

Holy relics of Buddha

June 20, 2022

In news- The four Holy Relics of Lord Buddha are being taken to Mongolia for an 11-day exposition to coincide with Mongolian Buddha Purnima celebrations.

Key updates-

- **During the 11-day visit, the relics have been accorded the status of a 'state guest' in Mongolia** and are taken in the same climate control case in which they have been kept presently at the National Museum.
- For the visit, the Indian Air force made available a special airplane, C-17 GlobeMaster, which is among the biggest aircraft available in India.
- **In 2015, the Holy Relics were placed under the 'AA' category of Antiquities and Art Treasures** which should not be ordinarily taken out of the country for exhibition, considering their delicate nature.
- But upon the request of Mongolian government, the government has made a special exception and permitted the exposition of the Holy Relics in Mongolia.

History of Relics of Buddha—

- The four relics come from among 22 Buddha relics, currently housed at Delhi's National Museum.
- Together, **they are known as the 'Kapilvastu Relics'** since they are from a site in Bihar believed to be the ancient city of Kapilvastu.
- The site was discovered in 1898.
- At the age of 80, according to Buddhist beliefs, Buddha attained salvation in Uttar Pradesh's Kushinagar district.
- **The Mallas of Kushinagar cremated his body with ceremonies befitting a universal king.**
- **His relics from the funeral pyre were collected and**

divided into eight shares to be distributed among

- the Ajathasatrus of Magadha,
 - the Licchavis of Vaishali,
 - the Sakyas of Kapilavastu,
 - Mallas of Kushinagar,
 - Bullies of Allakappa,
 - the Mallas of Pava,
 - the Koliyas of Ramagrama and
 - a Brahmana of Vethadipa.
- **The purpose was erecting stupas over the sacred relics.**
 - Two more stupas came up – one over the urn in which the relics had been collected and the other over the embers.
 - Stupas erected over the bodily relics of Buddha (**Saririka stupas**) are the earliest surviving Buddhist shrines.
 - It is said that **King Ashoka (272–232 BC) opened up seven of these eight stupas**, and collected major portion of the relics for enshrinement within 84,000 stupas built by him in an effort to popularise Buddhism as well as the cult of the stupas.

Note: In religion, a relic is an object or article of religious significance from the past. It usually consists of the physical remains of a saint or the personal effects of the saint or venerated person preserved for purposes of veneration as a tangible memorial. Relics are an important aspect of some forms of Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, shamanism, and many other religions.

The Kapilavastu relics-

- The **discovery of an inscribed casket in 1898 at the stupa site in Piprahwa (near UP's Siddharthnagar) helped identify the place with the ancient Kapilavastu.**
- The inscription on the casket's lid refers to the relics of Buddha and his community, the Sakya.
- **A further excavation of the stupa by the Archaeological Survey of India in 1971-77 – apart from revealing three**

stages of the construction brought to light two more steatite relic caskets, containing a total of 22 sacred bone relics, which are now under the care of the National Museum.

- This was followed by the discovery of more than 40 terracotta sealings from different levels and spots in the eastern monastery at Piprahwa.

Further

reading:

<https://journalsofindia.com/significance-of-lumbini-the-birthplace-of-the-buddha/>