

## Research Article

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# Buddhist Monuments in South-Eastern India: A Study of Forms and Patronage

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**Abstract:** The advent of Buddhism in India is usually dated back to 6th century BCE. Siddhartha Gautama, a Sakya Prince left for quest of truth and reality of life. He was showered with the divine light of enlightenment, then, instead of keeping it to himself, Gautama preferred to enlighten others. The teachings preached and propounded by Gautama Buddha were warmly accepted by a large number of people and emerged as a new school of thought i.e. Buddhism which later turned into a major religion of the world and the Buddhist remains discovered through archaeological investigations help us to reconstruct our past. (Chakrabarti, 2006: 315) It is a well known fact that various the kings of different kingdoms like Magadha, Vaisali, the Sakayas, the Bullis, the Koliyas, the Mallas, the Moriyas and Kalinga (Ancient Odisha) sought for the relics of the Buddha after the *parinirvana*. (Kern, 1989: 46) The emperors, kings, traders and commoners extended patronage and built monuments, kept relics, offered gifts to pay ovation to the Master Teacher. This historical phenomenon is known from various forms of Buddhist monuments built across India. Odisha, a geographical orbit of South Eastern India, is fortunate to have received a good deal of Buddhist monuments and relics. This paper is intended to present an account of different forms of Buddhist monuments that have been discovered so far, such as Stupas, Chaityas, Monasteries under the possible patronage of Buddhism in this part of India from third century BCE to sixth-seventh century CE.

**Keywords:** Kalinga, Archaeology, Stupa, Chaitya, Monastery, Trade, Religion, Art, Architecture

## Introduction

The earliest stone monuments in India date from the Mauryan period (320-185 BCE), particularly from the epoch-making reign of emperor Asoka (272 -232 BCE). Mauryan Emperor Asoka earned his name and fame as builder of Buddhist monuments throughout the empire only after the Kalinga (Ancient Odisha) War in 261 BCE. Kalinga become one the epicenters of his activities and the importance of Kalinga in shaping and spreading the Buddhist ideals was recognized. His domain engulfed whole of India, including Afghanistan and sent out missionaries to the south as far as Sri Lanka and westward even into Syria and Egypt. He constructed up to eighty thousand Buddhist monuments which include, pillars, rock-cut sculptures, stupas, chaityas and monasteries. This practice was followed by different dynasties like Kushans, Satvahanas, Vakatakas, Palas, Bhuaumakars etc. In India and outside where Buddhism did exist, or still exists, there are innumerable monuments representing different phases of Buddhism and these help us visualize the forms and patronage through the ages see Figure 1.

It is apparent, however, from the sophistication, the degree of perfection and the variety of the work that abruptly appears in the period of Asoka and then rapidly increases, that already in the earlier centuries (though invisible to us, because committed to the perishable materials of ivory and wood) the torrent of Indian religious art must have been flowing strong. The craftsmen who wrought the elaborately decorated gates of the 'Great Stupa' at Sanchi and now shattered shrines of Bharhut, Bodhgaya, Lalitgiri, Langudi, Aragarh and Amaravati, skillfully adapted to the special requirements and special legends of Buddhism with the ancient motifs and traditional craft.

Buddhist architectural vestiges in the Western Deccan goes back to the first century CE, and by the 6<sup>th</sup> -7<sup>th</sup> century, Buddhist caves such as Ellorā, Aurangabad, and Kānherī flourished due to the booming trade routes connecting them to the seaports of Sopara, Kalyan, and Baruch, as well as the mainland trade centre of Ujjain<sup>1</sup>.

