

NALANDA UNIVERSITY

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Nalanda University was established in November 2010. The University came into being by a special Act of the Indian Parliament – a testimony to the important status that Nalanda University occupies in the Indian intellectual landscape. Nalanda is a stand alone international university unlike any other established in the country. Located in the town of Rajgir, in the northern Indian state of Bihar, Nalanda University is mandated to be "an international institution for the pursuit of intellectual, philosophical, historical and spiritual studies". This new university contains within it a memory of the ancient Nalanda University and is premised on the shared desire of member States of the East Asia Summit countries to re-discover and re-strengthen "educational co-operation by tapping the East Asia Regions centres of excellence in education...[and] to improve regional understanding and the appreciation of one another's heritage and history"(The Nalanda University Act). Nalanda University has been designated as an "institution of national importance". The particular emphasis of this university, an emphasis which sets it apart from all other existant universities in the region, is its foundational philosophy. This philosophy seeks to recover the lost connections and partnerships that existed in the region called Asia, before the onset of historical forces that led to their dissolution. Asian cultures have many such links that go deep into the past and are reflected in many common cultural features. The re-discovery of inter-Asian linkages in recent times has led to a resurgence in discovering and building upon a shared history. Nalanda University is envisaged as an icon of this new Asian renaissance: a creative space that will be for future generations a centre of inter- civilizational dialogue.

Nalanda is a word known across the world and for centuries. It stands for a university which attracted students and scholars from across Asia and even farther away. It was a centre of excellence not only for Buddhist studies and philosophy but for medicine and mathematics as well. After teaching thousands of students for centuries, Nalanda ceased its existence just as universities were opening up in Bologna, Paris and Oxford at the beginning of the second millennium CE. The shift of centres of knowledge from East to West was symbolic of the eventual transfer of power which followed within half a millennium. There is now a perfect opportunity to recreate the hallowed universalism of Nalanda as a centre of knowledge. The second millennium CE ended with a tremendous resurgence of Asia after centuries of stagnation, division and decline. Asia is today synonymous with a dynamic entrepreneurial and innovative culture, based on knowledge and enterprise not forgetful of its past yet not afraid to face the future. Asian countries are coming together to forge a continent based on the foundations of peace and harmony.