Chapter IX.

Decline of Buddhism.

Buddhism in Andhra reached the climax of its glory in the Ikṣvaku period, i.e., about the middle of the 3rd century A.D. But the climax is the point where ascendency ends and decline begins. Since then, for about six centuries, the story of Andhra Buddhism is only one of decline and degeneracy till it was finally overthrown by Visisāvism.

The chief cause of the decline of Andhra Buddhism was a fresh wave of Brahmanical movement. Throughout the Satavahana period, Buddhism had to contend with the forces of Brahmanical revival and at the close of it, the great patriarchs of Buddhism, Nagarjuna and Aryadeva appear to have been murdered. Again, from the reign of the Ikṣvaku king Bhuvana Santamala, there started at Vijayapuri, vigorous temple-building activity by the Hindus, with a view probably to rival the Buddhist institutions and to counteract their influence and popularity. It is interesting to note that like their Satavahana overlords, the Ikṣvakus too appear to have been overthrown in a militant Hindu upsurge.

Pallava Hostility: The Pallavas were the successor of the Ikṣvakus in the region of Śrīparvata. The Pallava king Simhavarman of the recently discovered Menchikallu inscription is believed

1. See the previous chapter.
2. E. L., XXXIII, P. 149.
to have destroyed the city of Vijayapuri "together with its Buddhist establishments." The Pallavas were stout champions of the Brahmanical faith and their titles, Dharmaharajadhiraja, Pancama loka palaka, Asrayo Dharmah, Kaliyuga desavasarna dharmoddhara, nitya sannadhah, Anekasvamadavabhattasmanam, and Satakhyakalpan etc. clearly reveal their zeal to revive the Vedic ritual and to reinvigorate the Brahmanical faith. The absence of any important Buddhist record from almost about the 4th century A.D. at Nagarjunakonda lends support to the view that the rising Pallavas destroyed Buddhism at Sriparvata and since then, the Buddhist institutions of the place ceased to attract pious pilgrims. Longhurst who first excavated Nagarjunakonda says: "The ruthless manner in which all the buildings at Nagarjunakonda have been destroyed is simply appalling and cannot represent the work of treasure-seekers alone as so many pillars, statues and sculptures have been wantonly smashed to pieces. Had there been a town close at hand as at Amaravati, one can understand the site being used as a quarry by modern builders as was so often done in India. But this never occurred at Nagarjunakonda as there were no towns and no cart roads in or out of the valley." But it may be added that on the other side of Sriparvata, the Hindu religions

1. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Vasanta grant of Simhavarma, C.P.I. A.G.M., Ch.XVIII, p. 211 ff
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
8. AH.Longhurst, Memoirs of Archaeological Survey of India, No. 64.
activity continued for some time more and it is not unreasonable to suppose that the Hindus robbed the neglected and languishing Buddhist structures and utilized the materials in their own constructions. 1

Another Pallava king that is alleged to have destroyed Buddhism in the Kona valley is Trilocana Pallava, who figures prominently in the local records or the village Raiyates of the Cauvery and Kurnool districts. 2 N. Venkataramanayya 3 has successfully established the historicity of Trilocana Pallava and fixed his age in the second half of the 5th century A.D. The records are unanimous in describing Trilocana as the destroyer of Buddhism and Jainism and as the upholder of Vedic faith. He made Dhanyakata his capital and invited many north Indian Brahmin families to settle down in his kingdom. Thus, two Pallava kings, Simhavarma and Trilocana were responsible for the destruction of Buddhism at Nagarjunakonda and Dhanyakata respectively.

Simultaneously with the Pallavas, in north-western Andhra, the Vakatakas rose to power and established an empire. They too were champions of Brahmanism and Pravarasena, the founder of the Vakataka imperialism, performed Vedic sacrifices like the Vajranayaka, Srimatipatisava, Asvamedha, Agnistoma, Aptyotama, Uktva, Sodasi and Atiratra. 4

1. The recent excavations at Nagarjunakonda revealed that the temple building activity continued to the Medieval times. Some of them yielded stones, slabs and pillars, that originally belonged to the Buddhist structures. (I thank Dr. H. Subrahmanyan, who excavated the site, for having kindly permitted me to make use of the Notes he prepared in the course of the excavations).
3. Ibid.
4. Altakar and Majumdar, The Vakataka-Gupta Age, p. 93.
Loss of Patronage: In the midst of such momentous political developments Andhra experienced an economic revolution as well. The fall of the Roman Empire in A.D. 476 led to the decline of trade between Andhra and Rome and it had hit hard the mercantile community, which had been the chief patron of Buddhism.¹ Longhurst remarks that besides the general vane of religion, the decline of Buddhism is to be traced to certain economic agents which were at work "such as the decline of sea-borne trade with the west which caused vast quantities of Roman gold to pour into Southern India."² No longer the merchant community was in a position to patronise Buddhism. Curiously, from almost the 5th century to the 12th century, we rarely come across grants made by merchants. Rarely the Buddhist Church had permanent endowments, and it depended mainly on the charity of the pious from time to time. As the main source of that charity dried up, they lost their sustenance and languished.