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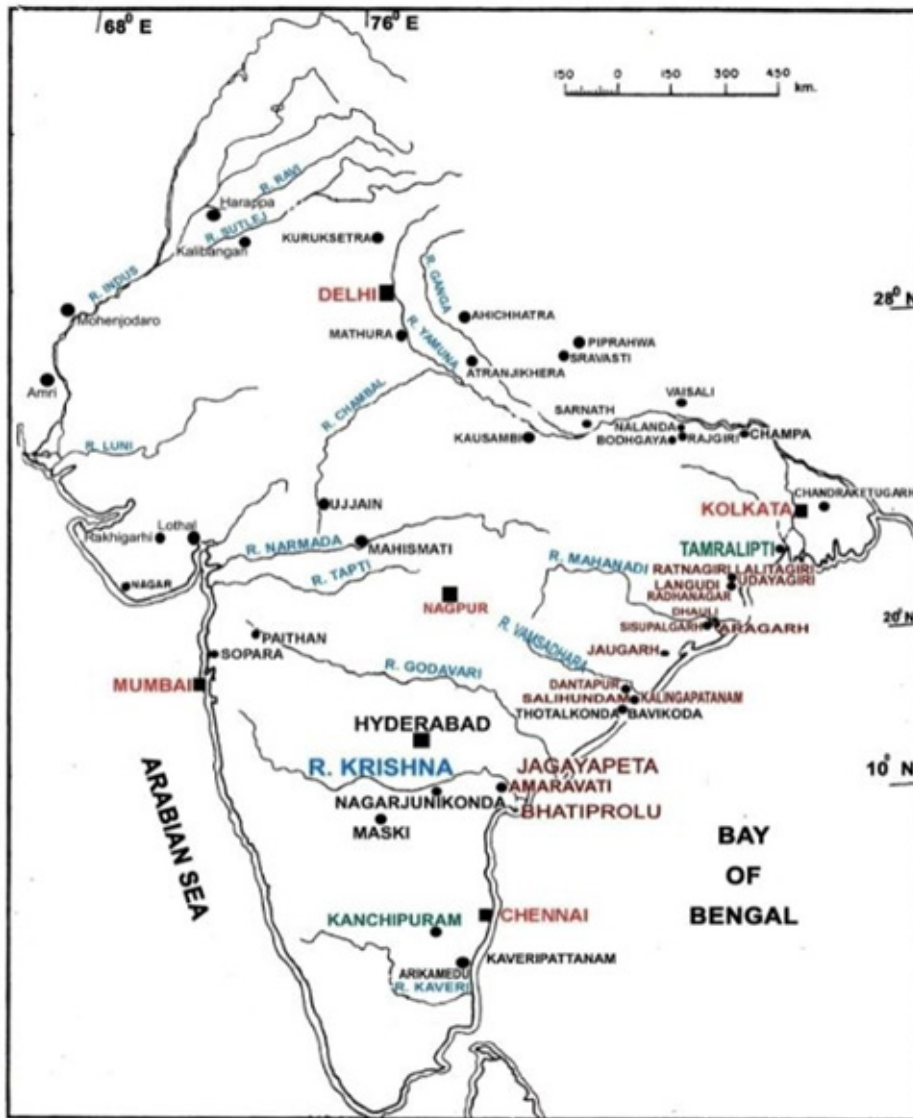


Fig. 1 Map of Early Buddhist Sites of India.

Such a phenomenon was also seen in Eastern Indian Coastal region stretching from Tamralipti in Lower Gangas with ports of Palur, Pithunda, Manikapatna Samapa Dantapura, Kalingapatna, Salihundam, Ghantasila, Nagarjunakonda, Guntupalli, Bhattiprallu of Odisha and Andhra region of South East India.

At the earliest phase, the strategic geographical location of Odisha helped it in rising to great heights in respect of trade and commerce from pre-Buddhist period. Odisha (ancient Kalinga) served as a bridge between the trans-oceanic and inland trade of India, causing migration of cultural traits along with trade and commerce. With the rise of trade and commerce in the historical periods, it is but obvious that the growth of urbanization leads building of various monuments.

Recent researches on the basis of material culture have shown that several Buddhist establishments have been developed in post-Asokan period in Odisha region, particularly at Lalitgiri, Langudi, Radhanagar, Dhauli, Jaugarh and Aragarh because of cultural interaction of Central Asia and Southeast Asia and Odisha (ancient Kalinga) remained as the nucleus zone. The agriculturally rich regions of Kalinga, Saurashtra and Raichur with their potential as states is viewed as core regions of Mauryan Empire<sup>2</sup>. Further, Rock Edicts XV and XVI mention that Kumaras were stationed at Taksasila, Ujjain and Toshali in Kalinga which were the north-western, western and eastern headquarters<sup>3</sup>. This has been proved from the recent survey of the trade routes from Balkh and Bamiyan in Afghanistan where the Silk Route met and then continued through north

India in Ganga valley up to Tamralipti (Tamluk) and then connecting the Buddhist establishments of Odishan region (Kalinga) like Langudi, Radhanagar, Lalitgiri, Dhauli, Aragarh, Jaugarh<sup>4</sup> and passed through the South Indian Buddhist establishments like Kalingapattinam, Salihundam, Sankaram, Tathalkonda, Bhavikonda<sup>5</sup> Guntupalli, Nagarjunikonda and Amaravati. This is the reason why a number of said Buddhist establishments with monuments developed along the East Coast,

Ancient Odisha or Kalinga was a good producer of rice, *bajra*, cotton fabrics, *samudra lona* (salt), elephant, silk, *dukula* (a kind of cloth), gems, pearls, oyster, perfumes, conch shells, ornaments, sugar, earthen pottery. Diamond was probably one of the valuable commodities sold at Kalinganagar, the then capital city of Kalinga in 1<sup>st</sup> - 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE. The mention of all these were found in the literary works viz, *Jatakas*, *Arthashastra of Kautiliya*, *Mahabhasya of Patanjali*, *Charaka Samhita*, *Samyaktta Nikaya* and *Indica* of Meghasthenese<sup>6</sup>.

A common assumption is that by the end of the reign of Asoka in the second century BCE, Buddhist monks and nuns were established in monasteries throughout the Indian Sub-continent and that these monasteries, located near cities, mostly on the river banks or hill slopes relied on state and public support. The Buddhist texts at the same time credit merchants and trading groups with the setting up of religious shrines, as for example, in the case merchant Anathapindaka's purchase of Jetavana park, for the Buddha and his monks for monastic establishment. This is a theme that finds representation at several early Buddhist sites such as Bharhut, Bodhgaya, Sannathi, Amaravati etc. In the context of eastern India, the *Vinaya (Mahavagga)* records that two early disciples of the Buddha, the merchant brothers Tappusa and Bhallika travelled from Ukkala (often identified with Odisha) offered rice cake and honey to the Buddha. They were also credited with establishing chaityas and monasteries on their return to home country<sup>7</sup>.

