

**Socio-Religious Background of Early Medieval  
Buddhist art ( 700 A.D. to 1200 A.D.)**



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**CERTIFICATE**

It is certified that present research work entitled “**Socio–Religious Background of Early Medieval Buddhist Art (700 A.D. to 1200 A.D.)**” by Sunita Mishra has been prepared under my supervision for the award of the Ph.D. Degree in History from M.J.P. Rohilkhand University, Bareilly.

This is an original work and has never been submitted previously. The candidate has made commendable efforts in dealing with the subject.

Date:

**(Prof.R. P. Yadava)**

# Preface

The early medieval period in Indian history is in fact, a transitional phase. This transition is distinctly visible in the Buddhist art of the period. Art of any period is an expression socio religious background existing during that particular period. Buddhist art which originated in the Indian sub continent following life of Siddhartha Gautama, 6<sup>th</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. reached its climax during early medieval period.

Despite the availability of good number of works, related to this topic, this phase has not been treated in a wider contest. This work is an attempt to overcome these lacunae. The present work tries to relate and bring out the impact of society and religion Buddhist art existing during that period.

We have dealt with the subject in several chapters. The first chapter deals with social, religious, economic and political condition of early medieval period. The second chapter is about the sources Archaeological and literary. The third chapter elaborates the architecture and painting of the period. The fourth chapter gives detailed information about the sculpture of the period. The fifth chapter throws light on the impact of society and religion on Buddhist art. The last and sixth chapter is the conclusion of the topic.

In the present efforts for understanding the subject for last three years many people has been the source of inspiration. First and foremost I offer my sincerest gratitude to my guide and supervisor Prof. R. P. Yadava for providing the affectionate guidance, encouragement and invaluable suggestions and giving me enough space to work in my own way. Equal significant assistance has been

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**(SUNITA MISHRA)**

Research Scholar

## ABBREVIATIONS

ABORI	Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Poona
BORI	Bhandarkar Oriental Reserarch Institute
ARE	Annual reports of south Indian Eipigraphy
KN	Khuddakanikaya
ASIAR	Archaeological Survey of India, Annual report
MBT	Minor Buddhist Texts
BG	Bombay Gazettear
SOR	Serie oriental Roma
EHI	Early History of India
GOS	Gaekwad Oriental Series
IHR	Indian Historical Review
TSP	Tattvasamgraha
JBORS	Journal of the Bihar and Orrisa research society
TSS	Trivandrum Sanskrit Series
JBBRAS	Journal of the Bombay branch of the Royal Asiatic society
GST	Guhyasamajatantra
JPS	Journal of peasant studies London
JUPHS	Journal of the U.P. historical society
IA	Indian Antiquary
BI	Bibliotheca Indica
IHQ	Indian Historical Quarterly
BST	Buddhist Sanskrit Texts
MASI	Memories of the Archaeological survey of India
SBE	Sacred Books of the East

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# **CHAPTER - I**

## **Introduction: Social, Religious, Political and Economic condition during Early Medieval period**

### **SOCIAL CONDITION**

The advent of Turkish Muslim Rule in India is generally seen at marking the end of Ancient Period, and the text books of Ancient Indian history by eminent scholars such as R.D. Banerjee, R.C. Majumdar, and K. A. Nilkanth Shastri carry the narrative roughly down to 1206 A. D. Thus the period between 700 A.D to 1200 A. D. is considered as medieval period. During this time, then another of India's Historic urban phases took place, the third urbanization after the first of Indus Valley and Second Gangetic Plain in 6<sup>th</sup> Century B. C. to pre-Mauryan times.

The term Society is used in its widest sense. Besides social structure, it also covers polity, economy, religion and ideology. One of the factors that transformed Ancient Indian society into Medieval Indian society was the practice of land grants. The post Gupta period saw a significant change in mode of payment to Government Officers. The earliest epigraphic evidence of land grants belongs First Century B.C. This practice of land grants gave rise to Feudalism. Early Medieval India was a Feudalistic Society. “Feudalism in India was characterized by a class of Landlords a class of Peasantry, then living in a predominantly agrarian economy marked initially by decline of trade and urbanism and by drastic reduction in metal currency”<sup>(1)</sup>. Land grants and subinfeudation led to unequal distribution of land and power on large scale and created new social groups and ranks which did not quite fit in with the existing fourfold Varna system. The new system of land strengthened the feudal system and influenced the society of lot. The Rajput inscription found from Odisha, Madhya Bharat, Maharashtra, Assam and Bihar tell that the king and the emperors donated land or villages to Brāhamanas and the religious institution. According to early medieval law books the king however claimed taxes in his capacity as land owner <sup>(2)</sup>. Numerous epithets underline the king’s ownership of land in



Early Medieval times<sup>(3)</sup>. He delegated his royal authority by a Charter to the beneficiaries who then claimed taxes. The king was called Bhūmidah or a giver of land. It is repeatedly said that the merit of giving land accrues to him who posses it<sup>(4)</sup>. This new politico-economic structure is generally described as feudalism: which resembled the European feudal structure. Thus, we find the king granting the revenue from the land to his officers who may be equated with the feudal vassals. From the 7<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. onwards there had been increasing tendency to grant land in lieu of salaries. This had naturally intensified the feudal process. Further, the cultivation was carried out by peasants who were mainly Shudras and were almost tied to the land. They were to give up the fixed share of their produce to their land owner. Due to this feudal system the social structure of early medieval period encompasses local lords with pre-eminent social land political status in the area. The key figures of early medieval India were these various groups of Samantas, Mahasamantas, Mandalesavaras, Rajakulas, and Rajaputras. These all are basically landed magnates but known as various regional expressions. The relationship between them and the heads of numerous royal families were perhaps variously defined and the system of court hierarchy in a kingdom was determined by the nature of this relationship. Such

a system fostered military adventurism which is reflected in the continuous formation of ruling dynasty. The process of proliferation and multiplication of castes was yet another marked feature of the social life of the period.

The caste system which had been established much earlier formed the basis of the society. The Smriti writers of the periods exalt the privileges of the Brahmanas and even surpass the earlier writers in emphasizing the social and religious disabilities of Shudras. A striking development from about 7<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. onward was proliferation of castes along with the division of Sudaras into pure and impure castes. Manu notes 61 castes, but the Viṣṇudharmottara–purāṇa, text of about 8<sup>th</sup> Century A. D., states that thousands of mixed castes are produced by connection of vaishya women with men of lower castes<sup>(5)</sup>. Land grants and subinfudation led to unequal distribution of land and power on the large scale and created new social groups and ranks which did not fit in with the existing fourfold Varna system. The process of proliferation appears to be most striking among the Brahamanas. In early medieval period, Brahamanas were named after the type of ritual they practiced or branch of Vedic learning they cultivated. Their caste was also multiplied due to growth of localism. In

course of time they came to be recognized only by their Gotra and Mūlas, family territorial affiliations. The inscription mentioned 194 Gotras<sup>(6)</sup> and quite a few are mentioned in the digest commentaries. The constant transfer of land or land revenues made by princess to priests temples and officials led to rise and growth of the scribe or Kayastha community which undermined the monopoly of Brāhamanas as scribes or writers.

In the Kshatriya community, proliferation was caused mainly by the emergence of new group of people called the Rajputs, where and how the Rajputs originated remains in doubts. No other community developed so much of racial and familial pride as the Rajputs did. They were provided with genealogies which connected them with either the solar or the lunar race thereby conferring upon them the utmost royal respectability in keeping with the traditions. The Rajputs rose to political importance in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Centuries A. D. when they were divided into number of clans of which four claimed a special status. These four – The Pratiharas or Pariharas, Chahamanas, Chālukya s or Solankis and Paramaras claimed descent from a mythical figure that arose out of a vast-sacrificial fire pit near Mt. Abu in Rajasthan. Consequently these four clans were described as the Agnikula or Fire family. This was

probably the first occasion when deliberate and conscious attempts were made by rulers to insist on their Kshatriya status. The early Medieval Varna system was modified not only by the rise of various strata of landed gentry connected with administration but also by the change in relative position of Vaishyas and Shudras. In post Gupta times the Shudras no longer appear mainly as slaves, artisans and agricultural labourers, they take the place of Vaishyas as cultivators. Hsüan-tsang clearly states that the Shudras were agriculturist<sup>(7)</sup>. The Skanda describes Shudras as giver of grain (annada) and householder (grahastha)<sup>(8)</sup>.

In early medieval times, the constant transfer of land or land revenues made by princess to priests, temples and officials lead to the rise and growth of the scribe Kayastha community. The Kayasthas were the important class of officers as is apparent from early literary and epigraphic evidence. The Viṣṇudharmasutra<sup>(9)</sup> and *Yājñavalkya-smṛti*<sup>(10)</sup> refer to the Kayastha as royal officers.

The Shudras had the largest number of castes in early medieval time. The approximation of the Vaishyas to the Shudras began as early as Boudhayana – Dharma Sutra.

Dr. Alteker and Ghurye rightly told the Vaishyas were brought down to the position of the Shudras. According to the Alberuni, a Vaishya girded himself with a single Yajnapavita made of two cords, but a Shudra used the thread made of linen. Even in the days of Lakshmidhara the Shudras had the freedom to sell all kinds of goods but the Vaishyas were forbidden to carry on transactions in some specified articles like salt, wine, meat, curd, swords, arrows, water, idols etc. Thus we can see that during this period the status of Vaishyas in society degenerated to such an extent that there was hardly any difference between the status of the Shudras and Vaishyas. In post Gupta times, the Shudras no longer appear merely as slaves, artisans and agricultural labourers. They take the place of Vaishyas as cultivators. Hsüan–tsang mentions that Shudras during this period were agriculturists <sup>(11)</sup>. The Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa seems to divide the Shudras into two categories, the pure Shudras and the mixed caste; the latter are called Patita and Adhoma. They most probably represent the untouchable category.

During this period, the Chandals were employed for the execution of criminals. They were required to wear the clothes of the dead. They were to live outside the village. They

were not to touch others. If the shadow of Chandala fell on twice born the latter was required to have a bath. The number of mixed and untouchable castes increased enormously during this period. Finally, Kinship was used to protect landed property and ensure socio-political supremacy. The Middle Ages saw a phenomenal growth in the number of impure Sudras or Untouchables who were first noted in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century B. C. by Panini. Medieval legal texts describe the untouchables as Beef eaters and list them as Antyajas, Barata, Bheda, Bhilla, Chandal, Carmakar, Dasa, Nata and Rajaka<sup>(12)</sup>.

The people in the early medieval period believed in Omens and Potents. The Mātsya Purāṇa gives a long and systematic account of Omens. Literary evidence shows that both men and women except Brāhamanas drank wine. Polygamy seems to have been typical of ruling class families identical with Kshatriyas, though it may have been practiced by Brāhamanas also.

**Position of Women:** The women were held in high respect during this period but a change was noticeable. They were gradually losing their traditional high position. Child marriage was prevalent during this period. In spite of all this, women were

not behind their men-folk in bravery and courage. Women of this period were devotedly loyal to their husbands and performed the Sati sacrifice willingly. Pride, honour and self-respect were dearer to them than anything in the world. In order to save their honour, they would burn themselves on the pyre and perform the practice of Jauhar or mass sacrifice. Widow remarriage was not so uncommon.

**Slavery**: Slavery increased in early medieval period. The practices of forced labour, sharecropping and leasing of land were promoted and supported by social institutions and inhibitions. Slaves were not only under Kings and feudal lords but also in monasteries and temples. Vigyaneshwar in Mitākṣarā has mentioned 15 types of slaves. Slaves were exported also during this period. The evidence from the Skand Purāṇa produced by B. N. S. Yadava leaves little doubt that hundreds of people were compelled into forced labour and this evidently meant for production in medieval times<sup>(13)</sup>. If Serfdom is understood as the compulsive attachment of the peasants to the soil, it prevailed in many parts of Madhya Pradesh, Eastern India, Chamba and Rajasthan. In many cases, the Charters clearly transfer the peasants, artisans and even traders to the beneficiaries<sup>(14)</sup>.

## RELIGIOUS CONDITIONS

The most outstanding features in the religious history of the period under review were the triumphant revival of Brahmanical religion during this period. Buddhism was almost on the verge of extinction. The growth of 'Tantrik' practices in Buddhism led to its downfall. Historically Esoteric Buddhism, usually described as Tantric Buddhism, was the last phase of Buddhism in India. The generally accepted views among modern scholars are Tantric Buddhism appeared in 7<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. Besides it Buddhism was merging into the Brahmanical religion during this period and Buddha was counted among the ten incarnations of Vishnu.

This can be gleaned in the field of plastic and metallic art alike. Before Buddha was taken as incarnation of Vishnu, his icons were not prepared in the fashion of Hindu God. The adoption of Kiriṭa Mukuṭa<sup>(15)</sup> of Vishnu in the image of Buddha is the positive castes, proof of artistic imitation. Due to the development of general many religious sects developed during this period. Mention may be made during this period new divinities such as Śhiva, Vishnu and Śakti were exalted and old Vedic gods were relegated to subordinate position<sup>(16)</sup>. Some of



the important religions which affected the society, culture, art & architecture of this period were Vaishnavism, Śaivism, Buddhism and Jainism.

The salient features of religious ideas and practices of the previous age continued during this period. But the relative importance of different religious sects underwent much change. Hinduism in the form of Śaivism and Vaishnavism began to dominate the field. Both Buddhism and Jainism lost their hold in Tamilnadu. In Deccan Jainism for a time gained ascendancy and retained its hold in western India. Buddhism came to be confined to the dominions of Pālas in Bengal and Bihar. Worship of images continued in full force. The spirit of religious toleration overrode narrow sectarian views. Massive temples came to be constructed in large numbers. This period saw the emergence of tantric cult which, while profoundly, influencing Buddhism pervaded different Brahmanical sects and radically changed their views and practices.

**Buddhism** : Buddhism was the living faith in the earlier period and inspite of state patronage of Hinduism, Buddhism continued to prosper in the Gupta age. Buddhism attained the highest degree of splendor in 6<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. <sup>(17)</sup> and thereafter

decline set in it. This is evidenced by the observations of Hsüan–tsang<sup>(18)</sup> and more clearly by those of I–tsing<sup>(19)</sup>. From about 5<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. the Mahāyāna sect was influenced by Tāntricism<sup>(20)</sup> and therefore, it naturally fell a victim to the allied evils like those of the Śaiva Tāntricism. But Śaivism survived and continued to flourish despite its lapses and also absorbed a large number of Buddhists<sup>(21)</sup>.

The rational teachings of Buddha gradually disappeared. With Chandrakirti and Santideva, Dinnaga and Dharmakirti ended the glorious days of Buddhist logic and philosophy and then came the days of Stotras and Stavas began by Sarvajnamitra of Kashmir in 8<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. Buddhism lost itself in mysticism and things like Guhyasamāja, Maṇḍala, Kriyas and Charyas dominated the scene. From 7<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. onwards we find the exuberance of Tārā Stotras and Goddess Tārā raised to the mothership of all Buddhas and made a companion of Avalokiteśvara, the personification of love and compassion. It did not take long to reach the Tantrik view that Tārā as such was Buddha's Śakti and the relation of Buddha to Tārā was similar to that of Śiva to Pārvatī. Besides it, on account of growing supremacy of the faith Brahmanical deities were incorporated in to the tantric

pantheon<sup>(22)</sup>. Ādi Buddha and ‘Prajñāpāramitā’ were Buddhist concept on the line of Brahma and Maya of Brāhmanism. The Puranic Gods namely Ganapati and Saraswati got a place in Buddhism. The Sādhanā<sup>(23)</sup> for Ganapati agrees with the representation of Gaṇeśa of Hindu pantheon. Many such images have been found in Bengal<sup>(24)</sup>.

The orthodox philosophers like Śankara elevated Brāhmanism at the expense of Buddhism. The incorporation of some of the best features of Buddhism into Brāhmanism made Buddhism look like a squeezed orange. The association of Buddhism with magical cults accelerated the process of decline. As a result of the influence of Tantric ideas on Buddhism, much of its original ethical teaching was further submerged in ritual. The earlier ethics of Buddhism neither favoured the idea of marriage<sup>(25)</sup> nor the entrance of women into Sangha<sup>(26)</sup>. But such restrictions were relaxed even before the beginning of the Gupta period<sup>(27)</sup>. The evidence of the Caca-nāmā shows that married monks were common in Sind<sup>(28)</sup>.

In the Pāla emperors of Bengal and Bihar, Buddhism found its last strong pillars of support. The monasteries at Bodh-Gaya, Nālandā, Odantapuri (Bihar) and Vikramaśilā, kept

up the traditions of old, and the Buddhist missioneries of the Pāla kingdom renovated the religion in Tibet where it still flourishes with unabated vigour <sup>(29)</sup>. Other places where Buddhism had its hold were Valabhi, Sind and Nālandā. The process of decline of Buddhism was slow and gradual and the ascendancy of Śiva-Śakti cult was fatal for Buddhists. There was hardly any difference left in the rituals of Hinduism and Mahāyānism. As a result of efforts of Kumarila Bhatta and Śankaracharya, Hinduism was purged of many of its evil practices and it became a fighting religion before which Buddhism could not stand. The last but not the least factor was the absorption of Buddha in Hindu Pantheon along with other duties.

**Jainism** : Jainism, unlike Buddhism made considerable progress during the first part of the period under review. The early Chālukyas and the Rashṭrākūṭas as well as the Gaṅgas and Kadambas, patronised the Jaina religion and it made great progress in South India during their rule. But from 7<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. Jainism began to decline in South India on account of the influence of Śaiva and Vaishnav saints. The renowned Jain Munis – Hem Chanadra Suri, Samantbhadra, Haribhadra Suri belonged to this period.

Except in the west and perhaps Malwa Jainism lost its hold over the rest Northern India. It was popular in some parts of Rajputanas. It attained preeminence in Gujarat under Kumarpala. The Rastrakutas continued to support it, but later the rise of Liṅgāyats undermined its strength. The Talakad Ganga remained attached to Jainism. The Hoysalas continued the tradition of supporting it until the conversion of Bittideva to Vaishnavism. Jainism lost its ground in Tamil country, but the losses of Jainism were not very conspicuous because its gains had always been limited.

In the period under review, the Jainism was greatly influenced by Brahamanic culture but it could not be digested by the Hindus. The Hindu system of worship was borrowed and other types of ceremonious were adopted by Jainas, showing there by that followers of Jain faith were becoming idolaters. This can be gathered from a document of a King, in which 1/20 royal share of tax has been granted for the daily worship of the Jain deity. The main object behind this grant was to meet the expense of the articles of worship. The famous Hindu ceremony Rathayatra also attracted the attention of Jaina community who adopted it for their own 'Tirthankars' during the period under review. In an Inscription, a reference is found of the gift of

barely corn for celebrating the festive procession of Shantinath<sup>(30)</sup>.

Thus we find that Jainas following the Hindu festivals did not lose their entity. They settled in the area of Brahmanical culture and followed diverse professions. Jainism like Buddhism, suffered more from the assimilative power of Hinduism. The process of Hinduisation is still going on, but Jainas, unlike Buddhists have not been extinct in the land of their birth. At present there are about 14 lakhs Jains in India.

**Brāhamanism:** Brāhamanism enjoyed most of the royal patronage in the period under review. The Hinduism, which thus triumphed over the heterodox sects, was, however, essentially different from Brahmanical religion of the Pre-Buddhist period. The new religion was no doubt theoretically based on the old Vedic system and beliefs, but it had characteristics features of its own which were fundamentally distinct. Its weapons were now dialectics, the spiritual energy of the dominant personalities and propaganda among the people and princes to secure their support to it. The most important of the Brahmanical cults were Vaishnaism and Śaivism. There was no clash between them. Both were patronized and practiced by

many dynasties. This new cult looked for inspiration to a new class of literature mainly the Epics and the Purāṇas and its rituals were quite different. The Śraddhā (faith), the watchword of the Vedic religion, on Jñāna, the knowledge of reality emphasized in the Upanishads was replaced by Bhakti or devotion. The elaborate sacrifices in open ground gave way to personal worship of images of the supreme deity Vishnu or Śiva in temples dedicated to him. But the most significant change in the new Brahmanical religion was the growth and development of sects, notably in Śaivism and Vaishnavism.

**Śaivism** : The worship of Śiva from a very remote period prevailed in India and it had good following among the aboriginals and Aryanized people. The remains of Indus valley shows that the cult of Shivaling is not entirely an Aryan cult. In Gupta period figures of Śiva assumed a definite shape as evidenced by the epigraphs<sup>(31)</sup> of Gupta dynasty. By 6<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. Śaivism had spread to the extreme south of India and also became the predominant religion in Annam and Cambodia. The Śaiva sects developed rapidly in 7<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. The dynastic records reveal the name of Pashupatas as prominent school of Shaivism. The Pasupatas were Saivas as we infer from the description of Bāna and the

monks, this sect used to besmear ashes on their forehead and to 'Rudrāksha' in the hands<sup>(32)</sup>. The epigraphic records of this period mention two other Śaiva sects of this period the 'Kāpālas' and 'Kālāmukhas' the theories and practices of these two were most revolting in character. Among others, besmearing the body with ashes of dead body, eating food in the skull and keeping a pot of wine etc. may be noted. Thus the religious practices of Kapalika were most findings and outlandish. They were very much influenced by 'Tanticism' and the 'Siddhis' attained by them enabled them to perform miraculous acts. The Kapalika sect was very influential and it caused a great damage to Buddhism.

The two branches of Kashmir Śaivism flourished in 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Centuries A. D. Sir R. G. Bhandarkar aptly remarks that "it is a relief to turn away from ghastly picture the wild aberrations of Kashmir Śaivism which is more humane and rational." This changed aspect by Śaivism seems to be due in small measure to the influence of great philosopher 'Śaṅkarācāraya' (C.788–820 A. D). He did much to popularize devotion to Śiva among the teaming millions of India. The most striking feature of the philosophy of Śankara was its extreme monism which makes Brāhman above real and self and the



world of things only an appearance, an illusion of the finite mind in its state of ignorance.

Śaivism also flourished in south India and it became a popular religion in south under the patronage of Rashṭrākūṭas and Cholas. Even the Pāla kings of Bengal established Śaiva temples. The famous sect of this area were Viasaivas or Liṅgāyats, whose philosophy was influenced both by Śankara and Ramanuja, and who gave great prominence to the Linga (phallus ) and Nandin or Bull.

**Vaishnavism:** Vishnu as Vedic God occupied a subordinate position in the age of Rigveda<sup>(33)</sup>, but in the period of Epic and mythology, the importance and popularity of Vishnu increased gradually and it became the supreme God. In the period under review Vaishnavism made a rapid progress. It was patronized by the Guptas, Chālukya s and Hoysala kings, among other and a large number of temples with Vishnuite images indicate its wide extent all over India. It also spread to Indian colonies in Far East.

The early medieval period saw a great many changes in the doctrine of Vaishnaism. Firstly, the incarnations<sup>(34)</sup> of

Vishnu were fully established till now; though origin of this conception may be traced to a fairly early period of its history, but it played a very important part only during the period under review. At first the total number was four or six, but later the number was raised to ten or even more. Ultimately even Rishabha, the first Tirthankara of Jains and Buddha came to be looked upon as Avatāras of Vishnu. The incarnations of Vishnu was Mātsya, Kūrma, Varāha, Narsimha<sup>(35)</sup> by the 8<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. The other incarnations were Rama, Balabhadra, Krishna, Kalkin<sup>(36)</sup>. Besides these incarnations Vakapati describes some other incarnations of Vishnu and they are Mohini<sup>(37)</sup>, Boar<sup>(38)</sup> and Serpent boar<sup>(39)</sup>.

Buddha, the ninth incarnation of Vishnu may be considered a remarkable example of awakening and adjustment of that time Brāhmanism. The Hindu began to worship some Buddhist Gods and at last they adopted Buddha as the ninth incarnation of Vishnu<sup>(40)</sup>.

The next great change in Vaishnavism during this period was the introduction of two new chapters in the life of Vasudeva Krishna. The first was the story of child Krishna and

the second was the introduction of Radha, the chief beloved, though not the consort, of Krishna.

The power and influence of Vaishnavism was very much developed in south India by the Alvārs or Vaishnava devotees who held the same position as Nayanars among the Saivas. A class arose in Vaishnavism, known as Ācāryas who devoted themselves in defending their faith on philosophic grounds. The first three Āchāryas were Nāthamuni, Yamunācārya and the famous Rāmānuja (11<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.) Ramanuja's name is only second to Śankara, and he gave a new turn to Vaishnavism by his Visishtavaiṭavāda theory which was a reply to Śankara's Advāitavada.

**Tantric Religion:** In its present widely accepted sense, Tantra means a literature which spreads knowledge and particularly knowledge of profound things with the help of mystic diagrams (Yantra) and words possessing esoteric meaning (Mantra) and helps the attainment of salvation. Although Tantrism belongs mainly to the Sakta sect, it is also fairly well pronounced in the Shaiva, Vaishnava, Buddhist and Jain sects. The Tantra as a special religious or philosophical concept gradually came into use from about fifth or sixth Century A. D. and became current

from the eighth Century A. D. onwards. Its strong hold was eastern India. Since some of its rituals came from Tibetan practices it had maintained close ties with Tibet.

We can have a fair idea of the general principle of Tāntricism from the Mahanirvana Tantra which is one of the most popular and well known tantric texts. Tantrism prescribed numerous magical rituals to achieve Mukti (salvation) and Bhukti (employment), and to fulfil the various material desires (Kāmayāni) of the people. A Vaishnavite tantric text of about 6<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. credits the Tantra variety of Siddhanta with the realization of Chatuvarga<sup>(41)</sup> which obviously means Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha. Tāntricism advocated on Mantras (prayers), Bijas ( syllabus of mystic significance peculiar to each deity), Yantras (diagrams drawn on paper or, inscribed in precious stone metal etc), Guhyasamāja (special positions of fingers and movement of hands) and Nayasas (placing the deities on different parts of the body by touching them with finger tips and the palm, mostly on the right hand)

Great adoration was shown to the mother image because it was in the mother's womb that life was created so it was linked with the Sakta-Śakti cult. Female energy was

regarded as essential to any action. Philosophical concepts like Prakriti and Maya and mythological figures like Pārvati, Durga, Lakshmi and Radha constitute the female principle of creation. They are merely different names of the Jaganmata (mother of the world). All the gods including Brahma, Vishnu and Śiva are contained in and issue out of the Divine mother. Hence Tāntricism looks upon every woman as an incarnation of universal mother. The aboriginal mother goddess came to be worshipped in the form of Śakti in Hinduism and Tārā in Buddhism. Śaktism emerged as a religious factor in 6<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. and became a strong force from 9<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. onwards<sup>(42)</sup>.

In this new religion new divinities such as Śiva, Vishnu and Śakti were exalted and the old Vedic gods were relegated to the subordinate positions. Tāntricism was institutionalized by temples which housed the images of new divinities, by monastic organization which gave paramount importance to guru or acharya and finally by a vast corpus of written literature which embodied the various tantric traditions and practices.

It is pointed out that Tāntricism arose as a result of the large scale admission of the aboriginal peoples in Brahmanical society. The Brāhmanas adopted many of the tribal rituals and charms which were officially compiled, sponsored and fostered by them. In course of time, those were distorted by the Brāhmanas and priests to serve the interests of their rich clients. Though the materialistic motives of Brāhmanas may have played some role, by medieval times Jainism and Buddhism had become incapable of offering any serious challenge to Brāhmanism. The outlook of Tāntricism was highly secular and materialistic and no other sect was so close to the life of various classes of people as it was. This was perhaps the chief reason that from seventh Century A. D. it continued to hold ground throughout the medieval age and has, in its essentials, survived to this day.

## **ECONOMIC CONDITION**

Economic organization in the Gupta period became the pattern for the latter period. Very little innovations took place. However, the almost simultaneous decline of Gupta and

Roman empires temporarily affected the fortunes of Indian trade and industry. Post Gupta coins are few, debased and crude, pointing to great economic decline in the country. As a major category of source for the period, landgrants best illustrate its economic trends although they may not cover all facts of economic life. The most significant change in the economy of the period is the large scale transfer of the land revenues and land to both secular and religious elements by princess and their vassals<sup>(43)</sup>. From 7<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. onwards, there had been increasing tendency to grant land in lieu of salaries. Cultivation was carried on by peasants and they were to give their fixed share of produce to the landowner. Thus the early medieval economic structure was marked by grossly unequal rights over distribution of land and agricultural produce. Again, the feudatories were permitted to hire out land assigned to them to the cultivators and collected revenue from them. A part of this revenue was given to the King.

In fact the entire economic structure of the period rested on the recognition extended to various categories of people as appropriator of surplus from land. There is hardly any doubt that the possession of wealth was considered the harbinger of all kinds of happiness in life, and poverty a great

calamity. It was, therefore, natural that for the acquisition of wealth, a person was permitted to follow any vocation he liked. The pursuits of learning and agriculture were considered the most resourceful during this period<sup>(44)</sup>. That learning and priestly functions were very fruitful for the acquisition of wealth is clearly reflected from thousands of land grants and donations made to priests, the Vedic scholars and learned authors, Stray references to which effect are also found in secular literature<sup>(45)</sup>. The Brāhmanas continued to receive patronage in the form of land-grants, the religious establishments too emerged as a major beneficiary during this period. Ibn-Asir says that in the Somnatha temple above a thousand priests were employed<sup>(46)</sup>. Purohitas also figured as royal officials in Sena records<sup>(47)</sup>.

Agriculture had been playing a vital role in the economy of the Indian people. The period under review was by no means an exception to it. Agriculturists have been specifically referred in various land grants of the period. Contemporary lexicons, commentaries, epigraphs and other sources are suggestive of the fact that there was a visible and unprecedented growth of agricultural items pointing to the advancement in agricultural economy. Even the Brahmanas and the Khastriyas for whom agriculture was but a 'forbidden land'



in usual course, were permitted to follow the occupation of the agriculturists in times of emergency “According to Baundhyana the Brāhmanas can follow the trade but only in times of emergency and not during other times<sup>(48)</sup>. The cultivators were highly esteemed and their profession was an honourable one. They even enjoyed the privilege of offering food and drinking water to the most, revered of the caste order. Thus the agriculturists were universally honoured during this period.

The geographical and the climatic factors also lent – Indians to depend on agriculture. The geographical and the climatic variations conditioned the soils capable of producing several varieties of rich and luxuriant vegetations. That the soil was classified for different purposes and for different kinds of crops and harvests is well evident from various sources. Increase in population may have been one of the factors which led to the cultivation of virgin land. Significantly during the early medieval we find an increase in number of lexiconised Sanskrit terms for peasants and agricultural workmen<sup>(49)</sup>. The increase in population and proliferation land grants led to greater utilization of land that is reflected in various land-grant of the period which specifies the boundaries of the donated area<sup>(50)</sup>. The demarcation of donated area implies that more and

more people were being accommodated on the land and in order to avoid any conflict that might arise among the donees, the boundaries were clearly laid down. It must have led to smaller holdings and thus to intensive cultivation, leading to greater agricultural production. The Lekhapaddhati suggests that fresh areas were also being brought under cultivation.

**Classification of Land:** Different kinds of land were known in this period. There were several methods according to which lands were classified. The first broader divisions were made for housing and cultivation purposes. In literature and inscriptions these are termed as ‘Vastubhu’<sup>(51)</sup> and ‘Kṣetra’<sup>(52)</sup> or Sīta<sup>(53)</sup>. Besides these there were other lands like ‘Khila’<sup>(54)</sup>(a prahate), waiting still for the spades of cultivators. The Amarkośa<sup>(55)</sup> states 12 types of land that were :-

1) Urvarā (fertile), 2) Uśarā (Barren) 3) Maru (Desert)  
4) Aprahātā (Fallow), 5) Svadvālā (Grassy) , 6) Pankilā (muddy), 7) Jalaprāyamanupām (watery or wet), 8) Kachchha (contiguous to water), 9) Sarkarā (land full of pebbles and stones) 10) Sarkrāvati (sandy), 11) Nadimātrikā (watered from a river for cultivation and (12) Revmātrika (watered by rain).

Various aids and implements of the cultivators for agricultural operations have been enlisted in the literary works and in inscriptions. Number of synonym had been used for the cultivator – e.g. Kṛṣukaḥ<sup>(56)</sup>, Kṛtumbi<sup>(57)</sup>, Siraṇa<sup>(58)</sup>, Kṣetrakāra<sup>(59)</sup>, plough was the most important implement for which the terms like Hala, Lāngala, Sira, Phāla, Kusika, Godarana have been given in lexicons<sup>(60)</sup>.

The land measurements referred to in the contemporary records are Nivartan<sup>(61)</sup>, Phalakas<sup>(62)</sup>, Prastha<sup>(63)</sup> and Plough<sup>(64)</sup>. In some inscriptions the land measuring one hala is called Bhūhala – e.g. the Bhāterā plate of Govindakesavas<sup>(65)</sup> and a copper plate grant of Haharaja Yaśovarmandeva<sup>(66)</sup>.

A large number of crops were sown and harvested during the period under review. So far the products are concerned; they are countless in number and in varieties. They can be broadly divided under two major heads. (i) those serving as staple food articles (ii) and those serving mainly as commercial articles. Thus the food products may be classified as follows: - (i) corns and cereals, (ii) vegetables, (iii) fruits and herbs, (iv) oil seeds. Commercial, products are also divided under several sub head such as (i) sugarcane plantations, (ii)

cotton plantations hems and other fibrous products, (iii) varieties of spices, dyes, medicinal herbs, flowers and plants, (iv) forest products and fodder.

