

***CHAPTER IV***  
***PATRONAGE OF***  
***BUDDHISM***

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### Patronage of Buddhism

In this chapter, an attempt has been made to examine the development of Buddhism under the patronage of the royal dynasties, merchants, traders, artisans and householders from the early Buddhist period to 12<sup>th</sup> century C.E. in the east coast of India. It is true that most of the patronage comes from royal dynasties. In the ancient Indian history patronage was a formal religious system, clearly linked to the ideological needs of a political organisation and its socio economic base. It would thus be interesting to study the attitude of the inhabitants of a particular region regarding patronage towards the religious recipients. The study of Buddhism under the patronage in India especially in east coast of India, undoubtedly of great importance in the spread of Buddhist culture in the study regions.

Patronage is support, encouragement, privilege or financial aid that an organisation or individual bestows to another. Patronage can be defined as a multi-dimensional, sometimes loosely codified network of exchanges involving not only the production of art and literature, but also its performance, transmission, reinterpretation and preservation. The giving and receiving may take place between individuals, groups or institutions. The groups are often specialized communities of craftsmen, ritualists or scholars. According to Suchandra Ghosh, patronage is an asymmetrical relationship between one party, the patron and another one, the client. It is quite natural that the patron will be a person who possesses honour as well as economic superiority and this allows patronage.<sup>1</sup> In her research paper she used the term 'royal patronage' which includes not only patronage from the king but also persons who are associated with the royal court like ministers or with the royal house hold like the queen. But it will be noted that the merchant class, common people and some house holder are not royal and they also patronage to Buddhism.

Patronage can be studied in Buddhism from the votive inscriptions which identify the donor and his/ her gift. Donations could be made individually or collectively by a family or a guild. We find monks, nuns, men and women making donations at many Buddhist site in the east coast of India. The act of giving that we witness at these sites shows the faith that was reposed in the *sangha* unlike in earlier times when gifts were given to monks in the form of food, clothing, medicine, etc., for

their maintenance. Since most of the Buddhist monuments built during this time were large-scale, they required planning and the collection of contribution in money or kind which were done by the monks.

When we look at the numerous Buddhist structures (*stupa, vihara, chaitya, etc.*) built during this time, we are impressed by the scale and plan of some of these as this kind of architecture was in the formative stage. What we need to realize is that these were sponsored by rulers who were keen both to legitimize their position and to earn the merit that is said to accrue from gift-giving. The early Buddhist period in India abounds in instance in which gift or patron were made of single railing pillars, cross-bars and paving slabs for *stupas*; similarly individual cells in monastery and sculptures in many Buddhist shrines were considered sufficient in themselves to bring religious merit to the donor.<sup>2</sup>

The sculpting of images in the building of Buddhist temples initiated a new pattern of patronage. Gradually, the donation came to include not only the concept of *dana* or gift offered to the deity through an intermediary but also that of *bhakti* or devotion to a deity. Of the several forms of artistic production that received patronage in Gupta times, such as poetry, drama, etc, only art will be dealt with here.

We get various terms like *Dana, Dakshina, Gift, etc.* to patronage in inscription. In present day if we see in temple or any religious places there is a box for *Dana* that is called *Danapatra*. That means the people donate something for the maintenance of religious institution. This is also a kind of religious patronage. The king Asoka mentioned in his inscription that religious patronage is a great important for every person. Romila Thaper's monographs patronage or *Dana* as forms of exchange is a more comprehensive treatment of the subject. She marshals considerable evidence to demonstrate that patronage in ancient times was an important socio- economic function.<sup>3</sup> According to I.C. Cunnison<sup>4</sup> the institution of patronage or *Dana* was a form of exchange and redistribution. Another excellent sociological study by J. Gonda<sup>5</sup> discussed various terms used in the sense of gift giving in the Rig-Veda; he seeks to assess the role of gift making in building and sustaining social relationship. Motive for gift making during the Rig-Vedic period receive adequate treatment.

In ancient societies, as so often today, patronage was normally without design and purpose. It was rarely a random and spontaneous act. The objective implicit in the

fact, more often than not, was the creation of social bonds and networks of patron-client relationship, and consequently further strengthening of the prevalent authority structure. The patron, the recipient and the objects of exchange are the interacting elements in the act. The dynamics of the relationship between the constituent elements is rooted in the particular society, for ultimately conceptions of status; power and authority are culturally patterned. Patronage includes not only impressive monuments but also more modest efforts and services as well, for what really matters is the perception that such activities create at the popular level and the image that they help to project. The type of patronage, their role in royal legitimation and status conferment and the social categories involved in the act are some of the concerns of this chapter.

We know that a religious structure can find its full fruition on the soil of a country with the help of its rulers. Patronage of the ruler was an important factor in the rise of Buddhism. A galaxy king like Ajatsatru, Asoka, Milinda, Kaniska, Harsha, etc. adopted and supported the religion. They provided material resources, protection and help to *sangha* and monks, built *stupa* and *vihara* and encouraged missionary work. It will be noted that the patronage of king and the religious enthusiasm of the common people could not have produced the great structures without the enormous wealth that suddenly became available in the region following the commercial expansion.

Apart from the royal king, householders or mainly the women were an important role of patronage of Buddhism in India. Women figure in *Pali* literature both as giving daily alms of cooked food to *bhikkhus* as well as making rich donations of precious jewellery and other articles to the Buddhist *sangha*. The phenomenon of women independently giving alms and making rich gift does bespeak a socially more active and economically more gainful and varied life for them at this time in Buddhism.<sup>6</sup>

There were various factors that fostered the growth of Buddhism and helped the widespread propagation of the religion in India and abroad. But it is an undeniable fact that like other religions of the World, Buddhism owed much of its expansion to the patronage of several dynasties of India, extended to the religion for its welfare and progress. In this chapter an attempt has been made to exhibit how far patronage operated to aid the spread of Buddhism in Indian coastal regions from the period of the Buddha's ministration to that of the extension of the 12<sup>th</sup> century C.E. It present from

historical perspective a chronological accounts of activates of king and clans who showered their patronage and support as a result of which Buddhism spread all over the east coast of India and even in the outlying countries.

Although Buddhism originated as a protest against the Vedic religion and its attendant social inequalities, at no time did it envisage a complete eradication of such inequalities. Rather it sought to contain them and to create a society ordered on more rational principles than the Brahmanical system. In such a society the king was assigned a more positive role as *chakravarti* and *dharmaraja*. In the Buddhist notion of the state, kingship was an instrument of social and political change and the creation of moral socio-political order.<sup>7</sup> Thus the king was not only the patron but an active participant in the processes of creation a social order in which Buddhism played a major role. Asoka provides the best examples of such a king, whose efforts to restructure society and economy through the policy of *Dhamma* led to the establishment of a metropolitan state.<sup>8</sup>

The primary sources of the work may broadly be classified under the following heads; literary and archaeology. Literary sources include both indigenous and foreign accounts and in the foreign accounts mainly Chinese traveller's accounts are consulted. Archaeological sources especially inscription (copper plate) and land grant records have been utilised here, which are very useful and reliable. This is mainly due to a large number of inscription in the shape of royal *prasastis*, votive records of gift images, pillar and doorways etc. as well as epigraphic records of land grants. These inscriptions naturally constitute more reliable sources of information regarding new categories of patronage items. We learn from the accounts of the Chinese travellers like Fa-hien, Hiuen-Tsang and I-tsing that how large landholding and untold wealth had become accumulated in the Buddhist monasteries. Even though some of this wealth may have been bestowed by traders and merchants, still considerable amount would seem to have been gifted out of the royal officers<sup>9</sup>.

One may ask why did the Indian rulers include among their major project the sponsorship of Buddhist structures in their kingdom? To find the answer, first we should analyse the epigraphic sources in the form of land grants charters issued by various kings in favour of the monastery. These charters constitute the basic evidence for the king's association with the structures and the formers material contribution to

the latter. In a few royal charters it has been explicitly mentioned that land grants to the Buddhist structures made merely for the increase of the religious merit of the donors.

The present chapter attempts to the study of Buddhism in the east coast of India from the very beginning of religious grants, that is, 5<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> century C.E. The aim is to understand differences in the attitude of the donors in different parts and the various groups or persons of the study area and to explain the factors behind it. Besides, the form and structure through which the act of patronage has been written and presented also used to be chosen by the particular regions and dynasty which are ruled over this region.

### **Patronage of Buddhism in the East Coast of Bengal**

Patronage of Buddhism in the east coast of India especially in east coastal regions of Bengal, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu is very important in the history of Buddhism. In ancient Bengal, that is West Bengal and Bangladesh coastal area where Buddhism was flourished in impressive manner. During the period under study we find land grants issued by the ruling dynasties of various status, whether local, regional or supra-regional. The kings were not donors in all cases. But obviously the state had sanction in each case since the grants were religious in nature and required to be tax-free. Merchants, Clans, householders were also played a significant role in patronage Buddhism. Other than royal patronage we also examine the role of royal persons in building the Buddhist structures. These charters constitute the basic evidence for the kings association with the structures and the formers material contribution to the latter. In a few royal charters it has been explicitly mentioned that land grants to the Buddhist structures made merely for the increase of the religious merit of the donors. The dynasties of the Gupta, Chandra, Devas, Khadgas, Nathas, Ratas and Palas are great patron of Buddhism in this region.

From the Gupta period onwards our knowledge in regard to Buddhism in Bengal becomes more and more distinct. Apart from the archaeological materials providing significant direction in this regards, we also get important references from the Chinese pilgrimage Fa-hien account (came around 399-414 C.E.) during the Gupta rule. His account gives a graphic description of his journey from Champa to Tamralipta along the Ganges. According to him several Buddhist complex built at Tamralipta<sup>10</sup>

having as many as twenty two monasteries, all field with monks and also it was an important trading marts during this period. One may note in this connection that trading community may help to construct Buddhist structures at Tamralipta.<sup>11</sup> Land grants character was an important source to know about patronage of Buddhism in the Gupta dynasty in this region. The earliest group of land grants had been issued by the local administrative officers under the authority of the Guptas. The donors are mostly local people. They are often important state officials like *ayuktaka*, *visayapati*, represented from merchant community like *nagarasresthi*, important groups of rural people like *gramika*, *brahmanas*, *mahattaras*, *kutumbins* and representatives from non-agriculturist community like the *pustapala*, *kayastha* and *kulika*.<sup>12</sup> So as donors we have a representation of both producing and non-producing groups.

Sometimes we even have community patronage and villagers were interested in settling or supporting Buddhist establishment.<sup>13</sup> According to Chinese sources the first ruler of Gupta dynasty Maharaja Gupta or Sri Gupta founded a Buddhist monastery and offered with a gift of twenty four villages to the Buddhist monks from China for maintenance.<sup>14</sup> This Buddhist monastery situated at *Mrigasthapana* in Varendra, North Bengal.<sup>15</sup> This is not connected with the region of coastal Bengal but it's very important to understand that, if this Sri Gupta is to be identified with the founder of Gupta Dynasty, then there does not seem to be any doubt that Buddhism had its heyday in Bengal during the early days of the Guptas. Archaeologically, however, we have not much evidence about this matter except discoveries some stray examples of Buddha images and ruins of Buddhist establishment in a dilapidated condition. Incidentally, the replica of the *Mrigasthapana stupa*, which has been referred to in the account of I-tsing, and which according to the description was constructed by Sri Gupta, has been represented much later in history.<sup>16</sup>

Inscriptional sources from Gupta dynasty, a direct evidence of the patronage of Gupta king Vainya Gupta, of whom a single record has been discovered at Gunaigarh copper plate near Comilla in Bangladesh of the year of 188 Gupta eras (507 C.E.).<sup>17</sup> This is the earliest evidence to show that a centre of Buddhism was emerging in the Mainamati region of Samatata. The inscription mentioned that a gift of land from the camp of victory at Kripura by Maharaja Vainya Gupta made at the request of his vassal Maharaja Rudradatta in favour of Buddhist monastery that is called *Ashrama vihara*, dedicated to Avolokitesvara by Acharya Santideva, a follower of Mahayana

Buddhism.<sup>18</sup> Other purpose of the gift was to provide fund for the supply of food, beds, seats, garments, medicine and other requisites to the inmates of the monastic establishment and meet the expenses for repairing the building of the *Ashrama vihara*.<sup>19</sup> On the basis of the charter of Vainya Gupta, it's clear that he was a great patron of Buddhist establishment. The epigraphic records provides information not only about the gift of some land and other things to the Buddhist monastery and monks for the maintenance of the *Ashrama vihara*, but also specifically mentions *Avalokitesvara*, who seems to have been the installed deity in the temple attached to the monastery.