It is a historical fact that the lay community received their continuing support of monks and nuns and sponsorship of ritual activities, pilgrimage as well as maintenance of monastic structures. This is true in case of Coastal Odisha and Andhra Pradesh in which the presence of Buddhism clearly coincide with the Mauryan period<sup>8</sup>. A pillar fragment discovered at Amravati during clearance of the site in 1958-59 with an Asokan inscription on it<sup>9</sup>. Engraved on one of the faces is the legend "the *gosthi* called *Vanda* at Dhanyakataka" together with the representation of waters<sup>10</sup>. The term *gosthi* has been translated as committee or association and occurs in the

inscriptions of Sanchi in central India, Bhattiprolu on the Andhra coast and Mathura in north India. The stele from Amaravati is significant as it graphically depicts the creation and legitimating of sacred spots in an area as far as far removed from the Buddha's peregrinations as the south-east coast and the linking of these to sacred spots in northern India. This stele dated to the Mauryan period thus provided justification for the association of the site Amaravati with sacred spots in the north such as Vaisali and Sravasti and perhaps also explains the prominent part played by monks and nuns in sponsoring religious architecture at the site<sup>11</sup>.

Scholars like Thapar<sup>12</sup> and Ray<sup>13</sup> refer that, by the first century BCE, much of the support for Buddhist institutions (monasteries and pilgrimage centres) were derived from craft guilds rather than royalty. The Buddhist institutions were the recipients of donations resulting from competitive generosity between guilds, lesser elite, and royalty which otherwise was an attempt to associate themselves with the divine. Ray remarks that the Buddhist institutions as more actively engaged in economic activities, serving as nodes and long-distance trade networks and managing agricultural production in the peripheries of developing states<sup>14</sup>. Schopen has also refers that the monasteries even acted as moneylenders, building their endowments by lending to Buddhist and non-Buddhists alike<sup>15</sup>. The fact is that the political consolidation under Satavahanas and Ikshvakus and the prosperity resulting from trade was the growth of a large number of religious complexes which were mostly Buddhist in character. If we look into Odishan context, it is certain that the settlement at Radhanagar of 3<sup>rd</sup> - 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE and the religious settlements of Lalitgiri and Langudi and the urban centers of Sisupalgarh and Jaugarh, the port cities Tamralipti and Kalinganagar are all Buddhist in nature. Indeed, this region together with Amaravati, Goli and Jaggayyapeta (AP) is conforming to the contemporary art-idioms of the Gangetic valley and central India. It means that between 200 BCE and 200 CE the sources of financial support for Buddhist institutions greatly expanded and the Buddhist sites particularly of Eastern Coast like Lalitgiri, Langudi, Radhanagar, Udayagiri, Jaugarh (Samapa), Kayma, Aragarh in Odisha and Salihundam, Tahtlakonda, Bhavikonda, Sankaram, up to Nagarjunikonda in Andhra Pradesh were developed by dint of this phenomenon. Scholars have studied the period from 500 BCE to 300 CE and concluded that Buddhist monastic sites grew up around permanent settlements connected by long-distance trade routes and served 'as symbolic structures mediating social hierarchy within a new urban complex'<sup>16</sup>. According to

Heitzman ‘the three-fold union of Buddhism, trade and empire continued into Common Era’<sup>17</sup>.

Some of the finest Buddhist settlements having different forms of Buddhist monuments such as stupas, chaityas and monasteries are unearthed at Lalitgiri, Langudi, Aragarh and Udayagiri and many other places in South Eastern India. This paper is limited to the study of forms of early stupas, chaityas and monasteries discovered in the said places which present a pan-Indian character and help us in various ways to understand the material culture, religion and art of this region.

## Stupas

We are getting valuable information from *Vinayasutra* that in order to involve the common people in the religious activity, the Buddhists encouraged public participation in constructing and worshiping the stupas. The work *Mahavastu*, a Pali text of Theravadis with contain the conception of Buddha prevalent among Mahasanghikas and the Lokottaravadis does actually represent a transition to Mahayana<sup>18</sup>. The *Mahavastu* recommends that one earns unlimited merit when one simply saunters around a stupa and worships it with gifts of flowers etc. It further describes that even carrying of the bricks for the construction of stupa / chaitya is meritorious and he who set up a flag on the chaitya of the lord inspires the rhythmic activity in the world of Buddha and he is worshipped by all<sup>19</sup>. A group of verses is devoted to recite the merit of one who sets up even a single lamp on the stupa of the Buddha. Similarly, some verses are devoted to recite the merit of a person who decorates and makes a stupa of the Buddha beautiful look at (*subhadarsana*) by the gift of an umbrella. The *Mahavastu* further states that if one is unable to honour a stupa by indulging in the expensive garlands, or other presents, one can acquire merit even by removing the tarnished flowers from the stupa.

