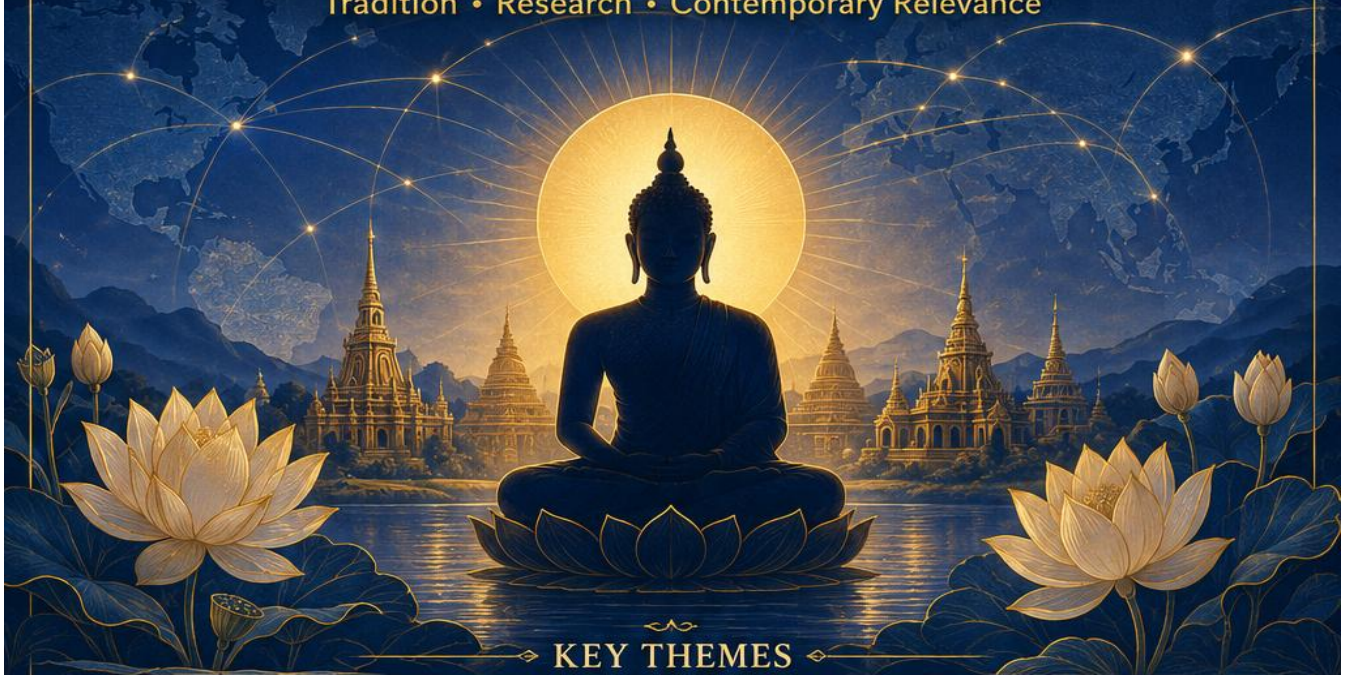


INTERNATIONAL BUDDHIST CONFERENCE 2026

Buddhism, Scholarship, and Global Dialogue

Tradition • Research • Contemporary Relevance



KEY THEMES



Theravāda &
Mahāyāna



Chinese Buddhism
& Yogācāra



Buddhist Psychology
& Counselling



Meditation &
Human Development



Buddhist Civilization
& Heritage



Social Sciences &
Global Ethics



20 AUGUST 2026



Bhiksu University of Sri Lanka



In collaboration with Fudan University, China



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International Buddhist Conference 2026: Buddhism, Scholarship, and Global Dialogue

*Editorial note: The phrase “International Buddhist Conference 2026” may refer to several Buddhist gatherings scheduled during 2026. This explanation focuses primarily on the **9th International Buddhist Conference of the Bhikṣu University of Sri Lanka—IBC BUSL 2026**, whose official title most closely matches the wording of the request.*

Introduction

The International Buddhist Conference 2026 represents an important meeting point between ancient spiritual wisdom and contemporary academic inquiry. Organized by the **Bhikṣu University of Sri Lanka in collaboration with Fudan University, China**, the ninth edition of the conference is scheduled for **20 August 2026**. It invites Buddhist monks, scholars, postgraduate students, independent researchers, and practitioners to discuss Buddhism from philosophical, psychological, cultural, historical, and social-scientific perspectives. Its principal areas include Theravāda and Mahāyāna teachings, Chinese Buddhism and Yogācāra, Buddhist psychology and counselling, meditation and yoga, Buddhist civilization, and the social sciences and humanities. [The official conference page](#) provides the program framework and submission schedule.

