

**RITUAL AND PILGRIMAGE IN EARLY
BUDDHISM: SACRED GEOGRAPHY OF THE
MIDDLE GANGA ZONE**

*DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
IN PART-FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE
AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF*

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

ABHISHEK SINGH AMAR



**CENTRE FOR HISTORICAL STUDIES
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI – 110067
2001**



23/07/2001

Certificate

Certified that the dissertation entitled "**Ritual and Pilgrimage in Early Buddhism: Sacred Geography of the Middle Ganga Zone**" submitted by **Abhishek Singh Amar** is in partial fulfillment of Master of Philosophy degree from the university. The work presented is original and has not been submitted in part or full for any other degree to this or any other university to the best of our knowledge.

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

Dr. Himanshu Prabha Ray

(Supervisor)

Prof. Dilbagh Singh

(Chairperson)

For

MAA and PAPA

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation would not have been possible if not for the guidance of my supervisor, Dr. Himanshu Prabhā Ray. The suggestions, insights and tips of Dr. Ray proved to be the most valueable ingredients of in the shaping up this dissertation. At the same time, I must admit that it was with Dr. Ray, since M.A. days, that I learnt about the nitty –gritties of history- writing and relevance of field –work. Undoubtedly, it was one of the great experiences to work with Dr. Ray, who liberally encouraged my ideas, thoughts and experiences from the fields. Thanks Maam

I must extend my gratitude to Dr. U.S. Moorti for his suggestions and Mr. Jagdish Yadav for his cooperation. I would like to thank the staffs of various libraries including Central Library and DSA, JNU, Indian Council of Historical Research, National Museum Library, Mahabodhi Society Library(Bodhgaya) and in particular American Institute of Indian Studies for their help and cooperation during the course of this work .

A man is known by his company. People related to me were very cooperative. Throughout the course of this work, Pahi has been a great support with her suggestions and ideas. I express my heartiest gratitude for her inexplicable amount of trouble she undertook from corrections, editing of drafts and typing .

As usual, Bimlendu and Munna (for helping in my field work) were there with their support. Hemanth, with his suggestions, was a great company in scanning various libraries. Tripuresh's comments were handy. I extend my thanks to Vaidu, Mahesh , Rajesh, Aditya, Rakesh Raj, and M. A Raza.

Needless to say, my parents and sisters have been motivating me towards the completion of this work, with their support and trust.

Thank You,

(Abhishek Singh Amar)

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Theme

Buddhism has been conventionally looked upon as a monastic religion of monks and nuns. Over the years, the religion has been studied from various perspectives. The socio-economic dimension focuses on changes in material-culture resulting in evolution of different belief-systems, especially Buddhism. Though widespread participation of entire cross-section of society from kings and queens down to the royal-functionaries, craftsmen, merchants, guilds and others as donors has been discussed, the ritual aspect of early Buddhism has seldom been referred to. One of the important processes linked with spread of Buddhism, as we shall show, was pilgrimage, as it became one of the primary forms of worship by the lay Buddhist community. The role-played by pilgrimage and pilgrimage circuits needs to be studied in detail in order to understand the recreation of sacred geography, that is, emergence of secondary sites in particular. The purpose of the study of this topic is not just confined to it being one of the unexplored and less worked upon area, but it

also raises the wider issue of ritual in early Buddhism that linked the clergy and the lay community. Moreover, pilgrimage in Buddhism is one of the continuing traditions, which can either be with a pious desire or with a tourist angle (proved by the new schemes of the government).

Generally the growth of the religion and the sacred structures have been connected with royal patronage or with the urban centres which developed due to surplus production. This surplus production was used for the religious places and for the maintenance of the monks. This assumption has to be examined in the light of available sources. At the same time the religion and the sacred places must have had their own dynamics, which must have helped in widening the social base of the religion. It also brings out the question of relationship between sacred places on the one hand and royalty and urban centres on the other. It is here that we need to examine the growth of sacred places independently, so also the sources from which they derived their legitimacy. Most of the sacred structures acquired their legitimacy by claiming to have consecrated the corporeal relics of the Buddha and other important monks and also by artistic depictions on the monuments, which conveyed to the viewers the life-history of the Buddha.

1.2 Historiography

A set of scholars have emphasized upon the iron and surplus production theory. R.S. Sharma holds that agriculture based on the use of iron share, sickles, etc. led to the production of surplus on a scale which could not be attained with previously used implements and it prepared the ground for the rise of urban settlements in northern India, around 500 B.C.¹ He also argues that Buddhism can be regarded as a product of material milieu created by the second phase of the Iron Age². Thus it appears that the emergence of Buddhism is related to the urban centers and the Buddhist centres continued because of the support from the urban centres.

The role of iron and mechanism of surplus production is questioned by A. Ghosh when he suggests the importance of burning of the forests as another mechanism along with use of iron³. N.Lahiri and D.K.Chakrabarti point out that when viewed in its total cultural context, iron does not seem to have given a qualitatively different dimension to the pattern of proto-historic growth in the Indian sub-Continent⁴.

¹ R.S. Sharma, *Material Culture and Social Formations in Early India*, 1983. pp123.

² Ibid., pp124.

³ A. Ghosh, *Cities in Early India*, 1993, pp.

⁴ D.K. Chakrabarti and N Lahari, "The Iron Age in India: The Beginning and Consequences". *Puratattva*, no 24, 1993-94.

In case of urban centres providing sustenance to the Buddhist centres, Erdosy has a different opinion. He cites the example of Rajghat⁵ which supported the monastic community of Sārnāth. The material finds from Rajghat prior to the 3rd century B.C., does not match the magnificence of the fortifications dated to 500 B.C. The material remains are modest in nature. In case of Vaiśālī, there are evidences for the coming up of the sacred structures such as stūpa even before the growth of the place as an urban centre. The location of sacred places near the urban centres may have enhanced the region of influence, but to argue for complete dependence and growth of sacred places on urban centers will be difficult to agree. These instances argue against the prevailing notion, and it is here that we need to focus on the internal dynamics of the religious centres which can have their own support base as long as the religion has a social base.

1.3 Defining Pilgrimage

To begin with, pilgrimage is a pious longing which one tries to fulfill as and when one gets an opportunity and means. The sacred places are concrete living reminders of deities, personages, events and happenings held holy and memorable, and a visit to them is considered meritorious and purifying. Thus pilgrimages are

⁵ Erdosy "Urbanisation in Early Historic India". 1988, pp108-109.

fundamentally place bound institutions. Pilgrimage involves an interaction among the devotee, environment and religious beliefs, which imparts an elevating aura to the sacred place. In Buddhism the places of pilgrimage are monastic sites, which have developed over a period of time. The main constituents are stupas , which are erected as devotional objects ; caitya halls, housing small stupas ; monasteries and temples.

1.4 Pilgrimage-centres

The major sacred sites to be visited by a Buddhist pilgrim, following the death of the Buddha, included the sites of Bodhgaya, Sārnāth, Lumbinī and Kuśīnagar, which basically fall within the region of middle Ganga plain and its fringes. The sites are important due to their association with the most important events of the life of the Buddha, and the permanent depiction of these events in the visual narratives at other sites indicates the importance of these sites vis-a-vis these shrines. The other four sites, as secondary important sites, are Rajāgriha, Śānkissa, Vaiśālī and Śrāvasti, which acquired their importance owing to the Buddha's visits, rainy season retreats in monasteries and performance of miracles and events by the Buddha himself, which also played a pivotal role in the spread of the faith. All these eight sites fall within the Middle Ganga zone.

1.5 Chronological-span

The chronological span for the proposed study is from circa 470 BC-circa 650 AD. By mid- seventh century AD, iconic worship of these events in an integrated form begins which acts as surrogate to pilgrimage. The reason for taking up such a large span is to present a comprehensive work, including both a survey of the sites as well as their organic growth/development.

1.6 Sources

The aim is to primarily focus upon various dimensions of pilgrimage. The sources are derived from both literary and archaeological data. The literary sources include a detailed study and analysis of the related issues based on two texts- *Buddhacharitam* and *Aśokāvadāna*, and two travel accounts of Fa-Hsien and Hieun-Tsang, ranging from first century AD to mid seventh century AD. The reason for taking up non-canonical texts is due to their importance in terms of interaction between the religion and laity. At the same time, most of the previous works have focused on canonical texts. The travel accounts are reproduction of the experiences of the travellers, who visited the sites to be examined here. The different time periods of the compilation of these texts and accounts will also indicate the relative

importance of the issues taken up for the study. The archaeological data includes excavation reports, inscriptions, seals and sealings etc along with architectural remains at all the eight sites. The study and analysis of the archaeological sources will not only supplement literary data, but also broaden the scope of the work and provide validity.

1.7 Chapterisation.

The first chapter will trace the development of pilgrimage as a place bound institution. It also involves the analysis of related issues, such as identification of a pilgrim centre, constituents of a pilgrim centre, typology of the objects venerated, possible motives of pilgrimage, patronage and donations by the pilgrims along with the nature of such donations, and the role of art and architecture in exemplifying the sacred expressions of religion etc, based on a historiographical survey. Secondary literature used in this study includes works on Christian and Hindu pilgrimage, especially in the context of the methodology adopted by different scholars. It will also take in to account the role of faith healing and miracles in the spread of the faith and coming up of a pilgrimage/ceremonial centre. It also discusses the concept of *Tīrtha* and *Darśana*, in different religions, celebrations of festivals and their nature, organisation/funding, and pilgrim's participation. The survey is just to prepare a background for

the study and provide us with a basic understanding of these issues, which will definitely be useful in devising a methodology.

The second chapter will be based entirely on literary sources-two non-canonical texts, *Buddhacharitam* and *Aśokāvadāna* and two travel accounts of Fa-Hsien and Hieun-Tsang. These works of different periods will provide us with changing perspectives of the related issues as well as prevailing conditions at the sites. The focus of the chapter will be to analyse the social base of religion and the role of different section of society “ all under the common terminology of Laity”. The study will attempt to investigate the process of development of legends by way of association of miraculous events and acts of Buddha’s life, role of miracles and legends in recreation of sacred sites and spread of faith-also through sermons and teachings of the Buddha and the monks. The chapter will also look into processes involved in the two-way relationship of the role of royalty in providing legitimacy to the faith by association to the royalty, and a royal establishing himself as a lay person to worship the Buddha and establishing himself as “DharmaKing”. The other relevant issues dealt in this chapter include role of conversions: gifts donations and patronage as processes of merit making; faith healing; beginning of pilgrimage, legitimacy to sites derived from literary sources and lastly beginning of the tradition of

Buddhist sacred architecture following the distribution of the Buddha's relics.

The third chapter will be based mainly on archaeological data, from excavation reports and will be a study of all eight sites. It will begin with the role played by A. Cunningham in the growth of Buddhist archaeology and a historiographical survey of excavation reports of all the sites in a chronological order. The chapter will also discuss the distribution and chronological span, details of the sites, expansion of legends and relationship with the settlement. It will focus primarily on:

Firstly, the emergence of the tradition of pilgrimage, archaeologically based on earliest surviving evidence, supplemented by literary references.

Secondly, the typology of objects venerated. This will also answer partially the first issue and the coming up of new ways of devotional worship over a long span, apart from the votive form of Buddhist architecture (stūpas, icons, images etc).

Thirdly, the question of patronage, donations and their nature based on the study of inscriptions, seals and sealings will also include involvement of the laity in the acts of pilgrimage. Lastly it will also deal with the nature of patronage, political linkages and their role in the

evolution of the sites. The organic development of the sites will also be highlighted. It will deal with the question of location of the sites vis- a- vis urban centers and in the process sites becoming more important due to strategic locations or regular donations. It will also focus on the study of festivals, relic consecrations based mainly on architectural analysis. Lastly, there will be a study of architectural constructions of ancillary structures at all the sites as well as repairs and reconstruction to indicate increased importance. It will also attempt to discuss the role of monastery in facilitating pilgrimage at the sites. Through an analysis of these issues, we can bring out important information regarding Buddhist pilgrimage.

The conclusion will attempt to summarise the results of the study undertaken. It will also discuss the tables and future strategy of the research.

Thus the attempt is to locate this study within the contrasting perceptions provided by canonical literature on the one hand and archaeological data and Buddhist biographical texts on the other. The widespread popularity of the faith enhanced its social base in terms of the laity. The widening social base led to the recreation of sacred pilgrimage sites in different regions which attempted to draw legitimacy either through legendary connections to the Buddha or other personalities/figures. The coming up of such sites questioned

the supremacy of the secondary sites as the iconic representations depict four different places at a later time. Similarly Sānchi, which is one of the richest Buddhist sites, acquired its position as an important pilgrimage site owing to Aśoka and stūpa built over the relics of monks in first century BC. Moreover it's strategic location helped in the spread of faith, participation of people from far of regions to perform pilgrimage and provided it with material support. The recreation of sacred geography facilitated people to worship/identify religion. Also, by mid-seventh century AD, *Aṣṭamahāpratihārya* tradition begins in which people performed surrogate pilgrimage by worshipping the iconic representations of the important events of the life of the Buddha.

Chapter 2

Early Buddhist Pilgrimage:

A Historiographical Perspective

Pilgrimage is a pious longing which one tries to fulfill as and when he gets an opportunity and means. The sacred places are concrete living reminders of deities, personages, events and happenings held holy and memorable, and a visit to them is considered meritorious and purifying. Thus the pilgrimage spots are fundamentally place bound institutions. Pilgrimage involves an interaction among the devotee, environment and spirituality of religious beliefs, which imparts an elevating aura to the sacred place. It makes the human and divine to meet in a transcendental apex symbolised by the mythological imageries of the universe and its unity and multiplicity.

In Buddhism, the literary references in the canon to pilgrimage are limited to the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, V (16-22), where Buddha talks to his disciple Ananda that the believing men should visit four places, related to four most important events of Buddha's life, with feelings of awe and reverence. The archaeological and epigraphic data on the other hand indicate a wider prevalence of the practice of pilgrimage. By 250BC, four other places had become important sites of

pilgrimage as well: Śrāvasti, the place of the great miracle; Saṅkissa, where the Buddha descended from *Trāyastriṃśa* heaven after preaching to his deceased mother; Vaiśālī, the place of monkey's gift; and Rājgriha, where the wild elephant Nalagiri was subdued. Soon, there were many other pilgrimage sites, and virtually every Buddhist region either had locations, which Buddha is believed to have visited during his lifetime or surrogate 'life sites', a visit to which served as a substitute for visiting the actual site. The tradition of the eight great miracles, and the sites associated with them had become a reality of north Indian Buddhist practices by fourth century A.D, and continue till date.

The importance of Buddhist pilgrimage, at present, can be analysed from the fact that the government of India is trying its best to develop the prime Buddhist pilgrimage sites into a tourist-circuit, not only to facilitate the tourists, but also to earn foreign-currency, as it has the potential to enhance the foreign currency reserve of the country. The various steps taken include the beginning of Buddhist-Mahotsava at prime Buddhist sites of Bihar and U.P, starting a new train named *Buddha parikrāma* tourist train, and upgrading the infrastructural facilities at sites etc. Thus pilgrimage is being presented in the form of tourist packaging, which is apparent from two recently published books.

One of the books '*Walking with the Buddha: Buddhist pilgrimage in India*', written by Swati Mitra¹ is a genuine attempt to present the sacred sites as a traditional pilgrim-circuit, following a time honoured trait with a hallowed history dating back two and a half millennia. The book presents an illustrated exploration of information ranging from ancient legends from the Buddha's life to practical information on the sacred sites, including illustrations of its architectural heritage, its literary wealth, and its humane-philosophy vis-à-vis the sacred sites. It also discusses the success of Buddhist art and architecture in exemplifying the sacred expressions of religion.

Another book on the same lines is '*The Buddhist pilgrimage*' by Duncan Forbes, who recounts his experiences and adventures as a pilgrim bound for the traditional sites of the Buddhist story by the modern means of twentieth century. The author's interaction with fellow visitors led him to know that few visitors were simply tourists, while the majority were probing the past on a spiritual journey in the present and all of them shared the reasons for their involvement in the doctrine of the Buddha. The author visits all the prime sites and informs us about the stories, legends, folktales and historical remains – archaeological and architectural. An interesting point brought out by the author is the historical touch to the mythical or miraculous events

¹ Monetary help from Dept. of Tourism, GOI and Eicher group facilitated the publication of the book.

through popular beliefs, for e.g., over a period of time, people started believing in the marked places where Buddha is supposed to have performed miracles/feats as a young child, and these miracles provided the focal interest of the spots where they were said to have occurred. Looking at the paucity of the sources for such studies, the author tries to draw a link between destruction of Buddhist evidence and importance of Buddhist studies from Chinese, Tibetan and Sri Lankan sources.

These two publications indicate the wide scope for the study of Buddhist pilgrimage, which involves various issues² and has the potential to take into account various types of sources. However the historiography of pilgrimage in Buddhism is not largely worked upon, apart from a few scholars who have talked in general about Asoka's pilgrimage and possibility of pilgrimage as the primary form of devotional worship by the lay Buddhist community in pre-Asokan times³. Therefore, the study of Buddhist pilgrimage can be useful in the context of emergence of later sites, where attempts were made to recreate the cultural geography of sites of the earliest original Buddhist-circuit.

² These issues have been studied in the context of Hindu religion, but there does not exist any such work on Buddhist pilgrimage.

³ J.C. Huntington talks of this trend in his articles.

This study focuses upon various dimensions of pilgrimage, and raises questions regarding the constituents of a pilgrim centre, identification of a pilgrimage centre, possible motives for undertaking pilgrimage, the typology of objects venerated, and patronage and donations by the pilgrims alongwith the nature of the donations. Keeping the variety of issues in mind, and non-availability of any comprehensive study dealing with such important issues, we have chosen a book from Christian pilgrimage of Medieval England to review. There are differences in the region and chronology of the work, but our attempt would be to draw upon the methodology adopted by the author.

The book *'Miracle and pilgrims: Popular beliefs in Medieval England'* by R.C. Finucane deals with a series of issues related to Christian pilgrimage of medieval England vis-à-vis nine shrine cults⁴ of medieval Europe, the sources for which are derived primarily from literary sources at the shrines. The book begins with the establishment of the shrines and the role played by miracles, faith-healing, medicines and relic-worship etc. The basic purpose of pilgrimage was experiencing miracles e.g., a miracle of healing or receiving supernatural assistance after praying or visiting a pilgrim

⁴ These nine shrine cults arose in a period of two hundred years and had widespread following. All of them were well documented in literary sources. The reasons are discussed by Finucane in the book. 11-12

site. It also tries to examine the historical and ideological background to beliefs about pilgrimage and saints/monks, their relics and miracles. Another important point is faith healing at the shrine, which includes popular beliefs and rites, and points to the origin and development of the shrine/cult as well as also about the pilgrims affected by the miracles. It also brings out the issue of pilgrim's interaction with spiritual monks and their behaviour at shrines.

The author discusses the early practice of relic veneration as part of the tradition, as relics were supposed to work wonders and their curative powers were most widely acknowledged⁵. The removal of certain saint's relics to nearly inaccessible elaborate shrines not only emphasised their elevated sacred status, but in a way consolidated their supernatural power. The new aspect was reverence to the relics of the monks related to the shrines. The author also discusses about the possible motives to undergo pilgrimage, as people believed that the saints were especially responsive to the prayers uttered in the vicinity of the relics. People went simply to express peity, to have a sight – seeing holiday, to carry out a penance, to collect free alms and food from monasteries and wealthier, even to rob them; to ask for some special favour from the saints or to thank them for favours received,

⁵ The content is from second chapter of the Finucane's book.

such as male heir, or business success or overall protection, and for cure from physical and mental afflictions⁶.

Pilgrimage was also undertaken for expiation of sins by penitential pilgrims, which depended on the kind of offences committed. The indigent visited holy places for charity on festive occasions. Moreover, monasteries played a considerable part in supporting the poor, and famous shrines only increased this charitable role by attracting more poor and rich pilgrims. The most common underlying motive for pilgrimage was a pious desire to honour the saint, though piety is never simple and seldom unselfish. For most people, pilgrimage was an opportunity to show reverence to a saint and to ask a personal favour, even very general one of physical and spiritual protection, a desire to gain some benefit in this world as well as the next. Another important aspect is the role of charity and monasteries provided hospitality and charity for poor as charitable works formed a part of an acceptable routine. Charity was a virtue dear to the pilgrims as alms – giving became a part of the pilgrimage. In case of pilgrim's behaviour at the shrines, pilgrims underwent ritual perfection, which involved fasting and confession, kneeling down, praying and offering coins and candles. Thus the relics, monks and pilgrimages were means to control popular impulses of the religion.

⁶ For motives, book in third chapter pilgrims progress and wonder tales [pp39-54] Finucane discusses

The author also attempts to study the shrines as faith-healing centres and informs us regarding medicinal practices and diseases of the time⁷. The monk's knowledge of medicine also helped in faith-healing, though it was cure-miracles which attracted major attention. The monks also explained the reasons for non-curing of certain pilgrims by saying – the pilgrim was unworthy; he had some hidden sin-one he might not even know about ; he lacked sufficient belief in the saint; he did not carry out his vows properly; he had consulted human doctor or used human – medicines and so on.

The next section deals with miracles, their role in establishing a cult or a new shrine, the spread of miracles, modes, ways and people involved and lastly, the attempt to establish a geographical field of pilgrims participation⁸. The creation of cultural geography was facilitated by miracles and by the relation of saints true or mythical relation to the shrines. The role of folklore, propaganda, miraculous association of places and traveller's accounts were significant in the enhancement of the social base of the cult. Clerics and monks were more important than the laity in spreading news of miracles because of their influence over the spiritual welfare of the layman, their literacy and their more efficient channels of communication. This resulted in

all the motives and charity in great detail.

⁷ This section has been dealt with in the chapter Faith Healing: Medicine and Miracle [pp59-82]

the development of an area around each shrine, within which tales of miracles worked by the holy dead became common knowledge.

Shifts in the importance of the shrines is another relevant issue. This occurred due to several factors, such as inadequate support to the shrine, lack of interest at the centre of the shrine and the receding role of miracles. In such cases, the number of outside pilgrims grew whereas local numbers declined. The geographical proximity to the shrine gave an added value, though the same happened with the association of relic-objects as a source of miraculous virtue. Thus the book by Finucane raises several issues and attempt a systematic study in dealing with these issues. These can be adopted in looking at relevant issues of Buddhist pilgrimage. But we have to keep the limitations as well in mind while borrowing from the book and that's why the attempts has been to draw as much from the archaeological and architectural data of the eight prime sites in orders to have a balanced approach.

In this background of Finucane's study of basic and pertinent issues, the work of J.C. Huntington '*Sowing the seeds of the lotus - A Journey to the great pilgrimage sites of Buddhism*', published in a series of five articles in one of the pioneering works. Apart from giving a detailed description of archaeological and architectural remains of all

⁸ The section is a summary of another chapter 'Maps and Miracles: The geography of pilgrimage [pp

the eight sites he discusses these in the context of their importance for the pilgrimage of Mauryan king Aśoka, the division of the relics, and the eight mahastupas, and the recent excavations of Kapilvastu. He has also explored the possibilities of origins of the Buddhist pilgrimage, soon after the death of the Buddha in (483 B.C).

The author begins with a brief introduction to Buddhist pilgrimage to the eight sites. He argues that to understand the phenomenon of pilgrimage in Indian context, it is necessary to briefly examine the dual concepts of 'pītha' or 'tīrtha' and 'darśana' relative to Indian religion⁹. A 'pītha' or 'tīrtha' is the sacred site, and such a place is recognised by some event having taken place there, either through the actions of the deity or by one of the great teachers or sages such as Sakyamuni Buddha. In Buddhism, there are hundred, perhaps, thousands of such sacred sites. Every place associated with the life of the Buddha, many locations of a vision by a teacher or holy man, every location of an attribution of a miracle and even places of attainment by a saint are marked for posterity. These locations become the 'seats' pītha [of the teacher, who will aid one's own progress in the path of advancement] or 'fords' tīrtha [to cross to the transcendent state of Buddhist eschatology] at which one may become inspired to make similar attainment oneself, or at the very least, be

152-171] from Finucane's book.

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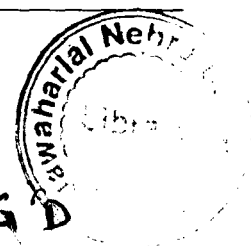
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reminded of the possibility of making the difficult attainment demanded by the Buddhist soteriological methodologies. The second concept '*darśana*' literally means 'seeing' or 'viewing', but also carries a more profound concept of essentially identifying with the events that one 'sees'¹⁰. The sense is that one who experiences *darśana* of an event becomes part of it and the merit or other benefits that might be gained by the principal participants are also gained to a lesser degree by the observer. Thus in Buddhism, even beings in the most unfortunate of births can accrue merit by simply being present and observing events surrounding the teaching of the dharma.

This concept of accruing merit is the underlying motivation behind the pilgrimages. While it is true that an individual might undertake pilgrimage to gain some sought-after benefit, the act of making the pilgrimage itself does not generate the benefit, but it is the merit to some desired objective. The ultimate desired objective/benefit is to positively affect one's own rebirth into higher realms.¹¹ Thus a pilgrimage to the holy places is a kind of long range planning for the future.

⁹ All these concepts have been discussed in part I of Huntington's article.

¹⁰ Huntington's article, part I, p47

¹¹ Huntington talks of the higher realms, that is two Buddhist paradises and twenty eight realms of Brahmanical cosmology, available to those beings, who have acquired enough merit. (pp47-48. part I)

The author, then, talks of eight great events or miracles, aimed at displaying the nature of Buddhahood. It was to communicate Buddhist soteriological ideals to the populace. Thus to visit the scenes of the eight great events is to experience in a direct way the life of the Buddha as both a demonstration of his perfection and the perfection of all Buddhas. The journey traversed by the Buddha and his predecessors is a demonstration that epitomizes the Buddhist promises of the attainment of altruistic compassion and wisdom that leads to one's own salvation.

The role of miracles in Buddhism is quite clear from the numerous miraculous events, which occurred at various sites and helped in creation of sacred geography¹². Moreover the apparent demonstration of miracles as para-normal powers decided the kind of royal or imperial patronage. In case of miracles, there was always both a didactic aspect intended to educate the intellectual and a brute demonstration of control over the metaphysical intended to win over the less easily educable.

At this stage, it becomes pertinent to review the paper by Phyllis Granoff¹³, *"The Ambiguity of Miracles: Buddhist understanding of*

¹² Secondary events occurred at the four sites of the eight sites, and all of them are legitimate early sites. [Rajgriha, Vāiśali, Śrāvastī, Sānkissa]

¹³ The paper was published in East and west, vol46,1996

supernatural power" where she examines two different types of discourse about miracles in the Buddhist texts. In the first group of texts, miracles are problematic; as miracles are produced by the Buddha and certain advanced monks in order to convince non-believers of the greatness of the Buddhist doctrine. These issues about the performance of miracles can inform us about how Buddhists defined a miracle¹⁴ and how they assessed the efficacy of miracles as a means of conversion. In the second section, she examines a totally different way of talking about miracles in the Buddhist past, in part to stress that the whole topic of miracles is a complex one; as there was no single understanding of miracles and their role in the dissemination of Buddhism. However, for someone within the faith, miracles were totally convincing reasons to continue to believe in Buddhism.

