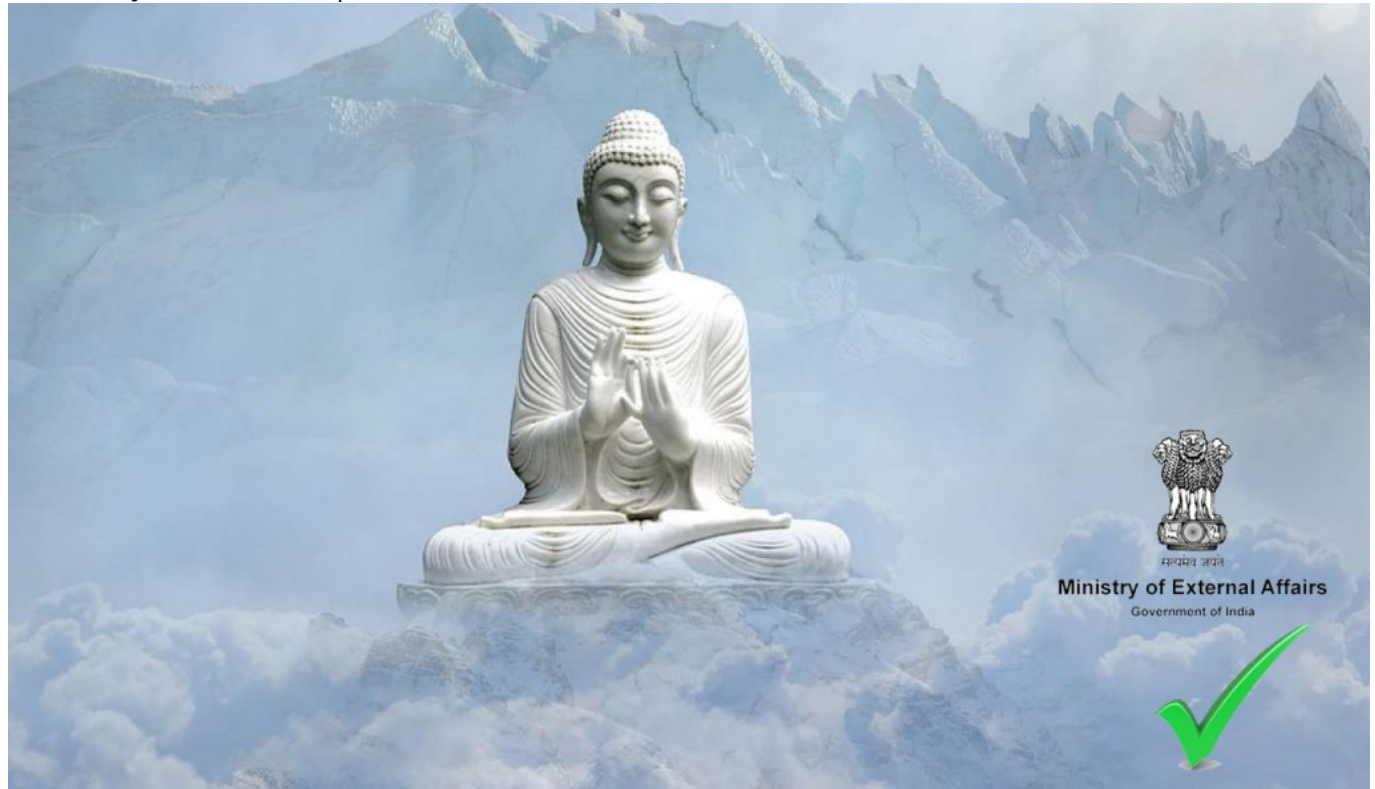


# No Doubt Buddha Was Born in Nepal': MEA Clarifies

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After Nepal formally objected to external affairs minister S. Jaishankar's statement at a webinar that Buddha was one of the greatest 'Indians', India was quick to damp down on a nascent controversy by asserting that there is "no doubt" that the founder of Buddhism was born in Nepal.

At Confederation of Indian Industry's 'India@75 Summit - Mission 2022', Jaishankar mused during an interactive session on Saturday about the "greatest Indians ever that you can remember". "I would say one is Gautam Buddha and the other is Mahatma Gandhi," he offered.

## **Key Highlights**

- A day later, Nepal foreign ministry issued a statement that it was a "well-established and undeniable fact proven by historical and archaeological evidence that Gautam Buddha was born in Lumbini, Nepal".
- The statement issued on behalf of Nepal foreign ministry's official spokesperson was in the context of the "recent statement made by the External Affairs Minister of India on Gautam Buddha".
- He reminded that Indian Prime Minister Modi had himself mentioned during his speech to Nepal parliament in 2014 that 'Nepal is the country where the apostle of peace in the world, Buddha, was born'.
- While Nepal's sensitivity over ownership of Gautama Buddha, the latest friction came in the backdrop of frosty relations between New Delhi and Kathmandu over territorial issues.
- In September 2013, then Indian foreign secretary Sujatha Singh had to reiterate publicly that "Buddha was born in Lumbini, which lies in Nepal" during her trip to Nepal.
- Around 300 cable operators in Nepal had blocked Zee TV after it had apparently shown in a

series that Gautama Buddha had been born in India. There had been street protests and extensive outrage on social media platforms.

- Due to the shared culture, Buddhism is not the only point of contention. Last month, Nepal's prime minister Krishna Prasad Oli had claimed that India had appropriated Lord Rama and that the 'real' city of Ayodhya was located in Nepal.
- India did not issue an official riposte, but Kathmandu was clearly aware of the political relevance of Lord Rama to the ruling establishment in New Delhi, which led it to issue a "clarification". "As there have been several myths and references about Shri Ram and the places associated with him, the Prime Minister was simply highlighting the importance of further studies and research of the vast cultural geography the Ramayana represents to obtain facts about Shri Ram, Ramayana and the various places linked to this rich civilisation," said the statement from the Nepal foreign ministry dated July 14.

**SOURCE:** *The Hindu*