The significance of this conference extends beyond the formal presentation of academic papers. It reflects the growing recognition that Buddhist thought may contribute to global discussions about mental well-being, ethical leadership, ecological responsibility, peacebuilding, technological change, and social harmony. The conference therefore occupies a space

between religious tradition, academic scholarship, and practical responses to contemporary human problems.

Buddhism as a Global Intellectual Tradition

Buddhism originated in South Asia approximately twenty-five centuries ago through the teachings of Siddhārtha Gautama, known as the Buddha. Although its beginnings were rooted in a particular historical and cultural environment, Buddhism gradually spread throughout Asia and subsequently became a global religious and intellectual tradition.

During this long development, different Buddhist communities articulated the teachings through diverse languages, philosophical systems, rituals, institutions, and methods of meditation. Theravāda Buddhism became especially influential in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia. Mahāyāna traditions developed extensively in China, Korea, Japan, and Vietnam. Vajrayāna Buddhism became prominent in Tibet, Bhutan, Mongolia, and parts of the Himalayan region.

This diversity does not necessarily represent fragmentation. It may instead be understood as evidence of Buddhism's adaptive capacity. Fundamental ideas—suffering, impermanence, dependent origination, ethical conduct, meditation, wisdom, and compassion—were interpreted according to different historical circumstances without entirely losing their foundational orientation.

An international Buddhist conference offers a structured setting in which these traditions can encounter one another. Such a gathering enables participants to investigate both shared principles and legitimate differences. It helps prevent any single tradition from claiming that its cultural expression constitutes the totality of Buddhism. Dialogue therefore becomes a form of intellectual humility.

The Academic Character of IBC BUSL 2026

IBC BUSL 2026 is principally an academic conference. Its purpose is not merely to celebrate Buddhist identity but to develop rigorous knowledge about Buddhist teachings and their relevance to humanity. Participants are invited to submit extended abstracts, present research findings, listen to keynote speakers, and engage in scholarly discussion.

The official conference schedule set **10 July 2026** as the extended-abstract deadline, **30 July** for notification of acceptance, **5 August** for revised submissions, and **20 August 2026** as the conference date. These procedures indicate that the event follows an academic model involving submission, selection, revision, presentation, and intellectual evaluation.

Its collaboration between the Bhikṣu University of Sri Lanka and Fudan University also has symbolic importance. Sri Lanka is one of the major historical centres of Theravāda Buddhism, Pāli studies, and monastic education. China has played a central role in the development of Mahāyāna Buddhism, Buddhist translation, and schools such as Yogācāra, Tiantai, Huayan, Pure Land, and Chan. Cooperation between institutions in these two countries creates an opportunity to connect South Asian and East Asian Buddhist scholarship.

The conference also seeks interaction between Eastern and Western academic traditions. This means that Buddhist teachings may be studied through traditional textual interpretation while also being examined using history, philosophy, psychology, sociology, anthropology, archaeology, linguistics, and comparative religious studies. The objective is not to reduce Buddhism to a secular object, but to allow multiple forms of knowledge to illuminate its complexity.

Theravāda and Mahāyāna Teachings

One major conference theme concerns the relationship between Theravāda and Mahāyāna teachings. Theravāda emphasizes the Pāli Canon, monastic discipline, insight meditation, and the ideal of liberation through the

realization of nibbāna. Mahāyāna traditions place strong emphasis on the bodhisattva path, universal compassion, emptiness, Buddha-nature, and the aspiration to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings.

Historically, comparisons between the two have sometimes been distorted by oversimplification. Theravāda has occasionally been characterized as exclusively individualistic, while Mahāyāna has been portrayed as exclusively altruistic. Serious scholarship demonstrates that both contain strong ethical, compassionate, contemplative, and communal dimensions.

Conference dialogue can move beyond rigid dichotomies. It can examine how the arhat and bodhisattva ideals developed, how different canonical collections describe liberation, and how compassion and wisdom function in diverse Buddhist systems. Such study promotes mutual understanding without erasing doctrinal distinctions.

Chinese Buddhism and Yogācāra

The inclusion of Chinese Buddhism and Yogācāra is especially relevant because of the collaboration with Fudan University. Yogācāra is a sophisticated Buddhist philosophical tradition concerned with consciousness, perception, cognition, karmic conditioning, and the construction of experience.

