

CHAPTER-1

INTRODUCTION

Present day Orissa mostly consists of the territorial units once under ancient Tosali, Kalinga, Utkala, Kosala, Odra and Kangoda. The archaeological investigations and findings reveal that from the very beginning of the historical period, Orissa has been associated with all the major contemporary religions in India, both the orthodox and heterodox. Along with other religions Buddhism also had a very long, prosperous and continuing history in this region till thirteenth-fourteenth century CE. Though there are no evidences to tell that Lord Buddha visited Orissa during His lifetime but there are literary evidences referring to people of ancient Orissa having knowledge and acquaintances with the Lord and his teachings.

Archaeological evidences coming from Lalitgiri (Chauley 1985-86: 62), Sisupalgarh (Ota 2007: 67) suggest Buddhism had already made its presence in Kalinga in the last quarter of the first millennium BCE. This is again corroborated from the early *Pali* literatures like Vinaya Pitka, Anguttara Nikaya, Majjhima Nikaya, Buddha Vamsa, Dathadhatu Vamsa and Lalit Vistara, which speak about His relationship with Kalinga. The recent archaeological investigations and excavations reveal the subsequent development, continuation and interaction with contemporary Brahmanism and Jainism with its various sub-sects till thirteenth-fourteenth century CE. The Buddhist activities in Orissa continued for a longer period than seen in some of the important centres in the subcontinent. The general cause for the downfall of Buddhism in Orissa could be similar in nature to those seen in other parts of the country, but its continuance for a longer period and sudden decline could have been influenced by a regional religious, economic, social and administrative perspective.

The study of Buddhism in Orissa, with its various facets has not received the due attention it deserves. Though hundreds of Buddhist sites have been explored and reported, of which a few have been excavated and reports on even fewer available; there has been no attempt to integrate the details of the findings to understand the essence of regional characteristics, their development

with relation to the regional religious atmospheres and with diverse socio-economic and political conditions. The number of Buddhist *Viharas* and sites having Buddhist affiliations, if properly documented may outnumber the monuments and sites of other religions. This can be gleaned from the vast number of Buddhist sites spread throughout the length and breadth of the state. There are more than 300 Buddhist sites reported from the state (Prusty 1997, Donaldson 2000 and Chauley 2005), of these only twenty one sites are excavated i.e. 4 major (Ratnagiri, Udayagiri, Lalitagiri and Langudi) and 17 minor (Ganiapalli, Kurum, Abhana, Kapilaprasada, Aragarh, Brahmavana, Sakuntalapur, Ranipur Jharial, Khiching, Kayama, Deuli (Kumari hill), Tarapur (Duburi hill), Vajragiri, Kantigadia, Neulpur, Radhanagar, and Viratgarh) and the rest 303 are explored sites. Of these, reports are published only on 1) Ratnagiri (Mitra 1981) in two volumes and 2) Udayagiri-II, in the form of two separate volumes for the field season's (1997-2000) (Bandyopadhyay 2007) ¹ and (2001-2003) (Trivedi: 2012).

History and Archaeology of Stupas and Votive Stupas in Orissa

The earliest reference of Stupa being constructed in Orissa can be dated back to the time of the Lord himself. According to the Buddhist texts the earliest Stupa was constructed by Tapasu and Ballika, the first disciples of the Lord, in their city Utkala, on their return. We come across literary references to the Lord's relic's being brought to Orissa in the form of *Kesha-asti*, *Nakha-asti*, and *Danta-asti*. During the reign of Ashoka when the eight Stupas having the relics of the Lord were taken out and redistributed throughout his empire and even beyond it, it is believed that Orissa or ancient Kalinga which had also become a part of Asoka's empire also received its share. From the excavated remains and explored sites from Orissa, it is clear that the earliest Stupa found till date can be dated back to as early as the second-third Century BCE. This has been observed from the findings at Lalitagiri from where the relic caskets with relics had been discovered. The Votive Stupa's at Langudi seems to be contemporary with the Votive Stupas at Lalitagiri, but the Stupas reported from Ratnagiri and Udayagiri are of a later period (third-fourth century CE onwards) and continued at Ratnagiri up to as late as fifteenth-sixteenth Century (Mitra 1981; Bandyopadhyay 2001). Many Buddhist mounds await to be properly excavated and studied. From the surface investigations of the mounds, it can be observed that they were large Buddhist establishments, spread over acres of land having good number of structures and images which are found scattered all over them. The visible architectural remains are unique; each site has its own personality and individuality in depicting the Stupas in various shapes, dimensions and mediums along with their iconographic features.