Added to this epigraphs throws significant light on the question of the ritualistic form of Buddhism, practised in this part of the region during the period. There is no doubt that as early as 507 C.E. Buddhism had developed a pantheon in which *Avalokitesvara* seems to have been a prevalent cultic form. An inscription from Jayarampur, (situated in Balasore district, Orissa) dated in the first year of the region of Gopachandre (6<sup>th</sup> century C.E.) records the gift of a village named Svetabalika (situated in Dandabhukti in the Medinipur district) for the construction of a *vihara* at *Bodhipadraka-agrahara*, where the *Avalokitesvara* had been installed. The gift was made to the *bhikshu sangha* of the Mahayana school.<sup>20</sup> There were another Buddhist *viharas* which were known as the royal *vihara* or the *Raja Vihara* (*Raja vihara* is normally translated as royal monastery) as one of the boundaries of the produced land to be granted of the Buddhist monk, Acarya Jitasena, probable, the royal *vihara* received its name from its establishment by the royal people for the use of the members of the royal family.<sup>21</sup>

Another important dynasty Ratas and Nathas seems to have extended their patronage to Buddhist structures. The dynasty was ruling in the 7th century C.E. in the Samatata region. The Kailan copper plate inscription<sup>22</sup> discovered in the Tipperah-Noakhali region of south-eastern Bengal, which is belonged to the Rata dynasty.<sup>23</sup> This inscription refers to three generation of Ratas rulers. We come to know from Kailan grant that *Mahasandhivigrahika* (minister for peace and war) Jayanatha approached, through Yuvaraja Baladharana Rata, the reigning king for the grant of a piece of land between a Buddhist monastery, in order to make a dedication out of it to "*Bhagavat Tathagataratna*" (Buddha) or the '*Ratnatraya*' (that is the Buddhist trinity of Buddha, Dharma and *sangha* symbolised in a Buddhist establishment). The prayer was granted by the king Sridharana Rata and 25 *patakas* of land,<sup>24</sup> situated in the *visayas* of

Guptinatana and Patalayika were given to Jayanatha for the Buddhist monastery.<sup>25</sup> The Kailan copper plate of Sridharana Rata records not only grant land and food, clothing and other necessities for the Buddhist monks, but also clearly indicates that the jurisdiction of the *Kumaramatya* of Devaparvata, i.e. the Mainamati-Lalmai range in the orbit of the Buddhist World. It will be noted that Sridharana Rata was a Vaishnava but his minister was Buddhist. Royal patronage cut across personal religion of the ruler.

According to Niharranjan Ray, this can be taken as an example of predominance of Buddhism in Samatata.<sup>26</sup> Records suggest that coastal Bengal Vaishnavism followed Buddhism in popularity. We may take the case of the Nathas dynasty from Tippera copper Plate of Lokenatha (c.564 C.E.).<sup>27</sup> He was perhaps a contemporary of Jivadharana Rata father of Sridharana Rata. According to this copper plate, the king granted 41 *patakas* land which is a forest region (*atavi-bhukhanda*) without any natural boundaries and other unknown amount to a Buddhist monastery. The land was requested by *Mahasamanta Pradoshasarman* which was made by Lokanatha.<sup>28</sup>

In the second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century C.E., when the later Guptas captured power in Gauda and Magadha, south-eastern Bengal saw the emergence of the Khadgas dynasty.<sup>29</sup> Khadga rulers were also Buddhist and a great patron of Buddhism in the region of *Vanga* and Samatata region. We come to know the history of this dynasty from two copper plates found at Ashrafpur<sup>30</sup> (30 miles north-east of Dhaka) and an inscribed image of Sarvani discovered at Deulbadi<sup>31</sup> (14 miles south of Comilla). From this inscription it is clear that land was granted to Buddhist structure from Khadga rulers. The Ashrafpur copper plate issued by Deva Khadga (c.671 C.E.) as benevolent and powerful and the conqueror of all enemies. The conquest probably required legitimisation through construction of or patronage to religious establishments. In accordance with the tradition of the age, this might have led Devakhadga to grant lands for Buddhist monastic establishments. The first plate also edited by R.C. Majumdar<sup>32</sup> and D.C. Sircar.<sup>33</sup>

The inscription mentions that Deva Khadga and his son Rajabhatta together donated 15 *patakas* and 20 *dronas* of land to the four *viharas* in charge of the revered Buddhist teacher Sanghamitra for the use of his monastery. The amount of the land donated to each *vihara* corresponds to about 484 *bighas* at an average. Devakhadga,

however, did not get the monasteries constructed; rather the establishment were already in existence and the Khadga king brought them within a single campus there by making it a sacred landscape. It appears that it was actually a cluster of sacred structure in the form of monasteries.<sup>34</sup>

Important evidence from copper plate B (Ashrafpur) that six *patakas* and ten *dronas* land granted to the monastery of Sanghmitra by the RajaRaja, son of Devakhadga. The donor in this case was Rajarajabhata who made the gift of his own land for the sake of the *Ratnatraya* (the Buddhist triad).<sup>35</sup> So this monastery flourished in that place with the help of royal patronage. Chinese pilgrimage Sheng-Che<sup>36</sup> in his account mentioned that the king is said to have given to the monks and nuns offering (not specified) for their maintenance. He also mentions every morning on behalf of the king an officers was sent to the monastery to ask the welfare of the resident. Here Sheng-Che mentions about the Raja *Vihara* which was also mentioned Gunaigarh copper plate inscription.<sup>37</sup>

In the Ashrafpur copper plate inscription B founded by the Balabhata in Salvan *Vihara*, mentioned that he granted 25 *patakas* land for the Buddhist structure, repairmen of *Ashramas* and for the Buddha, Dharma and *Sangha*. The land was donated at the request of *Mahasandhivigrahadhikarta* Sri Yajnavarman who was a devout worshiper of Buddha.<sup>38</sup> This epigraphs also refers to *mahabhogasrama* and eight *viharas* adorned with a large number of white coloured *chaityas* where Buddhist philosophy and worn on Buddhist religious thoughts were taught and discussed. Here we find cluster of monasteries of varying importance. It must be noted that along with copper plates a small *chaitya* made of bronze was also found. This is perhaps a votive *chaitya*. Donations of votive *stupas* were quite common among the Buddhists.<sup>39</sup> According to I-tsing<sup>40</sup> account the Chinese monk Sheng-Chi who visited Samatata and observed that there were 30 monasteries, with more than 4000 monk's and enjoying patronage from the king Rajarajabhata from Khadga dynasty. Another Chinese pilgrim Hiuen-Tsang accounts very interesting for that cause, when he visited in this region he also saw 2000 Buddhist monks. From these sources we can remarks that many Buddhist structures flourished in this place with the patronage of the king.<sup>41</sup> Patronage to Buddhism by the perhaps initiated this sharp increases in the congregation of monks in this coastal area. The capital of the Samatata was undoubtedly Devaparvata. We

know that Devaparvata was situated in Mainamati area of Comilla, where more than 50 monasteries were flourished, with the affiliation of the Khadga rulers.

Like Khadgas, Ratas, Nathas another important Buddhist dynasty Deva was a great patron of Buddhism in this region. The history of this dynasty has been reconstructed on the basic of three copper plates. The two important copper plate of this dynasty which was issued by Sri Anandadeva and Sri Bhavadeva in the Salvan *vihara* or monastery area of the Mainamati region near Comilla, these are indicates that Deva kings were granted land for the Buddhist structure. They patronised this Buddhist monastery after the Khadga dynasty. The royal patronage was to such an extent that the monastery was named after the ruler. This monastery was also known as Sri Bhavadeva *Mahavihara*.<sup>42</sup> The earlier published Bhavadeva plate does mention that granted land to a *vihara* or a small monastery situated in or around the Mainamati hill.

A land grant of Bhavadeva records permanent gift of 7/2 *patakas* of land in favour of the *Ratnatraya*.<sup>43</sup> This *Ratnatraya* indicates of the Buddhist trinity of Buddha-Dharma and *Sangha* worship in a Buddhist religious establishment. The Rata, Khadga and Deva copper plate mention 'Ratnatraya' establishment. The remains of Kutilamura Buddhist complex at Mainamati region was three main *stupas* known as *Ratnatraya*.<sup>44</sup> The recovered sculptural materials from Mainamati excavations are indicative of royal patronage to Buddhism and lend support to the conclusion drawn from epigraphy that Buddhism was predominant in this region. In the Deva dynasty the Anandadeva was a great patron of Buddhist structures. He built a great structure Ananda monastery at the end of the 7th or the beginning of 8th century C.E. Also we found many coins from of many Buddhist structures which were issued by some powerful and prosperous ruler of south-east Bangladesh, most probably by the Deva rulers.<sup>45</sup>

Another important dynasty Chandra was substantial supporters of Buddhist structures in Harikela (eastern and southern parts of Bengal). They issued large number of copper plates and inscriptions which are the main source of information to understand the patronage of Buddhism. Nearby 25 copper plates issued by different Chandra ruler were discovered from the Charpatra mura. The Charpatra mura *vihara* is one of important Buddhist structure in Mainamati region.<sup>46</sup> All the copper plates mainly issued for land grants to Buddhist monastery or other purposes, because Chandra

dynasty also great patron of Brahmanism. From the Charpatramura we have another inscription of king Viradharadeva (1230-50 C.E.) mentioned that the 15 *patakas* land transferred of lying in the Vataganga vishaya of the Samatata *mandala* to the shrine of Sri Ladamadhava. It appears that right from the time of Ladahachandra this shrine continued to be important to receive patronage till the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The *Paschimabhaga* copper plate grant of Srichandra (c.925 C.E. to 975 C.E.) describe both this king and his predecessor Trailokychandra as *Paramasugatha* and his Rampal and Madanpur copper plate grants describe that they are all devoted Buddha's and followers of Buddhist teaching and for that cause this Chandra ruler granted land for the reconstruction of Buddhist structures.<sup>47</sup> Trailokya Chandra of the Chandra family who succeeded the family of Devas.

According to Rampal copper plate of Srichandra was the mainstay of the royal family of Harikela.<sup>48</sup> This statement is exclusive to this copper plate only and it is generally accepted that this family attained royal status from the position of a subordinate chief. Who were the overlords of the Chandras is still unknown. However this family gradually extended their power of influence to Samatata and Vanga and also incorporated the Srihatta region within their sphere of influence. Probably in the later period of the Chandras did not exercise any authority over the Harikela region. If the Chandras exercised any authority on Harikela, they would have inscribed their names on the Harikela coinage which they did not do. That the Chandras did not donate any land in the Chittagong region also supports the connection. Their personal religion was Buddhism. All the Chandra plate bear an identical seal at the top, described in their inscriptions as *Dharmachakramudra* and represented by the 'wheel of the laws' flanked by two seated deer. However during their rule a shift in the religious patronage can be perceived. From the Chandra records we finds that land were granted almost exclusively to Brahmans or Brahminical shrines or installations of Brahminical deities by the rulers who themselves professes Buddhism.

The Mainamati plates of Ladhachandra and Govindachandra provides the names and reveal that the last two were *Paramasugatha*, as for Ananda Chandra, he called himself a lay of Buddhist and devotes nine verses to detailing his work of Buddhist piety, which including building many monasteries with his own name, also established many Buddhist image, it's still bearing the testimony that Chandra rulers are great patron of Buddhist structures.<sup>49</sup> The foregoing discussion thus unambiguously

indicates that the Chandra rulers were devout Buddhists. No clear instances of their devotion towards Buddhism on a personal level have, however, come to light so far.

The Mainamati copper plate of Ranavankamalla Sri-Harikeladeva, (1220 C.E) mentioned that, Dhadi-eba, a minister of the king, donated a piece of land in favour of a *vihara* dedicated to Durgottara (a form of the Buddhist Goddess Tara) situated in the town of Pattikera, near Mainamati. Dhadi-eba was good practices of Sahajiya cult.<sup>50</sup> According to some scholar Dhadi-eba and his family might have been from Burmese origin. The region of Pattikera was already famous in the Buddhist world before the 11<sup>th</sup> century is attested by the painting of a sixteen armed Chunda with the legend ‘*Pattikera Chundavarabhavana Chunda*’ on a manuscript of the Ashtasaharika Pranjaparamita copied in the year of 1015 C.E.<sup>51</sup> Pattikera is an important coastal site of Buddhism in Bangladesh.

From the Samatata if we move further south into the coastal tracts of Chittagong which was known as the Harikela region, we find that Buddhism prosperous in this region right from the second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century C.E. and received active patronage from the king. We learn from Tibetan works that the Pandita *vihara* was located in the city of Chittagong.<sup>52</sup> In the 7<sup>th</sup> century Chittagong region attracted Buddhist monks from China. According to I-tsing’s view Wu-hing sailed from Simhala for the north-east and after a month arrived at the country of *O-li-ki-lo* (Harikela). Wu-hing had stayed in Harikela for one year and then he left for Bodh Gaya. Another Chinese monk Tan-Kwong, coming to India by the southern sea route, arrived at *A-li-ki-lo* (Harikela). Having found much favour with the king of that country, he got a temple built there.<sup>53</sup> Thus Buddhist monks were patronised by the rulers of Harikela.

We learn from an inscribed copper image of Devatideva, about donation of some land to the Haritaka Dharmasabha *vihara* for the support of the legion of noble Buddhist monks who were involved in worship of the Buddha and the Dharma and the repairing and rebuilding of the monastery. It is suggest that the donation for repairing and rebuilding the continuous dwelling in the monastery. While describing a boundary of land a Mahayana *vihara kshetra* is mentioned as its eastern boundary. Devatideva Bhattaraka was devotes of Buddhism. It will be noted that this inscription may dated 77 regnal year of Devatideva and its refers to the Burmese Era starting from 638 C.E. and according to Gouriswar Bhattaachariya the record should be dated as 751 C.E.<sup>54</sup> From

that there was a close connection between Burma (present Myanmar) and Chittagong region is indicated by the use of Burmese era and this interaction has been reflected in the successive years from numismatic as well as epigraphic records.