The tradition investigates how human beings mistake conditioned mental representations for independently existing realities. It explains that perception is never entirely neutral because it is influenced by memory, attachment, habit, language, and previous action. Liberation consequently requires a transformation of consciousness rather than a simple accumulation of information.

These ideas have contemporary relevance. Modern societies are shaped by digital media, political polarization, algorithmic filtering, and competing constructions of reality. Yogācāra cannot simply be identified with

contemporary cognitive science, but dialogue between the two may generate valuable questions. How does the mind construct identity? Why do people become attached to particular narratives? How do habitual patterns influence judgement? Can systematic mental training reduce cognitive and emotional distortion?

Chinese Buddhist sources also preserve translations of Indian texts that disappeared in their original languages. Comparative study of Sanskrit, Pāli, Chinese, and Tibetan materials can therefore contribute to the historical reconstruction of Buddhist concepts.

Buddhist Psychology and Counselling

Buddhist psychology and counselling constitute another important conference area. Buddhism begins with the recognition of *dukkha*: dissatisfaction, instability, distress, or suffering. It then investigates the mental processes that produce and intensify suffering, especially craving, aversion, and ignorance.

This analytical orientation makes Buddhism relevant to discussions of mental health. Mindfulness-based approaches have already influenced clinical psychology, stress management, education, and organizational development. Nevertheless, an academic conference should examine such applications critically. Mindfulness is not merely a relaxation technique. In its Buddhist context, it forms part of an ethical and contemplative path involving right understanding, intention, conduct, effort, concentration, and wisdom.

If mindfulness is separated completely from ethics and compassion, it may become an instrument for helping people tolerate unhealthy institutions instead of transforming them. For example, a corporation might offer meditation sessions while maintaining an exploitative working environment. Buddhist counselling would require attention not only to

individual emotional regulation but also to the organizational and social conditions producing distress.

A responsible dialogue between Buddhism and psychology must also recognize disciplinary boundaries. Meditation may complement professional care, but it cannot automatically replace psychiatric treatment, clinical assessment, or evidence-based intervention. The contribution of Buddhist psychology is strongest when spiritual insight and scientific responsibility are brought into constructive dialogue.

Meditation, Yoga, and Human Development

The conference also addresses meditation and yoga. Buddhist meditation includes a range of practices: mindfulness of breathing, cultivation of loving-kindness, contemplation of the body, concentration, and insight into impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and non-self.

Meditation is increasingly popular throughout the world, but its rapid commercialization has produced difficulties. Practices are sometimes removed from their ethical foundations, advertised with exaggerated health claims, or converted into consumer products. Academic discussion can distinguish carefully between traditional objectives, empirical evidence, modern adaptation, and commercial representation.

From a management perspective, meditation may contribute to attention, emotional balance, self-awareness, and compassionate leadership. Yet it should not be treated simply as another productivity tool. A leader who meditates but continues to deceive employees or exploit communities has not fulfilled the ethical meaning of Buddhist practice.

Authentic contemplative leadership connects inner awareness with responsibility. It asks whether decisions reduce or increase suffering, whether organizational goals respect human dignity, and whether

economic achievement is being pursued at unacceptable social or ecological cost.

Buddhist Civilization and Cultural Heritage

Buddhist civilization encompasses architecture, literature, art, education, pilgrimage, monastic institutions, law, diplomacy, and cultural exchange. The movement of Buddhism across Asia was accompanied by networks of translation and learning. Monasteries often became centres of education, manuscript preservation, health care, hospitality, and intercultural communication.

Studying Buddhist civilization is therefore not limited to theology. It involves archaeology, political history, economics, linguistics, and heritage management. International conferences can support the digitization of manuscripts, documentation of endangered languages, preservation of archaeological sites, and protection of sacred objects.

This work also raises ethical questions. Heritage sites may generate tourism income, but excessive commercialization can undermine their sacred character. Local communities may be displaced or excluded from decision-making. Responsible Buddhist heritage management must balance conservation, spiritual integrity, public education, community participation, and economic benefit.

Sri Lanka's role as host is particularly meaningful because the country has preserved a continuous Theravāda tradition and a rich collection of monasteries, inscriptions, chronicles, stupas, and manuscripts. The conference can strengthen international cooperation in protecting this heritage while interpreting it for new generations.

