



A analysis of development of buddhist pilgrimage sites

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Abstract

The prominent places of Buddhism are located in the Northern part of India. This is the area where Gautama Buddha lived and taught and the main sites connected to his life are now important places of pilgrimage for both Buddhist and Hindus. However many countries that are or were predominantly Buddhist have shrines and places which can be visited as a pilgrimage. Pilgrimage meaning as per Oxford Dictionary is a journey to a place of particular interest or significance and a pilgrim's journey. Pilgrimage is actually a special way for physically walking on the path, trodden by the Buddha in the past and taken as an inspiration from these places and the teachings to keep walking on the path by a person who is called the pilgrim.

Keywords: buddhism, patna, rajgir, nalanda, sravasti, vaishali, kurukshetra, sanchi, ratnagiri, and etc

Introduction

The prominent places of Buddhism are located in the Northern part of India. This is the area where Gautama Buddha lived and taught and the main sites connected to his life are now important places of pilgrimage for both Buddhist and Hindus. However many countries that are or were predominantly Buddhist have shrines and places which can be visited as a pilgrimage. Buddhism offers mainly four pilgrim sites, they are Lumbini (Birth place of Buddha), Bodh Gaya (The site where the Buddha attained enlightenment), Saranath (The location of the Buddha's first sermon) and Kushinagar (The site where the Buddha attained parinirvana). Remaining pilgrim sites are at Patna, Rajgir, Nalanda, Sravasti, Vaishali, Kurukshetra, Sanchi, Ratnagiri, and etc.

Pilgrimage meaning as per Oxford Dictionary is a journey to a place of particular interest or significance and a pilgrim's journey. Pilgrimage is actually a special way for physically walking on the path, trodden by the Buddha in the past and taken as an inspiration from these places and the teachings to keep walking on the path by a person who is called the pilgrim. Thus Pilgrim and Pilgrimage is an essential factor on the path of Dhamma, to study the spiritual changes happening in the personality of humans.

Archaeology of Buddhism

The archaeology of Buddhism has been portrayed as the excavation of individual far-flung monuments and the chronological review of literature and regional style. Reports focus on isolated or untouched monuments, and practitioners expose only the brick or stone walls of monuments. Technical studies relate architectural phasing to the exclusion of associated ceramic, small find, and specialist analyses undertaken diligently, and there is a divergence of old and modern techniques when comparing the excavation of Buddhist monuments and prehistoric sites in general.

As a result, scholars in other disciplines rely on textual sources purporting to represent the social and economic context of early Buddhism rather than trying to interpret the results of excavations with the passing of time. This reliance is by no means new, as colonial pioneers also utilized

archaeology to provide evidence for assumptions based on those early textual sources. Many early encounters were amateurish, but their founding assumptions persist, along with explanations, limiting the sophistication of our understanding of early practice in true sense.

However, the archaeology of Buddhism offers the opportunity of tracing divergences between early precept and practices with ultimate reach and investigating the social, cultural, regional and economic transformations that accompanied its establishment. Indeed, Buddhism emerged at the same time as statehood and second urbanization, as well as the creation of mercantile and urban elites, princely clans, merchants, traders whose needs did not match related to established Brahmanical belief or the orthodox caste system.

Furthermore, although much has been written on the life of the Buddha, we have little evidence from this early period, and the date of his Mahaparinibbana as well as the identity of his childhood home are still debated. The archaeology of Buddhism can readdress these lacunae but only through fresh excavations at key sites in a whole to explore, do research and communicate using advanced techniques. Such techniques can also be applied to examine monuments within their landscapes in order to understand their position and function within the networks of social and economic relationships that unified cityscapes with hinterlands within India and Asia continent.

References must be made to the potential in representing the Buddhist ethnographies, which have recorded individual and collective motivations of communities, within the framework of laypeople and noble Sangha. These allow us to develop analogues for the past as well as demonstrating that, far from being conservative; Buddhism has been adaptive, which explains its spread and resilience through its lenses in divergence manner.

Archaeology of Buddhism can provide more than the description of individual monuments as it alone can shed light on the physical character of early ritual practice; it alone can demonstrate how Buddhism interacted with its contemporary period relate to social, cultural, political, economic, and ritual context; and it alone can shed light on what early Buddhists actually did in the phase of 1700 years.

Four themes are significant in the archaeology of Buddhism: the history of archaeology in Asia with reference to Buddhism; defining a chronology for the historical Buddha and sites associated with Buddhism; identifying regional specificities and contexts for Buddhist sites as they emerged across Asia; and finally addressing the issue of interconnectedness and interlink ages between the various sites within the Buddhist Sasana. The active participation of learned monks and nuns in the stūpa cult and their mobility across Asia along with renowned archaeologist and three Chinese pilgrim travelogue which has changed the course of Buddhist archaeology.

Importance of Buddhist Architecture through teachings

The eightfold path shown by the Buddha in the middle of the first millennium BCE was founded on wisdom, morality, and concentration. Like other contemporary Indic religions, Buddha Dhamma had no central organization, nor did it follow a single text as its guiding principle. Its core principle was refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha, though as it expanded across Asia; it absorbed local traditions, responded to historical factors, and evolved philosophically. The physical manifestations of the Dhamma appeared in the archaeological record at least two hundred to three hundred years later, in the form of inscriptions, stūpas, pillars, terracotta, images, and other objects of veneration. Relic and image worship were important factors in the expansion of Buddhism across the subcontinent and into other parts of Asia. As Buddhist Architecture evolved immensely and expanded the geographical boundaries under the patronage of Emperors and the technique was adopted through foreigners in the construction of rock-cut architecture, structural stupa were changing with the time from simply mud and clay to bricks, than baked bricks, later marbles, decorative panels and finally beautifully ornamented vedika. Jatakas and the life time of Buddha in iconic and aniconic form were showcased in different region as per the understanding of the people. Everyone supported towards the replicative architecture closely related to the life of people with the message or teachings of Buddha transmitted through the architecture.