Here in Odishan region the Buddhist settlements discovered in the last half a century has brought to limelight good many early stupas along with monasteries and chaityas. However, we have seen the site that the early stupas constructed singularly and then the monastic centers developed after two- three centuries later, perhaps after the site became a pilgrim centre. Let us have a glimpse of forms of the early stupas discovered at Lalitgiri, Langudi, Aragarh and Udayagiri of Odishan region which all are discovered few decades back and the author was involved in almost all the excavations see Figure 2.



Lalitgiri Mahastupa



Langudi Mahastupa



Aragarh Stupa

Fig.2. Early Stupas

## Stupa at Lalitgiri

The main stupa at Lalitgiri is located on the highest point of the hillock Nandapahada, made of dressed stones having 6.14 meter in diameter at the base and built of random rubble masonry and then veneered with finely dressed khandolite stones following the curvature of the dome (*anda*) as well as drum portion (*medhi*). Two constructional stages have been identified here. At a height above the pavement, the *stupa* has a ledge. From here the *anda* portion starts and the diameter of the dome (*anda*) decreases. The

total available height of the stupa (drum and dome) is 4.05 meter above the surface.

The dome is also covered by rectangular slab with a square hole, possibly the base of the *harmika* which was used to support the canopy (*chhatra*). Fragment of a *harmika* was recovered during the excavation. The ledge is made more or less in the pattern of Dhamekh stupa of Saranath. The base of the stupa was also excavated, the remains of a well paved circular stone flooring i.e., *pradakshinapatha* running round the stupa being 3 meter in width. The edge of the flooring of the base is marked by course of a raised stone of 0.10 meter above the natural rock of the hill.

The monument stands on a hard rock-base and the core is filled with mud-mortar. The khondalite stone and iron clamps in some places were used. Fine dressed stone joints are made together to check the atmosphere erection. Numbers of railing pillars used for encircling of the stupa were found from the site. The style of these pillars seems very early and helps us to date the stupa, which are very much similar to that of the railing pillars found at Bodhi-Gaya. This hemispherical stupa stands in between the stupas of Sanchi and Saranath and date back to 2<sup>nd</sup> - 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE<sup>19</sup>.

The most important discovery from this *stupa* is the relic caskets in the year 1985. Although, there are references found in Buddhist literature that several relics of Buddha like hair, tooth and bone were brought to Kalinga before and after Nirvana of the Buddha<sup>20</sup>. From the core of the stupa's *anda* three caskets were unearthed from the north, east and south respectively. The caskets consisted of four containers one inside the other i.e. 1. of khondalite stone resembling miniature stupas, 2. a steatite phial, 3. a silver casket, and 4. a golden casket. This golden casket preserved the sacred relic, Of the three sets of caskets (khondalite), only two of them contained all the three inner caskets. In one of the caskets the sacred relic (bone / *dhatu*) was found wrapped in a gold foil and the other casket contains only the relic (charred bone) which speaks about the importance attached to the person to whom the bone belonged. This type of arrangement is unique for Eastern India. In the past, relics of the Buddha have been reported from important Buddhist sites like Sarnath, Vaishali, Piprahwa, Kusinagar, Sravasti, Lauriya-Nandargarh and others but this type of arrangement was unknown in this part of the country for the first time. Normally, the relic caskets were either made of steatite, earthen ware, copper, soap stone or crystal containing the relic of the Buddha. The Relic Stupa at this place gives us the narration of Buddhism in 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE and the flow continued up to 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century CE, when Mahayana Buddhism evolved at this place.

## Stupa at Langudi

The Langudi site presents a unique religious landscape having numbers of monumental remains. The main Stupa independently developed as a singular unit having a square base which dates back to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE. The present base size of the stupa is 75 ft. north-south x 60 ft. east-west with a height of 9 ft. and the diameter is 60 ft. In the southern side steps are provided which leads to the elevated portion of the stupa. In the stupa architecture steps lead to the upper processional path in four directions are generally found. However, this stupa is an exception. The steps were originally flanked by eight railing pillars and *suchis* (cross bars) on each side as the post holes are clearly visible. The total stupa area might have encircled by railing pillars and *suchis* as observed with the discovery of 26 railing pillars. Fragmentary pieces of sandstone *chhatravali*s also noticed during the course of the excavation in the stupa area. These architectural pieces are culturally dated to the pre-Common Era. The remains of the pavement noticed in the upper portion of the staircase. The antiquities, its architecture and the absence of Buddhist sculptures indicate that the stupa belong to the Hinayana phase of Buddhism. The stupa has two phases of which the earliest one is made of brick, and in later phase enlarged by adding laterite blocks.

The site was expanded during the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE as evident from the findings of Sunga- Satavahana art idioms like lotus medallion. There are 54 Rock-cut Stupas found on the south-eastern side of the hillock. It has its own story of development. This kind of Stupa architecture, mostly encountered in South India, particularly at Thattalkonda and Sankaram having stupas with quadrangular base. Although the Buddhist sect *Sarvastivadins* were the builder of these stupas but no sect is traced yet at Langudi. However, the tradition is there that the *Mahisasakas* taking Buddhism to foreign lands and Kalinga and Andhradesa played a role in the cultural developments in South East Asia<sup>21</sup>.

