

**The bodhi leaf as a souvenir, a memento, a relic, and an ambassador of Buddhism**

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**Abstract:** The delicate venation of the heart-shaped leaves from the Aśvattha tree, as well as their tender rustling in the breeze and their reflecting the light of the sun as so many mirrors, have inspired artists, poets, mystics, ritualizing devotees, and shade-seekers. In Buddhism, a (preferably authentic) Bodhi leaf is eagerly sought as a memento, a pilgrim's souvenir, and often becomes a religious object in itself, spreading all over the Buddhist world. As portable vehicles of the sacred they help to reconstruct both the Bodhi tree and enlightenment. The question poses itself: what class of sacred objects (dhātu) does it belong to? In this paper presentation I investigate the immediacy and iconicity as well as the materiality and mobility of Bodhi leaves through pilgrim trails and tourist trajectories.