Reformed Hinduism: It was during this period that Brahmanism underwent a two-fold reformation. On the one hand, the priestly community became the mainstay of Vedic ritualism and on the other, the temple was made the centre of popular Hinduism. With this reformation Hinduism became "a religion where god was presented to the masses in the theistic form of Visnu or Krana or Mahadeva, always anxious to save genuine devotees who throw themselves upon his mercy".³ The system of Danas, Vratas and Yatras⁴ added to the picturesqueness of Hinduism.

¹ Vide supra, P. 2
² Longhurst, op. cit., P. 6
³ Altokar and Rajendra, op. cit.
⁴ See, Hinduism, Section on Vratas, Danas and Ksetras.
By this time many evils crept into the Buddhist Church. For a long time, it was badly divided against itself, and the Buddhist acaryas indulged in polemical disputes, each defending his own sect. The result was the general weakness of Buddhism, in the face of the attacks from its rivals. In his Abhidharmakosakarika, Vasubandhu of about the 4th century A.D. laments over the misinterpretations, that the bad logicians were giving to the Buddha Dharma. Such interpretations gradually led to Mahayana which transformed Buddhism into a theistic religion, cutting the ground from under its very feet. This change slowly killed the individuality of Buddhism and deprived it of all justification for a separate existence. Buddhism lost all special attraction to the people.

By about the middle of the 7th century A.D., when Yuan Chwang visited Andhra, many Buddhist monasteries were in ruinous condition. At To-na-ka-che-ka (Dhanakataka) he recorded: "There was a crowd of Buddhist monasteries but most of them were deserted, about 30 being in use -- There were about 100 Deva temples and the followers of various sects were very numerous". About Sriparvata and Chu-li-ya also he had discouraging tales to relate. He further says that it had already become a centre of the worship of Vajrapani and of Dharani. About a century later, a Pallava prince visited Dhanyakata and listened to...

3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid and see the section on Vajrayana.
discourse on law "in a secluded spot." This may indicate that the Buddhists were afraid of preaching their doctrines openly and their activities were confined to their monastic settlements.

The description of Dhanyakatoka as given by Yuan Chüng and the Pallava inscription makes clear that the Buddhists in Andhra had already adopted Tantric practices or Vajrayana, which led to much degeneracy in Buddhism and paved the way in more than one respect for its final collapse.

1. The relevant portion of the Inscription, when translated into English, reads:

"Having regarded it with curiosity and having humbly approached, and saluted the tutelary deities, which were charged with the protection of the whole sacred place, he listened to the discourse on law -- in a secluded spot".

Vajrayana is the last phase of Buddhism in Andhra. The term Vajrayana is collectively used to include all the later forms of Mahayana, generally known as Tantric Buddhism. Tantrism is a complex system characterised by the chanting of Mantras and Dharanis,\(^1\) practicing Mudras,\(^2\) worship of gods and goddesses and Yogic practices sometimes involving sex-relations.\(^3\) According to most scholars Tantrism developed out of aboriginal superstitions and primitive practices.\(^4\) It became a pan-Indian movement\(^5\) as every important religion of India adopted it and in the history of Indian religious thought, the period between the 7th and the 13th centuries is known as the Age of Tantrism.\(^6\)

There is no unanimity as to whether the Tantras first developed in Buddhism or Hinduism. Some scholars think that the Buddhist Tantras