## Stupa at Aragarh

Aragarh, Buddhist site, a hillock in Puri district near Bhubaneswar of Odisha is located in one of the several isolated hillocks of varied height and dimensions. The core area with archaeological remains is identified on the hilltop spreading over an area of more than five acres. The site was taken for excavations during 2014-17. Here the Stupa remains are found with several terraces. A complete basement or platform is exposed with having



stone encasing on either side which is the topmost surviving portion of the stupa with the drum base and the circumambulatory path is intact. Pieces of *anda* or drum, made of stone are traced. The circumambulatory path measures 1.78 m. in width and the circumference is 20.41 m. This is the first circumambulatory path.

Again, one more wide circular area with stone paving, the second circumambulatory path measuring 3.86 m. in width and having the diameter of 44.65 meters is found encircling the first one. In this area on the eastern side as well as western side two entrances to the stupa is marked with stone slabs having post holes. The width of the eastern side entrance on the top measures 3.2. m. This seems to be the main entrance to the stupa and joined further outward with the staircase on the eastern side. Here, between first and second enlarged *pradakshinapatha* there was a time gap in which it was enlarged.

These circumambulatory paths are located on a raised terrace. The two circumambulatory paths are laid successively which is the earliest period (2<sup>nd</sup>-1<sup>st</sup> century BCE/CE.). Some architectural pieces having geometric design and *triratna* symbol are also recovered from this level. Railing pillars numbering 191 and 300 *suchis* have been found both in situ and scattered around is no doubt a spectacular finding of the site. The first terrace measures 28 m. x 21 m. in which the circumambulatory path is marked. This terrace is exquisitely arranged with dressed stone slabs having railing pillars on the top. Some of the railing pillars are seen *in situ* on corners. It seems that this terrace (1.25 m. in height) was constructed, most possibly, on a raised morrum platform. The Stupa comprising of the above three parts was generally surrounded by a railing, this space was used by the devotees for performing *pradikshina*, a rite of worship. The *pradikshinapatha* (circumambulatory passage) of the Stupa was often paved with stone panels sometimes bear votive inscriptions. But here so far no inscriptions have noticed. In the *Mahavamsa* this railing is called *pada-vedika*: railing at the foot or ground railing around the stupa<sup>23</sup>.

One more stone terrace was exposed in three sides i.e., west, east and south. The terrace is completely exposed and the available portion measures 50 m x 29 m. The staircase is completely exposed in this terrace on southern and eastern margins. Some railing pillars and *suchis* are found on the terrace perhaps meant for the enclosure. Besides, two more terraces are found measuring 29 m. on the eastern side only in between the first and second terraces.

From the available evidences of brick bats, morrum and some weathered potsherds, it is clear that the site was abandoned most probably in 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century CE for obvious

reason and again reoccupied in 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> century CE. It may be conceptualized that Odisha was one of the important land for *Mahasanghika* sect of Early Buddhism and the trend of stupa building earlier known from Lalitgiri and Dhauri is also attested too in this site. However, Dhauri (where the ancient stupa was no more in existence) and Aragarh belong to same culture complex<sup>24</sup>. This type of platforms are observed in the early stupas of Sanchi, Satadhara and some other Stupas of Thatalikonda and Bhavikonda, more precisely akin to Stupa No. 2 and 3 of Satadhara<sup>25</sup>.

## Stupa and Chaityagriha, Udayagiri

The earliest phase of Udayagiri site (Jajpur district) is marked from the excavated stupa at Udayagiri -2 with circumambulatory path having approach with *Chandrasila* and Kushana Brahmi inscriptions and shell script (*Samkhalipi*). The Kushana inscriptions read as *Kohakonasa ja* of 1<sup>st</sup> century CE and *Sankhalipi* of 5<sup>th</sup> century CE.<sup>26</sup> The base and part of the stupa is still visible just below the Apsidal Chaitya on the Northern side. This is the earliest phase of construction activity of the site in 1<sup>st</sup> century CE. The stupa, as it is ascertained from the available ruins, measures 3 meters in diameter and the circumambulatory path having a width of 1.22 meter. A massive stone platform along with flight of steps from the north with a *Chandrasila* at the entrance was traced. The impression of a circular stupa on plan in the centre of the platform attests the existence of a stupa. Its western arm has preserved some kerb stones curved on the top. There are ten donatory inscriptions in the shell character on the platform as well as threshold have been engraved in the later period towards 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century CE. It served as a nucleus for future activities within the enclosure<sup>27</sup>. This stupa is one of the earliest Buddhist monuments of Odisha like those of Lalitgiri, Langudi and Aragarh. This shows that the Stupa was under active worship up to 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century CE with patronage of one sect of Buddhism. It may be mentioned that like other exclusive stupa sites of North and South India having the same tradition with early form of Theravada Buddhism. This is the result of expansion of Buddhism as it happened in other parts of India.