Drawing from Buddhist texts and Pali *Suttas*, the miracles centres around the performance of miracles and help us further to understand the Buddhist concept of miraculous power¹⁵. There are two different sets of interpretations of such miraculous power : a Buddhist seeing such displays of miraculous power might well turn to an unbeliever and proclaim loudly about miraculous and wondrous powers of Buddhists. The result can be either the non-believer

¹⁴ A miracle or *acchariya* was any event that did not follow from an identifiable sequence of natural causes. They regarded magic spells as identical in the way in which they function to display supernatural power.

converts to Buddhism or the non-believer considers the Buddhist an adept at magic, who performs it due to a particular magic spell. And thus we are introduced to a further ambiguity in the Buddhist understanding of miracles¹⁶. Thus the miracles may not be the only sole basis to attract someone to the faith.

The miracles, within the faith, were associated with healing as Buddha and his followers may heal individuals¹⁷. They heal entire countries or kingdoms, entire communities ravaged by plagues. The Buddha heals directly by touch or by offering his body to the victims, by washed water and even by his words¹⁸. Within the community itself, miracles were in fact part of a new set of expectation; the Buddha by definition was capable of extraordinary deeds that defied human understanding and were not necessarily meant to be attempted by others. Thus there existed a total acceptance of the miraculous power as part and parcel of the Buddha's nature.

Thus for outsiders, the miracle might raise several questions and can problematize miracles, but for community laymen, they could be related as part of the 'natural cure of the very unnatural life of the Buddha and his followers. So the role played by miracles and healing

¹⁵ Example have been discussed in *kerassha sulta* of the *Dighānikāya* (p 83[5]).

¹⁶ Granoff .1996 , (pp84[6])

¹⁷ Examples are present in prathary sutra of *Diwyāvadāna*, where healings are done by Ananda.

¹⁸ The author gives examples from *ksmendra's* collection of *avadāna*, the *sattveusadhavadan*..

specifically is very important, as it facilitates the coming up of secondary sites and recreation of the sacred geography.

Apart from miracles, the images of the *aṣṭamahāpratihārya* also played a significant role in the creation of sacred geography. This is evident in architectural depictions of these at most of the sites to draw legitimacy as sacred sites. Thus the architectural study of the Buddhist sites and their explanations becomes relevant for the above study.

The relevance of architectural study makes it necessary to review the paper '*Pilgrimage and the evidence of Bodhgaya image*¹⁹' by J. Leoshko. The paper discusses the remains of Bodhgaya as important evidence for understanding the pilgrimage activity at the site. The surviving sculptures with inscriptions demonstrate a concern for accruing merit and these also serve as significant records of the visual expressions appropriate to the revered places. All the sculptural evidence, including a large variety of images, is largely due to site's status as a special place of pilgrimage.

The paper discusses the symbolic meaning of the different kinds of images, like the ones in *Bhūmisparśamudrā* etc. The author opines that the special nature of Bodhgaya is also evident from its

symbolising the means of enlightenment for all Buddhist practitioners, through *vajrāsana* images of the Buddha. The author also talks of the practices of the shrines like seeing images, terracottas, myriad lamp and activities like bathing of the roots of bodhi-tree and circumambulating images. Moreover, pilgrims were expected to perform simple acts of offerings of conventional gifts, flowers, perfumes or incense to further help to create a special environment. Such offerings are well depicted with donor figures and devotees present at the bottom of the sculpture, apart from being mentioned in pilgrims accounts and texts²⁰.

Keeping in tune with the issue of piety and acts and activities of pilgrims at various centres, the article '*Votive objects from Bodhgaya*' by S. Lawson²¹ is another important paper. The paper discusses the objects of veneration / souvenirs and attempts to present evidence of pilgrim's pious activity, donation and reverence at the sites. These are indications of such objects found not only at Bodhgaya, but also at other sacred sites. The different types of Buddhist votive objects included stupas made of stone or stone and brick, made of clay-less expensive ones, small clay roundels called creed sealings, and votive plaques, depicting figures of the Buddha or

¹⁹ The paper is from van kooij's book, (pp 45-58)and is result of extensive work on one site to present a general picture.

²⁰ Hieun- Tsang's account takes of these acts of piety at sacred sites including Bodhgaya.

passages of a sacred text. And these were either offered to the temple, taken away as souvenirs, and manufactured for accumulation of merit, because these objects were tangible signs of the Buddhist doctrine, these were also used as relics as stupas became the symbol of the Buddhist goal of nirvāṇa and Buddhist creed represented the summation of the Buddha's teachings.

The first section of Lawson's paper deals with votive stupas, their chronology, constructions into three parts, which symbolized the difficult upward path towards enlightenment. The second section deals with cella and kula stūpas, which were related to the notion of funerary practices/function found at Bodhgaya²². The third section deals with miniature clay stūpas and creed sealings and their relevance as votive offerings and relics to be put inside a model stūpa. The last section deals with votive plaques, their types and variations according to places or deity. All these objects act as concrete proof of the ancient faith, which were souvenirs for and by Buddhist pilgrims.

The votive offerings had various interpretations and one of the new interpretation has come from G. Schopen in his article "*Stūpa and Tirtha: Tibetan Mortuary Practices and an unrecognized form of Burial Ad Sanctos at Buddhist sites of India.*" The paper aims at a study of the votive stupas as burial ad sanctos, practised by Indian Buddhists of

²¹ The paper is from J. Leoshko's book on Bodhgaya, a special publication from *Marg*.

virtually all the periods²³. These votive stūpas surrounded the main stūpas and came up as ancilliary structures, due to pilgrims. The study also makes use of literary sources and Ladakhi and Tibetan practices of 19th and 20th century.

The author begins with examples of many stūpas in India, neighboring countries and central Asia containing mortuary remains, which have been called tombs, using Foucher's terminology.

His findings reveal that even apart from these stūpas/ tombs, anonymous mortuary remains were deposited in significant numbers at Buddhist sacred sites²⁴. The practice of depositing miniature stūpas both separately and in large numbers together in the cores of secondary structural stūpas is attested at Buddhist sites in India. Another important point is close contact between India and Tibet due to geographic reasons and intermingling and drawing of practices from early times. The miniature stūpas too had a funerary function as they were found encasing bone relics and tiny clay sealings, obviously not of Buddha as indicated by the large numbers.

Thus the author tries to draw a link between miniature stūpas with their funerary function based on current Ladakhi funeral

²² This notion is borrowed from Schopen's work, which will be reviewed after this article.

²³ Schopen's article, pp273; published in *The Buddhist forum*, vol.3

²⁴ *Ibid*, pp278-279

practices and the votive interpretation of such stūpas²⁵. Similar ritual procedure was part of 18th century Tibetan Buddhist funeral practices. Thus the author suggests that such miniature stūpas, placed inside structural stūpas, contained relics of a locally important monk or a member of some ruling house, and such stūpas placed outside by themselves enshrined remains of otherwise ordinary people. Thus the function of miniature clay stūpas indicated that Indian Buddhist had an almost perfectly parallel procedure, that in fact the main Buddhist stūpa at a site had in regard to the deposition of the dead – exactly the same function as the Hindu tīrtha²⁶. In both the Hindu case and the Buddhist case, the remains of the dead, in whatever form, were deposited by preference at a sacred site. Looking at similar practices, the author suggests similar motives for the both, i.e., attainment of svarga, heaven or brahmloka. This attainment by the deceased is a direct result of the depiction, a direct result of placing his remains in the presence of or in contact with the person of the divine: both will henceforth dwell in the same divine place as well. The significance attached to practices like Burial ad sanctos as living Buddhist culture is attested by the archaeological records of the sites.

²⁵ *ibid.* pp 283-284

²⁶ *Ibid* pp 287

Here, J. Fontein's article '*Relics and reliquaries, texts and artefacts*' become relevant due to its content and issues²⁷. The author, deriving primarily from sources like Buddhist texts canonical and historical works, and archaeological data, presents a study of relics and reliquaries and the archaeological context in which they have been found, bring into focus the issues of this study. He cautions that any reconstruction of the evolution of *sāriira*-cult should take into account both types of evidence literary and archaeological, to provide insights in the meaning or functions of specific objects.

The author discussed the beginning of relic-worship just after the death of the Buddha and the four phases of the *sāriira* -cult. The first phase dates to the distribution of the remains of Buddha's funeral, over which ten mahastūpas were built. This created a new precedent of dividing the *sāriira* of the Buddha by his disciples and later monks and saints and ensured the involvement of laymen in the ritual of *sāriira*. The next phase from 3rd century B.C., when Aśoka is supposed to have built 84,000 stūpas in Jambūdvīpa. This Aśoka's legend played a role of decisive importance in the evolution of the *sāriira*-cult, in atleast two ways, i.e., creation of new sacred geography in Southeast Asian countries and China. The next stage notices a connection between *dhāraṇi* (*sutta*) and *sāriira*, thus enabling the

²⁷ The article is published in Van Kooij's book *Function And Meaning in Buddhist Art*. Groninger. 1995

association of organic and spiritual *sāriras*, as excavated in the Gupta monuments. In the last phase, the notion emerged that the essence of the Buddha's teaching, capsulized in the texts, could serve as a spiritual *sārirā* and thus they coexisted with *dharma sārirā*, except in a larger project. Originally, a single structure with its sacred deposit occupied both physically and spiritually the centre of the entire temple-precinct.

The relics (*sāriras*) were enshrined at any occasion, which must have been important. K.R.Van Kooij in his article, "*Remarks on festivals and altars in Early Buddhist Art*" discusses the pictorial depictions of festivals and altars in early Indian Buddhist art, on terms like Mahas, Pūja and āsana. There were a variety of festivals meant for installment of the relics and consecration of a stūpa etc. The sources are primarily derived from architectural representations as festivals, being the concern of lay Buddhist people. The depiction, at Bharhut relief (1st century B.C.) shows people making gestures of adoration – folding their hands or throwing flowers. The question is who are these devotees – local people visiting or pilgrims from neighboring or far off places. At the same time, it brings out the importance of relic worship.

Another relevant question is the nature of such festivals and their organisation, funding and pilgrim's participation. A few Buddhist texts mention that annual relic-worship was performed through such annual festivals/ceremonies. The term 'Mahas' has been used for the festivals, celebrated on different occasions, which were carried on rules laid down in *Mahāparinirbbāna Sutta*. In early Buddhism, pūja and its derivatives exist only in the sense of paying respect to a religious leader, both in *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* and Aśoka's rock inscriptions. Thus the early Buddhists made a clear distinction between the ritual procedures of a Buddhist festival or individuals way of paying respect and Hindu form of Worship. Āsana or altars denotes *vajrāsana* and represented anthropomorphic Buddha without human representations and these acted as centre cult of object, where lay folk paid homage by throwing flowers, and touching the altars. Thus the paper presents the early Buddhist reliefs as new sources of information for festivals and rituals at sacred places, *Mahas* as a commemorative festival, people's gathering for visual representation of Buddha's message and festive gathering of lay community and pilgrimage.

A.W.Entwine while discussing the tradition of pilgrimage at Braj centre near Mathura, talks of the reasons of motivations. One of the possible and important reasons is mere curiosity to see new places

and to get away from daily routine ; infact what amounts to the Hindu equivalent to a holiday. Curiosity and a desire to escape from the stifling framework of parish life are also some of the motivations cited by Sumption (pp13) for pilgrimage undertaken by medieval Christians. The desire of the pilgrims is to recreate in their imaginations the life of the god to whom they are devoted or whose stories appeal to them. They want to visit the places mentioned in the scriptures and oral tradition, and to hear the stories retold at the sites where miraculous events took place. Unsophisticated devotees who find it difficult to grasp anything but the literal meaning of myths are eager to find visible confirmations of their faith. The desire to see material evidence and the representations of the gods, saints and mythical incidents ,to follow the footsteps of the gods and great devotees are important motivating factors. The presentation of wonders ,miracles and religious mysteries in terms of visual image was prevalent in Hinduism. Though some saints discovered and promoted sacred places with a view to inspiring devotion, there have always been priests who have been interested in nothing more than extorting money from gullible pilgrims (pp103).

Braj emerges as a place that inspires one to contemplate and become immersed in the activities of Krishna that are associated with them. The circumambulation of Braj entails renunciation and self-

deprivation, yet the goal is not to obtain release but to gain some kind of emotional fulfillment here and now. Ritual is performed in a perfunctory manner, anticipating generation of merit. The pilgrims are more interested in beholding some sacred objects, or relic or token of Krishna's mythical activities and in hearing some miraculous stories. Rites that are motivated by some obligations such as those in the honour of the ancestors or atone for a breach of conduct are also performed.

Thus, in a nutshell, the historiographical review of all the above papers and books brings out the relevant issues as well as the methodology attempted to study those issues. The new issue, drawn from tourist-angle ethnographic details and Christian pilgrimage, broadens the scope of this study, where as the other issues have been dealt in an organised manner, i.e, the concept of *tīrtha*, *darśana*, the motives; role of miracles; and then the constituents of a centre like votive stupas etc, the motives behind such structures being built at pilgrim sites and issues of relic- worship, relic-enshrinement and related event and ceremonies and lastly, the pilgrims behavior at the shrines, which includes offerings, donations and acts of charity apart from construction of structures with ritual significance. The miracles have played a significant role in recreation of sacred geography and enhancing social base. The increasing social base and display of such

events has been of paramount importance while bringing patrons and donors. The medicinal knowledge of the monks was an added advantage to faith –healing. People visit sacred centres with the hope of getting rid of illness as well and it was here that the knowledge of monks was utilised. At the same time, in the distantly located monasteries, away from the urban centres the medicinal knowledge was utilised by the monks for curing patients. It brought more people under the realm of faith. At the centres , people donate to the temples and also to the needy people for various reasons. The act of charity was considered as one of the means of acquiring merit. One also hopes to receive the blessings of the poor people that is supposed to work in favour of the donor.

Thus the study presents a temporal representation of the aspect of the philosophy and symbolism, which was translated in this manner of objective veneration of the Buddha. The importance of the study is also drawn from the fact that issues related to Hindu pilgrimage has been dealt with and numerous comprehensive works exist, though it does not stand for Buddhist pilgrimage. Moreover any religion seeks to have a lay following and therefore has to take the aspect of pilgrimage in consideration.

Chapter 3

Pilgrim's participation: Glimpses from Non-canonical texts

The Study of pilgrimage in Buddhism is not much worked upon. The work done in the field has looked at it in the model of Puranic Brahmanism. However the notion of pilgrimage in Buddhism seems to be much earlier than the concept of *tīrtha* of Hinduism. The first textual reference/ literary evidence, for it, comes from the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, V (16-22), where Buddha spoke to his disciple Ānanda that the believing men should visit four places, related to four most important events of Buddha's life, with feelings of awe and reverence. And within a very short period say just after the death of the Buddha, four other places related to his life, as he performed miracles there as well, became the centres of pilgrimage, after consecration of stūpas over the relics of the Buddha. Soon there were many other Buddhist pilgrimage sites, and virtually every Buddhist region either has location, where Buddha is believed to have visited during his life time or surrogate 'Life-sites', a visit to which serves as a substitute for visiting the actual sites. This recreation of the sacred geography is an indication of growing social base of Buddhism, and rising popular participation.

Pilgrimage as a process to worship the faith and fountainhead of the sect began first in Buddhism. The first evidence for pilgrimage comes from the Mauryan period , when Aśoka with the monk upagupta, visited various centres, related to the life of the Buddha in order to worship the faith/Buddha and acquire merit. He worked extensively to propagate Buddhism as a faith of laypeople. This involved construction of pillars and signposts at various sites, reconstruction enlarging of the stūpas and other related activities apart from installation of inscriptions detailing his pilgrimage to Bodhgaya at Bodhgaya and Lumbinī¹. Relic-worship became the most popular mode of paying respect to the Buddha. And it was through relics, that most of the stupas gained legitimacy as related to the Buddha. Apart from this, the other evidence proving the existence of the notion of pilgrimage are a variety of votive stupas and sealings at most of the sites, which were dedicated at pilgrimage centres as a mark of respect by lay devotees².

Thus there exists many indications, which can prove the existence of the notion of pilgrimage. This effectively counters the notion of Buddhism being a religion of monks and nuns or that the rituals, worship etc were confined to the monks and nuns which has been the prevailing notion.

¹ Rummidei pillar inscription

² The study of votive stūpas and issues related to it will come up in the later discussion.

The importance and existence of pilgrimage is established by other studies as well³ and it has to be located in terms of religion per se, rather than the conventional socio-economic perspectives. That will help us build up the base of the religion, which was the society. The larger participation of the masses was the sole reason for the spread of the faith and creation of pilgrimage centres in virtually every region. It was the masses, which performed pilgrimage – a process involving various kinds of activities – to acquire merit, to attain *nirvāṇa*, as for monks and clergy it was a very different method altogether. This is where the popular categorisation of *rupalogical* (physical aspects) and *dharmalogical* (religious aspects) criteria become important. For lay people, physical worship/appearance was more important whereas for the clergy, doctrinal/religious knowledge was always more important than rupalogical aspects. Thus the focus here will be, firstly, on Buddhism as a social religion and secondly, the religion and pilgrimage per se were not located regionally.

The study obviously brings into picture various issues, related to pilgrimage and emergence of pilgrimage centres, involving the laity as well. The perception of the masses and scholars are well reflected in the non-canonical works than the canonical works, compiled primarily by the monks/clergy. The changing and varying notion of worshipping the Buddha and the faith has to be looked

³ Statement of I-Tsing on *Buddhacaritam*

historically to locate the perception and participation of the laity. Thus the attempt here is to analyse two non-canonical texts and two travel accounts to locate not only pilgrimage, but also a comprehensive analysis of lay involvement and growing popularity of pilgrimage as an effective mode of worship.

The study, here, is of a very large time span (5th century B.C to mid 7th century A.D.). Keeping this span in mind, the study will be of documentative nature. The reason for taking up two non-canonical texts is the adequate representation of these issues relevant for pilgrimage studies, apart from providing us with the layman's perception of religion. How religion was approachable to the laity? Moreover, non-canonical texts of different time periods will provide us with changes over a long span of time along with the role played by the laity, monks and royalty in the emergence of sacred space and pilgrimage phenomenon.

3.1 Textual tradition of *Buddhacaritam* :

The first text for the study is *Buddhacaritam* (BC) by Aśvaghōṣa, which is basically a biography of Buddha by a Buddhist scholar in 1st century A.D. The text is invaluable for originality of thought and for providing us with a complete and coherent picture of the faith. The importance and influence of the text can be understood in terms of Buddhist faith as reading the *Buddhacaritam* was considered meritorious for its compilation of noble doctrines in a concise form. The pilgrimage centres taken up for this study, acquired their

unique and special position as sacred place due to their association with events and miracles of Buddha's life, properly narrated in the text. The miracles were obviously one of the means of bringing more and more people under the influence of faith, though they were not solely aimed at that. The study of miracles associated with the Buddha's life brings into focus the formation of legends as events of life get associated to miracles, over a period of time. Another important aspect related to the above is the contemporary perception of such events/legends and their utility and role for laymen in conversions of various people. The text deals with conversions by the Buddha himself. It also discusses the sites and structures including the one's donated by various converts, as a gift to their faith or as a proof of reverence to the faith. Finally, the text deals with the mode of worship by laymen of the Buddha and the stupa consecrated over his relics, symbolising the Buddha.

With regard to work, date, country and other important particulars of the personal history of Aśvaghoṣa, traditions vary. But the established facts prove that Aśvaghoṣa authored two poetical works called the *Buddhacaritam* and the *Saundaranānda* and a drama a author *Sāriputra - Prakaraṇa*. The accepted time-frame for him is first 50 years of Christian era between C.1A.D.-50 A.D., as a contemporary of Kaniśka. He belonged to Saketa and was born and brought up in a Brahmin family. This reference is made on the basis of his writing, which was contemporary to the style

prevalent in Eastern India (that is divergences of his grammar from the Paninean system have been accounted by knowledge of one of the Pracya treatises, the sect of Buddhism). He is also supposed to have presided over the Fourth Buddhist Council, at the time of Kaniśka.

Before getting into issues, it is apt to point out the considerable drawing from Brahmanical mythology, and literature, which is overlapping and is used in almost all the cantos in some or the other form either for comparison or for quoting examples. The text begins with a brief description of Śākya and their king, Suddhodana who is compared with Brahmanical deities, may be in order to provide adequate importance in accordance with the set parameters, where the popularity of Brahmanical deities acted as standard parameter. The greatness of everything associated with Buddha has to be there and established by such comparisons.

3.2 Textual Tradition of *Aśokāvadāna*:

The second text for the study is *Aśokāvadāna*, a text of 2nd Century A.D., written in northwestern India. *Avadāna* literature includes legends, and stories showing the workings of Karma through the deeds of ordinary individuals. The text is the legend of a layman and his role vis-à-vis religion, though it deals with a number of important questions relevant for the study: questions pertaining to the nature of Buddhist kingship, relationship between

the state and the monastic community vis-à-vis king's role, role of king in creation of sacred geography, the involvement of laity, nature of religious practices e.g. merit making, devotion and rituals, conversions and spread of faith etc. The text, *Aśokāvadāna*, brings into focus the relationship of a layman through a king to the Buddha as it attempts to analyse the attempts of Aśoka to relate to the Buddha by establishing certain cosmological settings, resulting ultimately in merit making. The constructions of eighty four thousand stupas, visiting of 32 places of pilgrimage, care of Bodhi tree (installing *vajrāsana*) etc - each provides in its own way a focus, a structure where Aśoka can ritually and experientially relate to the Buddha. He establishes pilgrimage centre "as a favour to posterity", worships and reorganises relics by constructing stupas, symbolising Buddha's *nirvāṇa*, acts as a magical instrument to spread the faith and attempts to make the Buddha present in this world for the laity and subjects of his kingdom. The text was used by Buddhist preachers in popular sermons and is often compared to the *Jātakas* as evident in issues of attracting new converts and encouragement of both devotion and donation. Thus the utility of the text for the study is clearly brought out in the questions it raises and the relationship between the lay follower and Buddhism which it highlights.

The legends ought to be studied in overall literary and religious context as a whole as use of selective data / sources leads

to misinterpretation and ignorance of the context. The attempt is to focus on the traditional significance of the legends of Aśoka which, independent of edicts, reflected the religious preoccupation of particular communities.

The text is dated in 2nd century A.D. on the basis of reference to the gold coin ,*dinara* , which puts atleast part of it after 1st century A.D. *Aśokāvadāna* in its present form is a product of the Buddhist Sanskrit community of Mathura or North West India as a whole. This enables us to gain a better understanding of the religious milieu that formed this text. Mathura was an important centre of Buddhist Sanskrit tradition (particularly Śarvastivādā school). They were the first to introduce use of Sanskrit language for the writing of Buddhist texts as Sanskrit educated Brahmins, reworked the Buddhist tradition so as to propagate it more effectively, and in doing so, were quite willing to add more material to this Canon. So North western India as a whole began to see the emergence of individual Buddhist authors whose works, also in Sanskrit, were closely related to *Aśokāvadāna* in purpose and in world view. The authors were more of reworkers of old legends and oral tradition and retold Buddhist stories in better ways. The reason for retelling or embellishing popular stories was to preach and proselytize, to promote and spread the faith, to attract potential converts or maintain the faith of previous converts and address the situation of laymen. The authors were concerned with emphasising

a number of themes – the doctrine of karma and the context of rebirth, attempt to inculcate a sense of moral action as good and bad deeds were defined in terms of one's relationship to the Buddha, the devotional foci of Buddhism – Dharma and Saṅgha. To them, Aśoka's desire for close relationship with the Buddha inspired his acts of merit and religious life. The aim here, was to stress the importance of material support for the Buddhist religion, which meant an advocacy of the merits of *dāna* to the Buddhist community making it interesting to analyse the institution of kingship and its relationship to Buddhist religion.

The text takes definite positions on questions such as faith, kingship, devotion to Buddha, donation to the Saṅgha, and the nature of suffering and ways of overcoming them. The text deals with these themes in a example the *Mahāvamsa* of Sri Lankan tradition. It reflects a difference in the whole outlook of the text. The *Mahāvamsa* as a chronicle is naturally concerned with history different way as it forms part of a different tradition. The Pali recension of the legends vary from text to text as for and lineage, the *Aśokāvadāna*, an *avadāna* is not. Its focus is on religious and psychological setting of its story. The chronicle emphasises on tracing the line of descent from the Buddha's time to the author. In terms of Aśokan legends, it is interested in Aśoka as an important link in the chain of legitimacy connecting the Buddhists of Sri Lanka, with the Buddhists of ancient India and ultimately with the

Buddha himself. Basic differences exist in the literary genre and orientation of texts and that makes it easier to assess specific divergences from *Aśokāvadāna*. The chronicle (*Mahāvamsa*) discusses the third Buddhist council, various stories of ascetics, dispatch of missionaries and Mahinda, identification of M.Tissa and attempts to associate Aśoka with the *Theravāda* sect of the authors to enhance the prestige of *Theravādins*. All these are not at all dealt in the *Aśokāvadāna*, which is a total contrast. This proves the importance of aims and orientations of scholars and role of local traditions and popular beliefs, along with legends in compilation of such non-canonical texts. These acquire importance only in a social context and the works aimed at their accessibility to laymen, rather than, Buddhist monks. Their works provided legitimacy and a sacred /religious touch to laymen's experience of such legends.

3.3 Travel-Accounts As Sources:

The two travel accounts of Fa-hsien and Hieun-Tsang of 5th and mid 7th century respectively, have been taken for the study as they deal with first hand experience of monks as Buddhist pilgrims. These two accounts provide us with information about Buddhism as it existed in their times, such as the different traditions, way of devotion and performing ritual, condition of Buddhist pilgrimage centres, the laymen involvement /popular participation in the activities of the Saṅgha and festivals, patronage and donations and

participation of royalty in such activities. Apart from this, the accounts seem to be based more on the existing oral tradition, than on the edicts or inscriptions, for all kind of information. Issues such as, how the sites derive their legitimacy, dominance of Mahāyana, growing symbolism in worship of stūpa, life and ways of monks living in Vihāras, maintenance and the state of Buddhist education, role of various kings in the spread of the faith etc. are discussed in Hieun-Tsang's account⁴. The utility of the two accounts are thus proved by the varied and detailed information these provide for this study.

The accounts discuss Aśoka and his legends and have misinterpreted the Aśokan inscriptions, as their knowledge seems to be based on transmission of oral tradition rather than actual text of the edicts. Both pilgrims were familiar with Chinese versions of Aśokan stories. These conceived the king primarily as a supporter of the Buddhist Saṅgha and as a great builder of the stupas that marked the sites of their pilgrimage routes. For them, the pillars simply commemorated an event in the life of the Buddha or in the history of Buddhism and recorded the events/happenings of the place. They were ancient signposts piously erected by Aśoka for the benefit of travellers and pilgrims. This brings into focus popular belief about Aśokan edicts and actual text of the edicts, and role of such legends in reading of edicts. This point leads to the contrast of

⁴ Hieun-Tsang's account deals with Aśokan legend as well in pilgrimage and pilgrimage-routs and his act in spread of faith through construction of stūpas and signposts at various sites.

knowledge based on study of edicts/inscriptions vis-à-vis legends and popular belief through textual details and their validity as pure and influential sources .

3.4 MIRACLES AND LEGENDS :

To begin with the issues, it would be appropriate to deal with the various events/acts of life of the Buddha and how they get associated with the miracles (i.e. their subsequent association with the miracles) to develop legends. This process will obviously help us visualize contemporary perceptions. The study of miracles or legends in *Buddhacaritam* and *Aśokāvadāna* are relevant for the relationship between the Buddha and laymen, apart from legitimacy of the sites of pilgrimage, taken up for this study. The texts attempt all through to display the moral and spiritual grandeur of the Buddha, an aim, which would have been impeded by the magical performance of the legends.