Buddhism and the Contemporary Social Sciences

The inclusion of social sciences and humanities demonstrates that IBC BUSL 2026 is not confined to ancient texts. Buddhist ideas can be examined in

relation to economics, governance, conflict, education, environmental management, gender, technology, and organizational life.

Buddhist economics, for instance, challenges the assumption that unlimited consumption necessarily produces well-being. It emphasizes sufficiency, moderation, ethical livelihood, and awareness of interdependence. Economic activity is evaluated not only by growth but also by its consequences for human flourishing and ecological sustainability.

In management, Buddhist ethics may encourage leadership based on compassion, non-harm, accountability, and freedom from excessive attachment to status. An executive facing a restructuring decision could evaluate not only financial savings but also the human suffering created by layoffs, the fairness of compensation, and the availability of reskilling opportunities.

Buddhist social analysis must nevertheless avoid romanticism. Buddhist-majority societies, like all societies, may experience violence, inequality, nationalism, and political manipulation. The existence of Buddhist ideals does not guarantee ethical institutions. Academic inquiry must therefore examine the gap between doctrine and practice.

Peacebuilding and Interreligious Dialogue

Buddhist teaching is frequently associated with nonviolence, compassion, and peace. International gatherings can transform these principles into dialogue among communities divided by nationality, ethnicity, doctrine, or political history.

Peace, from a Buddhist perspective, is not merely the absence of armed conflict. It involves weakening the psychological and structural causes of violence: hatred, fear, greed, humiliation, and dehumanization. Inner transformation and institutional reform are consequently interconnected.

International Buddhist conferences can also contribute to interreligious understanding. Buddhism shares with Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and other traditions a concern for human dignity, ethical conduct, compassion, and peace. Dialogue does not require participants to deny theological differences. It requires them to approach those differences without hostility and to cooperate on shared problems such as poverty, war, environmental destruction, and displacement.

Buddhism in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

One of the most promising contemporary areas is the relationship between Buddhism and artificial intelligence. AI systems increasingly influence communication, employment, education, health care, finance, and political decision-making. These developments raise questions concerning consciousness, responsibility, bias, attachment, and human identity.

Buddhist philosophy may contribute to these discussions through its analysis of mind, intention, causality, and interdependence. It cautions against treating the self as an isolated and permanent entity. In the technological context, this insight encourages society to examine how individual decisions are shaped by data infrastructures, institutions, and automated systems.

However, Buddhism should not be used to make unsupported claims that AI possesses consciousness or spiritual awareness. The more immediate ethical question concerns human responsibility for designing and deploying technology. Does an AI system reduce suffering? Does it reproduce discrimination? Does it manipulate attention and desire? Who benefits economically, and who bears the risks?

A Buddhist approach to AI would place compassion, non-harm, transparency, moderation, and responsible intention at the centre of innovation.

Critical Challenges

The success of an international Buddhist conference depends on its willingness to confront difficult questions. These include representation among different Buddhist traditions, the position of women and bhikkhunīs, accessibility for scholars from less affluent countries, linguistic inequality, academic freedom, and the relationship between religious institutions and political power.

There is also a risk that conferences become ceremonial events producing declarations without sustained action. Their impact should therefore be evaluated through publications, research networks, educational programs, heritage projects, and policy engagement after the formal meeting ends.

Digital participation can improve accessibility, but it also introduces inequalities related to technology, language, connectivity, and digital literacy. Internationalization must mean more than inviting foreign speakers; it should involve genuine intellectual exchange and equitable participation.

Conclusion

The International Buddhist Conference 2026 is significant because it brings tradition, research, and contemporary global concerns into a shared intellectual space. The ninth IBC BUSL conference provides a platform for examining Theravāda and Mahāyāna teachings, Chinese Buddhism and Yogācāra, Buddhist psychology, meditation, civilization, and the social sciences.

Its deeper importance lies in demonstrating that Buddhist studies are neither confined to the preservation of the past nor reducible to modern self-help. Buddhism can function simultaneously as a religious path, philosophical tradition, cultural inheritance, and source of ethical reflection.

At a time marked by ecological crisis, mental distress, geopolitical conflict, technological disruption, and social polarization, the conference offers an opportunity to reconsider the relationship between wisdom and progress. Its enduring contribution will depend on whether scholarly dialogue is translated into compassionate practice, responsible institutions, and sustained international cooperation.

The most meaningful measure of success will therefore not be the number of papers presented or delegates attending. It will be the extent to which the gathering helps participants understand suffering more deeply, approach differences more wisely, and develop knowledge that supports peace, dignity, and the well-being of all living beings.