1. Dharanis are mystic syllables, at times combining several Mantras. They are believed to possess the capacity for fixing the mind on an idea, vision or an experience gained in meditation. Lama Anagaraka Govinda, *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism*, p. 31.
2. Mudras are certain postures and gestures, supposed to be essential for creating suitable mental conditions for devotion and meditation. S.B. Dasgupta, *Introduction to Tantric Buddhism*, p. 56.
3. Ibid. P. 2.
4. C. Chakravarti, *Antiquity of Tantricism*, Ind., VI, PP. 114-126. Edward Conze remarks: "There are always two kinds of Buddhism, one for the monk and the other for the layman. In course of time the layman became more and more predominant and Tantras and Tantric thought descended from them." *Buddhist Thought in India*, p. 270.
the Buddhist Tantras are mere offshoots of the Hindu Tantras.\(^1\) But prof. Bhattacharyya has shown that in the Hindu literature, Tantric Mantra appears with surprising suddenness, without showing a faint trace of its earlier and crude stages of development.\(^2\) He asserts that "it is possible to declare without fear of contradiction that the Buddhists were the first to introduce the Tantras into their religion and that the Hindus borrowed them from the Buddhists in later times and that it is idle to say that later Buddhism was an outcome of Saivism."\(^3\)

**Original Home of Tantrism.**

There is difference of opinion among scholars regarding the original home of Tantrism. One view is that some of the deities and practices connected with Tantrism are of foreign origin.\(^4\) On the other hand, in India, it is generally held that the three regions on the periphery of the Aryan lands the north-west, the north-east and the south, particularly Andhra, where the non-Aryan systems were predominant gave rise to the Tantric practices.\(^5\) Yuan Chwang, who visited India in the early half of the 7th century \(^6\), noticed Tantric beliefs and rituals in Uddiyana\(^6\) which corresponds to the Swat valley.\(^7\) But B. Bhattacharya thinks, on the basis of the

---

1. John Woodroffe quoted in 2500 years of Buddhism, P. 361.
2. Austin Waddell, Buddhism of Tibet or Lamaism, P. 14.
5. B. Bhattacharya, Introduction to Buddhist Esotericism, P. 147.
Sahajanamala and Pag Sam Jon Sang, that Eastern India, corresponding to modern Bengal and Assam, is the birthplace of Tantra.¹ No doubt, the Sahajanamala gives one the impression that Bengal-Assam region was a stronghold of Tantra. But many scholars reject the conclusion of Bhattacharya.² The fact that Vajrayana was popular in the East does not prove it to be the birthplace of that religion. Further, it may be remembered that the Badhanamala was compiled about A.D.³ 1165 and it is reasonable to believe that it reflects only the conditions of the 12th century A.D. There is every reason to think that Tantra developed in Assam not earlier than A.D.⁴ 700. Some scholars rightly believe that Vajrayana spread to Bengal, Assam and Cissa from Vikrama-sila, its stronghold in Bihar.⁵

On the other hand, L.M. Joshi concludes that "A number of Indian and foreign sources point to Andhradesa as a more ancient and more popular home of Vajrayana."⁶ There is plenty of ideological and archaeological evidence in support of the above conclusion based upon traditional or literary sources.

Traditional or Literary:

1) According to the Buddhist Traditions, the Buddha, sixteen years after his enlightenment, turned the Third Wheel of the Law of Vajrayana or the Kalacakra System at Dhanyakataka.⁷

---

¹ D.C. Sircar, Saka Pitahs, P. 12.
² B. Bhattacharya, Buddhist Iconography, P. 16.
³ Charles Eliot, Hinduism and Buddhism, II, P.
⁴ P.V. Bapat, 2500 years of Buddhism, P. 360.
⁶ Sahajanamala, II, Introduction.
(2) Another tradition says that a monk named Dasavala de-
posed all the Dharanis including the Matrтанtra-Kalacakra at
Dhanyakataka, which henceforth came to be known as Dharanikota or
the Fort of Dharanis.¹

(3) Naropa or Nadapada, a great Vajrayana authority of the 10th
century A.D., quotes in his Sekoddenatika an ancient tradition that
the Mantrayana was revealed at Siddhanya evidently Sri Dhanyakataka.²

(4) The Ceylonese Buddhist history called Nihaya Cangraba re-
fers to some Vajrayana tenets and attributes them to a sect called
Vajraparvatavasinkaya.³

(5) According to one Tibetan tradition, a Buddhist monk from
Vajraparvata converted king Matvalasena (A.D. 344-366) into Vajrayana.⁴

This Vajraparvata is generally identified with Sriparva-
Nagarjunakonda. But it may be recalled that the Ceylonese stories
about the tooth relic of the Buddha refer to a region called Diamond
Sands,⁶ which is located about the mouth of the river Krishna or the
region of Dhanyakataka.⁷ Therefore, the Vajraparvata of the above
traditions may refer as well as Dharanikota or Dhanyakataka.