As far as miracles are considered, there exist unlimited miracles in both the texts, which found mention in the travel accounts as well. In *Buddhacaritam*, nothing seems to happen without miracles, from the birth of the Buddha to his death, as the examples are numerous⁵. The role of miracles in creation of pilgrimage sites are elaborated by *Buddhacaritam* and supported by travel accounts, which points to the role of king Aśoka in marking

⁵*Buddhacaritam*. CI-4 to 27

the site with signposts as a mark of faith with a motive of merit and for the benefit of the general populace.

Therefore, the miracles till now have been discussed as part of the legends, where Gautama was to be established as Buddha. This was predestined and divine interference occurs quite often to facilitate the above. Now, after Buddhahood was attained and a faith had come up, it was to be established and here, miracles have played a very important role in doing so. The miracles and magical powers became part and parcel, as listed in the text, where two of his chief disciples are masters of wisdom and magical powers respectively.¹

The discussion of miracles in *Buddhacaritam* can be divided into two parts. In the first part, the formation of legends based on incidents of Buddha's life till enlightenment are discussed. The events, till now, took predestined and divine interference's/miracles occurs often to facilitate the coming up of the faith. The miracles also played an important role in the establishment and spread of the Faith. The miracles and magical powers became part and parcel, as listed in the text, where two of his chief disciples were masters of wisdom and magical powers respectively⁶. The miracle performed by the Buddha and later on by certain advanced monks were to convince the non-Buddhists of the greatness of the Buddhist doctrine and in this text, we are presented with the role of

¹ *Buddhacaritam*, CXVII-20

miracles as means of conversions within the Buddhist community itself. There existed total acceptance of the miraculous powers as part and parcel of the Buddha's nature and thus the examination of role of miracles in creation of secondary pilgrimage sites.

The miracles, prominent in the *Buddhacaritam*, are the ones performed by the Buddha himself at Śrāvastī, Saṅkissa, Vaiśālī, Rājagriha – all four became major pilgrimage centres . These performances in full public view and in front of lay people and city dwellers strengthened the faith by enhancing the social base and establishing Buddha's credentials as a great seer beyond doubt. These incidental miracles till *Mahāparinibbāna* definitely played a role in enhancing the influence of the faith over larger areas.

The eight pilgrimage sites acquired importance, as discussed in the text, because of immense influence of the faith over the local inhabitants, owing to miracles or teaching of the Buddha, or indirectly by monks and their healing powers, apart from sermons. For conversions the Buddha himself converts numerous followers like Amrapāli, Ananthapindika, Ashvajit and Upatisya, Mahākaśyapa, Bimbisār and princes from Kapilavastu by his miraculous power and teachings. This is later followed by the monks, who put their best efforts to bring more and more people under the faith. Cantos XXI in *Buddhacaritam* deals with conversions of people carried out by the Buddha himself, while visiting various places. The conversions were undertaken for the

benefit of the ones converted as attaining *nirvāṇa* would become easier by just following the words and path of the Buddha. They all acquire merit by being in touch with the Buddhist faith.

The references to miracles are numerous in the text, which definitely played a role in converting people and creating sacred sites. Prominent miracles include miracles in front of his father,ⁱⁱ challenge and defeat of Tīrthakas at Śrāvāsti,ⁱⁱⁱ teaching of law to mother at heaven, receiving alms from sky gods, and obeisance from gods and kings and coming down to earth at Saṅkissa.^{iv} This is followed by Devadatta episode where he attempts to kill Buddha twice - once by rocks at Gridhhakūṭa hill and secondly by leaving the wild elephant open, but both attempts failed and the mast and bloody elephant gets tamed by Buddha's *Prabhāśā*. The taming of the killer elephant in the heart of Rājgriha city was a miracle in front of the city dwellers and thus the faith was strengthened as more and more people come within the faith and Buddha's stature as a great seer is established beyond doubt.^v Another important miracle occurs on way from Pataliputra to Vaiśālī where Buddha crosses the Ganges river within seconds without any boat in front of numerous local inhabitants.^{vi} Lastly, there occurs a series of miracles as a reaction of nature and earth to Buddha's *nirvāṇa* - *Mahāparinibbāna*.^{vii} Thus, these incidental miracles definitely played a role in enhancing the influence of the faith over larger areas.

Related to the occurrence of miracles is the coming up of first eight sacred sites as pilgrimage centres as well as the architectural depiction of these miracles at various Buddhist sites. The *Aṣṭamahāpratihārya* tradition arises out of four important events and four miracles of Buddha's life. The sites became important also because of immense influence of the faith over the local inhabitants who were converted into the faith either directly by Buddha following miracles and teachings of Buddha or indirectly by monks and their healing powers, apart from sermons. Here the importance given to kings of various places by Buddha automatically becomes important as these meetings were not only reverence to Buddha but also provided him with adequate patronage and legitimacy to his faith.^{viii}

As far as references to conversions are concerned, there are various examples like conversion of Ashvajit and Upatisya,^{ix} Ananthpinḍika's conversion,^x Āmrāpālī at Vaiśālī^{xi} Buddha comes to Kapilavastu with thousand disciples and converts more people and princes from Kapilavastu by his miraculous powers and teaching.^{xii} Cantos XXI deals with conversions which were done by Buddha while visiting various places and a variety of people. The conversions are undertaken for the benefit of the ones converted, as attaining *nirvāṇa* would become easier by just following the words and middle-path of the Buddha. They all acquire merit just being in touch with the Buddhist faith.

Merit can also be acquired by donating various things including land and constructed monasteries. The text refers to the gift of Veṇuvana^{xiii} and the Vihāra inside, at Rājagriha by the king of Magadha, followed by a monastery inside Jetavana by Ananthpinḍika at Śrāvasti through the help of the local king Prasenjit.^{xiv} There are also references to Jīvākāmravana by Jīvāka at Rājagriha. All these donations are in accordance to their faith.

In *Buddhacaritam*, the importance given to the kings of the various places by the Buddha himself automatically becomes important as these meetings not only indicated reverence to the Buddha, but also provided adequate patronage and legitimacy to his faith. The conversion of a king / royalty obviously helped in widening the social base of the religion which also facilitated pilgrimage. Soon after his death, the kings decided to build stupas just to venerate the Buddha, a kind of symbolic worship, making it easier for masses to worship and show devotion towards Buddha.

The four events and four miracles of Buddha's life occurred at these sites and the depiction of these led to arrival of *Aṣṭamahāpratihārya* tradition, also used later by other sites to gain legitimacy of its architectural depiction. Lumbinī, the birthplace of the Buddha and Kapilavastu where his earlier life was spent, acquired importance as many miraculous incidents occurred following his birth. Aśoka visits all these places and the legend is

verified in Fa-hsien and Hieun-Tsang's account. Aśoka marked the site with an inscription and grant for the monks living here.

Next comes Bodhgaya, where he was enlightened and stayed for next seven weeks, thinking and acting, followed by miracles. From here, he proceeded to the deer park at Sārnāth to turn the wheel of the law and gave his first sermon to the five ascetics, who became his first five followers. The last of this series is Kuśīnagara, where he attained *nirvāṇa*, after converting his last follower .

The other four sites acquired importance due to the performance of the miracles. At Śrāvastī, in front of the king Prasenjit and the local inhabitants, Buddha accepted the challenge of Tīrthakas and defeated them⁷. Fa-hsien adds on to this by adding the miraculous stories of the Chanchamana, and Devadatta going to hell alive for their misdeeds against the Buddha. Hieun-Tsang attests to the legend and adds that topes were built at all such places. Buddha was gifted a Jetavana Vihāra by Sudatta, where he lived for a longer time than at any other place, preaching his law and converting men⁸. Wherever any incidents occurred, stūpas / topes were raised.

The next site was Saṅkissa, where from Buddha's ascent to and descent from the Trāyastriṃśas heaven took place. The Buddha went to the heaven for teaching of law to his mother and to receive alms from skygods; apart from receiving obeisance from gods and

⁷ *Buddhacaritam*, CXX, 54-55

⁸ J.Legge- Fa-hsien's travel accounts , CXX- p59

kings⁹. Apart from this, many legends are famous over here regarding building of image by the king, Utpala episode, Anurādhā and Mugalan episode etc¹⁰. . All these were the result of the supernatural power of the Buddha and his followers. The construction of a stūpa and a vihāra especially by Aśoka is reported by Fa-hsien and Hieun-Tsang's account.

At Vaiśālī, one of the favourite rainy season retreats of the Buddha, many legends are famous. But the prominent miracle was the donation of honey by a monkey to the Buddha. The interesting legends are regarding conversion and donation of Āmrapālī; interaction with the powerful rulers and lastly, the tope of bow and weapon laid down. Another famous event at the site was organisation of second Buddhist council. All these were sufficient to provide legitimacy as pilgrimage sites.

The last one Rājagriha, was capital of Magadha and Buddha visited it before and after his enlightenment. The legends of his interaction with Bimbisār and Ajātshatru are famous . Apart from that his physician Jīvaka gifted his mango garden with a constructed Vihāra to the Buddha and his monks for rainy season retreat. The prominent miracle here was of Devadutta's two failed attempts to kill the Buddha, when he tamed the wild elephant by his *Prabhāsa* in front of the city-dwellers of Rājagriha. Another miracle occurred at Gridhakūṭa hill, where a vulture attempting to

⁹ *Buddhacaritam*, CXX. 56-58

¹⁰ J.Legge- pp 55. C XVII

destroy the meditation of Ānanda, was stopped by the Buddha¹¹. Lastly, the first Buddhist council was organised here at Saptaparṇi caves, where all his teachings were organised in the Canon. Hieun – Tsang’s attested this legend.

All the eight sites received their share of Buddha’s physical remains as relics, after his *nirvāṇa* and the stūpas were constructed by the local kings to acquire merit. The followers of Buddhism also benefited by their ability to worship the relics and indirectly the absent lord in his *nirvāṇa*.

3.5 AŚOKA AND PILGRIMAGE

Later on, as discussed clearly in *Aśokāvadāna*, Aśoka attempts to relate to the Buddha and in the process, his acts meant for acquiring merit for himself and doctrinal benefit lives to the spread of faith and widening of social base. The popular participation in the faith and later related acts of worship through different means including pilgrimage increases, as reflected in the text. The legends related to the Aśoka are reinforced by the accounts of both Chinese pilgrims, who attempt to interpret Aśokan inscriptions in the light of legends, resulting in its misinterpretation.

As far as miracles are concerned, there occurred several ones in *Aśokāvadāna*. Aśoka himself converted following Samudra’s

¹¹ Fa-hsien’s account in J.Legge. Chapter XXIX

miracle in jail and later on his pilgrimage tour, the whole incident of the Buddha's birth are the narrated by the sal tree at Lumbinī. From miracles to conversions, a linkage is drawn and from performance of miracle only-pilgrimage sites as well come up. Later, the Buddhist turned to certain magic and miracle show as to assure themselves of satisfaction and certainties of an affective order, without which there is no religion¹². For developing of pilgrimage centres, these miracles and magics acted as a magical projection of the Buddha himself at the sites. And this was later accomplished by ritual action directed towards all kinds of object related to the Buddha it resulted in veneration of Buddhism by worshipping Buddha's relics (bones), cut hair, nails, begging bowls, foot prints and shadows left on a wall etc.

This was the reason for veneration of stupas with such type of remains. In order to facilitate the laity to relate themselves to the Buddha, Aśoka reorganised the relics and built up 84,000 stūpas – the focal point of religiously relevant reality, which represented the Buddha in *nirvāṇa*, and its worship evoked Buddha.

In the text, Aśoka's devotion towards the faith is reflected in all the three acts and lastly, his gift of a fruit, which helped him in equalling the record of Ananthapindika's donation. Aśoka is not able to get all the relics due to obstacles from Naga kings, but then he manages to build 84,000 stūpas over those remains. Stūpas over

¹² Paul Mus in J.S. Strong, pp 103

the relics represents the intimate relationship between relics and the Buddha's physical appearance. So, the stūpas built by Aśoka represent the Buddha on a magical plane. Offerings are made to them of flowers, ornaments, of foods, of cloths which are tailored to the Buddha's size. The daily worship of the relics reproduces the daily routine of the Buddha. It is clear that such symbolism projects on the relics the personal image of the Buddha. For Aśoka, this is also a religious experience. The completion of the stūpas mark his own achievement of a doctrinal understanding. It marks the change in Aśoka's image and established him as "Dharmarāja".

John S. Strong attempts to give two interpretations of this episode of the stūpas, one running along "Rupalogical" and the other along "Dharmalogical" lines¹³. The intimate relationship between the relics and the Buddha's *rūpakāya* is clear in the Buddhist tradition as the relics are the remains of the physical body of the Buddha. There exist miracle stories in Buddhism when these relics miraculously "come alive" and take on the body form of the Buddha himself, with all his physical traits.¹⁴ However despite lack of such stories in this text, it is quite clear that in Aśoka's organised distribution (and subsequent worship) of the relics an attempt is being made to recapture, to make present, the Buddha's *rūpakāya*, as argued earlier. The number 84,000 is significant as it is generally symbolic of totality, but it corresponds more specifically

¹³ J.S.Strong. 1983.pp 116

¹⁴ Strong quotes the example from *Mahāvamsā* in his text.(pp 116

here to the traditional numbers of atoms in a body. Thus in building 84,000 stūpas over 84,000 minute relics, Aśoka is trying to reconstruct Buddha's physical body on the face of his own realm, *Jambūdvīpa*.

In *Dharmalogical* dimensions, the stūpas are the dharma in the stone. The number 84,000 is also equal to the number of sections in the Buddha's teachings¹⁵. Thus by building 84,000 stūpas/vihāras, Aśoka is also symbolically reconstructing the body of the Buddha's teaching – *Dharmakāya*. In this text the stūpas are referred as "*Dharmarājikas*" that is, as monuments pertaining to the king of dharma (*Dharmarāja*). This of course reinforces their connection with the Buddha's, also referred to as "King of Dharma" but at the same time, it asserts their intimate relationship with the person of Aśoka, who is also, of course a *Dharmarāja*. Thus the construction of stupas also represent Aśoka's own establishment as dharma king, that is, his *Dharmalogical* understanding of his kingship. Therefore this episode marks change in his status from being "Aśoka the fierce" to being "*Dharmāśoka*". In this act, Aśoka has brought together two dimensions of the Buddha that had been separated since the *parinirvāṇa*: his *dharmakāya* and his *rupakāya*, and "cosmologized" them by identifying with the territory of his kingdom with *Jambūdvīpa*. Now the Buddha's physical remains are cosmologically organised and spread throughout the kingdom and

¹⁵ It is supported by *Mahāvamsā* records as Aśoka undertook the project after hearing this fact.

similarly the Buddha's teachings are now more cosmological and have been systematically implanted in and identified with the kingdom. So, Aśoka succeeds in establishing a relationship with the total person of the Buddha and the attempt at cosmologizing both his remains and teachings will make it easier for lay people to access the Buddha as they wish. In the process, Aśoka acquires merit for his doctrinal benefit. This is followed by another attempt of merit making by visiting the pilgrimage sites.

In *Aśokavadāna*, Aśoka after meeting with monk Upagupta, resolves to go on pilgrimage to honour all the places where the lord lived, and to mark them with signs as a favour to future pilgrims. This follows an account of their journey as they visit various sites associated with the Buddha, starting with Lumbīnī and finishing with Kuśīnagara¹⁶. His pilgrimage thus reconstruct the entire life of the Buddha in the sense that, as they move physically from one site to another, they retrace and remember the events of his career – a kind of religious experience when the king can experience the presence of the Buddha in a religious milieu. Thus, in pilgrimage physical form of the Buddha is being experienced not only by the Aśoka, but also by all the the followers and lay devotees.

At each of the major sites of pilgrimage, Aśoka builds a caitya, a commemorative monument, for himself and posterity to worship. Caityas are associated with places of pilgrimage, ancient

¹⁶ J.S.Strong, 1983. pp 244-251

sanctuaries, and specially groves of trees¹⁷. A caitya is a monument intended to recall in the mind of the faithful an importance in the life of the Buddha, and thereby give rise to meritorious thoughts. Supernatural activities occur throughout Aśoka's pilgrimage, as Upagupta keeps summoning local deities, trees spirits etc. to describe for Aśoka the physical form of the Buddha. In all these reports by such sources, the emphasis is as much on the person of the Buddha – his charismatic qualities – as on the specific events that occurred in the life of the Buddha at a particular place or time. Here ,what the king Aśoka wants is to relive those events, to experience the Buddha himself in all his glory. This is the best possible way for a layman to approach the lord.

Aśoka visits thirty two places sites as a pilgrim, the same as the number of distinguished marks on the body of the great man. It is a systematic establishment of his whole person – his life as a *Mahāpurusha* – on the face of the kingdom. This thirty two number of pilgrimage sites also attempt to glorify his kingship by identifying it with that of all *Chakravartin*, and through the *Mahāpurusha* connection, with that of the Buddha himself. What comes out of the analysis is quite clear .Thus ,one attempts to relive the life of the Buddha by visiting all pilgrimage sites, can feel religious experience, relate himself to the blessed one, access the lord in the *nirvāṇa*, and lastly acquire religious merit. Aśoka does all these

¹⁷ J.S.Strong. 1983. pp 120 (Borrowed from Andre Bareau)

and his experiences are followed by many others as it sets a trend of a laymen, though royal, relating himself to the Buddha, acquiring merit / full justification of his faith or glorify his faith.

Another interesting episode in *Aśokāvadāna* is Aśoka's attempt to relate himself to the Bodhi tree¹⁸. After his pilgrimage tour he returns to Bodhgaya, because his faith was particularly aroused by the Bodhi tree. He wants to make further offerings to the Bodhi tree and start sending all of his most precious jewels. The tree represents the Buddha and his enlightenment, but here Aśoka identified himself and his reign with the Bodhi tree. Aśoka's contribution in promoting Buddhist religion and establishing Buddha throughout the *Jambūdvīpa* was tremendous, but he is also promoting his kingdom and establishing himself. In the process, he converts many others to the faith of the Buddhist religion; the first being his younger brother Viṣaśoka (story discussed in *Aśokāvadāna* text). What is important here is Aśoka's good means in communicating his greater cosmological perspective. He makes it easier for the masses to access the Buddha himself, through different means.

Aśoka himself stands to gain merit by spreading the religion to far-flung areas, as reflected in the text. So, he is involved in all kinds of acts – from establishing faith to spreading it, to donating it ,to worshipping it on the one hand and on the other, he provides a

¹⁸ J.S.Strong. 1983. pp 257-260

sort of legitimacy in front of the people, who will definitely follow the royalty. At another level, he sets up the trend that a layman with poorest means can equally approach the Buddha, as a layman with best means – a contrast apparent in his own role – thus widening the social base. His role broadly in making it a social religion / a religion of the laity was tremendous. All this he does by reaffirming his faith and in the process acquires merit, which is constantly emphasized in the text *Aśokāvadāna*. The doctrine of rebirth and *karma* keep coming, which is bridged by merits or demerits, one does in the present life.

3.6 RITUAL OF PILGRIMAGE

Pilgrimage is one of the best ways to reaffirm one's faith and acquire merit. On pilgrimage, people worship the place and make donations. Donations are one of the best means to acquire merit and reaffirm one's faith, as proved in existence of this institution of gift making due to its sustained functional value for the society. Some motive is bound to be present in all acts of giftmaking. Giftmaking being an important mode of establishing social relationship with other individuals or groups, it becomes necessary to consider in terms of time and space, the immediate motives as well as the general, social and cultural needs, which impelled the donors to make gifts. The motives can be inferred from the gain or

results the gifts were expected to produce or from the kinds of occasions on which these gifts were generally made.

The *Nikāya* literature, particularly *Aṅguttara* and *Dīgha*, mentioned eight motives for gift-making. Gifts are made from desire of merit, from desire of profit, from fear, from free choice, from pity. The wealthy practise charity for the hope of cultivation of that virtue, by which to obtain high regard among men or the desire of reaching heaven after death. The installation of votive images or dedication of caityas, etc. by lay devotees were undertaken to promote one's own welfare as well as that of one's own near kinsmen, as evident from inscriptions of Mathura, Bodhgaya, Kanheri and others. Moreover, gifts made to religious beneficiaries and the poor were expected to yield certain positive gains for the donor. The *Dīgha Nikāya* openly avows, "That which he gives he hopes to receive in turn". Gifts were also made for sin-expiation, desire for temporal gains, spiritual merit, superstitious fear of ritual gift making on occasions, fear and concern for personal safety, personal welfare and gain. The expressions of happiness, affection, appreciation, gratitude or even cultivation of self-discipline through renunciation of material possessions were some prominent reasons for gift making as well. In the end, the principle of that "what is given away in this life is acquired in the next", besides being a widely held belief in the reproductive quality of all gifts, would be found to have two other major metaphysical concepts central to it,

viz. the doctrine of *karma* and the theory of rebirth. This is apparent in the *Aśokāvadāna* and the two travel accounts.

The gifts, referred to in *Buddhacaritam*, are the gifts of Veṅṇuvana¹⁹ and the vihara at Rājagriha by Bimbisār, Jivakāmravana by Jivak at Rājagriha, grove garden at Vaiśālī by Āmrapali, and Jetavana-vihāra by Ananthpinḍaka at Śrāvastī²⁰. All these are attested by the accounts of both the travel. In *Aśokāvadāna*, however this merit making alongwith the concept of the doctrine of rebirth and the theory of karma is greatly emphasised. Aśoka's gift of dirt as Jaya to the Buddha grants him kingdom in this life. Kunāl pays for the merits and demerits of previous lives. Similarly, other episodes of such kind exist, where the message is clear for everyone: acquire as much merit as you can in this life by good means, where gift making is one of the ways. Aśoka keeps making gifts to saṅgha, to all the stūpas, to monks in all forms not just to restrengthen his faith or wish to give more to the community but also to acquire fame as he attempts to equal Sudatta's donation.

We have already dealt with conversions and the people who were converted by Buddha himself or by the monks. How these influential people spread the faith has also been discussed, though their conversions in itself brings about a lot of people under faith. Now we would like to locate the process of conversions and the role

¹⁹ *Buddhacaritam*, CXVII, 46

²⁰ *Buddhacaritam*, CXVII, 58 & 86-87

played by faith-healing etc. The texts discussed here glorify the Buddha by telling of miraculous powers he possessed including the ability to heal. This power of healing is sometimes extended to the Buddha's teachings itself and to other statements of truth. The miracles and miraculous were generally accepted in Buddhism as evidenced by a host of texts including *avadānas*. This involves some of the religious beliefs and practices including rituals for which the *avadānas* give evidences and the way in which they were incorporated into the structure of normative Buddhist belief as a whole. There is no question that certain miracles could clash sharply with fundamental Buddhist doctrines particularly, doctrines of *karma* and causation. This is because some miracles in violating "natural laws" could also violate the most important causal law of all which demanded that there be retribution of deeds. All diseases were caused by *karmā*. Healing through the Buddha in offering a reprieve from illness without compelling the sufferer to exhaust the *karma* that caused it, would seem indeed to violate the general rule that all deeds bear fruit that must be fully experienced before that fruit can be eradicated. Ritual text seem to be aware of this problem and in stressing the greatness and efficacy of rituals they prescribe, these texts explicitly allow that their rituals even cure diseases that have been caused by *karma*²¹. This brings into focus both the faith-healing and rituals. The rituals were meant not

²¹ P. Granoff, pp286

just to show reverence but also to acquire merit and moreover the rituals were an easy way out for lay-devotees. Pilgrimage provided both opportunities to acquire merit by performance of rituals and an occasion for healing.

The Buddhists honoured the Buddha by calling him the greatest healer of all times.²² There are healing stories of miraculous cures in which the Buddha cures intractable diseases, often plagues that cannot be cured by ordinary medical means. He cures them through distinctly non-medical means: with his glance [*Avadānakalpalata* 96;99, *Avadānaśataka* 2.14] or by the fragrance of his corpse [*Avadānakalpalata*; 54]. The healing power is explained as simply a general power to aid others. But the motives\purposes it shows are wide ranging- from widening social base through conversions to pilgrimage. Healing rituals come out in *Avadānaśataka* (2.14), where the story of a relic of a Buddha, his role is carried throughout the kingdom and worshipped to ward off the plague. The community afflictions and healings were of a different kind, as it did not involve the individuals but the community.

For conversion, Fa-hsien cites reference of Great-heap monastery, built in memory of a wicked demon, converted by Buddha. He confirms the Āmrāpali episode of Vaiśālī and her donation of a vihāra built in memory of the Buddha. He also

²² *Gandhavāyūha*, pp354.398-399

confirms Samudra episode of *Aśokāvadāna*, and subsequent conversion of Aśoka and revival of Bodhi-tree at Bodhgaya. Most of these incidents are given with same details by Hieun-Tsang, who has also given elaborate details of legends of Aśoka and his constructions at all the eight sites.

In context of rituals and mode of worship, all the accounts and texts talk of building of the first eight stūpas over the relics of the Buddha and their subsequent reconstruction by Aśoka -legend²³, along with their reconstruction. Aśoka, in *Aśokāvadāna*, also attempts to worship the relics of the foremost disciples of the Buddha, provides us with the detail of stūpas built over relics of Sāriputra at Jetavana²⁴, stūpa of the elder Mahāmaudgalyāyana²⁵, stūpa of elder Mahākāśyapa²⁶, stūpa of Batkula²⁷ and lastly, the stūpa of Ānanda. He worships all of these and made offerings to all to show his reverence. Fa-hsien confirms this trend of building stūpas over relics of disciples and later Hieun-Tsang does the same. The tradition gets reflected in stūpas at Sānchi. The rituals talked of in these texts are not much elaborate. Aśoka makes *anjuli* at all these stūpas and makes largescale offerings. He also records his visits and donations, followed by festivals. The *Buddhacaritam* describes the adoration of stūpas by the learned and that the various lords of men paid excellent reverence to the stūpas which

²³ *Buddhacaritam*, cantos-xxviii, 63\65 : *Aśokāvadāna*, pp

²⁴ J.S. Strong, *Aśokāvadāna*-pp252 (wisest follower of Dharma)

²⁵ *ibid*, pp 253 (supernatural power)

²⁶ *ibid*, pp-254

held the relics of the saviour (Jina) with the chanting of hymns and the finest perfumes and lovely garlands and the sound of music²⁸. Fa-hsien himself made offerings with the flowers and incense and lighted the lamps when the darkness began to come at Griddhakūṭa-hill caves²⁹.

Aśoka organised an elaborate festival called the Quinquennial festival, where he made elaborate offerings to acquire merit. He gave gifts to all the monks assembled there, fed them, apart from worshipping the Boddhi-tree with a bath of scented milk, perfumes etc. and raised a platform on all the sides. After this his faith in the teaching of the Blessed one reached even greater heights.

Fa-hsien also talks of a festival involving monks and laity at Magadha. Every year on the eighth day of the second month they celebrate a procession of images, when the monks and laity within the borders all come together; they have singers and skillful musicians; they pay their devotions with flowers and incense. Then the procession enters the city and remains for two nights. Throughout the night they keep the lamps burning, have skilful music and present offerings. This is the practice in all the other kingdoms as well. This is the time when the rich vaisya families open their houses for dispensing charity and medicines³⁰. Hieun-

²⁷ *ibid* pp-254

²⁸ *Buddhacaritam*, cantos-xxviii, 57-84

²⁹ Fa-hsien's account, pp83

³⁰ *ibid*, pp79

Tsang provides a glaring account of Harsh's great festival at Prayag, where he donates everything to the monks and monasteries to acquire merit.