¹ In all excavation at Udayagiri has been carried in two phases for a total period of 10 field seasons; first at Udayagiri –I from 1985-1989 and second at Udayagiri-II from 1997 to 2003.

The history and development of Votive Stupas forms an integral part of Buddhism, and are found in many Buddhist establishments in the country and even outside the country. The first Votive Stupa building activity probably started in Orissa at Langudi and Lalitagiri for these are the sites which gives us the earliest dates on the basis of style and Archaeological evidences. Palaeographically and stylistically these sites can be dated back to first-second century BCE/CE.

The Votive Stupas reported from Udayagiri show an evolved form then those found at Lalitagiri and Langudi, but they are simple in execution. The most evolved and in profuse number are reported from Ratnagiri. Here the Votive Stupas are very elaborately decorated with designs, motives and large number of them even has sculptures carved in niches. This important Buddhist establishment is mentioned on several occasions in the Buddhist literature and is further substantiated by the large number archaeological remains unearthed during the excavation, especially the presence of numerous Stupas and Votive Stupas (Mitra 1981).

Previous Research and Scope for Further Work

Buddhism as a subject of serious archaeological research has not been given its due importance. Many eminent scholars have worked on Orissa, but the thrust area of research has been mainly on Brahmanical archaeological, that to confined to coastal Orissa; but very few, who can be counted on finger tips have worked on Buddhism in Orissa. Hence, very limited work pertaining to Stupa and Votive Stupa is available in Orissa. There has been no analytical attempt carried out looking into the recent development in understanding the subject as a whole in relation to the human/devotee/ socio-economic and religious aspects. Again, whatever references we come across on this aspect, they are in connection with the general observation and description of the site but not in details. This statement can be very well seen from the works of the earlier scholars, enumerated below, who have worked on various aspect of Buddhism in Orissa from time to time, with a few exceptions where the above mention subject has received some site specific observations. A brief review of the earlier works on Buddhism in Orissa has been done below:

A. Sterling made extensive survey of the antiquities of Orissa and his is the first major work on Orissan archaeology (Sterling 1825: 163-338), in which emphasis was given on the antiquarian remains in the areas of Puri, Bhubaneswar, Konark and Jajpur but he has only discussed temple architecture in this.

After Sterling it was Kittoe (1837: 200-206), who reported about the monuments of coastal Orissa, especially those around Jajpur. In his records besides the Brahmanical images and structure, he even narrates about the Buddhist deities he came across. He has even described the remains around Dhauli.

Fergusson wrote on the rock-cut caves at Udayagiri and Khandagiri in "*Illustrations for the Rock-cut Temples of India*". In this he wrongly calls the caves of Udayagiri as entirely Buddhist

and of a very early and pure type and those on the Khandagiri as belonging to a much later date and belonging to Jainism. He states that “one of the most singular feature in all the Buddhist caves here, is the total absence of all images of Buddha, and indeed of any affluent object of worship” and this made him place these caves in a higher antiquity, than those in western India (Fergusson 1845)

C.S. Banerjee (1870: 158-71) Deputy Magistrate of Jajpur has discussed the Buddhist remains of Nalitgiri and Lalitagiri as well as the antiquities of Jajpur in the journal of the Asiatic society of Bengal in early 1870's after he visited these sites. According to him the ruins inspected were located on the summits of three ranges of hills i.e. 1) Assia, 2) Nalti and 3) Mahavinayaka (names of the ranges as per the natives) two of which were situated in the centre of the district and other on its western border.

It was John Beams in 1871 who wrote in the same journal about the Buddhist remains of Kaupari (Beams 1871: 247-50) and the Alti Hills in 1875 (Beams 1876:19-23) being inspired from the account of C.S.Banerjee (Basa 2000:32).