Among the foodgrains, since the time of ‘Yajurveda’, rice, wheat, barley and pulses had been the principle crops. The records of the period under review show that all types of rice were cultivated in India mainly in the regions of heavy rainfall. Sāli was considered to be a fine variety of rice as indicated by Bhaṛthari<sup>(67)</sup>. Other varieties grown during this period were Raktaśāliḥ, Mahāśāliḥ and Kalamah<sup>(68)</sup>. Not less than twenty – one varieties of rice had been mentioned by muslim writers<sup>(69)</sup>. Eight varieties of rice had been mentioned in Mānasollāsa<sup>(70)</sup>, five by Medhātīhi<sup>(71)</sup> and four by Viṣṇudharmottara<sup>(72)</sup>. A general term ‘Bahudhānya’ is used by Sandhyakaranandī suggesting thereby paddy of several varieties grown in Bengal<sup>(73)</sup>.

As regard the places where these rice were grown mentioned may be made of Lampa, Kannauj, Magadha, Kashmir, Gujarat, Assam and a large variety of rice were grown in Northern India during this period.

Wheat was the next important crop grown during this period. From the study of literary works and inscriptions of this period it appears that Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Sindh were a great wheat producing areas.

Barley as a cereal was also significant. Varahāmihira made mention of it along with other foodgrains<sup>(74)</sup>. Neelmalā Purāṇa tells us that barley was abundantly produced in Kashmir<sup>(75)</sup>.

Maize was also produced<sup>(76)</sup>. Indians were fond of pulses which were required for various food preparations. Mudga, Kulāya, Kulatha, Masura, Valla, Aḍhākī, Māśa and Rājamāśa have been mentioned in lexicons<sup>(77)</sup>.

Oil seeds were also extensively cultivated such as Mustard, Tila, Jātila, Atasi<sup>(78)</sup>. Sugarcane cultivation was widely practiced for manufacturing sugar. Various varieties of fruits and vegetable were also cultivated during this period. Mention may be made of cucumber, gourd<sup>(79)</sup>, pumpkin<sup>(80)</sup>, garmut, sigru, sūrana, sūrasa, vangaka and vaca<sup>(81)</sup>. Fruits were grown and cultivated in profusion, especially in western India<sup>(82)</sup>. There are references of grape vines grown in

Kashmir<sup>(83)</sup>. Other fruits like mango, plantain, coconut, jackfruit, wood apple, jujube, orange, fig, tamarind, rose apple, palmyra, date palm, srīphala, lakucha, lavalī, kadamba, āmalaki, nimba, kṛtuṅga, bibītaka etc are mentioned in inscriptions and literatures.

**Irrigation**: The older forces of production were made available in new areas and were also reinforced by new ones. It seems that arahaṭṭa identical with the Persian wheel for drawing water, first appeared around seventh Century A. D. All this contributed to agrarian expansion, which is corroborated by the rise of numerous states in outlying areas. The Bhāvanagar inscription<sup>(84)</sup> records the excavation of a tank in order to provide water near at hand. Wells were also used as water sources for irrigation. The Kāsyapiya Kṛṣiukti is the only known Sanskrit text which discusses details of irrigational facilities<sup>(85)</sup> besides tanks and wells, irrigation canals were also in vogue. The Bhāvanagar plate states that field of Sossaka contained a canal<sup>(86)</sup>, other mechanical devices used for agricultural purpose include water wheels stated to be constantly in motion for moistening the earth. In Harshacharita, Bāna gives a reference of Persian wheel<sup>(87)</sup>.

Thus the following account of Agrarian economy during the period under study shows that it did not materially differ from what they were in earlier period or what they are in present days.

**Trade and Commerce** : It is well known that from 750 to 1200 A. D., India faced political instability and disorder. In this period the political scenario changed quickly and with the same quickness economic conditions also changed. During this period trade and commerce declined though they had not disappeared entirely. The main reason for decline in trade during this period was the economic self sufficiency of villages. This decline in trade during this period is also strengthened by the fact that during this period there was paucity of coins and deurbanisation.

**Industry and Trade** : Guilds continued to function during this period, Medhatithi, the commentator of Manusmṛiti, refers to the existence of industrial and mercantile guilds in his time (about 10<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.) As regards industries, it can be said that the traditional eighteen types of guilds based on industries and crafts of the Buddhist period functioned during the period under review, as well as the most important of them being those

of the oil-millers, metal workers, stone cutters, the weavers, the fishermen, cattle rearers, wine distillers and the potters . The guilds collectively made endowments for pious objects or received them on trust to provide for such objects out of the occurring interest. The Dasākumāracarita refers to a merchants' guild<sup>(88)</sup>.

Though guilds still existed during this period its importance had degenerated during this period. Lallangi Gopal, referring to the period 700 A. D., says that unlike earlier periods there are not many references to guilds receiving permanent endowments and paying periodical interests on them<sup>(89)</sup>. The non-availability of Nigama sealings belonging to this period testifies to the decline of guilds<sup>(90)</sup>. This declining trend in power, authority, autonomy and privileges of guilds was not a universal phenomenon, varying from region to region. The positions of guild in eastern India seemingly weakened during early medieval period whereas the scenario in contemporary North India was different as reflected from Medatithi<sup>(91)</sup>.

As regards the articles of internal trade, the most common were spices, metal, luxury goods and salt. Hsüan–stang noted that some cities were famous for the collection of rare



articles. In Tamralipti land and water communications met, consequently rare valuables were collected here and the inhabitants were prosperous<sup>(92)</sup>. Different regions of India were famous for different articles, Kashmir was famous for saffron and medicinal plants<sup>(93)</sup>. According to Cosmos, South India was a pepper country<sup>(94)</sup>. Best kinds of pearls were obtained from Saurashtra<sup>(95)</sup>. Internal trade areas carried on not only by the land routes but also by waterways. We know from Ahar Inscription of 953 A. D., that merchants from Karnataka, Madhyadesa, Lata and Takka came to Ahar and agreed to pay a large levy on their articles of sale while speaking of Bengal, it has been pointed out that rivers, being navigable for inland throughout the year, served as corridors (i.e. natural routes) for long distance traffic<sup>(96)</sup>. On the whole there was a decline in internal trade of the country that was partly due to the absence strong power in the country. There were too many status and absence of law and order and the increasing number of taxes made the situation worse.

**External Trade:** Foreign trade was an important phenomenon in economic life of India. In spite of a slow transport system, dangerous trade routes, and duties levied on traders India had established trade with distant foreign lands. The Indian

merchants did not go up to central Asia but visited Iran up to the Oxus valley. Items imported from Balkh were horses, saffron, asafoetida. From the beginning of eighth Century A. D. Arabs became most powerful maritime power. The Arabs exported from India perfumes like musk, aloes, amber, camphor, pearls, diamonds and medicinal herbs. The famous parts on the east were Tamralipti, Satyagram and Puri and on west coast were Deval, Khambat, and Bharoch. The best breed of horses came to India from Western and Central Asia. There was a decline in India's trade with China on account of competition of Arabs and Iranian merchants though Cholas carried on trade with China. Tamralipti was a famous part of Bengal. P.C. Bagchi remarks "Tamralipti monopolized trade of Eastern India and played a unique part in the economic history of Bengal up to the 17<sup>th</sup> Century "(97). India also traded with South East Asia. The parts of Gujarat played significant role in trade with South East Islands. Bhārukachha<sup>(98)</sup> was a celebrated port from a very early period and the author of the Periplus in first and second Century A. D. referred to the part as Baryagaza<sup>(99)</sup>. During this period India foreign trade also declined. Trade with Roman Empire had already ended. Silk trade with Iran and the Byzantine Empire stopped in the middle of the sixth Century A. D. The decline in the trade for more than 300 years after the sixth Century A. D. is

demonstrated by the practical absence of foreign gold coins in the country.

During the post tenth Centuries A. D. there was revival in foreign trade carried on both ways overland trade and maritime trade the sources belonging to the post tenth centuries reveal that the whole coast of Western India was studded with the settlements of Arab traders and shippers. It is significant that Indian kings, though resisted Arab attacks on their coast, welcomed merchants to visit their kingdoms and treated them with great kindness<sup>(100)</sup>.

This decline in trade affected the growth of towns. Such of the towns which had already attained a certain economic status continued. But the establishment of new towns became less frequent than before. Arab geographers writing of this period speak about the paucity of towns in India. However towns in eastern India did not lose their prosperity. The port towns particularly those in Gujarat, Malabar and Tamil Coast retained their prosperity. The decline in trade made one category of commercial professionals, the money lenders very prosperous. A high rate of interest was charged by the money lenders. During this period caste-consideration in matter of

money lending appear to have been regularized. The Brāhmana was required to pay only two percent and the sudra five percent or more.

However, on the whole the economic condition of general people does to appear to have been satisfactory during this period. Kings fought for the safety of their kingdom, but the general masses remained passive spectators, unconcerned expressing their dissatisfaction with the existing administrator.

## **POLITICAL CONDITIONS**

The history of India from 7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. has been projected as a period of strife and stagnation, but a keen study of this period brings forth the less emphasized fact that this epoch, like any other era was also a celebration in continuity. Though this period had its own phases of turmoil, thorough and deep study of the period shows remarkable quality of resilience among Indian people and its polity. One of the main features this age was absence of any effective central authority in India. The period between 800 – 1200 A. D. saw the emergence of regional kingdoms. Centralized states gave way to decentralized political systems based on local interests. Rather

than for going into alliance to keep major regional or external political threats in check, these kingdoms were more interested in protecting their own personal interests.

This change in the political system took place due to the emergence of politico-economic structure termed as feudalism. The outcome of the growth of feudalism was the carving out of independent principalities by the various vassals in different parts of the country. It is under these conditions that decentralized regional powers flourished in 8<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.

It is generally held that the death of Harshvardhan was followed by a period of anarchy and confusion throughout Northern India. Kannauj situated in the heart of Gangetic valley was his capital. His nearest rival in south India was Pulakesin II (610 – 42 A. D.), the Chālukyan ruler of Maharashtra. But the exit of Harsha and Pulakesin II closed the era of ancient Indian imperialism. After the death of Harsha, the subsequent history of Kanyakubja is unclear. According to V. A. Smith, Harsha's death was followed by a period of anarchy<sup>(101)</sup>. After him, the earliest known king of Kanyakubja was Yasovarman<sup>(102)</sup>, R. C. Majumdar<sup>(103)</sup> and R. S. Tripathi<sup>(104)</sup> also has the same

opinion. He was a contemporary of king Dahir of Sind. After the conquest of Sind by Arabs, Yasovarman and king Lalitaditya of Kashmir (725 – 55 A. D.) stemmed the tide of their advance in northern India. With the death of Yasovarman, there started a triangular contest for the occupation of Kannauj, the Rashtrakutas of Deccan, the Gurjara – pratiharas of Malwa and Pālas of Bengal being the contestants. Finally, a Gurjara – pratiharas chief, Nagabhata (725 – 40 A. D.) conquered Kannauj and laid the foundation of the imperial dynasty of his clan. But the imperial glory of Kannauj continued only to a limited extent. Rajyapāla, last ruler of this dynasty succumbed before Mahmud of Ghazni (1018 – 19 A. D.). Later on Rajyapal was put to death by princes of Gwalior and Kalinjar for having shown cowardice in acknowledging the over lordship of the invader<sup>(105)</sup>.

Due to the lack of political unity entire India was divided into small states in which different Rajput dynasties ruled. The states were usually identified with their ruling clans, tribes or communities. There existed mutual enmity among these states. As a result they fought among themselves and this was the reason that even in the face of foreign aggressions, they did not jointly face them and could not save the nation from

defeat. Rajputs possessed a quarrelsome trait and tendency. They considered the wars as a game; war was life and death for them. Their love of war never allowed them to sit in peace which led to mutual wars between them. There was no military power in the country strong enough to keep the warring princes in check and co-ordinate their activities against foreign aggression. The advantage of this political instability was taken by Muhammad Ghaznavi in 11<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. after which muslim rule laid the foundation of India. The weakness of Central authority is also indicated by the existence of several capitals. The fortified capital or Durg is considered an organ of the state in ancient texts. But in early medieval times a king came to have several capitals called Skandhavaras. Fortresses obviously meant for protecting the king, vassals and big landed magnates against their rival peasants, became a part of the early medieval landscape<sup>(106)</sup>. Thus under the new political system in every important kingdom the central government lost considerable authority.

To conclude our discussion on this introductory chapter we can say that the development of political institutions and in North and South India must be viewed and understood somewhat differently while in North Indian regions, local rulers

emerged as regional king and were able to integrate local and tribal forces, the South Indian Kingdoms emerged as typical early states. But both North and South Kingdoms could not install a centralized state beyond their 'core area'. Due to this political instability the early medieval period in Indian history has been described by the historians as dark phase of Indian history characterized by political disunity and cultural decline. But new studies have offered fresh perspective and do not agree to such a bleak description of period under scrutiny. In fact this political declining and rise of different states gave rise to different forms of art, religion and cultural in the society as will be viewed in the following chapters.



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63.	Vājasaney sanihitā, vv. 18-22.
64.	<i>Epigraphica Indica</i> , Vol X, p. 57, <i>Epigraphica Indica</i> , 9.II, p. 236.
65.	<i>Epigraphica Indica</i> , Vol XIX, p. 285.
66.	<i>Indian Antiquary</i> , Vol XVIII, p. 108.
67.	Nītiśataka (Bhartrhari), sl. 75.
68.	Abhidhāna Ratnamālā.

69.	Alqual, p.p. 48–49 (cf. Indian Historical Quaterly, XXVIII, p.193 n.).
70.	Mānasollāsa, III. 1346–48, 1358
71.	On Manu VIII–320.
72.	Paribhāṣaparakāsa, 115 (cf. –struggle for empire, p. 399.)
73.	Rāmcarita, III, v–17.
74.	Bratsahita, vol. VIII, p. 30.
75.	Neelmata Purāṇa, vv. 696–697.
76.	Ibid, 6XVI, p.p. 113 ffin Assam, ‘Koṣṭham ākhiyāna’.
77.	Abhi Ratna, II. 425–29, 110, Payāyaratnamāla P.V. Journal, II, 1945.
78.	Abhi Ratna, II, 426–428.
79.	Nītiśataka, p. 74.
80.	H.C.C.T, p. 229.
81.	Watters, Vol I.1, p. 178.
82.	Nadvi, op. cit., pp. 14–65.
83.	<i>Rajatarangiṇī</i> , VII. 498 ‘drākṣālata’.

84.	Ibid.
85.	Idem, <i>Indian Agriculture – ‘A historical perspective’</i> op. cit., p. 327.
86.	<i>Epigraphica Indica</i> , Vol. XI, p. 191.
87.	H.C.C.T., p.79
88.	D.C. Ryder, p. 176.
89.	Lallan Ji Gopal, op. cit., p. 82.
90.	Idem, <i>Guilds in ancient India: A study of guild organization in Northern India and Western Deccan (from C. 600 B.C to C. 600 A.D)</i> p. 141.
91.	R. C. Majumdar (Ed) <i>Age of Imperial Kanauj</i> , Bombay, 1960, p. 402
92.	Watters Vol. I, p. 147.
93.	Watters, Vol. I, p. 261; R.T, Vol. I, p. 42.
94.	Cosmas; Vol. XI, p. 364.
95.	Brhatsahinta, Vol. XXXI, 2.6
96.	History of Bengal, Vol. I, p. 660.



97.	Takakusu, p.p. 144–145.
98.	Ibid, p. 241.
99.	W. H. Schoff, <i>The Periplus of the Erythraean sea</i> , p. 284.
100.	Ibid, p. 74.
101.	V. A. Smith, <i>Early History of India</i> , p.p. 307–311
102.	Ibid, p. 392.
103.	Classical Age, p. 128.
104.	R. S. Tripathi, <i>History of Kannauj</i> , p. 192.
105.	For details refer to R.S. Tripathi, <i>History of Kanauj</i> , to the moslem conquest, Motilal Banarsidas, 1964, p.p. 281–87.
106.	R. S. Sharma, IF, 1980; Apendix–II.

## **CHAPTER – II**

### **Available Sources–(i) Archaeological(ii)Literary**

A systematic and thorough study of a subject depends on sources available for its study. To what extent one is able to present his study of a subject in a systematic and logical way depends on the nature and volume of sources at his disposal. The resources used for the topic under review may be classified as follows:

- 1) Archeological
- 2) Literary

### **LITERARY SOURCES**

In order to study any period of history we require different types of sources, it may be Primary or Secondary. According to Dr. R. C. Majumdar “one of the greatest defects of Indian culture which defy national explanation, is the aversion of Indians to writing history. They applied themselves to all

conceivable branches of literature and excelled in many of them, but they never seriously took to writing of history”. However it is pointed out by Indian scholars that Indians did possess an historical sense. The large variety of historical treatises and a number of other facts testify to the historical sense among ancient Hindus. The available literary sources of the period under review may be mentioned as follows:

**Historical works:** Historical sources may be broadly categorized into primary and secondly where the former are contemporary written records of period under study and latter are historical texts based on primary sources. Primary sources are generally available in form of documents or texts produced by eyewitness, participants or commentators of the event or period being researched upon while secondary sources are usually articles and essays and other text based on first person sources.

The *Vikramāṅkadevacarita* was written by the Kashmiri poet Bilhana in about A. D. 1085. Here a partial biography of King Vikramaditya–VI is presented in a fanciful background which sometimes has little reliance to history. ‘Bilhana’ was in the court of Chālukyan King Vikramaditya VI.

The *Prithvirājaviṣaya* written during the lifetime of Prithviraja, the unfortunate Cahamana emperor (C.A.D.1177–92) is a better historical work than *Vikramāṅkadevacarita*, but unfortunately no complete manuscript of this work has been found. The Kashmir historian Jonarājā wrote a useful commentary on his work. The *Hammiramahakavya*, written by Nayacandra deals with a branch of the Cahamāna dynasty which ruled at Ranthambor (1193 – 1301 A. D.). It derives its name from the gallant Hammira, the last prince of the Dynasty.

Ballal's text *Bhoja Prabandha* throws light on the history of Raja Bhoj. *Kumarpalcharit* of Hem Chandra describes the historical events in particular.

Kashmir seems to have had a long tradition of historical writing. Her first known historian, the celebrated Kalhana, states that he has examined eleven works of former scholars dealing with the chronicles of Kings. These works are lost, and we owe to Kalhana the best history written in Sanskrit, the *Rajtarangini*. In *Rajtarangini* history of Kashmir is written till 11<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. It was started in 1948 A. D. and completed in the following year. It is the only book written on history in true sense. *Navasāhasanka-charita* of Padmagupta

Parimal is also an important work of the period which throws light on history of Parmara dynasty.

**Poetic works:** The two dramas of Bhasa known as Svapnavasavadatta and Pratijnayaugandharayana, supply an interesting information about the political condition of India in the time of King Pradyota of Ujjain. The three works ascribed to Harsha throw interesting light on the history of seventh Century A. D. and those are Nagananda, the Ratnavali and Priyadarsika. The dramatic works of Bhavbhuti which throw light on this period can be mentioned as follows - Maltimadhava, Uttaramacharita, and Mahavircharita, Bal Ramayan, Bal Bhadra and Karpurmanjari of Rajshekhara written in 10<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. also require a special mention. Certain writers took the lives of their royal patrons as the theme of their literary works. Bāna wrote 'Harshacharita' or life of Harsha in prose and this book is useful not only from the point of view of political history but also for depicting the economic, social and religious life of the people of seventh Century A. D. Another poetical work named Ramcharit tells the story of king Rampal of Bengal. One of the very important sources for Pal history of post Gupta age is the biographic composed by court poets.

Biographical works of this period also gives some information about the life of this period some of these works are – Kumarapalcharit of Jivasimha, Kumarpalcharit of Hemchandra, Hammirakavya of Naya Chandra, Navasa Hasankacharit of Padamgupta, Bhoj Prabandha of Ballal and Privthvirajcharit of Chandbardai. These works cannot be regarded as genuine history although they contain valuable historical information.

**Religious works** : Many Smritis were also written during the Rajput age in which Narad Smriti and Brihaspati smriti are prominent. Shankar Bhasya was also written during this period.

According to Alice Getty “the most accurate source of information in regard to the Northern Buddhist Divinities has been found in the Sādhanā or texts of invocations of the Gods, in which they are described with much detail.”

Subsequent to the publication of the first edition of this above mentioned book, Bhattacharya edited and published the Sādhanmālā, the Guhayasamājatantra or the Tathāgataguhyaka, and the Niṣpannayogāvali of Abhayākara Gupta<sup>(1)</sup>. In the meantime was published Advayavajrasaṅgraha,

edited by H. P. Shastri<sup>(2)</sup>. These works brought to light a vast literature to explain various Buddhist iconic types, and to help tracing out the multifarious factors and problems involved in the process of evolution of the concepts underlying them of these iconographic texts, the Sādhanamālā and Niṣpannayogāvali are well known in view of the fact that almost all, subsequent works on Buddhist iconography are based principally on materials supplied by them. The Guhayasamājatantra elaborates the conception that an aspirant makes efforts to obtain enlightenment through mantras and images<sup>(3)</sup>. The Dhyāni Buddhas and their female counter parts form the major thesis of the work.

The Pratimā–Māna–Lakshṇam translated by P. N. Bose was composed probably between 7<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. It is Buddhist work recording the theory (Lakshṇam) of images (Pratimā).

An exploration of unpublished Buddhist ritualistic works can provide us with valuable information which we do not get from either the Sādhanmālā or the Niṣpannayogāvali . It was B. N. Mukhopadhyay who first pointed out that in the Vasundharoddesa and the vasundharāvratotpatyavdāna, two Buddhist ritualistic works, manuscripts of which are preserved

in the library of the Asiatic Society, Calcutta, there are descriptions of Vasudhārā corresponding strikingly with the six handed form of the goddess found in art representations<sup>(4)</sup>. Later on similar description of the goddess was noticed also in the manuscript of the Dhamakasaṅgraha of Amṛtānanda prescribed in Asiatic Society Library<sup>(5)</sup>.

The Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa is said to be earlier than Guhyasamājatantra which is ascribed to c. 300 A. D. On one hand Buddhists evolved images like Trailokyavijaya to crush Śiva and Pārvati, on the other hand they produced images of Śiva–Lokeśvara, Gaṇeśa to compromise. The author gives salient features of bronzes of 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.

**Manuscripts:** There are several manuscripts which serve as good sources for the study of iconography of later Buddhists. These manuscripts have also been utilized by modern research workers. Iconographic materials have been collected mostly from the following manuscripts now prescribed in the library of the Asiatic Society Kolkata.

1. Panchraksha (A. D. 1265), the importance of this manuscript is that it contains the description of four handed form of the



goddess Mahamayuri, which is not found from any other literary description known as yet.

2. Abhidhānottara (A. D. 1298), it is fairly large giving useful information about Buddhist deities and their iconography.

3. Nārāyaṇa – Paripṛcchā (A. D. 1361), it contains the description of Mahāmā Vijayāvāhinī – an unknown form of goddess Tārā. This goddess is also described in Dhāranī Saṁgraha manuscript.

4. Kṛishna – Yamāritantra (A. D. 1380), it gives description of some deities of much iconographic interest.

5. Dhāranī – Saṁgraha (not dated), neither they seem to be very old copies, but nevertheless they contain interesting iconographic information.

6. Nālandā manuscript cover, 11 Century A. D. Although the earliest remaining South Asia manuscripts dated from 11<sup>th</sup> Century A. D., the tradition of copying and illuminating manuscripts is considerably older for example – Fa-hien copied sutras and drew images of deities while at Tamralipti. All early

manuscripts were executed on Palm leaf. This scene from a cover of Buddhist Prajñāparamitā manuscript was executed at Nālandā during Rampālas' reign. It depicts symbol of perfect wisdom.

Utilising these and many other manuscripts many books on the sculpture of Buddhist early medieval period have been written which has been utilized by me in my research work.

**‘Charyapada’** is a collection of 8<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. Vajrayāna Buddhist caryagiti, or mystical poems from the tantric tradition in eastern India. Being caryagiti, or songs of realization’ the Charyapada were intended to be sung. These songs of realization were spontaneously composed verses that expressed a practitioner’s experience of the enlightened state. The writers of Charyapada, the Mahasiddhas’ or Siddha Charyas’ belonged to various regions of Assam, Bengal Orissa and Bihar. Many poems of Charyapada provide a realistic picture of early medieval society in eastern India, by describing different occupations of people such as hunters, boatmen, and potters. It also describes the some popular musical instruments such as Kada-nakada, drums and tom-toms. The custom of

dowry was prevalent. Cows were common domestic animals and elephants were common as well. Girls used to wear peacock feathers, flower garlands and earrings.

**Foreigners' Accounts:** Foreigners' accounts are important literary sources. Many Chinese records and Tibetan annals have been freely utilized in modern translation. From 8<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. onwards India also attracted many Arab Writers. Al-Beruni accompanied Mahmud Ghazni in 1017 AD. Al-Beruni described the conditions of India in 11<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. in several of his writings among which 'Tahkika – i - Hind' is regarded as the most informative one. He has described in detail the condition prevailing at that time. It is an important source for the contemporary political, social, economic and religious conditions of India. 'Al-Berunis India' translated by 'Edward Carl Sachau' serves as a useful source book for all the aspects of life during that period. Al-Beruni has described the temples, idols and Buddhist Vihāras as well. He has described that Vaishnav cult was most popular among the Indians at that time. In spite of some flaws, this book is an asset to history.

The most important works from the point of view of my topic are the Chinese and Tibetan records. Hsüan–tsang visited India in 7<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. Hsüan–tsang has mentioned sudras as community for the first time in 7<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. As cultivators they enjoyed some rights in land in which Brāhmanas were superior to them – Hsüan–tsang clearly states that sudras were agriculturists<sup>(6)</sup>. He has also thrown some light on economic condition of the period under review. Decline in towns has been mentioned by him. According to him, Pataliputra was in state of decay in 7<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. Hsüan–tsang has recorded a curious Buddhist legend concerning the harassment of a Buddhist philosopher Manoratha and he also found Buddhists observing caste distinctions in India, he is meticulous in recording caste of Indians especially of Buddhist monks and its lay adherents.

He found non–Buddhists of Simhapura copying the customs of Buddhists; in Gaya he saw the sacred Buddhist place completely populated by Brāhmanas which shows its assimilation with Hinduism. Gāndhāra presented to Hsüan–tsang a miserable scene with is 1,000 monasteries in ruins solitary to every inch, while heretics were numerous living in some hundred temples. Not only Hsüan–tsang but I–tsing

also leads us to conclude that “the teaching of the Buddha is becoming less prevalent in the world from day to day”<sup>(7)</sup>.

Hsüan–tsang in his general description of India observes “Buddhism now is pure or diluted according to the spiritual insight and mental capacity of its adherents. The tenets of the schools keep these isolated controversy runs high; heresies on special doctrines lead many ways to the same end. Each of the eighteen schools claims to have intellectual superiority and the tenets (or practices) of the great and small systems (lit. vehicles) differ widely ... and many are noisy discussion. Whenever there is a community of brethren it makes (Its own) rules of gradation<sup>(8)</sup>. Hsüan–tsang describes images, temples and worship of Avalokita, Mañjuśrī, Maitreya, Tārā, Harītī, Vajrapāṇi, and Yaksas. I–tsing also testifies to the popular worship of Harītī, Mahākāla, Maitreya, and Mañjuśrī.

The Pāla kings of Bengal (main seat of Buddhism at that time) reputed to be the devout patrons of Buddhist faith, were never entirely free from their Brahmanical learnings. They build not only the Vihāras for Tantrik Buddhist monks but also built Hindu temples. ‘Tārānath’ says that their chief ministers

were generally Brāhmanas who used to erect non-buddhist images in Buddhist shrines<sup>(9)</sup>.

The mystic tales of Lama Tārānath informs that when Acharya Buddhajanānapāda was residing at Nālandā, the saindhava – Śravakas of Odantapuri destroyed the silver - moulded image of Heruka and made profit out of it<sup>(10)</sup>. Tārānath says that Bhikṣu Savjnāmitra was a devotee of Tārā, a son in-law of king of Kashmir, and having given all his riches in charity became mendicant<sup>(11)</sup>.

The ‘Biography of Bharmā Svamin’ records that when he visited Nālandā in 1234–36 A. D., it had seven lofty sikharas in its centre, fourteen lofty sikharas towards north on the outside, eighty small Vihāras called aramikas. Two Vihāras were called Dhanya? and Guna?. In the eighty four Vihāras there were eighty four monastic cells. There were four especially venerated images of Kasarpaṇa, Mañjuśrī, Jñānānatha and Tārā. A Tārā figure was painted on the wall of the eastern side of the Viharā. The Nālandā temple had its western gate<sup>(12)</sup>.

In “An introduction to Lamaism The mystical Buddhism of Tibet”. R. P. Anuruddha informs that one should

read the Srichakrasambhara tantra on tantric iconography and its symbolism<sup>(13)</sup>. Mantras of the five Dhyāni Buddhas are given by him<sup>(14)</sup>. Avalokiteśvara was worshipped in Northern India towards 3<sup>rd</sup> Century A. D. and it reached its climax in 7<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. This worship was introduced into Tibet in middle of 7<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.<sup>(15)</sup>

**Modern Research Works:** Several modern research works have been done on the period under review. These works throw light on my work in one way or the other, a brief discussion on these works may stated as follows:

“A history of ancient and early medieval India”. From Stone Age to 12<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. by Upinder Singh. This book is a breaking away from the conventional text based history writing, it provides a window into the world of primary sources of history substantial archaeological data is incorporated into the narrative of historical period, along with literary epigraphic and numismatic evidence. This book presents balanced assessment encouraging the readers to independently evaluate theories, evidence and arguments. In the book ‘Art of the Pal Empire of Bengal’ by B. Sahai and J. C .French, Sahai states that inspite of political vicissitudes, the period witnessed

the development of Nālandā, Odantapuri, Vikramaśilā and Somapura monasteries and the rise and growth of a new school of arts, which flourished in eastern India, and came to be known as the Pāla art or Medieval Eastern Indian School of Art<sup>(16)</sup>. This book clearly shows that the early medieval period was not totally devoid of art; though the Tantrik cult gave to the art of this period its mysterious vitality and weird power and contrasted strongly with the classical spirit of the earlier art.

‘Early medieval Indian society’- A study in feudalization by R. S. Sharma has been of great help for the topic under review. This book highlights the feudalization of socio-economic structure of early medieval period. In the chapter economic and social basis of Tantrism, the author has discussed how the feudalistic structure of society and economy had impact on art. “The tantric monastic organizations and divine pantheons were modeled after the social and administrative hierarchy that characterized the feudal system by the eighth Century and later”<sup>(17)</sup>.

In his article intitled “The origin of crowned Bhddha Image”, Y. Krishnan observes that when the Buddha was represented symbolically an umbrella was held over the



invisible Buddha conceived as spiritual sovereign. Later a turban or crown was held over his image by angles at Kārle, Ajanta. Lastly, the crown was placed on his head<sup>(18)</sup>.

The articles published in 'Art Bulletin' South Asian studies' by 'Tamarai Sears' throws light on North and Central Indian states of Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan between (7<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.) which has also been beneficial in my topic.

Alice Getty<sup>(19)</sup> informs that the Mahāyān ists borrowed the idea of a supreme God (Adi–Buddha) and worship of divinities. Brāhmanas relegated the Buddhas to the background as special divinities. They introduced the conception of Bodhisattvas and recognized the Mānusī Buddhas who were incarnations of the Dhyāni Buddhas and that mediaeval art of India is reflected in the art of the savyambhūnātha stūpa near Kathmandu.

In an article 'Pāla and Sena sculpture' by Stella Kramrisch<sup>(20)</sup> we get lot of information about the principle features of sculptures from 7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. According to this article the Tantric figures of goddesses exhibit their two

fold aspect; as Śakti (working energy) and as mother. The goddesses accompanying the Bodhisattvas possess girlish charm. Many figures belonging to tantric cult has been included in the article such as crowned Buddha on way to Banaras of 9<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. miracle of Srawasti (middle of 9<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.), Sugatisandarsana Lokeśvara of beginning of 9<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. Thus it is an authoritative work and proved beneficial for my IVth chapter “**Sculpture**”.

The book ‘The Buddhistic Culture of India’ by Lal Mani Joshi is a systematic record, based on close study of contemporary Buddhis, Brahmanical and secular literary texts and epigraphic and monumental antiquities of India together with the Chinese, the Tibetan documents bearing on the period, and it presents a living picture of Buddhist faith, art, esoteric mysticism, reapproachment with Brāhmanism, and its tendencies towards decline and transformation in India. The book has been utilized in many ways for the topic under review.

The book ‘Iconography of Buddhist and Brahmanical sculptures in the Dacca museum’ by N. K. Bhattasali, this book throws light on the society which reflected through the sculpture such as costume ornaments etc.

Bhattacharya has also mentioned some Buddhist gods such as Dhyāni Buddhas and their Śaktis<sup>(21)</sup>. He has divided his work in two portions (i) Buddhist sculptures and (ii) Brahmanical sculptures. In the first part he has studied the figures of Vajra Tārā, Prajñāparamitā, Marichi, Heruka, Syama Tārā, Avalokiteśvara apart from other Buddhist gods.

In development of Buddhist iconography in Eastern India, Mallar Ghosh has discussed the origin of Tārā and presents a detailed study of her seven manifestations. According to the author Vajrayāna system tried to bring different religious systems under its fold during early mediaeval period. The Buddhists had to compromise in various matters, particularly in accepting some of the principal gods and goddesses. They conceived the maṇḍalas of deities where the Brahmanical deities appeared as subordinates of Buddhist deities<sup>(22)</sup>. The author has tried to show that the original concept of Buddhist Goddess Tārā was derived from Brahmanical religion<sup>(23)</sup>.