## Apsidal Chaitya at Lalitgiri.

Of all the buildings of the Mauryan epoch that which is most distinctly Buddhist is the *Chaitya-Griha* or House of the *Chaitya*, which was the assembly hall or *chaptu* house of the order. The commonly - called chaitya-hall known often as *Caitya-Ghara* (Sanskrit-*chaitya*) and Thupa-ghara

and rarely as *thuva (grihastupa)* in inscriptions, was in reality a sanctuary. In Buddhist literature *caitya* came to be used as cult-object. In the *Mahaparinibban* sutta, the Buddha speaks of the efficiency of erecting *dhatu caityas* and himself visited *caityas* like Udama, Gotama, Sattambaka etc., revealing them thereby as pre-Buddha institution. Besides, the *Diga-Nikaya* shows that Lord Buddha lived in Ananda caitya at Bhojanagana<sup>28</sup>.

The Apsidal Temple at Lalitgiri is located in a strategic position on which from all sides except east, there are monasteries and stupas. Perhaps, the Buddhists first constructed this temple and then gradually other monuments came into existence. As per the evidences available, there is a stupa, of which the base portion is traced on the middle of the shrine chamber. According to G.C. Chauley-the Excavator, this is the earliest monument in the site<sup>29</sup>.

The *Chaitya Griha* or Apsidal Temple faces east and is built of fine bricks. The length of the temple is 32 metre and about 11.40 metre in width. Approximately about a 3.30 meters thick wall provides an inner space of 4.75 metre width. In this space, a circular stupa with an average diameter of 3.35 metre was constructed towards the western side. The base mouldings and stone paved apron, further extends the area around this Stupa. In the remaining interior floor area a compact ramming with lime kankars had been provided for easy throughfare of the devotee and for circumambulation (*pradakhina*). A traditional stone railing was provided around the Stupa as the evidence of three carved pillars with socket holes have been found lying near stupa. The purpose of putting the railing pillars was to keep the devotees at a certain distance from the Stupa.

The courtyard around the chaitya griha is found paved with stone slabs on the north, west, and southern sides. It is evident from the shape and size, the stone slabs were part of earlier structures and here it was re-used in the pavement.

Evidences are also found that another brick stupa whose drum portion was encountered on the rammed lime floor inside the chaitya griha. All these constructions were imposed within the Apsidal chaitya griha. It signifies that there were several cultural phases and Stupa brought to be enshrined like that seen at Ajanta and Guntupalli.

A stone paved path-way approximately 10 meters in length and 3.50 metre wide was delimited with the porched brick stupa due to semicircular end, constructed at least in three phases, contains the name of the donors in shell script or Sankhalipi dated to the Gupta period of 5<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> Century CE. On the southern side of the pathway an almost square pedestal (1.42 x 1.42 meter) containing an

inscription in Brahmi script of 2<sup>nd</sup> - 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D. has been found. This pedestal is raised with two layer of brick courses and the top one stone course. The super structure above it, is now missing. The inscription according to K.V. Ramesh of Epigraphy Branch of ASI (Mysore), seems to record *the completion (Samaavta) of the seat (AASSAANA) of Adatmana, probably, jointly by Vinaya, a resident of Vadhamana, a certain Vinayadhara and his disciple Buddhiti a resident of Aggotisila*. the inscriptions shows the patronage of the of the Buddhism and building of this monument and donations comes from different regions<sup>30</sup>.

The inscription throws light on the popularity of this Chaitya Temple. It perhaps attracts Buddhists from far and wide. Number of miniature and votive stupas found laying near the Apsidal *Chaityagriha*. Some miniature stupas contain inscriptions of 7<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> century CE. The Apsidal Temple thus gives a running chronology from 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> century CE. to 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> century CE. This Apsidal is unique in different ways and more akin to Andhra counterparts as seen Salihundam, Sankaram, Ramatirtham. But I think the wave of Buddhism must have rolled from this area to further south at the beginning.

## Monasteries

Several monasteries datable to 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> centuries to 10<sup>th</sup> 11<sup>th</sup> centuries were unearthed at Lalitgiri, Langudi, Udayagiri, and many other places in Odishan region and their continuation is seen in a number of sites of adjoining Andhrapradesh. Almost all the monasteries are identical with cells, courtyard, shrine chamber on the middle. As has been mentioned in Pali text, *Chullavaga*, the entire monastic complex consisted of *viharas* (dwelling rooms) *parivenas* (cells of private chambers), *Kottnakas* (gate chambers or porches) *upatthanasalas* (service halls), *eggi-salas* (halls with fire places), *kappiyakutis* (store house outside the vihara), *Vachchakutis* (privies), *charikarmas* (promenade) *herikasalas* (rooms with promenades) *udapanas* (wells), *udapana salas* (shade attached to wells) *janatagharas* (bath rooms) *pokkharani* (tanks) and *mandapas* (halls)<sup>31</sup>. The site of the monastery would be neither too far from a village or town nor too near, suitable for coming and going, accessible to people whenever they want, not crowded by day, having little noise at night, little sound, without folks breath, secluded from people, fitting for meditation.

The Buddhist remains of almost all the important establishments were found slightly away from towns. It is thus, that outside the populous city of Vidisa (modern Besanagara adjoin Vidisa) there sprung up the magnificent establishment of Sanchi, besides a host of

lesser ones at Sonari, Satdhara and Bhojpur. Similarly the *Dharmachakra-vihara* of Saranatha was established six kilometres north of Varanasi. The other viharas being Ghositarama and Kukutarma at Kausambhi, the Kalkarama donated by the branch Kalaka at Saketa and the Viharas attached to Venuvana, Jinakamravana and Maddaku-Chehi-Migadaya in the suburbs of Rajgriha<sup>32</sup>.

