

PROJECT REPORT

ON

BUDDHISM IN ODISHA



SESSION : 2022-23

PREPARED BY

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

PATTAMUNDAI COLLEGE , PATTAMUNDAI

KENDRAPARA , ODISHA - 754215

REPORT

A project on 'BUDDHISM IN ODISHA' was prepared by students of +3 6th semester History Hons. During the month of March 2023. Eight numbers of students participated in the project work. They collected several resource materials on the concerned subject from different books, research papers and Historical sites in the localities. The project work is carried out under the supervision of Rabindra Kumar Panda, Reader in History. The project work is genuine.

Rabindra Kumar panda
Supervisor (Reader in History)

BUDDHISM IN ODISHA :

The advent of Buddhism trace back to 6th century B.C. Siddhartha Gautama, a Sakya Prince left all the worldly pleasure in quest of the truth and reality of life. Though, it took some years to realize the reality of life, but when He was showered with the divine light of enlightenment, instead of keeping it to himself, Goutam Buddha preferred to enlighten others as well. The teachings preached by Gautam Buddha were warmly accepted by a large number of people and came to be known as a new school of thought, Buddhism which later turned into a major religion of the world and the kings, emperors, traders and commoners built monuments, kept relics and offered gifts to pay ovation to the Master Teacher. Odisha is fortunate to have received a good deal of monuments and relics throughout history at least up to 15th century A.D. Archaeology and Literature are the two basic sources to study and compile of history and culture of a place or a region or a State or Country. Without proper study archaeology or archaeological remains which are the primary source, no cultural history could be written.

Odisha has repository of Buddhist art and heritage. The glimpses of materials remains could be seen from the various Buddhist sits spread over the state..Buddhism -the great religion had its origin in India

2500 years back, some time in 6th-5th century B.C. It emerged as a dominant force in Indian religion and culture from its birth down about the 11th -12th century A.D. and still visible in some northern parts of India. It is still prevalent in Nepal and beyond Tibet and Mongolia and in the island of Ceylon or Lanka It is spread to South-East Asia from Thailand and Myanmar into Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, so that by modern times Buddhism became a dominant force. In the first millennium of Buddhist era, the pre-dominant form was Mahayana, which developed Buddhist philosophy in amazing direction. Much of this material together with tantric notions, were retained and elaborated in Tibet. Meanwhile from the 1st century B.C. /A.D., Buddhism had begun to move into China via Silkroute (North of Tibet) and in due course some Chinese -flavor developed, notably Miao Yen and Chan which had their influence in Korea and Japan, where Zen in particular evolved in a Japanese way. Chinese philosophical Buddhism is largely based on Indian sources.

Sacred places across the whole of Indian sub-continent attract a lot of Buddhist pilgrims from all over the world. Before entering into Nirvana, the Buddha himself said about the four places which a pious believer ought to visit with feelings of faith and reverence .These are Lumbini where Tathagata was born, Buddha Gaya where he was attained perfect Enlightenment, Saranath

where delivered his first Sermon and Kusinagar, where Mahaparinirvana took place. The other four places of pilgrimage or Sravasti, Rajgriha, Nilagiri and Vaisali which all eight places together called *Atthmahasthamani* or eight sacred pilgrim points, which throughout the years people are visiting these places.

Mauryan emperor Asoka during 3rd century B.C, declared such pilgrimage as “*Dharmayatra*” or “Tours of Piety”. Emperor Asoka (c. 269-32 B.C.) had built 84,000 Buddhist monuments throughout the Empire along with the foot steps of Buddha. The Buddhist monuments are Stupa, Pillars, Chaityas, Monasteries and Rock- Cut Caves, dedicated for the masters of Buddhist world or residents regarding interpretation of the cannons preached by Buddha. During the second Council of the monks (the Samgha) held at Vaisali, two separate schools of Buddhism clearly emerged, namely Hinayana and Mahayana or Mahasanghika. The Mahasanghika later on became Mahayana school. Hinayanists called themselves as Theravadi. Theravadi monks visited Kalinga and stayed here to propagate Buddhism and educate the monks of Odisha (Patnaik, 2012). Asoka built a monastery for Theravadin Monk- Tissa, at Bhojakagiri. Incidentally, an inscription written as *Sadabhu Tissa* in Brahmi script of C. 3rd-2nd B.C have been found from Kankia-Radhanagar Excavation (OIMSEAS). Radhanagar is an Early Buddhist settlement of India belonging to 3rd century B.C. This is one of the early settlement

might have developed during the Mauryan King Ashoka in Kalinga. It is referred that a large number of Buddhist Stupas were built by the emperor Asoka in Kalinga to glorify Buddhism of which three have been proved. These are Lalitgiri, Langudi, Tarapur (Dharmasala) and recently discovered one at Aragarh.