In 1924, Bhattacharya published the first edition of his celebrated book 'The Indian Buddhist iconography'. In the 'The Indian Buddhist iconography' B. Bhattacharya clarifies that book is based mainly on the

Sādhanmālā and some other tantric text. “The study confines itself to the iconography and goddesses only”. It is a practical hand book for the guidance of the scholars who have to handle a large number of tantric, images of gods and goddesses with strange faces, weapons and poses. It is a work giving indications as to how much images should be studied, enlisted and finally identified with the help of original Sanskrit texts such as are quoted in this book at every place. The author informs that the Buddhist statuettes in Royal Temple at Peiping in Manchuria are inspired by Sādhanmālā and Niṣpannayogāvali <sup>(24)</sup>.

“The making of early medieval India” by Brajadulal Chattopadhyaya gives a clear insight of the process of change in Indian society over the period from about the seventh to thirteenth Century A. D. Within this frame work, he discusses such diverse themes as irrigation, urbanization, the formation of dominant ruling caste, and structure of polity in general. “The collection clearly confirms the authors position as one of the leading scholars in this period of Indian history, making major contributions in methodology and in theory.... by demonstrating command over sources and vigorous control over time and space variables, by moving our concepts away from absolute

category debates, Chattopadhyay is showing us the cutting edge of this field....” (25).

“Social groups and economic change, 7<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.” by Tejaswini Yarlagadda. This book analyses the practice of land grants, which became considerable in Gupta period and widespread in post gupta period. It shows how this led to the emergence of class of landlords endowed with fiscal and administrative rights. It is good histographical work and besides that a good use of source for my topic.

“The art of India” by O. Takata and T. Veno which is written in two parts throws valuable light on the Buddhist art during the period under review. In a caption entitled ‘The last flowering of Buddhist Art’ it is mentioned that in the regions of Bihar and Bengal Buddhist statues were produced during the reign of the late Gupta, Pāla and Sena dynasties. “Indications of stylization and lack of the spiritual depth are found in standing Buddha from Nālandā (Fig 1) presumably from the later half of the seventh Century A. D.”. Tārā figures are largest in number Bihar and Bengal majority of them “fail to reflect the sculptor’s creative imagination except for some rare examples which reveal the artists carving skill in rendering feminine grace”.

The “Eastern Indian school of medieval sculpture” by R. D. Banerjee is one of the most important works on the art of Eastern India from 7<sup>th</sup> Century to 13<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. which has been prepared mainly on paleographic grounds. This book contains number of sculptures in a distractive way, which has been very useful on my topic of research.

The collection of Varendra Research Society of Rajshahi contains sculptures collected in Bengal proper and mainly in northern Bengal. This collection has been catalogue by Prof. Radhagovind Basak, M. A. Honorary Secretary, Prof. Dinesh Chandra Bhattacharya, Honorary librarian of the same society in the book ‘Catalogue of the Archaeological relics in the museum of Varendra Research Society’.

These and many other modern research works have been utilized as sources for my study which will be mention in bibliography.

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOURCES

A substantial amount of information about the period can be gathered from archaeological sources. The inscriptions of Hindu rulers of Orissa, the Deccan and South India contain lot of useful data on history of these regions. The years of royal accession, the extent of kings dominions, relation with neighborhood kingdom, religious and economic condition may all be ascertained from the study of various archaeological sourced such as inscription, excavated site, sculptures and coins.

**Inscriptions**: Inscriptions give important information about architecture, sculptures paintings, scripts, language, art, iconography, history, religion etc. While the extension can be judged by number of specimens found in any particular district, the date of products of any particular period can be judged by the inscriptions of that period. “Some Epigraphical Records of medieval period from Eastern India edited and translated by D. C. Sircar has brought to light some valuable inscriptions. The Antichak stone pillar inscription of Masanikesa almost confirms the location of Vikramaśilā Mahāviharā which was a great

Buddhist centre contemporary of Nālandā. These two institutions had close relation from 8<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. onwards. The Bodhgaya stone slab inscription of Buddhasena in the Berlin museum is one of the most important records proving that even after the Muslim conquest of Bihar, Buddhasena ruled over the Bodhgaya region and Ceylonese Buddhists maintained their establishment of Maha-bodhi temple along with other shrines.

The rulers who ruled in Andhradesa during the period under review were strong supporter of Brahmanical religion. But still some sites like Dhānyakaṭaka, Salihundam and Gummadidurru continued to flourish even upto medieval times under the patronage of minor local dynasties like Kota chiefs of Dharaṇikōṭa<sup>(26)</sup>. The Bekkalu grant of chālukya Tribhuvanamalladeva dated 1100 A. D. refers to the construction of temples for Śiva, Vishnu, Jina and Buddha at Bekkalu in Jangaon taluk of Warrangal district<sup>(27)</sup>. The korniplates of Anantavarma Choda Ganga deva (12<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.) describe the Buddhist site at Salihundam as famous place of Mundiya Monka<sup>(28)</sup>.



Some inscribed images found in North India are also a great source for the period under scrutiny. A image of Tārā dedicated at Nālandā in the 35<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of Devapāla<sup>(29)</sup>, discovered at Hilsa in Patna district. An image of Buddha, erect, in the attitude of giving protection discovered at Bihar in the Patna District of Bihar and Orissa, dedicated in the second year of the reign of Sūrāpāla<sup>(30)</sup>. A similar image dedicated in the same year of the same monarch's reign at the same place and by same donor. The inscriptions by the way, mention that the images were dedicated at Uddandapura which is the same as Odantapura of Tārānatha, the Tibetan historian, and modern Bihar town<sup>(31)</sup>. One image of Buddha has been found inside a small shrine, in front of great temple of Mahabodhi at Bodh Gaya in Gaya district of Bihar and Orissa. This inscribed image shows the 11<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of Mahipāla<sup>(32)</sup>.

The Kailan inscription of Srīdharana Rata, placed on Paleographic grounds in the middle of the 7<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. points to the popularity of Buddhism in Samatata. This king is said to have made land grants to Buddhist monastery for the provision of food and clothing of monks. This pious act he did at the request of his minister Jayanatha<sup>(33)</sup>.

Tārānath gives a detailed account of some Chandra kings, who ruled in Bengal just before Pālas. In an inscription known as the Rampāla copper plate, Suvarṇachandra, the second king in the genealogical list, appears to be follower of Buddhism. This is proved by the facts that they invoked Buddha at the opening of their copper plate grants, adopted the epithet *Paramasaugata* and employed the Wheel of law on their seals. R. C. Majumdar suggests that Chandra kings ruled in East Bengal from 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. <sup>(34)</sup>

Select inscriptions, Vol II edited by D. C. Sircar from sixth to eighteenth Century A. D., contains important epigraphic material bearing on the cultural history of the period. No. 14, Nālandā stone inscription of Vipulasrimitra of 12<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. (script Gaudīya)<sup>(35)</sup> recording that he built a monastery at Nālandā. It refers to a shrine of Khasarpaṇa, carpet of Prajñāparamitā manuscript, a monastery with painting (Vihārikāyāṁnavakarmma chitraṁ, line 8), image of Dipanikara Buddha and temple of Tārā (Tarinya bhavanam). The world renowned Buddhist centre a Dhānyakaṭaka, presently known as Amarāvati has been mentioned a famous Buddhist centre, where Śaivism also flourished since at least 10<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. Both

the religions flourished together at this site for more than five countries. A pillar inscription dated circa 1100 A. D. records the visit of the Pallava king. Simhavarman to ‘*Parama Buddha Kṣētra* of Dhānyakaṭaka’<sup>(36)</sup>. Another pillar epigraph from the same temple dated 1182 A. D., belonging to the reign of Kota Beta II, describes the architectural and sculptural embellishment of the *Mahāchaitya*, as ‘*chaityam atyunnatam yatra nānā-chitrasuchitritam*’. Further it also records certain endowments made by the king to lord Buddha<sup>(37)</sup>. Another record issued by Bayyamaba wife of Kota Beta II dated 1234 A. D. refers to offering of a perpetual lamp to the God Buddha at “Sri Dhayaghat”. From this, it is clear that the kings of medieval Andhradesa, though they were staunch followers of Śaivism, patronize Buddhism liberally.

An inscription incised on one of the caves at Dhauli hill reveals the existence of Buddhist monastery called Arghyaka Varatika. The inscription belongs to early 9<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. The monastery was built in A. D. 829 by Bhimata Loyamaka during the reign of Santikaradeva<sup>(38)</sup>.

A copper plate grant of 9<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. testifies that in Jayāśrama–Vihāra, in Northern Tosala. King

Śivakaradeva-III donated the revenue of a village called Kallam for God Buddhabhaṭṭāraka. The temple of Buddhabhaṭṭāraka, enshrined an image of Buddha, was built by Amubhattāraka in the precincts of Jayāśrama–Vihāra.

“Tamil copper plate Inscriptions” are mostly records of grants of villages or plots of cultivable land to private individuals or public institutions by members of various south-Indian royal dynasties. The grants range in date from 10<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. A large number of them belong to Chālukyan Kings, The Cholas and The Vijaynagar kings. These throw valuable light on social conditions of medieval South India and help in filling the chronological gaps to connect the history of ruling dynasties.

**Excavated Sites:** Number of Buddhist sites belonging to the period under review have been found especially in Eastern and Southern India, which throw ample amount of light on my topic. mention of some of the excavated sites may be made as follows:

Buddhism had been an important part of the socio–cultural life in state of Orrisa since the end of the reigning

period of Somavamsi. 'Ratnagiri' houses a number of Vajrayāna sculptures in Orissa. Various forms of Avalokiteśvara, Heruka, Mañjuśrī, Kurukulla, Jambhāla, Vajrasattva, Mahākāla and Aparchana have been found. Ratnagiri became a centre of Tantric Buddhism during 8<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. a Tibetan source "Sam Jon Zang" suggests that the institutions at Ratnagiri played significant role in emergence of Kālachakratantra during 10<sup>th</sup> Century A. D., this is quite evident from the numerous votive stūpas with reliefs of devinities of Vajrayāna pantheon. Separate image of these divinities and inscribed stone slabs, and moulded terracotta plaques with Dhāranīs have been found in excavation at Ratnagiri. The excavations at Ratnagiri reveal that Buddhist art developed in Orissa from about 5<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. and flourished upto 12<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.

The site of Solanapura North of Jajapura, has yielded many Tāntrika Buddhist images belonging to the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.<sup>(39)</sup>. An inscribed image of Avalokiteśvara found at Khaḍīpada was installed by a Tāntrika Buddhist called Parama–guru Rahularuci, in the reign of Subhakaradeva (790 A. D.)<sup>(40)</sup>. The archaeological remains at 'Udayagiri' consists of brick stūpa, two brick monasteries (One

excavated and other still unexcavated), a beautiful stone well with inscription on it, and rock cut sculptures at the top of hill behind. Chronologically the Udayagiri Buddhist complex is later than Ratnagiri and Lalitgiri and monasteries probably flourished between 7<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. The large numbers of exposed sculptures from the excavation as well as those still in situ belong obviously to Buddhist pantheon and consist of Bodhisattva figures and Dhyāni Buddha figures.

The Buddhist artistic remains in Assam probably date from the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries onward<sup>(41)</sup>. Hsüan–tsang found no Buddhist edifices in Kamrupa. In Samata he found in a monastery a dark blue Jade image of the Buddha, eight feet high, showing all the distinctive characteristics<sup>(42)</sup>.

The remains of Vihāra along with images of Lord Buddha have been unearthed from a land in Jaipur district of Orissa. Three feet long meditating image of Buddha has been found. Image of Padampāṇi and Tārā has also been found here. The unearthed Buddhist monastery was probably built in 8<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.

The ruins of the ancient establishment of Nālandā, the greatest and the most flourishing centre of Buddhism during the period under review, have been laid bare by the spade of the archeologists near the village of Badagaon, 7 miles north of Rajagrha, 55 miles south-east of Patna, in Bihar. Hsüan-tsang and I-tsing have left graphic description of Buddhist activities in Nālandā in seventh Century A. D. In the first half of 8<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. we find valuable information from an inscription of Malada, a minister of king Yasovarman of Kannauj. Archeological excavations at Nālandā have unearthed more than 11 large monastery sites and several temple sites<sup>(43)</sup>, besides numerous Buddhist antiquities belonging to the Gupta and Post-Gupta periods upto 11<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.<sup>(44)</sup>. 'Kurkihar' in Bihar is also an important Buddhist site. Several images of Buddhist pantheon have been unearthed here. The oldest Kurkihar bronze figure of the Buddha is not earlier than 8<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.<sup>(45)</sup>. These bronzes are more elaborate than Nālandā bronzes. Most of these images belong to the Pāla period.

Many sites belonging to Vajrayāna phase have also been unearthed in south India which was once regarded as the seat of origin of Tantrik Buddhism. Archaeological evidences at

Dhānyakaṭaka, Salihundam, Guntapalli, Gummadidurru, Sankarama etc, in Andhra Pradesh. Kanchipuram, Kaveripattanam, Nagapattanam in Tamilnadu and Sannati and Kadri in Karnataka have proved that the Vajrayāna Buddhism was present here till 14<sup>th</sup>–15<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. This is proved by the availability of Dhyāni Buddhas with their consorts, clay tablets with mantras and inscribed bronze icons.

‘Sankarama’ (Andhra Pradesh), the twin hillocks, locally known as Bojjanakonda and Lingatametta, lies to the north of Anakapalle at a distance of 3 kms, near the village Sankarama, a corrupt form of *San̄ghārāman*. Excavations at this site has yielded several clay tables, conical and square seal impression bearing figures of seated Buddha, pagodas and Buddhist creed formulae. Some of the globular seals contain impressions of mantras. Other antiquities recovered from the site include seventy copper coins of the Eastern Chālukya dynasty (7<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.). Basing on the architectural material, the beginnings of the site may be assigned to 2<sup>nd</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> Centuries A. D. and it flourished upto 9<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> Centuries A. D.



‘Dhānyakaṭaka’ presently known as Amarāvati , was also an active centre of Tantrik Buddhism. Medieval inscriptions mention ‘Dhānyakaṭaka’ as famous Buddhist centre till 10<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. The tantric work Sēkōddēśatika of medieval times refers to it as ‘Sīrdhanya’ i.e. Dhānyakaṭaka. The name ‘Dharaṇikoṭa’ appears to have been derived from *Dhārnīs* or *Mantras* (hymns)<sup>(46)</sup>.

‘Kollapattu’ is a hamlet of Damarai village located in the island of Pulicat lake in Sullurupet Mandal of Nellore district. It is about 20 kms from Sullurupet and 8 kms from Sriharikota - a famous space launching centre in south India. The survey of in and around the site resulted in the discovery of medieval potsherds and an image of Buddha in Dhyānimudrā. On stylistic grounds it is datable to 12<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.

‘Salihundam’ lays on the right bank of the river Vamsadhara in Srikakulam district and 12 kms away from Kalingapatnan an ancient port town. Excavations at this place brought to light apsidal and circular *Chaityagrihas*, pillared *Maṇḍapas*, *Vihāras*, *images* of Buddha, votive stone *stūpas* and platforms, spoked *stūpas*, a good number of inscribed Brahmi potsherds and sculptures of Tārā, Manjuśrī, Māricī etc.

belonging to Vajrayāna cult<sup>(47)</sup>. It appears that this place flourished as a prominent Buddhist centre in central Kalinga region upto the medieval times i.e. 12<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.

Buddhism in its Vajrayāna form enjoyed longer spell in Tamilnadu as compared to Andhra Pradesh. In Tamilnadu, the Vajrayāna phase of Buddhism is also characterized by the presence of icons and images with prominent flaming *Uṣṇīsa* and *Ūṛṇā* and also Buddhist creed formulae inscribed on the pedestals. 'Kanchipuram' the Tamil epic '*Manimekalai*' tell us about the prosperous condition of the Buddhist monasteries of the south. It mentions a Chaitya erected in the middle of Kanchipuram to house of golden Bodhi tree with emerald leaves and another shrine dedicated to Lord Buddha<sup>(48)</sup>. On the city of Kanchipuram, in the precincts of the temples, on the walls of the temples and also at public places, several images of Buddha were reported which range in date from 7<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> Century A. D., which is sufficient to testify the site continued to exist as a prominent Buddhist centre in Tamil country.

'Nagapattanam' one of the important port towns was a major centre of Buddhism that produced casting Buddhist

bronzes right from 9<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. and continued till 17<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. Several Buddhist images belonging to Vajrayāna phase of medieval times have been unearthed here.

Other sites of importance in Tamil Nadu, throwing light on the topic under review are ‘Tiruvatti’, ‘Jayanna Konda’, ‘Cholapuram’, ‘Tyagnu’, ‘Melaiyur’ ‘Manambady’, ‘Tanjore’, ‘Elaiyur’ etc.

Buddhism in the Indian state of Himachal Pradesh can be traced back to the spread of Buddhism in the early 8<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. Over the centuries this activity has become deeper rooted, particularly in the Lahaul, Spiti and Kinnaur valleys of Himachal Pradesh. After a lull in the spread of Buddhism in the state during the 10<sup>th</sup> Century A. D., the Tibetan King Yeshe Od of Guge took the initiative to revive it. Of the 21 scholars he had sent to revive Buddhism in the Trans Himalayan region, only two had survived, and one of them was the famous scholar-translator Rinchen Zangpo who transfused Buddhist activity in the state of Himachal Pradesh. Known by the epithet “Lohtsawa” or the “Great Translator”, Zangpo built 108 monasteries in the trans-Himalayan region to spread

Buddhism, which are considered as the main stay of Vajrayāna of Tibetan Buddhism (also known as Lamaism).

It was in 749 A. D. that Padmasambhava (hailed as the second Buddha) with his compatriot Shantarakshita established the Vajrayāna Buddhism in the Western Himalayan region. Archaeological evidence in Himachal Pradesh offers strong evidence of Vajrayāna Buddhist influence. Discovery of marble head (7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.) of Avalokiteśvara at the confluence of Chandra and Bhagha Rivers support evidence of monastic activities in these remote regions. Archaeological evidence also supports the influence of Vajrayāna Buddhism influence prior to 8th Century A. D. in the region east of Sutlej River. Cult powers of Padmasambhava, before he went to Tibet (before 747 A. D.), are also deciphered from legends at Nako in Kinnaur, Trilokinath and Gandhala in Lahaul, and Rewalsar in Mandi district.

**Sculptures:** Sculptures are one of the most important source which throw light on the religion and culture of any period, it shows the gradual changes in life and thoughts of the people. Full one chapter has been dedicated to sculpture in my research

work. A brief description of these sculptures has been mentioned in the chapter of sources.

As already stated earlier Eastern–India has yielded a large number of images of Buddhist deities’ mostly tantric gods and goddesses – belonging to the period from 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Centuries A. D. onwards. The central point of these sculptures is the human figure which combines in itself both spiritual and physical symbolism. The erotic symbolism of the Tāntrika texts find in these images a genuine plastic expression<sup>(49)</sup>. “The eleven headed Avalokiteśvara, which has become so popular in Tibet, originated in India. It is found in one of the caves of Kanheri<sup>(50)</sup>.”

Orissa has also yielded number of Tāntrika Buddhist images. A Lokeśvara image found at Bhubaneswar, Buddha in Bhūmisparśamudrā from khaḍḍipadā, Avalokiteśvara Padampāṇi in standing pose from khaḍḍipadā are displays at Orissa state museum in Bhubaneswar. Most of these Buddhist images are very big in dimension. A colossal image of two armed Avalokita now broken into two pieces, flanked on the right and left by the images of four armed Bhṛkuṭi and Hayagrīva, respectively and bearing on its forehead an effigy of Amitābha,

found in Udayagiri, is assigned to 8<sup>th</sup> Century A. D., on paleographical grounds<sup>(51)</sup>. Huge number of Vajrayāna or tantric Buddhist images found at Orissa suggests that this form of Buddhism found a fertile ground in Orissa.

Nālandā was a great centre of Buddhism during this period. Many images of Buddha, Tārā, and Avalokiteśvara have been unearthed here. One image of Buddha has been found lying in the courtyard of Suntemple at Baragaon. A feature that strikes the observer here is that Buddha wears the crown and jewel like necklace, earring of royal patronage, the very worldly attribute discarded at the time of renunciation. The images of Avalokiteśvara (one of the most popular of Bodhisattvas of Mahāyāna Buddhist pantheon) have been found in abundance in stone, bronze, and terracotta. He is represented either standing or seated pose in the company of his Śaktis like Tārā and Bhṛkuṭi, attendants Sucīmukha, Hayagrīva etc. Sometimes he is represented alone.

Among other stray pieces of noteworthy art of the period mention may be made of Sirpur Buddha, image with a halo upon which is engraved the famous “*gatha Ye dharma...*” in the letters of the 8<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.<sup>(52)</sup> The Visvakarma cave of

Ellora is also probably a product of 7<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.<sup>(53)</sup> A beautiful image of goddess Tārā with attendant deities (bronze) from Madhyapradesh is said to belong to 8<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.<sup>(54)</sup>

Even south India was an active centre of Mahāyānism and Tāntrika Buddhism during the early medieval period; Srī Parvata and Dhānyakaṭaka were important centres in south. The bronze images of Buddha from Amrāvati dating from 6<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. continue the earlier tradition, a granite standing Buddha from Kāñcīpura belonging to 7<sup>th</sup> Century A. D., figure of Simhanada (granite) from Amarāvati belonging to 8<sup>th</sup> Century A. D., a figure of Mañjuḥṣa (granite) from Amarāvati of 8<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> Century A. D., and the beautiful standing image of Maitreya (bronze–gilt) found in Tanjore District assigned to 8<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. are noteworthy<sup>(55)</sup>.

A figure of Buddha in Dhayana Mudrā was reported from Tyagnur. He is shown seated in *Padmasana* on a pedestal in *dhyāna mudrā*. It is a highly developed form of the Buddha with an unfinished Uṣṇīsa which was left uncarved as a lump. The square face, the prominent nose, the full lips, the strong and

broad shoulders, the highly proportionate limbs and torso which make the image a perfect and magnificent specimen of a developed form. It is similar to the late Buddha images reported from Amarāvati. On stylistic grounds, it is dated to 10<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.<sup>(56)</sup>

These and many other examples in south India such as figure of Maitreya from Melaiyur, Buddha (Amitābha) from Madagram, Buddha in *Bhusparsamudrā* (Akṣobhya) from ‘Vaikunthapuram’. Buddha in *Bhusparsamudrā* from Mukhalingam, the two handed icon of Padampāṇi from Guntupalli etc serve as a rich source for my topic. These and many other sculptures of Buddha belonging to early medieval period will be discussed in detail in my chapter ‘**Sculpture**’.



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# **CHAPTER - III**

## **ARCHITECTURE & PAINTING**

Architecture is an art of profound creativity. It is a visual representation of culture and insight into the social, religious, political, economics, customs, climate and environment of the particular period. It serves as the visual memory for the history of our ancestors.

One of the most enduring achievements of Indian civilization is undoubtedly its architecture. Indian architecture which has evolved through centuries is the result of socio-economic and geographical conditions. Different types of Indian architectural styles include a mass of expressions over space and time, transformed by the forces of history considered unique to India a vast range of specimens have evolved, retaining a certain amount of continuity across history. Though the cities of Indus provide substantial evidence of town planning, the beginnings of Indian architecture can be traced back to the advent of Buddhism in India. Buddhism played a very important role in architectural field.

Buddhist architecture emerged slowly in the period following Buddha's life, building on Brahmanist Vedic models, but incorporating specifically Buddhist symbols. True to the spirit of Buddhism, the development of Buddhist architecture has been an open ended process during which it absorbed a great deal of foreign elements along its course of travel and modified its form to acclimatize to the local conditions. It experienced a lengthy evolution since its commencement in the sixth Century BCE. Buddhist architecture can be classified into Stūpas, Monasteries and Temples.

**Stūpas:** The stūpa originated as a piled-up burial tumulus and constituted the most characteristic monument of Buddhist religion. A stūpa, sometimes referred to as pagoda can be considered the “high rise” of Buddhist architecture due to its tall, narrow shape that reaches toward the sky- sometimes to an immense height. The stūpa was a solid structural dome (anda), usually raised on one or more terraces and surmounted by a railed pavilion (harmika) from which rose the shaft of the crowning umbrella (chhatra). The stūpas had one or more circumambulatory passages (pradakshina-patha) which were usually enclosed by railing (vedika). The earlier stūpas were hemispherical in shape with a low base, while the later ones

assumed an increasingly cylindrical form with a well developed drum. In the later examples, which tended to be more ornate, the base terraces and umbrellas were multiplied. The purpose of stūpa is to provide a place to enshrine the Buddha's relics, where people can then come and make offerings to the Buddha. While maintaining a relatively consistent shape, stūpas are constructed in a variety of sizes, proportions, colors and creative designs.

The stūpa architecture mainly began during the Mauryan period. The only brick stūpa of a probable pre-Ashokan date is that at Piprahwa in Basti District of Uttar Pradesh. The oldest stūpas are hemisphere in shape, such as the stūpas of Sanchi and Andher and the great stūpa at Mankiala, near Rawalpindi. Later on the stūpas were raised about the ground level by adding a solid cylinder beneath the hemisphere. This came to be known as the drum of stūpa. In Gāndhāra stūpas a niche was added to the drum. In Mathura specimen, four niches were added to the drum, each facing one of the cardinal points and containing an image of Buddha in attitude of teaching. This becomes the standard type of votive stūpa in the medieval period.



One surviving example of stūpa of the period under review is the stūpa at Giriyeḱ. This stūpa is built entirely of bricks. The antiquity of the shrine is indicated by a sloping causeway built of gigantic stones similar to the pre–Mauryan causeway on the Gṛidhrakūṭa hill old Rajgir. The lower part of the stūpa is broken and no ornamentation has survived with the exception of a row of niches along each façade of the square base of the stūpa. The height of the drum indicates that this stūpa belongs to early medieval period (8<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.). The stūpas of the post Gupta period, while retaining the cylindrical form, tended to be even more ornate in design and with their multiple terraces and umbrellas inspire the stūpa architecture of Greater India including Tibet, Burma, Siam, Cambodia and the Islands of Indonesia.

Ratnagiri situated on the Bank of the stream Keluo midway between the Birupā and Brāhmanī rivers, almost twenty–one kilometers south of Jajpur through the air, yielded an impressive stūpa on the top of the hillock, surrounded by an overwhelming number of smaller stūpas. The excavation of this site was carried out by Archaeological survey of India in 1958–61 and its results were published by Debala Mitra some twenty years later.<sup>(1)</sup> As indicated by Mitra, the excavations

revealed an establishment that could be compared with that of Nālandā. “In the overwhelming number of portable monolithic stūpas, Ratnagiri can compete even with Bodha–Gaya. The number of these antiquities is an adequate index of the profound popularity and sanctity of this centre in the Buddhist world”.<sup>(2)</sup>

The excavations unearthed the structural remains of large brick stūpa No. 1 (Mahastūpa) situated on south western flank of the highest part of the hill that commands a view from large distance. The stūpa has a square base measuring 14.35 m each side while superstructure is now partially missing. It consists of five recesses and six projections. Its height from base to top is 5 m. The space between the two walls served as circumambulatory pathway. The evidence shows that this 9<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. stūpa was built over the plinth of an earlier edifice.

The area around the Mahastūpa is covered with numerous votive stūpas of varying dimensions made of either brick or stone. The largest numbers of these monolithic stūpas, as many as 535, were found on south western side of the main stūpa. Majority of them can be dated between 9<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. These stūpas were made locally as is

evident from many stūpas having projection on one side of the drum and dome. As according to D. Mitra “the intention was to carve the figures of deities into these projections according to the inclination of devotees, which again tends to indicate the maintenance of permanent ateliers and sculptors”. In few cases āyaka–pillars are carved on the stūpas, a characteristic of the Krishna valley in Andhrapradesh, to suggest that the local craftsmen were including esoteric features under the direction of the visiting clients. For the most part however, the visiting pilgrims dedicating stūpas did not affect local traditions.<sup>3</sup>

According to Donaldson recent excavations by the Orrisa State Archaeology have unearthed a votive stūpa at Sakuntalapur, a short distance beyond Mahāvinayaka near Chandikol Fig 1. The stūpa is still partially buried and the Bodhisattva with in its single niche is badly damaged. This Buddhist stūpa can be dated to 9<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.<sup>(4)</sup>

Several thickly plastered votive stūpas made of bricks, larger or smaller in sizes have been exposed at the sites 3 and 12, Inscriptions found at Nālandā call them as chaityas or stūpas. The main stūpa of Nālandā is the result of seven successive accumulations of the shrine chamber on the top,

facing both, can be approached by the stair case of sixth period. It presumably contained a colossal image of Lord Buddha as the pedestal therein would indicate. It belongs to 11<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. A Buddhist stūpa belonging to 8<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. has also been uncovered from Nālandā Fig 1B. Another Votive stūpa belonging to Pāla School, 11<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. has been found from Bodh Gaya, Bihar and is presently installed in Indian Museum, Calcutta Fig 1A.

The temple 12, of Nālandā in its south east corner is studded with votive stūpas of different sizes. On plan they are circular, oblong and star shaped. Some of them are made of bricks while other of stone. Some stone stūpas are monolithic. In some of them the harmitā and the capital form separate parts fixed on to the socket made on the top of the dome. Most of them belong to medieval period. These stūpas have hemispherical or cylindrical domes. The mouldings decorating their lower portion are now three or even more. Their tops carry a groove to receive the stick of the chhatrāvalī, sometimes a stick having seven discs. The stūpas are heavily decorated as compared to earlier stūpas. They are decorated with bird-bodied kinnaras, āmalakas, lotus scrolls, bead-reel, twisted rope pattern, squares triangles, lentils etc. A shrine with its

semi-circular back is decorated with three horizontal rows of seated Buddhas in the lower and four similar rows of Buddha in the upper portion. This shrine is probably composed of four parts and on stylistic grounds appears to date from 9<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.

Nālandā was a great religious and academic mart for the Buddhist world and was famous as Talahatta, Bharmahatta, Devapālahatta and Dharmaganja. It also served as a standard model for construction of monastic buildings in foreign lands. Numbers of miniature stūpas belonging to the period under consideration also exist in Nālandā. These are mostly built in metal. They date from 8<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.

A copper stūpa belonging to 9<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. has been reproduced by Banerji from Nālandā. The pedestal of this stūpa was damaged; probably it was a footed one. Two of its legs on the proper right side are still extant. Above the legs, a broad moulding goes round the high plain recessed part of the pedestal. The drum of the stūpa has standing sides. An oblong niche with pilasters against the drum contains a Buddha figure seated cross-legged in *bhūmisparśamudrā* keeping left hand in its lap. Three mouldings, the middle one projecting more

decorate the base of the dome which is hemispherical and has a truncated top. On the top of the oblong niche there is a chaitya window in relief against the dome with a rectangular base, serpentine vertical sides and flat tops with beaded ends. The drum and the dome, in combination give the look of a relic-casket. The harmikā has a projecting moulding at its base and top. It is mounted by a capital of four receding square tablets. A thick stick, circular in section, with three umbrellas of a common type, stands on the capital.

A bronze stūpa from Nālandā preserved in the National Museum, New Delhi, belongs to 8<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. In its niches on the drum on four sides it exhibits Buddha and Bodhisattva figures. It has four sides each showing five stepped stairs. A double lotus decorates the base of the dome which is semi-circular. Above the lotus is a ring or moulding of beads, plain square harmikā on the top of the dome is crowned by three gradually expanding tablets forming a capital. An elongated stick with eight gradually diminishing umbrellas mounts the capital of the harmikā. Similar type of metal stūpa from Jhewari has been installed in Indian Museum, Calcutta Fig 1C.

In case of Buddhist stūpas of Bengal a series of terraces rise tier after tier not only to provide circumambulation passage but also to restrengthen the foundation, on the top of which stands stūpa like shrine as seen at Paharpur – a model so faithfully copied and further embellished at Pagan in Burma and at Borobudur temple in Java. It is on to their wall surface that numerous terracotta plaques are fixed to tell various stories and scenes in the life of the Buddha. These stūpas create an atmosphere of formal preaching by direct pictorial representation. The votive stūpas of the Bengal School belonging to the early medieval period are generally solid cylinders of stone with a hemisphere on their tops which again bears a square piece of stone on its summit to support the umbrella. On each of the cardinal points of the drum is a niche containing an image of one of the Dhyāni Buddhas. Generally four Buddhas are figured around the votive stūpas<sup>(5)</sup> and five is an unusual number. The four Dhyāni Buddhas are Akṣobhya Ratnasambhava, Amitābha and Amoghasiddhi.<sup>(6)</sup> In one specimen in the Indian Museum we find respective mudrās and vāhanas of each of these, viz. Amoghasiddhi in abhayamudrā on Garuḍa; Amitābha in dhyānamudrā on a peacock; Ratnasambhava in the varadamudrā on a horse; and Akṣobhya in bhūmisparśamudrā on an elephant.<sup>(7)</sup> The same specimen in

the Indian Museum has five instead of four Dhyāni buddhas around its drum the additional one being Vairocaṇa in the dharmmachakramudrā on two lions.

One of the stūpas from Eastern India, which belongs to 9<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. and has been referred by I–tsing also, shows an low circular drum over a basement consisting of six terraces each of which is in form of lotus. The semi–circular dome with four niches on four sides contains Buddha figures and is decorated with garlands at the top and surmounted by a square harmikā. Above it rises a tapering row of chhatras, the topmost one of which is adorned by flying streams. A hemispherical Buddhist stūpa belonging to Vajrayan period of Buddhism dating back to 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. was unearthed recently by department of Archaeology of Andhra Pradesh, following sighting of a large brick in the vicinity of a large mound in Mujuluru village of Krishna District. This stūpa is a hemispherical dome of 10 m height with rectangular projection at the base on four cardinal directions. The brick size measure 27 x 23 x 7 cm. The stūpa is in dilapidated state. Due to tilling activity some outer structures like aramas and ayakas have vanished.<sup>(8)</sup>



Thus we can see that stūpas continued to be built in early medieval period also, inspite of the decline of Buddhism in India. They also aspired to the height, which was achieved by multiplication and heightening of the supporting terraces. The earlier type of stūpas with a low drum and few or no ornaments evolved through successive stages into a lofty drum with an elongated dome, decorated with a wealth of imagery and finally culminated in a kind of shrine.

