Preface

An attempt has been made in our dissertation to present a systematic and comprehensive history of Buddhism during the Pala culture-epoch, from circa eighth century to the close of the twelfth century, with a margin of a few years at two extremes. A survey of Buddhism in the pre-Pala age has also been made (Chapter I) for making the story complete and the perspective clear.

While Chapter II deals with Buddhism in the Pala period, with a special reference to the patronage extended to it by the Pala monarchs and the members of contemporary minor dynasties, Chapter III aims at a depth-study of Buddhist art and architecture which flourished during this period in Bengal and Bihar (the area the Palas ruled over), along with the reverberations they sent beyond the geographical frontiers of India. In the following Chapter the evolution of Buddhism has been traced, with an accent on the ideas and ideologies underlying its significant systems the emergence of which our period witnessed; as in the case of contemporary art-idioms, thoughts and tenets of these new systems also exercised their influence on Buddhism prevailing in countries like Tibet, China and Japan and this phenomenon has been considered with due importance. Chapter V reviews the upshots of the discussions
In the preparation of this dissertation we have subjected all our data to a detailed and systematic examination. Every possible source, archaeological and literary, has been explored and no material has been included here without proper scrutiny. It may be mentioned here that we had a fortunate access to new materials which have recently come out in course of excavations and explorations at sites like Mainamati and Mahasthan, particularly the former, in Bangladesh. Many of them have been incorporated in the present work, perhaps for the first time.

Although we are indebted to our erudite predecessors, we have occasionally disagreed with their theories and have ventured to offer our own views and suggestions. The disagreement with Benoytosh Bhattacharyya on the issue of the inspiration of Buddhist Tantras leading to the emergence of Hindu Tantrism is a case in point. Similarly, we have suggested that the Buddhist subjects of Sasanka forced their king to adopt a hostile attitude towards them in consequence of their anti-state activities.
My heartfelt thanks are due to my teachers, friends and colleagues. I owe a deep debt of gratitude to Professor Anukul Chandra Banerjee under whose critical and stimulating guidance I have prepared and completed the present dissertation. I also take the opportunity to record my heartfelt gratitude to my mother, Suprity Dasgupta, for her unbound affection and care, otherwise it would have been difficult for me to complete this work. My husband, Sri Tapas Sen-Majumder, has been a never-failing source of inspiration to me; no words are adequate for the expression of my gratitude to him. I am also deeply beholden to my esteemed brothers-in-law, Sri Sochi Sen-Majumder and Sri Mityaranjan Sen-Majumder.


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