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## **Cunningham and Dharmapala: A comparative study of the two approaches to Buddhist sites in India**

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The present paper is a critical comparison of the activities of Sir Alexander Cunningham and Anagarika Dharmapala who were pioneers of protecting Buddhist sites in India in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century in two different perspectives. Cunningham, as an archaeologist is credited for the discovery of the Buddhist sites in India and for their preservation in antiquarian perspectives. Dharmapala is venerated as the revivalist of Buddhism in India and as a protector of Buddhist sites in religious perspectives.

This study will address the issues of application of Archaeological principals and Religious sentiments in managing living religious sites. Policies, Strategies and achievements of each of these personalities will be investigated. Clash of interests on certain issues and the ways of reaching to a compromise will be taken into consideration. Public support, political backing, academic interests and the overall merit of the activities will be assessed.

Four sites, Buddhgaya, Sarnath, Kusinara and Sanchi are taken as examples in this study. All these sites have been excavated and initially conserved by Cunningham. Activities of Dharmapala were also centered around these four sites as all of them were highly sacred to Buddhists and were neglected as religious centres at that time.

The establishment of the Archaeological Survey of India in 1861 with Cunningham as the Director General of it and the formation of the Mahabodhi Society in 1891 by Dharmapala at Buddhigaya are landmarks in this study. Annual reports of the Archaeological Survey, Journals of the Mahabodhi Society, Newspapers published in India and Sri Lanka, Public and private correspondences will be critically analyzed in this study.

This study will take into consideration the present situation of the particular sites as archaeological sites as well as religious centres and assess the contribution of both personalities into the sustainability of those places by this study. Further, identifying the shortcomings of the activities of these personalities and working towards the betterment of these living religious sites are other aspired outcomes of this study.