The great Buddhist saint Nagarjuna paid a visit to Odisha in the 2nd Century A.D. and converted the then King Munja into Buddhism. The early Buddhist literature suggests that the primary abode of the Mahasanghikas (Mahayana) in the eastern region was Vaisali. They spread to Magadha from Vaisali and then travelled to Andhra regions en-route Kalinga. In course of this migration they also made their few settlements in Kalinga. Archaeological spade at Salihundam, Sankram, Ramatirtham (now in Andhra) were earlier part of Kalinga where, we get large settlements and ruins of Buddhist monuments speak volumes about the growth of Buddhism. N K Sahu brings the attention of the scholars suggesting Mahayana form of Buddhism evolved from Odisha. This was evidenced from the Lama Taranath's information from Pag Sam Jan Zang.

Buddhisim was accepted by larger extent during the reign of the Kushans (c.78-220 A.D.), Satavhanas (c.1st -

195 A D.), Vakatakas and Guptas (350-550 A D.). Even in post-Gupta period regional dynasties such as Vardhamanas, Palas of Bengal and Bhuaumakras of Odisha (c. 7th -9th .A.D) were the patrons of Buddhism and sustained Buddhism in India particularly of Vajrayana form

The Buddhist philosophy contained three main ideas .One idea was that of rebirth or reincarnation. Generally, the Sarmanic movements accepted the thought that without special effort, we are destined to continuous rebirth. The second idea was that nevertheless, liberation (*moksha* or *mukti* or *nirvanā*) is possible. The third idea was that there are certain means, for liberation from rebirth. With these notions also went the conception of a soul of *Jiva* or *Pursa* who might continue into liberation. Nirvana does not involve the persistence of the saint or the Buddha or Tathagata Or more strictly, since the Buddha's analysis of life reduces things to complexes of events, the very question as to whether the self exists after death is meaningless; like the query "*as to whether a flame goes north ,south, east or west after it goes out.*"

From an early time the Buddha Sangha created formulas for instance, the four Noble Truths analyzed the human predicament and its solution in the guise of a medical

formula. The human condition of suffering (*dukkha*) or ill force is caused by carrying; there is a cure for suffering and that is eight-fold path (the *attangikamarga*) which culminates in *samadhi*. The formula of four noble truths, parallel the declaration that everything is conditioned - a view ultimately *patityasamatpada*. This common formula see human problems as deriving from greed, hatred and delusion. This is akin to ignorance but slightly different. At any rate, the opposites of these 'sins' (lack of benevolence, grasping and insight) bring about liberation. These ideas and thoughts have been knobbed in every Buddhist sites of India. All the sites like Rajgir, Bodhgaya, Nalanda (Bihar), Ratnagiri, Lalitgiri, Udayagiri, Dhauli (Odisha) Nagarjunakonda, Amaravati, Salihundam (AP) or Ajanta, Ellora, Bagh, Karle, (Maharashtra) or Sanchi (MP). The narrative stories could be found in the form of material remains such as Chaitya, Stupa, Vihara or the Buddha and Boddhisattva images spread over the country.

The evidences from archaeological excavations that took place in Odisha recently, proves that after Asoka till 11-12th century A.D. numerous Stupas, Viharas and centers of learning of Buddhism sprang up in different parts of Odisha.

In the early medieval period of Indian history some of the Buddhist sites rose to prominence as center of

excellence so far Buddhist learning is concerned. Here, number of monasteries were built to accommodate the disciples and Buddhist teachers. Nalanda and Vikramsila even rose to prominence as universities. In Odisha, references are found that a Buddhist learning center Puspagiri rose to prominence in 6th century A.D., which was mentioned by Chinese traveler Yuan Chwang. References are found in various Buddhist literature that monasteries like Bhojakgiri Vihara, Puspagiri Mahavihara, Bhorasaila, Jayasrama Vihara,

Arghyika Varatika, and Jagdala Monasteries were flourished as centers of Buddhism. The Buddhist art centers have been developed during historical period at Dhauli, Lalitagiri, Ratnagiri,

Udyagiri, Vajragiri, Langudi, Kayma, Tarapur, Kuruma, Jajpur, Achutrajpur, Ayodhaya, Kupari, Solampur, Ganiapali, Boudh, Khiching, Aragada etc. The art antiquity comprises huge Stupas Monastries, Chaityas, Buddha and Bodhisattava images, Mahayana pantheons, Vajarayana images and host of other sculptures.