**Monastries:** Monastries, a dwelling place for community of monks, presents fine example of Buddhist architecture and charismatic Buddhist spirituality. Buddhist monasteries came into existence as a result of the donations made by the kings, officials of the state and merchant princes. Their maintenance was also due to the charitable endowments and periodical contributions made by royal and rich persons of the society for the upkeep of their inmates. From the time of its commencement, the architectural program of a monastic establishment specified that it should not be too far or too near a town. According to the ‘chullavagga’, pp. 252–53, the most suitable place for location of a vihāra is that which is neither very far from the village or nigama or town nor too close to

them. It should be fit for solitude, a lonely place suitable for meditation.

In the early period, before 500 B. C., renunciation of the worldly materials was the bit motif of Buddhism. But later on especially during the period under review, two major developments took place one was the incorporation of tantra in Buddhism and secondly, early medieval eastern India witnessed the efflorescence of Buddhist Mahavihāras which led to the firm institutionalisation of Buddhism as religion. All the major Mahavihāras,<sup>9</sup> viz. Nālandā, Vikramashila, Odantipura, Sonapura, Ratnagiri, among others served as a catalyst for the growth of thriving religious and economic centres.

Monasticism started from the earliest days of Buddhism and went through several stages of development according to the changing social religious and economic conditions. According to Hsüan-tsang “the Buddhist monasteries are one of the most remarkable architecture. They have tower at each of the four corners of the quadrangle and three high halls in a tier. The rafters and roof beams are carved with strange figures, and the door, windows and walls are painted in different colours”. The monasteries in ancient India

were usually planned as a square block formed by four rows of monastic rooms along the four sides of an inner courtyard. They were raised on a platform of brick or stone. The building materials in the earlier period were usually wood and bricks but during the period under review, bricks and stones of diverse colour and variety seems to have been in universal use. It was a regular feature to enclose a monastic establishment within a boundary wall with one main gate. Instances of several monasteries being enclosed within one wall are also known.<sup>(10)</sup>

The epigraphs of early medieval period supply detailed information regarding the foundation of monastic establishments by ruler of different dynasties especially in Eastern India. Pāla rulers were professed Buddhists hence they established monasteries in different parts of the empire. On the evidence of Tārānāth we know that Gopāla founded Odantpuri Mahavira and his son Dharampāla established Vikramaśilā institution.<sup>(11)</sup> In Jagjivanpur copper plate<sup>(12)</sup> of Mahendrapalā (Malwa, West Bengal, dated 840–846 CE), Vajradeva, a member of the royal family, is said to have built a Vihāra and granted taxfree land of Nandadirghika, for its maintenance. The Bodh Gaya Inspiration<sup>(13)</sup> of Dharampalā mentions the excavation of a deep lake at a cost of three thousand dramnas

for the benefit of Mahabodhi Vihāra. The Nālandā stone inscription of the time of Yasovarman<sup>(14)</sup> (dated first half of the eighth Century A. D.) mentions that a ministers son Malada (in Yasovarman kingdom) donated one *aksyayanivi* (probably a money endowment) for the perpetual offering of various items to the monks. Ambari stone inscription of Samudrāpalā (dated 1154 CE) mentions about land donated by king Samudrāpalā to a vihāra for the establishment of *Sattara* institution in Yogahali, where rituals were performed. Kings also made land grants for the establishment of Vihāras. According to the Tippera copper plate of Lokanatha (dated to second half of seventh Century A. D. ), the king granted a forest region without any natural boundaries to a vihāra.<sup>(15)</sup> These land grant charters show that new settlements were expected to be set up there. As R. S. Sharma and B. D. Chattopadhyay<sup>(16)</sup> have pointed out that these land grants led to Buddhist Vihāras and other religious institutions led to the creation of mathas and monastic establishments in the early medieval period.

In India the ruins of Nālandā monastic University and the ancient monasteries at Sarnath whose ruins are still present with some of the latest ones, still depicts the golden past of Buddhism and developed architectural style in India.

Archaeological excavations at Nālandā have unearthed more than 11 large monastery sites and several temple sites;,<sup>(17)</sup> besides numerous Buddhist and Brahmanical antiquities belonging to Gupta and post Gupta periods upto 11<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.<sup>(18)</sup> It is also called Mahavihāra or great monastery, because it consisted of several smaller vihāras, it was also a great university or research institute consisting of several colleges; because of this it acted as academic centre of India during the period under review Fig 2.

At Nālandā, archacological remains of the University and edifice is 1600 feet long from north to south and 800 feet long from east to west. The Nālandā monastries range from smallest 71' x 100' to largest 178' x 255'. All these monasteries have been rebuilt by successive kings over a long period of time upon existing foundations Fig 2A. The vihāras typically have quadrangular plans like Gāndhāra monasteries and Ajanta cave Vihāras, with a projecting entry portico and an image chapel in the back that occasionally has a Pradakshina path. The interior of the monastery had columned verandahs around a courtyard which is surrounded by monk cells on all the four sides. A secret chamber for keeping the valuables, staircase for going to upper stories, kitchen, well, gravary, had a single entrance and

common place for meeting or prayer are the characteristic features of almost all the monasteries of Nālandā Fig 2B.

The Nālandā Saṃghārama was “the most remarkable for its grandeur and height”.<sup>(19)</sup> Complemented by the grandeur and gilded domes of the stūpa, rising into the sky, as they were seen by Hsüan–tsang in 7<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. before they were razed to ground by the muslim invaders of 11<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. “The richly adorned towers, and fairy like turrets” he says, like pointed hill tops are congregated together. The observatories seem to be lost in vapours of the morning, and the upper rooms’ towers above the clouds. The outside courts in which are the priest chambers and in four stages and have dragon projection and coloured caves, the pearl and red pillars carved and ornamented, the richly adorned balustrade and roofs covered with tiles that reflect the light in a thousand ways, these things add to the beauty of the scene”.<sup>(20)</sup> This graphic and enthusiastic picture of the architecture, sculpture and general beauty of the Nālandā establishment is recorded in the biography of Hsüan–tsang.

The great Vihāra had maintained gardens of mango trees and flowers and fairly good ponds with lotus flowers. Not

only the collegiate buildings, but also the residential buildings of the Buddhist sages, scholars and students of Nālandā, were four storied. Their style of construction, their exterior projections being dragon – like with lower edges of roofs coloured, sculptured pillars and beautified and exuberant rows of balusters and parapets with covered copings, it was a city complete in itself and may have attracted even princes to come to its precincts. There is no reason to doubt the trustworthiness of the above description of a seventh Century A. D. observer. It is corroborated by an epigraph dating from the middle of the 8<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. and found from the site itself.<sup>(21)</sup>

The pillars used in the construction were ornamented carved with various round type of figures. Generally in the Nālandā monasteries there is always a large or main shrine just opposite their entrances in the middle of the row of cells at the back as in monastery 1. The main shrine generally contains a colossal Buddha image as were installed in the Buddhist temples at Nālandā. This arrangement facilitated offering of prayers to and worship of the Buddha. In addition to the main shrine there were subsidiary shrines, stūpas, and chaityas in the courtyard of monasteries.

Superior quality and well baked with mud mortars or lime–concrete were used in the construction of monasteries and temples of Nālandā. Wood was used in the construction of roof. The floors and pavements were laid on a bed of lime – concrete. The drains were made of brick layers with corbelled arch at the top. The bricks used in Nālandā do not show any effect of decay. Granite was used for construction of pillars, sculptured panels and images.

The original monastery of Nālandā was built during the reign of Kumaragupta, (415–455 A .D.) and later construction were taken up under the patronage of king Harshavardhana (606 – 647 A. D.) and Palā kings (8<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.). Nālandā passed into obscurity when Bhaktiyar Khilji destroyed the centre of learning in 1197 A. D.

Many Buddhist monasteries were established by Palā king Dharampāla, viz. Odantpuri and Vikramaśilā Vihāras. The famous Vikramsila monastery was situated on the top of a hill on bank of Ganges near Magadha. The Institution had 114 teachers in different subjects, six colleges and it also included a central temple surrounded by 107 others, all enclose by a



boundary wall. The site of this monastery has been identified as Patharghata in the Bhagalpur district. The monastery of Odantpuri which served as a model for the great Bsam-ya monastery in Tibet was in neighbourhood of Nālandā in Bihar. Among the other famous Vihāras of this period mention may be made of Traikutaka, Devikota, Pandita, Sannagara, Phullahari, Pattikeraka, Vikramapuri and Jagaddala Vihāras – all are situated either in West, North east Bengal or Western Magadha.

Recently ruins of some Vihāras in Mainamati in Commilla district have been unearthed, which were supposed to have more huge and vast Vihāras and temple. All these establishments testify to the scientific and intelligent planning of a monastic organization, present in the period of Pāla monarchs.<sup>(22)</sup>

The ruins of Dharmapāla's Somapura vihāra (modern Ompur) in Bengal have been recognized through archeological exploration. In a number of sealings from 8<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. onwards, reference is made to this monastery of a community of monks built by Dharmapāla (Śrī-somapura-Śrī dharamapāla – deva – mahā – vihārity – ārya – bhiksu – saṃghasya.<sup>(23)</sup> The great monastery finds mention in

inscriptions from Gaya<sup>(24)</sup> and Nālandā.<sup>(25)</sup> The entire establishment occupied a quadrangle measuring more than 900 feet externally on each side, had high enclosure walls lined on the inside with nearly 177 cells, excluding the cells of the central block in each section<sup>(26)</sup> K. N. Dikshit observes that “no single monastery of such dimensions has come to light in India”.<sup>(27)</sup> It followed the traditional cruciform plan for the central shrine. There were central blocks in the middle of the eastern, southern and western sides. These might have been subsidiary chapels. It was premier Vihāra of its kind and its fame lingered till 11<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.

Recent excavations at Jagjivanpur (Malda district) revealed a monastery of 9<sup>th</sup> Century A. D., nothing of the superstructure has survived. However a number of monastic cells facing a rectangular courtyard have been found. It is similar to Nālandā monastery. In Jagjivanpur copper plate<sup>(28)</sup> of Mahendrapal (Malwa, West Bengal, dated 840–846 CE) Vajradeva, a member of the royal family, is said to have built a vihāra and granted tax-free land of Nandadirghika, for its maintenance.

The Buddhist artistic remains in Assam probably date from the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Centuries A. D. onward.<sup>(29)</sup>

Hsüan–tsang found no Buddhist edifices in Kāmarūpa. In Samatata he found in a monastery “a dark blue jade image of the Buddha, eight feet high, showing all the distinctive characteristics”.<sup>(30)</sup>

The excavations conducted since 1958 in Orrisa has confirmed the testimony of late Tibetan traditions that Orrisa was a great centre of Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna learning and art. Ratnagiri one of the major Buddhist sites of Orrisa has yielded two quadrangular monasteries. According to Debala Mitra, the excavations revealed an establishment that could be compared with that of Nālandā. Archaeologically Ratnagiri has the longest sustained activity of any Buddhist site in Orrisa and must have been one of the foremost Buddhist establishments in India.<sup>(31)</sup>

The two monasteries of Ratnagiri were excavated on the high mound, locally called Ranipokhari located to the north of Mahastūpa. Larger one of the monasteries is monastery 1 and faces south. This monastery is chatusala in plan and measures 548 m sq (externally) with 24 cells and a spacious stone paved central courtyard of 21m square. It has three periods of structural activity the first period belongs to 8<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.,

second to 11<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. while the third period belongs to 16<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. It is the largest excavated monastery in Orrisa made essentially of brick but externally veneered with khandolite to make the entire composition very attractive. The monastery has pancharatha projection in front of its entrance. The exquisitely carved chlorite door frame with Gaja–Lakshmi on the lintel and the bands of floral, creeper and manusyakautaki motifs betray the superb craftsmanship in its artistic exuberance and graceful charm. The ornate doorway of the monastery is unique of its kind and marks the highest watermark of decorative art of India. The door frame of the front Porch has been published by Donaldson Fig 2C. The sanctum enshrined with massive seated Buddha is in *bhūmisparśamudrā* flanked by standing figures Padampāṇi and Vajrapāṇi holding chamaras on each side. The façade of the sanctum is embellished with creeper pattern and elegant figures of doorkeepers. It is assignable to 8<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.

Monastery 2 of Ratnagiri also evidenced three period of structural activity with period 1 dating to about 5<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. period 2 to 7<sup>th</sup> and period 3 to 11<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. It measures 29 mtrs square (externally inconfirmitly with its counterpart is made essentially of brick,

though the use of stone restricted to door frames, windows, kerbs of verandah and pavement etc. The sanctum houses a standing khandolite image of Buddha in varada–mudrā flanked by diminutive figures of Indra and Brahma indicating the miracles of sankisa. This monastery is immediate posterior to monastery 1.

Udaygiri was another Buddhist centre of Orrisa. Excavations of this site, by the ASI in 1905–86, has unearthed a large monastic complex consisting of cells for the monks, an open courtyard, a verandah and a central shrine chamber housing a colossal image of Buddha in *bhūmisparśamudrā*. The door frame of the sanctum is richly carved and helps to date the complex to mid 8<sup>th</sup> Century A. D Fig 2D. This image has also been published by Donaldson.<sup>(32)</sup>

The remarks of vihāra along with images of Lord Buddha have been unearthed from a land in Hatikhal in Jaipur district of Orrisa. Three feet long meditating image of Buddha have been found, images of Tārā and Padampāṇi have also been found. The unearthed Buddhist monastery was probably built in 8<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.

Thus the study of Buddhist statues and monuments in Orrisa points to the gradual transformation of Mahāyāna form of Buddhism to Vajrayāna form, by the heart of the 9<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. From epigraphical sources also we come to know that Orrisa was a great centre of Buddhism during the period under review.

The territory of Ka-sse-mi-lo or Ko-shih-mi Kashmir has been regarded as cradle of Sanskrit Buddhism.<sup>33</sup> This ancient land has produced a number of famous Buddhist commentators, poets and philosophers in the first millennium of Christian era. However, in the first half of Seventh Century A. D. condition of Buddhism was not very well in Kashmir. But during 8<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. under the rule of Lalitaditya the Central Kashmir Valley became an important artistic site, Mahāyāna Buddhism flourished at Alchi, dating from 11<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. have beautiful painting depicting Mahāyāna Pantheon. The Monastries at Leh and Phiyang continue to be renovated today, and the recent resurgence of Indian Buddhism, associated not only with concession of lower caste Hindus to Buddhism under the influence of Ambedkar but with the establishment of Tibetan Buddhist communities,

particularly in North India, has introduced a fresh Chapter in Buddhist architecture of India.

The construction of all these monasteries mentioned above was an outcome of several mega-projects most likely sponsored by the contemporary rulers. These were called Mahavihāras or 'great monastery' because they consisted of several smaller Vihāras, keeping in mind the prevalent socio-economic and political conditions in Eastern India, during the early Medieval Period, these monastic establishments, which were initially developed by royal patronage were too important to be ignored by the kings of later generations.

**Temples:** Temples are often the centre of cultural activities from a modern point of view, temples can be compared to museums for they contain precious and spectacular art forms, and in fact, are beautiful art forms themselves. They are a combination of architecture sculpture, painting and calligraphy. 'Temples' offer a harmonized environment and a spiritual atmosphere that allows one to become serene and tranquil.

Temples also form one of the most important Buddhist monuments. They were an important feature in all the

monasteries, often as an actual part of the edifice constituting the monastery. It was in the earliest days of Buddhism in India that neither temples nor halls for meeting together (Sangha-griha) were much needed. The monks recited the law or Dhamma in the open air to the laity. It was only when some groups of monks crystallized into regularly organized communities that a kind of congregational recitation law became a part of everyday ritual. Then the monks required places of assembly like Vihāras for the performance of religious services. This is thus, the first stage or source of temple establishment.<sup>34</sup> These places of meeting were often erected like the cells for the monks excavated out of rocks. Since relic-shrines called chaitya were erected at the further extremity of the excavated hall, the hall itself was generally called chaitya which later on developed into temples.<sup>(35)</sup>

While the stūpas were places of religious learning, Buddhist temples were used for dual purpose, prayers and teaching. It served as a gathering place where followers could go and make offerings to Buddha and learn Buddha's precious teaching. The earliest structural Buddhist temple is Temple 17 at Sanchi which is also the earliest known example of Gupta temple style. It is a plain flat rooted structure of ashlar stones



comprising on plan of a square sanctum with a shallow portico resting on four pillars in front. The decoration is confined to its doorway; this temple lays the logical foundation of temple architecture in north India, which developed in due course a Śikhara over its basic form.

The early medieval period as already stated was a period of decline in Buddhism, so very few temples belonging to this period have survived. One of the most remarkable examples of Buddhist sacred architecture of the period was Mahabodhi temple near Bodhi Tree<sup>(36)</sup> in Gaya district Fig 3. Much of the history of this temple is known through inscriptions, graffiti and to a lesser extent through accounts of many pilgrims who visited throughout the centuries. The main brick–built shrine known as Mahabodhi temple appears to have originally erected in circa 2<sup>nd</sup> Century A. D., is encumbered with heavy renovations, the four corner towers being an arbitrary addition of circa 14<sup>th</sup> Century A . D.

The central tower of Mahabodhi temple is a 170 ft high pancha–ratha Śikhara of a straight–edged pyramidal design demarcated into 7 storeys by bhumi āmalakas and embellished with bold chaitya–windows and niches framed by pilasters.

According to Hsüan–tsang “to the east of the Bodhi Tree was a temple above 160 feet high, and with a front breadth at the base of about twenty paces. This temple was made of bricks and coated with lime, it had tiers of niches with gold images; its four walls were adorned with exquisite carvings of pearl strings and genii; on the roof was a gilt copper āmalaka. Connected with the east side of the temple were three lofty halls one behind the other; the wood work of these halls was adorned with gold and silver carvings and studded with precious stones of various colours; and an open passage through them communicated with the inner chamber”. Such was the architectural layout of this great temple as it existed in 637 A. D.

On the left and right hand sides of the outer door of these halls were images of Avalokiteśvara and Maitreya respectively, each made of silver and over 10 feet height. Within the temple was an image of Buddha in bhūsparśamudrā sitting under Bodhi Tree.<sup>(37)</sup>

During the long reign of Pāla kings of Bengal, the Mahabodhi temple received lavish patronage, and most of the images and stūpas that can still be seen belong to the Pāla period. During this period a third sandstone floor was laid, the

inner throne was refaced and tower was rebuilt and replastered. It seems most probable that the models of the temple were made no earlier than Pāla period. The most elaborate of these depicts a temple with a tall straight sided tower surmounted by a large stūpa and surrounded with four smaller tower of similar design. A large rectangular doorway provides entrance to the second storey.

During 12<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. Bodhgaya and nearby regions were invaded by Muslim armies, during the period Mahabodhi temple fell into despair and was largely abandoned. In 1880's the British Govt. of India began to restore this temple.

Another Buddhist temple called the temple of Tārā lies in the courtyard of Mahabodhi temple. Though this temple stands on much higher level than the great temple, resembles it in all the essential details; but the Śikhara, though built of bricks, slightly slopes inwards and is decorated exclusively with the chaitya window ornaments executed in brick. It can be shown distinctly by comparison with the central Indian specimens of temple architecture that the exclusive use of chaitya windows to cover the faces of the Śikhara belongs to the late medieval period.<sup>(38)</sup> Such are the great temples at Makla in

Indore state,<sup>(39)</sup> at Chandrehe in Rewa state,<sup>(40)</sup> and at Nemawar in Indore state.<sup>(41)</sup>

Even Nālandā had a planned layout with an almost symmetrical row of monasteries facing a row of temples, with wide spaces in between. “Its temples were made brilliant on account of the network of the rays of the various jewels set in them and were the pleasant abode of the learned and the virtuous *samgha* and resembled sumeru, the charming residence of the noble *Vidyādharas*”.<sup>(42)</sup> These temples were temple 3, temple 12–14; all the temples were solid rectangular structures of two tiers, the sanctum being placed on the upper tier which was approached by a grand flight of steps. The facades of both the tiers were plastered and embellished with elegant pilasters and niches containing images. Chaitya 12 is the biggest temple having a 170”x 194” plan dated between 6<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. while the chaityas 13–14 both date between 6<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. Temple 3 was more than 31 m high and consisted of seven successive accumulations. It was originally a small stūpa (phase I–III) it was later converted to a temple due to the ascendancy of the cult of images and temples over the worship of relics and stūpas. This new chaitya (phase IV–VII) has been dated between 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Centuries CE.<sup>(43)</sup> There is lot

of similarities between these temples and Mahabodhi temple which has already been observed by scholars and also by Hsüan–tsang during his stay at Nālandā.

“To the North of this was large temple (chaitya 12) above 300’ high built by king Baladitya. In its size and ornamentation and in its image of the Buddha this temple resembled the one at the Bodhi tree (Maha Bodhi Temple)’

Some Buddhist temples have also been found in Orrisa, which was a great centre of Buddhism during the period under review. Ratnagiri has yielded an 11<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. temple of Mahākāla in typical Orrisan style. The Mahākāla temple, now transformed into the Mahakali temple, consists of a *duel* and a *Jagamohana* with the upper portions of latter missing and replaced by a modern thatched roof within the sanctum is a two–armed bust of Mahākāla, worshipped as Mahakali, while within the *Jagamohana* are small Buddhist images carved on the shaft of pillars placed at the four corners. Included among the deities in the shallow niches of these pillars are images of Buddha, Tārā, Vajrasattva and Arya–Sarasvati. Near the door is also a *mithuna* image. The temple can be dated to 11<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.<sup>(44)</sup>

Another temple of Mahākāla has been discovered from Udaygiri, which has been converted to Śaiva temple. The figures of Gaṅgā and Yamunā originally carved in doorjamb of the Buddhist temple are seen in the present shrine. The goddess Gaṅgā from Udaygiri, which is now preserved in Patna Museum, is a remarkable specimen of fine art.<sup>45</sup> According to N. K. Sahu Buddhist temples of Ratnagiri, Lalitagiri and Udayagiri near Jajapur were, to all probability plain and simple in design, excepting their highly ornamental doorways. On the large niches were fixed superb images of Mahāyānic Gods and Godeesses in the art of which the Buddhists undoubtedly excelled.<sup>46</sup>

The remains of Paharpur in Bengal consist of a vast square court, nearly a thousand feet on a side, surrounded by an enclosing peristyle consisting of more than one hundred and seventy five individual cells. In the centre is a shrine, through which the Pāla-sen school of art can be viewed whose style is 'Sarbotobhara type.' In elevation this sanctuary consisted of a pyramid of three superimposed terraces and at the summit a square cella with projecting porticoes on all four sides. The shrine can be described as *prasada* or *meru* type of temple, in

which the diminishing terraces magically symbolize the steps and peak of the world mountain. The decoration consisted of multiple terra-cotta relief plaques attached to the brick facades as in the Gupta temple of Bhitargaon. Since there is no mention of this monument by Hsüan-tsang it may be dated to late 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. The indications are that it was originally a Brahmanic installation which at some later period was taken over by Buddhist.

A flourishing centre of Buddhism in south India during the period under review was Nagapattinam, near Madras on east coast. There existed here in the medieval period a colony of the Malaya Buddhists, who patronized by the cholas erected here two temples; one was Rajarajaperumpalli and other was Rajendracholaperumpali. The Pallama king Narsimhavarman also built a temple here.

Though most of the Buddhist temples belonging to this period have been destroyed, but a number of miniature temples mostly Buddhists still exist in Eastern India. These temples are mostly the copies of temple of Bodh Gaya. General Cunningham and Mr. Beglar rescued numerous miniature temples during their excavations at that place in

1890.<sup>47</sup> A beautiful little miniature temple was discovered in district of Dinajpur. This specimen is characterized by sloping corners of the Śikharas, the use of chaitya–windows on each façade and an *āmalaka*, disproportionately large for the height of the temple. In addition to these features there was use of looped–up garlands with tassels and *Kīrtimukhas* in the interspaces.

Each façade of these beautiful temples bears a niche flanked by tapering pilasters, which support a turfoil arch and each of these niches arch and each of these niches contains a figure Buddha.

In Gadag Taluk, Dharwad district, at Dambal, there was a Buddhist centre as late as 12<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. According to an inscription of 1095 A. D., a temple of the Buddhist deity Tārā and a Buddhist *vihara* were built by 16 merchants during the reign of Lakshmidēvi, queen of Vikramaditya VI. Another temple of Tārā, built at Dambal was by Sethi Sangarmaya of Lokkigundi. Karnataka was indeed the place where the worship of Tārā gained ground.

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These surviving examples of Buddhist Architecture clearly indicate that Buddhist art had not died out totally even in its heyday.

**Painting:** Literary references alone would prove that painting was very highly developed art in ancient India. Palaces and the homes of the rich were adorned with beautiful murals and smaller paintings were made on prepared boards. Not only were there professional artists but also many men and women of the educated classes could ably handle a brush.<sup>(48)</sup>

Unfortunately very few paintings belonging to the period under review has been found. As it was period of emergence of Tāntrika Buddhism growth of *dhāranīs* and *mantras*, popularity of spells and charms, cult of Avalokita and Tārā, worship of female deities. More concentration was laid on iconography as compared to other fields of art such as painting and architecture.

The history of Buddhist art at Ajantā covers more than seven hundred years, some pieces of Ajantā paintings are assignable to 7<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. These are the wall painting in

cave I depicting the attack of Māra on Buddha; Māras attack and temptation in cave XXVI; the Mahāparinirvāna scene on stone in same cave; the façade of the chaitya hall in cave XIX; and the chaitya hall in cave XXVI.<sup>(49)</sup>

The miniature paintings of the Pāla period are the earliest examples of miniature painting in India that existed in the form of illustrations to the religious texts on Buddhism. The earlier examples of wall paintings are well known from Ajantā and Ellora in India, but miniature paintings, an entirely new technique, is first seen in Bengal during the Pāla period. The Buddhist monasteries of Nālandā, Odantapuri, Vikramsila, and Somapura were great centre of learning.

A large number of manuscripts on palm leaf relating to Buddhist themes were written and illustrated with the images of Buddhist deities. The surviving examples mostly belong to Vajrayāna school of Buddhism and represent gods and goddesses of the cults such as Tārā, Lokanatha, Cuṇḍā, Mahākāla Avalokiteśvara, Amitābha, Maitreya, Vajrapāṇi etc. A few of them also depict stories from life of Buddha. As these paintings reveal an already developed form and technique, they

appear to have been introduced by Buddhist monks moving from place to place.<sup>(50)</sup>

In these paintings first of all writing was done on Tala Patras and little space was left in middle for the painting. Then these manuscripts were sent to the painters who used to paint them beautifully but no artist has ever written his name anywhere on them which is specialty of these paintings and resembles Ajantā paintings. Some cloth paintings of Pāla-school has also been found, Pālas generally painted *Sava chashma* (one and quarter eyes) faces, in which nose is too long, which has gone across the other cheek. Eyes are closed; sometimes two-eyed front poses are also painted. The paintings have been finished in black lines which are not smooth as if these lines have been drawn with some nib like thing. In the paintings the heads are flat because of which there is no life in the paintings. Colours like red, blue, pink, indigo and reddish grey were used.<sup>(51)</sup> A fine example of typical Buddhist Palm-leaf manuscript illustrated in Pāla style exists in Bodleion Library, Oxford, England. It is a manuscript of *Astasahasrika Prajnaparanita* or the perfection of wisdom written in eight thousand lines. It was executed at the monastery of Nālandā, in the fifteenth year of Pāla king Rampāla, in last quarter of

11<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. The manuscript has illustration of six pages and also on due insides of both wooden covers.

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## **CHAPTER - IV**

### **SCULPTURE**

#### **Evolution of the Buddhist Icon**

Early Buddhists followed one Indian Anionic tradition which avoids direct representation of Human figure. In the Hinayana Buddhism there was no systematic pantheon. The early Buddhist texts sometimes refer to thirty-three Gods of Brahmanical religion and some other deities. It is said that these deities reside in the Trāyatrimśa heaven<sup>(1)</sup>. But the Buddha did not encourage image worship. Therefore in early Buddhism neither the Buddha nor any other deity was worshipped in the form of images. Stūpas and other symbols of Buddha were paid respect.

The Buddhist universe is represented by a Stūpa and Stūpas received worship from the Buddhists from the life time of Buddha to the present day. Around 1<sup>st</sup> Century A. D. an Iconic period was started lasting to this day which represents Buddha in human form. Buddha was represented by different symbols pertaining to his life that is Mahabhiniskrana, Sambodhi, Mahaparinirvana etc. For several centuries after the Mahaparinirvana of Buddha, we never meet with any representation of the Great Master himself. Indians were not the first one to carve out a statue of Lord Buddha, one of the greatest celebrities of India. In Mahāyāna we have seen Buddha was assigned a subordinate position among the three Jewels, time obliterated almost everything of his solemn personality, and Graceo-Buddhists carved out his first statue in Gāndhāra<sup>(2)</sup>. Buddha was the chief object of representation in this art. Besides Buddha's image there were images of Jambhāla, Matreya, Harītī, The Indian Madonna and her concert, and other Bodhisattavas images<sup>(3)</sup> in Gāndhāra Art, besides numerous other things.

In the Gāndhāra school of Art we find a large number of Buddhist image. Besides, a large number of deities are described in Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa (2<sup>nd</sup> Century A. D.); also in

Prajñāparamitā we find elaborate worship of Buddha with diverse Paraphernalia<sup>(4)</sup>.

This art was carried over to Mathura where again Gāndhāra art coming in contact with local art took the name of Mathura school of sculpture<sup>(5)</sup>. Next to Mathura came the Sarnath school which covers a period from the time of Asoka down to the reign of Pālas<sup>(6)</sup>. It is here that we meet the representations of the varied and extensive pantheon of Vajrayāna Buddhists. With the introduction of Mahāyāna a large number of deities were conceived and later on its more advanced form of Tantrayan these deities became surprisingly large with deities of every description. Virtually, “there was an epidemic of defiction in which every philosophical dogma, ritualistic literature, abstract ideas human qualities , even desires such as sleeping, yawning and sneezing were given a deity form<sup>(7)</sup>”.

Further downwards the Monastries of Odantpuri, Nālandā and Vikramaśilā must have developed the latest form of Vajrayāna before Buddhism was finally wiped out at the advent of Muhammadan invader Bakhtiyar Khilji and his warlike cavalry, who targeted the shaven heads of the innocent

Buddhists priests mistaking them for soldiers<sup>(8)</sup>. Most of the Vajrayāna Buddhist sculptures have been found from Bengal School of sculpture. Suffice is to say, that the followers of Vajrayan, in order to make sure of their existence, converted a good many of the natives and carved out innumerable images of gods both in stone and in wood, so much so that a student of iconography is overwhelmed at their wealth and variety.

The Guhyasamāja, probably for the first time, describes the five Dhyāni Buddhas, namely Vairocaṇa, Akṣobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitābha and Amoghasiddhi. These five Dhyāni Buddhas represented the five Skandhas or element of which the world is composed<sup>(9)</sup>.

In the Sukhāvativyūha<sup>(10)</sup>, which was translated into Chinese between A. D. 148 and 170, Amitabha Buddha appears for the first time as the presiding deity of Sukhavati heaven, where he brought Avalokiteśvara, the personification of compassion into existence. The smaller recension of Sukhavati–Vyūha, which was translated into Chinese between A. D. 384 – 417, mentions two more names, of Akṣobhya as a Tathāgata and Mañjuśrī as a Bodhisattava. It may be noted however, that Fa-Hien (394–414 A.D) mentions the names of Manjuśrī,

Avalokiteśvara and Maitreya; Hsüan–tsang (A. D. 629–625) mentions the name of Avalokiteśvara, Harītī, Kṣitigarbha, Maitreya, Mañjuśrī, Padampāṇi, Vaisravana, Sākya–Buddha, Sakya Bodhisattva and Yama. Yuan–Chwang refers to Avalokiteśvara, Harītī, Kṣitigarbha, Maitreya, Mañjuśrī, Padampāṇi, Vaisravana, Sākya–Buddha, Sākya–Bodhisattva and Yama together with several defied saints<sup>(11)</sup>. I–Tsing (A. D. 671 to 695) mentions the names of Avalokiteśvara, Amitayus, Harītī, the Caturmaharajikas, Maitreya etc. Sāntideva (A. D. 695–730), in his Siksasamuccaya, mentions the names of Akṣobhya as a Tathāgata, Gaganaganja as a Bodhisattava Simhavikridita, as a Tathāgata, Cuṇḍā, Trisamayārāja, Māricī, Simhānanda, Mañjuḥṣa and many others<sup>(12)</sup>.

Thus on the basis of art, history and literary evidences it is believed that the Pantheon of Northern Buddhists came into prominence during 7<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.

## **Background of the Buddhist Sculpture**

Buddhist, who have originally in India wide contacts with the Brahmanical people, were greatly influenced by later

religious ideas, even though they did not formally believe in the Vedas, Brahmanical sacrifices and rituals and the existence of immortal divinities<sup>(13)</sup>. To them Buddha was the supreme and there was nobody above him. The Neo Buddhists who were but converts from the Brahmanical faith, ultimately proved to be a great force and their religious ideas and convictions could not altogether be ignored.