According to an unfinished copper plate dated 9<sup>th</sup> century C.E. from Chittagong that about Kantideva of Harikela *mandala* and he was a Buddhist. In this inscription mentioned that the grant of Attakaradeva we find that the ruling monarch is praised as a follower of Sugata i.e. the Buddha. The object of the inscription was the donation of a cell in honour of *Munindra bhattarika* (Buddha) for the prosperity of perfect knowledge and for the development of religious merit of his parents, of himself and of all sentient beings. The cell was constructed in a monastery, which was called *Vela vihara* and some land was donated by Sahadeva with the approval of the king, for the expenses of Tathagata-bhataraka and for the payment of food, clothing, beds and medicine for the monks residing in the monastery. The donation was handed over to the honourable elderly monk Dharmmadatta.<sup>55</sup> It will be noted that in ancient Bengal i.e. present west Bengal and Bangladesh, and in the region of coastal Bangladesh, Chittagong was an important place for Buddhism and also art historical material. A big hoard of bronze images was found from the village of Jhewari, situated in Chittagong. Jhewari figures are representing to Buddha in different *mudras*. Here, however, in most of the cases the donors were Buddhist monks. An example may be cited. It read as ‘this is the religious gift of the venerable monk Kumarabhadra who is a prominent follower of Mahayana Buddhist. Donation of metal images naturally implies that there was a local centre of production of such images and the client was wealthy enough to donate such images. From Jhewari apart from the images we have donation of a small temple and *stupa*, belonging to the 9<sup>th</sup> century C.E. Donation of miniature *stupa* acquired for the donor the highest religious merit. The Chinese pilgrimage Hiuen-Tsang clarify that the incorporeal importance of these *stupas*. The rulers of the period patronised for the consolidation of Buddhism in the region which led to the donation of finest Jhewari bronze.<sup>56</sup>

Mogalmari was an important Buddhist site in the east coast of Bengal, situated in west Medinipur district of West Bengal. It will be noted that Mogalmari Buddhist structures received patronage during the later Gupta or pre Pala time. The location of the monastery played an important role for flourishing the monastery from every aspect. The monastery stood upon an important trade way from Pataliputra to

Visakhapatnam that passed through Dandabhukti. Another branch way from Tamralipta port was too connected to this site. According to Durga Basu, “since it was located in the Tamralipta region, we can presume that it was traders rather than the king who were behind the growth of this monastery.”<sup>57</sup> It is agreeably proved again when a grey pot (*handi*) full with about 200 ancient cowries was discovered from the 5<sup>th</sup> phase excavation. Ashok Datta said that these cowries brought from Maldweep which had a financial value at that time.<sup>58</sup> This area was, in all probability, connected to Maldweep by its business terms through Tamralipta port. Many coins were discovered from this monastery; it may consider being the Gupta period. We can say that the Gupta rulers might donate to this monastery for reconstructing the structure.

Though the Svetavalika village of Indra inscription has been identified with villages of Balasore in Orissa, but the discovery of Buddhist monastery at Mogalmari (Dantan) near the Bengal-Orissa border gives rise to the possibility of existence of the Svetavalika village of Indra inscription at Mogalmari. During the Gopachandrs’s rule Dandabhukti seems to have been included the region north of the river Suvarnarekha in the Balasore district as well as the area round the present Dantan in West Medinipur district. This region was in the charge of his feudatory Mahasamanta Maharaja Acyuta and he donated Svetavalika vithi for establishing a Buddhist monastery which seems to have been situated in this area.<sup>59</sup>

The Pala dynasty also was a great patron of Buddhist structure. We come to know from epigraphical and various literary sources of the Pala period that many Buddhist structures established with the help of the Pala rulers in eastern India. In the Pala dynasty all the rulers were Buddhist and Buddhist establishment seems to have received their direct patronage. During this time, they achieved a great success in the field of education, art and literature which marked a golden chapter in the history of Bengal and Buddhism became an international religion under the patronage of Pala dynasty.

The Palas of Bengal played an important role in the religious and cultural life of the country. Several centuries of Hindu-counter-reformation had greatly reduced the hole of Buddhism on other part of India, but the Pala dynasty continued the tradition of royal patronage for Buddhist structures. On the basis of epigraphic sources indicate that maximum land grant portray the kings act as humanitarian measure primarily driven by

religious consideration. During this period four major Buddhist *Mahaviharas* were built, which indicates that the glorious of the economic condition of the Pala rulers, their disproportionate material support for monasteries does not appear to be driven by mere religious consideration. It appears that the king - monk relationship, during the Pala period, was based on a patron - client relationship to the Buddhist structures by sponsoring project of structure construction and also donating land for their upkeep. The rulers provided the monks stipends along with academic posts in the monastery, which were hierarchical in nature. Also contemporary literary sources indicate that the Pala ruler's donation to the Buddhist structures were also a pragmatic step to the support of these Buddhist structures, as they exercised considerable influence in the society.

Mostly all the Pala rulers were the great patrons of Buddhist structures. If you look it at chronological order Gopala was the first ruler of Pala dynasty (c. 750 to 770 C.E.), and founded a *vihara* or monastery at Nalanda and established many religious schools. It is said that Gopala interested in helping the construction of the Buddhist structures.<sup>60</sup> He also revived the Nalanda monastery (in Bihar), created several new monasteries in his dominion and offered lavish gifts to the Buddhist structures. Yet in Bengal Gopala did not built any Buddhist structure, but it will be remember for this kind of patronage by Gopala inspire other rulers to help to built the Buddhist structures in Bengal.

Dharmapala, the son of Gopala-1 was great patron of Buddhist structures in Bengal (775-810 C.E.). There are adequate references to Dharmapala's patronage of Buddhist structures in Tibetan chronicles. He founded the famous Vikramasila *Mahavihara* in Magadha on the top of a hill on the bank of the *Ganges*. Dharmapala also built magnificent monastery Somapura *Mahavihara*, which is now in Bangladesh. It is to be noted that at first this structure was known as Jain establishment.<sup>61</sup> After the patronage of Dharmapala this structure known as a great Buddhist establishment and became an international heritage site in Bangladesh. So it is true that without patronage of the Pala ruler this monastery can't became a biggest Buddhist structure. According to Taranatha, Dharmapala established a large Buddhist scholar Harivadhara and founded fifty religious institutions, composed his famous annotation of *Abhisamayalankara*, by retreating to the solitary room Traikutaka *Mahavihara*, which was an important Buddhist structure in Bengal.<sup>62</sup>

Dharmapala was succeeded by his able son Devapala (810-850 C.E.). He was also followers of Buddhism. His fame spread too many Buddhist countries outside India. According to Badalpur pillar inscription,<sup>63</sup> Devapala granted five villages, requested of Balaputradeva to build a Buddhist monastery and also economically helped for the monastery. Devapala also constructed many Buddhist monasteries in Magadha. But as no archaeological sources with Buddhist overtone has yet been found in the Bengal delta, so that, it is not possible to suggest as how Buddhist structure were benefited by Devapala's patronage. After the Devapala reign in Bengal there was political instability and weak rulers succeed the throne one after another. Though these kings were devoting Buddhism, but they could not established any Buddhist structure in Bengal region, as they were busy in maintaining political stability.

The most notable king after the death of Devapala was Narayanapala (861-817 C.E.). A small inscription of Narayanapala was founded by V.V. Pandit in the inscriptions gallery of Indian Museum, Calcutta, which was published in the JVSP.<sup>64</sup> It records the creation of an image of Buddha in the 9<sup>th</sup> regnal year of the king Narayanapala, by a Buddhist elder Dharmamitra, an inhabitant of Andhra country in the month of *Baisakha*.

The beginning of the 11th century C.E. should be regarded as the new era for the flourished Buddhist structures in the Bengal region. Nayapala infused fresh life-blood in Buddhism. During his period Vikramasila and Somapura monastery rose to their height of fame. Another important ruler Ramapala was a great patron of Buddhist structure. He founded a new city Ramavati, which had a Buddhist *vihara* named Jagaddala *Mahavihara* in Bengal. Ramapala granted land and economically supported the monastery for enhancement and maintenances. During his time Buddhism was in flourishing condition in Varendri. It is tempting therefore to accept the claim made by Haraprasad Shastri in 1910, and repeated by many since that time the *Jagaddalamahavihara*, One of the great monastery in the Pala domains whose founder has not yet been identified, who was the founder of the monarch. Govindapala, the last important king of the Pala dynasty, who gave patronage for the establishment of Buddhist structures. He took the title *paramasaugata* which clearly gives impression of his faith in Buddhism. End of his rule (in C.E. 1199) was practically the end of Buddhism in Bengal, though the faith continued as a lesser spiritual force tills the invasion of the Muslims.<sup>65</sup>

It is significant to note that though most of the kings of Pala dynasty were followers of Buddhism, and all these rulers were lavish patronage of Buddhist structures in different parts of Bengal and Bihar. But it is true that some of the Buddhist sites also flourished in coastal region of Bengal under the patronage of Pala rulers. Dharmapala, the 2<sup>nd</sup> king of Pala dynasty in the 8<sup>th</sup> century C.E., established fifty Buddhist monasteries. The Pandita *vihara* is one of them which were situated in Chittagong district of Bangladesh coastal region.<sup>66</sup>

The prosperity of Buddhism in south-eastern Bengal seems to have continued uninterrupted after the fall of the Pala dynasty. A copper plate inscription from Chittagong region shows that the issuer Kantideva and his dynasty, ruling in the Harikela *mandala* (Sylhet, Chittagong and Noakhali regions of coastal Bengal) were also ardent followers of Buddhism. The inscription is datable to the 9<sup>th</sup> century C.E.<sup>67</sup>

From the above description it is very clear that, the Buddhist structures flourished in Bengal mainly with the patronage of royal dynasty. The epigraphic records show that the rulers of many royal dynasties endowed the Buddhist structures. It will be regarded as the golden age of Buddhism in Bengal for the wide range of development and advancement of Buddhist structures during this time. We know that Gautam Buddha's theory of non-violence and peace for all, which effected in these royal dynasties and they patronised to the development of Buddhist structures in Bengal.

### **Patronage of Buddhism in the East Coast of Orissa**

Next important region in the east coast of India is Orissa, where Buddhism was flourished in many places by the patronage of many dynasties, merchants, royal officers and householders. Ancient Orissa occupies a prominent place in the history of Buddhism and Buddhist culture. Mainly the land grant record from various dynasties, epigraphical sources and Chinese travels account, help us to understand about the patronage of Buddhism in the coastal region of the Orissa.

We know that the Orissa is the holy land of Lord Jagannath, has remained a sacred land through the ages, where various religious faiths flourished and prospered. It was a meeting ground of various religious sects both homogeneous and heterogeneous and has played a significant role in the religious and spiritual history of India. Of all the

religious creeds Buddhism played an important role in the socio-cultural history of coastal Orissa. The earliest history of Buddhism in Orissa is wrapped in mystery. No systematic record to the religion is available to us. However, in the Buddhist records we find references to Orissa here and there. Unlike *Vardhamana Mahavira*; Buddha is not known to have personally visited in this region. But Buddhist traditions closely associate Orissa with Buddha. *Buddhavamsa* and *Dathadhatuvamsa*<sup>68</sup> inform us that after the death of Buddha, one of his tooth-relics was carried to Dantapura, the capital of Kalinga. There the tooth-relics were enshrined in a magnificent *Chaitya*. *Mahasattarisaka sutta* of the *Majjhimanikaya*<sup>69</sup> further informs us that Vassa and Bhanna, the two tribes of Utkala people recognise the teaching of the blessed one and discarded their previous views. Further we learn from *Pali* literature that two merchant brothers of Utkala, named Tapassu and Bhallika became the first lay disciples of Buddha. The two merchants with 500 trading carts paid reverence to the blessed one in the eight weeks after his enlighten and offered the Buddha rice cakes and lumps of honey. According *Anguttara* commentary<sup>70</sup> Buddha gave them eight handful of his hair and the merchants took it to their city named Asitanjana, where they enshrined it in a magnificent *chaitya*.<sup>71</sup>

It is true that in Buddha's life time Buddhism had not entered in Orissa. Even after the *Parinirvana* of Buddha two centuries Buddhism had not made any heyday in Orissa. But after that Buddhism was became a great religion during the Asokan time. He was a great patron of Buddhism in the coastal region of Orissa. Buddhism was developing into a powerful creed in the Asokan time. According to *Mahagovinda Suttanta*,<sup>72</sup> the Orissa was well known to the Buddhist in Asokan time. After the Kalinga war (261 B.C.E) Asoka was became from Chandasoka to Dharmasoka<sup>73</sup> and he devoted his life, time, energy and resources for the spread and patronage of Buddhism in and outside India. On the basis of available information it is clear that the growth and spread of Buddhism in all over India from the Kalinga region. Geographically Kalinga was an important region of coastal Orissa like Odra and Utkal. No doubt, Buddhism was the personal religion of Asoka which is mentioned in Bhabru edicts.<sup>74</sup> Though he did not personally preach Buddhism, yet the faith received great stimulus under his patronage. When he publicly expressed his inclination towards Buddhism, as revealed in the Bhabru edicts, the monks received strong incentives and encouragement to propagate the religion far and wide.<sup>75</sup> Ashoka believe that in religious tolerance and it

is quite impossible on his part to favour any particular group or section. It may be presumed that all the three section of Buddhism must have received his patronage.

It is clear that Buddhism was already prevalent and received royal patronage and status of the state religion after 261 B.C.E., when King Asoka issued edicts and erected pillars at several places for the spread of Buddhism in Orissa. According to some scholars, he must have also erected two *stupas* on the two ridge of Dhauli hill facing each other. Asoka's edicts preaching the non-violence of Buddhism inscribed on the rock at Dhauli made the place popular, sacred place for Buddhist monks and large number of caves were excavated in Dhauli hills for their residence.<sup>76</sup>

After Asoka many dynasties of east coast of Orissa have received patronage from the Guptas, Bhauma-kara, Somavamsis, Sailabhadras, Ganges, etc. During the Kushana period in the 1<sup>st</sup> century C.E. Buddhism split into two distinct divisions, Hinayana and Mahayana and king Kaniska became a great patron of Mahayana form of Buddhism. Though Orissa did not form part of the Kusana Empire, yet it could not escape the spell of Mahayana Buddhism and from the 1<sup>st</sup> century C.E. to 7<sup>th</sup> century C.E. Orissa played a very important role in the rise and spread of Mahayana Buddhism. But some of the Puri-Kusana coins have been unearthed ranging in time between 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries C.E. Five Kushana gold coins have been discovered in coastal Orissa so far.<sup>77</sup> These Kushana coins perhaps in filtered in to Orissa coastal region through trade or were carried by pilgrims. From the archaeological evidences at Lalitgiri yielded some Kushana donatives' inscriptions from a pedestal in front of the *chaityagriha*, palaeographically these inscriptions dated 3<sup>rd</sup> century C.E. During this period ancient coastal Orissa was well connected with trade routes of south central and western India.<sup>78</sup> We don't have much archaeological material to study the region of Buddhism during this period.