Recent excavations unfold many mysteries and myth about Buddhism in Odisha. The huge sites like Ratnagiri, Udyagiri, Lalitgiri, Langudi, Kyama, Tarapur, Vajragiri and Argarh where series of excavations were conducted

during the year 1990 to 2017 and found large number of Buddhist settlements whose dates vary from early centuries of Christian Era to late Medieval period (16th century A.D.). Thus, the settlements have rich monumental remains and some are earliest in Indian sub -continent. There are more than 200 sites documented in odisha which has Buddhist relics and remains.

The major site Lalitgiri have Stupas, Chaityas, Viharas and number Sculpturs which are developed between 3rd century B.C to 13th century A.D. The Stupa at Lalitgiri yielded Relic Caskets like that of Sanchi. The monastic establishments and Apsidal Chaitya Griha are unique in many ways. The simple early Stupa date back to 2nd century B.C, supported by Kushan inscriptions and Sunga art idioms so also the shell scripts (inscriptions) discovered at Lalitgiri with Mauryan inscriptions, inscribed on the pot-shreds tend to tell the posterity that the site was experienced with Hinayana, Mahayana as well as Vajrayana phases of Buddhism. The site revealed as *Chandraditya Mahavihara*

Similarly the huge Stupa and Monastic areas of Udyagiri are unmatched so also at Ratnagiri. The huge monumental remains together with hundreds of stupas having Vajrayana pantheons are also remarkable. The huge life size images like Avalokiteswara, Maitreya. Tara,

Vasudhara, Hariti, Jambhala, Chunda, Aparajita, Marici, Manjusri, Dhyani Buddhas etc, have been discovered which speaks volumes about the rise and fall of Buddhism in Odisha. These sites are also store house of knowledge and developed during 1st century B.C to 13th century A.D.

The other sites like Lagudi, Radhanagar, Kayama, Tarapur in Jajpur District were also huge Buddhist settlements developed in 3rd century B.C and continued up to 7th -8th century A.D. These sites after excavation contributed a lot to know the life and culture of Odisha during 3rd century BC to 7th century A.D. The fortifications at Radhanagr and excavated materials show the urban life style developed in the historical period so also the Stupa and Rock -cut images of Langudi gives a narrative story of development of art and architecture that was developed in Odishan region before coming of Temples.

The recently excavated site Aragarh hilltop on the right bank of the river Daya near Jatanai in the district of Puri laid bare a huge terraced Stupa of 3rd century BC. This Stupa is unique in many ways and contemporary to the earlier stupa at Dhauli. The Buddhist sites Dhauli - Aragarh and Jaugarh are the earliest cultural complexes that perhaps developed during the time of Asoka soon

after Kalinga war. Interestingly all these three sites located in a row and the visible evidences of historical past. We the people of Odisha are very fortunate to have such wonderful Buddhist remains and monuments that were coming to lime light recently (2010 to 2017) which are just visible to any lay mans eye. The Buddhist Monuments are not just simply cultural remains of the past but helps us to promote our Tourism in Asia..The first one thousand years history of Odisha is known only from these Buddhist Monuments and Remains.

However there are many other sites awaits Excavation and Documentatation. The important sites are Ayodhya, Jayarampur(Balesore), Abhana,Kaupur,Kupari,Soalmpur

(BhadraKh),Khadipada,Tarangasagrpur,Jajpur,Talagarh,Panturi,Kayama,Deuli,(Jajpur),Nagasapur,Rusipada,Tarpur,MahangaNaraj,Baneswarnasi,Bhattarika,(Cuttack)

Achutrajpur,Banapur,Kurkkimunda,Labangiri,Manitri (Khurda), Jaugarh, Kayama, Buddhikhola (Ganjam), Dhiasahi, Marchipur, Mudupur, Papanpur Salipur (Jagatsighpur), Boudha, Paragalpur Shyamsundarpur (Boudh),Ganiapali (Bargarh) and many other sites dotted throughout the State were documented by Odishan Institute of Maritime and South Easian Studies to know our cultural past during the years 2010-2017

