



## **Introducing Religions**

### *The place of Enlightenment*

Bodhgaya in Northern India is famous for Buddhists and Hindus as the place where the Buddha gained enlightenment. It is a site of pilgrimage and prayer for monks and lay Buddhists from all over the world.

#### **Narrator**

Bodhgaya, in present day Bihar, Northern India, is the place where the Buddha is said to have attained enlightenment, while sitting in meditation under a tree.

Today it is a place of pilgrimage for people from across the Buddhist world. And also for Hindus, who worship the Buddha as an avatar of Vishnu.

#### **Man1**

I'm from Thailand, from Bangkok.

#### **Interviewer**

Can you tell me what you're doing in Bodhgaya?

#### **Man1**

Yes, In Bodhgaya we pay homage to the place where the Buddha enlightened 2400 years ago. And you know we pay homage, as a Buddhist, as a good Buddhist.

#### **Lady1**

Vietnam.

#### **Interviewer**

Tell me why you came to Bodhgaya?

#### **Lady1**

I come here because I believe in the Buddha, and I think that's good for my soul.

#### **Lady2**

I'm from Malaysia. This place is special for me, this place is a place of enlightenment for Buddha. After I came here I feel it's very different, extraordinary, because I find that there are so many people, irrespective of whether they are Buddhists or not, they worship the place of enlightenment of Buddha. And now you can see there are so many sectarians, or so many schools of Buddhism, they are so united here. Even though non-Buddhists, they pay respect to this place, who had to live in so harmoniously. I find that when I'm in Malaysia, I don't sense these things here.

Bodhgaya's temples

#### **Narrator**

Buddhists from many of the cultures which have embraced Buddhism build temples in Bodhgaya. These temples reflect the varied architectural and symbolic styles in their places of origin. There are temples here built in the style of many cultures, among them China, Tibet, Burma and Japan. In the grounds of the Japanese temple stands a huge statue of the Buddha.

#### **Man2**

The statue is large because the Buddha lived for 80 years, so the Japanese also decided to dedicate this statue for 80 feet. This is not built of one stone. These are built of pieces of stones, each pieces of stone carved and then gently placed over. So it has taken around four years to build this statue. He had several large following, and he had a large disciple, so out

of those disciples he has the chief 10 disciples, who are masters in particular fields, like knowledge, like tantrism, medicine, preserving the prayer teachings that Buddha preached. So out of that, these are the chief 10 disciples.

[chanting]

Japanese Buddhism, they follow the revered Buddha as their teacher, as their part guide, and besides that, they have many more followings, and they have several sub-sects formed of that and they have their own way of worship they have included something of their own, to make it different from others.

[chanting]

Bodhgai's worshippers

**Narrator**

Bodhgai is a place of religious practice for monks, nuns and lay people.

**Man3**

I would like to practice meditation and pay respect to the place where Buddha once was here. The original place.

**Man4**

This is the place where the Buddha has come to enlightenment, and there is some connection between us and the Buddha when we come here.

**Lady3**

It's very calm and quiet, so we feel that actually the Buddha is there, that he still lives, and that we feel that this must have been the environment even in those days.

**Narrator**

Texts and study are a vital element of Buddhism. To copy, recite and memorise Buddhist texts is a key practice.

**Man5**

Text are like, some have a special text, which we have decided we have to do a special kind of prayers, every day, and there are some prayers we can do off and on, you know, whenever we have time. The prayer rolls, there are so many different kinds of mantras, enrolled inside this prayer roll, and so we believe how many rounds you could make you will get that kind of marriage.

**Narrator**

Meditation in one form or other is practised in all schools of Buddhism. Tibetan Buddhists who visit Bodhgai may come specifically to perform prostrations as a preparation for tantric meditation practices.

**Man6**

I came here to do prostration which we have to do like 100,000 prostrations. In the Mayan tradition we have two kinds of method. One is like an academic course where we study philosophies for nine years. After that we start the most practical, what we have studied into practice. So we have to start with that prostration, prostration is to clean ourselves, like, we do prostration to clean our mind, our body and our speech.