The advent of Guptas on national scene, mark a new impetus in Buddhism. All the Gupta emperors were Bhagavatas, the adherents of Brahmanical faith but they were equally sympathetic towards the causes of Buddhism. Here, again we are not sure whether Gupta rule entered over Orissa or not? However we get a clear picture of the Buddhist establishment at other sites from the period of Guptas who appeared to have a hold over the southern part of Orissa upto second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century C.E. as is evident from the Sumandala, (district Ganjam) copper plates, dated in the Gupta year

250 (569 C.E), of the time of Prithivigraha who had been governing Kalinga-Rastra apparently as a viceroy of the Guptas.<sup>79</sup>

The Chinese pilgrim Fa-hien had visited India during the Gupta period, seen twenty four Buddhist monasteries.<sup>80</sup> In the later part of 5<sup>th</sup> century C.E. Ratnagiri became a famous Mahayana Buddhist centre. According to Taranath,<sup>81</sup> the *vihara* on the top of the mountain at Ratnagiri in Orissa created in the time of *Buddhapaksha*, who has been identified the king Narasimhagupta Baladitya and Mahayana Buddhist scriptures were stored here. It may have been built in the later part of 5<sup>th</sup> century or the early part of the 6<sup>th</sup> century C.E. The remains of large number of Buddhist establishment dating from Gupta King Narasimhagupta Baladitya revealed here in excavation and large number of Buddhist scriptures recovered at Ratnagiri, Lalitgiri and Udaygiri, indicate that these caves were an important Mahayana Buddhist centre in the coastal Orissa with the royal support of Gupta dynasty.<sup>82</sup>

The Buddhist ruins at Ratnagiri, Lalitgiri and Langudi in the district of Jajpur and Cuttack, (the coastal district of Orissa) and Jajpur respectively provide some evidences to show that the monastic establishment flourished during the Gupta periods. During this period we could know from copper plate grants that there were some local rulers ruling over different parts of Orissa, constructed *viharas* and given donations to Buddhist institutions.<sup>83</sup>

After the death of Harsavardhana, Sailodbhovas rose to power as independent rulers in Kangoda, which extended their kingdom as far as Mahanadi. The Sailodbhovas dynasty ruled in Kangoda existed upto late 8<sup>th</sup> century C.E. The kings of this dynasty professed Brahmanical religion. Inscription of Padmapur in the Koraput district reads as: “Sri *Chandrakhadra Khan Dharmmakirti*” can be ascribed to the 7<sup>th</sup> century C.E. That *Dharmmakirti* is a Buddhist philosopher and during this period *Udyotakara* a great Brahmanical philosopher flourished in India.<sup>84</sup> From the Banpur copper plates of Dharmaraja Manabhita, grandson of Sainjabhita Madhavarman II, it is evident that this king at least was liberal enough to endorse a grant land to monks for Bali, Sattrra and Charu to be offered to a deity presumably Buddhist.<sup>85</sup> The archaeological remains at this place also testify to this fact. Remains of Buddhists antiquities such as a *stupa* mounds, kerbs of a monastery, a few Buddhist images and

number of votive *stupas* were effectively suggest the popular religion once developed here, near river Salia, a Buddhist establishment by the patronage of this ruler.

Hiuen-Tsang, in his account has vividly described the flourishing activities of Buddhism in Orissa.<sup>86</sup> He was visited Orissa in 639 C.E, when Orissa had lost her political unity and had been divided into four distinct divisions- Odra, Kongoda, Kalinga and Kosala which are mentioned already in first chapter. Within this four divisions Buddhism was not flourishing in Kongodadesa, where the people were not Buddhist and he does not refer to a single Buddhist monasteries there. But Buddhism was a dominant faith in three other divisions. About Odra *desa* Hiuen-Tsang says “they (the people of *Wu-ta*) were indefatigable students and many of them were Buddhist”. There were about hundred Buddhist monasteries and innumerable brethren all Mahayanist who numbered about 10,000. There were about 10 *stupas*, which were built by Asoka.<sup>87</sup>

In Kalinga pilgrim notice the “ten Buddhist monastery and 500 brethren students of the Mahayanist Sathavira school system”. About Kosala he says that “the king was a *kshatriya* by the birth, a Buddhist in religion and of noted benevolence. There were about 100 Buddhist monasteries and 10,000 brethren, were all Mahayanist.<sup>88</sup> He also referred to great Buddhist monastery with a great *stupa* just outside the capital city, which was built by the Asoka and where at one time the celebrated Mahayana philosopher Nagarjuna resided. He further says that to the south-west of the country about 300 *li* from the capital was a mountain called *Po-lo-mo-lo-ki-li* (Parimalagiri), where king Gautamiputra Satakarni built a Buddhist monastery for his philosopher friend Nagarjuna.<sup>89</sup> N.K. Sahu also identifies this monastery as Gandhagiri.<sup>90</sup> So from above description of Chinese pilgrimage we can say Buddhism was flourishing in these regions by the royal patronage of many kings and seventh century C.E. was a great important of Buddhism, both Mahayana and Hinayana flourished simultaneously along with other religious faiths.

During the 8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> century C.E. Buddhism was the state religion under the reign of the Bhauma-Karas. It's a golden era for the growth and development of Buddhism in Orissa. From the beginning of the Bhauma-Kara rule in Orissa Mahayana Buddhism proposed rapidly due to the royal patronage. Under the patronage of Bhauma-Kara kings a large number of religious institution developed in many parts of

coastal Orissa. The Bhauma-Kara rose to power at a time when Orissa was divided into many sub-regional kingdoms and was ruled by different dynasties of Aryan and aboriginal stock. They carved out a far-flung kingdom in the coastal regions of Orissa and some adjoining hinterlands. In the heyday of their power, the Bhauma-Kara kingdom was extended from the Medinipur district of West Bengal in the north to the Ganjam and Gajapati district of Orissa in south. This region also identify as the coastal Orissa.

According to the account of Hiuen-Tsang the Odra desa of the coastal Orissa inhabited by the monks of the Mahayana order.<sup>91</sup> It received a new impetus during the study period, as the earlier ruler of the dynasty viz., Ksemankaradeva, Sivakaradeva I, Subhakaradeva I, and Sivakaradeva II, who bore Buddhist epithets *Paramopasaka*,<sup>92</sup> *Paramathatagata*,<sup>93</sup> *Paramasaugata*<sup>94</sup> and *Sautagatasarva*<sup>95</sup> respectively, were follower of this sect and extended royal patronage to it.<sup>96</sup> The rulers built a number of Buddhist monasteries and sanctuaries in their kingdom, the remains are still found in different parts of coastal Orissa.

An analogous statement is found in the two Baud plates of Prithivimahadevi alias Tribhubanamahadevi II, which credits Subhakaradeva I with the erection of number Buddhist monasteries.<sup>97</sup> A large number of *Dhayani* Buddhas, Bodhisattava and other deities of the Mahayana pantheon discovered from place like Khadipada, Ratnagiri, Udaygiri and Lalitgiri and assignable to the 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> century C.E. also clearly indicate that Mahayana Buddhism flourished in Orissa during the early Bhauma-Kara regime.

The Dhenkanal plate of Tribhuvana Mahadevi says that Tribhuvana Mahadevi predecessors were Buddhist and they exhausted the vast treasure of the kingdom for the cause of Buddhism,<sup>98</sup> The inscription of Bhimata<sup>99</sup> from Ganesa Gumpha of Udaygiri which records that all the caves of the Kumari hill in Udaygiri had been occupied by the Buddhist monk by the end of the eighth century C.E.

The Khadipada image inscriptions<sup>100</sup> of Subhakaradeva I, refers to a Buddhist monk named Rahularuci, styled as *Mahamandalacarya Paramaguru* or the teacher of the great division and the supreme preceptor. The title indicates that he was a famous Buddhist monk holding of the high position of the state pontiff during Subhakaradeva I's time.

According to It-sing, the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim who visited India 673-687C.E., the *Bha-ra-ha* monastery in Tamralipti, modern Tamluk in the Medinipur district of West Bengal which formed a part of Bhauma kingdom.<sup>101</sup> He mentioned that it was inhabited by monks and nuns, who maintained perfect discipline of life and conduct. The monastery was run by an assembly of monks, which formulated monastic rule and rites and implemented them. Any inmate of the monastery violating the rules was liable to be expelled. The learned monks delivered daily lectures and were provided with good rooms free from duties.<sup>102</sup> This monastery must have continued to flourish during the Bhauma-Kara rule also.

The famous Buddhist establishment at Ratnagiri situated in the east coast of Orissa in the district of Jajpur, which was renowned for its Buddhist culture, developed by the 8<sup>th</sup> century C.E. into a great seat of learning. It was a famous as an important centre of Yoga. According to the Tibetan account the famous Buddhist scholars Bodhisri and Naropa practised Yoga at Ratnagiri. From different parts of the country many teachers and Acharyas resided here to teach Yoga and philosophy. The famous institutions of Yoga at Ratnagiri probably flourished under the patronage of Bhauma-Kara rulers.<sup>103</sup> The excavations at Ratnagiri laid bare the remains of two imposing quadrangular monasteries, an imposing *stupa*, a single-winged monastery, eight temples, a large number of votive *stupas* and a large number of Buddhist sculptures and objects of daily use. From epigraphical point of view we can assign this establishment to the Bhauma-Kara period.<sup>104</sup>

Near the cold-field of Talcher there is place called Jagatri where from three copper plate grants of Bhauma-Kara king Subhakaradeva III were discovered and have been edited by Pandit Binayak Mishra. According to him this was the site of Buddhist monastery called *Jayasrama vihara* which is no more in existence. We learn from this inscription that they donate servants for the maintenance of the Buddhist temple and also supplying female mendicants with garments, pots, bed seat and medicine for offerings. The name of this *vihara* finds mentioned in the copper plate grants and build by the Bhauma-Kara king.<sup>105</sup> Another monastery named Aghyaka Varati was situated in Dhauli area. According to the inscription this monastery was built in 829 C.E. during the reign of Bhauma-Kara king Santikaradeva I. We know that at the time of Asoka and continued to be famous centre of Buddhism for several centuries thereafter.<sup>106</sup> Lalitgiri

and Udaygiri two important Buddhist sites flourished in the coastal Orissa also get patronage from Bhuma-Kara dynasty.

Kurma, about five miles from Konarka in the district of Puri, was an important Buddhist centre during the time of Bhauma-Karas of coastal Orissa. The excavation at Kurma revealed a Buddhist monastic complex with a *stupa* which was constructed by the help of this dynasty. Another important Buddhist site Achutarajpur situated in Puri district. Many bronzes figure of Buddhist image was found in this place.<sup>107</sup> A Tara image of this site contains the inscription Gauriputta *Sangha* which makes us believe that probably a Buddhist *sangha* existed here in the time of Bhauma ruler Gauri Mahadevi.<sup>108</sup>

So from the above description of Bhauma-Kara dynasty we can say the most glorious period in the history of Buddhism in Orissa. The contribution of the Bhauma-Kara dynasty to the propagation and spread of Buddhism is incomparable. No other dynasty in Orissa had done so much for the Buddhist faith, as compared to the Bhauma-Karas.

After the Bhauma-Karas next important dynasty was Somavamsis. It is evident that during the Somavamsis period the Saivism and Vaishnavism had their growth, but the Buddhism also flourished in their kingdom. Among the Somavamsis kings, Balarjuna Mahasivagupta, the last great ruler of the early branch of this dynasty was a great patron of Buddhism, though he was a Saivite in religion.<sup>109</sup> He was a very powerful king of Soma dynasty and ruled for more than fifty years. He showed great respect to Buddhism and made very liberal land grants to Buddhist monks, nuns and monasteries. The Sirpur stone inscription<sup>110</sup> praises the 'lotus' feet of the Sugata (Buddha) and records the construction of a monastery by a *bhiksu* named Ananda Prabha during the reign of Balarjuna as well as the establishment of a feeding house for the monks residing in the monastery and for the upkeep of that, a white rice field was given together with the supplementary crops grown in it. The monks were to enjoy it in succession. He also said to have donated a *vihara* to Buddhist nuns.<sup>111</sup> He made the grant of the village Kalasapura in the Taradanska bhoga to the community of the venerable monks, who coming from the four quarters were residing in the small monastery at Taradamska.<sup>112</sup>

Many Buddhist monasteries located at Sirpur, are said to have been constructed by Balarjuna and the revival of the Mahayana Buddhism was the most outstanding feature of his reign. Banpur has yielded a large number of Buddhist bronze images, where from the Somavamsi ruler Indraratha's copper plate has been discovered. Indraratha had made a land grant to a female Buddhist deity called Khadirabhata Bhattaraka.<sup>113</sup> Moreover their patronage of Buddhism also known from the gift of the village by Karnadeva to Rani Karpurasri hailing from Solanapur *Mahavihara* of Utkaladesa.<sup>114</sup> Solanapur which has been identified with a village of the same name near Jajpur on the bank of the river Vaitarani was an important Buddhist centre since the time of the Bhauma-Karas and therefore it is presumed that the village granted to the lady was apparently a Buddhist in religion. So all these evidences prove the prevalence of Buddhism under the Somavamsi kings. It received royal patronage for its progress.

