

# NALANDA: The Greatest University and its Magnificent Library - DESTROYED and now this intolerant madness plagues us again

By Rick Heizman, July 13, 2013, San Francisco      read more here: [scribd.com/rheizman](http://scribd.com/rheizman)

First an update, Feb 2, 2015: Islamic State (ISIS) militants are destroying books in places they have invaded and captured. They cannot tolerate other peoples ideas, achievements, and wisdom. "These books promote infidelity and call for disobeying Allah. So they will be burned," a fully bearded Muslim man declared as books of poetry, philosophy, culture, history, science, and even children's stories were taken out of libraries and schools. Only Islamic material was spared. Some people had been hiding books, old and rare manuscripts, and collections of Ottoman Empire works, until ISIS became aware of that and declared death for any such action.

Even before ISIS there was a severe shortage of books about such things as yoga, mediation, Buddhist teachings, critical thinking, comparative religion, and certainly nothing critical about Islam - imagine the risks - in many places - of selling such books! There are - throughout the Muslim world - plenty of books of hate, conspiracy theories, and plans to annihilate all others. Needed are books of love, science, and plans for peace.

At the time that the **historic Buddha - Siddhartha Gautama** - walked the earth in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC, Nalanda was an influential and prosperous town, and a place the Buddha himself knew and visited. One of the earliest Buddhist Shrines was built in Nalanda, after the passing away of the Buddha. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC, the great Emperor Asoka (a Hindu who became a dedicated Buddhist) expanded this shrine, and added a monastery for monks. This monastery become a well-known Buddhist learning center and by the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD, it had expanded many times and had become the first university in the world - **Nalanda International Buddhist University**.

According to records from scholars at that time, the University was an **incredible architectural masterpiece**. There were 8 separate compounds, colossal buildings, 10 temples, many classrooms and meditation halls, and a magnificent library. As well, the campus included lakes, parks, gardens, sculptures and art.



**The curriculum** included virtually the entire range of world knowledge and every field of learning available, including: all branches of Buddhism, Vedic and Hindu knowledge, Medicine, Astronomy, Geography, Mathematics, Logic, Philosophy and other arts and science subjects of the day - whether sacred or secular, foreign or native.

As the university was run by the Sangha (the community of Buddhist monks), Buddhist Studies were outstanding and Nalanda was greatly renowned, far and wide.



**The great Buddhist Pala Empire**, centered in nearby Bengal, ruled from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Pala Kings were devout Buddhists and supported Nalanda greatly. The Pala period is considered as the golden era of Bengal, with stability, prosperity, colossal temples and exquisite works of art. This remarkable Buddhist Empire eventually disintegrated in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, most drastically with the invasion of Muslim armies.

## MUSLIM INVASION: Destruction and Supremacy

In the year 1193, these **invaders led by Mohammad Bakhtiar Khilji**, attacked and burnt down and demolished this great center of learning and knowledge that had existed for some 700 years. They destroyed the magnificent buildings and massacred its resident scholars and Buddhist monks.



**Mirjah-i-Siraj, the famous Persian Muslim historian**, in his chronicle '*Tabaquat-I-Nasiri*' left a detailed and horrid account of Khilji's vandalism and violence. He reported that the burning of over 9 million invaluable books, manuscripts, and other items from the gigantic library complex continued for over six months.

Mirjah-i-Siraj reports that **thousands of Buddhist monks** were burned alive and **thousands beheaded** as Khilji tried his best to uproot Buddhism and **plant Islam by the sword**. Mirjah-i-Siraj notes that Buddhism virtually disappeared under the brutal impact of Muslim fanaticism. The ruthless Muslim invaders were intolerant of other religions and cultures. They took delight in destroying the culture, the monuments and the religions they encountered.

This invaluable collection of knowledge that was destroyed was the product of centuries of scholastic studies. **Nalanda**, the greatest center of Buddhist learning (and other subjects) in the world for 7 centuries became a deserted and desolate place, eventually its ruins were covered by jungle and nearly entirely forgotten.

**All of the compassion, metta, love, humanity, virtue, wisdom, and morality that was defined, explored, and taught at Nalanda could not save Nalanda from the onslaught of absolute intolerance, inhumanity and supremacy.**

**The world lost an absolute treasure of human thought, wisdom, and achievement.**

### **BUDDHISM UNDER ATTACK: Declines and Disappears**

Buddhism was under attack, and started declining. In 1193 Muslim invaders seized control of Delhi, enabling them to strike the very heart of Buddhist India. The invaders destroyed Buddhist temples and monasteries and mercilessly killed Buddhists, including and especially monks.

The **Muslim ruler Aurangzeb**, and following rulers, destroyed Buddhist temples and monasteries and replaced them with Islamic mosques. Intimidation and threats pressured or forced many to convert to Islam. **Women and girls** were taken and converted to Islam.

Buddhism became virtually **extinct in India** by the end of the 19th century, excluding small isolated communities in eastern Bengal (now Bangladesh) and Nepal.

Ironically, it was the British who discovered the overgrown ruins of Nalanda, and after beginning excavation realized its tremendous importance and significance.

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