The Gupta art tradition was followed in later period also the art of Nālandā, Kurkihar, Sarnath, Orissa and other places during medieval period is based upon Gupta art idiom. The North Indian Buddhism of the medieval period (8<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.) is a peculiar synthesis of Mahāyāna ideals and tantric elements. The concept of Ādi-Buddha, the Dhyāni Buddhas, and the Divine Bodhisattvas as well as the concept of Shakti or the female energy figures most prominently in Buddhist Iconography of the period. One anachronism of Buddhist art in medieval period is the introduction of crowned Buddhas with jewellery. Though incompatible to the idea of the renunciation which Buddha followed and preached, such images were made probably to lay emphasis on concept of Buddha as Chakravartin, the supreme universal monarch. Though the Brahmanical gods were incorporated in Buddhist pantheon they

were not considered to be immortal as believed by Brahmanical people, but as impermanent and subject to death and they were denied the quality of providing the worshippers with salvation. Thus, the Brahmanical divinities like Indra, Brahma, Vishnu, Śiva, Varuna, Vayyu, Agni, Yama, Kubera, Kartikeya, Sūrya, Gaṇeśa, Lakṣmi, Saraswatī, etc. were ultimately incorporated in Buddhist sphere.

According to Benoytosh Bhattacharya, “The conception of Gods and Goddesses in the Puranic literature was so very attractive that the Buddhists in later times could not help incorporating the idea of God head in their religion; and when they actually did this they defied all important personalities of Buddhism, together with the defection of a large number of Buddhist ideas and philosophical concepts along with a few purely Hindu Gods”<sup>(14)</sup>.

The early medieval period was a period when Buddhism was strongly imbued with the ideas of Tāntricism. It had its due effect on the art of the period, consequent upon which large number images of Buddhist Gods and Goddesses have been found all over India, especially in large numbers in eastern parts of India with the development of Tantrayana and

Vajrayāna innumerable new Tantric Gods and Goddesses have been appeared in the Buddhist pantheon, which were unfound in the early Mahāyāna groups of Gods and Goddesses viz. Aparājitā, Trailokvijaya, Heruka, Prajñāparamitā, Ēkjaṭā and varieties of Tārā etc. M. A. Foucher in his work – ‘Etude sur l’ Iconographic Bouddhique de l’ Inde’ published in two parts has divided these Buddhist sculptures into five different parts :-

- (i) The Buddhas
- (ii) Bodhisattvas
- (iii) Minor Male Deities
- (iii) The Tārās
- (iv) Minor female deities

Many examples of Buddhist sculptural belonging to the period under study have been found in India. Especially eastern India and southern India were a hoard of sculptures of this period. These examples can be studied according to the following list for the sake of convenience. (1) The Buddhas (2) Bodhisattvas (3) Female Deities. It has to be admitted that this classifications does have certain overlappings. But this



should be appreciated as permissible keeping in mind the element of interfusion in the concept of divinities of tantric Buddhist pantheon. Bengal & Bihar has yielded a large number of images of Buddhist deities – mostly Tantrik Buddhist Gods and Goddesses. These include Vajrasattva, Jambhāla, Avalokiteśvara, Mañjuśrī, Tārā, Prajñāparamitā, and some forms of fierce Goddesses. Most of them are products of Pāla and Sena periods<sup>(15)</sup>.

The Pāla rulers were professed Buddhists. They developed a luxurious and pompous taste; their aesthetic sense seems to have appreciated “over sensitiveness of form and gesture a sensuous worldliness and meticulous details of ornamentation.”

**The Buddhas** : Early medieval period was also the period when Buddhism was strongly imbued with ideas of Tāntricism. It had its due effect on sculpture of the period. Buddha images were still numerous even after the Tantrikism but the mass production and carelessness had left images without spiritual calm as characterized in early Buddhist image. However, there were exceptions existing during this period also for example, the Buddha image from Kurkihar, belonging to 9<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.

for instance now present in Lucknow museum, which was a gift from one Vinitabuddhi of Benaras, “is a great work of merit, and is marked by the simplicity and severity of line, the background on the contrary, displays a profusion of decorative detail”<sup>(16)</sup>.

Numerous images of Buddha, found from different places of Bengal and Bihar, besides representing the main figure also depict principal events and miracles connected with masters life (1) The Illumination (2) The first sermon at Benaras (3) The descent from the heaven of the *Trāyastriṃśas* (4) The submission of Nalagiri or Ratnapāla (5) The presentation of honey at Vaisali and (6) The miracle of Srāvastī (7) Mahapariniravan. Buddha with bowl of honey comes from Bihar presently in Indian Museum Fig 4. The scene of Mahapariniravan has been found from Dinajpur, West Bengal and is presently installed in Indian Museum Fig 5. It belongs to 10<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. Since Buddha had abandoned luxury life his images are depicted as a monk who differentiates him from Boddhisattva images which are fully lavished with numerous ornaments. But in later times even Buddha images were fully decorated one such example has been recently excavated from Antichak and presently housed in Patna museum. It shows the

God wearing an elaborate crown over his head. He is seated in *Bhūmisparśamudrā* on a double petalled full bloom lotus, with the figures of two lions with raised paws and devotees with their palms folded in *añjali mudrā* carved on the pedestal. Besides the crown, the God also puts on a beautiful necklace over his chest. This image belongs to 11<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. Another image of crowned Buddha in *Bhūmisparśamudrā* with Acala (or Mara) on a pedestal has been found from Ratnagiri and it belongs to 11<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. Two images of crowned Buddha hails from Bihar and Sarnath Fig 6 Acc. No. 3755/A25146 & Fig 6A Acc. No. 526/A25127 respectively are currently installed in Indian Museum, Calcutta.

The Buddha carved in the round *Bhūmisparśamudrā* and installed in front of Mahadevasthana of village Surajpur situated to North East of Nālandā is also an admirable masterpiece. It is unique for its special feature i.e. on the top of the *Uṣṇīsa*, a flame like triangular object is carved which is unfound in any other image available within the locality. Besides the flame, the facial expression of the image shows that the Pāla artists were acquainted with the image of South–East Asian countries which is also testified from the Nālandā copper plate of Devapāla granting five villages to Balaputradeva of Java<sup>(17)</sup>.

According to Dr. Coomarswamy: “throughout the period this development of later Mahāyāna School exerted a powerful Iconographic and to some extent a stylistic influence upon the art of Nepal, Burma, Sumatra and Java beyond the seas<sup>(18)</sup>. Such images showing Buddha wearing a crown are not only confined to Bihar and Bengal but have also been discovered at Tewar<sup>(19)</sup> and Tigowa<sup>(20)</sup> in Central Provinces. A crowned and seated Buddha has also been recovered from a door lintel from Uttar Pradesh which belongs to 8<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. and is presently installed in Indian Museum Calcutta Acc. No. UR54/A24180 Fig 6B

Another Buddha image probably ‘Sakyasimha Buddha’ has been discovered from ‘Jayanna Konda Cholapuram’ in Tiruchirapalli district. It is datable to 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.<sup>(21)</sup> In this image Buddha is shown in *Padmasana*. The Iconographical details such as the curls of hair, the flame over the cranium, the civaras, the trivali and depression on the neck are prominently seen. It is well modeled and endowed with great spiritual potentialities. The subtle smiling face and the powerful and broad shoulders suggest the influence of foreign tradition. The important feature of the figure is the depiction of oval shaped halo behind the head.

Along the margin of the halo are carved three pronged flaming buds and the top of an umbrella with the branches of the Bodhi tree which probably suggests the status of Sakyasimha Buddha.

**Dhyāni Buddhas** : The Buddhists are more scientific than the Hindus in matter of determining the hierarchy of gods in their pantheon. They believe that all Gods emanated from one or the other Dhyāni Buddhas, popularly known as divine Buddhas, and the images of such emanations invariably bear the effigies of their sires on their head crown or on the aureole behind them<sup>(22)</sup>. The Dhyāni Buddhas are peculiar kind of Buddhas who are required to pass through the stage of a Bodhisattva<sup>(23)</sup>. According to the system of Ādi-Buddha, the group of Dhyāni-Buddha was evolved by the Ādi-Buddha. Each of the Dhyāni – Buddhas received, ‘together with his existence, the virtues of that Jñāna (wisdom), and dhyāna (meditation) to the exertion of which by Ādi – Buddha he owed his existence and by similar exertion of both he produced a Dhyāni Bodhisttva<sup>(24)</sup>.

According to Benoytosh Bhattacharya there are five Dhyāni Buddhas to which sixth has been added. The order in which Nepalese Buddhist worship them is as follows.

1. Vairocaṇa

2. Akṣobhya
3. Ratnasambhava
4. Amitābha
5. Amoghasiddhi
6. Vajrasattva

All the five Dhyāni Buddhas belonging to Pāla School 11<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. have been carved on a niche top and is installed in Indian Museum Calcutta Acc. No. UR55/A24199 Fig 7. Each Dhyāni Buddha has his own colour, mount (Vāhana), śakti and mystic pose of the hands, taken from the mudrā invented by Gandhāra and Indian schools to symbolize certain events in life of Gautama Buddha, whose ethereal form is Amitābha.

**Amitābha:** The most ancient in the group of five Dhyāni Buddhas is 'Amitābha', who is conceived as residing in Sukhāvatī heaven in peaceful meditation. He is generally represented seated with legs closely locked. His hands lie on his lap in dhyānamudrā and hold the pātra (begging bowl). He has

usnāsa and ūrnā and long lobbed ears. His colour is red and his vāhana is a pair of peacocks.

A sculpture of 'Amitābha' has been found in dhyāna mudrā from Mukhalingam in Andhra Pradesh. It is made of red sand stone. The God is shown seated on a lotus pedestal dhyāna mudrā. Pair of makaras on either side of the figure at the shoulder level, flying figures holding fly whisks and a *prabhamandarala* is prominently depicted.

Survey in and around the village, 'Kollapattu' resulted in the discovery of an image of Buddha in dhyāna mudrā (Amitābha)<sup>(25)</sup>. It is a beautiful image carved in green granite stone. He is shown seated in Vjraparyaṅkāsa in dhyāna mudrā. A prominent halo behind the head and usnāsa showing a tongue of flames are the important features representing Buddha as Amitābha. Similar images with flaming usnāsa are reported from Kunthuru in Nellore district in Andhra Pradesh<sup>(26)</sup>, Elaiyur in Tamil Nadu<sup>(27)</sup>, and at Awkana, Veheragala and Gadaladiniya in Sri Lanka<sup>(28)</sup>. A dhyāna for his worship is also given in Advayavajrasaṅgraha.<sup>(29)</sup>

An image of Buddha (Amitābha) has been unearthed from Tiruvati in Tamil Nadu. In this image Buddha is shown seated in *padmāsana* on a pedestal in *dhyāna mudrā*. The *uṣṇīsa* is well worked out like a flame which rises directly from the cranium itself. The curls of hair, the civaras, the torso and facial expressions indicate of sublime tranquility. The elongated ear lobes, smiling face, the lips, oval face, snubbed nose suggest the influence of south Asian school of Art<sup>(30)</sup>.

Donaldson has reproduced two images of this god, one from Udayagiri while the other from Lalitagiri Orissa. The image of Tathāgata Amitābha was found carved on a *stūpa* excavated in Udaygiri in Orissa. It is datable to 8<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. It shows all the general features of Amitābha such as the *dhyāna mudrā*, *uṣṇīsa*, *ūrṇā* and long lobbed ears Fig 8.

In other image found at Ratnagiri Amitābha is represented above the Buddha in *bhumisparaśāmudrā* along with Vajrapāni and Ratnasambhava, this image belongs to 9<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. Another image from Lalitagiri shows the Buddha flanked by five lunar discs. This image belongs to late 9<sup>th</sup> early 10<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. Fig 8A. The image of Amitābha



found from Udayagiri on a stūpa it is flanked by Lokeśvara and Vajrapāni, and belongs to mid 8<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.

Emanations of Amitābha are Mahākāla, Saptaśatika, Hayagrīva, among the Goddess we find Kurukulla, Bhṛkuṭi and Mahāsītavatī.

**Akṣobhya** : The Dhyāni Buddha ‘Akṣobhya’ is represented seated, like all the Dhyāni – Buddhas, with legs locked and both feet apparent. There are often wheels marked on the soles of his feet, or a protuberance like a button, resembling the ūrnā on the forehead. His left hand lies on the lap in ‘meditation’ mudrā. His right hand touches the earth with the tips of the outstretched fingers, the palm turned inward. This is called bhūmiśparasā or witness mudrā and is the same pose of hands that the Gāndhāra school gave to Gautama Buddha, when representing his invoking the earth to bear witness that he had resisted the temptation of the god of Evil Māra.

An image of this Dhyāni Buddha was found in the Karukkilamarnda Amman temple in Kanchipuram. The image (3’- 9’’) is shown seated in padmāsana on an ornamental pītha in bhūmiśparaśāmudrā. The iconographical details closely resemble the images of Chola type. The halo inside is

beautifully delineated with tassels like a garland jetting out from the wide open mouths of makaras and flames on the outside margin. On stylistic grounds, it is dated to 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. <sup>(31)</sup>

Another image of Akṣobhya has been discovered from Nagapattanam. In this image God is shown seated on a lotus pedestal in bhūmisparaśāmudrā. The lotus pedestal is inscribed with a label inscription which reads as ‘Udaiyar’ and refers to Buddha himself. The mark on the left palm is shown with full blown lotus within a diamond shaped enclosure where as the ūrnā is shown as a circle. The face is round and the long ears are bored. The flaming usnīsa has a ruby in front. <sup>(32)</sup> The iconographical features are more akin to Buddha figures reported from Kanchipuram. <sup>(33)</sup> A dhyāna for his worship is mentioned in Niṣpannayōgāvali. <sup>(34)</sup>

The emanations of Akṣobhya are Chandaroshana, Heruka, Buddhakapāla, Vajradāka, Samvara, Hayagrīva, Yamāri and Jambhāla. Numerous examples of ‘Jambhāla’ have been discovered in Eastern India and the oldest specimen was discovered at Kurkihara in Gaya District. Jambhāla is undoubtedly a Buddhist counterpart of Kuber Vaiśavana, like

Kubera he is also connected with wealth and treasure, his parental Dhyāni Buddha is either Ratnasambhava or Akṣobhya. Jambhāla emanating from Ratanasambhava carries the mongoose in his right hand and citron in the left. He is represented seated in Lalitāsana with one of his legs on an upturned coin – jar by the side of are placed seven more jars. Vasudharā appears as consort of Jambhāla. The Dhyāna in Sādhanmālā describes him as follows: <sup>(35)</sup>

*Jambhālaṃ trimukhaṃ ṣadbhujam Akṣobhyajaṭāmukuṭinaṃ  
dakṣiṇatribhujah mātulungā – ṅkusa – banadharaṃ -  
prathamvāmvāmbhujaikena vama – pārśvasthita –  
prajāliṅgitaṃ – pāravāmbhujabhyām sapāśanakulī –  
kārmukadharaṃ ātmanāmnīṣpādya.*

A large number of images of Jambhāla with many of the above mentioned iconographic features have been found in excavations. The representation of Jambhāla is to be seen, not only in stone and bronze but also in painting<sup>(36)</sup> and teracotta. He is represented in yab–yum form in golden yellow complexion in paintings on this aspect he has three face and six arm. An image of Jambhāla has been found from Nagappattanam in Tamil Nadu, where he is shown seated in

Lalitāsana on a circular lotus pedestal (10.5 cm height). His right hand holds a citron while the left hand carries a mongoose. The depiction of head gear, Makarakuṇḍalas, necklaces, waist girdle around the pot belly, three stranded *yajñōpavīta*, armlets, anklets, siraścakra undergarment etc. suggest the influence of Gāndhāra School of Art. On stylistic grounds, it is dated to early Chola times.<sup>(37)</sup> An early image of Jambhāla has also been reported from Amrāvati in Andhra Pradesh<sup>(38)</sup> and stone sculptures from Orissa and Sarnath.<sup>(39)</sup>

Another image of Jambhāla has been installed in a temple in village Surajpur. It is 4” in height. The god is shown seated on a lotus pedestal resting on the back of a lion. He is in Bhadrasana pose placing his legs on two halves turned well decorated kalas full of jewels showering gems. The figure is embellished with usual ornaments. He is shown wearing *Karaṅḍamukuta* and three numbers of necklaces, one long garland of champak flowers reaching upto his knee. Besides, he is wearing a broad chain on neck. He is holding a lemon in his right hand and his left hand holds a money bag having the face of a mongoose that is constantly vomiting jewels. The Buddhist creed is on the prabhavali. It is datable to 10<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. A bronze image of Jambhāla (7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. ) has been

found from Nālandā and installed in Indian Museum Calcutta, Acc. No. NS9425/A22897 Fig 9.

In the collection of Nālandā Museum a few miniature Jambhālas are found of which one is shown having four arms holding respectively sword, lemon, and lily and money bag (ACC No. 80018). In one more image Jambhāla is shown holding a cup like object in his lower right hand and the upper right is damaged. In his upper left he holds a trident and a laddu or a lemon in the lower left. In few images Jambhāla is also shown holding weapons. Jambhāla in another form shows two hands holding citron and mongoose in *ālīdha* attitude and tramples, upon to semi-divine beings viz, Sákhamuṇḍa and Padmammunda.<sup>(40)</sup> Images of this form are reported from Gāndhāra, Saranath, Mathura, Magadha, Bengal, Nepal, Tibet and China. His terrible form known as Ucchuṣma – Jambhāla is reported from Saranath only.<sup>(41)</sup>

Another image of Jambhāla (11–53 Nālandā 10803, 401 156, stone) represents the god in seated position. The back slab is semi-circular from the top and beaded halo meets the lintel of the throne. On the ends of the lintel there is a triangular ornament as seen in 8<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. sculptures of eastern

India. The lintel has āmalaka-shaped knobs forming its ends as usual. Vyālaks flank the throne but the elephants on which they usually stand are absent. Couchant lions support the throne. A cloth-cover is seen on either side of the foot pedestal of the god. The usual features like pot belly and fan shaped projections of the crown are also present. A headless image of Jambhāla with pot belly has been found from Kurkihar, Bihar and is installed in Indian Museum Calcutta Acc. No. KR1/A24139 Fig 9A.

Jambhāla image along with the image of Avalokiteśvara and Vajrapāṇi was found in solampur: Śānteśvari thakurānī compound in Orrisa. In this particular image Jambhāla is shown in sitting pose in the middle of the other two gods on a pedestal, the usual iconographic features of this god can be easily seen. It belongs to 10<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. Its iconographical details have been given by Donaldson Fig 9B. Jambhāla along with Harītī under tree is in Indian Museum Calcutta Acc. No. 4218 Fig 9C.

‘Heruka’ is also an emanation of Akṣobhya; he is one of the most popular deities of the Buddhist pantheon. His name is generally associated with his ‘Śaktis’, who embrace the god and remain in yab-yum. A regular tantra, Heruka tantra is

devoted to his worship. Many of his forms are described in the *sadhanā mālā* in its numerous *Sādhanās*. In the *Sādhanmālā* the worship of Heruka is said to confer Buddhahood on his worshippers and he is said to destroy all the maras of the world.<sup>(42)</sup> One lifesize image of Heruka is found at Subhapur village in the district of Tripura and now is in the collection of Dacca Museum.

The earliest image of Heruka from south India has been reported from Amrāvati. The sculpture is made of lime stone, measuring (10” x 7” x 3”). In this sculpture god is shown in *ardhaparyāṅka* pose keeping the sole of right foot touching the ankle of the left leg and shown with two hands. He holds the *vajra* in his right hand and the *kapāla* in his left. The *Khaṭvāṅgam* hangs down from his left shoulder. He wears *kuṇḍalas*, necklace of bones sewed by guts, *yajñōpavīta*, *prakōsthavalayas* and *mēkhala*. The lower garment that extends upto the ankles is secured by *mēhkala*. His hair rises up and forms into a crown.

One image of Heruka has been found from Nālandā Museum. This image was badly damaged and some reconstruction has been done in this sculpture. God is shown in

dancing attitude, with human skin and *mundamālā*. The right leg is completely lost and left legs lower portion is missing. Unlike the Heruka of Dacca Museum, the God is shown standing on the prostrate body of naked male instead of lotus. On both sides of the main figure, six miniature dancing females, three on each side are shown one above the other. Each female is holding a *Khaṭvāṅga* in the left and a vajra in the right hand. Heruka is decked with usual ornaments like armlets, ear – rings, girdle, necklaces, besides, *mundamālā*. The image of Dhyāni Buddha Akṣobhya from which it is emanated appears on the blazing tiara. His girdle with hanging ghaṇṭa at one end is remarkable. God is having third eye on the forehead. The projected prabhāvalī and inscriptional evidence on it and the style of art are datable to 11<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. In Hēvajra Sādhana tantra, he is described as: <sup>(43)</sup>

*Ēkamukhaṃ Jñānavisuddhaṃ dvibhujam  
Śunyatakaruna visuddhañ, dakṣinatho vajramabhēdya jñana  
pratipādakam, vamēkapāla khaṭvaṅgaṃ cha khatvāṅgam  
prajñāshva bhavarūpam kapālam bōdhichitta pradipādakam.*

Another image of Heruka in bronze 5 inches high has been found in Orrisa State Museum of Bhubaneswar. (Acc



No. 296). This image also bears all the usual iconographical features. This sculpture belongs to 10<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. Fig 10.

‘Yamāntaka’ or Yamari is the most complicated and terrible of all the Northern Buddhist divinities. The simplest form of yamāntaka has one head (a bull) and two arms. He has a crown of skulls and a third eye. In his right hand is a chopper and in his left a skull cup (kapāla). He is usually represented with his Śakti.

One example of this god has been found in Bodhgaya Bihar. The image stands in a tiny shed, sunk into the ground and cemented into the walls. The backdrop is severely damaged, the proper left side and top completely broken off. Yamāntaka is of vāmana – yaksha type. He is *lambodara*, his belly hanging over the belt of his *dhoti*. Around his lips is a lion skin, its maned head on Yamāntaka’s left thigh, and two of its limbs are knotted together between his legs. He wears a full complement of jewelery at the wrists, upper arms, neck and ankles instead of upavita he wears a long garland in which heads alternate with medallions. Yamāntaka’s head is large and his central face full. Two faces are on the proper right of the

central face and three on proper left, though the third is almost broken off. None of the face has third eye. The god bears a crown above the main head is image of Akṣobhya. He is six armed, he holds sword above his head with the upper proper right hand. He also holds a vajra and danda – club. The tip of the vajra hangs down along his belly Fig 11. This figure has been published by Rob Linrothe in his book *Ruthless Compassion*. It belongs to 10<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.

Another image of Yamāntaka was found in Nālandā in 1920–21 at the monastery site.<sup>(44)</sup> The inscription on the back of the sculpture places it to 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. Iconographically it is much in common to Bodhgaya Yamāntaka. Even this image has six arms, legs and heads. The *pratyāliḍha* posture is the same as Akṣobhya in the headdress. The sword is held overhead it is in tarjanīmudrā at the chest and holds vajra in the middle right hand. It wears a garland of skulls. The beard is longer at the chin. The snake ornaments are much prominent in his hair, around his upper arms, his neck, waist and ankles Fig 11A.

An Orrisan image of Yamāntaka was found in a small brick shed, along with an adorned Akṣobhya and on

Avalokiteśvara at Kuruma village, eight kilometers north – east of konark. The site was excavated in 1974 – 77 by P. K. Ray, B. K. Rath and B. B. Bari who discovered a small Buddhist Monastery here.<sup>(45)</sup> In this image only three heads are visible instead of six and only two legs trample on the buffalo. This image seems to have eight hands. Both the sword and danda is held in upper right hand, and a noose is held in one of the left hands. The vajra is held in the hand broken off from the body. The other left hands hold a head, a hatchet and a staff held against the body. The bottom of the staff rests on buffalo's neck and has a vajra finial above a skull. Even this belongs to 9<sup>th</sup>. – 10<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. Fig 11B.

‘Hayagrīva’, has several forms, but in only one he is said to bear the image of Amitābha on his crown. Another is said to bear that of Akṣobhya. He is three-headed and bears Amitābha or Akṣobhya, is terrific like Bhima<sup>(46)</sup> and crushed the wicked.<sup>(47)</sup> Hyagrīva-vidyā is well known.<sup>(48)</sup>

One image of Hayagrīva has been discovered from Ratnagiri (Orrisa) and belongs to 7<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. Fig 12. Here the god is four armed, he makes the *vandana mudrā* with upper right hand, holds a noose in the upper left, and makes the

*vinyahasta* gesture with the central pair of arms. He stands in an exaggerated *pratyaliḍha* with a dwarfish *lambodara* figure and bulging eyes. He is bearded, has moustaches and hair is styled into a bun. He stands directly in front of the stalk of a lotus. In this image Hayagrīva is with Avalokiteśvara. One fine example of Hayagrīva in metal was discovered in 1930 in the Kurkihar hoard.<sup>(49)</sup> It is 10 cms in height. A plethora of snakes ornaments the Kurkihar Hayagrīva. Serpents wind around wrists, his upper arms, ankles and neck, while other comprises his *upavita*. It has a rising moustache and rimming beard only few of Hayagrīva images has third eye and this image shows this feature Fig 12A. These images have been by Rob Linrothe in his book *Ruthless Compassion*.

Hayagrīva image has also been found in Nālandā museum, which belongs to 8<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. Here the god is seen as an attendant to twelve armed Avalokiteśvara, out of the four attendants on the platform. Hayagrīva is not only smaller than Bhṛkuṭi and Tārā, but he is even smaller in scale than his partner, Sūcimukha. Hayagrīva's lower toro is damaged but he seems to wears a dhoti, large earrings hang at his ears, and a bulky necklace circles his neck. His hair is relatively short, separated into a fat “*Guptesque*” curls that divide in the centre

and frame his face. The Nālandā Hayagrīva seems to be a mixture of fifth Century A. D. depictions of Śiva – Gana with visnu’s *ayudha – purusa*.

When Heruka is embraced by the Dakinī Vajravārahi in yab–yum, he is called Vajradāka and “Samvara” is one of the three varieties of Vajradāka. He is two–armed and one faced and bears the effigy of Akṣobhya on his Crown. He wears tiger skin, garland of skulls and is generally shown in Ālīdha attitude.

One image of ‘Samvara’ has been discovered from Ratnagiri and is presently installed in Patna Museum. It is datable to 11<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. The image has three faces and twelve hands. The necklace and girdle loops are executed with methodical precision. The main face is triangular in shape and the image wears necklaces, armlets and anklets. The image wears a crown on all the three heads. The image stands in ālīdhamudrā trampling on Bhairava and Kalaratri. He carries vajra and ghaṇṭa Fig 13.

Another image of ‘Samvara’ was discovered from Nālandā and is now preserved in Indian Museum Calcutta. In this sculpture the god and goddess are seated in

*vajraparyaṅkamudrā* in tight embrace. The god probably is eight armed but the sword and other attributes are not recognizable. His front hands around the body of the goddess exhibit *vajrahukāramudrā*. The goddess with a sow-face appears to be vajravārāhi or vajraghoṇā. It is believed that Samvara and vajravārāhi are a yab-yum form of Heruka. The sculpture is unique but its details are not clear owing to the un-finished or rough type of chiseling of the stone.<sup>(50)</sup>

Kuṇḍeśvara village situated in Balikuda police station area of old Cuttack district boundary in Orissa has also yielded one 'Samvara' image. It is seated in *lalita* pose on a lotus throne, placing his right foot on the back of a naked girl, who lies on her breast, but looks upward with enormous face, decked with nose ring and ear-ring. The left hand is damaged but in right he carries a skull up (Karoto) full of blood and his face is bloomed with a smile of contentment. Garland of skull hangs prominent on his neck, and almost touches the lotus throne, while the tiger skin is visible round his loins.

The goddesses who are emanations of Akṣobhya are Mahāchinatārā, Janguli, Ēkjaṭā, Pranaśavarī, Prajñāparamitā,

Vasudhara, and Dhavajāgrakeyūra. These goddesses have been discussed under the heading ‘**Female Dieties**’.

**Ratnasambhava:** ‘Ratnasambhava’ the third Dhyāni Buddha seems to have been the least popular of all the Dhyāni Buddha. His statues are extremely rare but one may come across him in paintings. The first documented mention of Ratnasambhava is found in Ārya Suvana–Prabhā–Sottamasutrendrāra Jamahāyana Sutra (Sutra of golden light.) and in the Gūhyasamājatantra (4<sup>th</sup> Century CE) and he subsequently appears in a number of Vajrayāna texts. The most elaborate account of him is to be found in the panchakara section of the Advyavajra sangraha. Only few deities emanate from this Dhyāni Buddha and this fact accounts for his late incorporation in Buddhist pantheon. He exhibits varada–mudrā and gift bestowing attitude. His vahana is pair of lions and crest is the jewel.

According to Donaldson the largest surviving example is the Ratnasambhava occupying the south niche of the stūpa excavated at Udayagiri. He is flanked by standing images of Samantbhadra on his right and Akṣagarba on his left, both of whom are associated with a jewel. A short inscription is incised on the top edge of his halo and *vidyādhara* is at each upper

corner of the back slab. A naga is seated on either side of the lotus stalk on the pedestal. The image can be dated to 8<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. Fig 14. This image has been produced by Donaldson in Fig 128 of his book *Iconography of The Buddhist Sculpture of Orissa*.

One more image of Ratnasambhava has been found from Ratnagiri,<sup>(51)</sup> it is a chlorite image where the god is seated on a viśvapadma with an ornate throne carved behind him. The back-rest of his throne is decorated with the horizontal mouldings supported at each side by a moulded post. The pointed halo has beaded border edged by flames and is surmounted by branches of bodhi tree. On either side of halo is vidyādhara. The pedestal is triratha in design. The outer rathas contain a lion and the centre one has bejewelled figure in anjāli facing a stand supporting a manuscript. This image can be assigned to 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.

The emanations of Ratnasambhava according to B. Bhattacharya are – Jambhāla, Ucchuṣma Jambhāla and among the goddess are – Mahāpratisarā and Vasudharā.

**Vairocaṇa:** ‘Dhyāni Buddha’ ‘Vairocaṇa’ comes first in the list of Dhyāni Buddhas, fairly a large number of deities emanate



from this Dhyāni Buddha. He is regarded as the oldest of the Dhyāni Buddhas. His colour is white and his two hands are held against the breast with the tips of the thumb and forefinger of each hand united. His vahana is a pair of dragons or gryphons<sup>(52)</sup> and his crest is the cakra or the discus.

An image of Vairocaṇa without ornamentation comes from Lalitagiri Fig15. There is a mantra inscribed on the back–slab, it reads “*namah samanta buddhānām A vīra Hūmkham*”. This mantra helps us to identify it as the image of Vairocaṇa. A bronze figure of Vairocaṇa Fig 15A comes from North East India and belongs to 11<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. The god is seated in dhyanasana on a double lotus base with a chakra flanked by two deer incised on the front, his hands in dharmachakramudrā, clad in thin dhoti with borders inlaid with copper, his peaceful eyes and lips and his necklace are inlaid with silver. He has a tightly knotted hair and pronounced *Uṣṇīsa* secured with a foliate tiara and ribbons billowing to either side.

His emanations are Mārīcī, Usnīsavijayā, Sitāpatrā, Aparājitā, Mahāsāhasrapramardanī, Vājrāvarahī, Āryavajravārāhī. These goddesses have been discussed under the heading ‘**Female Dieties**’

**Amoghasiddhi** : Dhyāni Buddha ‘Amoghasiddhi’ is regarded as another form of Amitābha and is later addition to the Buddhist pantheon. According to Alice Getty, Amoghasiddhi the fifth Dhyāni Buddha is believed to be unfailingly successful and to have the power of infallible magic. He is seated in admantive pose (legs closely locked with soles of feet apparent). The left hand lies in his lap, with the palm upwards, and may balance the double thunderbolt or hold a sword. The right hand is lifted in ‘Abhaya–mudrā’ a pose of hands indicating protection. All the fingers are extended upwards and palm outwards.<sup>(53)</sup>

Several examples of Amoghasiddhi have been found in Orrisa. One image at Lalitagiri Fig 16 shows the god sitting on ‘viśvapadma’ with his right hand resting on the knee. A throne–back is lightly carved behind his body. His eyes are downcast and the elongated oval halo framing his head is edged with a band of rope like scroll. A vidyādhara is at each upper corner of the back–slab. The pedestal is missing. This image is probably representing Amoghasiddhi and can be dated to 8<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.

There are also several examples at Ratnagiri which have been dislodged from small monolithic stūpas<sup>(54)</sup> including one crowned image of 9<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.<sup>(55)</sup> A small headless image has been found from Ayodhya Fig 16A. He is shown seated on viśvapadma and his back–slab is decorated with a throne–back ornamented with *Mali phula phadika* scrollwork consisting of half rosettes framed by triangles of beads. His right shoulder is bare and folds of his uttārāsanga spread over his left shoulder. The lower part of the pedestal is missing most likely the image was housed in a niche on north side of a small stūpa. The image can be dated to 10<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.<sup>(56)</sup> This image has been produced by Donaldson in Fig 109 of his book *Iconography of The Buddhist Sculpture of Orissa*.

The emanations of Amoghasiddhi are various forms of Tārā such as Khandiravanī–Tārā, Vasya–Tārā, Sadbhujā Sita–Tārā, Dhanada–Tārā etc. and will be discussed under the heading ‘Female Deities’.

**Vajrasattva :** ‘Vajrasattva’ the sixth Dhyāni Buddha according to Benoytosh Bhattacharya is regarded as priest of the Dhyāni Buddhas by Vajrācāryyas of Nepal. His conception as the sixth

Tathāgata who, as the priest of the five Tathāgatas, according to Saraswati, “came to be considered as the embodiment collectively of the five skandhas over which the five Tathāgatas as said to preside, appears to be the later development. This conception led to his emergence as an important divinity of the Buddhist pantheon”.<sup>(57)</sup>

He is always represented seated, wearing the five leaved crown and the dress and ornaments of a Dhyāni Bodhisattva. He generally holds the vajra against his breast with the right hand, but the vajra may be held in the hand or balanced on its point in the palm of the hand, with the left he holds the ghaṇṭa on his hip.