Apart from *Pratimokkha* and *Pāvarana* ritual involving only the monks, the monasteries organised *Kaṭhiṇa*-rites at the end of the rainy season. In fact, *Pāvarana* and *Kaṭhiṇa*-rites continued to be held commemorating the end of the rainy season. The *Pratimokkha* encourages the monks to examine their own personal behaviour while the *Pāvarana* encourages them to evaluate each others conduct. The *Kaṭhiṇa* ceremony represents an affair in which the laity expresses their admiration of the *bhikkhu-saṃgha*. The ceremony\ institution of the *Kaṭhiṇa*-rites evolved out of concern for the appearance of the *bhikkhus*³¹. The monks attending this communal ritual were considered to be pure with regard to disciplinary conduct (and thus possessed a disciplined inward disposition), the giving of material for new robes symbolizes the laity's desire that the monks appear outwardly pure as well. Thus the *Kaṭhiṇa*-rite also provides an occasion whereupon the laity can express appreciation to monks who are worthy of support.

Alec Robertson pointed out: one of the great advantages of the *Kaṭhiṇa* ceremony is that it brings together the monks and the lay-devotees. The monks received from the laity the requisite of the monk life which are necessary for their physical well being and at

³¹ Buddha prescribed giving of new robe material by laity to saṃgha.

the same time promote their spiritual progress on the path to deliverance. The monks reciprocate the liberality of the laity by providing the latter with spiritual nutriment for their well being here and hereafter. The mutual interdependence of the *saṅgha* and laity is essential for the strength of the unity, the solidarity and the longevity of the Buddha-Śāsana³². Thus he is pointing to the fact that both laity and monks factions of the Buddhist community benefit from the reciprocal formally represented in the *Kaṭṭhina*-rites. Laity gains merit by providing the most important material goods to the most auspicious field of merit--the *bhikkhu-saṅgha*. A pure and unified *bhikkhu-saṅgha* is required for the transaction to result in a meritorious reward for laity. The rites provide an opportunity to the laity to recognise the special status of purity maintained by the *bhikkhus* and in the process, gain merit for their own quests to gain better rebirth. Most importantly, it provided an occasion for interaction between monks, monasteries and the laity. The laity participated in the ceremony at most of the pilgrimage sites, as that enables greater merit. This interaction enabled a structure of relationship between the two to be sustained and it could happen by both performing their duties sincerely—monks adhering to discipline and participation in ritual life of the community and laity adhering to the faith and providing support to it. Such occasions enhanced the faith of laity.

³² J.C.Holt,HR,no. .1976, pp52)

3.7 End notes

- Buddhacaritam*, CXVII. 20.
- ii *Buddhacaeitam*, CXIX. 12-15.
- iii *Buddhacaritam*, CXX. 54-54.
- iv *Buddhacaritam*, CXX. 56-58.
- v *Buddhacaritam*, CXXI. 39-62.
- vi *Buddhacaritam*, CXXII. 7-10.
- vii *Buddhacaritam*, CXXVI. 85-106.
- viii Meetings with the kings of Magadh, Kosal, Sravasti, Kapitlavastu, Vaisali, etc.
- ix *Buddhacaritam*, CXVII. 4-14.
- x *Buddhacaritam*, CXVIII, 2-56.
- xi *Buddhacaritam*, CXXIV. 46.
- xii *Buddhacaritam*, CXIX. 1 and 38-42.
- xiii *Buddhacaritam*, CXVII. 46.
- xiv *Buddhacaritam*, CXVII. 58. and 86, 87.

PILGRIMAGE AND SACRED GEOGRAPHY

In Buddhism the places of pilgrimage are monastic sites which have developed over a period of time. The main constituents are stūpas which are erected as devotional objects; caitya halls, housing small stūpas; monasteries and temples etc. The eight sites, under study here, have grown archaeologically as well and they developed because of their important position as pilgrimage centres. The examination of the growth of these places will bring out the interaction between laity and the sacred place. It will also point towards the role of royalty, particularly Aśoka Maurya, in enhancing the tradition of pilgrimage and establishing the sites as important places by marking them with pillars, stūpas and inscriptions. We will also analyse the chronology and independent evolution of the sites. The focus will be to examine the relationship between the religious centres and urban centres, and to see if the religious centres were dependent on urban centres or grew independently. An analysis of inscriptions and seals and sealings will also be undertaken.

In the previous chapter, we have dealt with a variety of issues based on textual sources. We have come across the story of evolution of sites based on life-events and miracles, role of royalty, motivations for pilgrimage, marking of site, conditions of sites during the time of the Chinese pilgrims etc. Now this chapter will attempt to analyse the

same issues in light of the material remains at the site in order to bring out a clear picture of the tradition of pilgrimage. The question of relic worship and development of sacred geography based on worship of stūpa, monasteries etc. will also be dealt with.

4.1 Beginnings of the Buddhist Archaeology

The genesis of Buddhist archaeology has either been accidental or with the purpose of treasure hunt. The early historic sites have been looked generally in the context of urban centres and that is the content in which they have been studied. The beginning of archaeology in early (half of) 19th century was due to interest of some individuals, and these people attempted to begin work on the sites which have come to light accidentally. The interest of few Britishers in particular consolidated the basic works. They in order to bring up the new sites, went to early texts, which were not very useful. Then focus shifted to Buddhist texts and travel accounts in particular, which helped A. Cunningham & others to locate the sites/places. Hieun-Tsang's account became handy as the scholars based their search entirely on his placings. The result was discovery of various sites and Buddhist sites and places, where Hieun-Tsang went as a pilgrim and as a student.

The deciphering of Aśokan inscription by James Prinsep in 1834 initiated a totally new way of researches on Buddhism as Aśokan inscription referred to the popular form of Buddhism. A series of

publications of these inscriptions followed. At the same time, A. Cunningham began to explore and excavate various sites such as Saṅkisa (1842 & 1862), Sānchi (1850); Sārnāth (1834-36), Vaiśālī (1861-64), Bodhgaya (1861-92), Śrāvastī (1862), etc. These sites were identified by him and he published a series of monographs based on works at these sites. They were : The Bhilsa Topes or Buddhist Monuments of Central India (1854), comprising a brief historical sketch of the rise, progress and decline of Buddhism; 24 volumes of Reports of Archaeological survey of India, (13 himself & 11 vols by J.D. Beglar & A.C.L. Carleyle under his supervision); Ancient Geography of India, (1871) in which he made an attempt to identify the ancient sites of India on the basis of the accounts of Alexander's historians & the travel report of the Chinese pilgrims; Corpus of Aśokan inscriptions (1877), contained the texts and translations of the Aśokan inscriptions with some of their photographs; The Stūpa of Bharhut (1879) & Mahābodhi or the Great Buddhist Temple under the Bodhi Tree at Bodhgaya with 31 illustrations (1892). From 1861-65, he served as archaeological surveyor and from 1871-85, as Director- General of ASI. Thus, A.Cunningham's work provided the base for the growth of archaeological study and a trend arose.

4.2 Identification of Buddhist sites :

Identifying features generally are Buddhist monastic remains within or on the periphery of settlements or along trade routes between c. 6th B.C. and 12th – 13th c A.D. Architecturally, one or all of the following these elements should be present at a Buddhist site : the stūpa, the caitya worship hall containing a stūpa, and the vihara or the monastery. The Buddhist stūpa was built to contain the corporeal relics of the Buddha or one of his chief disciples, or even mark a spot associated with an important event of the Buddha's life or the history of Buddhism. The stūpa could be fashioned as votive offerings at Buddhist religious sites. The popularity of religion with layfolk gets reflected in the simultaneous growth of the sites, and evidences for popular participation come from votive objects, seals, inscriptions etc. Before getting into the acceptability of the stūpa-cult or worship of stūpa and inclusion of an elaborate ritual for worship, let us try to look at the earliest evidence for pilgrimage.

Rummendei pillar inscription talks of Aśoka's visit to Lumbinī to pay respect to the place. The Nigalisagar pillar inscription of Aśoka (2nd century B.C.) refers to a stupa in the Nepalese terai dedicated to the Buddha's mythical predecessors and enlarged and embellished by Aśoka.¹ It was from Aśokan times that one witnesses proliferation of stūpa sites all over India. The site of hill pillars were marked with stūpas as well. (Ghosh, 1967) Amongst the reliefs at Sānchi in Central

¹ Ray, H.P. – Kanheri, Paper in *World Archaeology*. Vol. 26. No. 1, p. 37.

India are several representations of congregational and ceremonial stupa worship by lay devotees with music & floral offerings (Marshall & Foucher 1940, Vol. II, pls 12,15, 26, 32, 33, 36, 41, 43, 43, 45, 47, 48, 60, 62, 63). As evidenced by references in *Mahāvastu*, stūpa worship had developed its own elaborate ritual by the early centuries of the Christian era involving circumambulation, obeisance, offerings of flowers, incense, cotton and silk cloths, placing of lights and striking up of instrumental music (II : 362-4) Referring to the reign of Aśoka, the *Mahāvamsa* (p. 19) mentions festivals associated with the worship of the stūpa. To the lay worshipper, the boons expected were not so much spiritual benefit as advancement in worldly life, riches and prosperity (*Mahāvastu*, II : 362-4).²

Thus, the earliest evidences of pilgrimage to the Buddhist sacred sites comes from Aśokan period, by the king Aśoka himself. It is he who is supposed to have given pilgrimage a fillip by his act of pilgrimage and spreading the religion by constructing a number of stūpas, pillars, vihāras and installing inscriptions. The evidences of stupa or pillar-constructions are present at all the major sites, but what really existed before all these constructions needs to be enquired. We know that these sites existed before Aśoka as well. The purpose of raising this issue is to examine the nature of the remains and to see if that brings out the involvement of the lay people in the growth of the site as well as with the religion. The analysis will also help in setting these sites within their wider archaeological and cultural context. The

² Ibid., pp. 38.

growth of the sites vis-à-vis monuments and structures must have led to the development of a sacred complex. The sacred complex must have helped to propagate the power of the Buddhist religion (*dharma*) across the landscape, and it also indicated a preoccupation with the protection of Buddhist relics and the control of the monuments in which they were deposited. On an intra-site level, the importance of vision, surveillance and availability of services (*pūja*, medical treatment etc.), may have been manifested in spatial terms within the sacred complex.

These complexes provide a sacred landscape, where they enjoy considerable influence. At the same time, the analysis of the sacred and its landscape helps in situating the sacred/ritual site within their broad socio-political setting. The analysis of landscape archaeology involves the study of systematic relationship between sites. A time-space perspective, on the other hand, is concerned with the routine movement of people through landscapes, constituted by the locales in which they came into contact (Barret et.al., 1991 : 7 – 8).³ The entire landscape has to be examined in order to bring out a clear picture. It has to be looked at in its totality and focus on the total area rather than the existing monuments. The focus on remains in monumental form has led to the sacred : profane polarity and use of rigid religious categories such as 'Buddhist' and 'non-Buddhist'. Therefore it is necessary to look at other substantial, albeit fragmentary, remains religion/structures such as votive stupas etc. We shall also try to

³ Shaw, Julia – *Buddhist landscape*; paper in world Religion, BAR International Series, 755.

examine the issue of visual experience, and in particular intervisibility between/within sites, as an important consideration in examining ritual monuments within the landscapes.

As we know most of the Buddhist sites were marked with stupas, because stūpas represented the physical body of the Buddha. The stupas were the most sacred of the remains and were the focus of the rituals. The stūpas have been widely researched in its architectural, artistic and symbolic aspects and a variety of donative and reliquary inscriptions have been used to shed light on the wider socio-historical context of the stūpa. In order to understand the symbolic meanings of the stūpa, we need to analyse the relationship between monastic architecture and sensory experience. We can only hope to understand the symbolic meanings of the archaeological structures by viewing them within their wider ritual context, i.e. i.e. the way they were made, used and experienced by man (Raulius, 1980 : 272).⁴ There have been attempts by scholars like Gregory Schopen and Kevin Trainor in this direction, who have explored the nature of the relics deposited in stūpas and the rituals that surround them. Their work has helped to dispel the idea that the veneration of relics was the exclusive concern of the Buddhist laity. Trainor (1996 : 18-35) has discussed the way in which a monument can, through the force of ritualization mould the way in which people move around and 'read' its various parts. This brings in archaeology, which 'offers a perspective on what people actually did, as opposed to what they were supposed to

⁴ Ibid. pp 7

do. Julia Shaw, keeping the recent works in mind recommends that there is a need to reconsider these monuments from a phenomenological angle, applying what can be gleaned from texts and inscriptions to what can be found on the ground at specific places. The enquiry she envisages goes beyond scriptural texts and archaeological remains per se and attempts to make a 'somatic' assessment of the ways in which people in the past responded to and interacted with their surroundings.⁵ Thus the focus of the enquiry here will be an attempt to recover the ritual dynamics of specific Buddhist sites and the landscape in which they were set in. The other relevant questions to be dealt, include how people responded and interacted with their "created" (by royalty or people) surroundings, role of location of such sites in propagating faith.

James Heitzman in his paper '*Early Buddhism, Trade and Empire*' has attempted to link Buddhism, trade and empire in a new way, where growth of an empire facilitated trade and spread of the Buddhism. He attempts at locational analysis of Buddhist sites to bring out a new insightful picture, based primarily on archaeological data.

He begins with a definition of monastic and a non-monastic site. Buddhist monastic site is a place where surviving artifactual and structural remains include Buddha statuary, donative inscriptions, artistic motifs, relics or any other finds indicate the former presence of

⁵ Ibid. pp 9

persons concerned particularly with Buddhist devotion. Structural remains include : (a) Stūpas – mounds of earth, brick or stone, supposedly raised over the relics of the Buddha and other important Buddhist personages or erected simply as devotional objects, ranging in diameter from less than one meter to forty meters; (b) Caitya halls – building or caves, housing small stūpas (caityas); (c) Monasteries – building or cover, often quadrilateral in shape, containing cells as dwelling places for monks; (d) Temples – building or cover housing a Buddha image in a central position for devotion. A non-monastic site is a place other than a monastic site, indicating long term occupation during the early historic period. They are basically of two types – village farming community and urban centres. It is a fact that all early Buddhist monastic sites are located close to non-monastic sites or along routes connecting urban localities. And at this early stage in their spread, around third century B.C., Buddhist monastic institutions were closely linked to the major forms of political and economic organization that were developing at the same time.

Although Buddhist monastic sites were consistently associated with non-monastic locations and with two institutional components – empire and trade – which organized the network of permanent settlement, there is little archaeological evidence to suggest that the Buddhist sites themselves had any purely political or economic role. In the vast majority of cases like Sānchi, Taxila, Nāgarjunikoṇḍa, Vaiśālī and even at Śrāvastī, monasteries are situated at a distance from the non-monastic structural concentrations. The locations of the monastic

sites at a distance from the scenes of political and economic activity made their direct participation in such activity inefficient. The monasteries were peripheral to the major governmental and commercial organizations based in the discrete non-monastic centres. But it continued to receive patronage from the urban elites as Buddhism may have provided an opportunity for those persons at various class and status levels within urban environment to express and confirm their positions through ostentatious display. The donations might have been with an aim at spiritual or material benefit or for acquiring merit. Thus, Buddhist diffusion was closely dependent on patronage of urban elites. Buddhist monasticism appears as an appendage to centralized organizations in the early historic periods. The above argument and an analysis attempts to bring out a clear picture regarding the relationship between the urban centres and religious centres, and the independent existence of the latter, based on archaeological data. This issue will be dealt later, after an analysis of the eight sites, their chronology and historiography of excavations conducted.

4.3 SITES :

After a detail discussion on the sacred places and their evolution within Buddhism, it is pertinent to have a data based analysis of all the eight pilgrimage sites. These eight sites – Lumbinī, Bodhgaya, Sārnāth, Kuśīnagara (now Kasiā), Śrāvastī, Sankissa, Rājagriha and

Vaiśālī – were associated with Buddha himself. Buddha himself stayed at all the sites and all these sites have physical relics, which are seen as most powerful focus for Buddhist devotion. They act, first, as reminders of a Buddha (or saint), their spiritual qualities, their teachings and the fact that Buddha (they) actually lived on earth. These relics, then, act both as reminders of Buddha, or some other holy being, and as actual tangible links with them and their spiritual powers. Therefore, there is equal merit in devotion to the Buddha's relics as there was in devotion to him when he was alive.

4.4 Importance of Sites & Historiography of Excavations:

Bodhgaya

Bodhgaya was the place where Buddha stayed for a longtime before attaining enlightenment below Bodhi-tree. From earliest times of Buddhism, Bodhi-tree seem to have been the focus of attention as it was the symbolic reminder of the Buddha, for they, too, were tangible links with him and his spiritual power. The site continues to be one of most sacred and frequented pilgrimage centre. The place continues to be one of the prime pilgrimage sites, visited by people from around the world, and venerated by the devotees for centuries.

Bodhgaya has been a subject of scholarly interest since the nineteenth century when it was visited repeatedly and featured in various studies and drawings. The importance of the site is apparent

in the numerous structures of early periods, which include the Mahābodhi temple, *Vajrāsana*, the Bodhi tree, architectural fragments, Aśokan pillar, sunga railings, votive stūpas and images etc. Thus, with only incomplete historical and pilgrimage records, such remains, documenting centuries of pilgrimage and patronage, become important evidences for understanding the activity at the sites.

There have been a number of works on Bodhgaya and the prominent scholars have been Alexander Cunningham (1861-92), R.L. Mitra and J. Beglar (1871), J. Fergusson (1876), T. Block (1908-09), B.M. Barua (1931-34), J. Marshall (1922), L. Bachofer (1929), A. Coomaraswamy (1935), P. Stern (1954) and Chandra (1971). All these scholars have primarily worked on the basis of architectural and archaeological remains.⁶ It will be interesting here to examine the different approaches of these scholars in determining the chronology of the site.

The most important aspect of their work has been on the chronology⁷ of the site, for which they used the various sources, available at the side. In these works, reliance has been placed on the inscriptions written on or the motifs described in the sculptures. Then attempt has been to put Bodhgaya in the context of the development of motifs or styles of sculptures elsewhere in India, like Sānchi, Bharhūt etc., which has been derived from Western methodology and made too

⁶ Cunningham, Bloch etc. were involved in the excavation of the site, while Mitra, Beglar etc. were involved in the restoration of the temple and other structures. Here it is necessary to point out the incomplete excavation of Bodhgaya.

half-heartedly to succeed. Thus it will be suitable to look at Bodhgaya with a new approach, based upon autonomous mode of evolution of art and architecture at the site.

Cunningham, Barua and Bloch used inscriptions and coins to date the site between third century B.C. and first century A.D. working with the precondition that Indian art began with the Mauryan emperor Asoka (C. 271-231 B.C.) under Greek or Persian influence, relying only on literary accounts, inscriptions or motifs rather than on the style of sculptures, Cunningham was unable to distinguish the undeniably Mauryan style of the *Vajrāsana* sculpture from the later sculptures of the sandstone railings, or the sculpture of Bodhgaya from that of Bharhut.⁸ Barua thought of Bodhgaya being a sequel to Bharhut by vague speculation about the decreasing use of descriptive labels or increasing use of Buddhist symbols in place of inscribed incidents from Buddha's life. He fails to provide any illustrations of sculptures showing the stages of this process. T. Bloch dated the site on paleographic grounds in a convincing way to the Sunga period.

J. Marshall, Bachofer and Chandra dated the site by using stylistic analysis, which has been perceptive, summary and tentative. R.L. Mitra based his dating on Cunningham's work, whereas J. Fergusson dated the site to C. 250 B.C., Bharhut to 200 B.C. and Sānchi I toranas to A.D. 10-80, representing a deterioration in 'delivery and precision'. He saw growing complexity as a sign of decay,

For chronology: the scholars have based their works on the early sandstone railing pillar sculptures of Bodhgaya and few associated sculptures in sandstone.

a eurocentric opinion, where technological simplicity was posited as a classical virtue, characteristics of an early age, and complexity as a sign of decay, indicative of a later period. Marshall, based on classicist opinion and in terms of Greek influence, saw at Bodhgaya as transitional phase between Bharhūt and Sānchi I, and dated it to C. first century B.C. He found Bodhgaya to possess, as compared with Bharhut, free movement of planes, more organic modelling of figures, a greater freedom and closer relationship in their poses,⁹ due to influence of Greco-Iranian art, visible in decorative treatment, characteristics of jewellers, lapidaries and carpenters, to the plastic treatment of a mason. But he modified his views in 1940's, dating the sandstone railings to around 60 B.C. The reason for post-Bharhut date of Bodhgaya was detected by him in the change from the religious tone, restrained mannerism, firm and precise modelling and vigour and character of the Bharhūt, to the mundane quality, easy postures, soft rounded contours, simplification and orderliness of Bodhgaya.¹⁰ Marshall's analysis of Bodhgaya sculpture was inconclusive, being incidental to the study of Sānchi I or of broad artistic trends and being involved in his classical predilections. He seems to have denied the possibility of any autonomous development in the formation of Bodhgaya style seeing it as subservient to the developments at Bharhūt or at Sānchi. He did not, however, flesh out his theory by illustrating the way or the stages in which this influence of other sites or schools was exerted on Bodhgaya.

⁸ K.K. Chakrabarty, 1997. pp. 10.

⁹ K.K. Chakravarty: 1997. pp. 13.

L. Bacher used rigorous stylistic tools to place the majority of Bodhgaya sculptures in the first half of the first century B.C., as a necessary stage in the treatment of contour and volume, depth and tectonics, in a morphological evolution of Indian art, stretching from about 150 B.C. to A.D. 200. He saw two phases of Bodhgaya and thoroughly discussed individual sculptures before assigning them to each of these phases. He too suffered from the problem of Marshall of comparative study, which was Sānchi-centric, as Sānchi I being the best example of Indian architecture. Bodhgaya was assessed in relation to other sites and not on its own terms. Chandra¹¹ suggested after Bharhūt, one in the direction of the 'simple and plain work' of Bodhgaya; the other in that of the rich and sensuous splendour of Sānchi I gates. He demonstrated how Bodhgaya shared this ambivalence with other contemporary sites by citing sculptures from Kausāmbi, Mathura, Sarnath etc. He did not elaborate on the transitional phases in the evolution from Bharhut to Bodhgaya and Sānchi I and suggested subtler sequences between them, yet to be followed up.

A. Coomaraswamy reversed the approach of Bacher, chiding him for placing shape over meaning in Indian art, and rejected Marshall's view of Bodhgaya as a stage in the studying of Hellenistic and Indian techniques. He used internal evidence of style to date it around c.100 B.C., i.e., between c.125-75 B.C. and assigned the larger Bodhgaya figures between 50 to 0 B.C. He supported his

¹⁰ Ibid. pp. 14.

iconographical premises by stylistic analysis and distinguished two phases at Bodhgaya.¹² S. Kramrisch's (1933 : 83) chronology of the first half of the first century B.C., based on stylistic generalisations, remained generalized, amorphous and indeterminate. Lastly, P. Stern, dating it post-Sānchi I, shows complete disregard of the possibility of the different styles, using same motifs at different times and places. Another weakness with Stern's approach was his selective choice of motifs, picking up those which suited his conclusion and ignoring others.¹³ His chronology is quite confusing, based on comparative method.

What comes out of the discussion is quite confusing and makes it difficult to provide a precise date for the architectural development of the Bodhgaya. The firm group of objects,¹⁴ obtained from archaeological excavation, here needs to be used as corroborative evidences as well. And it will be suitable to analyse on visible characteristics of the objects and if necessary, in comparison to Bharhūt, Sānchi and Mathura, and by looking at sculptures at other centres of Central India to establish missing links in the broad movement of style at major sites.

¹¹ Ibid. pp. 20.

¹² There is a problem with his methodology and use of Aryan symbols and Dravidian iconic types. He also saw closeness between Bharhut and Bodhgaya. the same tool which has been challenged.

¹³ Chakravarty. K.K.. pp. 18.

¹⁴ Railings, inscriptions, other sculptures etc.

SĀRNĀTH :

Sārnāth, 4 miles to the north of Vāraṇasī, represents the site of the ancient Rishipatana or Mrigadeva. The first name owes its origin to the fall (patana) of the bodies of five hundred Pratyēka – Buddhas (rishis) at this spot after their attainment of *nirvāṇa*, while the latter is derived from the legend that the king of Varanasi, moved by the spirit of self-sacrifice of Bodhisattva, born as a deer named Nyāgrodha – mriga (Banyan Deer), granted security to the herds of deer to roam freely in the woods of Sārnāth.

The site enjoys a high position in the Buddhist world and is one of the four great places named by Buddha on his death-bed, due to his First Sermon. The seed of the saṅgha was also sown here with the conversion of the householder Yasa and his fifty-four friends. It continued to be a leading centre of Buddhism owing to its sanctity under such names as *Dharma-Chakra-Vihāra*, *sad-dharma-chakra-vihāra* and *sad-dharma-chakra-Pravartana-vihāra*.¹⁵ In consonance with its great sanctity, the relics excavated at the place are extensive, varied and rich.

The site was discovered accidentally in eighteenth century by the workmen of Jagat Singh, diwan of Raja Chait Singh of Vāraṇasī, who were digging the place for bricks (1794 A.D.)¹⁶ at the cost of Dharmarājikā stupa, built by Aśoka. The relics discovered on this

¹⁵ Mitra, Debala – *Buddhist Monuments*, pp. 66.

¹⁶ Sahni, D.R. – *Guide to the Buddhist ruins of Sārnāth*, pp.7, (1982-83).

occasion created a widespread interest in the ruins of the site. Jonathan Duncan, the resident commissioner, has left us an account of the incidental discovery of Sarnath and he handed over the two urns – a stone and a marble vessel – to the Asiatic society of Bengal. He communicated to the society “for inquiring into the history and antiquities, the arts, sciences and literature of Asia.”¹⁷ The next round of excavation was carried out by Colonel C. Mackenzie without much success and nothing was published.

A. Cunningham carried out explorations and excavations of a more scientific nature between December 1834 till January 1836. The cost of the research was shared by James Prinsep, Capt. Thoresly, Major Grant and Cunningham himself. He aimed chiefly at the examination of the three large stūpas. The Dhamekh stūpa was opened, but yielded nothing but a stone slab inscribed with the Buddhist creed which he found at 3 feet from the top and ascribed to the sixth century.¹⁸ He concluded that the monument itself belonged to the same period. Chaukhandi too proved to be similar in nature. And it was only Dharmrājikā, which was proved to be a relic – stūpā and he was able to verify the exact find spot of the Buddhist relics. His finds at the site included a medieval monastery, a temple and a collection of some sixty statues and bas-reliefs.¹⁹

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 9.

¹⁸ A.S.R., Vol., pp. 111.

¹⁹ They were presented to the Asiatic society in Bengal and are presently at Calcutta museum. 40 left statues were used while making bridge over Barma river, as reported by Rev. Sherseng in his book ‘*The Sacred City of the Hindus*’.

The next systematic excavations was carried out by Major Maskham Kittoe, who brought out two Vihāras (called one of them a hospital), a variety of votive stūpas, plinth structures of temples and a few sculptures. He could not publish a report due to ill-health and all his informations are gathered from his letter to Cunningham, embodied in Cunningham's report. His excavations were continued first by Mr. E. Thomas and then by Mr. Fitz Edward Hall. Brief accounts of their works were published in *the "Proceedings of the Bengal Asiatic Society"* and the finds were kept in Sārnāth museum. Dr. Butler and Dr. C. Horn (1865) explored the site and his finds went to Calcutta museum. In Dec. 1877, Mr. A. Rivett-Carnac (C.S.) discovered a Buddha image at Sārnāth. It was only in 1856 that the government acquired the site of Sārnāth with the ruins from Mr. Fergusson, an indigo planter, but a custodian for the site was appointed in Nov. 1900.

