



Bodh Gaya Temple Act, 1949

Why in News?

The [Supreme Court of India](#) recently refused to entertain a plea (under [Article 32](#) of the Constitution) challenging the constitutionality of the [Bodh Gaya Temple Act, 1949](#).

- The Act was challenged due to concerns over religious autonomy and representation in the management of the Mahabodhi Temple.

Key Points

- **Bodh Gaya Temple Act, 1949:**
 - It regulates the administration of the [Mahabodhi Temple](#) and aims to ensure its proper management.
 - After India's **Independence**, the **Bodh Gaya Temple Act (1949)** introduced shared management between Hindus and Buddhists.
 - The Act deals with the temple's administration, which is vital for preserving and maintaining the sacred site, which includes the **Bodhi tree**, the **Vajrasana**, and several other sacred structures.
- **Mahabodhi Temple:**
 - It was built by [Emperor Ashoka](#) in the 3rd century BCE.
 - It is located in **Bodh Gaya, Bihar**, and is one of the most sacred places for Buddhists worldwide.
 - It is believed to be the location where [Lord Gautam Buddha](#) attained **enlightenment** under the **Bodhi tree**.
 - The temple remained an important Buddhist site through the [Pala period](#) and was visited by the Chinese traveler [Hiuen Tsang](#) in **629 AD**.
 - After the **13th-century invasion by Bakhtiyar Khilji**, Buddhism in the region declined.
 - The current temple, constructed during the **5th-6th century CE** (Late Gupta period), is made entirely of brick.
 - In **1590**, a Hindu monk established the **Bodh Gaya Math**, transferring temple control to Hindus.
 - **Architectural Features:**
 - It includes a **Shikhara, Vajrasana (Diamond Throne), Chaitya niches, amalaka, kalasha, sculpted balustrades, and Buddha images**.
 - Seven sacred sites within the temple complex commemorate **Buddha's seven weeks** of meditation post-enlightenment, including the **Animeshlochan Chaitya, Lotus Pond, and Ajapala Nigrodh Tree**.
 - **Mahabodhi Temple Complex:**
 - The [Mahabodhi Temple complex](#) is a [UNESCO World Heritage site](#), consisting of a **50-meter high grand temple**, the **sacred Bodhi tree**, the **Vajrasana**, and **six other sacred sites** related to Buddha's enlightenment.
 - A **Lotus Pond** located outside the temple is also considered sacred. These sites are surrounded by **votive stupas** and are well-maintained with multiple circular boundaries for protection.

Gautama Buddha

- **Gautama Buddha**, the founder of Buddhism, was born in **563 BC** on **Vaisakha Purnima** day at **Lumbini** (now in Nepal), in the **Sakya Kshatriya** clan.
- His father, **Suddhodhana**, was the king of **Kapilvastu**, and his mother, **Mahamaya**, was a princess of the **Koliya** republic.
- After his mother's early death, he was raised by his **stepmother** and aunt, **Mahaprajapati Gautami**.
- Buddha married **Yasodhara**, a princess of the **Shakya** dynasty, and had a son, **Rahul**.
- At age 29, Gautama encountered four sights—an **old man**, a **sick person**, a **dead body**, and an **ascetic**—which led him to renounce his royal life and become a wandering ascetic.
- His first teacher, **Alara Kalama**, taught him meditation techniques. He later studied under **Udraka Ramputra**.
- At age 35, after meditating under the **Pipal tree** at **Bodh Gaya** (near the **Niranjana River**), he achieved **Nirvana (enlightenment)** after **49 days** of meditation.
- Buddha delivered his first sermon at **Sarnath** (Deer Park) to five disciples, known as the **Dharmachakra Pravartana** (Turning of the Wheel of Law).
- Buddha passed away at age 80 in **483 BC** at **Kushinagar**, a moment referred to as **Mahaparinirvana** (Final Nirvana).
- **Key Figures:**
 - **Kanthaka**: Buddha's horse.
 - **Channa**: His charioteer.
 - **Devadatta**: His cousin.
 - **Sujata**: The farmer's daughter who offered Buddha rice milk at Bodh Gaya.
- **Other Names:** **Gautama** (clan name), **Siddhartha** (childhood name), **Shakyamuni** (sage of the Shakya clan).

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