Two images of Vajrasattva one in stone and other in bronze comes from Nālandā. In the stone image god is seated tossing Vajra against chest with right and holds ghaṇṭa in the left He is adorned with ornaments and is seen sitting on lotus pedestal. The image in Bronze has been reproduced by Kamini Sinha<sup>(58)</sup>. Ghosh calls it as Vajrasattva.<sup>(59)</sup> It can be dated to 9<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. Its pedestal is covered with cloth cover, lions support the pedestal, and god is on the lotus pedestal. The petals of the pedestal have prominent pointed ridge. God is wearing

conical crown with effigies of Dhyāni Buddha. Both the hands rest against the chest holding a Vajra.

Vajrasattva is especially popular in Orrisa and his image corresponds closely to two armed description of the *Advayavajra–Saṃgraha*. In one of the images from Acuttrajpur Fig 17 he is shown with all five Tathāgatas. He is shown seated in *Sattvaparyāṅka* on the pericarp of the *viśvapadma*. He is richly adorned and his conical *mukūṭa* is crowned by a stūpa-shaped finial. His eyes are inlaid with silver. The image can be dated to 9<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. or early 10<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.

In an image from Solampur same as one in Indian Museum Calcutta, Vajrasattva is depicted seated in vajraparyāṅka and balanced his vajra vertically on the tip of one finger. He is richly bedecked with ornaments and his *Kirīṭa–mukūṭa* is crowned by a stūpa-shaped finial. A miniature stūpa appears at each upper corner of the back-slab while a kneeling devotee is at each corner of the pedestal. This image can be dated to 11<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.<sup>(60)</sup> Fig 17A.

According to *Sādhanmālā*, ‘Cuṇḍā’ is the only female emanation of Vajrasattva, bearing the image of this

divine Buddha on the crown. This goddess has been discussed under the heading 'Female dieties'

## **The Bodhisattvas**

Bodhisattva is another popular god of the Mahāyāna Buddhist pantheon. The term Bodhisattva consists of two words *Bodhi* (enlightment) and *Sattva* (essence) and they represent a class of deities who derive their origin from the five *Dhyāni Buddhas* representing the five primordial elements. The lithic representations of Bodhisattvas are to be marked with the development of Mahāyānism first at Gāndhāra in the first and second Centuries A. D. In the Gāndhāra School of art we meet with innumerable images of Bodhisattvas. The figures of the Bodhisattvas are always represented as a royally attired young man, backed with usual ornaments like bracelets, necklace, ankles etc. In common with the unornamented representations of Buddhas, they have the mark about the nose called urna, and the nimbus.

According to theory, the Bodhisattvas are innumerable, but lithic representations of only eight Bodhisattvas are found in sculpture. The analysis of the Sādhnas proves that in Buddhistic ritual the different species of

Bodhisattvas are divided according to the five Dhyāni Buddhas. On this basis Bhattacharya in his book 'The Indian Buddhist Iconography' has given the name of these Bodhisattvas as following –

i) Sāmantbhadra

ii) Vajrapāṇi

iii) Ratnapāṇi

iv) Padampāṇi

v) Visvapāṇi

vi) Ghaṇṭapāṇi

In the list of corresponding to Dhyāni Buddhas, Dr. Bhatta Sali has mentioned five names: Sāmanta Bhadra, Vajrapāṇi, Ratnapāṇi, Avlokiteśvara, and Visvapāṇi, but he further states that sometimes the Bodhisattvas are represented in a group of eight instead of five by the deletion of Ratnapāṇi and Visvapāṇi from the original five and the addition of five few names viz. Akṣagarba, Kṣitigava, Sarvanivāraṇa, Viṣkambin and Mañjuśrī, Maitreya.

**Avalokiteśvara** : is the most popular Mahāyāna Bodhisattva and his cult has played an important role in the growth of Mahāyān Buddhism and art. He has as many as 108 forms. He is the spiritual son of Dhyāni Buddha Amitābha. He is said to be the Bodhisattva who rules during the period between the disappearance of Mortal Buddha Sākyā Simha and the advent of future Buddha Maitreya. The earliest conception of Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara is to be found in *Mahāvastu Avadana* (2<sup>nd</sup> Century B. C.) where the deity is described as *Bhagwan*; who takes the form of Bodhisattva. The worship of Avalokiteśvara was in vogue in 2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> Century A. D. This is corroborated by the Kushan art showing Avalokiteśvara from Gāndhāra. The images of Avalokiteśvara have been found in abundance in stone bronze and teracotta. He is either represented in standing pose or seated pose in the company of his śaktis like Tārā and Bhṛkuṭi, attendants Sūcīmukha, Hayagrīva etc. Sometimes he is also represented alone. This Bodhisattva is known by different names such as Avalikhita, Lokeśvara, Lokanāth etc. This Bodhisattva can be identified at once by presence of divine Buddha, by his head dress, and by the presence of lotus with stalk in his left hand. The number of his hands varies and so do the attributes in each and every different case.



Different centres of Eastern India, Nālandā and Kurkihar from Bihar, Lalitgiri and Ratnagiri from Orissa, Mahoba from Central India, Kanheri and Ajanta from Maharashtra and also Alchi from Ladakh have yielded unique images of Avalokiteśvara “The eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara, which has become so popular in Tibet, originated in India. It is found in one of the caves of Kanheri”.<sup>(61)</sup> To this archaeological evidence, may be added the literacy evidence of the *Ekādaśamukhaṃ a dhāranī* of Avalokita discovered in Gilgit,<sup>(62)</sup> which mentions this form of Avalokiteśvara. An image of Avalokiteśvara comes from Bihar and belongs to 10<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. and it is installed in Indian Museum Calcutta Acc. No. Kr.4/A25137 and the same deity from the same place belongs to 11<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. Acc. No. 3804/A2515. Fig 18 & 18A.

Orissa has yielded large number of tantric Buddhist deities. A colossal image of two armed Avalokita, now broken into two pieces, flanked on the right and left by the images of four armed Bhṛkuṭ and Hayagrīva, respectively, and bearing on its forehead an effigy of Amitābha, found in Udayagiri, is

assigned to 8<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. on paleographical grounds.<sup>(63)</sup> Another image of this deity comes from Lalitagiri and is displayed at Indian Museum Calcutta Acc. No. 6958/A25224 Fig 18B

Mention may be made of Avalokiteśvara image, which exhibit highest competence on the part of Pāla artists, these images come from Vishnupur in the district of Gaya. In one image Avalokiteśvara is seated in Srdhaparyāṅka on a cushion with a lotus on the left and the right hand displaying *abhayamudrā* in front of the chest. This image preserved in Patna Museum and is datable of 11<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. Another image from Patna Museum shows the Bodhisattva seated in varda pose. Ornaments like the necklace, armlets and wristlets tastefully decorate the person of the divining, who has his face illumined with peace.

‘Khasarpaṇa’ is obtained by the addition of another lotus stalk to the right and the portrayal of five Dhyāni Buddhas on the back slab.<sup>(64)</sup> Two life size images of Khasarpaṇa Lokeśvara on black basalt are available at Nālandā. One in the Museum and the second in the *Mahādevasthāna* of Surajpur. In

each case God is represented in *Sampada Sthānaka* pose holding two full blown lotuses in both left and right hands.

*Jaṭā Mukuṭa* in miniature form of Amitābha is shown on the crest, five Dhyāni Buddhas are depicted on top of the halo. Tārā, Suddhan Kumara are represented to left and Bhṛkuṭi and Hayagrīva to right respectively. Devotee Sūcīmukha are shown below Pedestal. Out of the two, the sculpture of the Museum is superior in workmanship and is considered to be the best products of the artists of Nālandā. It is datable to 9<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.

Another form of this Bodhisattva is the four armed image of ‘Shaḍaskharī Lokanāth’ which was found in the Shashthitala quarter of the village of Bhadrapur in Birbhum district. Avalokiteśvara is also represented with six hands and also with multiple hands. In the Sādhnas we find the name of Māyājālakramāryāvalokiteśvara who has five heads and twelve hands.<sup>(65)</sup> One example of Lokeśvara with six hands is in Indian Museum, in this image we find a rosary, and a jewel in the first two right hands, while the third is in the gift bestowing gesture. In the left hands we find a lotus with stalk, a snare and water vessel respectively.<sup>(66)</sup>

Some images of Avalokiteśvara also come from South India – Amrāvati was an important Vajrayāna centre at that time. Many images of Buddhist pantheon have been found here. One image of Avalokiteśvara has been depicted in standing pose in *Sambhaṅga* attitude on a pedestal with his left hand and a vase or rosary in his right hand. He is well ornamented with jewels. He has well decorated head–gear with an effigy of the figure Dhyāni Buddha Amitābh. A pair of Dhyāni Buddhas i.e. Amitābha over the left and Akṣobhya over the right shoulder is depicted prominently. The features such as oval face, thick lips, snubbed nose and smiling face clearly suggested South Indian Art tradition. The iconometrical details help us to date the sculpture to 8<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. (It is also in London Museum).<sup>(67)</sup>

The four armed Avalokiteśvara image from Nagapattinam is also worth mention in. It is shown standing in a *tribhaṅga* on a circular lotus pedestal, holding a rosary and a *Kuṇḍika* (vase) in the upper right and left hands, the lower right hand is in *varada* – while the left hand with a lotus. He is decorated with *Makarakuṇḍalas*, necklace, *yajñōpavīta*, waist girdle, armlets, wristlets, *śiriścakra*. Ūṛṇā is marked with a dot.

A diamond shape mark with a vertical line on the left lower line is the palm mark of the lower right hand. He wears an ornamental *Jaṭamukūṭa*. The general iconographical features of the deity are perfectly modeled. The image represents the form of *Jaṭamukūṭa* Lokeśvara which is one of the forms of Avalokiteśvara.<sup>(68)</sup> Early icons of Avalokiteśvara were reported from Nelakondapalli,<sup>(69)</sup> Amarāvati <sup>(70)</sup> and images from Gummadidurru<sup>(71)</sup> and Ramthirtham<sup>(72)</sup> from Andhra Pradesh. A six-armed Avalokiteśvara has also been displayed in Indian Museum Calcutta which belongs to Pāla School 10<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. Acc. No. KR1/A24138 Fig 18C.

Lokeśvara image from Nagapattinam is shown seated in the *Mahārāja lilāsana* on a pedestal (10.3 cm height). He represents *Kataka mudrā* with his right hand and left hand rests on the pedestal. The conical head gear, *yajñōpavīta* made out of deer skin, wristlets rings for the thumb, *pādasaras* etc. are shown prominently. Undergarment extends upto the ankles. *Jaṭamukūṭa* with its frontal decorative is defaced. Iconographically, the features correspond to the late Pallava period (9th Century A. D.). He is the favourite deity of the Mahāyānists who cures all diseases.<sup>(73)</sup> He is one of the important emanations of Dhyāni Buddha Amitābha.<sup>(74)</sup> Two

images of Lokeśvara, one from Nālandā Bihar and other from Satna Madhya Pradesh, both belonging to 7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. are displayed in Indian Museum Calcutta Acc. Nos. 9447/A24289 and 6498/24195 respectively Fig 18D & 18E.

**Maitreya** : Maitreya, the Messiah of Buddhism is the Bodhisattva of the present age. It is said he will come to earth fully four millennia after the disappearance of Goutama for the deliverance of all sentient beings. Maitreya may be represented as a standing figure richly decorated with ornaments holding in his right hand the stalk of lotus. He is distinguished from Padampāṇi mainly by the figure of small chaitya, which the former bears on his crown. According to Alice Getty<sup>(75)</sup> “In Indian sculpture his hands form the usual Dharmacakramudrā, in the left there is a vase, round, oval or pointed, or there may be the stems of flowers which support his two characteristic symbols, the vase and the wheel. Maitreya may also be represented seated as a Buddha with legs interlocked or both dangling down. His colour is yellow and his images sometimes bear the figure of five Dhyāni Buddhas on the aureole behind them. The small chaitya on the crown of Maitreya is said to refer to the belief that a stūpa in the mount Kukkuṭapāda near

Bodh Gaya covers a spot where Kaśyapa Buddha is lying. When maitreya would descend to earth he would go direct to the spot which could open by magic and Kaśyapa would give him the garments of Buddha.”

The images of Maitreya can be traced right from the Gāndhāra School down to the present time. Mention may be made of one interesting image of Maitreya on stone discovered from site no. 3 at Nalāndā where he is shown standing on lotus in the varada pose and the left hand holding the hem of the drapery. The figure is decorated with ornaments like necklace, armlets and the garments fashioned like Buddha with parallel incision on the surface indication folds of the drapery. Apparently it looks like the image of the Buddha but the conical tapering *Mukuṭa* and branch of lily above his head in place of *Bodhi* tree are some of the features that differentiate it from Buddha image.

The Indian Museum contains two separate images of Maitreya with two hands, in both of which there is a chaitya in his head—dress and in one of them there are two four—armed female figures in attendance upon him. In these two images the Bodhisattva holds a Branch of the Nāgakeśara in his proper left

hand, while the right hand is in posture of blessing (*varada mudrā*).<sup>(76)</sup> Fig 19.

A rare example of Maitreya image from South India (Melaiyur) is not only different in delineation of form, ornaments and drapery but also in the history of bronze gliding. He is shown standing in *Samabhaṅga* on a circular lotus pedestal (39.5 cm height). Both hands are found missing. Well decorated *Karaṇḍamakūṭa* (head gear) with an effigy of *stūpa* and *ūrṇā* on the forehead are important features to identify the icon as Maitreya. Eyes were inlaid with silver<sup>(77)</sup> *Makarakuṇḍalas*, *śiriścakra* and a broad necklace with pendants a garland like *yajñōpavīta*, a thick under garment with lines, tassels, loops and securing strings arranged in elegant knots are some of the characteristic iconographical features that not only reflect the Pallava and Rāshtrakūṭa schools of art but also tally with the images of Nalāndā and Kurkihar datable to 9<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. The icon stands as a classical example in the bronze art tradition of South India. Probably it is the earliest of all the Buddhist bronze of Tamil Nadu so far reported.<sup>(78)</sup> The icon appears to be one of the original attendant figures of the Buddha found at Nagapattanam.<sup>(79)</sup>



**Mañjuśrī** : After the Lokeśvara and Maitreya the most important group of male deities consist of Mañjuśrīs. ‘Sādhanmālā’ has given variety of names to this God such as; Mañjuvara, Mañjughoṣa, Mañjudeva, Vāgīśvara, Mañjukumara etc. B. Bhattacharyya’s work gives us four different classifications within the same genus.

1. Emanations of Amitābha
2. Emanation of Akṣobhya
3. Emanation of the five Dhyāni Buddhas
4. Independent forms

The emanations of Amitābha are – Vāk and Dhamadhatu–Vāgīśvara. While that of Akshobhya are – Mañjughoṣa, Siddhaika–vīra, Vajrānangh and Nāmasangīti Mañjuśrī. Benoytosh Bhattacharya places certain forms of Mañjuśrī under the heading “Emanations from the five Dhyāni Buddhas” these are – Vāgīśvara, Mañjuvara and Mañjukumāra. Apart from these some of the independent forms of this God are – Arpachana, Sthirachakra, Vādirāt, Mañjunātha. Mañjuśri like other Boddhisattvas is also depicted with ornaments.<sup>(80)</sup>

An effigy of Akṣobhya is seen in his crown. His Uśnīsa is ornamented at top by a flaming pearl. He is commonly known as the God of culture and learning a book, a sword and a blue lotus are his special symbols. He has two distinct types as per the Sādhna, one with sword and book, and the other with the Utpala or blue lotus. His name first occurs in the *Āryamañjuśri mūlakalpa*, which is earlier than Guhyasamāja (300 A. D.)<sup>(81)</sup>

In Niṣpannayogāvali ,<sup>(82)</sup> he is described as :

*Pitānilaśuklasavyetārāvakrah ṣaḍbhujō daksinaih  
khaḍgavaradabānān vāmaih prajñāpāramita pustaka  
nilābjadhanuṣi bibhrāṇah.*

“Mañjuśri has three faces in yellow, blue and white colours. He is six armed. In the three right arms he holds the sword, *varada mudrā* and the arrow and in the three left carries the Prajñāparamitā book, the blue lotus and the bow”. In an image from Bihar presently installed in Indian Museum Calcutta Acc. No. 3803/A25141. The god is shown with two female attendants on his sides. A standing pose of this god is also

installed in Indian Museum Calcutta which belong to 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. Acc. No. Kr7. Fig 20 & Fg 20A respectively.

The image of Mañjuśrī (siddhaikavira) from Nālandā, represents the God in standing posture. It seems that it was carved in round figure remnants of which are present near its left foot and right arm. The right arm was joined with the flower and part of the halo was seen behind it. The upper part of figure appears to be well preserved while the lower part is broken. The curls of hair are secured with beaded fillet and locks fall over the shoulder. The wheel and tiger nail necklace renders the figures to represent Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī. Its face is circular, full, broad and vibrating with smile. Eyebrows are taken up with a raised *ūrṇā* in between. Shoulders are sloppy. Short drawers are indicated by incised lines and a ridge on either thigh. The end of the drawer falls vertically between the legs. The knees have cap marked with crescents. The craftsmanship is superb and can be assigned to early 8<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.

Three images of Vāgīśvara have been reported from Salihundam, Andhrapradesh. These are carved in red granite.

One of the image which is (2'2" x 1'6" x 10") in size represents the god with two hands seated in *ardhaparyāṅkāśana* on lotus throne. At either of the pedestal are seen two lions in recumbent posture and in the middle is a lady worshipper. He wears plenty of Jewellery in addition to princely ornaments. The Buddhist creed formula is inscribed on the halo of the image. Both arms are broken and missing, however the stem of the *utpala* in his left broken arm and the intact right arm disposed in graceful attitude clearly suggests that it belongs to family of Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī. An image of Vāgīśvara in Indian Museum (Calcutta) holds a bell in right hand.<sup>(83)</sup>

An indepent image of Arapachana in bronze comes from Nālandā. Ghosh refers to this figure as that of Arpachana, "seated cross legged with a book held against the breast in left hand and sword in right hand. There is a red stone in each of the corners of the pedestal".<sup>(84)</sup> It compares well with the figure of Arapachana (IN6271) of Mahipals' time.<sup>(85)</sup> Saraswati assigns the Nālandā figure to C. 10<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. <sup>(86)</sup>. A rare specimen in Baroda Museum shows Mañjuśrī in the company of two principal Hindu Gods, Ganapati and Vishnu.<sup>(87)</sup>

**Padampāṇi** : This Bodhisattva is the emanation of Dhyāni Buddha Akṣobhya belonging to the lotus family. His spiritual consort is Pandara. He is red in colour and a full blown lotus is his symbol. Padampāṇi is well represented in all the South Asian countries.

One image of this deity has been reported from ‘Salihundam’ Andhra Pradesh. It is a mutilated one the head portion is broken and missing. He stands in *sambhaṅga* attitude on a lotus. He holds a long stem of lotus in his hand while the right is in *bhūmisparśamudrā*. He is decorated with ornaments. The part below the waist is well clad with a thin loin cloth, the folds of which touch the anklets.

Another image comes from Nagapattanam. This image shows the influence of Javenese art. The delineation of Karaṇḍamakuṭa has pyramidal design, undergarments śraśchakra, necklace and armlets are similar to Javenese art. His right hand is extended upto its elbow resting on the right knee while the left hand rests on the seat and holding the stalk of a blue lotus, seen clearly at shoulder level.<sup>(88)</sup> On stylistic ground it is datable to 11<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. Images of Padampāṇi were

also reported from Orrisa, Nālandā, Amarāvati,<sup>(89)</sup> and Nelakondapalli.<sup>(90)</sup>

An image of this Bodhisattva reported from Nālandā, which is now preserved in Patna Museum is datable to 8<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. <sup>(91)</sup> The crown of the figure had two triangular peaks one of them still survives. Strands of locked hair fall back as a bunch behind the head. It appears that the god is chanting some mantras from its open mouth or as if he is performing some mystic rite with right hand in *Vitarkamudrā* held against chest holding lotus–stalk with left hand planted on the left thigh. The *Yajñopavīta* forms a cross near the left arm pit. The pedestal wears an inscription reading “Sri vimalasinghasya” in C. 10<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. characters.

In the reserve collection of the Nālandā museum, two independent stone panels are available, each exhibiting eight different Bodhisattvas seated on *Padmasna* pose.

## **Female Deities**

In the vedic age female divinity was not given a prominent place till the civilization in India became more refined. Later on Brahma was given feminine counter part Sarasvatī, Pārvati became the Śakti of Śiva and Lakshmī became the Śakti of Vishnu. By the 7<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. corrupt influence of Tantra system introduced female divinities in Buddhist Pantheon.

**Tārā** : The goddess Tārā was enrolled among the northern Buddhist gods in the 6<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. ; by the 7<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. , according to Hsüan–Tsang, there were many statues of her in northern India, and between 8<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Centuries A. D. her popularity equaled that of any god in Mahāyān pantheon. Tārā according to M. de Blonay, derived from the root ‘tar’ (to cross). Tārā is one of the most important female divinity of the Mahāyāna Buddhist Pantheon.

The concept of five Dhyāni Buddhas and their association with their female counterparts are for the first time met within the Guhyasamājantra. Originally this goddess seems to have been the one who was invoked from safe crossing of waters and who saved her worshippers from the calamities

caused by floods.<sup>(92)</sup> Her worship began probably about the 6<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. as early representation may be those in the well-known Buddhist caves of India like those of Nasik, Ellora and Kanheri as side deity of Avalokiteśvara.

Images of Tārā have not been found in Gāndhara. It seems that Śakti worship was introduced in Mahāyānism about the 6<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. mainly in Tibet and Eastern India. At least there are 21 forms of Tārā represented through images. Tārās are generally grouped into five classes according to colour of their body which they derive from their parental Dhyāni Buddhas. The Tārās are almost always seated, but if they accompany Avalokiteśvara or any other important god, they are usually standing. Tārā may be surrounded by her own manifestations as well as by other gods.

According to Benoytosh Bhattacharya, Tārā's associated with five Dhyāni Buddhas are –

- i) Green Tārā : Khadiravani Tārā, Vasya Tārā, Ārya Tārā Mahattari Tārā, Varada Tārā, Durgattarini Tārā, Dhanada Tārā, Janguli Tārā and Parṇaśavarī Tārā.



ii) White Tārā: Astamahabhaya Tārā, Mrtyuvancana Tārā, Chaturbhuja Sita Tārā, Sada–Bhuja–Sita Tārā, Visvamata Tārā, Kurukulla Tārā, Janguli Tārā.

iii) Yellow Tārā: Vajra Tārā, Janguli Tārā, Parṇaśavarī Tārā, Bhṛkuṭi Tārā.

iv) Blue Tārā : Ēkajaṭā Tārā, Mahacina Tārā.

v) Red Tārā : Kurukulla Tārā.

But this classification of Tārā is hardly applicable for identification with stone or metal where the colour is absent. She is generally identified by her gestures and the pose of her hands. The image of white Tārā holds a full blown lotus while that of green Tārā holds a lily while the other hand is in varad pose. She was declared the Śakti of Avalokiteśvara. Mantra for Tārā worship is, “*Ōm Tārā Tuttāra Ture Svāhā*”.

Images of Tārā testifying to the popularity of the Goddess have been found in caves of Ellora, Sirpur, Nasik,

Cuttack, Kendrapara, Dharmasala, Bhubaneswar, Ratnagiri, Balasore, Vajragiri, Nālandā, South India.

An image of Tārā measuring 4' 3" / 2' 2" / 1' 2" dated 10<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. was carved out of sand stone, was originally lying under a tree in Nimapara area of Puri district. The two armed image of Tārā is seated in padmasana on a double petalled lotus throne. The hands from the elbow are broken; nose and lips are slightly rubbed. Below the pedestal on right side are two devotees in kneeled position. There are also sculpture, from left to right, a lotus but, a sword, two seated damsels, a horse and an elephant below the pedestal. The deity is flanked by two seated devoties. The Dhyāni Buddhas numbering five and seated on lotus pedestal showing Abhaya, Bhumsparśa, Dharmachakra, Pravartana Guhyasamāja. The notable ornaments worn by othe deity are anklets, valayas, girdle, necklace, armlets, earrings and crowning mukuṭa. It is superbly carved and reveals the artistic merit of the sculpture. An image of Tārā from Bihar with all the characteristic features is installed in Indian Museum Calcutta Fig 21.

A small image of 'Shyama Tārā' has been found in excavation and is now in the collection of Nālandā Museum.

According to Sādhanamālā “Khadriyanī Tārā or ‘Shyama’ is of green colour, bears the image of Dhyāni Buddha, Amoghasiddhi on her crown. Her right hand exhibits varada mudrā, while the left one holds *utpala* (lily). To her right and left are Aśōka Kāntā, Mārīcī and Ēkajaṭā. She appears as celestial virgin”. In the image found in Nālandā Museum the Goddess is seated on lotus seat. Her right leg is pendent and rests on small lotus pedestal. On her left hand she is holding the stalk of a half blown lily. On both sides of the halo are represented miniature figure of Tārā place one above the other. The upper portion of the prabhavali is missing so only six, three on left and three on right side of the goddess are visible, each of them holding a lotus in her left hand, right hand being in Abhaya mudrā, devotees are shown below. A burning lamp is shown on the pedestal. This figure can be compared with the image of Tārā found at Sompada in Bengal.<sup>(93)</sup>

Another image of ‘Shyama Tārā’ is reported from Nagapattinam (Tamil Nadu). In this image the goddess is seated on an oval lotus pedestal (13 cm height) and represented with two hands. The right hand is in varada Mudrā while the left hand holds utpala or blue lotus. The hands are shown with palm marks. She is decked in ornaments and jewels. She wears a

prominent head gear. On stylistic grounds, it is dated to Chola period.<sup>(94)</sup> A dhyana is prescribed in *Sādhanmālā* for her worship.<sup>(95)</sup> An image of this type was reported from Amrāvati also in Andhra Pradesh.<sup>(96)</sup>

An image from Acutrajpur also depicts Khadiravanī Tārā. The figure is richly ornamented. She wears a *Kirīṭamukuṭa* which is decorated with the effigy of a Tathāgata, his *mudrā* not being distinguishable. Her head is framed by a leaf shaped halo crowned by three petal projections. A *Vidyadhara* is at each upper corner. She is flanked by a standing attendant on either side with *Ēkajaṭā* on the left holding a *Kartrī* and *Kapāla*. The goddess on the right has her left hand on the thigh and holds her attribute (aśoka–bough) in her raised right hand. Figure of lion is at each corner of the pedestal while to the left of the lotus stalk are two kneeling devotees. Above the Tārā's pendent right foot is a diminutive image of *Vajrasattva*. The base of the pedestal is inscribed with the Buddhist creed.<sup>(97)</sup> This image can be dated to 10<sup>th</sup> or early 11<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. Another image of this goddess Acc. No. 3824/A25158 poses similar features Fig 21A

‘Astamabhābhayā Tārā’ was one of the early forms of Tārā who unvariably depicted standing in the earliest images while later images generally depict her seated in lalitāsana.<sup>(98)</sup> Saraswati has reproduced a figure of Astamabhābhayā Tārā and ascribed it to 10<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.<sup>(99)</sup> It shows only the head of the principal figure and three of the accompanying Tārās seated on full blown double lotuses. The trunk of the accompanying figure shows, very thin waist and prominent bust. The crown of the principle figure shows a prominent rhombus shaped central ornament which is not easily met with chignon, flying streamers and fan shaped projections. The goddess has a smiling face; the backslab of the figure is unfinished which probably represents a decline. Amoghasiddhi decorates the top of the stele above the head of the goddess.<sup>(100)</sup> Similarly Banerji has reproduced a figure of Khandiravanī Tārā from Indian Museum (No. 5618) which also has a prominent triangular central ornament and belongs to 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.<sup>(101)</sup> On these grounds this image can be dated to 12<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.

One large image of this form of ‘Tārā’ was also discovered in Ratnagiri and is now in Patna museum<sup>(102)</sup> and can be dated to 11<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. In this image goddess is depicted

in tribhaṅga pose and both arms are broken off near the elbow. She wears triple strand of Yajñopavīta.

A *Sāṭī* and a scarf in an *upavītī* fashion. Her hair is fastened with studs and arranged into a chignon on the right side of her head where it rests on her shoulder. Just above her head are the effigies of five Tathāgatas – Amitābha, Ratnasambhava, Amoghasiddhi at centre, Akṣobhya and Vairocaṇa. Her right hand is in abhaya while left holds the *nīlotpala* as she faces away from the centre image on each side. The perils, beginning at the top right are : 1) *Sapa–bhaya* (2) *Agni–bhaya*, (3) *Hasti–bhaya* and (4) *Simha–bhaya* while the corresponding perils on the left are (5) *Taskara–bhaya* with the robber holding a sword and shield (6) *Pisaca–bhaya*, (7) *Jalarnava–bhaya* (8) *Nigala–bhaya*.<sup>(103)</sup> The place of Amoghasiddhi suggests her to be green Tārā, while according to Sādhanā she is to be white.<sup>(104)</sup>

‘Ārya Tārā’ is one of the forms of Green Tārā. An image of this Tārā has been discovered from Salihundam in Andhrapradesh. It is beautifully carved in granite and is represented with two hands. She is seated in lalitāsana on a lotus throne; she holds a lotus in her left hand while the right hand is

in *varada mudrā*. She is seated cross legged with the right foot hanging down and resting on a lotus pedestal. She is richly ornamented with jewellery. Her hair is done upwards and tied into the shape of an elevated bun. She is not accompanied by any God or Goddess and hence is identified as Ārya Tārā. The pedestal is depicted with two female worshippers and lotus flower motifs.<sup>(105)</sup> An inscription in Nagari characters records the usual Buddhist recitation beginning with ‘ye dharma’. This image seems to belong to 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.

An image of Ārya Tārā, in sitting and standing pose also comes from Nālandā. She is depicted without the figure of Amitābha and standing in *Samapādashānakā mudrā*, Saraswati mentions two types of Kuṇḍalas. The right ear has a miniature wrapt bundle fastened to it. This manuscript like earring resounds mantras in her ear.<sup>(106)</sup> She holds a miniature pot, fruit or jewel with right hand. A seated figure of Ārya Tārā from Nālandā is produced by Saraswati. It possess all the characteristic features of the image discussed above<sup>(107)</sup>

‘Vajra Tārā’ is another form of Tārā. In Sādhanmālā there are five Sādhanās (nos. 93, 94, 95, 97, 110) devoted to the four headed eight armed form of Vajra Tārā of yellow

complexion. She has numerous forms and is decked with ornaments. One image of Vajra Tārā from Ratnagiri was produced by Donaldson. On this image the goddess is unattended. She is carved of chlorite and was originally housed in the niche of a monolithi stūpa. Tārā is seated in *vajraparyāṅka* on a *viśvapadma*. She has three visible heads and eight hands. Her major right hand, upraised, wields a vajra while the corresponding left hand is placed in front of her chest in *tarjanīmudrā*. Her lower right hand, in *varada*, holds a conch while the other two hands hold an arrow and a noose. Her topmost left hand extended straight out from the shoulder, holds a bow while the two lowered hands hold an upala and a goad. She is richly ornamented and her facial expression is calm. A tall tiered *mukuta* crowns each head. There is no Tathāgata present and the rectangular backslab is unembellished. It can be dated to late 10<sup>th</sup> or early 11<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.

Image of this deity has also been found from Nālandā. The goddess here is two armed, she is seated in *ardhaparyāṅkāśana* tossing vajra with right hand against the breast and placing left hand in *Sayanāsana* on the seat. It belongs to 10<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. The sun temple at Badagaon maintains a standing Vajra Tārā along with Ēkjaṭā. An image of



Vajra Tārā in Bronze has been found from Patharghata now in Indian Museum Calcutta Acc. No. 4551/A24364 Fig 21D.

Red Tārā (Kurukulla) the passionate lotus dakini originated from the country of Uddiyana. She is said to have emanated from Amitābha. Among Amitābha's three female emanations Kurukulla is the most important one. Kurukulla is often called Red Tārā (sgrol–Ma–dmar–Pa) or Tarodbhava Kurukulla, 'the Kurukulla who rises from Tārā'. She is red in colour because of her magical function of enchantment and magnetism. She has a single face and four arms. She wears a crown of skulls. She holds a bow and arrow entwined with flowers.

In the village Kurukura, in the Cuttack district two images of Kurukulla have been reproduced by Kumar Prafulla Chandra Bhanja. Another image of this deity comes from Udaygiri. In this image of Kurukulla her Dhāranī is inscribed just below her seat. She is represented in Lalita–kṣepa pose holding the red lotus and the bow in her two left hands and exhibiting the club and varada attitude in two right hands.

Sita Tārā (white Tārā) is one of the four deities that emanated from combination of the five Dhyāni Buddhas. One image of this Tārā has been found from Andhra Pradesh. The image (5' x 2'6" x 1'2") is four armed sitting cross legged in *Padmasna* on double lotus throne. There is a large plain halo behind her head. She holds a flower in her upper left hand and a round object cintamani in the lower left hand. The right upper hand is broken while the lower shows *varada mudrā*. She has elongated ear lobes and conical head gear. She is richly ornamented with jewellery, a prominent *Yajñopavīta* and an under garment. Her third eye cannot be seen due to the mutilation of the sculpture. The Tantric form of Sita-Tārā is Janguli-Tārā, the dispeller of poison who is invoked to cure serpent stings.<sup>(108)</sup> An Orrisan example of this Tārā has been probably found from Solampur, and can be ascribed to 9<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. Fig 21C.

