Tree and the Mahā Bodhi Temple. The seat is made of stone where prince Siddhārtha sat to become the Buddha and which is the holiest of the holy places to the Buddhist world.
2. **Animeṣalocana Stupa**; Lord Buddha spent the second week Here, out of gratitude, stood gazing unwinding at the Bodhi-Tree, for giving him shelter while making his effort to attain Buddhahood.

3. **Caṅkamaṇa or the cloister walk**; This spot is marked by a raised platform along the northern wall of the Mahā Bodhi Temple. At this place Lord Buddha spent the third week walking up and down in meditation. The platform is 3 feet high and 60 feet long.

4. **Ratanaghara or Jewel House**; Lord Buddha spent the fourth week here in meditation reflecting on the Paṭṭhāna or the causal law.

5. **Ajapāla Nigrodha Tree**; Lord Buddha spent fifth week in meditation under this tree, where Sujātā had offered him a meal of the rice-pudding.

6. **Mucalinda Pond or Lake**; Lord Buddha spent the sixth week at this place in meditation.

7. **Rājāyatana Tree**; This is the tree under which Lord Buddha spent the seventh week in meditation.

What the Buddha attained is Dhamma or the law of nature that is the most top secret leading people to get rid the suffering and the lasting liberation well known as **Nibbāna**. The most significant Dhammas which are Buddhist foundation discovered by the Buddha consist of the Four Noble Truths (*Cattāri Ariya Saccāni*), Dependent Origination (*Paṭiccasamuppāda*) and so on.

After the Buddha wandered from place to place, a number of people who believed in His teaching was increasing rapidly, many of them asked Him for monkhood. Later, His disciples became huge group known as “**Bhikkhu Saṅgha**”. At that time Bimbisāra, considering his *Veḷuvana* garden such an ideal place for living of the Buddha, took gold vesseled full water to pour and dedicated the *Veḷuvana*, park (*uyyāna*) to the event he, delivered a religious discourse and thus addressed the *Bhikkhus*. “I allow you, O monks, to receive
the donation of a ārāma or monastery” (Anujānāmi bhikkhave ārāmaṃ) probably constructed by Bimbisāra. This was the first monastery ārama (or Vihāra) ever offered to the Saṅgha as a residence for longer period the system subsequently attained a glorious position in the history of Buddhism.

After that, numerous Buddhist monasteries have been established from the Buddhas lifetime until the present. For nearly two centuries after the Mahāparinibbāna of the Buddha in BC 486, Buddhism survived as a small religious community but it was well-entrenched in Magadha and many other adjoining areas. Then came Asoka, the third Mauryan Emperor (273 BC-232 BC), who transformed Buddhism from an obscure faith to a world religion. Emperor Asoka played the most import role to spread Buddhism to all over India and neighboring country such as Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand and so on. He devoted whole life to Buddhism and established a number of monasteries including Mahābodhi Monastery. Legend also says that Asoka opened seven of the eight stupa that were built over the Buddha’s ashes, divided the relics into 84,000 portions, and built stupas over each portion, although this number is an obvious exaggeration, there is no doubt that many of the stupas in India were first built during the Mauryan period. In one of his inscriptions Asoka tells us that he given up the usual king habit of going on pleasure trips and had instead going on Pilgrimages, or he called Dhamma tours.

The outstanding feature of Bodhgaya is the famous Mahābodhi (Great Enlightenment) Temple, which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It was King Ashoka who first built a temple near the bodhi tree. In the second century A.D., the original Ashoka’s temple was replaced. The present temple, which has gone through many alterations over the centuries, dates from around 600 A.D. The last full account of the temple was written by the Tibetan monk Dharmasvamin, who arrived in 1234 to find only four monks there and the place deserted. Sri Lankans did much to restore the temple, in 1286 and again in the 15th Century.
The modern history of the Mahābodhi Temple begins with the remarkable Sri Lankan Theosophist, David Hewivitarne, better known throughout the Buddhist world as Anagarika Dharmapala. Dharmapala visited the site and found it in a deplorable condition. For three hundred years it had been used as a Hindu temple and many of the Buddhist carvings in the niches around the temple had been pilfered or destroyed and the ancient Ashoka pillars and much of the magnificently carved stone railing around the bodhi tree had been looted. In 1891 Dharmapala founded the Bodh Gaya Maha Bodhi Society with the determination to return the temple to the hands of Buddhists and restore its glory. This was his life's work until he died in 1931. Largely through the efforts of the Mahābodhi Society, the Indian Government created the Bodh Gaya Act in 1949 and set up a committee of five Hindus and four Buddhists to run the site.