   Helmut Hoffman writes that according to the Tibetan version of
   of Laghuntatra, the Buddha preached Mantrayana at Dhanyakataka.
   2. L.J. Joshi, op. cit.
   3. Ibid.
   4. R. C. Mitra, Decline of Buddhism in India, P. 104.
   5. Ibid.
   Cunningham, Ancient Geography of India, P. 534.
6) The Chinese pilgrim, Yuan Chwang recorded that "in the cliff to the south of Dhanyakataka there was the shrine of Vajrapani where monks desirous of supernatural powers recited the Vajrapani (sui-hsin) dharaja". Commenting on this, Watters observes that "our pilgrim's statement about Vajrapani and his magical spell seems to agree with another authority which tells us that Kshemikota became a centre of production for spells and exorcisms".

7) The Tibetan account,Houston says that king Srong-Tsan-gam-po of the 7th century A.D. brought from South India an eleven faced and self-originated statue of Avalokitesvara. According to Candavyuha, Potalaka or Potali in Daksinapatha was a seat of Avalokitesvara. The Cullakalinga Jataka mentions Potali as the capital of the kingdom of Assaka and hence it can be identified with Bodhan in the Nizamabad district of Andhra Pradesh.

8) The Eatnavali of Sri Harsavardhana mentions that the Tantric master Srikantadasa went to Kausambi from Sriparvata and taught Udayana the art of making flowers blossom in any season.

This Sriparvata may be identical either with Sriparvata-Hagarjunakonda or Srisailam of the present day. In either case, the account clearly establishes the fact that Andhra became a centre of Tantric practices during the early part of the 7th century A.D.

---

2. Ibid. p. 224.
3. Taranatha's History of Buddhism (Tr. by Schifner), p. 277.
5. Kalinaksha Dutt, Preface to Buddhism in U'issa.
6. B.C. Law, Tribes in Ancient India, p. 159.
9) One strong Tibetan tradition refers to Andhra as the place of Nagarjuna who lived for 500 years. Evidently, the tradition has confused Acarya Nagarjuna of the 2nd century A.D., the founder of the Madhyamika school with Siddha Nagarjuna who lived about the 6th century A.D. The Tibetans appear to have held the two identical and hence gave him a long life.

Siddha Nagarjuna played a prominent part in the evolution of Vajrayana Buddhism. He is said to have been initiated into Tantrism by the well-known Siddhacarya Sarahapada of Nalanda. At Dhanyakataka, he meditated on Tara and obtained the Mahakala and the Kurukulla Tantras. He attained Rasasiddhi and Vajrakayasiddhi. He is associated with the Mahamayurividyā and the introduction of the worship of Ekajata from Bhota or Tibet. The authorship of as many as 59 Tantric works is attributed to him. Siddha Nagarjuna spent the later part of his life at Sriparvata.

The Tibetan tradition that Siddha Nagarjuna lived in Andhra is supported by an inscription from Jaggayapota, a renowned Buddhist Tīrtha. The inscription mentions that a certain Candraprabha, a pupil of Jayaprabha, who in his turn was a disciple of Shadanta Nagarjuna. On paleographical grounds, the inscription is assigned to the 6th century A.D., and therefore, the Nagarjuna mentioned in it must be identical with Siddha Nagarjuna. The inscription makes

1. This confusion is clear from the Tibetan work, Pag-san-jen-Carg, Suniti Kumara Pathak, "Life of Nagarjuna", I.H.Q., XXX, P. 93.
2. S. Bhattacharya, Sadhanamala, II, Introduction, P. XLIII.
4. S. Bhattacharya, op. cit.
5. Ibid.
7. Ibid. P. 29.
thus clear that from at least the 6th century A.D., Tantrism was practised in Andhra desa.

A careful study of the different stages in the history of Andhra Buddhism would clearly show the important role the Andhra Buddhist played in the evolution and development of Tantrism.