After the Somavamsis, Buddhism was in a decline phase. The successors of the Somavamsis were the Gangas in the second decade of the 12<sup>th</sup> century C.E. and they ruled till the 15<sup>th</sup> century C.E. During this period the Buddhism was not much spread in Orissa. The excavated remains at Ratnagiri and the scattered Buddhist remains at different Buddhist sites, it is seen that the religion was not much affected during the rule of the Gangas. Though no royal patronage have been extended to the Buddhist but it kept getting local patronage from the traders and local devotees. The excavation at Ratnagiri, from within a *stupa* a Ganga fanam was found.<sup>115</sup> But it is very important to note that the famous Jagannath temple was constructed at Puri during the Ganga rule in the 12<sup>th</sup> century C.E. and became a centre of Vaishnavism.

Traders were also played an important role in the spread of Buddhism in the coastal regions of the Orissa, especially oceanic traders engaged in a dynamic interaction with the religion. Langudi is an important historical Buddhist site in coastal Orissa which was constructed mainly through active patron of Buddhism and donation by the merchant and traders.<sup>116</sup>

### **Patronage of Buddhism in the East Coast of Andhra Pradesh**

In the east coast of India the coastal region of Andhra Pradesh was prominent one, where many of Buddhist sites flourished with the help of royal patronage and the

support of rich individuals. Buddhism was flourished in this region from the earliest times to the 12<sup>th</sup> century C.E. But most of the sites were flourished between the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.E. to 6<sup>th</sup> century C.E. Many scholars worked on the history of art and architecture, social background and some others focussed on the features of Buddhism, but none of them focussed what was the patronage condition in the coastal regions of Andhra Pradesh. We know that maximum Buddhist sites were established in the coastal region of Andhra and it is also true that without patronage large of Buddhist structures did not spread in this region. There are number of Buddhist sites in the east coast of Andhra Pradesh. So it is very difficult to discuss about the entire Buddhist sites.

We find references to the royal patronage in the coastal region of Andhra Pradesh. Many of the inscriptional evidences speak about the royal dynasties and others, who were the great patron of this religion. Recent surveys revealed that the Theravada (Hinayana) Buddhism was prevalent more in north-coastal Andhra, whereas Mahayanism was predominant in mid-coastal Andhra, especially in the fertile tract lying between the rivers Godavari and Krishna.

Judging from the inscriptional sources and from the factors the late V.R Ramachandra Dikshitar, has pointed out that the inscriptions are very useful sources to understand about the patronage.<sup>117</sup> Some inscription of the pre-Mauryan age speaks of the preparation of a casket and of a box of crystal to deposit some relic of the Buddha. The Bhattiprolu Inscriptions 3,5,6,8 and 9 speak of the various village communities and *nigamas* that have offered caskets, boxes of crystal and boxes of stone.<sup>118</sup> The tenth inscription tells us that even the women of Nandapura (modern Chandolu, near Bhattiprolu) and the *sramaners* from *Suvanamaha* participated in this enterprise in memory of the Buddha who has departed. Why should even these women participate in this great task? They should evidently be Buddhists. But this alone will not explain all this eagerness and enthusiasm. These inscriptions clearly reveal that these preparations were made immediately after the *nirvana* of the Buddha and even the women can be explained only on the ground that they have seen the Buddha at least once in their life. A couple of miles near this Nandapura we have a village Buddam (Buddhapuri), evidently named after the Buddha in memory of his visit to these areas.<sup>119</sup>

It was after the conquest of Kalinga Asoka embraced Buddhism and made strenuous efforts for its diffusion throughout the length and breadth of his vast empire

and even outside. It is, therefore, quite likely that Buddhism entered Andhra Pradesh by the coastal route. The Ceylonese chronicles aver that the third century B.C.E. Buddhist council held under his patronage at Patiliputra in the eighteenth year of his reign deputed missionaries for the propagation of Buddhism to various countries including *Mahisha-mandala*, *Vanavasi*, *Aparantaka* and Maharashtra,<sup>120</sup> which shows that the Andhradesa was brought within the sphere of Buddhism during Asoka's reign. *Mahisha-mandala* is sometimes sought to be equated with the Krishna-Godavari region contiguous to Kalinga. There can be no doubt that Andhra Pradesh received a strong tide of Buddhism during Asoka's reign.<sup>121</sup>

Buddhism in coastal Andhradesa, rarely enjoyed royal patronage. Among the few royal patrons of Andhra Buddhism, patronage of Asoka stands out as the most prominent. At least from the time of Asoka, Andhra turned into an important centre of Buddhism, during the third century B.C. The earliest Buddhist monuments of Andhra started build in the time of Asoka with his patronage. The first and foremost Buddhist shrine in Andhra, the *mahachaitya* at Amaravati, in the district of Guntur, is said to have been founded by Mahadeva, a monk-missionary, deputed by Asoka to preach and propagate the *dhamma* in the Andhradesa. From the excavation results at the *stupa* site in Dhanyakataka have led to startling discoveries.<sup>122</sup> They reveal that at pre-Asokan levels there was a *stupa* of modest size which probably Asoka enlarged and reconstructed enshrining in it a genuine *dhatu* and provided the *stupa* with a granite railing. A few granite uprights have been unearthed and they are found with typical Mauryan polish and a few label inscriptions in Mauryan script.<sup>123</sup> A fragmentary inscription,<sup>124</sup> discovered at Amaravati gives credence to this view. It is therefore not unreasonable to conclude that the *dhatu* (*dhatuvara-parighita*)<sup>125</sup> found at Amaravati was Asokan presentation.

The *Mahastupas* at Amaravati, Bhattiprolu and the rock cut caves at Guntupalli and several monasteries at Salihundam were also constructed during this period. It will be noted that this are all sites situated in the coastal region of Andhra Pradesh. Both major and minor edicts of Asoka engraved at Erragudi<sup>126</sup> and Rajula Mandagiri,<sup>127</sup> in Kurnool district bear testimony of this fact. The non-occurrence of Asokan edicts in coastal Andhradesa, except for a solitary fragment of Asokan inscription at Amaravati and the beginning of the great *stupa* at this renowned site go back to the Maurya period.<sup>128</sup> Very recently a fragment of Asoka's pillar was discovered at Amaravati.<sup>129</sup>

The Amaravati fragment contains a portion of an inscription. Commenting on it, D.C. Sircar says that it is the first pillar inscription of Asoka so far discovered in Andhra Pradesh and it resembles the Girnar version of Asoka's rock edict. He concludes that the present inscription seems to suggest that the Amaravati *stupa* was built by the Asoka about the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.<sup>130</sup> This view is supported by the Ceylonese legends of the Buddha's tooth relic. They refer to the construction of a *stupa* at Diamond Sands by Dharma Asoka. Fergusson and others have identified the place with the region of Dhanyakataka.<sup>131</sup> The origins of the Bhattiprolu *stupa* are also sought to be taken back to Asoka's time,<sup>132</sup> though the suggestion may not find general acceptance.<sup>133</sup>

According to the *Mahavamsa* Asoka was built 84,000 *viharas* and *stupas* all over India. Even in coastal Andhra Pradesh, we find many *viharas* and *stupas* which were built by Asoka,<sup>134</sup> but it is scarcely possible to identify them clearly. The Chinese traveller, Hiuen-Tsang also refers to the *stupas* built by the Asoka in Andhra.<sup>135</sup> According to him, there is one such *stupa* not far from the capital of Kalinga and it was 100 feet high.<sup>136</sup> Another *stupa* built by Asoka stood to the south west of Acala near Vengi, the then capital of Andhra.<sup>137</sup> One more *stupa* stood to the south east of the capital of *Chu-li-ye*.<sup>138</sup> It is rather difficult to identify these places mentioned by Hiuen-Tsang. *Chu-li-ye* means the land of Colas. During the 7<sup>th</sup> century C.E. the region of Cuddapah and Kurnool districts was ruled by the Teleugu Codas<sup>139</sup> and therefore Hiuen-Tsang might have been referred to it as the Chola Kingdom. However, some of the old Buddhist sites in coastal Andhra Pradesh such as Bhattiprolu, Amaravati, Salihundam, Sankaram and Guntupalli reveal Mauryan associations.

According to Asokan XIII rock edict, it is mentioned that the people of Andhras who were living within the imperial domain (*raja visaye*) had already been following Buddhism (*dhamma manusarante*).<sup>140</sup> Having thus found out the Andhra's preference to Buddhism, Asoka should have felt it wise to strengthen its base in Andhra so that it can serve as the centre for spreading the *dhamma* to further south and even to Tambapanni Dvipa. That Asoka bestowed therefore serious attention on Buddhism in Andhra becomes clear from what is outlined we discuss.

Asoka also mentions Andhra, along with other imperial territories, in Thirteen Major Rock Edicts (Shahbazgarhi version) which tell us how the people in the Mauryan

Empire responded to Asoka's Dhamma-campaign. According to the edict,<sup>141</sup> "likewise here in the empirical territories among the Greeks, Kambojas, Nabhakas and Nabhapantkis, Bhoja and Pitinikas, Andhra and Parindas (*Pulindas*), everywhere the people follow the beloved of the God's instructions in *Dhamma*. Even where the envoys of the beloved of the God's have not gone, people here of his conduct according to *Dhamma*, his prospects and his instructions in *Dhamma*, and they follow *Dhamma* and will continue to follow it".

Recent archaeological discoveries from various parts of Andhra Pradesh have thrown fresh light on several aspects of Buddhism, especially its patronage by the local king or chieftains even before the propagation of Buddhism by Asoka. Between the period of after Asoka and before the Satavahanas in the Deccan, Andhra Pradesh divided into several petty states or minor tribal republics, ruled by the local chieftains or Rajas. In this period all of these kings, who mainly patronised and propagated Buddhism even to the outlying or far flung areas of their territories, as evidenced by the existence of numerous Buddhist sites along the coastal regions of Andhra.<sup>142</sup>

The two inscriptions of probably second century B.C discovered from the Buddhist *stupa* at Bhattiprolu mention the name of a king Kubarika, a local Buddhist ruler who ruled in the south-east coast of Andhra. The inscriptions mention that, he was responsible for constructing the *Mahachaitya*, enshrining in it the corporeal relics of the Buddha. He was the patron of this site.<sup>143</sup> The inscription engraved on the relic caskets are of the special significance and of fundamental value, for, they indicate the vernacular notation of Brahmi script in Andhradesa, which were on the basis of palaeography, dated to pre-Asokan times.

Another important local kings were Somaka, mentioned in an inscription at Vaddamanu,<sup>144</sup> near Amaravati and Raja Kumariyya Sammaliya, from Amaravati,<sup>145</sup> where vestiges of an ancient Buddhist settlement we find. In the Andhra coastal region Sada, local dynasty was also patronage to Buddhism. The Sadas, known through the occurrence of their coins and Brahmi label inscriptions noticed at Guntupalli, a famous Buddhist site in the Godavari district of coastal Andhra. The Buddhist site flourished in the time of 3<sup>rd</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.E. to 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> century C.E.<sup>146</sup> Further, the discovery of a fragmentary Asokan Pillar Edict in association with N.B.P ware and other early historic

cultural material at Amaravati, obviously suggests that the mature phase of Buddhism began at least since Asokan times in Andhra Pradesh.<sup>147</sup>

Till recently, scholars held the opinion that, it was only due to the untiring efforts and missionary zeal of the great Mauryan emperor Asoka, Buddhism entered Andhradesa and grew into a state religion. Asoka was instrumental in propagation (*dhamma vijaya*), after the conquest of Kalinga, which subsequently became a mass religion in the sub-continent. Afterwards, Buddhism became more popular during the Satavahana period in Andhradesa. The first capital of the Satavahanas, according to scholars was at Srikakulam in the Krishna district.<sup>148</sup> It was later shifted to Dhanyakataka and then to other place. So we can say Satavahana was started rule in the coastal regions of Andhra Pradesh.

In Andhradesa, the period of Satavahana (200 B.C.E to 200 C.E) witnessed the growth and development of Buddhism and Buddhist art, besides maritime trade. Under their rule, the religious tenets set forth by the kings were scrupulously followed by all the section of the society, which helped the spread of Buddhism to every segment of the state. Buddhist institutions received munificent grants and it was well supported by the royalty. The Satavahana kings made valuable gift to the Buddhist monks and monasteries. Several caves and religious structures were built during this period.

The Satavahanas though they were not Buddhists, were responsible for the growth of Buddhism in Andhra Pradesh. The Buddhism seems to have flourished, on account of the support given by the people during this period. The label inscriptions from Amaravati are of special importance, for, they mention a number of laymen and royal officers such as army commanders (*senagopa*)<sup>149</sup> royal scribe (*raja lekhaka*),<sup>150</sup> superintendent of water-houses (*paniya-gharika*),<sup>151</sup> caravan-leaders (*chitta sthanika*),<sup>152</sup> treasure and bankers (*heranika*),<sup>153</sup> overseers of renovation work (*maha navakammika and nava kammika*),<sup>154</sup> artisans, foreman of artisans (*avesanin*),<sup>155</sup> stone workers (*pashanika*),<sup>156</sup> perfumers (*gandhika*),<sup>157</sup> scribes (*lekhaka*),<sup>158</sup> cow-herds (*mahagopalaka*),<sup>159</sup> cobblers (*charmakara*)<sup>160</sup> and trades and merchant,<sup>161</sup> who contributed voluntarily their services and mite, to growth of the Buddhist establishment. An inscription at Amaravati refers to a monastery exclusively meant for the Magadhan monks from Pataliputra.<sup>162</sup> Thus, Dhanyakataka flourished as a prominent Buddhist centre under the Mahasanghikas. The prolific occurrence of N.B.P

ware at Amaravati again confirms cultural and trade contacts between north and south and vice versa. During the Satavahana period, the Buddhist settlements at Amaravati, Jaggyyapeta, Salihundam, Guntupalli, Ramatirtham, Ghantasala, Baivikonda, Thotalkonda, etc., became renowned pilgrimage centres and some of these sites continued to flourish even during the medieval times in coastal Andhra Pradesh.<sup>163</sup> For instance different parts of *stupa* like pillar, rail bar, sculptural slabs, coping stones, panels, friezes, *sripada*, carved garlands, rock umbrellas, gates, cells and pavilions were donated by people.