Hunter in 1872, also postulated that the caves at Udayagiri were Buddhist and were constructed in three phases in the first the cells for the ascetic were built, in the second, the ceremonial structures were excavated and in the last phase, the fashionable ones like the two storied queens palace (Ranigumpha) was carved. He also mentions about the remains of Lalitagiri, Jajpur and Konark.

R.L. Mitra published two volumes on Antiquities of Orissa (1875 & 1880). Mitra's book has lots of illustrated descriptions of the antiquities and structures and also sheds light on the social history of Orissa as could be glimpsed from the antiquities, the first volume contains general observation on the nature and character of objects noticed and the second volume had detailed descriptions on these objects.

Vasu (1911) discusses the archaeological remains of Mayurbhanj in his book “*Archaeological research in Mayurbhanj District*” by giving a brief summary of the religious developments supported by archaeological findings; moreover, he describes individual sites, their archaeological remains along with illustrations where ever necessary (Basa 2000:31). In the second book ‘*The Modern Buddhism and its followers in Orissa*’ of his, he discusses in detail about the remains of Neo- Buddhist in Orissa and how they have been surviving in disguise and has discussed in a way the history of Buddhism of Orissa after the reign of Mukandadeva up to the time of his research in 1911.

Sahoo (1958) was the first scholar to take up in-depth study of Buddhism in Orissa, taking help of literary and archaeological data available at the sites. His book ‘*Buddhism in Orissa*’ is still the bible on Buddhist history in Orissa. Most of the works undertaken after him on Buddhism are abstracts form it.

D. Mitra's book "*Ratnagiri*" (1981) in two volumes and "*Bronzes from Achutrajpur*" (1978) are site-specific books but are very exhaustive and cover all aspects of Buddhist remains discovered at the site, except pottery. In her book '*Ratnagiri*' she has very exhaustively and systematically discussed the stupa architecture at the site, but it is a site specific work.

Fabri (1974) in his book "*History of the Art of Orissa*" gives a passing reference on Buddhist art in Orissa.

Panigrahi (1981) wrote a book on "*History of Orissa*" but we get very little information on Buddhist remains in Orissa. At the end while discussing the Art and Architecture he has discussed about the Brahmanical, Jain and Buddhist remains found in the state. Data on Buddhism was mainly those available on the surface at the sites.

Behera and Donaldson (1998) have discussed the master pieces of Orissan sculptural traditions from the view point of style and iconography in their book "*Sculptural Masterpieces from Orissa: Styles and Iconography*". This work not only discusses the Brahmanical but also Buddhist and Jain iconography. The Buddhist sculptures are discussed under the heading "*Iconography of the Buddhist Images*" (p:52-64) the sculptures are discussed in brief, names of some of the sites, district wise are mentioned without elaborating on them. Only the representative sculptures are discussed. The book mainly deals with Brahmanical sculptures.

Between 1970's and 1985 the Orissa State Archaeology undertook excavations at Kuruma, Abhana, Kapilprasada, Brahmavana, Sakuntalapur, Ranipur Jharial, Khiching and Viratgarh; Sambalpur University undertook excavations at Ganyapalli and Utkal University undertook excavation at Lalitagiri.

Mukherjee's (1984) monograph on "*Lalitagiri, Udayagiri and Ratnagiri*" is a guide to the Buddhist wealth at these sites, with emphasis on the sculptures available at the sites. He also, like some scholars, speaks about south-east Asian influence on the Buddhist art in Orissa, and not much is written about the Buddhist architecture at the sites.

A national seminar was held on "Buddhism in Orissa" by the 'Institute of Orissan Culture' in 1995, which brought out its proceedings in the form of a book "*Studies in Buddhism*". The book is a good attempt to tap all valuable articles on Buddhism in a volume for which we are beholden to (Late) Dr. K.C. Mishra.

In 1985 the Archaeological Survey of India opened up a Circle and Excavation Branch IV in Orissa to cater to the archaeological needs of Orissa in particular and eastern India in general. Both the Circle and the Branch took up excavations at Lalitagiri and Udayagiri respectively. Lalitagiri was excavated from 1985 to 1991 and Udaygiri was excavated in two spates i.e. Udaygiri-1 (1985-89) and Udayagiri-2 (1997-2003). Report on Lalitagiri has been submitted to the Directorate and those on Udayagiri-2 have been published in two separate volumes as Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India i.e. Udayagiri-2 (1997-2000) and Udayagiri-2 (2001-03). Besides

the above a number of articles have been published by the archaeologists of the ASI on different aspects of Buddhism on the basis of the archaeological data recovered from the sites.