Historically, the association of Buddhism and Tantrism is explained with particular reference to the spirit of catholicity that characterised Mahayanism as a whole. The fundamentals of Mahayanism—deification of the Buddha, the concepts of Sunyata or Prajna and Karuna as the basis of the Bodhisattva doctrine and the positive interpretation of Nirvana as Mahasukha — were the sources of Tantric beliefs and Tantrism carried them to their logical extent, transforming Buddhism into a monotheistic religion. It made the Buddha one supreme god, surrounded by a huge pantheon of gods and goddesses. Tantrism held the universe as His outer manifestation and its realisation as the only true enlightenment. Nirvana was conceived as Mahasukha where the Buddhas resided and hence came to be designated as Sukhavati. It is to be attained not by means of contemplation and reasoning but by certain devices of mystical value such as Mantras, Mudras and Yogic practices, involving even sex-relations. Along side, the cult of the female principle was developed and the highest truth is conceived as a subtle inscrutable combination of the universal

2. Ibid.
masculine and feminine principles of Prajna and Karuna.¹

The Buddhist literature such as the Kathavatthu tells us that from the beginning, the Andhakas introduced innovations which were of far reaching significance in the evolution of Buddhist doctrine and discipline.² They may be summarised as follows.

1) The Caityakas conceived Buddha as Lokottara and this led finally to the concept of Dharmadhatu, which is a sort of Buddhist Brahma.³

2) They insisted on the need of a preceptor. This became a principle of fundamental importance in the Vajrayana. Bhattacharya remarks, "in ancient India, for all kinds of religious and secular knowledge the necessity of a Guru or preceptor was always felt but nowhere is reverence to the Guru so much in evidence as in Vajrayana⁴." This principle might be taken to have gradually developed into faith in the grace of Bodhisattva.

3) They developed the paraphernalia of worship which included circumambulation, offering of flowers and flower-garlands, lamps, incense, etc. which are included in the Vajrayana worship, as is learnt from the Sadhana of Tara, composed by the famous

1. 2500 Years of Buddhism, p. 360.
2. see Section on Mahayana.
3. See the section on Caityakas.
4. S. Bhattacharya, Buddhist Iconography, Introduction, 'P. xvii and liii.'
Tantric author Anupama Raksita.¹

4) More than all, from the Kathavatthu, we learn that the Andhakas permitted even Maithuna for certain specific objects.²

5) They believed in Nirvana as an eternal and faultless state or amitapada which compares favourably with mahasukha.³

A comparison between the Vajrayana doctrines and the Caityaka innovations would thus clearly suggest that the latter constitute the source of the former.

Vajrayana Literature: It was in the paramita literature that the Buddhist deities, Mantras and Dharanis were elaborately dealt with.⁴ It is already noted above that the Paramita literature developed among the Saila Schools, the branches of the Caityakas of Andhra. This historical fact, if read together with the tradition of Dasavala, would clearly indicate that the Mahayana Vajrayana literature was developed in the Viharas of Dharanikota and Srifurva.

Vajrayana developed out of Mahayana through the badhyamika and Yogacara schools.⁵ A good number of thinkers and writers who were responsible for such a development are associated with Andhra and Maharashtra. An account of Acarya Nagarjuna and Aryadeva is

---

1. Ibid. P. 20-23.
3. 2500 Years of Buddhism, P. 118.
already given above. Bhavaviveka or Bhavya who developed the
Svatantra School in Madhyamikavada lived near Dhanyakataka. The
founder of the Vijnanavada or Yogacara was Maitreyanatha and he was a resident of Potala or Bodhan. Asanga, the greatest exponent of the Yogacara was a disciple of Maitreyanatha. It is generally held that Asanga was a Kasmirian. But he is also known as the Sage of Ajanta. Asanga is associated with the introduction of the Tantras and the Guhyasamaja, the earliest authority on Tantric Buddhism. According to one view, Padmasambhava, who introduced Vajrayana in Tibet, hailed from Andhra. Gaurishankar Kirti, a great exponent of Vijnanavada was born in Kalaka, one of the ancient Janapadas of Andhra. Siddha Nagarjuna’s association with Andhra is already noted.

Archaeological:

Archaeological evidence also points to the early development of Vajrayana concepts and practices in Andhra.

1. 2500 Years of Buddhism, P. 222.
3. 2500 Years of Buddhism, P. 223.
5. Ibid.
6. 2500 Years of Buddhism, PP. 223-224.
7. P. S. Sastry, op. cit.
8. B. Bhattacharya, Sadhanamala, II, xxviii.
9. Padmasambhava is generally held to be Kasmirian. But according to his biography, written by his Tibetan lady-disciple, Yeshe Tsogyal, he was born at Dhanyakala, in the country of Urgyan, which may be identical with Dhanyakataka and Nagadasa respectively. Padmasambhava’s wife, Mandarava was the sister of Santarakshita, a resident of the city of Saha, in the north western corner of the Andhra country.
10. Ibid.
1) At Salihundam in the Srikakulam district, a pottery piece has been recently discovered. It contains the legend Pausa Virc. According to the Buddhist literature, the Five Viras are the Dhyani Buddhors; Vairocana, Ratnasambheva, Amitabha, Amoghasiddhi and Jaskobhya, who were born out of the five Skandhas of Adi Buddha. On paleographical grounds, the pottery piece is assigned to the 4th century A.D. It is therefore clear that as early as the 4th century A.D., the Andhra Buddhists were conversant with the Buddhism of Vajrayana.