Other forms of Tārā are Dhanada Tārā, Ugra Tārā, Mahattari Tārā, Bhṛkuṭi Tārā, Mahasari Tārā etc. whose images have been found in Orrisa, Nālandā, and South India. One metal image of Bhṛkuṭi Tārā comes from Nālandā Bihar and belongs to 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. It is presently installed in Indian Museum Calcutta Acc. No. 9432/A22892 Fig 21D.

**Apārajitā** : Apārajitā is another form of tantric goddess shown trampling over Ganesha. According to Sādhanmālā this deity is yellow in complexion, has two arms, one face, and is decked with various gems. Her face is awful, terrible and ferocious. She is destroyer of all wicked beings. Images of this goddess have been reported from Nālandā, Lalitagiri, Ratnagiri and Udaygiri.

In one of the images from Nālandā, only the lower portion of the goddess can be seen, where the goddess is shown trampling upon Ganesha.<sup>(109)</sup> Her right leg rests firmly on the pedestal and with her bent left leg she is pressing the lower part of the prostrate Ganesha, who has raised up his right hand in helplessness. Scarf-like two prominent flames appear on the back slab. Saraswati has ascribed this figure to 10<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.<sup>(110)</sup>

In a recently excavated figure of this goddess from Udaygiri, the same posture of this deity is depicted in Fig 347 of *Iconography of the Buddhist Sculpture of Orissa* by Donaldson. She is in *ālīdhapose* and tramples lord Ganesha. She wears a *sātī* decorated with oblique finds and fastened with a chain link girdle. Her left hand is in *tarjanīmudrā*. She is flanked by an

attendant on either side with the one on her right, standing on a prostrate figure, holding the shaft of her parasol. Both attendants are female and have their hair matted in a bun on to their head; this image can be dated to 8<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. <sup>(111)</sup> Fig 22.

**Harītī** : Harītī as a deity is found in the early Buddhist literature, her worship came into vogue only after the advent of Mahāyānism. She is generally represented with two arms. She is the only deity of Buddhist pantheon who holds a baby in her hands.

One image of Harītī comes from Krakaipalle village near Elamanchili in Vishakhapatnam district. <sup>(112)</sup> She is depicted with two hands and seated on a pedestal. She holds a baby in her right hand, while her left hand is in *varada mudrā*. The sculpture is damaged. She is decked with ornaments. Her hair is drawn aside and made into double bun. Interestingly, a standing lion is depicted below the folded left leg on the pedestal. It is a unique sculpture depicted with a vahana for the goddess. It is datable to 10<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> centuries A. D. <sup>(113)</sup>

Another sculpture of this deity in bronze is in Nālandā museum. This sculpture belongs to Devapāla's reign. The goddess is shown seated on a pedestal with four legs. The

figure of the goddess is tall and slim. Her face is round and full with a smile. She has sharp nose, broad forehead and eyes gazing in front. Tubular arms and legs, full breasts, holding a citron in right and supporting a child seated on her left knee are her other features. She is seated in *ardhaparyāṅkāśana* pose. She wears large kuṇḍalas, pearl garland and a chain–mekhala. She is wearing a full choli extending upto the stomach. There are curved folds of flesh below her breast. Her sari is plain, showing the folds across the pericarp and lotus seat. The goddess is shown wearing a crown. Harītī has also been found with Jambhāla as shown in Fig 9C.

In another image from Nālandā, deity is represented seated on a plain cushion holding a child. Devotees are carved on the pedestal. Harītī was also popular in Orrisa as almost all the three noted monasteries viz Ratnagiri, Udayagiri and Lalitagiri have discovered medium size sculptures.

**Vasudharā** : Goddess ‘Vasudharā’ is a goddess of fertility or wealth and consort of Jambhāla.<sup>(114)</sup> She is regarded as one of the emanations of Akṣobhya. Only three Sādhanas are devoted to her worship, and in one of these only is she said to bear the image of Akṣobhya in other two she is assigned to Dhyāni

Buddha Ratnasambhava.<sup>(115)</sup> Vasudharā may be represented in any attitude standing or seated. She is richly bedecked with ornaments. She carries in her left hand the ears of corn while right hand is in *varad mudrā*.

One image of this goddess along with Jambhāla comes from Nagapattanam (Tamil Nadu). In this vasudharā is sitting left to Jambhāla. Her left leg hangs down and kicks bag of riches. Her right hand holds a cup of jewels, probably to shower on devotees and her left hand with the ear of corn. She is decked in all ornaments and jewels. On stylistic grounds, it is dated to Chola times.<sup>(116)</sup>

In the collection of Nālandā museum there are three independent images of Vasudharā, two very small in size and the other one is medium in size. One image which is 35 cms in height was reproduced by Sarasvati and he has attributed it to 10<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. <sup>(117)</sup> It is a perfect representation of this deity. She is seen standing on a lotus below which is shown inverted vessel (Kalaśa) that pour gems. She is decorated with usual ornaments, her right hand is in *varada* pose, left hand holds a lotus over which is placed the miniature pot (Mangola Kalaśa) from which germinating branches of trees indicate the symbol

of fertility. The back slab is little tapering on top. Around the prabhāvalī is inscribed the creed. The stone is of course grained with traces of mica particle within the core (Acc. No. 00047). A seated image of this goddess is installed in Inian Museum Calcutta Acc. No. 3822/A25138 Fig 23.

**Prajñāparamitā** : Goddess ‘Prajñāparamitā’ is the great symbol, she is the mother of all Buddhas. She has been described as one of the emanations of Akṣobhya by Benoytosh Bhattacharya, nine Sādhanās in the Sādhanamālā describe the procedure of her worship, out of these only two are assigned to the cult of Akṣobhya. When in dharmachakramudrā, both of her hands meet at the centre of her breast (uromadhya) like books (Pustakākari).<sup>(118)</sup> She is known as Bhagavatī Tathatā, Sñyata, Vajradhātuīsvarī<sup>(119)</sup> etc.

In the excavation at Nālandā six images of Prajñāparamitā on bronze has been discovered. In one of the image she is seen seated on a lotus in *padmāsana* pose, cross legged with six pairs of arms. No image of the goddess is found in terracotta on stone. In other image goddess is seated cross legged in vajraparyānkāsana, two armed and forming dharmachakramudrā lotus stalks pushing under the arms support

a book on each side.<sup>(120)</sup> This image may be assigned to 9<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.

There are nine or ten surviving examples of this goddess in Orissa, one most beautiful two armed image of the goddess was found while repairing a canal at Tārāpur. She is seated in vajraparyanka on a viśvapadma with her hands in dharmachakramudrā. A lotus stalk issuing up on the left side passed under and over her left arm to blossom opposite her face. She is richly adorned and wears a *Kirīṭamukuṭa*. Her head is framed by a *makara-toraṇa* decorated with beaded borders and edged with flames. The lintel of the torana is supported at either side by a *virāla* motif. A *vidyādhara* is at each upper corner of the back-slab while the five Tathāgatas are aligned at the top. The centre stalk supporting the viśvapadma seat has mantering creepers on the upper register which house the sapta-rathas in circular sprays. On the lower corners are kneeling devotees and in the centre is a lamp and bows heaped with offerings. The image can be dated to 11<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.

**Praṇaśavarī** : The worship of ‘Praṇaśavarī’ is believed to be effective in preventing outbreaks of epidemics and in assuring safety to terror stricken. Very rare images of this goddess have



been found in India. There are two sādhnas in Sādhanamala which are devoted to the six armed form of Praṇaśavarī and they are nearly identical except for their colour. In Sādhanā no. 148 she is of yellow colour and bears Akṣobhya on her crest.

One noticeable example of this goddess has been found in a niche of monolithic stūpa from the group at the south west corner of stūpa no. 1 at Ratnagiri. She is depicted in contrast to textual imagery. She has three faces and is seated in *sattvaparyāṅka* on a viśvapadma. Her faces are showing pleasant countenance. In three right hands, she holds an arrow, a paraśu and vajra while her corresponding left hands hold a bow, a branch with a cluster of leaves and display *tarjanī-paśā*. She is richly adorned and each head has a tall crown. Beneath her seat is an incense burner and three indistinct objects.

One image comes from Nālandā. In this goddess is seen with eight arms, four on each side. The stone is yellow marble. The front face is distinct and laughing appearance by side face is indistinct. She is seated cross-legged on a simple pedestal and is found from site no. 1 (ACC.No.00102).

**Mārīcī** : Mārīcī is one of the interesting goddesses of the Vajrayāna pantheon, an emanation of Vairocaṇa. Her iconographic feature show that she was an adaptation from the North India Surya Mandir and her name means one who has ray.<sup>(121)</sup> She is usually represented as three faces and right arms holding such attributes as a needle, a string, an elephant goad, a noose, a bow and an arrow, a thunderbolt, a bunch of Aśoka flowers. She stands in *Pratyaliḍha* pose on chariot drawn by seven pigs and driven by either Rahu or goddess with no legs.

One example of *astabhuji* Mārīcī was found in a small village and now housed in Kalāgni temple at Kalanapur in Orissa. In this image she stands in *pratyaliḍha* holding a vajra in her raised right hand while her corresponding principal left hand is in *tarjanī–mudrā*. Her lowered set of hands in *ardhacandra* hold the needle and thread. Her remaining two hands hold a goad and asoka–bough below and arrow and bow above. Her left face is that of a sow and her three conical crowns merge at the top. A lotus–rosette is at each upper corner of the back–slab. A two–armed charioteer, raising the lash in his right hand, is seated at the front edge of the chariot. The sows, moving on all the four legs, are carved in low relief with four advancing to the right and three to the left. It may be dated to 10<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.

Another *astabhuji* Mārīcī image is installed in Indian Museum Calcutta. It is in bronze and belongs to 9<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. Acc. No. NS4248/A24356 Fig 24.

One life size image of Mārīcī has been found from Nālandā, she is also represented with eight arms, arrow, ankusa, noose etc. A flame of fire is around the prabhavali.

An image of Mārīcī from ‘Salihundm’ Andhrapradesh is carved in red granite is in alidha pose standing in a chariot drawn by seven horses. The image is slightly defaced. Except for a bowl in her lower left hand and a sword in her raised right hand, the weapons in the remaining hands of the image are mutilated. However, a full blown lotus flowers, an arrow and Vajra like object can be seen. She is decorated with ornaments on the upper portion while the lower part is well clad with thin cloth which is beautifully carved and held in position by a beautiful girdle around the lions. It belongs to 9<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. A similar image with three faces and six arms has also been reported from Bihar. In this image also there is representation of seven horses on the pedestal. It seems the horses view earliest iconographical forms and later or were

substituted with pigs. Other forms of Mārīcī are Asoka Kāntā, Ārya Mārīcī, Vajradhāreśvari etc.

One image of Mārīcī found at Nālandā has been referred by Ghosh,<sup>(122)</sup> Saraswati,<sup>(123)</sup> Sahai<sup>(124)</sup> and Bannerji<sup>(125)</sup> as Mārīcī pichuvā. It is comparable to Bodhgaya image dated to 1021 A. D. <sup>(126)</sup> It is eight armed and finely executed. The back-slab is without any borders. It is dated to 10<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. by Saraswati. But according to Banerjee it belongs to 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> Century A. D., but on the whole it belongs to 11<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.

**Uṣṇīsavijayā** : Goddess ‘Uṣṇīsavijayā’ is also emanation Vairocaṇa and as stated by Alice Getty, she is one of the earliest feminine deities. A sculpture of this goddess has been reported from Mukhalingam in Andhra Pradesh. It is carved in red sandstone. She is seated in Vajraparyāṅkāśana on a lotus pedestal which is depicted with attendants in añjali. She is fully decorated with ornaments and head gears. She has eight arms and three faces. All the five Dhyāni Buddhas are represented on the prabhavali but only figure of Ratnasambhava can be clearly seen. Her four hands represent double thunder bolt, the arrow, the third is not visible, and fourth one is in varada pose, while

her four left hand show the bow, the goad, the noose with the *tarjanī–mudrā* and a water vessel respectively. In Japan, she is considered as the deified form of Buddha *Uṣṇīsa*.<sup>(127)</sup> The symbols in her hands vary from one sculpture to other for example, instead of abhaya pose, she may hold a filled water vessel having a branch of Asoka tree.<sup>(128)</sup> A fine sculpture of this goddess was also reported from Indian Museum.<sup>(129)</sup>

**Cuṇḍā** :According to Donaldson “Five bronze images of ‘Cuṇḍā’ has been discovered from Acuttrajpur, D. Mitra has tentatively identified, these as goddess Cuṇḍā among these one has six arms. The four armed images are all identical in respect to iconography. The back left hand of these four holds a *Kamandalu*. The major set of hands are in dhyāna with the palm of the right hand holding a small bowl while the uplifted back left hand has a *Kamandalu*. She wears a *sātī* fastened by a girdle, and an *uttarīya* worn in an *upavītī* fashion. She is richly adorned and wears either a *Jatā–mukuta* or a crown with three triangular projections. She is seated in a Vajraparyanka and her body is held rigid. On the pedestal of the largest image there is a *Aopicchā–simha* (lion with one head and two bodies) at each corner”.<sup>(130)</sup> The images date from 9<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.

Another image of this goddess was published by Kempers,<sup>(131)</sup> at Nālandā, the present location of this image is however not known. In this image goddess is represented seated cross legged in Vajrapayaṅkāsa. She is twelve armed. Her front two hands perform dharmachakramudrā other right hands carry clock wise; fruit, jewel, *akshamala*, *abhayamudrā*, saucer; left hand carries clock-wise arrow, lotus supporting book, conch, noose and flask. According to Saraswaati, the identification of the image as Cuṇḍā ‘can hardly be doubted’ because “the ayudhas shown in the image appear among those prescribed for Cuṇḍā with twenty six hands in Niṣpannayogāvali p. 49”. *Dharmachakramudrā* stands probably for mūlamudrā prescribed in the Niṣpannayogāvali .<sup>(132)</sup> These and many other Buddhist sculptures of early medieval India have been found in India which throws ample light on the artistic activity during that period.

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## CHAPTER - 5

## **SOCIO – RELIGIOUS IMPACT ON BUDDHIST ART**

Indian art is an expression of Indian life and thought attained to its vast natural background and its socio – religious traditions. Its style, technique or general tenor has nothing to do with any particular religious outlook; it is fed and fostered upon a vast store house of Indian traditions, symbols and designs. The term Hindu, Jain or Buddhist Art is but a popular nomenclature to distinguish one group of monuments including painting, cave temples, architecture etc from another. Hence by Buddhist Art is meant popularly those monuments and painting which have for the main purpose the edification or popularization of Buddhism.

The powerful impact of society and religion and other changes reflect itself in the development and style of art. Culture of any society is like a kalideioscope in which endless aspect of tradition and variety of beautiful coloured art forms would be seen. Thus the Art of any period is always a mirror of its society. Simply by having a deep insight into the art of any

period we can have an idea of society and religion of that period.

In the early medieval period, the social structure encompasses local lords with pre-eminent social and political status in the area. The key figures of early medieval India were thus various groups of samantas, mahasamantas, mandalesvaras, rajakulas and rajaputras. These all are basically landed magnets but known by various regional expressions. The relationship between them and the heads of numerous royal families was perhaps variously defined and the system of court hierarchy in a kingdom was determined by the nature of this relationship. Thus the social system of this period was feudal in structure which was based on a dominant class of landlords and a subject class of peasantry. This landed hierarchy was the result of increase in number of castes during this period which has already been discussed in the first chapter. This feudal hierarchy when combined with the caste system became very rigid. It gripped the mind of people so much that it left no room for social equality or democracy. This idea of social equality and landed hierarchy was expressed through the medium of religious art and architecture.

The most important change that took place in the period under review was religious system. A distinctive feature of the religious system during this period was the complete surrender of individual to his or her god. The outstanding features in the religious history of the period were the triumphant revival of Brahmanical religion. The growth of 'Tāntrika' practices in Buddhism led to its downfall. Besides it Buddhism was merging into the Brahmanical religion in the period, and as it has already been stated Buddha was counted among the incarnations of Vishnu. Although tantrism belongs mainly to the Śākta sect, it was fairly well pronounced in the Shaiva, Vaishnava, Buddhist and Jain sects.

'Esoteric Buddhism' or Vajrayāna Buddhism is an appropriate mode of expressing the significance and essential contents of Buddhist Tāntrikas. 'Tāntrika Buddhism' was the last phase of Buddhism in India, and its beginnings are still in obscurity. Still, "the developed Tāntrika religion as it was prevalent and became popular, is not a very old religious system of India, though its seeds may be traced back, to the remotest period of Indian Civilizations"<sup>(1)</sup>. Vajrayāna Buddhism is a complex and multifaceted system of Buddhist thought practice which developed over several centuries and encompasses much

in consistency and a variety of opinions. A distinctive feature of Vajrayāna Buddhism is ritual, which is used as a substitute or alternative for the earlier abstract meditations. The period of Indian Vajrayāna Buddhism has been classified as the fifth or final period of Indian Buddhism. Although the first Tāntrika Buddhist texts appeared in India in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century B.C. and continued to appear until the 12<sup>th</sup> Century CE, scholars such as Hirakana Akira believe that the Vajrayāna probably came into existence in 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> Century CE, while the term Vajrayāna first came into evidence in the 8<sup>th</sup> Century CE.

Though Vajrayāna Buddhism was not a new religion, Mahāyāna Buddhism came to be transformed in course of time into Tāntrika Buddhism, just as Mahāyāna Sutras were supplanted by Buddhist Tantras. The religion expounded in the Tantras is a peculiar mixture of mystic syllables (mantras)<sup>(2)</sup>, magical diagrams (yantras), ritualistic circles (maṇḍalas)<sup>(3)</sup>, physical gestures (Guhyasamāja), sexplay (maithuna), psycho-physical discipline (yoga)<sup>(4)</sup>, a fearful pantheon, elaborate worship and ritualism, magical sorcery, necromancy, symbolism, astrology, alchemy, co-efficiency of female element and monastic philosophy<sup>(5)</sup>.

Thus, Buddhism during this period was imbued with the above mentioned characteristics. Now, what would have been probable reasons for this change in the Buddhist religions or in other words the basic reasons for the decline of Buddhism during the period under review. Moral degradation in moral and spiritual attainments of the Buddhist monks and nuns during the seventh and eight centuries is reflected in the accounts of the Chinese pilgrims and clearly alluded to in the contemporary Indian literature. In the *Mattavilasa-prahasana* of the pallava king Mahendravarman (cir. 600–630 A. D), the Buddhist monks along with the śaivas, are ridiculed for their lack of self-control and indulgence in sense-pleasures<sup>(6)</sup>. Sectarian disputes may be quoted as another reason for the decline of Buddhism. Besides these there were many other reasons for the decline of Buddhism, but the most important reason in my view was the revival of Brāhmanism. Besides preparing a hostile atmosphere in the society for Buddhism, the protagonists of vedicism and Brahmanic philosophy, like Uddyatakara, Kumārila, Śaṅkara, Udayana and Vācaspati Miśra, also endeavored to re-establish Brāhmanism on stronger grounds<sup>(7)</sup>. In fact “Buddhism perished in India, to be born again in a refined Brāhmanism”<sup>(8)</sup>. During this period Buddhism & Hinduism both enjoyed a common patronage by kings and officials which made it possible for both

the religious to borrow from each other. The Pāla kings of Bengal, reputed to be the devout patrons of Buddhist faith, were never entirely free from their Brāhmanical leanings throughout their rule the Brāhmanic culture never ceased to be a living force in Bengal<sup>(9)</sup>. They built not only viharas for Tāntrika Buddhist monks and Tibetan lotsabas but also built Hindu temples. Tārānath says that their chief ministers were generally brāhmanas who used to erect non–Buddhist images in Buddhist Shrine<sup>(10)</sup>.

These socio–religious developments in society could be seen all over India during early Medieval India, which had a deep impact on literature and art of the period. These striking developments were especially reflected in the field of Buddhist art and that too in its iconography. Tāntrika Buddhist attributes a number of Sādhanās and mantras to Gautama Buddha and make him a Tāntrika of the first order, but according to professor Winternitz, there is no proof to believe in the existence of Tāntras, Maṇḍalas and Dhāranīs in the age of Buddha<sup>(11)</sup>. The Buddha discouraged superstition and blind faith and encouraged the spirit of critical enquiry<sup>(12)</sup>. The Vimānsakasutta of the Majjhima Nikāya shows that Buddha discouraged blind faith<sup>(13)</sup> and the Keśamuttīsūta of Anguttara



Nikāya reveals that Buddha was not in favour of winning disciples unless they were satisfied after critically examining his teaching<sup>(14)</sup>. Buddha placed greater emphasis on purity, fear from doing evil, sense control and mindfulness<sup>(15)</sup>. Further, the Kevaṭṭasūta shows that he was not in favour of magical and superhuman feats, and regarded these as black arts. In the Brahmajālāsūta long list of pseudo–sciences is given which the Buddha apparently condemned as low arts<sup>(17)</sup>. Thus the generally accepted view of the scholars is that Tāntrika Buddhism appeared in 7<sup>th</sup> Century A. D.

The earliest available texts on Tāntrika Buddhism are the Gūhyasamājatantra (3<sup>rd</sup> Century A. D. probably)<sup>(18)</sup> and the Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa. The former deals with yoga and *anuttarayoga* (Tāntrika form of yoga), and the latter with *mudrās*, *maṇḍalas*, *mantras*, *kriyās*, *charyās*, *Śtla*, *vratas*, *suchachara*, *niyama*, *homa*, *japa*, *dhyāna*. The Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa also gives directions for paintings of different gods and goddesses of the Tāntrika pantheon<sup>(19)</sup>.

Tantras are the foremost canonical literature of Vajrayāna centring on Yoga practices, ritualism, iconography etc. Broadly speaking the Tantras are divided into two types:

Higher Tantras and lower Tantras<sup>(20)</sup>. In a well known scheme we find four classes of Tantras:

1. Kriyatantra (rites of ceremonial magic),
2. Caryatantra (rites of religious practice)
3. Yoga tantra (rites of communion)
4. Anuttarayogatantra (rites of supreme communion)

The latter type of Tantras became popular during the rule of the Pāla kings chiefly by the efforts of Vajrācāryas and Siddhacāryas<sup>(21)</sup>. In sacred Vajrayāna ceremonies Tantricians often employ the mantras and *mudrā* calling upon the presiding deities for protection and services. These Tantric mudrās were not simple hand gestures of early Buddhist sculptures. Symbolism is a very important component of the Vajrayāna Buddhism. Thus the Vajra symbolically represents *Upaya*, *male* and the *sun* while *ghaṇṭa* (bell) or *Padma* (lotus) symbolizes *prajñā* (wisdom) female and the moon. The symbolic sexual union (*yu-ganaddha*) between these two opposite elements in *anuttarayoga-tantras* personifies the ultimate state of enlightenment (Vajra) and this concept is literally and graphically depicted in Vajrayāna religious sculptures.

Since it was the period when Buddhism was strongly imbued with ideas of Trantrism, it had its due effect on art of the period, consequent upon which image of large number of Buddhist gods exhibiting different Guhyasamāja and āsanas in various forms have been found from many place. A fine bronze icon of Bodhisattva Padampāṇi has been found from Guntupalli. In this image the god is having two hands, is seated in *rājalitāsana* on *padampīṭha*. A decorated *prabhāmaṇḍala* crowned by a *chhatravali* clearly indicates that the icon was under worship. His left hand holds the stem of a lotus and his right hand is in *varada mudrā*. A devotee in meditative posture is shown on left side of the pedestal. On the lotus pedestal is a Buddhist creed formula reading “*ye-dharma hetu prabhavah hetun tesam tathāgatō hyavā dat Tēsanchāye nirōdha ēyam vadi Mahā sramaṇah*” in Nagari characters datable to 9<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> Centuries A. D. Another Buddhist creed formula is found engraved on stone tablet reading “*Dukha Dukhi Samutpadam Dukhasya Vavetikkram Ariyañcha ajaṅgikam ma tīm Dukōpaśama samikam*”. Such Buddhist creed formula inscribed on the sculptures are reported from Salihundam<sup>(22)</sup> and Amarāvati<sup>(23)</sup> in Andhra Pradesh. Kandhar in Maharashtra<sup>(24)</sup> and also Khailkair in East Bengal<sup>(25)</sup>.

Thus mantras occupied an important place in esoteric Buddhism. These mantras seem to have been the backbone of Tāntrika worship. These mantras as known to us from esoteric Buddhist texts are almost invariably unmeaning<sup>(26)</sup> compilation of words. For instance, the mantra for worship of Tārā is ‘*Ōṃ Tārā Tuttāre Ture Svāhā*’, the mantra of Yamāntaka is ‘*Ōṃ hriḥ striḥ vikrtanana huṃ huṃ phaṭ phaṭ svāhā*’<sup>(27)</sup>. These mantras associated with Buddhist gods was an outcome of the changed religious Buddhist policy during this period.

Another important icon in Vajrayāna religious symbolisms in the maṇḍala (circle) which represents the sphere or field of an individual or group of divinities like Buddhas, bodhisattvas and other Tāntrika deities<sup>(28)</sup>. Maṇḍala denotes an idealized ‘representation of existence’, a ‘mystic circle’, a ‘magical diagram’, or a ‘sphere of divinity’. In the Gūhyasamāja the maṇḍala is created by the five dhyāni Buddhas, their emanation, female counter parts, spiritual sons, and the guardians of the four quarters<sup>(229)</sup>.

In its geometrical pattern in paintings, a maṇḍala is divided into five sections or parts; the central point is occupied by the central symbol or image and at each of the four cardinal

points, four other images or symbols are placed. This quinary grouping of images is significant from the doctrinal and psychological standpoints. They correspond to the five constituents elements of human personality (pañcaskandhas) viz, rūpa, vedanā, saṃjñā, saṃskāra and vijñāna; they further correspond to the five members of the holy pentad (pañca dhyāni Buddhas) Akṣobhya, Vairocaṇa, Ratnasambhava, Amitabha and Amoghasiddhi—just as the macrocosm corresponds to the microcosm, so that external quinary complex corresponds to the internal, spiritual quinary principle<sup>(30)</sup>. There are two important types of maṇḍalas namely the *yoga-tantra* maṇḍala and the *anuttarayoga-tantra* maṇḍala. The former is usually administered by a single male deity like Vairocaṇa who is accompanied by male or female Śaktis, whereas the latter typically involves a purely tantric pair of male and female deities like Hevajra and Nairatmya in yuganaddha and their attendants can all be females in many cases.

In the formation of the *Tathāgata maṇḍala* as recorded in the *Guhyasamājatantra*, each of the five Tathāgatas is given a direction, a mantra, a colour, a prajñā and a guardian of the gate. This alignment has been found on stupa's and also on independent stone slabs. This arrangement of Buddhist gods

can be related to the structure of the society existing during early medieval period. This social structure was expressed through the medium of Buddhist Art.

The earlier panel sculptures belonging to pre-Gupta times do not show much difference between the sizes of various figures of gods and people who are represented. The panels of Gandhara sanchi, Barhut and Sarnath do not show mark difference in the size of images appearing in them. But there was a marked difference in the sizes of images depicted through the medium of Maṇḍala. This may be explained by the structure of patriarchal family in which the authority of the head of a family is unquestionable and in which sons and daughters have to obey their parents, wives their husbands and younger brothers their elder brothers. In order to emphasise the idea of *parivār* or *paricara*, members of the pantheon are represented on a scale smaller than that of the central god<sup>(31)</sup>. But it can be applied only to the gods and goddesses who are family members of the central pantheon. These gods and goddesses are represented smaller in size according to their social importance. This pyramidal structure displays pyramidal ranks in the society. Social hierarchy was based on varna system during this period and was reflected in Vajrayāna system of Buddhism through the

medium of art especially in north–eastern India. Its pantheon was conceived as a pyramidal structure with twenty–five Bodhisattva at the base. These were headed by seven *mānuṣī* or mortal Buddhas, who in turn were presided over by five *dhyāni* or meditating Buddhas. And finally at the apex of the pantheon stood, like a paramount power, the richly dressed and ornamented Vajrasattva<sup>(32)</sup>. The pyramid obviously represented a divine social ladder providing for four rungs of Buddhist gods<sup>(33)</sup>. Esoteric Buddhism is a direct response to the feudalization of Indian society during the period under review, a response that involves the sacralization of much of the period of social world. The monks and yogins in Esoteric system configures his practice through the metaphor of becoming the overland of a maṇḍala of vassals, and issues of scripture, language and community reflect the political and social models employed in the surrounding feudal society.

This arrangement of pantheons can also be explained in terms of the feudalistic structure of the society existing during the period under review, where the number of peasants is more than the landlords. In the same, the smaller icons of the pantheon out number the larger one. One such image is installed in Patna museum. It shows an image of Tārā centered in the

middle and surrounded by large, medium and small sizes of the icons, where number of small size icons is more than the larger one. These pantheons indicate the nature of the household and social stratifications that were emerging during this period.

Maṇḍalas with eight Bodhisattvas surrounding or flanking a centre deity appear in sculpture as early as the 6<sup>th</sup> Century A. D., as evident in a terracotta plaque from Uttar Pradesh now in Metropolitan Museum in New York<sup>(34)</sup>. There are four surviving sculptural maṇḍalas at Ratnagiri and in each case there are eight Bodhisattvas on the back-slab, four aligned vertically on either side of the centre figure to suggest that the Maṇḍala concept is fully developed. Donaldson in figure 142–143 of his book has shown this concept of Maṇḍala. Fig 25 & Fig 25A. In an another example from Ratnagiri, the large centre deity is Buddha / Vairocaṇa displaying *dharmacakra–mudrā* while the four flanking Bodhisattvas are Lokeśvara, Maitreya, Mañjuśrī and Vajrapāṇi, the four who most often serve as companions to Buddha in various combinations. Fig 25B. Each Bodhisattva is seated in *ardhaparyāṅka* with one arm resting on their raised knee. The most popular sculptural mandals, however consist of a large centre deity, generally a Tathāgata or a form of Mañjuśrī



surrounded by eight bodhisattvas, four on either side arranged vertically one above the other<sup>(35)</sup>. Thus the tantric monastic organizations and divine pantheon were modeled after the social and administrative hierarchy that characterized the feudal system by eight Century A. D. and later.

Another important element that was introduced by Tāntrika Buddhism was its emphasis on the female counterpart though the cult of mother goddess had long been prevalent in India, but by Sixth Century A. D. it acquired an outstanding place in literature and other written traditions of the Buddhist and Brahmanical sects. The aboriginal mother goddess came to be worshipped in the form of śakti in Hinduism and Tārā in Buddhism. Śaktism emerged as a religious factor in 6<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. and became a strong force from 9<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. onwards<sup>(36)</sup>. This Śaktism may be called Śakti-worship or worship of female energy or association with co-efficient female partner in spiritual effort. The consensus of opinion among the acknowledged scholars<sup>(37)</sup> is that Śakti-sādhana is the essence of Tantra, whether Hinduistic or Buddhistic. Theravada Mahāyāna iconography consists exclusively of male Buddhas and Bodhisattvas but in Vajrayāna form they are depicted with their Shaktis. According to the

Buddhist Tantras, the unity of male and 'female' is the supreme truth which is known as *yab–yum* in Tibetan. In Hevajatantra it is given that "twofold is the innate (sahaja) for wisdom is the woman and means is the man"<sup>(38)</sup>. In Buddhist esoterism the term "prajñā" stands for female counterpart. The term 'Śakti' is also used in some esoteric texts<sup>(39)</sup>. According to Gopinātha Kavijrāja "Tāntrika worship is the worship of Śakti". From the Buddhist standpoint prajñā is essentially a form of Śakti<sup>(40)</sup>. The shrines of mother goddess may have existed from a much earlier date in Brahmanical tradition but they were accorded a regular place only from Sixth Century A. D. onwards. Once the shrines of mother goddesses were established in the peripheral areas, attempts were made to legitimise them through Sanskrit text, both Buddhist and Brahmanical. The Hevajatantra mentions four holy pīṭhas, which can be identified with Jalandhar Oḍḍiyāna (in Swat valley), Paurṇagiri and Kāmarūpa<sup>(41)</sup>.

Testimony to the increasing importance of woman during this period is evident from textual accounts where various male deities are provided with female companion in *Maṇḍala* configurations, as in the *Mahāvairoconābhisambodhi*, for example which lists four for Avalokiteśvara, three for Vajrapāni and five for Mañjuśri among the twenty goddesses and four

female door guards mentioned, and the *Āryamañjuśrīmūlakalpa* which lists six for Avalokiteśvara and four for Vajrapāṇi<sup>(42)</sup>. Thus in Buddhist literature, not only the Buddhas but also the Bodhisattvas are associated with Śaktis or female co-efficients. We find Vajrasattva often represented in *yab–yum* posture, in tight embrace with his *yogini* touching all the vital points of contact<sup>(43)</sup>. So is the case with Heruka and Nairātmā<sup>(44)</sup>. The images of these goddesses are fleshy, youthful and sensuous. The purely Tantric gods were invariably accompanied with their Śaktis, who were sometimes given a separate seat in sculptures, sometimes the same seat, sometimes a seat on the lap of gods, and sometimes they were represented in actual embrace of gods. The sober form of Tantra generally adopted the first three courses. But the most thorough going form worshipped the gods in the embrace, in union with their Śaktis, or as Tibetans describe it in *yab–yum*. The women during period were held in high respect during this period. It is clearly visible through the iconography and cult of mother goddess during this period<sup>(45)</sup>.