In the meantime State archaeology took up excavations at more 9 sites, of which the excavation at Langudi is of importance; but data on them are scant or negligible.

Prusti's (1997) unpublished thesis "*Buddhist Establishments in Cuttack District*" is a result of his exhaustive fieldwork in Cuttack district and other neighbouring districts. In it, Prusti has furnished first-hand information on more than hundred eighty Buddhist sites explored by him on the basis of the surface finds and the thesis is enriched with numerous illustrations. But it should be added that many of the sites mentioned as Buddhist sites have at present only remains of one or two sculptures kept under a tree or in the possession of some private collector or are sites which at some point of time had some Buddhist sculpture or remains. Prusti has at length described about the excavated remains of Lalitagiri and Udayagiri sites along with that of Langudi. He has also taken the pain to mention the sites with their coordinates, which is very informative for scholars who in future intend to take up some more extensive study in this field. When published it would be a monumental work for the scholars and students interested in Buddhist studies in Orissa. As the scholar has worked only on the materials available/viewed at the site and as the reports were not written, many a information are missing in it and more over the work is a summary of remains at the site.

Patnaik (2000) in his book "*Buddhist Heritage in Orissa*" has done a comparative study of the three excavated sites in erstwhile Cuttack district i.e. Ratnagiri, Lalitagiri and Udayagiri. Some other important Buddhist sites have also been discussed briefly. This book is more like a guide on these three sites and so has given an over view of the remains at the excavated and some other sites.

In recent times the most noteworthy work published on Buddhism is that by Donaldson (Donaldson 2001). In his book "*Iconography of Buddhist Sculptures in Orissa*" he has dealt at length about the Buddhist sculptures found spread throughout the state, and its different aspects. It is the first published work, which gives exhaustive information on one hundred seventy three Buddhist sites of Orissa. As such after N.K. Sahoo's work this is a remarkable piece of work on Buddhist iconography. This work though exhaustive only deals with Buddhist iconography and nothing on the Buddhist architecture of Orissa.

Moharana (Moharana 2001) in his book *Tantric Buddhsim* deals with different aspects of *Tantric* Buddhism, its prominent *siddhacaryas*, *tantric* literature and *tantric* gods and goddesses and its impact on Orissan literature and social life.

Chauley (Chauley 2005) in his unpublished PhD thesis "*Buddhist Establishments in Orissa- A case study of the excavated remains from Lalitagiri*" has tried to evolve a chronology for Buddhism in Orissa from the third Century BCE to thirteenth-fourteenth Century CE on the basis

of the excavated remains from Lalitgiri in particular and other excavated sites in general. He has also dealt the stupa architecture as a variety of the Buddhist architecture at the sites.

Mishra (Mishra 2009) in his book *Vajrayana Buddhism: Study in Social Iconography* has dealt the topic from a different angle. He has mostly used epigraphic and textual sources to show that Buddhism made both vertical and horizontal expansion in Orissa in the medieval times in a multi-religious environment. *Vajrayana* as a social instrumental religion was not a declining and degenerated religion confined to monastic complex only; on the contrary, he has dealt at length on how Vajrayana innovated numerous deities, introduced new rituals for its followers, wrote mantras in praise of its deities and imbued the deities with functions in response to the changing socio-political setting and economic expectations; what were the support system and what were the reason for its rapid decline.

Besides the above, from time to time articles have been published by scholars, researchers and amateurs on various aspects of Buddhism in various journal and periodicals.

Thus, from the above review it is seen that no one has specifically worked on stupa architecture of Orissa. The works mention above by the scholars had their own aims and objectives which they have tried to fulfil. However, none of these works have specifically oriented their research to understand the emergence, development, manifestation and relevance of the stupa architecture in relation to the changing Buddhist philosophy. Thus from the review of the previous works it is evident that a comprehensive research on Stupas and Votive Stupas in Orissa is essential.