On the most significant occasion of 2500th Buddha Jayanti Celebration, Government of India sent the invitation letter to all Buddhist countries to establish monasteries in the area of Bodhgaya. The year 1956 marked a milestone in the chequered history of Buddhism. In that year, the Buddhist Era, which commenced on the day of the *Mahāparinibbāna* of the Buddha, completed 2500 years. This historic event was celebrated with great enthusiasm throughout the Buddhist world. The Buddha Jayanti Celebration of 1958 undoubtedly marked the beginning of a new era, an era of hope, peace and prosperity for Buddhism. This is particularly true about India. To celebrate the historic event in a befitting manner, the Government of India appointed the Buddha Jayanti Committee headed by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, Vice President of India. Prime Minister of India was an Associate Member.

The Government of India headed by Shri Jawaharlal Nehru was interested in Buddhism and wanted restore it. According to his statement; “If India forget the Buddha and Bhagavaggita, India will cease to exist.” At that
time, the Government of India leading by him had supported Buddhism in many ways, namely;

1. To reconstruct the Buddhist Holy places all over the country, particularly four Buddhist important places, namely; the place of birth, Enlightenment, teaching the first sermon and Mahāparinibbāna.

2. To support education about Buddhism by mean of establishment Buddhist University such as Ambecka University and New Nālandā Buddhist University etc.

3. To encourage and support young generation to learn Pali and Sanskrit languages as well as Buddhist history.

4. To invite all Buddhist countries to establish monasteries in the Holy Buddhist places, especially in Bodhgaya, the Enlightenment place.

5. To invite all Buddhist countries to establish monasteries around the Enlightenment place in Bodhgaya. In 1956, Shri Jawaharlal Nehru, the beloved Prime Minister of India, sent the invitation to all Buddhist countries such as Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, the Republic of Lao, Cambodia, Japan and so on, to organize their own monasteries in Bodhgaya.

This research indicated that after the invitation letter send by the Government of India headed by Shri Jawaharlal Nehru, the beloved Prime Minister of India, to all Buddhist countries such as Thailand, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Cambodia, the Republic of Lao, Vietnam, China, Japan, Taiwan, Tibet, South Korea and so on, in order to establish the Buddhist monasteries according to the culture of each country. From 1956 until now, many monasteries, both Indian and foreign, have been established at Bodhgaya around the Mahābodhi Mahāvihāra Temple Complex. Most of them had been supported their own government, but some had been sponsored by Buddhist pilgrims. Nowadays (2013) there are 54 Buddhist Monasteries approximately, 11
Monasteries under construction and 2 institutes having been established by Buddhist countries from worldwide.

Also the research showed that coming of Buddhist monasteries from numerous Buddhist countries to Bodhgaya has created a lot of impact towards Bodhgaya and Buddhist pilgrims from around the world. They are as follows;

1. **Buddhist teaching propagation**: These Buddhist Monasteries have set up programmes to declare the Buddha’s doctrine to the world. The activity becomes the main mission of every monasteries in Bodhgaya. These are divided into three principal functions, namely;

   a) **Meditation Programme**; Such activity is managed by many monasteries in Bodhgaya in order to instruct all people worldwide know how to control their mind and to purify the mind. This is attracted activity to interested people from around the world.

   b) **Buddhist Conferences**; A number of conferences had held by Monasteries in Bodhgaya and some of them has become annual activity. This activity produces a lot of advantages to Buddhists such as Dhamma discussion, harmony and unity among Buddhist monks and lay people form worldwide.

   c) **Buddhist Guidance**; Since Buddhist Monasteries have been established in Bodhgaya, a number of Buddhist pilgrims have been increasing respectively. Buddhist Monasteries have contributed Buddhist guidance training program known as “Dhammadoor” in order to develop Buddhist monks about teaching and guiding skill. This is very useful for Buddhist pilgrims to receive the proper information of Holy Buddhist Places as well as clearly understand the Buddhist Teachings.

2. **Educational development**: Buddhist Monasteries in Bodhgaya have played the important role for educational development to local people. These
have realized the necessary in educational development. They, therefore, have arranged many free schools for local children.

3. **Social Services**: Above from studying the Dhamma, Buddhist Monasteries do not neglect to improve life quality of the local people. They have provided many ways of assistance especially health care. In 2000, the Daijokyo Health Care Centre was established at village Bakraur, i.e. Sujātā Village, across the River Neraṅjarā. The Taungpulu Health Unit established by the International Meditation Center (I.M.C.). In 1958, Health Care Center named as Aroggayasathāna was organized by Wat Thai Buddha Gaya being ran under the care of Venerable Phra Kruviboondhammasasana. In 1985, Wat Thai Buddha Gaya established football club known as Dhamma Football Club under (DFC) the care of Venerable Phramaha Chalong Candasiri. For poor contribution, every Buddhist Monasteries have often offered survival pack to need people.