There were two Satavahana kings whose names find mention in the stone slabs of Amaravati *stupa*. These slabs were once a part of the architectural scheme of the *Mahachaitya*. These names include Vasisthiputra Pulumavi and Gautamiputra Yajna Satakarni.<sup>164</sup> These epigraphical records attest the benevolence of Satavahana emperors towards the Buddhist *Mahachaitya* at Dhanyakataka.

The *Mahachaitya* of Amaravati was initiated by Asoka. But the one that seems to have grown into a massive structure with an impressive form covered by sculptured slabs and provided with a highly ornamental rail must have been the result of the patronage extended to this monument by the Satavahana.<sup>165</sup> If the base reliefs of *stupa* on early drum slab be any guide to the actual monument, even the *ayaka* platforms might have come into existence during the Satavahana domination of this region, an assumption which may be drawn from a short series of inscriptions yielded by the ruins of the site. The earliest of such inscription refers to the gift of a *dharma chakra* at the western gate of the *Mahachaitya* during the reign of Vasisthaputra Pulumavi (cir. 130-59 C.E).<sup>166</sup> A second inscription engraved on a coping of the railing, refers to the replacement or renovation of the railing, or at least a part of it, during the reign of Sri Sivamaka Sada, usually identified with Siva-Sri (cir. 159-66 C.E.) or with the Sivaskanda Satakarni (cir. 167-74 C.E) of the Puranas.<sup>167</sup>

All the fundamental institutions of Brahmanism were severely criticised by Buddhism. There is a tradition that Acharya Nagarjuna succeeded in persuading Yajnasiri<sup>168</sup> not only to be tolerant of Buddhism but to patronise it. From this time, there appears a change in the attitude of the Satavahanas to Buddhism. Yajnasiri Satakarni patronised Buddhism and showed his reverence to it. A *stupa* pillar fragment

bearing an inscription of his reign found at Chinna Ganjam in the Guntur district proves beyond doubt that the progress of Buddhism in his reign in the coastal Andhra Pradesh.

According to B.S.L. Hanumantha Rao, Buddhism rarely enjoyed royal patronage in Andhra coastal region. The only Satavahana kings who made some gifts to the Buddhist monasteries were Gautamiputra Satakarni and his son and successor Vasistiputra Pulumavi.<sup>169</sup> It sounds strange that Gautamiputra Satakarni, who is described as a personification of Brahmanical orthodoxy and his son Pulumavi patronised Buddhism. No other Satavahana king is known to have ever patronised Buddhism he says. The Satavahana patronage of Buddhism thus started in the eighteenth regnal year of Gautamiputra and ended almost in the twenty second regnal year of Vasistiputra.<sup>170</sup>

Another interesting aspect of Satavahana liberality is that it was limited to the Nasik Buddhists. The reason for this is not far to seek. It may be recalled that the Nasik region was conquered by Gautamiputra from the Kshaharathas probably during the 18<sup>th</sup> regnal year and it was in that very year his first gift to the Buddhist monks was recorded. The Kshaharathas too patronised the Buddhist community at Nasik. In fact, Usavadatta, son of Dinika and son-in-law of Mahakshatrapa Nahapana who became governor of Nasik during this period to be a great benefactor of the Buddhist monks at Nasik. A number of inscriptions by him in cave VIII at Nasik tell us about the excavation of new caves as well as gifts made by him and his family to the *Bhikkhu Sangha*. In all, cave VIII has as many as six inscriptions referring to Nahapana.<sup>171</sup> It became all the more necessary for Pulumavi to extend patronage to the Buddhist fraternities of the coastal Andhra region to keep them loyal to himself. The Dhanyakataka figure prominently during his reign and it may be said that the latter city became the eastern capital.<sup>172</sup>

It is important to note that during the Satavahana period Buddhism not only flourished to a great extent but it reached the zenith of its popularity. Though they were followers of Brahmanical religion they actively supported it and gave their full co-operation and patronage to its progress. That is why; several inscriptions refer to the establishment of rock cut *chaityas* and *viharas*, *stupas*, refectory, hall of reception (*upathanasala*), the offering of villages, land money to the monks as grants and the enlargement and embellishment of several religious buildings by the Satavahana kings,

their feudatories and officials. This is no doubt an important achievement of Buddhism during the Satavahana period.

After the decline of the Satavahanas, the Ikshvakus came into power in Andhra. The Ikshvakus, who were probably the feudatories of the Satavahanas. During this time Buddhism was continued to flourish and enjoy popular support in the region for nearly a couple of centuries. The Ikshvakus monarchs themselves were staunch adherents of Brahmanical religion and performed Vedic sacrifices and constructed temples of Hindu divinities. But their women folk – queens, princesses and other female members patronised Buddhism and they were extremely liberal in making donations. King Chantamula-I was succeeded by his son Mathariputta Virapurishadatta in the third quarter of third century C.E. His reign is a landmark in the history of Buddhism in Andhradesa. It was largely through his efforts the religion of Sakyamuni flourished and was able to occupy the most important place in the religious history of South India. He was a great admirer of Buddha, as it is attested by his inscriptions in which he claims that he belonged to the same family as the lord Buddha. Several inscriptions belonging to his reign been discovered at Jaggayyapeta of Krishna district and Nagarjunakonda of the Guntur district.<sup>173</sup> The inscription refers to private donations of pious men and women to some Buddhist establishment at Jaggayyapeta and Nagarjunakonda.<sup>174</sup>

The copper plates from Kallacheruvun village<sup>175</sup> in West Godavari district, issued during the period of the Ikshvaku king Ehalu Chamtamula, register some donation of land for the benefit of the monks in the city of Pithunda on the occasion of building a *Chatussala* for the monastery and his Mahatalavara Aggisuri issued an order to that effect. His father Vijayapuri was Brahmanism and became a Buddhist. An inscription of an Upasika Bodhisiri<sup>176</sup> provides us a graphic account of the architectural activity that took place during the period, at Kamtakosala (Ghantasala) a stone *mandapa* at the eastern gate of *Mahachaitya*. The Nagarjunakonda rose to its importance as a great centre of Buddhist activities under the patronage of the Ikshvaku rulers of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century C.E. which is clear from several Buddhist inscriptions discovered here. A limestone scene of the *Saddanta Jataka* showing the huntsman cutting of the tusks of the Bodhisattva and the queen dying of grief subsequently, a limestone scene of the *Vessantara Jataka* illustrating the gift of the royal elephant by prince *Vessantra* and another limestone scene of the *Vessantara Jataka* showing

*Vessantara's* exile to the forest discovered at Goli clearly indicate that Buddhism made a steady progress in the Ikshvaku kingdom under the patronage of the rulers and their subordinates.<sup>177</sup>

The Ikshvakus permitted royal women to follow and propagate the Buddhism. During this period Buddhism blossomed with the support of royal ladies, commoners and merchant community. Especially in the reign of Sri Virapurisadatta, they vied with one another making donation to the Buddhist monastery. The principal donatrix was Santisiri, the sister of Chantamula. She repaired, extended and reconstructed the *Mahachaitya* at Sripurvata. Many more institutions owed their existence to her liberality, which rather repaired the damage done to Buddhism during the previous regime. In this connection, no one can fail to be struck with admiration at the numerous benefactions of Upasika Bodhisiri, probably not connected with Ikshvaku royal family.<sup>178</sup> She constructed a *chaitya* hall with a flooring of slabs and a *chaitya* provided with all necessaries at the institution of the Chula Dhammagiri at Sripurvata for the benefit of the monks that came from Kashmir, Gandhara, China, Yavana, Tambrapanni, a *chaitya* hall at Devagiri, a tank and *verandah* and a *mandapa* at Purvasaila.<sup>179</sup> Such was the unbridled munificence of the ladies which not only sustained but added richness to the cause of Buddhism in Andhra. In Amaravati sculptures, we see women participating in public assemblies. At Amaravati alone 72 inscriptions, out of 45 record gifts either of ladies or those in which ladies are associated. Buddhist nuns also donated for the same as we have seen. Thus it is clear that women in Ikshvaku period enjoyed a certain degree of equal status.<sup>180</sup>

Finance is the main source for the promotion of any religion or establishment. A continuous source of income would keep an institution in a prosperous state. Merchants who are supposed to be rich formed a backbone for the development for Buddhism. Inscriptional evidence proves that merchants have lavishly donated to the Buddhist establishments in coastal Andhra regions. The guilds that flourished during the Satavahana-Ikshvaku periods were prosperous, not only due to the internal trade activity but also to the seaborne trade. Archaeological evidence to the existence of inland navigations comes from Dhanyakataka and Nagarjunakonda. Rich emporia on the south east coast like Chinnaganjam, Ghantasala, Machilipatnam, Adduru, Kalingapatnam, etc., must have greatly contributed to the seaborne trade with the countries like Ceylon, Java, Sumatra, Burma, etc., in the Far East. Further flourishing

Roman trade in this period is well attested by the Roman coins found at Nagarjunakonda, Amaravati, Ghantasala, Alluru, Chebrolu, Nandyal, Attirala and Cuddapah. The large quantities of double-mast ship coins of Sri Yajna discovered in the early historical sites in Coastal Andhra, demonstrate the intensity of the foreign contact.<sup>181</sup>

The role of the craft organisation and that of *sangha* in the erection of the *stupa* during the Satavahana-Ikshvaku period can be gleaned from the inscriptions. The *sangha* received endowments from the donors who are varied and also some in permanent endowments. The latter are invested either in lands or with the guilds. The actual work of the building was conducted by *avesanis*, *kasakaras*, *tasakaras*, *mithikas*, *kammakaras*, *kadhicakas*, *selavadhikins*, etc.<sup>182</sup>

During the post-Ikshvakus times, with the revival of Brahmanical faith, the patronage for Buddhism declined to low ebb. The royal support which was its mainstay witnessed a downward trend. However, its survival as a religion, in some parts of coastal Andhradesa continued even upto late medieval times. The Salankayanas, Anandagotrins, Vishnukundins and other minor dynasties that ruled over different parts of Andhradesa during the 4-5<sup>th</sup> centuries C.E., after the downfall of the Ikshvaku also played a no less important role in the spread of Buddhism to different parts of India and south-east Asian countries.

The Salankayanas (4<sup>th</sup> century C.E.) of Vengi who were staunch followers of Vaishnavism also made some liberal donations to the Buddhist monasteries. The king, Vijaya Nandivarman II, though held the title *Paramabhagvata*, made some gift to the *mahavihara*, as noticed in a stone epigraph at Guntupalli.<sup>183</sup> Excavation at Vengipura or Peddavegi, brought to light *viharas*, *stupas* and stone pillared *mandapas*, built by certain sects like *Aparasaila* and *Aparamaha Vinayaseliyas*.<sup>184</sup> According to tradition, the Salankayanas were mainly responsible for the spread of Buddhism to Kanchipuram and also to the South-East Asian countries as far as Burma. The Anandagotrins of Kandarapura (435-460 C.E.) also paid some attention towards Buddhism.<sup>185</sup>

Notable Buddhist establishment that received additions during the Vishnukundin period in coastal region are Sankaram, Ramatirtham, Guntupalli, Jaggayyapeta, etc. An interesting feature of this period is royal patronage enjoyed by Buddhism, in contrast to the popular support of earlier Buddha. The Chaitanyapuri

inscription near Hyderabad and two copper plate grants from Tummalagudem in Nalgonda district, of Vishnukundin times, mention some gift made by the kings and queens for the maintenance of Buddhist monasteries. It is interesting to note that the term *stupa* occurs for the first time in these copper plate grants.<sup>186</sup>

The Hyderabad Prakrit inscription of Govindavarman (405-445 C.E.) found at Chaitanyapuri<sup>187</sup> records the construction of a stone residential cell, attached to Govindaraja *Vihara*, for the use of person's in charge of incense and clothes. A stone cell is also stated to have been set up those who carry water for the *Bhikkhus* of the *vihara*. The two copper plate of Tummalagudem credit Govindaraja with the erection of several *stupas* and *viharas* all over the Deccan. Further, the Tummalagudem copper plate set-I issued by Govindavarman, son of Madhavavarman records the grant of two villages namely Enamadala and Prenkapura, for the maintenance of Buddhist *vihara* at Indrapura, by his chief queen Parama Mahadevi, in the occasion of *Vaisakha Purnima* (Buddha *Purnima*).<sup>188</sup> The second set issued by Vikramendravarman,<sup>189</sup> son of Indrabhattaraka Varman, also registers the grant of the village Irundoru, for the enjoyment of the *Bhikkhu-Sangha*, staying in the *mahavihara*, established by Parama Bhattarika Mahadevi, the chief queen of Govindaraja. Vikramendravarman I is also described as a Parama Saugati (a staunch follower of Buddhism).