Apart from the works on Orissa to have a broader perspective on the origin, evolution and architecture of the stupa, books and papers written by many national and international scholars on stupa architecture have also been referred few of them are Sushila Pant's 'The origin and development of Stupa Architecture in India' 1976, throws light on the stupa architecture in general; beginning from second century BCE to seventh century CE.

Nineteenth century onwards few British, French and German archaeologist and Indologists like A. Cunningham, J. Marshall, J. Fergusson, J. Burgess, A. Grunwedel, A. Foucher and others showed interest in the field of Buddhism and through excavations tried to build the architectural details. Indian scholars like H. Sarkar, T.N. Ramchandra, D.R.Sahani, D. Mitra, M. Sivarammurthy have minutely discussed a few stupas either of the North or of South India.

Benisti Mireille's, 'Stylistics of Buddhist Art in India', 2003, she believes stupa structure as religious par excellence. She has discussed the stylised forms, the significance of stupa and a comparative study of Bodhgaya and Ratnagiri.

J. Irwin in 'The Stupa and the Cosmic Axis: The Archaeological Evidence', 1979 has describe the axial pole of the stupa is considered as the Tree of Life.

The excavations especially at Ratnagiri, Lalitagiri, Udayagiri and Langudi have brought to light a large number of structures i.e. Monasteries, Stupas, Votive Stupas and other secular structures. Stupas and Votive Stupas are the predominate structures at most of these sites. Besides, impressions of Stupas are also found depicted on the clay tablets. Some of the major Stupas were constructed, maintained, renovated and often enlarged and embellished with sculptures at different times as is seen in the pan Indian context. Probably, they coped with the changing religious atmosphere, affiliation, their sectarian requirement along with economic growth and intensity of religious motivation of the patrons. These behavioural aspects are very well represented in the Stupas and the religious images on them and even more vividly on the Votive Stupas. Innumerable Votive Stupas are reported from the excavations and many more are still scattered in the environs of all these sites. They are fashioned variously depicting different type of architecture, shapes, sizes, and icons/images on them. They are probably the true representation of the underling conditions like religious activity, economy, social, and internal and external influences. Hence, many an aspects of Buddhism has yet to be dealt with. The present work intends to deal with the study of Stupas and Votive Stupas trace its evolution, regional traits, neighbouring influences and differences, the iconographic representations on them and try to extract inferences on the socio-economic and religious condition in the then society on the basis of their study.

Though Buddhist organisations co-existed within specific regional context, their cultural and micro religious practices differed. For example, this can be gleaned even by the general observation from the four major excavated sites Lalitagiri, Langudi, Ratnagiri and Udayagiri, which are located in close vicinity within a radius of 20 km (Fig.2). A comparative analysis of the structural, visual and artistic (all forms art including images) characteristic of Stupas within a chronological frame work is needed to understand the dynamics of Buddhism in Orissa. An intensive study is again needed to understand the role of Votive Stupas at these sites. Mitra (1981) in her report on Ratnagiri has discussed about 290 selected Votive Stupas having images unearthed in the excavations, though there are more than 750 such Stupas present (with and without images) at the site and many more lying in the environs. Similarly, there are 179 Votive Stupas at Lalitagiri, 192 Votive Stupas at Udayagiri, 64 rock cut and 6 monolithic Votive Stupas at Langudi and scores of Stupas in different stages of preservation are spread throughout the state, which have yet to be properly documented and studied. These Votive Stupas are unique pieces of art with lot of variations on them, they are plain to ornamented; with or without images carved on them; with and without inscriptions; some with corporal relics in them. Votive Stupas are mainly of three type's i.e. monolithic, structural and rock cut; made of stone, bricks and metal. From among 324

sites, Votive Stupas are reported from 52 sites (Chauley 2005). For the purpose of this research work only the Stupas and Votive Stupas reported from the four major excavated sites have been taken up due to the following reasons (a) they have been extensively excavated. (b) a large number of archaeological data, varied in style, size, execution and material is reported, (c) they are displayed and accessible, (d) from no other site they are reported in such large numbers, (e) each site is representative of a phase in history of Buddhism, and (f) last but not the least this area remained the main centre of Buddhism from the third-second Century BCE to later Medieval period i.e. fifteenth-sixteenth Century CE.