Likewise, Buddhist Monasteries in Bodhgaya have welcomed to the visitors. It is appropriate to call ahead to ask whether visitors are welcome at a given religious observance. Visitors are free to participate in communal ritual as the wish. Major ritual activities include offering incense, chanting texts from the Sutras or singing hymns, and quiet meditation. Guests who choose not to participate should observe in silence from the back or side of the temple.

4. **Buddhist Pilgrims Assistance**

Buddhist Monasteries in Bodhgaya plays the important role to provide assistance to pilgrims in both accommodation and guidance.

(a) **Accommodation**: Even though Bodhgaya is full of hotels, but these are not enough for pilgrim needs. Many Buddhist Monasteries have provided accommodation and pilgrims can contact directly to all.
(b) **Buddhist Guidance**: Buddhist Monasteries have arranged the training programme to improve Buddhist monks both teaching and guiding skill. This is very useful for Buddhist pilgrims to receive the proper information of Holy Buddhist Places as well as clearly understand the Buddhist Teachings.

5. **Center of cultural study**: After being invited to establish monasteries in Bodhgaya from the first Prime Minister of India, Shri Jawaharah Neruh, in 1974, several Buddhist monasteries have been built by the people from many Buddhist countries such as Bhutan, China, Japan, Myanmar, Nepal, Sikkim, Taiwan, Tibet, Mongolia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Lao and Vietnam in a wide area around the Mahābodhi Temple. These buildings reflect the architectural style, exterior and interior decoration of their respective countries. The statue of Buddha in the Chinese temple is 200 years old and was brought from China. Japanese Nippon temple is shaped like a pagoda. The Myanmar (Burmese) temple is also pagoda shaped and is reminiscent of Bagan. The Thai temple has a typical sloping, curved roof covered with golden tiles. Inside, the temple holds a massive bronze statue of Buddha. Next to the Thai temple is 25 meter statue of Buddha located within a garden which has existed there for over 100 years. It is said that Bodhgaya has already become the center of Buddhist cultural study and invited people from around the world come and see.

There are several kinds of culture that we can find and study in from Buddhist Monasteries in Bodhgaya such as Buddhist chanting (International Tipitaka chanting and Kālacakra Pūjā Ceremony), culture of bowing, the Buddhist Art: Buddha Image and Bodhisattva. Also this research study variety of Buddhist symbolism, namely; Footprints of the Buddha, Dhamma Wheel or Dhammachakra, lotus flowers, Nāga, the Buddhist flag, Eight Auspicious Symbols, Tibetan Bell and Mala.
Buddhist culture from each county has their own identity that indicates spiritual mind and belief. As culture of praying, Buddhists do not pray to a Creator God, but they do have devotional meditation practices which could be compared to praying. Radiating loving-kindness to all living beings is a practice which is believed to benefit those beings. The sharing of merit is a practice where one dedicates the goodness of one’s life to the benefit of all living beings as well as praying for a particular person.

In Tibet prayer is going on most of the time. Tibetans pray in a special way. They believe that when certain sounds and words, called mantras, are said many times, they arouse good vibrations within the person. If a mantra is repeated often enough it can open up the mind to a consciousness which is beyond words and thoughts. In Japan millions of Buddhists pray to Amida Buddha, the Buddha of Infinite Light. They believe that Amida has created a Pure Land in the west and that those who have faith and repeat Amida’s name in prayer will go there. Yet they also believe that Amida is really within them.

Finally, the study showed that Buddhist Monasteries having been established by Buddhist countries play the important role to develop the area in Bodhgaya especially the area beside the Enlightenment place of the Buddha. This development has effected towards two main factors, namely; individual and public. The individual factor is that Buddhist pilgrims from over the world, who come to pay respect to the Buddhist Holy Place, have received suitable services from monasteries such as facilities, meditation training programme, Buddhist knowledge and so on. The public factor is that Buddhist Monasteries in Bodhgaya have good opportunity to propagate the Buddha Dhamma to the world, as well as they have arranged numerous Buddhist activities which lead to co-operation among Buddhists from many countries such as Buddhist seminar, Buddhist ceremony, training courses etc. Such action will create harmony and
unity in Buddhism which lead to peaceful and happiness world as the Buddha says:

\begin{quote}
Sukho buddhānam uppādo
Sukhā saddhamsadesanā
Sukhā saṅghassa sāmaggi
Sammaggānam tapo sukho.\end{quote}

Happy is birth of Buddhas. Happy is the teaching of the sublime Dhamma. Happy is the unity of the Saṅgha. Happy is the discipline of the united ones.\footnote{Narada Thera, “The Dhammapada”, p.141.}

\footnote{Dhammapada, Verse 194.}