The greatest discovery came only in early twentieth century, when proper exploration was carried on scientifically and systematically by Mr. F.O. Oertel, assisted by B.B. Chakravarty. His finds were most elaborate and included the remains of a large temple (probably the main shrine of the whole site), Aśokan Column and its lion capital, the nucleus and centre of the park,²⁰ 476 pieces of sculptures and 41 inscriptions. J. Marshall carried on the work in 1906-07 assisted by Dr. Sten Konow, Mr. W.H. Nicholls, Pandit D.R.

²⁰ The actual spot where the Buddha was believed to have sat when he delivered his sermon. It was evident that for many centuries devotees had vied to honour and adorn this most sacred

Sahni and Mr. Chakravarty. This excavation covered a larger area than previous ones and served to convey for the first time a clear idea of the general topography of the site and of the relative positions of the large groups of buildings comprise in it. The finds included monasteries on the northern side, a variety of sculptures of artistic and historical value and 23 inscriptions. The high number of findings of great historical value necessitated the construction of a museum at the Sarnath designed by J. Ransome with the help of Imperial government in 1910. It was followed by excavation by Hargreaves in 1914-15 and by D.R. Sahni in 1921-22. Sahni found three attractive relic-caityas, a terracotta stupa, images of Hindu and Buddhist gods and inscriptions dedicating records. For antiquity of the site, the Mauryan constructions are found alongwith schism edict of Aśoka at the same. At the sametime, it will be apt to discuss the chronology while analysing the growth (constructionwise) of the site.

KUŚĪNAGAR (KASĪĀ) :

The ruins of Kuśīnagara are situated near the town of Kasiā, 34 miles east of Gorakhpur. It was one of the Four Great places which a Buddhist 'should visit with feeling of reverence and awe, as suggested by Buddha himself. Two extensive monastic establishments, *Mahā-parinibbāna - vihāra* and *Makulabandhana-vihāra*, the former associated with the site of his *nirvāṇa* and the latter with that of his

place for images, bas-reliefs and inscriptions were found heaped up here in remarkable numbers.

cremation, grew up at the place. The reports take the site back to the Mauryan period.

The first excavations at the site were carried out in 1904-05,²¹ which established the identity of the site at the excavated place Māthā-Kuār-Kā-Kot and Kasiā. The finds of the excavation under J.P.W. Vogel included various monasteries, a Kalachuri temple, terracotta, clay seals, metal vessels, inscriptions etc. He tried to draw from the survey conducted by Cunningham and Carleylle and excavated the places identified to check what really existed on the ground. Vogel continued the work in 1906-07 and found several new monasteries, inscriptions, inscribed objects, monastic-seals, and personal seals. Hiranand Shastri continued the work in 1907-08 with the help of funds collected by a few Burmese Buddhists of Calcutta²² and imperial funds. He found out the relics of the great stūpa,²³ stūpa of Rāmabhār the spot where remains of Buddha were cremated, coins,²⁴ clay seals and sealings of different categories, a monastery and a few structures, and a copper-plate of Gupta period.

RAJGIR :

Rajgir, 62 miles north-east of Patna, still preserves the old name Rajāgriha, the ancient capital of Magadha, came into existence as one prominent Mahājanpada. The place was variously known a Vasumatī,

²¹ A.S.R., 1904-05, pp. 43.

²² They collected the money to repair the excavated stupa. near nirvana- stupa. A.S.I. (Annual Report), 1910-11; pp. 63.

²³ This stupa was found out by Carleylle in 1876.

²⁴ Cunningham, A.S.R., Vol. I, pp. 85.

Bārhadhrathapura, Kuśāgrapura and Girivraja. Buddha spent many years of his life at Rājagriha which was the chief centre of propagation in the early years of his spiritual administration. Many places over here were associated with his life such as Gridhakūta-hill, Gautmanya-grodha, Chauraprapāta, Saptaparnī cave, Kālaśilā on the Rishigiri side, Sarpa-Śaundika-prāgbhāra in Śīlavana, Tapodārāma, Kalandaka lake in Venuvana, mango-grove of Jīvaka, and deer park in Mardakukshi. It was here, where Devadutta, both his cousin and rival, made murderous attempts on his life by letting loose the infuriated elephant Nala, by hiring assassins and by hurling a rock at him.

After Buddha's death, Ajātsātru consecrated his share of relics inside a stupa built for the purpose. Soon afterwards, the first Buddhist council under Mahākāśyapa was held at Rājagriha in a hall in front of the caves known as Saptaparnī to rehearse and canonize Buddha's scattered sayings relating to *dharma* (doctrines) and *vinaya*. The site lost its predominance due to shifting of capital of Magadhā to Pāṭalipūtra.

Various scholars have visited Rajgir due to their interest and have attempted to explore the site. J. Buchanan²⁵ wrote about his visit to the place in 1811. Prominent explorers of the site were Kittoe, I (JABS., Vol. XVI, pp. 957-961), A. Cunningham (ASR., Vol. I, 1871, pp. 20-27)²⁶, Broadlay (I.A. 1872 pp. 18-21, 69-74 and 106-110), Beglar (A.S.R., VIII, 1878, pp. 85-101) and M.A. Stein (I.A., Vol. XXX, 1901, p.

²⁵ in Martin's. A.S.R., Vol. I., pp.85.

²⁶ Also in *Ancient Geography of India* (1871) pp. 461-8 and A.S.R., Vol. III. pp. 139-50

55). In early twentieth century, there were several rounds of excavations under J.H. Marshall, beginning in 1905-6²⁷. Trial excavations were carried out at new Rājagriha by D.R. Sahni. Recently in Nov.-Dec. 2000, a stūpa was unearthed over here by Patna circle²⁸ which is claimed by the archaeologists as the stupa built by Ajātśhatru over the relics of the Buddha.

Saṅkissa :

It is situated in Shamsabad tehsil of district Farrukhabad in Uttar Pradesh, at a distance of about 320 kms. from Delhi. The site is located near Kali nadi, the river mentioned in Sanskrit literature as Ikshumati. It has been identified as Saṅkissa, mentioned as royal city of Kusadhwaḡa, the brother of king Janaka in Valmiki's Ramayana and with Saṅkissa mentioned in Pali Buddhist texts. Chinese travellers Fa-hsien and Hieun-Tsang visited the place and mentioned it as **song-kia-she or kia-pi-tha**. This is the place of miracle where Buddha accompanied by Brahma and Indra descended at this site from the Trāyastrimśa heaven by a ladder of gold or gem after preaching *the dharma* to his mother. A place of pilgrimage, Chinese travellers had seen the Aśokan pillar, monastery, several stūpas and naga tank in the city of Saṅkissa.

Although the site is known for 150 years, no scientific archaeological excavation was conducted till 1995-96. A. Cunningham

²⁷ A.R. A.S.I., 1905-06.

²⁸ Frontline, December 2000. I personally visited the site in December 2000 and January 2001 to enquire about the newly unearthed remains.

discovered the site in 1842 and explored the ruins in 1862 at leisure. He has described the antiquarian remains noticed at the site, including the elephant capital, and on the basis of accounts of Chinese travellers he has also tried to identify the important places with the existing mounds. In 1876-78 he opened a few trenches, but not much came out of the excavations. Hiranand Shastri also conducted excavations in 1926 and collected a large number of antiquities from the site ranging from Mauryan period to the early medieval period. Earlier excavators had not paid any attention towards the study of stratigraphy and cultural deposits at the site. B.B. Lal reported PGW at the site after his explorations in 1955-56. B.R. Mani from Excavation Branch-II, Purana Quila, New Delhi of ASI from 1-5-5 1996 to 8-7-1996 conducted the excavation, after properly surveying the sites. The most important investigation in the first season's excavation work at the site was confirmation of Painted Grey ware period deposit which has yielded, besides usual shapes of PGW, black-and-red ware, Black slipped ware and associated red ware, important antiquities like terracotta bust of mother goddess, a similar terracotta female figurine, terracotta rather with eight mini-balls etc. which reflect the material culture of early iron age. The site has Aśokan capital pillar and ruined stupa of Triple stairs :

The finds from different areas of Saṅkissa and in particular from village mound and area towards deposits of following periods.²⁹

²⁹ Mani, B.R. – *Excavations at Saṅkissa*, pp. 45.

- Period – I : Painted Grey ware period (C. 9th century 16 to C. 6th century B.C.)
- Period – II : Northern Black Polished ware period (C. 6th Century B.C. to C. 3rd Century B.C.)
- Period –III : Sunga period (C. 2nd century B.C. to C. 1st century B.C.)
- Period – IV : Kushān period (C. 1st century A.D. to C. 3rd century A.D.)

This classification is tentative and as per generally accepted divisions, which can be confirmed later.

Śrāvastī :

Śrāvastī, On the bank of the Achirāvati (Rapti) was the capital of the Kingdom of Kosala. In *Mahāparinibbāna sutta*, Śrāvastī is mentioned as one of the six important cities where Buddha had a large following. Buddha spent considerable time, particularly rainy seasons, at this place. Moreover, the king Prasenjit of Kosal was a great admirer of Buddha.³⁰ It was here that Buddha performed the great miracle of Śrāvastī, for which act the place came to be venerated as one of the eight great places connected with the master's life.

The site is very rich archaeologically and is yet to be excavated completely. The latest excavation at the site was conducted in

January- April 2001 by Institute of archaeology, the results of which are yet to be published. The ruined city of Sahāt-Mahēt is situated between Akaonā and at nearly equal distance from Bahraich and Gonda. In shape it is an almost semi-circular crescent with its diameter of 1 mile and a third in length curved inwards and facing the north-east, along the old bank of Rapti river.

A. Cunningham in 1860's started to work on the site and tried to search the site based on textual accounts of Fa-hsien and Hieun-Tsang. He collected the datas and took help from Sri Lankan Buddhist annals. In 1890's V.A. Smith also visited the site and has left a vivid account of the site. In 1863, Cunningham excavated the mounds of Mahēt and Sahēt, which he identified as the site of ancient city of Śravāstī and that of the Jetavana, the famous Buddhist establishment outside that city.³¹ The finds established the antiquity of the site.³²

In between Mr. W.C. Benet, C.S., did a few days digging in Mahēt and dug into a mound known as Pakkī Kuṭī, which Cunningham had identified with the Angulimala stūpa mentioned by the Chinese pilgrims.³³ Cunningham resumed his excavations in 1876 at Sahēt, when he laid bare some sixteen distinct buildings, mostly stūpas and small temples of a comparatively late date. Prominent structures found were Kosamba Kuṭī, Gandha-Kuṭī in the Jetavana

³⁰ One of the reliefs on the railing of the stupa from Bharhut depicts the king's ceremonial drive to visit Buddha.

³¹ A.S.R., Vol. I, p. 30.

³² One of the finds was a colossal Buddha image with an inscription incised on its base in characters of Kushāna period.

etc. Dr. W. Hoey did some digging in same season at Mahēt, but nothing much came except a few Jaina images. His excavations of 1884-85 was on a large scale and dealt with no less than 34 buildings at Sahēt-Mahēt. But none of them were completely excavated and both the descriptions and plans subsequently published are inadequate to convey an accurate idea of the remains discovered. In 1898, V.A. Smith questioned the identification of Mahēt with Śrāvastī (Cunningham's theory) and located Śrāvastī in Nepal³⁴ between the villages of Balapur, Kamdi and Intava. The controversy continued till excavations at the site was taken up by J. Ph. Vogel in winter, 1908. The result was tremendous and it established the identity of the site Mahēt as city of Sravasti and finds included numerous stūpas, vihāras like Kacchī-Kuṭī, gates, rampart, terracotta objects, inscriptions etc. J.H. Marshall continued the excavations in 1908-09 in Vogel's absence.³⁵ He focused on Jetavana Vihāra and several outlying buildings. The remains were several stūpas such as Panahiāmī Jhār Khaṛahuamī Jhār, Bhatti stūpa, many other stūpas and various viharas, apart from coins, sculptures, seals and sealings, terracottas objects and figurines, pottery and bricks. In 1959, a small scale excavation was carried on by Dr. K.K. Sinha, who unearthed a few remains.

³³ Benet's results were published by Cunningham in *Oudh Gazetteer*. The reference comes from ARASI., 1907-08, pp. 82 (under Vogel).

³⁴ His article on Kauśāmbī and Śrāvastī is reproduced in D.K. Chakrabarty and F.R. Allchin .. *Source Book of Indian Archaeology*, pp. 13-32.

³⁵ ARASI., 1910-11, pp. 1-24.

Kansai University of Japan in collaboration with ASI conducted a joint excavation project from 1986 to 89 and then commenced it again in 1991 to 98.³⁶ The large scale excavation, revealed six cultural periods and the dating of each cultural period is based on objects in each period, mostly pottery.

- Period I BRW/BSW phase, the 8th to 7th century BC
- II Early NBPW phase, the 6th to 4th century BC
- III Late NBPW phase, the 3rd to 1st century BC
- IV Kushāna phase, the 1st to 3rd century AD
- V Gupta phase, the 4th to 6th century AD
- VI Post-Gupta phase, the 7th to 10th century AD

This indicates the long time period of the site. Since this dating is based on latest excavation, we shall follow this broad chronology for the site.

Vaiśālī :

Vaiśālī, the capital of the Lichchhavi clan, was one of the largest city at the time of Buddha, who visited it several times and stayed at some of its shrines and caityas like Bahuputra-caitya, Chapala-caitya and Mahāvāna-Kuṭāgara-sālā. It was here that Buddha was offered a bowl of honey by a monkey, which was reckoned as one of the eight

³⁶Purattva.2no.30,pp71-92

important events of Buddha's life. The spot, marking the miracle, was honoured, according to Hieun-Tsang, with a stūpa located by the side of the Markatahrada. During one of his visits, not long before his death, Buddha accepted the gift of a mango-grove from the famous courtesan Āmrapali. After his death the Lichchhavis received a share of the relics of Buddha and enshrined it in a stūpa near Vaiśālī. It is stated that another stūpa near the place contained half the relics of Ananda, the other half being buried at Rājagriha.

The second Buddhist council under king Kalasoka or Kakavarman took place at Vaiśālī, a century after the death of Buddha in connection with the ten rules of discipline adopted by the eastern monks, living at Vaisali and Pataliputra against the protest of the westerners, residing at Kāusāmbi, Patheyya and Avanti (Western Malwa). The controversy led to the division of the sangha in two camps, the easterners came to be known as *Mahāsaṅghikas* and the more orthodox as *Theravada*.

The caityas of this place were famous by 2nd century B.C. as borne out by labelled reliefs of the sancturies and trees of Vaiśālī on a stele from Amaravati, which depicts some of the incidents of his last journey from Vaiśālī to Kuśinagara.³⁷ The monks of the Mahāvana monastery attended the consecration of the Mahāthūpa built by the Dutthagamani of Ceylon. Both Fa-hsien and Hieun-Tsang visited the place. The latter saw a large number of Buddhist monuments, including the stūpa which had been erected by the Lichchhavis and

which had been opened up by Aśoka for its relic contents and also the stūpa built by Aśoka himself.

Basarh, 22 miles west of Muzaffarpur, in northern Bihar represents the ancient Vaiśālī. While no Buddhist remains are noticed within the excavated portions of the ruined city, they are found outside it. Thus, within 300 yards to its south-west is a brick mound, (stūpa ?) substantial even in its ruined condition. At Kolhua, 2 miles to the north-west of the fort, stands a pillar with a lotus capital and a cable necking upon which is an oblong abacus surmounted by a lion, belonging to the Mauryan period (Aśokan origin). Adjacent to it is a large brick stūpa probably built by Aśoka and is surrounded by numerous votive stūpas.

The site has 6 sets of excavation reports, beginning with A. Cunningham's (1861-64) who focussed on the garh area and Aśokan pillars. The second one was by T. Bloch's excavation (1903-04) at the garh area, which revealed a few stray structures and 720 seals of different periods. D.B. Spooner's excavation (1913-14) at the same place yielded the same result as of Bloch.

First major excavation was carried out by K. Deva and Y. Mishra which (1950) revealed a few structures and a variety of finds, pushing the antiquity to 500 B.C. He suggested a chronological framework as well. The next major excavation was carried out under the auspices of

³⁷ *Ancient India*, Nos. 20 & 21, 1964-65 : pp. 168.

B.P. Sinha and S.R. Roy which revealed various structures like defences, stūpas, complex building structures at various places, apart from varied finds, ultimately establishing the chronology of pre-600 BC and urbanisation between 600-200 B.C. The excavation was carried out at Raja Vishāl ka garh, Bhimsen Ka Palla, Baniya, Virpur, Halpura, Chakramdas, Marpasauna. The last excavation report of Mr. K.P. Gupta (1976-78) which focussed at Kolhua and revealed a stūpa and many small commemorative stūpa. Recently the site is being re-examined which has unearthed remains of two monastic plans and a fragmentary one.

Lumbinī :

Lumbinī, in the lovely grove of which Mayadevi on the way to her parents home at Devahrada retired immediately before her confinement has been identified with Rummindei in district Bhairhwa, Nepalese Tarai, on the evidence of Aśoka' s pillar which proudly proclaims : 'Here was born the sage of the sakyas? It is approachable from Nowgarh railway-station (on the Gonda-Gorakhpur line) by bus, the distance being only 21 miles. By its east side flows a streamlet called Tilarnadi, the oil (sela) River of Hieun-Tsang. The most interesting piece of antiquity here is, of course, the sandstone pillar bearing the characteristic Mauryan polish and having tiny blackish specks, the quarry of the stone being, as usual, the neighborhood of Chunar.

The site has a modern temple and the high platform, which are built over the ruins of several subsidiary structures, including stūpas, and magnificently decorated plinth of an early temple unearthed by P.C. Mukherjee in 1899. Another major excavation was carried out by Kaiser Shumser Jung Bahadur Rana in 1933-34. Indeed, the ruins extend eastwards to the bank of the Tilar. Recently, excavations were carried out, the results of which are yet to be published. The site has been given the status of world Heritage site by UNO, and Rs. 410 crore has been sanctioned for developing the site.

4.5 GROWTH OF THE SITES : REFLECTING INTERACTIONS

All these eight sites have grown over a span of time and to be most precise, they have attained a separate identity in terms of religion. The sites like Vaiśālī, Śrāvastī, Rajgir, Saṅkissa etc. undoubtedly were urban centres of considerable importance at that time, but the growth of the site as a religious pilgrimage centre was not at all related to it being urban centre. The reason for arguing on such line are various – firstly, the remains of Buddhist nature at these sites are many such as the remains of stūpas, vihāras, votive remains, seals, plaques at these sites which point to the nature of these sites. At the same time, today the existing remains, seals, plaques at these sites point to the nature of these sites. At the same time, today the existing remains of Buddhist nature outnumber the others. It will be apt here to point out the case of Bodhgaya, which was not a urban

centre. It grew and the growth of a temple, railings and later on a complex in itself was primarily due to it being a sacred place owing to Buddha's enlightenment.

Sārnāth, 10 km from Varanasi, also grew into a complex with 3 stupas, 4 vihāras and numerous temples, markers and votive stūpas primarily due to its sanctity. It was neither an urban centre, nor closely related to any trade-route. Lumbini has a similar case. Kusinagara also grew primarily due to its sanctity. It will be appropriate here to point out that the proximity to an urban centre or location close to the trade-routes can play a secondary role as it brings in influential patrons and traders-merchants (the major support base of the Buddhists) as lay people, plus it enhances the region of influence for that particular sacred site. It can undoubtedly play a major role in spreading the religion and recreation of sacred geography (the case of Sānchi). The sites grew due to the interactions of the laity with the religion/sect at the site. Keeping the above argument in mind, we shall try to analyse the growth of the site chronologically to see if they stand true after a detailed analysis of data.

LUMBINI

Beginning with Lumbini, the antiquities date back to Mauryan period. The Asokan pillar and Rummindei inscription of Asoka point to the above fact. The pillar has a vertical fissure down to the middle and its top is broken off probably by lightning, as noted by Hieun-Tsang. The height of the extant part, above the rough hammer dressed

surface meant to be buried below ground is 24 ft. 3 inches. The crowning elements, except the bell-shaped lotus member (in two halves) is missing. On the pillar, at a height of 11ft 2½ inches above the rough surface, is a pithy inscription of Aśoka in five lines recording that twenty years after his coronation, he paid homage in person to the spot where Buddha was born, that he erected a stone wall around the place as well as a commemorative pillar and exempted the village of Lumbini from paying tax except only one-eighth share of the produce. Near the present top are several later records of pilgrims, of which one is the well known *mantra* 'Om Manipadme hum' in Tibetan characters.³⁸

A few yards to east of the pillar is a modern flat roofed temple with a spacious paved platform around. Inside temple is enshrined a fragmentary image, stylistically dated to the Gupta period, of Rupadevi and Rummindei. It presents in high relief the nativity of Buddha. The modern temple was built over ruins of several subsidiary structures, including stupas and the magnificently decorated plinth of an early temple, which consisted of a brick sanctuary and an oblong antechamber facing east and enshrined the nativity relief.

The site of the old temple marks the spot where Gautama was born. It is likely that the stone enclosure of Aśoka lies buried below either the plinth of this very temple or the ruins of a still earlier

³⁸ Mitra, D 1971...*Buddhist Monument*, 1979, pp. 59.

temple. An oblong enclosure with a central structure lies partially buried below the long staircase of the modern temple. The enclosure appears to have been built over a ruined earlier structure. To the south of temple, is a tank, recently veneered with bricks in terraces and represents the bathing tank of the Śākya, mentioned by Hieun-Tsang.

On east bank of the tank are many ruined brick-structures, most of which are bases of small brick-stūpas. Six of these stūpas stand in the east corner of the tank. Below these structures are earlier foundations. Near the South east corner of the tank is a quadrangular brick monastery with an array of cells on four sides of a courtyard. Above the ruins of this monastery are traces of a structure, representing possibly a later monastery.⁴⁰

A group of 16 votive stūpas of bricks existed (till 1957) to the north side of the path leading to the east staircase of the modern temple of Rummindei. To the north of the latter are three small brick stūpas, each with a square base. Below the middle stūpa is an earlier structure. The antiquities found at the site include a mottled red sandstone head of Buddha of the Kuśhāna period from the atelier of Mathura, a large number of terracotta heads (some of the Gupta Style) and panels, stones sculptures representing Buddha (9-10th centuries A.D.) Mañjuśrī, Maitreya, Lokēśvara and the Great Miracle of Śrāvastī, a leaf shaped plaque with Buddhist creed in characters of 8th-9th

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 60.

century A.D., two early bronze figurines – one with folded hands and the other with a lotus in the right hand, and a large number of terracotta tiles relieved with Buddhist scenes and decorative patterns. By now we are familiar with the utility of plaques, creeds, terracotta tiles either as commemorative or votive donation or as a symbol of pilgrimage. The available antiquities take Buddhist establishment of Lumbinī, in existence, till 10th century A.D.

BODHGAYA

In case of Bodhgaya, the site grew due to its status as a special place of pilgrimage. To locate the development of art and architecture at the site, apart from looking at various results of the Buddhist pilgrims, it will be apt to analyse the numerous structures and images and remains, which are constituent of a Buddhist pilgrimage site. The constituents are the temple, sandstone and granite railings, Bodhi-tree, *Vajrāsana*, stūpas and votive-stūpas, railing stones, vihāras, various sculptures and images, numerous inscriptions and other structures. Various dedicatory inscriptions, ranging from 1st century BC to 14th century AD are found, of which very few are of use. Material evidences are available in the numerous sculptures and architectural fragments, found on the temple premises, which had been augmented by rudimentary archaeological finds by Cunningham. There was no systematic excavation, which might help us to understand the relationship of sculptural remains and architectural features and further contributed to a clearer understanding of the way the temple changed over last two thousand years.

Different phases of construction has been observed of all the structures and all of them had specific motives. The earliest evidence at the site comes from Aśokan times, when first temple and stupa were built, apart from installation of an Aśokan pillar.⁴¹ The reference to Aśoka's visit/pilgrimage to Bodhgaya comes from one of his edicts. The construction of Aśokan times have been depicted in bas relief at other sites like Bharhūt stūpa etc.

The *Vajrāsana* was built inside the temple by the Aśoka. The Bharhūt relief shows decorated *Vajrāsana* and railings around the Bodhi tree (Century 120-100 B.C.). Huntington⁴² believes this Aśokan period platform to be as part of Aśoka's commemoration of the site, the intention for which was not a throne, but as a platform (*āyaka*) in front of the tree on which offerings were made to the tree itself.

The remnants of the Aśokan temple has been found, which contained two polished sandstone throne and two pillar bases *in situ*. The bases showed that each of the two pillars had an octagonal shaft above a pedestal with a pot or vase ornament at the top of a gradation of steps. The southern base was hidden under the southern wall of the chamber, "while the northern one was quite clear of the southern wall." A third pillar was also discovered. Cunningham considers them actual remains of the original building, deriving from Bharhūt relief.

The Mahabodhi temple was built on remains of Aśokan temples, but separately. The temple underwent reconceptualization and was

⁴¹ The pillar was installed in the temple premises in 1956.

supposed to have been built during the Sunga period. The contrasting account of inscriptional⁴³ and literary⁴⁴ sources led to a conflict over construction of this temple. R.L. Mitra dates the construction between C. 1st BC and C. 1st A.D., whereas Cunningham dates it between 2nd century – 3rd century AD (120-160 A.D.). Barua dates it between 5th-7th C A.D., based on accounts of Chinese pilgrims, which is not at all convincing. The excavations revealed sources, on which Cunningham attempted to date the construction, and this date seems more authentic, till new sources are located.

In 1871, Cunningham found three distinct layers in the flooring of the main chamber of the temple on the ground floor : the upper layer being represented by a granite pavement, the middle layer by a pavement of sandstone and the lower layer by a plaster floor. Inside this chamber, he found a basalt throne of which the blue stone facing stood on the granite pavement. On removing this plaster, he discovered a ball of stiff earth or clay, which contained the relics.⁴⁵ Of these relics, he used the Huviška coins to date the temple to C 152 A.D. precisely (120-160 A.D.). He found another corroboration of this date from an inscription on the pedestal of a statue of Buddha which was found near a small ruined temple close to the south gate of the railing of the great temple. The early date of this statue is attested by the Indo-Scythian or Gupta style of the letters and sculptures; but as the inscription is dated in the Samvāt year 64 and the record is

⁴² J.C. Huntington. Part I, pp. 60.

⁴³ Burmese inscriptions.

⁴⁴ accounts of Chinese pilgrims. like Fa-hsien and Hieun-Tsang etc.

worded in the usual form of the Indo-Scythian inscriptions found at Mathura.⁴⁶ And the temple was extensively repaired, renovated and embellished in the following centuries. The account definitely brings into picture the role of king Huviśka, a Kuśhāna king, in the construction of the Mahabodhi temple.⁴⁷

The temple's architectural constituents are pillars, niches, statues, and towers. The outer side of the temple has innumerable niches, carvings, creepers, floral designs birds holding a string of pearls in their beaks or makkaras, having string of pearls in their mouths and images. Main niche on the west wall has a fine image of the Buddha. The temple contained a statue, which had an inscription, talking of the statue as a gift of senior monk Viryendra from Somapura monastery.⁴⁸ The temple now is 170 feet high, while its base is 50 feet square. It consists of a straight pyramidal tower surmounted by a stūpa. Each of the four sides of the tower presents several tiers of niches, while the front face has a tall lancet opening for the admission of light into sanctum and at the base of the tower there rises a tusset at each of the four corners – a miniature replica of the main shrine. In the front of the main entrance, there is an imposing gateway decorated with delicate carvings. The gateway presents on the front an elegant stone votive stupa of small proportions. The niches on both

⁴⁵ A. Cunningham, 1892, p. 20.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p.p. 21.