There are altogether four monasteries unearthed at Lalitgiri, Two in Udayagiri, one at Langudi, three at Ratnagiri. These sites are located in the hill slopes and the landscape matches as referred in the Buddhist scriptures. The interesting fact is that all these monasteries are constructed centuries after the monuments be it stupa or chaitya and have different nomenclature such as *Sri Chandraditya Mahavihara Arya Bikshu Samgha* (Lalitgiri), *Sri Madhavpur Mahavihara Arya Bikhu Samgha* (Udayagiri-1), *Simhaprastha Mahavihara* (Udayagiri-2) and *Ratnagiri Mahavihara* (Ratnagiri)<sup>33</sup>.

Almost all these monasteries followed as usual a *chauthasala* type in quadrangle in plan 36 x 36 meter and some in 29 x 29 meter consisting of a series of cells all around with four running pillared *verandahs* and a central courtyard. It has a porched entrance on its eastern side and an exit on the southern side near to the western end. The sanctum chamber is on the west. Some of the monasteries are double storied. However, the monastery 2 at Udayagiri has some unique features like *pradakhina* around the shrine chamber, which has not been encountered in the other monasteries see Figure 3.

This monastery consists of monk cells arranged in the usual pattern like other monasteries i.e. monk cells, shrine chamber, courtyard, drain and pylon etc. Here, the shrine chamber found on the middle end with circumambulatory path (*pradakshina patha*) around. The back or the southern wall of the shrine chamber is divided by projections like *pancharatha* pattern of Odishan temples. An upper shrine chamber is provided just on the back wall. The arrangement of the cells are made with two each on both wings of the central shrine, three each in the east and the west while three in the south. The unique feature of the cells of this monastery is that secret chambers are provided inside the cells perhaps meant for esoteric practices or keeping of valuables. Again, on the recess of the cells mostly a recess for keeping lamp and a nice the use of which perhaps meant for practicing meditation. A significant architectural style introduced is the use of long arches in the shape of vaulted passage particularly noticed in formation of 2m high 1.44 m long and 1.70 m wide arches on the window part. One must appreciate the excellence in mastery over architecture achieved by monk architects of this monastery.



Monastery, Lalitgiri



Monastery, Udayagiri

Fig. 3. Monasteries

Two cells in the north-western side represent somewhat different formation having combined unit. Access is made for a room from the door of the other room is inside facing east. These cells are also provided with secret chamber 83.5 x 75 x 98.5 cm probably served for the purpose treasury. It is observed that this cell perhaps meant for the chief monk or the elderly one. The excavators has given a precise date that during 8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> century CE, the monastery was in use.

The monastery is double storied for which steps were provided on the north-eastern corner. A water reservoir or a tank has been exposed on the south-western side of the monastery comparatively bigger in size then one found in monastery-1 of Lalitgiri. Its inner dimension is around 6.70 x 6.20 m while the depth is slightly more than 2 m. This system of water reservoir is called "*podhi*" in Buddhist literature often associated with Buddhist sites.

In the adjoining areas, in front of this monastery on its north-western side assemblage of votive stupas and a massive Avalokitesvara image still found *in-situ* stands over a ground primarily consisting of shrine zone. Little in a distance just on southern hill slope a kitchen complex is also discovered<sup>34</sup>.



## Buddhist Art

Indian art is an expression of Indian life and thought attuned to its vast natural background and its socio-religious traditions. It is not exclusive or sectarian in the narrow sense of the term. 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. Buddhist art is meant popularly for those monuments and paintings which have for the main purpose the edification or popularization of Buddhism. The earliest stone monuments in India, as discussed, dated to the Mauryan period (320-180 BCE). Emperor Asoka was converted to the Buddhist belief and was an immensely powerful patron. Early Indian Art is anionic and the Buddha does not appear in anthropomorphic form till late first century BCE<sup>35</sup>. This early phase of Indian Buddhist Art that manifests itself in the Buddhist reliefs of Bharhut, Sanchi, Amaravati etc. (from 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE. to 1<sup>st</sup> century CE.), would reproduce all these eight in periodical convention of the symbolic or Buddhist sculptures are the Persian pillar with bell shaped capital which was adopted directly, can be seen in the east Gateway at Sanchi. The bell capital frequently serves as a basis for one or more lions or elephants or for a religious symbol (wheel) when the pillar is considered as standing alone. If the pillar is used as a support in a building, the bell capital serves as base for an abacus on which turned towards the sides, winged figures of animals such as horses, gazelles, goats, lions or sitting elephants are placed. This can remarkably be seen in the pillars of Sanchi, Ajanta, Bagh, Pitalkhora and Nasik etc.

The region of Kalinga (Ancient Odisha) being one of the cradle land of Buddhism also developed its own style of art starting from stone pillars, Yaksha and Yakshi images from Bhubaneswar, Rock-cut Elephants at Dhuli and Kayama, railings, *suchis*, terracotta figurines, and images recently discovered from Langudi, Radhanagar, Lalitgiri and Aragarh all are dated from 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE to 5<sup>th</sup> century CE in its first phase<sup>36</sup>. The discovered monumental remains, images, terracotta figurines, ornaments and sculptures are for the first time present a chronology of early Buddhist art at par with the Mathura, Gandhara and Saranath School of Art.