Prithvisrimularaja (5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century C.E.) who succeeded Vishnukundins, also patronised Buddhism. Three copper plate grants of Prithvisrimularaja from Kondavidu,<sup>190</sup> record various benefits extended to the Buddhist *sanghas*. The first grant<sup>191</sup> records gifts to the *Bhikkhu*, who belonged to the *Arya Bhikkhu Sangha*, residing in the *Mahavihara* of Vardhamana, (present Vaddamanu near Amaravati), for their daily rituals like meditation (*dhyana*) and recitation. The second grant<sup>192</sup> refers to the establishment of a *Mahavihara* in Tadikonda by the same king. It mentions the existence of various sects of Buddhist *sangha*, like *Sakya Bhikkhu Sangha* and *Arya Bhikkhu Sangha* flourishing in Andhra during 6<sup>th</sup> century C.E. It also records the appointment of an officer called *Navakammika* (superintendent of renovations), who resided at Aparasaila, i.e. Nagarjunakonda, to attend to the renovations works at *Mahavihara* at Gunapasapura. The evidence suggests that the Buddhist centre at Nagarjunakonda continued to flourish even upto 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century C.E. The third grant<sup>193</sup> refers to the monks of eighteen fold *Bhikkhu Sangha*, residing in the well known monastery established by himself, in the eastern part and in the outskirts of the hill of

Gunapasapura, in East Godavari district. The grant further refers to the gift of certain villages to this *Mahavihara* for meeting the daily requirements of food, beds, seats and medicines.<sup>194</sup>

After Vishnukindis, Buddhism lost its ground, mainly due to the lack of royal support and hence many settlements were deserted. This fact is also confirmed by the accounts of Chinese traveller Hiuen-Tsang who visited Andhradesa in the 6<sup>th</sup> -7<sup>th</sup> century C.E. He mentions that though Dhanyakataka was found to be full of Buddhist monasteries, about only twenty, fit for living, were occupied by nearly one thousand monks, belonging to the *Mahasanghika* School.<sup>195</sup> From the 5<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> century C.E. sources material relating to Buddhism is scanty. There are only a few inscriptions referring to the royal support given to this religion. One of the important records is the Amaravati pillar inscriptions dated circa 1100 C.E. of Pallava king Simhavarman, who was visited to *Parama Buddha Kshetra* of Dhanyakataka.<sup>196</sup> Another pillar epigraph from the same temple dated 1182 C.E. belonging to the reign of Kota Keta II describes the architectural and sculptural embellishments of the *Mahachaitya*.<sup>197</sup> Further, it also records certain endowments made by the king to the lord Buddha. Another record issued by Bayyamamba, wife of Kota Keta II dated 1234 C.E. refer to the offering of a perpetual lamp to the God Buddha at Sri Dhanyaghatai.<sup>198</sup> From this, it becomes clear that the kings of medieval Andhradesa, though they were staunch followers of Saivism, also extended to patronise Buddhism. It describes in glorious terms the mystical experience of the king and his conversion to Buddhism.<sup>199</sup>

Fa-hien and Hiuen-Tsang, the two Chinese pilgrims who visited Andhra left their impressions in their writings. Hiuen-Tsang describes different monasteries and places where miracles were performed, *stupas* were built. It may be said that the fall of the Ikshvakus was followed by the decline and degeneracy of Buddhism and that it struggled for survival till 10<sup>th</sup> century C.E.<sup>200</sup> He also said that the Buddha visited Andhradesa and personally preached the Dharma. Describing a monastery *An-to-lo* (Andhra), he says, near the south-west of the monastery was an Asoka Tope where the Buddha preached, displayed miracles and received into his religion a countless multitude.<sup>201</sup>

According to the Telugu work *Panditaradhya Caritra* of Palkuriki Somanatha at certain places like Amaravati and Buddham in coastal Andhra the worship of Buddha

continued till the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>202</sup> Among the Chalukya-Chola feudatories like the Natavadis and Kondapadamatis there were *Buddharajas* and these names are a pointer to the high esteem in which the Buddha was held among these families. An inscription from Vijayawada<sup>203</sup> dated in 1146 C.E. records the gift of a perpetual lamp of Buddhadeva of Amaravati by Somanapreggada, the *Sandhivigrahi* of a certain *Mahamandaleswara Bhimana*. According to Amaravati pillar inscription<sup>204</sup> dated in 1182 C.E. Kota Ketaraja II gifted three villages-Kanteru, Medikonduru and Donkiparru with all tolls to Buddhadeva whom Brahma had earlier worshipped. His queen Prolama and concubine Suramadevi gifted 55 sheep each to the same God for perceptual lamps. The same pillar contains a fragmentary inscription dated in 1234 C.E. which records a gift of 55 sheep to Buddhadeva by a Natavadi prince, Bayyamahadevi.<sup>205</sup>

### **Patronage of Buddhism in the East Coast of Tamil Nadu**

From Andhra we pass on to the Tamil country which is geographically located in the southern part of the Indian peninsula. Hiuen-Tsang's picture of the Tamil land and its state of Buddhism was not a happy one. Though some Buddhist monasteries were functioning and a number of monks were carrying on their normal duties, the religion of the Buddha had undoubtedly received a set-back.

If we compare the patronage upon various religions in Tamil region, it would be clear to us that Buddhism was less patronage than Hinduism and Jainism. Buddhism could not flourish in a broad way from the view point of quantity and quality. Consequently the historians are unable to present a minute description about this particular area of study. So, the historians should depend upon the literary and archaeological data. Other sources may be found from analysing the Deccan and Andhra religions which describes the differences in the degree and extant of the circumlocution of Buddhist religion, ideology and the nature of patronage that it acquired from various local groups. This would also display that kingly patronage to Buddhism cannot be calculated separately from the complex processes of social change in the pan-Indian context. Here we may see the dominant figure of Buddhism in sub-continent and we also understand the role of Buddhism in such changes in Peninsular India, Deccan, Andhra and Tamil region. According to S.N. Kandaswamy, Buddhism entered Tamil Nadu in 300 B.C.E. through the missionaries sent by Asoka from the north and by the Ceylonese king Tissa from the south. The Ceylon chronicle

*Mahavamsa* says that the third Buddhist council was held at Pataliputra with the patronage of Asoka with Tiaas Moggaliputta presiding, after which many monks were sent to various places. Along with other monks, Asoka sent his own son Mahendra, and they preached the teachings of Gautama Buddha to King Devanampiya Tissa. The king and the people were profoundly impressed by the new gospel and accepted Buddhism. It is possible that these monks visited Tamil country on their way to Ceylon.<sup>206</sup>

The spread of Buddhism in Tamil country is known mainly from the epigraphical records found in its ancient caves and stone beds. Brahmi scripts in a number of caves have been found in Tamil Nadu, mainly in Madurai, Tirunelveli and Cenkalpattu districts. It is clear from history that Brahmi script was popularised by Emperor Asoka through his *dhamma vijaya*; such script are found in almost all places in India. The name Dravidi or Damidi (Tamili) is given to the South Indian Brahmi scripts.<sup>207</sup>

The Buddhism can never attain the major religious force in Tamil regions comparing with Jainism. In contrast, Jainism exerted its authority and received a considerable follower. It achieved much popularity among merchant communities, farmers and peasant's families. It seemed to have been single frustration for the Bhakti exponents in the 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> century C.E. as royal patronage gave its much focus on Jainism rather than Buddhism. Consequently, it led to serious conflicts at the royal courts of Kanchipuram and Madurai. Owing to the social change as referred to earlier, the merchants and the rulers started extending their patronage to Buddhism and constructed Buddhist monasteries. As a result, Buddhism became increasingly popular and entrenched in the Tamil soil from about the 5<sup>th</sup> century C.E.

Buddhism expanded almost all over the sub-continent under the Mauryan patronage. The first royal patron of Buddhism in the Tamil land was no doubt Asoka the great. It could be possible through Buddhist mission such as Aparanta, Banavasi, Mahishamandala and Tambapani. But from where Mauryan impact was weakened, individual monks and traders performed their duty successfully there. In the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C trade activities was started in the Ganga valley. It developed into bigger orbits in pre-Mauryan times. Then these trades were gradually reached its level under the Mauryas as they looked for the precious thing like gems and gold ere. The areas of the Asokan inscriptions at places like *Maski* and *Yerragudi* would point to regulate along

the routes of commerce.<sup>208</sup> The Mauryan period also observed the progress of the looping trade along the east and west coasts.<sup>209</sup> Tamilakam presents an account of contrast in relation to Buddhism because in this region Buddhism emerged out as less important phenomenon. But other northern religious sects or ideologies such as Brahmanism, Jainism and Ajivikism formed revelatory contribution to the institutions of the society experiencing transfiguration.

From the pre-Mauryan times, religious and cultural elements were gradually piercing into the Tamil regions from the northern sides of India. Mauryan dominance or control found so far as there was no direct evidence. But it is often demanded that Tondainadu areas under Asokan rule and Kanchipuram became major Buddhist centres with *stupas* and *viharas*. Hiuen-Tsang, the most famous traveller, referred the *stupas* at Kanchipuram which he attributes to Asoka, as well as *stupas* in the Chola country and Malakuta (the Pandiya country).<sup>210</sup> He also included Asokavarman as an early predecessor of the Pallavas in the Vayalur inscription of Rajasimha.<sup>211</sup> Among the Pallava rulers of Kanchipuram, Rajasimha is credited with the construction of a Buddhist *vihara* in Nagapattinam, for the benefit of the Chinese pilgrims and merchants. He is believed to have sent embassies to China.<sup>212</sup> Vajrabodhi, a Buddhist teacher from the Pandiya country, was invited to Kanchi by Rajasimha on account of the miraculous power of the teacher to bring rains to the drought ridden city. Vajrabodhi visited several Buddhist centres in India and travelled to Sri Lanka and China. Several Buddhist teachers are associated with Kanchipuram during 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> centuries.

In Tamil country there were many patrons, who patronised for the development of Buddhism. According to Iravadha Mahadevan<sup>213</sup> the patrons of Buddhism include members of the Chera and Pandiya ruling families, princes, royal functionaries, *Vel* chiefs, merchants, craftsmen such as gold smith, blacksmith, weaver, lapidary, other individuals and even people of a certain locality. The chronology entrusted them, on the basis of their palaeography, shows that the earliest inscription held around Madurai. In this particular context, we may admit Maloney's observation<sup>214</sup> which is more significant. He assigns the beginnings of civilization in south India to the effect of coastal sea traffic, trade and the possible introduction of a script by traders. They may have first reached the Pandiya coast. It was well known for its pearls and also known to *Arthasastra* and which may well have been a great attraction for the traders. The

chronology of Tamil Brahmi inscriptions would seem to bear out this early relation with the Pandiya country. The Korkai and recent Alakankulam finds may also point to such a contact.

The Tamils ethos was dominated by the ideology of generosity to poets, bards and kin/clan members and of war/plunder as a major mechanism of acquiring resources. The idea of gift is here an important reciprocity between patron and client and kin-based distribution as well as social differentiation between the chief/ruler and the people/ruled. The Buddhist idea of *dana* is perhaps first emphasised only in the later epic *Manimekalai*,<sup>215</sup> at a time when Buddhism was sought to be propagated as an ideological force in bringing together the laity and the monastic orders in a closer and well-knit organisation. This would more likely be in the post-Sangam period, i.e. the period of Kalabhra domination in the core regions, where the *Muventar*, Chera, Chola and Pandiya had ruled.

An interesting consequence of coastal links between Andhra and Tamil regions with Sri Lanka in early historic times was that the Paratavar of coastal Tamil Nadu and north-west coast of Sri Lanka seem to have become the first ethnic group to be acculturated into the northern tradition, the Brahmanic and the more importantly the Buddhist tradition. Although they are often described as a low fishing community in the Sangam anthologies, the reference in the *Maduraikkanchi*, some *Akam* poems and in the later *Cilappatikaram* show that they had gradually enhanced their status by becoming a dominant trading group, trading in pearls, gems, horses and other items, became wealthier and more influential and lived in well-built houses. The Sangam poems furnish us with several evidences for the reconstruction of the history of Buddhism in the Tamil country. It was at this stage of their economic influences and higher social status that the Paratavar would seem to have become followers of Buddhism. They are considered to be the same as the Baratas of Sri Lanka inscriptions of the same period.<sup>216</sup> The non-sectarian attitude of the author of the two epics has been emphasised<sup>217</sup> and the Chera royal connections of Ilango Adikal, author of *Cilappatikaram*, would also point to royal patronage to both the creeds. The scene of both the epics is located in the major urban centres of the early historic period viz., Pukar, Madurai, Vanci and Kanchipuram, apart from Uraiyur.

The prosperity which Buddhism saw in northern India under the patronage of the Gupta dynasty naturally attracted the monks from Tamil country to north Indian regions. At Kanchipuram Ilankilli, the brother of Killivalavan, the Chola king of Pukar, is said to have built a *stupa*, a *vihara* and a *caitya* and provided all amenities to Manimekalai, who kept the Buddha foot prints at the *caitya*. She learnt Buddhist teaching from Aravana Adikal, who is associated with both Pukar and Kanchipuram. The *stupa* is ascribed by Hiuen-Tsang to Asoka,<sup>218</sup> along with other Buddhist structures. Under Manimekalai's influence the Chola king is said to have converted a prison house into a Tavappalli or *vihara*.<sup>219</sup> In both Pukar and Kanchipuram Manimekalai is associated with charitable works like providing food, medicine, etc. to the needy and to have miraculously procured food at Kanchi during a famine with the help of her divine bowl (*amutacurapi*).<sup>220</sup> Thus the entire cult symbols such as *stupa*, *caitya*, Bodhi tree and foot prints of the Buddha are invariably associated with those centres, where Buddhism exercised a dominant influence. The links between the laity and the *sangha* are constantly emphasised by the rich merchants either patronising or building *caityas* and *stupas* or entering the orders, while *upasakas* (householders) are described as great supporters who venerated the monks.<sup>221</sup>

The activities of Manimekalai, the Buddhist nun, in the major Buddhist centres are often linked to a crisis whether caused by famine or destruction due to curse. Reference is made to Pukar being washed away by sea at the end of Killivalavan's reign, as a result of a curse due to his failure to celebrate the Indra festival and Pukar becoming desolate due to evacuation.<sup>222</sup> Due to a famine at Kanchipuram, Manimekalai visited the city to provide people with famine relief with the divine *amutacurapi*. The holy mendicants are said to have abandoned the city and settled down in the *vihara* at Vanci.<sup>223</sup> These would point to a crisis perhaps both for Buddhism and trade. The crisis may be placed at the end of the early historic period, when the Roman trade declined and the Tamil polities also declined. Hence also an attempt to revive Buddhist influences, particularly at Kanchi, where Ilankilli's attempts to provide for Manimekalai's accommodation could represent continued attempts to patronise Buddhism.