⁴⁷ It indicates royal patronage at the time of Huviśka, Kuśhāna period

⁴⁸ The plan of the temple is not given because it's a 19th century structure and it will not be of any use here.

sides of the main entrance to the temple contain images of the Buddha.

Another important structure, indicating an act of donation on pilgrimage, is construction of *Vajrāsana*.⁴⁹ It is a polished sandstone throne, located at the base of the present tree, decorated with a Mauryan style palmate and goose frieze, is the earliest physical evidence at the shrine. This is also connected with the legend of Asoka's revival of the tree and construction of a shrine around it. This is supported by evidence of a relief sculpture at Bharhut stūpa, which gives original appearance of Bodhighara. The relief shows that an open air storeyed shrine was built around the Bodhi-tree by 1st century B.C. In the Sunga period, the throne shrine measures 12 m wide and 14 m long, with an encircling brick plinth. By Gupta period, Bodhighara was transformed into *Vajrāsana Vṛhad gandhkuṭī*, as called in Gupta period inscription recording addition of plaster and point to the temple, its area was greatly expanded. Thus, continuity from Maurya to Gupta period is depicted in the throne. The expansion occurred, due to Gupta patronage and increasing patronage from abroad,⁵⁰ attested in the new configuration for the temple.⁵¹ The original *Vajrāsana* now is moved and contains figures on new base of typical Gupta style.

⁴⁹ It's purpose is discussed earlier as well in this paper.

⁵⁰ This is attested by two stone inscriptions of Sri Lankan monk Mahanaman of 588/89 A.D. These inscriptions indicate presence of Sri Lankan community at the site, attested by building up a monastery on request of Sri Lankan king Meghvarman.

⁵¹ The temple underwent constructions and repairs from time to time, due to patronage by Purnavarman, Pala kings, Burmese kings and monks etc. The early Bodhighara was transformed into temple in Kuśānā period, the earliest image of which was found on a plaque, found at Kumrahār excavations.

The other set of example of patronage by lay Buddhists or pilgrims are sandstone railings (discussed earlier, partly, while sorting out chronology of the site), donated by queens and royal ladies of Sunga dynasty. These railings contain inscriptions, recording gifts of lady Kurangi, Sirīma and Nagadevi (inscribed in letters of 1st century B.C.). The evidence of early pilgrimage and patronage from afar comes from another railing inscription, recording the gift of Bodhiraksita of Tāmraparṇi.

The oldest parts of stone railings fall within the period of century 1st B.C. to century 1st A.D. There are two phase – in the first phase, the stone railings are made of sandstone (Sunga period), while in the second phase, it is of coarse granite (king Pūrṇavarman, 7th AD). The old stone railings had 64 pillars, of which only 7 pillars are now standing *in situ*.⁵² The pillars and architraves were decorated with a variety of floral, animal and mythological symbols. Medallions on the pillars portray themes, typical of early Buddhist art or religious motifs, such as, a Bodhi-tree with umbrellas and garlands; a Bodhi-tree surrounded by a railing; devotees worshipping the Bodhi-tree; elephants worshipping the Bodhi-tree; a combined symbol of *Triratna* or “Three Gems” the Buddha, the *Dhamma* and the Sangha – and the *Dhamma* wheel set up on a throne and attended by two worshippers; the *Dhamma* wheel; and a Deva flying over the battlements of city, with a garland in his outstretched hand, towards a Bodhi-tree before which a man is kneeling in adoration. These pillars suggest that the

temple would have been completely surrounded with images of many realms of existence from the animal to the human to the divine, as for example, the stupa at Sānchi. The depictions indicate the motive of accruing merit by such acts and such images being carved.

There are a large number of votive stūpas erected from time to time by the ancient Buddhist pilgrims. The best carved stūpas may be seen inside the eastern side of the railing. Directly south of the Mahabodhi temple is the foundation of the biggest stūpa at Bodhgaya, built by Aśoka, the Mauryan king. This stūpa is surrounded by a large number of votive stūpas which are votive objects, which has been divided into four types – (1) stūpas made up of stone or stone and brick; (2) stūpas made up of clay; (3) small clay roundels, also called creed sealings, and (4) larger sealings, depicting figures of Buddha or Bodhisattvas or passages of a sacred text-called votive plaques.⁵³

The use of these votive objects were either offered to the temple, taken away as souvenirs and were built for accumulation of merit. The religious merit acquired was because these objects were tangible signs of the Buddhist doctrine. The stūpas were sacred due to Buddha's relics buried in eight original stūpas, and for that reason, the stūpas became the symbol of the Buddhist goal of *nirvāṇa*. The Buddhist creed was selected as the summation of the teachings of the Buddha. Impressed on a little clay roundel, these passages made a stūpa sacred and was used instead of an actual relic. They were also put on votive

⁵² The rest are either lost or kept in museum and are replaced by the cement casts of the original ones.

plaques and sealings and all these spread the faith in a literal and very vivid way.

The votive stūpas began to be built by 3rd – 4th century AD, though most of existing ones at Bodhgaya are of Pāla times. There are many variations but basically the stūpas have three parts, which are similar to the forms of larger structural stūpas, symbolizing enlightenment. The plain dome serves as a transaction between two realms. Below, the decorated tiers symbolize the countless forms of existence, and above, the heaven (enlightenment) are symbolized by the plain, undecorated umbrellas. The four niches with their figures on the sides of the drum define the quadrants of the universe. The figures on the stūpas in the large niches depict different Buddhist deities, celestial Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, Jambhala, Mārīchi and Tāra etc. Most configuration shows four mudras of Buddha in clockwise direction : *Bhūmiśparsa mudrā*, *Dharmachakramudrā*, *Dhyana mudrā* with a bowl, and a second Buddha in *dharmachakra mudrā*.⁵⁴ The scenes represented are enlightenment, First sermon, events at Vaiśālī and miracles of Śrāvastī. The richest pilgrims would have had the large stūpas built, either of bricks with a carved stone casing or of sculpted stone blocks and smaller stone stūpas.⁵⁵ The stūpas of clay were less expensive form that monks and poorer pilgrims could acquire or make themselves.

⁵³ Simon Lawson. discusses them in J. Leoshko's (ed.) book.

⁵⁴ The images of Buddha in these mudras began to be built in 6th century A.D.

⁵⁵ This is also found at other Buddhist pilgrim site, like Sāmāth etc.

Cella stūpas (*kulas*) with scenes from Buddha's life are found, which are hollow and depict Bodhgaya scene. The 'door' may have been closed with a plaque depicting the Bodhgaya Buddha or an image might have been placed inside. The motive may be the Buddhist desire to be buried close to a holy site,⁵⁶ thus suggesting a funerary function. Dhārani sealings, believed to contain magic power of the text impressed on them, helped to ensure better life were put in *kulas*. So the purpose may be quite similar to the idea of immersing bones in a holy river at a pilgrim centre in Hinduism. For these stūpas, multiple tiers of identical Buddha figures are a major decorative theme and these illustrate the idea of the multitude of Buddhas found in Buddhist scriptures and they express, in a concrete fashion, the pervasive quality of Buddhahood.

Cunningham also found lots of small offerings of clay stūpas – miniature stūpas found inside the larger stūpas, enclosing small clay seals (made of friable material). These contained Buddhist creed – and they were called *dharmasāriras*. These were used as votive offering in its own right and the date of these are revealed by the style of the script. Votive plaques.⁵⁷ differed according to time and place and deity. Many plaques from Bodhgaya show Buddha under Bodhi-tree calling the earth as witness, alongwith a Buddhist creed and a few show Buddha in the middle of many stupas with the creed below. Still, others depict Buddha 'turning the wheel of the law' in the deer park at

⁵⁶ This is propounded by Gregory Schopen, who considers them mortuary stūpas, called *kulas*, and those contained ashes or bones.

⁵⁷ Various types of plaques found at various sites.

Sārnāth. Other depictions include that of Mārīchi, the Buddhist goddess. The dhārani sealings were found inside a type of stūpa, which might have contained human remains and that they were put there to ensure a fortunate rebirth. The sealings found are *Vimalosnisa* dharni sealings. Thus all these evidences prove that the ancient faith was a concrete reality and continuity was apparent in these souvenirs by the Buddhist pilgrims.

As far as Vihāras are concerned, the excavations revealed layout of a vihāra, but in absence of further excavation, nothing concrete can be said, except the one built by a Sri Lankan king Meghavarman for the Sri Lankan monks and lay visitors.⁵⁸ Construction activity at the centre occurred during king Purnavarman of Magadha and it received a major thrust during Pāla period. The magnificent stone gateway marking the entrance to the sacred space of the temple precinct was built in 8th century A.D. The major thrust was upon renovations and constructions of various images of Buddhas⁵⁹ and other celestial gods as inferred from various inscriptions, like 850 A.D. inscription of Dharmapala; 1021 A.D. inscription of Chinese pilgrim, Yunshu, who records his worship of the site, but no architectural activity at the site; two Burmese inscriptions of 1035 A.D. and 1086 AD recording repairs by Burmese and lastly, 1234 AD inscription of Tibetan monk, Dharmasvamin. These infer that the main feature of the temple remain unchanged and the changes introduced were new stucco and images

⁵⁸ Hiuen Tsang discusses about this monastery and its remains have been found.

⁵⁹ Images became the focused form of Buddha, which were worshipped with proper ritual by 6th - 7th centuries A.D.

on the exterior, construction of rear cell of the simple basement and restoration of towers. There was third sandstone floor in Pāla period, when inner throne was refaced.

The Gupta and post-Gupta period sculpture is followed by Pāla period sculpture at Bodhgaya, which demonstrates artistic inventiveness employed in the creation of such works. The Buddha is shown seated on a double lotus with a throne back, composed of simple uprights and a crossbar surmounted by a plain halo adorned with pipal leaves. Three compartments are assigned across the front of the sculpture base, each holding a figure. A fourth figure, a devotee who is possibly the donor appears on the far left side. The two females are two earth goddesses, who were witnesses of Buddha against Māra. Another important aspect is the devotee's visualization of particular deities – Buddha with two *Bodhisattvas* and all elements like *Vajrāsana*, tree, leafs etc., as found in *Sādhnas*.⁶⁰ The image in the main shrine is a Pāla period image of Buddha in *Bhūmisparśa mudrā* with an incised inscription in one corner of the pedestal, which gives the Buddhist creed an account of the donor, Pūrṇabhadra. Various images of Buddhas – few crowned Buddhas⁶¹ were built and installed at the site, which were depicted in the votive plaques as well. Moreover, there was a proliferation of different form of deities to symbolize increasingly complex concept of enlightenment, like that of Tāra, Avalokitēśvara, Majushri etc. These sculptures have inscriptions

⁶⁰ *Sādhnas*, textual description, can often provide identification of the particular forms depicted in the images.

with them, which provided information about gifts. These images must not be viewed as only presentations of the event, but as representations of the site and its power. The most popular Buddha form, *Bhūmisparśa mudrā*, is clearly linked to the enduring importance of the *Vajrāsana* and the events associated with them. Thus, the symbolic meaning of the images hints at the reason for getting such images built, as just the '*darśan*' of such images resulted in accumulation of merit.

The other architectural structures at the site are : Ratna carnkamana (Buddha's Promenade), 'the shrine of the Jewel walk' on the northern side of the temple, where the footsteps of the Buddha are represented by lotus flowers on a narrow masonry platform about 53 ft. long, 3 feet 6 inches broad and a little more than 3 feet high : the Animeshlōchana stūpa, within the courtyard of the temple and Ratna-ghara or Jewel chamber and a small shrine with a large Buddha statue in *Bhūmisparśa mudrā*, dated in late 10th c A.D., where Brahma Sahampati appeared before the Buddha and implored him to preach his dharma for the good and well being of all.

Apart from all these architectural and sculptural activities, the bas-reliefs and carvings on the old stone railings are both religious and secular topics. The incident of Buddha's birth at Lumbinī is depicted by the device of two mansions, one placed over the other. It is portrayed in the upper panel of the South-west corner pillar of the

⁶¹ A break from historical context is apparent in crowned Buddha, which may be due to attempt to provide a celestial touch.

railing. There are four different representations of Buddha's enlightenment here. The first three representations fill the upper panel of one of the corner-pillars of rail posts and the fourth fills the upper panel of one of the corner pillars. In the first representation, the Bodhi-tree alone figures with a quadrangular enclosure and without the diamond throne, though honoured with two posted umbrellas and two hanging garlands. In the second representation, only the cubical seat is shown under an umbrella, with a pair of worshippers who are standing with joined hands. In third representation, only a quadrangular path of perambulation upon a colonnade pilaster is shown. And in the fourth representation, there is a two-storeyed temple with an open-pillared hall in the lower storey with a covered verandah in front.⁶² The verandah shows a sanctuary with the diamond throne enshrined in it. The throne is depicted as a cubical seat with a *Triratna* symbol placed upon it. The upper storey shows three small sanctuaries, each containing diamond throne.⁶³

Of the six representation depicting Buddha's first sermon at Sarnath, one fills a medallion in the middle row, three fills the upper panels of three rail-posts and two appear in the panel of two corner-pillars.⁶⁴ Of the eight representations of Buddha's *Mahāparinirvāṇa* at Kuśīnagara, six are in sandstone and two in granite. Some earlier designs present the stupa as dome-shaped and some as bell-shaped. Some have worshippers, as also flags etc. The purpose of *Jetavana* at

⁶² D.C. Ahve, 1994, pp. 151

⁶³ The enlightenment is depicted symbolically as well as by later styles of temple and Buddha images.

Śrāvastī is sculptured in the upper-panel of a railpast of the railing.⁶⁵ A number of Jātaka are also depicted – The *Udanchanī Jātaka*, *Selanisama Jataka*, *Sussondi Jātaka*, *Athana Jātaka*, *Tittira Jātaka*, *Kimchhandra Jātaka*, *Kumbha Jātaka*, *Sambula Jātaka* *Ālambura Jātaka*, *sonaka Jātaka* and *Sudhabhojana Jātaka*. And lastly, there are astronomical representations – like sun, signs of solar Zodiac (Rasi-Chakra) and the luner-Asterisms.⁶⁶ The rite of circumambulation of the site and of individual image alongwith acts of offerings of conventional gifts are also depicted with donor figures and devotees often present at the bottom of the sculpture.

The motives for the pilgrimage has been discussed in the paper⁶⁷ and the surviving architectural remains and sculpture itself speaks of concern for merit accruing. The religious motivations for creating Buddha's images and the events of his life in a group was to elevate the central figure to an all inclusive level, a demonstration of both the nature of Buddhahood and the path to it. Buddha – *darśan* was conducive to enlightenment. The merit could be derived from seeing an image of the Buddha, which reproduced all the auspicious marks of the Buddha. The merit was also accrued as donors of Buddhist image and construction of the buildings at the sacred site with artistic depictions of the life of the Buddha. The appropriate variety of imagery

⁶⁴ The different depictions are discussed in detail by D.C. Ahir, pp. 151.

⁶⁵ D.C. ahir, pp. 151-2

⁶⁶ For details. Ibid., pp. 152-3.

⁶⁷ Hieun. Tsang also talks of motive, in context of construction of temple. He gives the story of the Brāhmaṇa and his brother, who constructed the temple and pond. and received desired results. They later emphasized on charity as well.

of Buddha indicates the diversity of the pilgrims, who made their way to the Bodhgaya.

Bodhgaya may then be viewed as layered with additional roles which included its identity as a pilgrimage centre, whose focus was upon the concepts of enlightenment, also conveyed by the images of the Buddha. The special nature of the site is from its symbolizing the means to enlightenment for all Buddhist practitioners. Taking into account other events, the main concern of pilgrims focussed on the *Vajrāsana* and its meaning as sustaining and unchanging source of Buddhahood. Even the representation of the Mahabodhi temple became an important image of the site.⁶⁸ Thus, all these architectural, artistic and sculptural development at the site has to be conceived and realized in terms appropriate to the larger picture of religious development over a long span of time. But undoubtedly, all these constructions were result of people's faith in this ancient religion.

SĀRNĀTH

In case of Sārnāth, we see the simultaneous growth of a complex. The complex primarily consists of Dharamrājīkā stūpa, Dhamek stūpa, 4 monastic remains, and innumerable votive stūpas, apart from temples and Aśokan pillar.

The 1903-04 excavations revealed two monasteries L and O, and called hospial N, a temple M, and the ground around the Dhamek

⁶⁸ All these facilitated recreation of sacred geography, which has been dealt in historiography.

stūpa J. The first structure excavated was the stūpa K, known as Jagat first structure excavated was the stūpa K, known as Jagat Singh Stūpa, with its concentric rings of brickwork.⁶⁹ The diameter of the innermost ring which can be traced at the bottom, measures 44'3" and that of another ring 55'3". On examining the surrounding wall from inside, it will be noticed that the upper part is cored or overhanging. This is due to its following the dome shape of the stūpa, over which it was built. One may also notice remains of layers of concrete in the brickwork, for instance on the south-west side, 5'3" above the level of the foundations. This is, no doubt, the remains of the concrete floor of terrace surrounding some inner stūpa no longer existing.⁷⁰ The stūpa has several layers of flooring, indicating reconstructions many a times. It can be presumed here that whenever the stūpa would have been in bad shape, reconstruction would have taken place by influential section of laity.

In the same season, some smaller stūpas, with similar case, were excavated. A few sculptures were recovered in the remains of these small brick stūpas all around the great brick stūpa. The temple excavated was a huge structure with several phases of reconstructions and changes in its original plan. The brick sizes also differed. All the masonry is of bricks laid in clay and plastered outside with Kankar lime, which was afterwards whitewashed. The south chapel of the sample had a stone-railing and a small stūpa alongwith a plain stone railing forming a square fence round it. A short votive inscription on

⁶⁹ ARASI, pp. 1904-05; pp. 65 (It is doubted if its innermost was 44' 3")

one of the stones places the erection of the railing in or before the first century B.C.

A Chabutra (platform) around Aśokan column, dated to Mauryan period, has been unearthed. Several small stūpas with Buddhist creed or Bodhisattva/Buddha images inside it were excavated.⁷¹ Besides Aśokan pillar are a group of three stūpas, of same shape and built side by side on the same floor and probably Gupta period. To the west and north west of the Aśokan pillar, numerous small stūpas were laid bare. These stūpas were arranged for most part in rows, apparently in relation to the main shrine. Most of them belong to the Gupta period, as antiquities show. They contained carved stones, images, figures of the Buddha together with a small terracotta jar, a sculptured slab found *in situ* fixed into south side of the stūpa 20 and containing illustration of the principal scenes from the Buddha's life.⁷² A few other smaller stūpas yielded similar finds.

Dhamek stūpa measures 104' above the terrace. The lower part of the structure above the brick foundation is of solid stone work to a height of 36'9" above the terrace. The stone in each layer are held together by means of iron cramps and as the stones themselves are very large, the lower part of the building is practicably indestructible. Cunningham in 1835, dug into the building to search for relics. He believed that the Dhamek tower was a stūpa erected by Aśoka to enshrine relics of Buddha, , and therefore he made sure that there

⁷⁰ Ibid., pp. 66.

⁷¹ ARASI, 1906-07 : pp. 70-71.

must have been relics in it, although he failed to find them.⁷³ It seems more likely, however, that the Dhamek tower was a memorial erected on the spot where Maitreya received assurance from Śākyamunī that he would be next Buddha. Hsüen-Tsang mentions a stūpa on the spot and it is not unnatural that the last great building erected at Sārnāth should have been in honour of the coming Buddha, from whom benefits might still be expected. The tower is dated to Gupta age by Oertel. It has eight projecting faces with niches for statuary and the appearance of the building suggests the Maitreya conjecture. It was the western niche where main image was to have been placed.

On top of the Chaukhaṇḍī stūpa is a memorial tower, erected by Akbar in memory of Humāyun in 1588 A.D. It is the remains of a large ruined stūpa. It had the concrete floor originally surrounding the building and exhumed the remains of three square terraces, each about 12 feet high and 12 ft broad, on which the stūpa seems to have been erected.⁷⁴ The stūpa was octagonal in shape, with star like points at the angles. The stūpa did not have any relics.

The complex has four monasteries and all four are rectangular in shape. The first one was excavated by Marshall in 1905. The building, with rows of chambers, its paved courtyard and its well was a monastery, must indeed be patent to anyone familiar with Buddhist architecture and that it was designed more or less after the usual fashion with a large open court in the middle and rows of chambers

⁷² Ibid. pp. 75.

⁷³ ARASI. 1904-05, p. 73.

around, may be regarded as an almost foregone conclusion. One of them was considered to be a hospital by the excavators, datable to the Gupta period. The other two monasteries were excavated by Hargreaves in 1913. The plan for all of them are similar and they are dated based on the style and types of bricks, apart from antiquities found from them.

Asoka marked the site with a lion column and an edict. The column 7' in height is surmounted by four magnificent lions standing back to back and in their middle was a large stone wheel, the sacred *dharmachakra* symbol. It is made up of chunar sandstone and polished. There is another capital, belonging to late Mauryan period.⁷⁵

The site around the main shrine and the great brick stūpa was crowded with smaller stūpas, votive caityas, shrines, another minor objects of veneration such as columns, stone umbrellas and statues. Many of the smaller objects which has been found in such numbers in previous excavations on the Sarnath site, may have been manufactured on the spot and possibly the sacred community had an interest in their sale. The clay crucibles and lumps of molten brass in particular, found in the ruins, would seem to suggest that brass images and several utensils were cast there. The large store of terracotta seals with the creed and deer and wheel symbols stamped on them and the diminutive clay stūpas, with small seals let into the bottom, found in the ruins of the monasteries at Sārnāth are such as

⁷⁴ ARASI, 1904-05, pp.75

⁷⁵ ARASI, 1906-07, pp. 72.

the pilgrims would take away as mementos to their homes or to deposit at their village shrines. At the temples of Pagan and elsewhere in Burma, many such terracotta tablets or seals have been found which from the designs on them have been thought to come from India and to have been brought to Pagan by Burmese pilgrims returning from Bodhgaya and Sārnāth. we know from inscriptions left behind by them⁷⁶ of small brick stūpas and shrines, the remains of 129 were unearthed. A few of the smaller stūpas have statues, *in situ*, placed in porch like niches against the domes. A great number of miniature votive stūpas came to light. Most of these have Buddha figures on the four sides, in the traditional attitudes and sometimes marked by symbols. A large number of burnt clay 'spirals' as smallest votive stūpas were found.

KUŚĪNAGARA

At Kuśīnagara, presently Kasiā, the focus of the ruins is a stūpa (*nirvāṇa - caitya*) with a shrine in front, both standing on a platform, 9 ft. high. On excavation the stupa yielded two sets of relics – one belonging to Gupta period and the other to 1st century A.D.⁷⁷ The relic was in a copper vessel and contained charcoal, cowries, precious stones, seed pearls, and two copper tubes, one of which yielded ashes, a small emerald, a silver coin of Kumaragupta I and a tiny gold tube encased in a silver one. The mouth of the vessel was closed by a copper-plate on which was written, mostly in ink, the *Pratitya-*

⁷⁶ Cunningham. 1892. pp. 67 – 75. The details of inscriptions will come out after a discussion on tables of inscriptions.

Samutpāda-Sūtra in Gupta characters. The record concluded by saying that the copper-plate had been deposited in the *nirvāṇa-caitya* by one Haribala. Further excavation resulted in finding the circular plinth of a small stūpa, 9 ft. 3 inch high, with a niche on the western façade having a terracotta figure of Buddha in *dhyāna mudrā*, stylistically ascribable to 1st century A.D. Inside the stūpa were found pieces of charcoal and earth. The site has seven stūpas, as brought out by Vogel.⁷⁸

Vogel also unearthed four monasteries, generally square or rectangular in plan and having similar cells of smaller size. Monastery D, L, M and E.⁷⁹ L and M monastery probably covered to exist around 500 A.D. D was then built for friars attached to the shrine. L & M have Kushana origin and existed till early Gupta period. The monasteries are dated based on the antiquities or inscriptions or seals and sealings found inside them. Two new monasteries (N&O) were found in next season's excavation, each with 20 cells wood was used for roof and terrace. The date of monastery is early Kushāna period, probably about the time of Kanishka as the study of ascribed objects revealed.⁸⁰ Buildings I looks like a quadrangular monastery with cells on 4 sides⁸¹ whereas building I also looks like a monastery. But the exact nature of the nature of the building as monastery is doubtful. It is quite possible that the buildings I & J were intended for the accommodation of

⁷⁷ Mitra, D, 1971, pp 70, ASI-AR, 1910-11, pp. 66-67.

⁷⁸ ARASI-1905-06, pp. 67.

⁷⁹ Ibid., pp. 69-71 and 73.

⁸⁰ Ibid., pp. 50-52.

⁸¹ Ibid., pp. 53 detail of structures are given.

pilgrims. For it should be noted, first, that they have not the eastern orientation; secondly, that they do not contain a chapel and thirdly that they are separated from the sacred buildings by a heavy wall. This has not yet been completely excavated, but it was most probably connected with the wall running north from the main stūpa.⁸²

Another monastery like structure P is found which is a rectangular building⁸³ measuring 102'9" by 67'9" internally. It has a spacious courtyard, a kitchen with hearths, a shrine room, a bathroom (drains) and two masonry pedestals are found in the courtyard. The building is adjacent to I and is paved with large brick tiles like building I. It may perhaps be surmised that, while the structure I supplied dwellings to pilgrims, the building served as a refectory. Several *nirvāṇa* sealings were found alongwith a few personal sealings but mostly fragmentary. Another monastery dated to Kalachuri period is found.

The stūpa of Ramabhar is identified by Cunningham as *Makutabandhana*, the spot where remains of Buddha were cremated. It is located near Ramabhar Tāl and is a ruined brick stūpa, circular in plan, which both in shape and size proves to be very ancient.⁸⁴ The high antiquity of the building is evidenced by the very heavy square bricks of the Mauryan type of which it is mostly built. Hundreds of clay-seals with the creed formula, evidently votive offerings, were found around the stūpa. This stūpa formed the centre of a group of

⁸² Ibid., pp. 54.

⁸³ ARASI, 1911. pp. 67, The details of monastery's structure is discussed here.

religious buildings. A rectangular building is found near the stūpa, whose nature is not clear. The buildings Q had 3 stages of habitation – first that of the monastic building; second, that of the pakka brick flooring, third, that of the memorial stūpas.⁸⁵ It was one of the earliest buildings, which continued till 10th c. A.D.

The other remains at the main site include votive stūpas and other miscellaneous buildings. The votive stūpas are clustered to the south of the main stūpa, but small groups occur elsewhere as well. Some of them, to the east of the stūpa-platform, are to be seen partially buried under it, indicating their early date. The other remains will be tabulated in accordance and the results of the tables will be discussed later.

In spite of the record of the activities of Aśoka at Kuśinagara, nothing else is found of Mauryan period. The object of Kushan period consists of coins of Kadphises I and Kanishka and a fragmentary inscription. Most of the structures, including Ramabhar stūpa underwent repairs and reconstructions and renovations due to being object of high sanctity.