Historical Personality supporting Archaeological Findings

Emperor Asoka journey to Buddhist pilgrimage sites is more important than anyone in the history of Buddhism because these sites signified the connection to Buddha, which he went ahead and constructed pillars. To list them we find pillars at Lumbini, Bodhagaya, Sarnath, Vaishali, Sankissa and Kausambi which has Inscriptions giving information related to importance of these sites during the lifetime of Buddha. The first historical record of performing a pilgrimage is about the great Indian Emperor Asoka, or, as he always referred to himself, Piyadassi, Beloved of Gods. When he was crowned in 270 BCE, becoming the third emperor of the Mauryan dynasty, he inherited a vast empire that stretched from Afghanistan to Bangladesh and included off all India except the southernmost tip and later annexed the present state of Orissa, and then known as Kalinga. We also find Asokan pillars at the birth place of previous Buddha such as Kanakamuni and Krakuchhanda at Nepal region at Niglihawa and Gothihawa these places were also connected to pilgrimage as Asoka visited himself in 249 BC on the occasion of twentieth year of his coronation.

Contribution to be noted here if Emperor Asoka would have personally not visited Lumbini at Nepal Terai region, we would have not able to proclaim Buddha has a human it would have been only myth.

Inscription at Niglihawa: Devanam piyena piyadasin lajina- chodasavasa bhisitena Budhasa Konakamanasa thube-dutyam vadhite Visativa sabhisitena cha atana-agacha-mahiyite silathabe-cha usa papite

Inscription at Lumbini: Devanapiyena Piyadasina lajina visati vas abhisitena atana agacha mahiyite hida Budhe jate Sakyamuni ti silavi gada bhicha kalapita sila thabhe cha usapapite hida Bhagavan jateti Luminini game ubalike kate athabhagiye cha

Pillars can also been traced on the route towards Chamaparan East and West at Bihar, to name them are Rampurva, Lauriya Nandangarh and Lauriya Areraj, these are not directly connected with Buddha, but they are on the routes towards Buddhist sites. Apart from that there is minor rock edicts stating Emperor Asoka was on a journey with his queens, family members, and royal persons an inscribed portrait or relief panel, on it has been found at Sannati, Karnataka depicting the scene. Also a minor edicts stating Emperor Asoka travelling for almost 256 days across places under his kingship from North India to South of Karnataka and writing down inscriptions of his journey and spreading the teachings of Buddhist doctrine to his masses.

Hiuen Tsiang: in his diary Si-Yu-Ki: Buddhist Records of the Western World, of respective places associated with the Buddha's life, we get complete picture from glorious past of Ancient Buddhist India and how famous it had been termed by the name the Light of Asia. His diary is still the best of centuries for any person who is keen in writing about a location which has transformed through ages. It gives a complete overview of not only today's India but the neighbouring countries or we can say undivided India of Emperor Asoka. Diary gives minute details of geographical, climate, settlements, teachings, architecture, language, university's, administration, dynasty, rivers, mountains, countryside's, narrative story's related to Jataka and his personal touch of how he sees the conditions of deserted places which once been a light as a diamond for everyone.

Sir Alexander Cunningham: did not come to the Middle Land as a pilgrim, but much of what the modern pilgrim sees today at Indian Buddhist pilgrimage sites is due to his efforts. Alexander Cunningham came to India in 1833 as a second lieutenant. He saw active service on several occasions, and later distinguished himself as an administrator, surveyor and engineer. During 1833-1885 he had been in India, and in 1861 when the Archaeological Survey of India, was founded he became the first Director General which he continued till 1885 after he returned to England, he dedicated his life for revealing and preserving India's past. He himself published 13 volumes of the reports of the ASI, and also supervised many excavations and preparation of archaeological reports. Sir Alexander Cunningham learned to decipher a large number of ancient scripts; he located or visited an enormous number of sites, surveying many of them; and he developed a truly remarkable knowledge of India's ancient geography, its numismatics and the comparative styles of Indian ancient

sculpture. During the course of time apart from above named pilgrims we get information of renowned scholars. In the 18th Century James Prinsep who has a massive contribution in deciphering and reading out the ancient Brahmi script or Dhamma lipi on Asokan pillars. Apart from him the Religious Scholar who had taken a massive stand at International religious world level forum and Conference was none other than Anagarika Dhammapala for revival of Mahabodhi and Sarnath and other Buddhist places too.

Conclusion

Archaeology has a subject would have not started or opened up any new horizon, if not interlinked with Pali language. Buddhist history would have not been open towards the entire world in the form of torch light in the current situation. We have to be grateful to all the European Archaeologist especially British and German scholars along with Indian Archaeologist, Researchers who all have worked day and night by reading the Tipitaka texts and interpreting through Pali, hybrid Sanskrit, inscriptions and coins legends to decipher this ancient Buddhist India and too be thankful to the Pali Text society who have dedicated their time and energy to translate the texts.

The ancient pilgrims travelogue were essential to focus on the Buddhist archaeological sites; structural along with rock cut sites which are spread across the entire Asian continent of more 84000 stupas, vihara and monasteries of ancient period. This defines archaeology has a medium to develop Buddhist pilgrimage sites at a large scale across India an Asia peripheral. So we has a student or research scholar, academician and faculty need to enhance the archaeology has a subject in our respective university, curriculum interlinking with Pali language to rehydrate, Pali Language Studies, Buddhist Studies and Archaeology Studies all three goes hand in hand an builds a new platform for everyone to rewrite our true Indian history and geography through the perspective of Buddhist archaeological sites.

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