So far, human representations in early Buddhist art are represented with delicate and supple joined limbs, miserable calves and feeble muscles, light built slippery, eel-like, as that of today with an agreeable child like naturalism. The other kind of representation is a long head with full round face, large eyes and thick lips which can be seen in the Buddhist panels. The terracotta

figurines found from Radhanagar presents a benchmark in the study of Buddhist Art. The Buddha head, Lion figure and other terracotta figurines of 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> century CE provides certain clue to study the early art tradition of Odisha<sup>37</sup>. An important form is the lotus-flower (*padma*) which is employed decoratively and with great taste in the arrangement. The broad disc of the blown flower is employed in all positions as a decoration. A medallion of such type was found from the Apsidal Temple site at Lalitgiri which is datable to Sunga-Kushana period. Also, such medallions are still found in the Stupa rock cut panel of Langudi. There are several railings with Lion copings and beautiful ornamented lady figurines of stone with typical head gear (knot) is also reported from Langudi belonging to 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE /CE. The art of ancient Odisha of this period thus well represented like that of Sanchi or Bharhut and its continuation is also seen in the later monuments.

Towards 2<sup>nd</sup> -3<sup>rd</sup> century CE, the terracotta objects recovered from Radhanagar Excavation (2010-13) represent the continuity of Buddhist art which include Buddha head, Lion motif, *trirtna* symbols, Bodhi tree, terracotta serpents, elephants, Sri image, and other decorative ornaments which all displayed in the recently organized Tarapur site museum. This shows the continuity of Buddhist Art in this region although as discussed earlier, there were constant interaction with Buddhist sites of other parts of India.

Afterwards, the monolithic Buddha images at Langudi 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> century CE appeared followed by Buddha and Bodhisattva images from 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century CE at Lalitgiri. This tradition can very well be understood from Udayagiri and Ratnagiri sites towards 7<sup>th</sup> -8<sup>th</sup> century onwards. This phenomenon was for the first time discussed here after close examination of the Buddhist images of India known so far.

The art works like representations of perforated panels, alternating with *ghatas*, dancing figures, *bharavahakas*, dotted arches and the decorative details like rosettes, lotus petals, *purnaghatas*, scrolls, dots, gourde bands, and undulating figuration of half lotus - are all found in the Buddhist monuments of Langudi, Lalitgiri, Ratnagiri and Udayagiri. These were little later (around 7<sup>th</sup> century) developed profusely and more attractive details depicted on the temple walls. Thus, the formative phase of art traditions of early Odisha is reflected in the Buddhist Art as that of India.

## Conclusion

The paper reveals that from the earliest period of Indian historical setting, Buddhist monuments played a pivotal role for growth of religion, trade, art and architecture in the Indian Sub-continent. It has provided a window with its visible material culture to assess the cultural growth of the country. The maritime circuit of Bay Bengal is evident from the Buddhist monastic sites of Bengal, Odisha, and Andhra Pradesh. It is also evident that the Buddhist circuit between the well known centre of Nalanda, Bengal, Odisha, and Andhra Pradesh coasts and the Indonesian archipelago, as known from the travels of the famous Buddhist teacher Atisa Dipankar. The three great teachers, Subhakarasiṃha (637-735), Vajrabodhi (671-741) and Amoghavajra (705-774), taught both the *Mahāvairocana-sūtra* as evident from Lalitgiri and *Sarvathāgatattvasaṃgrhasūtra* (evident from Udayagiri) and were responsible for introducing them in China. Subhakarasiṃha who studied at Nalanda, was also an official emissary, carrying the *ahdvairochanasūtra* to Ch'ang-an in 716 at the invitation of the Tang emperor<sup>38</sup>. Subhakarasiṃha is known to belong from the Bhumakar dynasty of Odisha. Similarly Saraha known as Rahula, is also connected to Odisha where a seventh or eighth century inscription refers to Rahularuchi, a *mahamandalcharya* and *paramguru* of a Buddhist monastery. A copper plate charter from Jayarampur in the district of Balasore, dated to first half of sixth century CE, records the grant of a village Sevतालिका to the *bikshusangha* for constructing a viḥāra at Bodhipadraka (identified with present Jayarampur) for Arya Avālokitesvara. The grant provided for ritual requirements of worship such as *bali, caru, gandha, puṣpa, pradipa* and more and for providing necessities of the *Arya Sangha* like food, bed, medicine and so on<sup>39</sup>. This is another example of patronage and construction of Buddhist viḥāra or monastery.

The monuments had a life beyond construction i.e., for functional utility to ritual needs required resources for rituals and management of monk communities. Overall, it looks in to association of patron. A large number of communities had extended their patronage to build such monuments throughout the length and breadth of the country and the Odishan region too has received same amount of patronage that helped to raise the monuments with its various forms like stupas, chaityas and monasteries<sup>40</sup>. Now these are the material records discovered through the archaeological spade in the last half a century in Odisha in South Eastern India.

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