Rajgir :

The site has numerous places like the Gridhakūṭa hill with a cave and a brick stūpa ruins, Saptaparni halls, Kāranda – Veṇuvana, Pipla stone house, Jivakāmravana and a recently excavated stūpa.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p p. 69.

⁸⁵ Ibid., pp. 67.

Hieun-Tsang reports of two stupas on Gridhkūṭa hill and they are still there. The first is composed of rough stone foundations with bricks above, but all the superstructure has fallen to ruin. The second stūpa is further up the ascent, where the causeway bends round to the north. Both are structurally similar. Another stūpa near the *vihāra*, when excavated, yielded nothing.

Veṇuvana, presented to Buddha by king Bimbisāra is near the gate of the fortification. Dr. Bloch's excavation at mound near the garden, marking the site of many ruined structures, brought out foundations of a room and the bases of nine brick stūpas. The stūpas contained nothing, but nearby areas revealed Buddhist creed of 10th-11th century A.D. The stūpa built by Ajātshatru and Aśoka was located by Cunningham on a mound (H).

A few structures, probably ordinary dwelling houses were excavated in new Rājagriha, which yielded 3 inscribed tablets of unburnt clay, one of which is compressed with a few Brahmi characters of the first or second century B.C.⁸⁶

The site has numerous *vihāras*, the earliest being *Jīvaka-Āmra-Vana* vihar, donated by physician Jīvak. The quadrangular layout of the *vihāra* is still present at the base of Griddhakūṭa hill. The enclosure wall together with foundations of a few large elliptical halls and subsidiary oblong rooms, all built of rubbles, are apparent. The plan of this complex, if it was the monastery of Jīvaka, does not

⁸⁶ ARASI. 1905-06, p p. 101.

conform to the usual plan of Buddhist monasteries; this may be due to its early date, when the monastic plan had not yet been standardized.

Recently, a stūpa was excavated, which has been claimed by archaeologists (K.K. Mohammad) to be of earliest antiquity, i.e., the stupa built over Buddha's relics by Ajātshatru. This is pure speculation, as truth will come out only after complete excavation of the structure. Around the site, *Jethian* (ancient *Yashtivana*) was sanctified by the presence of Buddha and here Aśoka it said to have built a stūpa. And Giriyak, situated on the outer face of the eastern hill of Rājgir, identified with Indrasala – guha where Śakra once is said to have visited Buddha, contains among other ruins, a cylindrical brick stūpa 28 ft. in diameter and 21 ft. in height standing on a 14 ft. high plinth.

Saṅkissa :

The site, only Aśokan elephant capital has been identified. Nothing has been accomplished in way of excavation at either the city of Saṅkissa or the stupa of the Triple stairs. The stūpa was located on the gate of the city.

The stūpa is presently topped by a Saivite shrine, and because the shrine is in active daily worship, it is not eligible for excavation under present Indian guidelines for religious monuments. Circumambulation demonstrates conclusively that the mound is a stūpa; indeed, a very large one of the exact type that would have been

raised at so important a location as the place where Buddha demonstrated his dominion over the traditional gods.

The antiquities at the site range from Mauryan period to the early medieval period. The excavation by B.R. Mani focuses more on the ceramic analysis and study of other deposits to bring out a scientific chronology. But the site is not excavated completely. Excavation at Saṅkissa are important in view of the fact that the great city site has never been earlier excavated with scientific methods and no proper record of the exposed structures and antiquities or stratigraphy is available. The site needs a proper study, which is possible, only if different mounds of the site are excavated carefully in a wider perspective. At the same time, the site defines the western most activity of the Buddha and is the place of the demonstration of the pre-eminence of the Buddhist religion in the Indic sphere. For the true pilgrim, it is one of the key sites of the route.

Vaiśālī :

Vaisali was one of the prominent urban centres and it has a long history. The excavations revealed fortification, various small sites, varieties of pottery (PGW, BRW, NBPW etc.) coinage, script, public architecture, etc.

In terms of Buddhist architecture, it is one of the most important site. The Buddha relic stūpa revealed the relics belonging to Aśokan times and pre-Mauryan casket. This stūpa is supposed to be built, soon after the death of the Buddha around 480 B.C., over his

ash. The original stūpa was a small structure, only 26'6" in diameter built entirely of earth. One layer of earth was separated from another by a very thin layer of white kankars and 27 such layers were detected in the extent portion of the stūpa. It also had *āyag* projection or *āyakapatas*, the earliest in India and only one in north India. The centre of the stūpa, rich in NBPW sherds, revealed a casket with ashes mixed with earth and one punch-marked copper coin, two glass beads, one couch and a thin small piece of gold probably of Mauryan period. The stūpa dates to pre-Mauryan period.⁸⁷

First enlargement was done between 300-250 B.C. The diameter of this enlargement was 34'4" and was built of kiln burnt bricks. The distance between the inner face of enlargement and outer face of original stūpa was rich in NBPW sherds and not uniform.

In second renovation, the stūpa's diameter was reduced by 4'8" to 33'6" and the chronological framework is the first quarter of 3rd century B.C. The materials used was old brick bats and sun dried bricks in an indiscriminate manner, though the *āyakapatas* were well built.⁸⁸ The third enlargement increased the diameter to 38'2" and used brick bats for inside and full bricks for the facing. The *āyag* projection continued and this was done around C 2nd century B.C.

At Marpasauna, located at north-western corner of the *chaur*, reveals a mud-stūpa (not relic) alongwith NBPW sherds and stone beads, weights, earlobes and terracotta beads. The excavators suggest

⁸⁷ Sinha, B.P. and Roy, S.R. 1968, pp. 21-22.

it to be a commemorative stūpa,⁸⁹ which is quite unique at this point of time.

The excavation at Bhimsen ka palla reveals two earthen stūpa of great antiquity. The stūpas finds were few copper utensils, a BRW dish and a red ware bowl, potteries associated with NBPW at the core of the stūpas. It also belongs to the same period. These stūpas at the satellite place/region of an urban centre shows the spread/influence of the religion and laity's involvement in the growth of such places.

Kolhua region has an Aśokan lion pillar, a contemporary stūpa and two excavated monastic remains of Aśokan period, a tank and numerous votive stūpas.

The excavations revealed that the original stūpa was built by square sized bricks (30 × 30 × 8cm), plastered with kankar lime and subsequently reconstructed or repaired atleast thrice. The important antiquities found included a fragment of *chhatrāwāli*, and pieces of broken relic-casket (both bearing typical Mauryan polish), gold leafs and semi-precious stones, some of them embedded in bricks apart from a headless seated figure of the Buddha and a crowned head of the Buddha. The earliest occupation dates to around 350 B.C. The monasteries have been excavated in 1997-98 and belong to Mauryan period.⁹⁰ The structure of the monastery is rectangular (*swastikā*) with a large rectangular room in centre, probably for prayer and small

⁸⁸ Ibid., pp. 22.

⁸⁹ Ibid., pp. 38.

⁹⁰ Gupta, K.P. – *Purātātva*, (11, 1979-80) pp. 145-147.

rectangular rooms on three sides for monks to stay. It has around 105 votive stūpas belonging to Maurya, Sunga, Kushāna and Gupta period. Most of them are brick stūpas and differ in shape and size.

The place and site developed into a complex, despite the fact that the stūpa was built by Aśoka, the king. It has everything stūpa, monastery, tank, votive stūpas. An interesting point is that the original stūpa with Buddha's relics did not develop into same and did not have any votive stūpa around it. At this place, we must point out that the royalty's role was prominent atleast in spreading the influence of the faith and it comes out very clearly in this case.

Śrāvasti :

The teachings of Buddha are aimed at expressing how the individual practitioner will attain his own enlightenment and Buddhahood, the message of the great illusion at Śrāvasti is nothing less than every devotee's identity with the *dharmā kāya*. The site has an special importance..It is at Śrāvasti that his ministry, his special relationship with his disciples and lay devotees, still may be felt and understood. The site has innumerable donations of monasteries and stūpas, apart from other materials.

The prominent stupas at the site were Paṇahiān Jhār, Ora Jhār, Kharahuaṃ Jhār, Bhatti stūpa, 3 stūpas (H, J, K) stūpa 8 and 17.⁹¹ There exists some 19 stūpas, of which most were memorial in nature. The stūpas have their origin in pre-Mauryan period, though mostly

belong to Mauryan and post-Mauryan period. Many of them like stūpa H have been reconstructed several times and contain antiquities like a red sandstone statue of Bodhisattva of Kushāna period, with a short dedication carved on its pedestal – ‘the gift of the nun Rajī’.⁹²

Similarly, there existed numerous viharas, such as Jetavana vihara, Mahā-gandha-Kuṭī, meant for the exclusive use of Buddha, Kareri – maṇḍalamālā (Kareri-Kuṭī), Kosamba Kuṭī and Chandanamālā, Salalughara (built by Prasenjit), Pūrvārāma (built by pious lady Visākhā), Pubbrāma – Migāramahipasada (and which was hallowed by the presence of the Buddha), Rājakrāmana (built for residence of nuns) and Mallikārama (built by Queen Mullika for the rendezvous of the wanderers). Apart from Kachhī and Pakki-Kuṭī, the excavations have revealed six monasteries and various structures, whose nature is doubtful. They can be rest-house for pilgrims. Most of the monasteries are similar in plan.

A detailed discussion of the growth of the site definitely points to their importance. The growth took place because of people’s interest in the religion and respect for the faith and Buddha. Keeping this fact in mind, the focus here has been primarily on the Buddhist archaeology (i.e. sacred landscape). These constituents make the sites sacred and an analysis of remains, i.e. seals and sealings, plaques, statues, inscriptions will reinforce the argument of pilgrims’ interaction with

⁹¹ ARASI, 1910-11.

⁹² Ibid., pp. 7.

the site. The sites developed as religious centres due to people's contribution in varying forms.

4.6 CONCLUSION

By now, we have detailed the growth of the sites. Keeping Heitzman's argument in mind, we can presume that atleast the site of Bodhgaya, Vaiśālī, Śrāvasti, Sārnāth, Lumbini, etc. were located away from the urban centres and that renders them inefficient for political-economic developments. The patronage keeps coming by laity, for different reasons, discussed earlier. Atleast two of the sites have beginnings of the sacred stūpa-buildings from pre-Mauryan times – Vaiśālī and Śrāvasti, as evidences suggest. The monastic sites can at best be termed as sacred complexes, evolved over a span of time.

As far as royalty's role is concerned, Aśoka Maurya gets to know about Buddhism through his interaction with the monasteries and monks. He pays respect to all the pilgrimage centres by visiting them alongwith Upagupta, one of the chief monks of his time. The centres/sites must have enjoyed some kind of importance prior to Aśoka Maurya and it must be through oral tradition, that he gets to know about them. We do not have evidences for this presumption, but the analysis of texts suggests the same opinion.. Moreover, the monks and nuns must have kept the tradition alive and spread the stories of miracles to far flung areas to spread the faith. The laity, merchants

participating in the rituals and paying respects, would also have spread the faith, as many of the sites were located on trade routes. For Aśoka, his visits and importance attached to the faith as reflected in his constructions and markers at the sites, it would have helped him in acquiring a kind of legitimacy among masses. At the same time, for the masses, the belief in same religion and following similar rituals would have given a kind of relationship (or a kind of identity) with the royalty. The widespread participation meant that Buddhist institutions could perform unifying role at the same time and the inclusion of everyone in the same cosmic system according to their various *dharmas* meant that all, regardless of exalted or humble position, were together in the same endeavour. Thus, the purpose of religious contributions in the minds of the donors was to show reverence to the Buddha and his order and concurrently to gain merit.

CONCLUSION

In the above study, we have attempted to analyse the emergence of the sacred geography in the middle Ganga zone vis-à-vis Buddhist pilgrimage. It is also demonstrated that the institution of pilgrimage gets substantiated by the material structures, which supports the practice. At the same-time, the continuous growth of the sacred centres is an important indicator of the persistence and durability of religious beliefs and practices over a long period of time. It is known that pilgrimage brings people to a 'sacred centre' which serves as a focal point for traditions of the faithful. The faithful laity denote a widely held perception and belief on the part of those, who are personally involved in the practice of pilgrimage. Therefore, we have tried to assess the broader meaning and significance of pilgrimage.

We have seen how the sacred centres grew due to their relationship with the Buddha. It indicates that the effectiveness of a sacred centre, in terms of sacred performance, is dependent on its association with the Buddha and monks. The sites also acquired importance due to miracles performed, as was the case with four secondary sites-Rajgrha, Vaiśālī, Śrāvastī and Sankissa. The other four sites are the places of life-events. In the mundane sense, the eight

great pilgrimage sites are where the major events of the life of Buddha occurred.

However, in the supermundane sense, the life events are part of a 'magic show' or literally, 'conjurer's illusion' (*pratihārya*) aimed at displaying the nature of Buddhahood.¹ The implications are that the life essence which was to become the śākyamunī Buddha had other options, but chose the life that he lived as a conscious act of didactic demonstration. As a manifestation of the universal nature of Buddhahood (*dharmakāya*), it was more a matter of exercising his skilful means (*upaya*) in the instruction of 'trainable men' that caused the 'magic show' to take the form it did. In other words, for the time and the place, the show was perfect in its ability to communicate Buddhist soteriological ideals to the populace.² And that is why, to visit the scenes of the eight great events is to experience in a direct way the life of the Buddha as both a demonstration of his perfection and the perfection of all Buddhas. We see and feel the locations of the conjurer's illusion teaching us the same message of Buddhist soteriological methodology that was displayed to his contemporaries. Through his experience, we are taught the fundamentals of the universality of Buddhist experience.

¹ Huntington, J.C. *Sowing the Seeds of the Lotus*, Part I, Orientations, Vol. 16, November 1985, PP.48

² *ibid*, PP.48

Here, we have analysed the tradition of pilgrimage and emergence of pilgrimage-centres. In the first chapter, a historiographical analysis of the various issues related to pilgrimage has been done in order to understand the methodology used. The survey has been based on texts from different tradition, including Christian and Hindu pilgrimage. By now, we have discussed the role of the miracles. The other issues vis-à-vis other traditions discussed includes the concept of *tīrtha* and *darśana*, the motives for undertaking pilgrimage, rituals performed at the site, charity, faith-healing, relic-worship etc. The motives for undertaking pilgrimage are many such as tourism, a break from usual routine, an act of devotion to the sacred beings or acquiring merit etc. A pilgrimage is supposed to confer some benefits, e.g material, moral spiritual or divine leading to liberation, on a pilgrim who visits it, and a pilgrim is said to enter a state of some sort of sacredness during his pilgrimage. For faith-healing, the miracles apart from medicinal knowledge played an important role. We have architectural and archaeological, apart from literary evidences to prove the existence of festivities, relic-enshrinement, and relic-worship, which gave rise to sacred architecture in Buddhism.

The second chapter, based on two non-canonical texts- *Buddhacaritam* and *Aśokāvadāna*- and two travel accounts of Fa-hsien and Hieun-Tsang has taken up the issues raised in the first chapter. After a thorough discussion on textual traditions, the focus has been on various facets of pilgrimage which includes miracles and legends, pilgrimage of Aśoka and role of royalty in giving a fillip to pilgrimage, and rituals of pilgrimage. The texts deal extensively with the recreation of sacred geography and they associate it to the miracles performed at the sites by Buddha. In *Buddhacaritam*, a biography of Buddha, most of the incidents have been associated with some or the other miracles. It also gives evidences for the beginning of constructions of sacred structures in Buddhism and gives us the story of distribution of the relics by *Drōṇa* and beginning of stūpa-worship. The *Aśokāvadāna* provides evidences for the role of royalty in broadening the social base of the religion and simultaneously, royalty acquiring legitimacy. The text acquires importance for describing the experiences of a layman, who was a king. It enjoins in cases of miracles and legends, and provides us with the literary evidence for the pilgrimage performed by Asoka Maurya. The text familiarises us with Aśoka's act of devotion by organising festivals, performing rituals, creating sacred place around the *Jambūdvīpa* by building 84,000 stupas. The two travel accounts have provided us with 70to80 percent accurate data of what existed on

ground. They have shared their own experiences of the site and rituals performed at them. In the last section, the fact of interaction between the monks and laity through various rituals like *Kaṭhiṇa-rites* has been brought out. Many Buddhist texts have dealt upon the rituals performed at sacred centres and the motivations for pilgrimage, which has been discussed in detail to prove people's participation and involvement at the site. The monastic segment of the community provided a fundamental mediation in serving as "field of merit" in response to their act of support.³ *Stūpa* - worship and the example of enlightened *arhats* or at least of those on the enlightened path, were also important. We must consider the monk's practice of reciting *suttas* in lay people's hearing, presenting actions and sayings of the Buddha for their inspiration and instruction, would have provided mediation between the laity and monks. In this way the Buddha's completely enlightened demeanour, as well as content of his *dharma*, was presented in dramatic form. The community's collective memory of his image, supported in its own characteristic devotional mood, was stabilized through this practice in a way that became increasingly important. Thus we see continuity of closer links between lay and monastic people in our region.

³ Stoerz, W., *Pre-Mauryan Lay Buddhism*, IJBS 1(2), 1989, PP. 18.

In the third chapter, we have tried to begin by discussing the beginnings of Buddhist archaeology and the prominent role played by A. Cunningham in it. The focus here, has been on constituents of a sacred place and the growth of monastic sites. We are also familiar with the sacred architecture and the messages conveyed by it. The analysis indicates the independent growth of sacred places and their internal dynamism. In our region, most of the sacred sites were located away from the urban centres, as revealed by archaeology, and argued by *J. Heitzman*. Royalty did play a role in the growth of the sites as Aśoka Maurya visited all the eight sacred sites and established stupas and marked the sites with pillars commemorating his visit.

As far as pre-Mauryan existence of these sites are concerned, it must have been present in the oral tradition. The history of the early development of the eight sites is lost in the oral traditions of the early lay Buddhists. Having lived so short a time, after the period of the Buddha, it is generally accepted that Asoka's determinations of the sites (or presumably, actually, those of his spiritual advisor, said in the *Aśokāvadāna* to the *Upagupta*, a dharma master from Mathura) were correct. Although not all the sites are extensively excavated, there is enough archaeological evidence of each of them to confirm early, or at least Maurya (circa 321-185 BC) or pre-Mauryan period, activity at each. Generally, it is the discovery of Aśokan monuments that provides

the kind of validation of authenticity which determines the acceptance of the majority of the sites.

The eight major sites grew primarily due to their religious importance in laity's opinion. The growth has been detailed in the chapter to reflect the laity's participation in different acts. The literary references point towards the beginning of the sacred places by building of stupas over Buddha's relics,⁴ and slowly the sites grew with many other structures like, other stūpas, monasteries, temples, votive stūpas etc. The sites developed as people under the influence of faith donated to them. Once the sites were established, it was upto the particular site as to how it commanded resources from the pilgrims. The image / importance of the site was one of the prime factors for getting patronage and donations. The purpose of religious contributions in the minds of the donors was to show reverence to the Buddha and his order, and concurrently to gain merit. For the occasions of donations, references in the Buddhist literature indicate that the *uposatha* days of the month were traditionally set apart for alms giving and ritual.

The architectural evidence for the pilgrimages are many as scenes depicted in Sānchi stūpa complexes indicate. In our region, we have to base our arguments on archaeological data. The presence of

votive stupas at Bodhgaya, Sārnath, Vaiśāli, Kuśīnagara etc are major indicators of pilgrimage. The donation of small votive stupas was a major component of the ritual of pilgrimage. These were either monolithic or of brick, terracotta or metal. The stone and brick stūpas often contained tablets or plates inscribed with the Buddhist creed, images or protective magical charms.⁵

At our sites, we have votive stupas at Sārnath, Bodhgaya and Vaisali, generally made up of brick and placed inside the complex, around the main structure. At Bodhgaya, we have black sandstone monolithic votive stupas, which are dated to Pala period. At Vaiśāli and Sārnath, they are dated from Śuṅga period, Kuśāna period and Gupta period. The absence at other sites might be attributed to incomplete excavations of these sites or they are lost. We have innumerable miniature stūpas found from these sites, which indicate the importance of stūpa in rituals. In course of a pilgrimage devotees often took home a memento or holy souvneir through which the benefits of their visit could continue to be enjoyed and could be shared by those unable to make the journey in person.⁶ These souvneirs include low-fired and sun-dried clay miniature stupas, clay

⁴ This has been discussed in *Buddhacaritiam*, where beginnings of stūpa constructions and rituals involved has been discussed.

⁵ Ray, H.P., *Kanheri: the archaeology of an Early Buddhist pilgrimage centre in western India*, WA Vol. 26 No.1, PP.40.

⁶ Guy, J., *The Mahābodhi Temple : Pilgrim Souvneirs of Buddhist India* PP. 356.

impressions of prayer seals, narrative clay votive plaques, small stone steles depicting eight great events of Buddha's life and a leaf from the sacred *Bodhi-tree* itself at Bodhgaya. The widespread distribution of these souvenirs are enough indications of pilgrimage.

The link between pilgrimage and patronage is established from the data tabulated from inscriptions and seals and sealings.⁷ The analysis of the tables indicate the largescale participation of laity at most of the sites. The evidence of royal patronage is numerous in early period. In subsequent periods patronage came largely from visiting pilgrims and missions sent by various rulers, including foreigner rulers. We have evidences for the construction of a monastery at Bodhgaya for Sri Lankan pilgrims, on request of the Sri Lankan ruler to the local Gupta king, Samudragupta in fourth century A.D.

⁷ We have not been able to tabulate inscriptions and seals and sealings for the sites - Lumbini, Sankissa, Sravasti and Rajgriha due to paucity of data.

5.1 Future Research Strategy

The paucity of data prevents us from raising a number of questions, which included the hierarchy of the sites, pilgrimage circuit and relationship of the sites with settlement sites. The Buddhist pilgrimage is one of the continuing tradition. This widens the scope of the research as ethnographic data based on pilgrim's experience can be collected and can be used.

Most of these sites are being re-excavated and new data are acquired, which will be immensely helpful in locating the hierarchy of the sites. Currently, Śrāvastī and Rājgriha is being re-excavated. A stupa has been discovered at Kesaria, which is located on the way from Vaiśālī to Kuśinagar. The recreation of sacred geography, drawing from these eight sites, can be another important aspect, which needs to be dealt with.

Last but not the least, few of these sites have been important pilgrimage sites for other faiths as well, like Rājgriha and Vaiśālī for Jains, Vaiśālī, Gaya and Benares (near Sarnath) for Hindus. These sites have witnessed multiplicity of faiths. At Rājgriha, the interactions of Buddhism with *Naga* cult is suggested by the existence of *Māṇiyar Māth*. The presence of *Jaina* caves and temples of Hindu deities indicate the interaction of people from different faith. At Vaiśālī, we

have *chaturmukhi linga* and numerous seals depicting legend of goddesses *Srī* and *Lakshmi*. Bodhgaya is just 10 kms away from Gaya, which is one of the important continuing pilgrimage centres for Hindus for performing *Sraddhā*. Benares is another important Hindu *tīrtha*, located just 9 kms away from *Sārnāth*.

We can presume here the interactions between people/ pilgrims of various faiths at these sites. An analysis of these can bring out interesting facets of religious interactions and their effect on the masses, in particular.

Thus, pilgrimage in general, gives knowledge of distant lands, mountains, rivers, ways of life and living of people of different parts. Pilgrims were supposed to observe certain rules, regulations and rituals during pilgrimage as the sacred effectiveness of a ritual act increases manifold with the correct combination of space and time. Pilgrimage generated a spirit of adventure and tolerance as one met other pilgrims of his faith as well as of others faiths and sect leading to cultural interaction.

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Abbreviations

ARASI – Annual Report of the Archeological Survey of India.

HR – History of Religions.

IAR _ Indian Archeological Review.

IESHR – Indian Economic and Social History Review.

IJBS- Indian Journal of Buddhist Studies.

IJBPP- Indian Journal of Bihar Puravid Parishad.

JAOS – Journal of American Oriental Society.

WA - World Archeology.

BODHGAYA (INSCRIPTIONS)

Table I.

S.No.	Name of donor	Place of origin	Period	Others involved	Object donated	Nature
1.	----	-----	c. 2 nd B.C	Parents	Diamond-throne	Layman (gift)
2.	Kurangi	Indragnimitra-palace	c. 2 nd B.C	-----	15 pillars of stone-railing	Gift by laywomen
3.	Sirima	Indragnimitra-palace	c. 2 nd B.C	-----	1 pillar of stone-railing	Gift by laywomen
4.	Nagadevi	-----	c. 2 nd B.C	-----	1 pillar of stone-railing	Gift by laywomen
5.	Amogha	-----	-----	-----	Rail-bar of stone-railing	Gift by laywomen
6.	Bodhirakshita	Tāmrapani	-----	-----	Rail-bar of stone-railing	Layman (gift)
7.	(?) Pratihara	-----	-----	-----	Rail-bar of stone-railing	-----
8.	A monk with the help of a laywomen	-----	-----	Parents	Two lion-vehicled stone-images of the Buddha	-----
9.	-----	-----	Medieval	Parents	A shrine-built and material for utility	Layman (gift)
10.	Prakhyatakirtti (monk)	Sri Lanka	-----	Mankind	-----	Pilgrim
11.	Samudragupta	Pataliputra	9 th year of his rule	Parents and himself	-----	-----
12.	Mahanaman	Amardvipa	-----	For everybody	Temple and image	Layman
13.	Dharmagupta and damstrasenal	Tisyamratīrtha	-----	For everybody and acarya	Stone image	Monk
14.	King Sinbyuthikhin and king Kyawswa	Burma	1298AD	-----	Flags and streamers, 1000 bowl of rice, 1000 lamps, gold, silver, flower and cloths	Layman
15.	Jinasena	Pārvata	-----	Parents	-----	Pilgrim

Reference: A.Cunningham (1892)

Sarnath Inscriptions

Table 2.