Objectives of the Research work

On the basis of the above facts and figures this research work was taken up with the following objectives:-

- 1) To undertake extensive documentation and study of the art and architecture of the Stupas and Votive Stupas in Orissa reported from the excavated sites i.e. Lalitagiri, Langudi, Udayagiri and Ratnagiri.
- 2) To undertake a comparative study of the Stupas and Votive Stupas of Orissa with those found in the neighboring states in Eastern India in particular and those found in the Peninsular India and other parts of India in general, to see if there was any external influence on the Stupa building activity in Orissa as is seen in the case of execution of the sculptures.
- 3) To see if any regional variation is observed in the Stupa building activity.
- 4) To study the iconography of the of Buddhist pantheons as represented on the Votive Stupas.
- 5) To study the gradual development in the Stupa architecture with the gradual development of Buddhism, from the evidences.

Keeping in view the aims and objectives of the study as well as the source material at my disposal, the research work has been divided in to six chapters.

The Chapter-1 'Introduction' the reasons for selection of the topic, aims and objective of the research work, the previous works relating to the research work that has taken place in Orissa and that in pan Indian context have been discussed briefly.

Before taking up the Political and Religious history, a brief of the geomorphological features of Orissa is done to give a background to the geographical setting of the state. This constitutes the subject matter of Chapter-2, 'Geomorphological, Political and Religious History of Orissa'.

The influence of Buddhism in Orissa is believed to have started right from the lifetime of Buddha and it was after the conquest of Kalinga by Asoka that Buddhism in real sense spread in Orissa. Buddhism was given royal patronage and was made a state religion. Buddhism became a state religion even during the Bhaumakara period. It was the period when most of the monasteries, *chaityas*, *stupas* and other construction works were carried out throughout the length and breadth of the state. It won't be an exaggeration to say that this period saw the peak of Buddhism in Orissa. This period was also important for the emergence of a new form of Buddhism i.e. *Vajrayana*. *Vajrayana* became very popular among the masses and most of the archaeological remains reported are from this period. It is believed that it was from here that *Vajrayana* travelled to other parts of the country and abroad. In the subsequent periods Brahmanical Hinduism was at its peak but Buddhism survived due to local and individual patronage. It remained a strong hold of Buddhism even after the Muslim conquest of India. Orissa also acted as a refuge for the Buddhists fleeing from the neighbouring areas due to Muslim onslaught. The construction of Buddhist structures continued up to the reign of Mukunda Deva (1559-68) and this is found mentioned in the records of Taranath (Mitra 1980: 223). In this work the political and religious history has been discussed simultaneously and only up to sixteenth Century, when we have the last records of constructional activity. A brief about the *Tantrayana* phase and the reasons for the decline of Buddhism in Orissa is also done.

In Chapter-3 'Development of Stupa Architecture in India' the various aspects and sources of development of stupa's origin, evolution and structural arrangement and architectural phenomenon of as seen in India and abroad has been discussed. Different Buddhist texts throw light on erecting a stupa, there components and importance of each and every part of the stupa i.e; *vedhi*, *medhi*, *anda*, *harmika* and *chatravali*. Archaeological findings justifies the Buddhist texts and the excavated Buddhist sites glorifies the past of Buddhism.

In Chapter-4 'The Stupa Architecture in Orissa' the major, the minor structural and votive stupas reported from the important excavated sites i.e; Lalitagiri, Langudi, Udayagiri and Ratnagiri of Orissa have been minutely discussed according to the tentative dates assigned to them. The stylised forms of the different parts of the stupa has also been shown separately i.e; *vedhi*, *medhi*, *anda*, *harmika* and *chatravali*.

In Chapter – 5 ' Buddhist Icons as depicted on the Stupas' iconographic representation of the male and female deities, their emanations as seen on the stupas has been covered.

Chapter – 6 is the ‘Conclusion’ in which a summary of the research work has been done and many other fact and figures which were outside the preview of discussion in the above chapters has been done here.

After discussing the ‘Introduction’ in which the previous research work done by different scholars on the Buddhist sites of Orissa and my aim and objective for taking up this topic for my research work, in the next chapter ‘Geomorphological, Political and religious History of Orissa’, geographical location, the land formation, the important rivers flowing from Orissa and political and religious history of Orissa beginning from the time of Asoka, second-third century till the fourteenth century has been done.