In the coastal region of Tamil Nadu Kaveripattinam was an important Buddhist centre. Around the 5<sup>th</sup> century C.E. the Tamil country was visited by great Buddhist monks Thervada (Sathaviravada) such as Buddhadatta, Buddhaghosa and Dharmapala.

They were engaged in religious activities in the Tamil country. Buddhadatta stayed in Kaveripumpattinam at the time when Kalabhra king Accuta Vikkanta ruled over the place. According to the great epic, *Cilappatikaram* and *Manimekalai* the Kaveripumpattinam was an important Buddhist centre and have been written at the heyday of this site. Both the epics refer to a Buddhist monastery. It was built by Mahendra, son of Asoka, when he visited Kaveripattinam on his way to Ceylon as a Buddhist missionary.<sup>224</sup>

T.N. Ramachandran mentions that, coming back to the history of Kaveripattinam, we hear from the *Manimekalai* that the early Chola king, Killivalavan (2<sup>nd</sup> century C.E.), converted a prison house into a charity house at the request of the Buddhist nun, Manimekalai, and gifted it to Buddhist, who utilised the building for a *palli* (Buddhist monastery) and a charity house. The *Pali* work, *Rajavahini*, refers to a Chola king who, while engaged in constructing a Siva temple at Kaveripattinam, met some Buddhist *bhikkus* who proved to him the superiority of Buddha Dharma and in return got from him the Siva temple which they converted into a shrine of the Buddha. In the 5<sup>th</sup> century C.E. a great Buddhist divine called Buddhadatta, there who flourished in the reign of the Kalabhra chief, Accuta Vikranta, resided in a *vihara* in Kaveripattinam built by one Vishnudasa or Krishnadasa. There is said to have written most of his works in Kaveripattinam at the instance of the Buddhist acharyas Sumati, Buddhasika and Sanghapala. Buddhadatta's patron was the Chola king, Kalabhra king Accuta Vikranta and this divine exhibit in his work an unusual eloquence and patriotism in describing the Chola kingdom under him of which he was proud inhabitant.<sup>225</sup>

It is interesting to note that in Kanchipuram, all the four major Indian religious schools like Buddhism, Jainism, Saivism and Vaishnavism have had their own periods of ascendancy and royal patronage in the city and that, of them, Jainism, Saivism and Vishnavism have continued as living faiths down to this day. From this point of view it may rightly be held that Kanchipuram enjoys a unique status among ancient Indian cities.

The Chinese traveller Fa-hien visited India during 339-414 C.E. refers to the influence of Buddhism in Krishna, Guntur and Nellore districts. Though he never makes any particular reference to Kanchipuram as such we cannot rule out the

possibilities of the prevalence of Buddhism then at Kanchi whose surrounding formed a dominion under the Pallavas who were just establishing their power there and patronage of Buddhism in this region.<sup>226</sup>

The Pallava king's associations with the Satavahanas who were great patron of Buddhism in Andhra, definitely would have been the foremost cause of their promotion of Buddhism in Kanchipuram and in other places of Tamil Nadu. Some of the early Pallavas like Asokavarman, Buddhavarman and Buddhayankura were Buddhists as indicated by their names and the others followed only the Vedic *dharma* though they patronised Buddhism.

Kanchi's position as a major commercial and political centre was seriously affected during this phase of transition, although the early Pallavas of the 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> centuries C.E. had made it their administrative centre and issued several land grants. They also seem to have continued to patronise Buddhism. Excavated remains of a Buddhist character in Kanchipuram have been assigned to the 4<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> centuries rather than to the early historic period. The Buddhist structures mentioned in the *Manimekalai*, may well have been built by the Chola subordinates mentioned in the Sangam works and the early Pallavas before the Simhavishnu line of rulers. The proximity of Sangam literature reveals the spread of Buddhism in Tamil Nadu by the Buddhist monks from the Andhra regions. It is to be noted that Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism were introduced by the Tamil Nadu monks to Sri Lanka. The name of Pallava rulers like Buddhavarman, Buddhayankura, etc. suggests Buddhist affiliation. Interestingly, Simhavishnu, an early Pallava ruler, invokes Lord Buddha in his Amaravati inscription recording the setting up of a Buddha statue while returning from a northern expedition and making a pilgrimage to Dhanyakada. It is also important to note that 7<sup>th</sup> century Sanskrit burlesque *Mattavilasa Prahasana* ascribed to Mahendravarman-I, ridicules the Buddhist monks at Kanchi, pointing to a general decline in the character of the *sangha* and its orders by the 7<sup>th</sup> century C.E. This work points to the existence of a *Rajavihara* at Kanchipuram.

It is believed that the Sangam age in the Tamil country was brought to an end around 4<sup>th</sup> century C.E. by the Kalabhras. The later continued their rule in Tamil Nadu till the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century C.E. Though Buddhism and Jainism had a place even in the Sangam age, they were well patronised only by the Kalabhras. The period after the

4<sup>th</sup> century C.E. to the 6<sup>th</sup> century in the Tamil country is sometimes called ‘the dark age’.<sup>227</sup> According to historians, the Kalabhras, who are supposed to have hailed from Karnataka, had occupied the Tamil country in this period. After the downfall of the Satavahana dynasty, the Pallavas, occupied the Tondaimandalam about the middle of the 6<sup>th</sup> century C.E. These Kalabhras are said to have been the supporters of Buddhism as well as Jainism. One of the copper plates of the Pandiya kings refers to them as “the evil rulers.”<sup>228</sup> It seems that Buddhism in the Tamil country had flourished through the patronage of the Kalabhras and the business community since the 4<sup>th</sup> century C.E.

The only Kalabhra king who is known with a specific name is Accuta Vikranta. The memory of Accuta Vikranta lingered on for long among the Tamil Buddhists. In *Yapparungalam*, a Tamil work of 11<sup>th</sup> century C.E., written by Amita Sagara the poet, “prays to the Buddha to grant Accuta with the long arms like the clouds in charity and with the fighting spear so that he might wield his spectre of authority over the whole world.”<sup>229</sup> From the testimony of Buddhadatta, who was contemporary of Accuta Vikranta, and the praise showered upon the Kalabhra king by the poet in *Yapparungalam*, it is evident that Accuta Vikranta was a Buddhist and a liberal patron of Buddhism.

In the time of Kalabhra period Accuta Vikranta was most important, mentioned by Buddhadatta,<sup>230</sup> as a ruler of Kaveripumpattinam, evidently a patron of Buddhism. Buddhadatta’s work *Vinaya Viniccaya* was probably written in Putamamkalam (Bodhi mangai, where Campantar defeated the Buddhists in debate) in the *vihara* built by Kanhadasa, lay followers of Buddhism.<sup>231</sup> There was also an Accuta Kalappala, who is said to have ruled at Tillai where he held the *Muventar* captive. The Kuruva Nayanar story which refers to the 3000 Brahmans of Tillai refusing to crown him king of the Chola country suggest that he may have been the patron of the Buddhist or Jain religion and perhaps sought legitimating of his power through Brahminical norms, denied to him by the Tillai Brahmans. Tillai (Chidambaram) seems to have been an early Brahmin settlement, which later became a huge temple centre, where the imperial Cholas invariably crowned themselves.<sup>232</sup> During the Kalabhra reign, it is very significant which lasted nearly 300 years, Buddhism was at its best in and around Kanchi, ancient Tondaimandalam. There were a number of Buddhist saints and scholars, such as Nagaguttanar (author of the Kundalakesi), Buddhadatta (the Pali commentator), Dinnaga (the great logician), Dhammapala (the author of Pali

commentator) and Bodhidharma (the great *dhyana* teacher) between the 4<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> centuries C.E. The association of Buddhaghosha, the greatest Pali scholar and commentator, who was contemporary of Buddhadatta, further confirms the ascendancy of Buddhism during the Kalabhra interregnum in the Tamil land.<sup>233</sup>

Even the Tamil literature got a boost during the Kalabhra reign and this period was marked by great literary activity. According to K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, “this dark period marked by the ascendancy of Buddhism and probably Jainism, was characterized also by great literary activity in Tamil. Most of the works grouped under the head. The eighteen minor works (*pathinen keelkanakku*) were written during this period and also the *Cilappadikaram*, *Manimekalai* and other works.”<sup>234</sup>

The Kalabhras were ousted by the Pallavas who rose to prominence again under Simhavishnu (575-600 C.E) who founded a new dynasty which ruled for nearly 300 years. The importance of Nagapattinam as a chief Buddhist centre is confirmed by the observation of the Chinese traveller I-tsing. During the reign of the Pallava king, Narasimharman II, a Buddhist *vihara* was constructed at Nagapattinam in 720 C.E. for the use of Chinese mariners who called over there for purposes of trade. This monastery was known as the Chinese monastery and was seen by Marco Polo in 1292 C.E.<sup>235</sup>

Nagapattinam was an important Buddhist site in the east coast of Tamil region. During the time of the Chola dynasty Buddhism was flourished at Nagapattinam. As a result of maritime activity between eastern India and Malaya Peninsula, there existed at Nagapattinam, in the days of the Cholas, a colony of Malay Buddhists, particularly from Srivijaya who appear to have given a new lease of life to the dealing Buddhism of south India by erecting Buddhist temples at Nagapattinam with the aid of subsidies granted by their kings, the Sailendras.<sup>236</sup> Being patronised by the Chola monarch, they built at least two temples at the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. These temples were called Rajaraja-perum-palli and Rajendra-Cola-perum-palli or Cola-perum-palli and the smaller Leiden grant dated in the twentieth year of the reign of Kulottunga I (1090 C.E.) records gift to both of them.<sup>237</sup> The former was named after Rajaraja I, and the later after Rajendre I, during whose reigns they were respectively built. The former was evidently the chapel of a *vihara*, known as the *Chudamanivarma- vihara*, which including its chapel was built during the reign of Rajaraja I by Sri Maravijayottunga –

varman, son of Chudamani-varman of the Sailendra dynasty, king of Kataha (Kadaram) and Srivisaya or Srivijaya and dedicated to the memory of his father. This *vihara* just built for the sake of the tradesman caused the revival of Buddhism in Tamil Nadu and it was a centre for the propagation of Vajrayana form of Buddhism.

The Chola endowments to the Buddha *vihara* at Nagapattinam have also been recorded in their copper-plate grants.<sup>238</sup> In some of the coastal towns and ports, Buddhism survived and even provided an important instrument of legitimising trade ventures under royal patronage till the end of the Chola period i.e. 13<sup>th</sup> century C.E. though Buddha *vihara* at Nagapattinam flourished till about the 17<sup>th</sup> century. According to K.V. Raman, Nagapattinam was the first port on the mainland touched by vessels from the east bound for South India as mentioned from I-tsing's account and this must have been one of the reasons for the construction of the *vihara* at Nagapattinam.<sup>239</sup>

In short, when Andhra Buddhism reached its peak in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century C.E., its influence was very much found in Kanchipuram. The loss of royal patronage of Buddhism in Andhra and the patronage of the Pallavas and Kalabhras in Tamil Nadu were the major causes that contributed to the peak period of the Tamil Nadu between 3<sup>rd</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> century C.E., during which period most of Buddhist structures would have been built.

Archaeological data are not highly illuminating of the early period. There are no remains of a definite Buddhist association of pre 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. Hiuen-Tsang refers to Asokan *stupas* in the Chola country, Kanchipuram and Malakuta (Pandiya country).<sup>240</sup> In this eagerness to provide great antiquity to Buddhist centre in this region, he even associates the Buddha with having converted this region after performing miracles. He would assign equal antiquity to Buddhism in Kerala.<sup>241</sup> Kanchipuram the city describe by Hiuen-Tsang as a having number of Buddhist shrine, has, however, not come up with any significant Buddhist structures. Some items of a Buddhist character of the 1<sup>st</sup> - 2<sup>nd</sup> century C.E. have been recognised in the pre-Pallava cultural layers, but the so called Buddhist structures may be of the 4<sup>th</sup> -7<sup>th</sup> century period i.e. the early Pallava period and not earlier. Kanchipuram, in the period of Pallavas and their patronage became a great centre of Buddhist teaching and culture.<sup>242</sup> Maloney talks of early Buddhist antiquities at Kayalppattinam, but no positive evidence has been found.<sup>243</sup>

Available evidence suggests that Buddhism survived in the coastal regions of Tamil Nadu even beyond 3<sup>rd</sup> century C.E. and perhaps continued to wield some influence till the 7<sup>th</sup> century C.E. However, it would be hard to find definite evidence of patronage from Pallava, Chola or Pandiya royal families either in the form of structures or inscriptions. It may be assumed that the transitional phase of 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> centuries C.E. was one of the Jain and Buddhist ascendancy probably under the patronage of the Kalabhra rulers.<sup>244</sup>

A large number of Roman coins have been found from the Coromandel Coast. These evidence bear witness to the active maritime trade of the Tamil country with foreign nations. This trade was one of the basic factors behind the emergence of merchant community to the highest stratum of the social scale in the ancient Tamil Nadu. This had brought about drastic changes in the old social set up which was dominated by the war-like aristocracy. The newly emerged merchant class supported Buddhism as well as Jainism. The patronage shown by this rich merchant class as well as by the rulers providing the necessary stimulus and nourishment, Buddhism witnessed tremendous development in the Tamil country.<sup>245</sup>

The role of Tamil Nadu in the propagation of Buddhism in foreign countries, particularly in China, Japan, Burma, Sri Vijaya and Ceylon is unique. The Zen or Chan Buddhism, Buddhist Logic, Vajrayana and Buddhist art and architecture to a certain extent have either originated in Tamil Nadu or got enriched by its contribution.<sup>246</sup>

## **Notes and Reference**

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