In a sculpture from Nālandā which is presented in Indian Museum Calcutta, Samvara is portrayed with its Śakti vajravārahī. According to *Sādhanmālā*, Samvara bears skull crescent and Akṣobhya on his head crown and uses necklace of

several heads. He stands in *ālīḍhamudrā* trampling upon Bhairava and Kālaratri. He carries vajra and *ghaṇṭā*<sup>(46)</sup>. In the sculpture mentioned here the god and goddess are seated in *vajraparyāṅkamudrā* in tight embrace. The god probably is eight armed, but the sword and other attributes are not recognizable. His fore hands around the body of goddess exhibit *vajrahunkāramudrā*. The goddess with a sow-face appears to be vajravārhi. She is two armed holding a sword in right and shield? in left hand. It is believed that Samvara and vajravārahī are a yuganaddha or *yab-yum* form of Heruka. Saraswati has based the identification on Abhidhānottara, the Sādhanamālā (Sādhanā Nos. 252, 253 and 255) and the Niṣpannayogāvali (p-24) and Chakrasambaratantra and Vajrayāne Pūjavidhi. The sculpture is unique but its details are not clear owing to the unfinished or rough type of chiseling of the stone<sup>(47)</sup>.

Similarly in an image from Nālandā, Jambhāla is shown with his right leg pendant and wearing *utpalamāla* he shares seat with *yakshinī* Vasudhārā seated to his proper right. She carried a purse? or an indistinct object in right, rests left hand on the seat in sayanasana and right leg on spiral object at the pedestal. An image of Jambhāla with Hārīti has also been

discovered from Bihar; it belongs to 9<sup>th</sup> Century A.D and is presently installed in Indian Museum, Calcutta Fig 9C.

All these changes in Buddhist religion and society of the period had a deep impact on the literature of the early medieval period. This period was marked by social hierarchy, pomp, show, vanity and splendor which were reflected in the literature also. Kosambi considers the combination of sex and religion to be distinctive feature of feudal literature<sup>(48)</sup>. Sexual union came to be interpreted spiritually as union with the supreme divine power. According to the vajrayani Tāntrikas, the realization of supreme knowledge, which amounted to supreme bliss, lay in the sexual union of the male and female<sup>(49)</sup>. Inverted spiritualism was thus used to justify eroticism in both art and literature<sup>(50)</sup>.

In general the position of women had improved during this period. Apart from images of Buddhist goddesses along with their counter parts, we also find various independent images of these female divnities in several forms. As the supreme goddess of Vajrayāna pantheon, Tārā holds a position second only to Buddha and thus occupied a position similar to that of Durga in the Hindu pantheon. In each, as noted by

S. K. Saraswati, “the Indian belief in the feminine principle as an active force in the universe finds recognition in the fullest measure”, and each “manifests herself in innumerable form, benign as well as terrific”<sup>(51)</sup>.

The influence of Tāntrika Buddhism on Buddhist art is evidenced by prominent place occupied by the female divinities. This period features a fascinating and divine array of female divinities. The pantheon is dazzling in its breadth encompassing voluptuous true spirits, maternal nurtures, exalted wisdom figures, compassionate healers, powerful protector cosmic mothers of liberation, Goddesses preside over child birth, agriculture, prosperity, longevity, art, music, learning, love magic and occult practices. There are goddesses who offer protection from epidemics, snakebite, demons, curses, untimely death and every mortal danger. There are also goddesses who support practitioners in their pursuit of knowledge, mental purification, a higher rebirth and full spiritual awakening<sup>(52)</sup>. Thus we find a prominent place occupied by divinities like Tārās of various forms and colours, Paṇḍarī, Māricī, Nairātmā, Hārīti, Bhṛkuṭī , Ekajaṭā, vajravarāhī<sup>(53)</sup> etc. Iconographic details of some of these have already been discussed in the Chapter - IV “**Sculpture**”. Due to the tantric

element in Buddhist religion these images exhibited different mudrās and āsanās. These figures were made exceedingly beautiful and highly sensuous. The heavy round breasts and bulging hips over emphasized the femininity of female figurines. This sensuous suggestiveness of a really spiritual mood was due at the bottom to an inner experience of erotic nature derived from sexual yoga or Tantrik inspiration. The tantric ideas including the Śakti worship greatly influenced the Brahmanical faith, and the Hindu divinities represented in the art hardly display any difference from the Buddhist ones excepting in their attributes and vehicles.

Early medieval period was marked with a striking development and that was the revival of Brahmanical religion. The growth of Brahmanical cults like those of the Bhāgvatas and Śaivas and re-establishment of varṇāśramadharmā during the period under review had a declining influence on Buddhism. Due to the progress of Buddhism in India, Brāhmanism seems to have suffered a set back during centuries immediately preceding and following Christian era. In order to fortify the sanctity and authority of Vedas, to make varṇas, āsramas and their respective dharmas more powerful several attempts were made by the priestly class of Brāhmanas. Several devices such

as *vrata*, *upavāsas*, *samskāras* are perceivable in the literature of Gupta and post Gupta period. The *Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa* teaches that it is absolutely necessary for every person to lead a householder's life to be free from debt to his piṭrs, before he could join the *smṇyāsa*<sup>(54)</sup>. In this way Brāhmanism was fortified during this period to counter the growth of Buddhism. The mounting tide of anti-Buddhist propaganda in Brahmanical literature seems to have reached its apex in the hands of the famous Śaṅkarācārya (cir. 788 A. D). His debt to Buddhist thought has been well recognized by modern scholars, and while his works justify the epithet of 'crepto Buddhist' (*pracchanna bauddha*) he himself, notwithstanding, describes, Buddhist systems as '*Vaināśika*' or '*Sarva-Vaināśika*', and regards Madhyamaka philosophy as unworthy of consideration<sup>(55)</sup>. Thus far *odium theologicum*<sup>(56)</sup>, Śaṅkara's biographies tell us that the great guru led a religious expedition against the Bauddhas and caused their destruction from Himalayas to the Indian Ocean<sup>(57)</sup>.

Besides the Brahmanical hostility, Buddhism had its own reasons for decline. Bhauabhuti has nicely and rather novelly brought to light the lapses that had sapped the strength of Buddhism and paved the way for its merger into Brahmanical religion. He presents Saudaminī, a favourite sisya



of Kōmandakī, later on who became a devout disciple of Aghora–ghaṇṭa, and attained miraculous power by practicing penances, spells, mystic diagrams and incantations at Śrīparvata<sup>(58)</sup>, which was a celebrated centre for esoteric activity<sup>(59)</sup>. And the power that Saudaminī attained enabled her to fly in the air<sup>(60)</sup>. She also paid tribute to lord Śiva known as Suvarnabindu<sup>(61)</sup>. But far from censuring her for the act of apostasy, Kōmandakī, only praised her thus, ‘you are the mistress of yogis’<sup>(62)</sup>; you hold the treasure of merits, your miraculous powers are covetable and you alone are fit to be adorned by the world on account of your deeds which surpass even those of the Bodhisattva<sup>(63)</sup>.

The above account throws light on the drastic changes and laxities which were brought about in Buddhism. It acquaints us with the fact that it had become too close to the Brahmanical religion to save its separate entity. In fact Buddhism became a refined Brāhmanism during this period. The common patronage enjoyed of Buddhism and Hinduism by kings of that period may have made possible for both Buddhism and the Hindus to borrow heavily from each other.

Besides it on account of the growing supremacy of the faith, Brahmanical deities were incorporated into the tantric pantheon. Ādi Buddha and 'Prajñāpāramitā' were Buddhistic concept on the line of Brahmā and Māyā of Brāhmanism. The puranic gods namely Ganapati and Sarasvatī got a place in Buddhism. The Sādhanā<sup>(65)</sup> for Ganapati agrees with the representation of Gaṇeśa of Hindu pantheon. According to Bhattacharya, "the conception of gods and goddesses in puranic literature was so attractive that the Buddhists in latter times could not help the idea of incorporating god head in their religion, and when they did this they defied all important personalities of Buddhism together with deflection of large number of Buddhistic ideas and philosophical concepts along with purely Hindu gods<sup>(66)</sup>. Many such images have been found in Bengal<sup>(67)</sup>. But the most important adoption of Buddhist deity by Hindu was Buddha himself who was regarded as ninth incarnation of Vishnu in Hindu pantheon<sup>(68)</sup>. Buddha had penetrated into the Indian mind so deeply that he could not be neglected, even after the decline of Buddhism, and this acceptance Buddha as an incarnation had been accomplished probably in sixth Century A. D.

The Mātsya reads thus -

*Matsyaḥ Kūrmo varāhaśca nārasimhōtha vamaṇaḥ //*  
*rāmo rāmaśca kṛṣṇaśca buddhaḥ kalki iti ca kramāt //*

Buddha as a god occurs in Bhāgavat. A hymn of 9<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. saint Nammalwar also points to the popularity of Buddha avatāra in south India<sup>(69)</sup>. This strong similarity between both the religions during this period can be gleaned in the field of plastic and metallic art alike. Before Buddha was taken as incarnation of Vishnu, his icons were not prepared in fashion of Hindu god. The adoption of Kirīṭa Mukuṭa<sup>(70)</sup> of Vishnu in the image of Buddha<sup>(71)</sup> is a positive proof of artistic imitation. In these images Buddha is shown wearing a crown and a necklace, such images are common in Benaras, Bihar and Bengal. Such images wearing crown have been found in Indian museum. Fig 6 & 6A.

One more image of crowned Buddha has been found lying in the courtyard of Sun temple at Baragaon. Here Buddha is represented in yoga pose. In this particular image Buddha image is fully ornamented and is shown wearing a crown. He is depicted with that entire worldly attribute which was discarded

by him at the time of renunciation. The crown and the jewel not only proclaim his power as chakravartin or universal sovereign , but are intended to suggest that state of radiant splendor or transfiguration attained at the supreme moment of enlightenment<sup>(72)</sup>.

Yet another distinguishing feature of Buddhist art during this period was the tendency to represent gods and goddesses with many faces and arms. This tendency may be attributed to Tāntrika influence on one hand and Brahmanical influence on the other. Mahāyanāsūtra described Avalokiteśvara not only with the attributes of Brahmanical gods like Śiva and Brahmā, but also having eleven heads, a hundred thousand arms and incalculable eyes<sup>(73)</sup>. Goddesses like – Tārā, Parṇaśvarī, Māricī, Nairātmā, Hārīti, Bhṛkuṭi, Ēkajaṭā, vajravarāhī etc are shown with many arms<sup>(74)</sup>. Many such images have already been discussed in Chapter – IV “**Sculpture**”. The image of eleven headed Avalokiteśvara described as ‘Ekadasasira’ in ‘*Gunakaranadavyuha*’ may be the conversion of eleven violent gods of vedic age, the Ekadasa Rudra of Brāhmanism. This literary evidence is also corroborated by artistic testimony also. Fig 26. An image of Trailokvijaya with many arms is installed in Indian Museum Calcutta Acc. No. 4552/A24365

Buddhist Tāntricism embraced Indian ideas of spiritual manifestation and emanation. Avalokiteśvara in his tantric form has as many as 108 different manifestations and most celebrated of these are Padampāṇi and Lokeśvara. Thus in the words of B. Bhattacharya “The Hindus say that the number of their deities is thirty three crores, and it seems that Buddhists can claim a similar figure. One single deity may have innumerable forms according to the number of hands, the number of faces, the number of legs. He will differ, again, according to the colour, according as he is worshipped in different Maṇḍalas; the number of which it is not very easy matter to ascertain. He will differ again according as he is invoked in different tantric rites, according to his companions, in accordance with the Āsanas, and different weapons that are held in his hands. A permutation and combination of these different categories will give innumerable forms to a single deity”<sup>(75)</sup>. Thus the Tāntricism and this Brahmanical influence laid emphasis on image Worship, rituals, room for emotional demands of laity and in doing so it brought both the religions so close that there was hardly any difference left between them. To a laymen and laywomen of India, there was no difference between the worship of Visnu and Buddha of Śiva and Avalokita of Tārā and Pārvatī<sup>(76)</sup>. In two images of Orrisa this

intermingling of Buddhism and Hinduism can be clearly seen in one image which belongs 9/10<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. Harītī is transformed into Pārvati holding Gaṇēśa while in the second one Buddha is transformed into Śiva with serpent ornaments. It also belongs to 9–10<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. This intermingling of Buddhism and Hinduism can clearly seen in Fgs 38–39 of Donaldson’s book *Iconography of the Buddhist Sculptures of Orissa* Fig 27 & Fig 27A.

Thus the distinction between Hinduism and Buddhism was narrowed down during this period and Brāhmanism was incorporated into Buddhism or vice-versa. But it was only one side of the coin. In reality it was a period of competitive rivalry between the two for patronage as wells for converts. It was a period dominated by sakta/Tantra concepts incessant experimentation with new and esoteric form of deities created to meet the changing needs of the society. According to a scholar “A close study of images and also liturgical literature it is apparent that the Mahāyān ists were determined to win over the masses saturated with Brahmanical concepts by bringing the religion within their reach and conceding to them what they expected from Brahmanical deities, even though such a concession could require a radical change in the religion”<sup>(78)</sup>.

According to her Mahāyānists and afterwards Vajrayonists, in order to make their religion attractive and acceptable to maximum number of people “introduced the Buddhist counterparts of the Brahmanical and fold deities who would bestow on votaries what the latter so long got or expected from Brahmanical gods and goddesses and fold divinities.

Though the Brahmanical deities like Vishnu, Brahma, Indra, Mahakal, Kubera, Yama, Sarswati etc were incorporated into the Buddhist sphere, they were only subservient to the Buddha and other Buddhist superhuman beings<sup>(79)</sup>. They were not considered to be immortal as believed by Brahmanical people, but as impermanent and subject to death<sup>(80)</sup> and they were denied the quality of providing the worshippers with salvation. They were given the role of protecting the Buddha and the like, nay, they were considered to be the guardians of Buddhist faith. In Vajrayāna Buddhism attempts were made by the Buddhists to show superiority over the Hindu gods. In Hindu pantheon, Gaṇeśa is considered as ‘Siddhidata’ or ‘Bestover of success’ and as a god he occupied the foremost position among Hindu gods, but Buddhists assigned the lowest position to this god in their pantheon. For example, the icons such as Parnasbari, Apārajitā and

Vighnantaka etc. in Indian museum and Baroda museum are portrayed in such a way the Gaṇeśa was trampled by Buddhist deities<sup>(81)</sup>. This shows the animosity of Buddhists towards Hindu gods.

While dealing with the syncretistic icons in Indian art, Banerjee observed “In the whole history of religious developments in India there might not have been many instances of intense hatred and violent strife between the members of rival sects as are to be found in the religious history of Europe. But these sectarian animosities of the Indians found vent through the milder channels of the concoction of mythological stories and construction of interesting images in illustration thereof”<sup>(82)</sup>. In spite of this it remains a fact that during these period many Hindu gods got a position in Buddhist creed though a subordinate position.

Apārajitā is an interesting Buddhist goddess who is projected as trampling over Gaṇeśa. A short Sādhanā is devoted to her worship in Sādhanmālā. One of her hands is raised in attitude of dealing a slap, while her parasol, according to Sādhanā is held by Brahma and other Brahmanical gods. Nālandā museum<sup>(83)</sup> preserves a fragmentary image of the goddess



showing only the Lower half of the images, which can be identified with Apārajitā. In this case the figure to the right of the goddess appears to be that of Indra and the rod held by him seems to be handle of a parasol, required to be held over her head by Brahma. A complete, though mutilated, image of goddess is preserved in Indian Museum Calcutta<sup>(84)</sup>. This image confirms to description of Sādhana<sup>(85)</sup>.

A recently excavated image of Apārajitā at Udayagiri has been mentioned by Donaldson. In this image Fig 22, the head and right arm is broken off. She assumes strongly flexed *alīḍha* pose with her left foot planted on the back of a prostrate Gaṇeśa. Apārajitā wears a *Śaṭi* decorated with oblique bands and fastened with a chain like girdle. She is richly adorned; her left hand almost broken is in tarjanī mudrā. She is flanked by attendants on either side. Both attendants are female and have their hair matted in a bun on top of their head. This image can be dated to mid 8<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. <sup>(86)</sup>

Thus the Buddhists in order to display their aversion to the followers of Brahaminical faith, made their gods trample upon Gaṇeśa and showed their animosity against Hindu god Gaṇeśa and him the epithet of *Bighna* or obstacle. But this

bitterness against Hinduism was showed by no other sect in India and the Buddhists had to heavily pay for this callousness by becoming most unpopular faith on the land of its birth.

Another striking development during this period in Buddhist art was the introduction of wrathful deities in the Buddhist pantheon. Buddhism as propounded by Buddha, was clearly anti-Brāhmanism and opposition to castes, it vastly differed from vedic-Hinduism in its anti dogmatism, rationalism and social ethics that greatly appealed to privileged class, but Vajrayāna incorporated within itself many non-Buddhist and seemingly offensive tantric elements. The serene and tolerant religion of Buddha was replaced by the sexual and wrathful deities in *anuttarayogatantra*.

There may be many reasons for the introduction of wrathful deities, one of the most important may have been the rivalry between Hinduism and Buddhism. The Śaivas showed aggressive rivalry against the Buddhists which was not tolerated by Buddhists and they too in turn became hostile towards Hinduism and as a result expressed their feelings through these terrific sculptures. It was also a period of political upheaval, anarchy and confusion and people believed in survival of the

fittest. Buddhist must have thought to dominate over Brāhmanism through these terrific divinities.

These deities find expression even in the literature of the period. Esoteric Buddhist sources suggest that intimate acquaintance with the wrathful brutal aspects of life is a prerequisite to wisdom. The Hevajratāntra states “the six faculties of sense, their six spheres of operation, the five skandhas and the five elements are pure in essence, but they are obstructed by ignorance (*avidya*) and emotional disturbance (*Klesa*). Their purification consists in self experience and by no other means purification may one be released”<sup>(87)</sup>. Such passages suggest that the wrathful iconography of the *Krodha-vighāntaka* is ultimately linked with self experience that is with our own inner state. Linrothe summarises similar textual passages when he writes that *Krodha-vighāntaka* are the “metaphors for the internal yogic practices employed to gain enlightenment”<sup>(88)</sup>. The *Savatathagatattvasaṃgraha*, a ca. mid Seventh Century A. D. text that Linrothe cites as primary example of Esoteric Buddhism, ha Mahavairocaṇa states that Trailokvijaya is “specially commissioned and equipped to perform these necessary tasks the Tathāgat connect perform with only peaceful means”<sup>(89)</sup>.

The wrathful deity theme proves to be much more efficient in profiling the distinct character of evolving esoteric Buddhism. According to R. A. Ray “the integration and hierarichal arrangement of the (Maṇḍalas) terrible deities (Indicates) not only their fundamental importance to the tantric process of transformation but also the different stages of awareness bound up with this process”<sup>(90)</sup>. The theme of the wrathful deities apart from its value for the historical study of Esoteric Buddhism is of interest in other ways for the history of religion ideas and art. The forms found in Esoteric Buddhist images seen to share a great deal with other traditions of “grotesque” in that as a “species of confusion” they violate the expectations of reason and natural order<sup>(91)</sup>. According to P .H. Pott, one of the two significant and distinctive aspects of Mahāyāna iconography is “the demonizing of its most effective figures”<sup>(92)</sup>.

In Buddhist art of this period majority of images represent fierce and angry looking deities who accupy an important place in Tāntrika texts especially in Sādhnas. A unique image of Buddha-kāpāla is preserved in the Baroda Museum. It is a terrific posture, “with three blood-shot eyes rolling in anger distorted face, canine teeth, ornaments made of

bones, a garland of severed heads<sup>(93)</sup> and an attitude of menacing dance”. In the *Sādhanmālā* he is described in an embrace with his Śakti (*Prajñālingitaṃ*)<sup>(94)</sup>. Among other wrathful deities of the period are Yamātaka, Hayagrīva, Trailokvijaya, Heruka, Samvara and Hevajara, Mahākāla.

Mention may be made in this connection a unique bronze image in Indian Museum Calcutta, with four heads and twelve arms which bears a very strong affinity to Trailokvijaya. It represents a man standing in the posture of an archer (*Pratyālīdhapadam*) on the breast of a male and the female lying prostrate but not in actual coitus as in case of Tailokvijaya in Brahmanical monastery at Bodh Gaya<sup>(95)</sup>. The god holds thunder bolt (vajra) in right hand in front of the heart. One left hand holds pāśa and the feet rests on the hearts of a prostrate male and female. This image displays an aggressive and militant form of Buddhist symbolic of the degenerate phase.

Māhakāla is also a terrifying deity in Buddhist pantheon. He is described in *Sādhanmālā* and *Niṣpannayogāvali*. One miniature image of this deity has been found from Nālandā. Here the god is standing in *pratyālīdha* pose. Having a *Jaṭāmukuṭā*, his right hand is shown in pose of

holding a vajra. He is wearing a tiger skin (vyāghracarma) as his lower garment. Belly is tied with a snakes belt. The left hand is shown in (*Tarjanī mudrā*). Another image of Māhakāla has also been found from Vikramsila and Ratnagiri. The image at Ratnagiri is pot bellied with three heads that stands in *ālīḍha* trampling on a male and female figure, now this image is installed in Patna Museum<sup>(96)</sup>. Thus these images whether hailed from Nālandā or Ratnagiri testify the influence of Kalchakrayana on Buddhist art.

Thus it is apparent from texts and from concentrations of archaeological remains that Esoteric Buddhism found a home in the monastic institutions of eastern India during the period of 8<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. through the 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. , after which Indian Buddhism declined sharply<sup>(97)</sup>. In spite of decline in Buddhism during this period Buddhist art was not affected in any way, the only change that took place in its art was its Tāntrika form which was deeply rooted in India during this period. It was also a period when Buddhists busied themselves with producing a large number of tantric literatures, and during this tantric age a large number of works were written. Later on due to the religious zeal of the Buddhist missionaries, these works were readily transmitted

through the Himalayan passes to China, Tibet Mongolia, Nepal and Japan and their influence made a large section of the population believe in gross magic and superstition<sup>(98)</sup>

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## **CHAPTER – 6**

### **CONCLUSION**

Our study of “Socio–religious background of early medieval Buddhist art (700 AD to 1200 AD)” covers certain important aspects of society existing during the period under review without which it is almost impossible to have a clear picture of Buddhist art and the conditions which effected it, during early medieval India. After touching all the major aspects such as social, religion, economy and polity of early medieval India, one may conclude that society and religion of any period are like a mirror through which we can peep into the art of any period or vice-versa.

Early medieval India was in fact a transitional phase marked by the change and continuity in the societal processes. The feudal structure existing during this period was based on a dominant class of landlords and a subject class of peasantry. This feudalism went a long way in shaping up the nature of state in early medieval India. The increasingly frequent land and

village grants, which transferred the control of agrarian resources and the exercise of administrative and Judicial powers to the beneficiaries, undermined the sovereign authority and led to the growth of a hereditary, hierarchized and feudalized state apparatus based on an unequal distribution of land.

Feudalism created a system of hierarchy between the landlords and the peasants. This landed hierarchy started as a trait of Indian society with the rise of varṇas. This landed hierarchy was articulated through the medium of art and architecture of the period. The Buddhist sculptures which belonged to pre Gupta period did not show much difference in the size of different divinities in a panel. Thus the Jātaka panels of Sanchi, Bharhut, Gaya and Amrāvati do not show much difference in the size of the images present on them. While on the contrary the images in the period under review show a marked difference in the sizes.

Another striking development in the religion during this period was decline of Buddhism and revival of Brāhmanism. Moral and ethical degeneracy of Buddhists is seen by some scholars as one of the most important causes of the decline of Buddhism. (K. W. Morgan, 1956:48; R. C.Mitra,

1954:2) Even the earliest Buddhist texts divulge an awareness of proclivity towards dereliction and iniquity with the *Samgha* that grew to the point where large numbers of monks were garnering individual or community wealth and engaging in several other indiscretions. Jātakas also acknowledge that some people entered the *Samgha* because they found living easier inside the *Samgha* than on the outside. (*Jātaka* I :311) A young man in one of the *Jātaka* stories say: "Day and night I am toiling away with my own hands at all sorts of tasks, yet never do I taste food so sweet. I must turn Brother myself." Some renowned monasteries are known to have issued their own seals and coins.<sup>(1)</sup> Monasteries even started owning land, village, pasturage and cattle etc. for the maintenance of their residential monks. (P. Niyogi, 1973:535) Chinese travellers Faxian, Ijing and Xuan Zang talk about the feudal character of monastic institutions which had considerable real property and assets.<sup>(2)</sup> Big monasteries with their own property of various kinds were able not only to attain self-sufficiency, but were also a position to extend their power and influence in their respective localities.<sup>(3)</sup> There are also references to Buddhist monks visiting sex-workers, consuming alcoholic drinks, working as match-makers, indulging in theft, robbery and farming.<sup>(4)</sup> It was a period during which Buddhism transformed completely into a

new faith and the basic reason for this transformation was the emergence of Tantrik religion. The salient features of religious ideas and practices of the previous age continued during this period. But the relative importance of different religious sects underwent much change. Hinduism in the form of Śaivism and Vaishnavism began to dominate the field. Both Buddhism and Jainism and especially Buddhism lost its hold on the land of its birth. The growth of Tantrik practices in Buddhism led to its downfall. Historically Esoteric Buddhism usually described as tantric Buddhism, was the last phase of Buddhism in India.

Tāntricism was a response to the social, economic and religious conditions existing during the period under review. On one hand it included women and sudras, and on the other hand it also recognized the social and feudal hierarchy. It was open to all the sections of the society, irrespective of Varna, sex and other considerations.

A systematic and thorough study of a subject largely depends on the searches available for its study. After utilizing the Archaeological as well as the literary sources of the period, it was quite clear that literary sources especially the Tāntrika literature written during that period were of great help for my

topic. Literature of any period is very important for the study of art during that period. According to Alice Getty ‘the most accurate source of information in regard to the Northern Buddhist divinities has been found in the Sādhanā, or texts of invocations of the gods, in which they are described with much detail’. Buddhist texts like Sādhanmālā, Niṣpannayogāvali , Guhyasamāja Tantra etc brought to light a vast literature to explain various Buddhist iconic types and to help tracing out the multifarious factors and problems involved in the process of evolution of the concepts underlying them. Sādhanā, (“realization”), in Hindu and Buddhist Tantrism, spiritual exercise by which the practitioner evokes a divinity, identifying and absorbing it into himself—the primary form of meditation in the Tantric Buddhism. Sādhanā involves the body in mudrās (sacred gestures), the voice in mantras (sacred utterances), and the mind in the vivid inner visualization of sacred designs and the figures of divinities. Detailed instructions on how the images are to be visualized and the appropriate mantra for each are contained in written Sādhanās of most divinities. One such collection is the *Sādhanamālā* (Sanskrit: “Garland of Realization”), composed perhaps between the 5<sup>th</sup> and the 11<sup>th</sup> Century A. D. This collection of some 300 Sādhanās includes those designed

for various practical results as well as those intended to further spiritual realization. The written Sādhanās also serve to instruct sculptors and painters. The mastery of visualizing the divinities in order of increasing complexity requires hours of practice each day for a period of years. In the resultant state of consciousness, such concepts as the illusory nature of phenomena and one's identity with the ultimate are said to become experiential realities. Even the modern research works went a great way in dealing with my topic.

Archaeological sources such as inscriptions, Excavated sites and sculptures of the period clearly indicate that this period was not totally devoid of Buddhist art. A survey of the sites shows that Buddhist art flourished especially in Eastern India during this period. The available sculptures belonging this period in South India also suggests that even south was an active centre of Mahāyānism and Tāntrika Buddhism during early medieval period. Some famous Vajrayāna Buddhist centers during this period were Ratnagiri, Lalitagiri, Udayagiri, Nagapattanam, Salihundam, Dhānyakaṭaka, Kollapattu etc.

Though it was a period of political upheaval still we can see that artistic activity continued during the period in some

form or the other. Regarding the Buddhist Architecture and Painting of the period very few examples are available but they are sufficient to throw light on the artistic skill of the period. Buddhist architecture which emerged slowly in the period following Buddha's life absorbed a great deal of foreign elements along its course of travel and modified its form to acclimatize to the local conditions.

The surviving examples of stupas belonging to this period show that the simple stupas of earlier period became more ornate, the base, terraces and umbrellas were multiplied. Due to the changes in the religious practices the stupas were transformed into chaitya-grihas. These reached their high point in structure, Mahabodhi temple at Bodhgaya is a well known example for it. The only structural example so far discovered in India showing the transformation of Buddhist stupa into a temple is the one at Nālandā monastery. It is made of brick and ornamented in stucco and consists of medieval stupa square on plan, with a small shrine chamber in front for the image of Buddha. Even the monasteries during this period underwent a great change, the monastic cells of the earlier period culminated into large universities such as Nālandā monastery, Vikramsila, and Odantpuri and the construction of these Mahāviharās was

an outcome of several mega projects, most likely sponsored by contemporary rulers. The complex Tantrik rituals of Vajrayāna led to the incorporation of stupas and image chapels in Buddhist monasteries. These monastic universities or Mahāviharās were devoted to the religious and scholastic pursuits of Theravada, Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna subjects.

Literary references alone prove that painting was very highly developed art in ancient India. But unfortunately very few paintings belonging to the period under review has been found. As it was a period of emergence of Tāntrika Buddhism, growth of *dhāranīs* and *mantras*, popularity of spells and charms, cult of Avalokita and Tārā worship of female deities. More concentration was laid on iconography as compares to other fields of art such as painting and architecture.

Vajrayāna or Esoteric Buddhism during this period had long lasting impact on the Buddhist iconography of the period. Keen observations of the sculptures of the period give us an insight into the life of the people during that period. The increasing Hinduistic manifestation in the plurality of divinities, worship, ritualism and litany had already considerably weakened the original impulse and pristine purity of Buddhism



and with the introduction of Tāntricism in Buddhist quarters, the process of decline seems to have been quickened. Tāntricism narrowed down the difference between Hinduism and Buddhism. This change in Buddhist religion could be felt through the Buddhist iconography. The cult of mother goddess was given importance in Buddhism during this period. In Tāntrika Buddhist literature, not only the Buddhas but also the Bodhisattvas were associated with Śaktis or female co-efficients. Since Buddhism was totally influenced by Brāhmanism during the period under review prominent place was occupied by female divinities like, Prajñāparamita, Tārās of various colours and forms Parṇaśvarī, Māricī, Nairātmā, Hārīti, Bhr̥kuṭi , Ekajaṭā, vajravarāhī etc. Buddhist tantras were quite identical with the Śivaite and Śākta Tantras. The Śākta piṭhas became equally important and holy places for Hindu and Buddhist tantrikists. The only difference between the Śākta and Buddhist tantras concerning the female element is that in the Buddhist tantras and in the Esoteric Buddhist art the female (yum) or prajna is represented embraced by an active male aspect or god. In Śākta tantras the posture is reversed Sakti is an active element and god is passive. This introduction of female element in Buddhist art made the sculptures exceedingly beautiful and highly charming, almost to the point of

sensuousness. The heavy round breasts and bulging hips over emphasize the femininity of the female figures.

The feudal hierarchy an important feature of the society could be seen in the sculptures of the period. In early medieval Buddhist art the figure of the main deity occupied the central position. Attendant figures or the accompanying figures are placed on separate miniature lotus pedestal in lower grades of reliefs. The *prabhavali* or the *halo* is generally depicted behind the main figure. The idea of social inequality and landed hierarchy was expressed through the religious art of the period. Some early medieval inscriptions represent the relation between the king and god in same manner as between the lord and his vassals. According to Benoytosh Bhattacharya “social hierarchy based on four gradations was reflected in the Vajrayāna system of Buddhism, which was popular in north–eastern India during this period. Its pantheon was conceived as a pyramidal structure with twenty five Bodhisattvas at the base. These were headed by seven *Mānuṣī* or mortal Buddhas who in their turn were presided over by five *dhāyanī* or meditating Buddhas. And finally at the apex of the pantheon stood, like a paramount power, the richly dressed and ornamented Vajrasattva”.

The Tāntricism existing during this period had brought within its fold all the religions including Buddhism, which had brought Buddhism quite close to Brāhmanism and it was reflected through other features of Buddhist art during this period. The practice of representing Buddhist god with many heads and arms can be attributed to Tāntrika influence. Avalokiteśvara has been described not only with attributes of Brahmanical gods like Śiva and Brahma, but also having eleven heads, hundred thousand arms and incalculable eyes.

Since it was the age revival of Brāhmanism, several Hindu gods were included in the Buddhist pantheon, but they were given subordinate positions as compared to Buddhist god. Many Hindu deities were shown trampled upon by Buddhist gods and goddesses for example Gaṇeśa. But sometimes they were also given roles parallel to those of Buddhist deities. In a unique image of Hari–Hara from Bihar, the Brahmanical deities like Śiva, Vishnu and Surya are depicted in combination with Buddha. According to Bloch, Bodhgaya was the place where the ninth or the Buddha incarnation of Vishnu first came into existence. Thus we can conclude that Buddhism which initially did not believe in image worship brought within its fold several gods and goddesses, in Buddhist texts like Sādhanmālā etc

during this period, and not only this it also admitted numerous Brahmanical deities like Vishnu, Brahma, Śiva, Gaṇeśa, Indra and Pārvati.

The fierce and angry looking deities also occupy an important place in Tāntrika texts, especially Sādhnās. These deities were given a plastic expression during this period which was in total contrast to the serene and peaceful personality of Buddha. These fearful deities included Yamātaka, Hayagrīva, Mahākāla, Hevajara etc. This feature introduced in Buddhist art was also one of the influence of Tāntricism introduced in Buddhist religion during this period.

Thus the early medieval period gave a new insight to the Buddhist art. The socio-religious impact on the art of the period could easily be felt. Despite the decline that marks Buddhism during early medieval period, it can not be said that it was period of artistic sterility.

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