S.No.	Name of donor	Place of origin	Period	Others involved	Object donated	Nature	Reference
1.	Aśoka Maurya	Pataliputra	c.3 rd B.C	-----	Pillar (edict)	Layman	ARASI-1904-05
2.	Aśoka Maurya and sulaksmāna	Pataliputra	c.3 rd B.C	-----	Railing pillar and votive-inscriptions	Laymembers	ARASI-1904-05
3.	-----	-----	c.3 rd B.C	-----	Railing pillar and votive-inscriptions	-----	ARASI-1904-05
4.	Kaṇiṣka (2 inscriptions)	Mathura	3 rd year of his rule	-----	Bodhisattva statue and umbrella-post	Layman	ARASI-1904-05
5.	-----	-----	Gupta	-----	15 inscriptions with Buddha images and statues, contains Buddhist creed	Laymembers	ARASI-1904-05
6.	-----	-----	C. 6 th AD-9 th AD.	-----	10 inscriptions with Buddha images and statues, slabs, bas-reliefs, contains Buddhist creed	Laymembers	ARASI-1904-05
7.	Samvāhika	-----	c. 2 nd B.C	-----	Rail-stone	Nun	ARASI-1906-07
8.	-----	Benares	c. 2 nd AD.	-----	Votive-stupa	Monk	Do

S.No.	Name of donor	Place of origin	Period	Others involved	Object donated	Nature	Reference
9.	Jateyika and Bharini	-----	c. 2 nd B.C	-----	Rail-stone	Laymembers	ARASI-1906-07
10.	Sarvastivadin teachers	Mathura	c.3 rd -4 th AD.	-----	Railings	Monks	ARASI-1906-07
11.	Kirtti	-----	c.1 st -2 nd BC.	-----	Lamp and rail stone	Layman (devotee)	ARASI-1906-07
12.	Dhanadeva	-----	c. 4 th -5 th AD.	-----	Buddha-stature and image of Buddha (2 inscriptions)	Layman	ARASI-1906-07
13.	Kumaragupta	-----	c. 5 th AD.	-----	Buddha-stature	Layman	ARASI-1906-07
14.	Bodhisena	-----	c. 6 th AD.	-----	Rail-post	Monk	ARASI-1906-07
15.	Bhavarudra	-----	c. 6 th AD.	-----	Rail-post	Layman	ARASI-1906-07
16.	Mabhuka	-----	c. 9 th AD.	-----	Buddha-stature	Layman	ARASI-1906-07
17.	Karnadeva (kalachuri-chedi)	Tripuri	c. 10 th -11 th AD.	-----	Buddha-stature	Layman	ARASI-1906-07
18.	Hariti, Suguta, Visvadeva and others	Ujjain, pataliputra	c. 3 rd -2 nd BC.	-----	13 donative inscriptions	Laymembers	ARASI-1914-15
19.	Dharmmad	-----	c. 4 th AD.	Parents	Buddha-image	Nun	ARASI-1914-15
20.	Abhaymitra (two specimen)	-----	c. 4 th AD.	Parents	Buddha-image	Monk	ARASI-1914-15
21.	Silasena	-----	c. 5 th AD.	All beings	Buddha-image	Monk	ARASI-1914-15

S.No.	Name of donor	Place of origin	Period	Others involved	Object donated	Nature	Reference
22.	Kumaragupta	Pataliputra	473-4 AD	-----	Buddha image	Layman (to worship)	ARASI- 1914-15
23.	Narmana	-----	c. 6 th AD	All beings	Buddha image	Layman	ARASI- 1914-15
24.	Amritpala (two inscriptions)	-----	c. 9 th AD	Father and uncle	Buddha image	Layman	ARASI- 1914-15
25.	Jasmana	-----	c. 12 th - 13 th AD	-----	Buddha image	Layman	ARASI- 1914-15
26.	Lay people	-----	c. 9 th AD	-----	Oval tablets	Laymember (to purify and get children)	ARASI- 1914-15

Sarnath (votive stupas)

Table 3.

S.No	Object	Period	Depictions	Reference
1.	Stone	Gupta	Four life events	1904-05
2.	Sand stone	Gupta	Buddha in meditation	1904-05
3.	Sand stone	Medieval	Buddha in different postures	1904-05
4.	Sand stone	Medieval	Buddha in different postures Bodhisattvas	1904-05
5.	Sand stone	Medieval	Buddha in different postures	1904-05
6.	Sand stone	Medieval	-----	1904-05
7.	Sand stone	Medieval	Buddha in enlightenment postures miracles	1904-05
8.	Sand stone	Medieval	2 life events miracles at Sravasti and Kausanbi	1906-07
9.	Sand stone	Medieval	Buddha in different postures	1906-05
10.	Sand stone	c. 8 th -9 th AD.	All eight events	1906-05
11.	Sand stone	Medieval	Fine life events	Queens college collections (Q.C.C)
12.	Sand stone	Gupta	Life events Buddhisattvas	(Q.C.C)
13.	Brick	-----	-----	1904-05
14.	Sand stone	-----	-----	1904-05
15.	Sand stone	-----	-----	1904-05

S.No	Object	Period	Depictions	Reference
16.	Sand stone	c. 9 th – 10 th AD.	Buddha in three postures (inscriptions with Buddhist creed- gift of varnika)	1904-05
17.	Sand stone	-----	Buddha expounding the law	1904-05
18.	Sand stone	Medieval	Budha expounding The law	Lucknow Provincial Muslin
19.	Sand stone	c. 11 th AD.	Budha in earth touching attitude & devotion	
20.	Sand stone	c. 8 th – 9 th AD.	Buddha, Bodhisattva , Buddhist creed	1904-5
21.	Sand stone	Late Gupta	Life-events & miracles	Q.C.C.
22.	Sand stone	Medieval	Life-events & miracles	Q.C.C.
23.	Sand stone	Medieval	Bodhisattva & Marichi goddess	Q.C.C.
24.	Sand stone	-----	Life events & Miracles	1906-7
25.	Sand stone	-----	Buddha and Tara	1906-7
26.	Sand stone	Gupta	Buddha	1904-5
27.	Sand stone	Medieval	Buddha	1906-7
28.	Sand stone	Medieval	Buddha in four postures	1904-5
29.	Sand stone	Medieval	Buddha in four Postures	1904-5
30.	Sand stone	Medieval	Buddha in Postures	Q.C.C.

S.No	Object	Period	Depictions	Reference
31.	Stand stone	Medieval	Buddha in earth Touching attitude	1904-5
32.	Stand stone	Medieval	Life events	1904-5
33.	Stand stone	Medieval	-----	1906-7
34	Stand stone	11 th -12th restry A.D.	Buddha gift Of monk kasyapa	1904-5
35.	Bricks and Stand stone	Early centuries AD to Medieval	-----	1904-5,1906-7,1907-8

Table 4. Sarnath (Other objects)

S.No.	Objects	Number	Period
1.	Umbrellas gifted with inscription)	28	Kushana to medieval
2.	Lintels of doorways	17	Kushana to medieval
3.	Window screens	12	Kushana to medieval
4.	Pillars with door-jamb (three with inscription)	60	Kushana to medieval
5.	Capitals	35	c. 2 nd BC to medieval
6.	Inscribed slabs	9	Mauryan to medieval
7.	Seal dyes	3	Early medieval
8.	Seal-Gandhakuti	8	Kushana to Gupta
9.	Votive-stupa and tablets	42	Early centuries AD to 9 th -10 th AD
10.	Railing-posts, coping stones and crossbars (ten with inscriptions)	53	c. 2 nd BC-6 th century AD (mostly 2 nd and 1 st century BC)

Note : The data for this table has been collected from ARASI reports and information provided by D.R. Sahni in his report of the Sarnath museum.

BODHGAYA SEALS AND SEALINGS

Table 5.

S. No.	Object	Shape	Depictions	Legend	Period	Nature
1.	Clay seal	----	Two deer on opposite sides & name of founder of the vihara	Sri. Saddharmā & Gandhakuṭī	---	Layman
2.	Clay seal	----	A pair of feet above a throne with a worshipper on each side	----	----	Layman
3.	Clay seal	---	Mokhāli kasa	----	c. 1 th & 2 nd B.C	Layman(Maukharis tribe)
4	Clay seal	-----	Half lotus flower above the name of Kumara	----	c.5 th - 6 th A.d.	----
5.	Burnt clay seal	----	Buddha seated on a throne with both hands in his lap, inside a pillared temple with a low roof	----	c. 10 th -11 th A.D	Monastery stamp (Layman)
6.	Burnt clay seal	----	Buddha seated on a throne with his hands raised before his breast in the attitude of teaching	----	----	Seal brought by a pilgrim from Benaras (Layman)
7.	Clay seal	----	Rajni Śri Soma - Tula	----	Medieval	----

<i>S. No.</i>	<i>Object</i>	<i>Shape</i>	<i>Depictions</i>	<i>Legend</i>	<i>Period</i>	<i>Nature</i>
8.	Clay seal	Oblong	Kasaparakshita	----	Medieval	Kasyapa Rakshita(Layman)
9.	Burnt Clay seal	----	Figure of Padma pani	Buddhist creed	----	Monastery stamp (Layman)
10	Burnt clay seal	----	Buddha in meditation below Bodhitree	Buddhist Creed	Medieval	Seals of different Buddhist establishments at Mahabodhi Temple (Loyman)
11.	Hard clay	----	Small stūpa	Buddhist creed	----	Layman
12.	Hard clay	---	Small stūpa	Pratishthita	---	Layman

Note: Several clay seals of type 11 & 12 have been found which does not have any other information apart from depiction and Buddhist creed . **Reference:** Alexander Cunningham's excavation of Mahabodhi temple complex (1892).

Table 6. Kusinagara (seals and sealings)

S.No	Object	Shape	Period	Legend	Depiction	Nature	Reference
1.	Clay-sealing (2specimens)	Elliptical	c. 4 th AD	Mahāparinirv- (āna)-bhiskshu-(2) saṅghasya	Coffin between twin sal trees	Monastery	ARASI- 1910-11
2.	Clay-seal	Oblong	c. 400 AD	Mahāparinirvānae (ne) caturdiśo (2) bhikshusaṅgha	Coffin between twin sal trees	Monastery	ARASI- 1905-06
3.	Clay-tablet	Oblong	c. 400 AD	Śri Makūṭa-bandhi Smagha	Flaming pyre with kneeling figure	Monastery	ARASI- 1905-06
5.	Clay-seal Dyes	Oval	c. 400 AD	Śri Visnuḍvipa- vihāre bhikshusaṅghasyā	A sacred tree within an enclosure	Monastery	ARASI- 1906-07
6.	Clay-seal	Circular	c. 600 AD	Śri- Mahāparinirvāna- (2)-vihāra bhikshusaṅghah	-----	Monastery	ARASI- 1905-06
7.	Clay-seal	Circular	c. 600 AD	Śri-Bandhan- Mahāvihāre — ārya bhiksu-samghasya	Wheel of the law & 2 deer couchant	Monastery	ARASI- 1905-06
8.	Clay-seal (8 specimen)	Circular	c. 600 AD	Śri- Mahāparinirvāna- (2)-vihāre bhikshusaṅghasya	Human figure	Monastery	ARASI- 1906-07
9.	Clay seal	Circular	c. 600 AD	Śri- Mahāparinirvāna- (2)-vihāryārya bhikshusaṅghasya	Wheel & deer symbol	Monastery	ARASI- 1906-07

S.No	Object	Shape	Period	Legend	Depiction	Nature	Reference
10.	Votive clay tablet (27 specimen)	Circular	c. 600 AD	Buddhist creed	-----	Layman	ARASI-1906-07
11.	Clay seal	Circular	c. 650 AD	Śri- Mahāparinirvāna- (2)-vihāryārya bhikshusaṃghasya	-----	Monastery	ARASI-1906-07
12.	Clay seal (19 specimen)	Oblong	c. 750 AD	Śri- Mahāparinirvāna- (2)-vihāryārya bhikshusaṃghasya	Wheel and deer symbol	Monastery	ARASI-1905-06
13.	Clay seal (8 specimen)	Circular	c. 750 AD	Śrimad-Ēraṇḍa- Mahāvihāryārya- bhikshu- saṃghasya-----	Buddhist creed	Monastery	ARASI-1906-07
14.	Clay seal	Elliptical	c. 750 AD	Śri- Mahāparinirvāna- (2)-Mahāvihāryārya bhikshusaṃghasya	Wheel and deer symbol	Monastery	ARASI-1906-07
15.	Clay sealing (240 specimen)	Oval	c. 8 th AD	Śri- Mahāparinirvāna- (2)-Mahāvihāryārya bhikshusaṃghasya	Wheel and deer symbol	Monastery	ARASI-1910-11
16.	Clay seal dye	Circular	c. 900 AD	Śri- Mahāparinirvāna- (2)-vihāryārya bhikshusaṃgha	Wheel and deer symbol by metal objects	Monastery	ARASI-1905-06

S.No	Object	Shape	Period	Legend	Depiction	Nature	Reference
17.	Clay seal	Circular	c. 900 AD	Śri- Mahāparinirvāna- (2)-vihāryārya bhikshusaṃghasya	Wheel and deer symbol	Monastery	ARASI- 1906-07
18.	Clay sealing (295specimens)	Circular	c. 10 th AD	Śri- Mahāparinirvāna- (2)-vihāryārya bhikshu- (3)saṃghasya	Wheel and deer symbol	Monastery	ARASI- 1910-11
19.	Votive-clay- tablet	Elliptical	c.1000 AD	Buddhist creed	-----	Layman	ARASI- 1910-11
20.	Votive-clay- tablet (2 specimens)	Oval	Medieval	-----	Bodhisattva figure with flower, two miniature stupa and Buddhist creed	Layman	ARASI- 1910-11
21.	Votive-clay- tablet (6 specimens)	Elliptical	-----	Buddhist creed	Seated Buddha and Maitreya figures and Bodhisattva figure in vṛādamudrā	Laymemb ers	ARASI- 1906-07

Note : 1. There were 94 personal seals with different legends and ten non – inscribed seals, which can not be Used due to incomplete data.

2. There is one official sealing and seven private sealing with different legends. They do not have any depiction and may be of the laymen who visited as pilgrims. Some 300 clay tablets bearing the Buddhist creed formula in medieval characters have been found around the Ramabhar stupa, nirvana stupa and at the chapel of Kalachuri monastery. **Inscriptions :** The site has three inscription of Kushana and Gupta period engraved on copper plate by Haribala of Gupta period, one on stone and two on terracottas and they are donated by layman.

Vaisali (seal and sealings)

Table 7.

S.No	Object	Shape	Period	Legend	Depiction	Nature	Reference
1.	Terracotta-token	Circular	c. 3 rd BC	Buddhalakhitasa	-----	Layman	Sinha & Roy (1958-62)
2.	Terracotta-Token	Circular	c.3 rd BC	-----	----	Monk	Sinha & Roy (1958-62)
3.	Terracotta-Token	Circular	c.2 nd BC	Srinagaseanasa Mavisa	-----	Monk	Sinha & Roy (1958-62)
4.	Terracotta-Sealing	Circular	c.200-600 AD	Purusasya	A tree in railing	Layman (Gupta Family)	Sinha & Roy (1958-62)
5.	Terracotta-Sealing	Circular	c.200-600 AD	----	A stūpa	----	Sinha & Roy (1958-62)
6.	Terracotta-Sealing (3 specimmen)	Circular	c. 200-600 AD	(Śre) Sṭhisarthavahā-prathamaku(li) kanigamah	A. stūpa device with a <i>harmikā</i> & <i>chhātra</i>	Guild as lay-members	Sinha & Roy (1958-62)
7.	Terracotta-Sealing (2 specimen)	Circular	c. 200-600 AD	Kullikanigamah	A stūpa device	Guild as lay-members	Sinha & Roy (1958-62)
8.	Terracotta-Sealing (2 Specimen)	Circular & Oval	c. 200-600 AD	Bhagvata---? (Blurred)	A stūpa & Human Figure	Laymen	Sinha & Roy (1958-62)
9.	Clay-Sealings(16 Specimen)	Circular	Gupta	Sresthi-nigamasya	A stūpa design over Railing	Laymen	Deva & Mishra (1950)

Fig.1

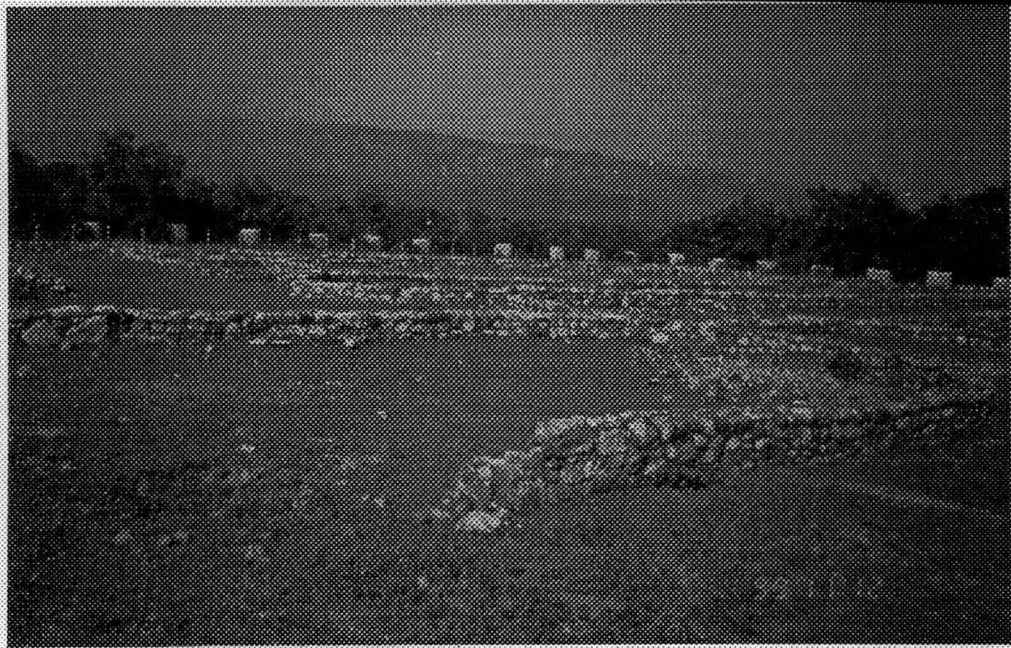


Fig.2



Fig.3

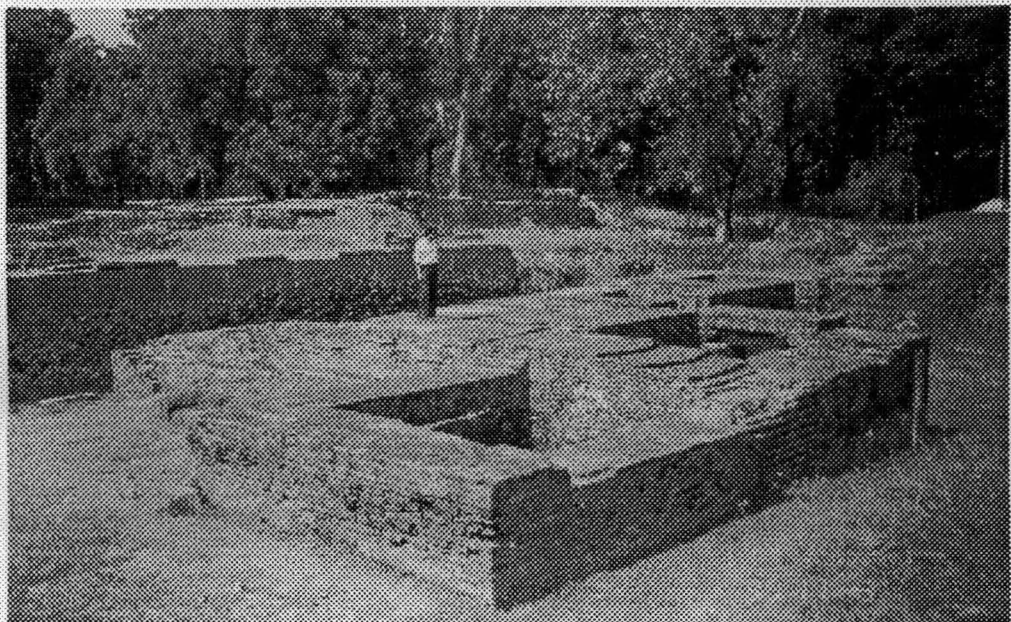


Fig.4



Fig.5



Fig.6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8

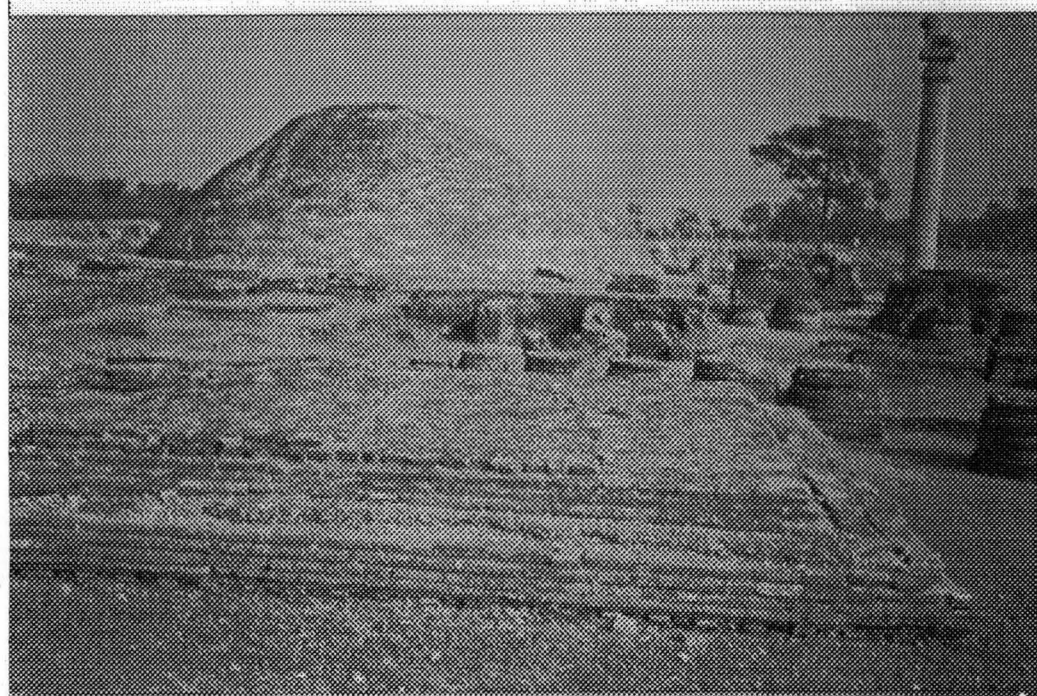


Fig. 9



Fig. 10

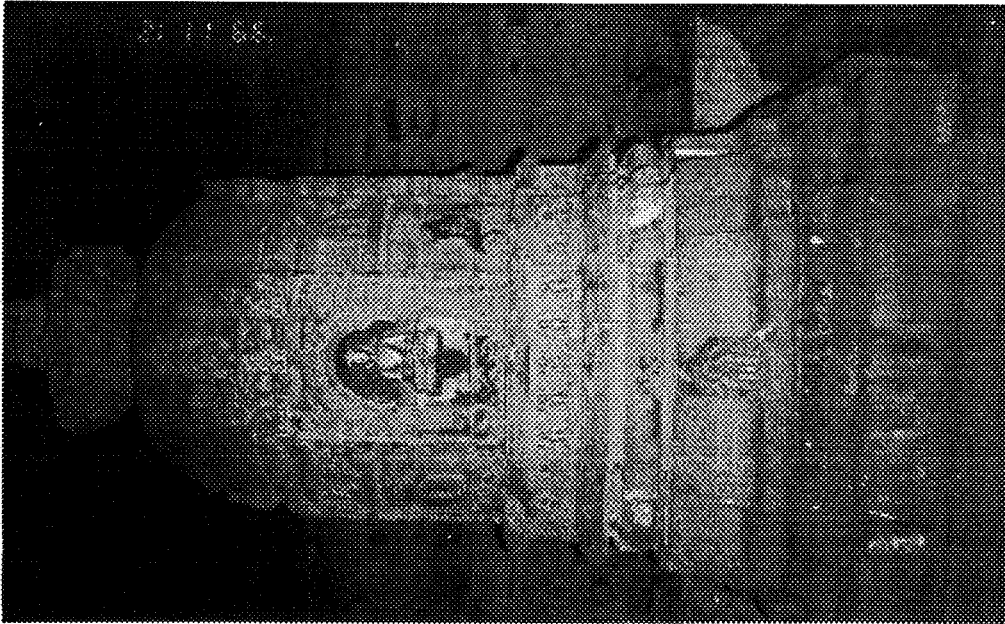


Fig. 11

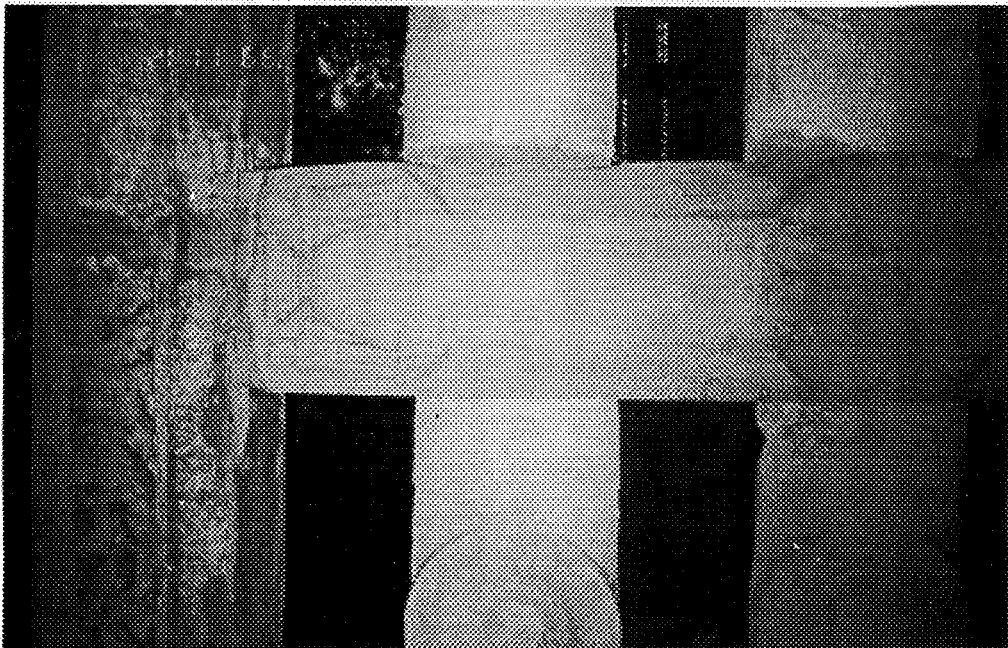


Fig. 12

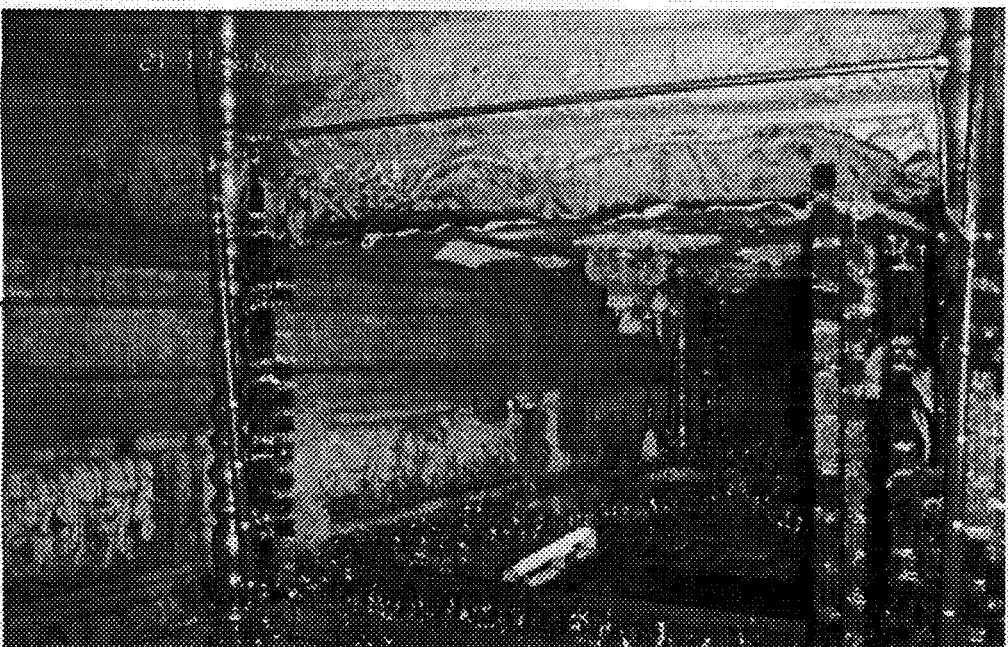




Fig. 13