2) It is noted above that at Nagarjunakonda was discovered an image of the Buddha on the lotus. This image clearly indicates that already by the 5th century A.D., the Buddha was conceived as the 'essence of all being' and a cosmic function was assigned to him. He was the Adi Buddha, creating and sending out into the world several Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

The evidence of this image from Nagarjunakonda is complementary to that of the pottery piece from Salihundam.

It may be added that two images of the Buddha, seated on lotuses were discovered at Salihundam. Especially one of them is surrounded by chavri-bearers, Yaknas and a Bodhisattva. In this sculpture, the artist appears to have attempted to give fullness to the idea of Adi Buddha.

1. R. Subrahmanyan, Salihundam, P. 51-52.
2. S. Bhattacharya, Buddhist Iconography, P. 11.
3. R. Subrahmanyan, op. cit, P. 52.
5. R. Subrahmanyan, op. cit, pls. XXIX and XXX.
3) A few Vajrayana images have been salvaged from Amaravati and Salihundam. Especially, the former place yielded a large number and variety of images which include those of Ratnaprabha, Padmasambhava, Simhanada-Avalokiteswara, Manjughosa, Dhanada Tara, Mahasri Tara, Heruka,1 Manjusri and Cunda. Twelve images were found at Salihundam, the most important of them being those of Sitatara, Manjusri and Marici.

The images of Manjusri and Cunda from Amaravati are in the London Museum and are assigned to the 8th century A.D. About the Manjusri image, Douglas Barrett says that "its weight and majesty and impression of rather brutal power, relate it to the Calukyan sculptures of Badami, especially cave II — a formal date of about A.D. 700 may be accepted for this."3 He further remarks that the iconography of this image is of special interest as his headdress contains Stupa whereas the headdress of his north Indian counterparts shows Akshobhya.4

In this context it may be recalled that the Gandavyuha tells us that Bodhisattva Manjusri lived at Dhanyakataka for a long time and it is well known that Dhanyakataka was the centre of Gaityakavada. It may be assumed therefore that this image indicates the Gaityaka origin of Manjusri.

1. The images of Dhanada Tara, Mahasri Tara and Heruka are discovered recently and no detailed report about them is published. Pl. III, 1, 2, 3.
2. Bhattacharyya says that the images of Cunda are rare and none of is not aware of the Amaravati find. Buddhist Iconography, P. 221.
4. Ibid.
About the Simhananda image of Amaravati, P.R. Srinivasan remarks that "it is not only an exquisite specimen of sculpture of about the 9th century A.D., but is a rare representation correctly answering the Sadhana relating to Simhanada."¹ The recently discovered images of Bhunada Tara and Mahasri Tara also closely confirm to the Sadhanas. Srinivasan asks the question:

"Can this strict adherence to the Sadhana suggest anything?" and he suggests the answer: "We may not be far wrong if we say that this representation is one of the few earliest of its class, made just at the time when Vajrayana began to be popular not only in North India but also in the South."²

In the opinion of Bhattacharya, some of the paintings and sculptures of Ajanta, Ellora and of other cave temples in the South show signs of immature Tantra and may be assigned to a period before the 7th century A.D.³ In fact, the earliest representations of Tara are found in the famous caves of Ellora, Nasik and Kanheri.⁴ In cave No. 6 at Ellora, there is an image of Mahamayuri which cannot be dated later than the 5th century A.D.⁵ It may be recalled that Siddha Nagarjuna of the 6th century A.D., meditated upon Tara at Dhanyakataka and obtained the Mahamayuri Tantra.

1. The Story of Buddhism, etc., P. 79.
2. Ibid.
Thus, there is a mass of evidence — literary, epigraphical and archaeological — which points to the probability of the origin of Vajrayana Buddhism at Dhamayakataka, Ajanta and other places in the Dekkan. S.K. Aiyanger observes that along with the idea of Shakti "runs another stream which is perhaps but described as Tantrism, worship offered by means of mystic signs and formulae of various characters. The same influences seem responsible for the transformation of Hinayanist Buddhism into the Mahayana. Even in this latter transformation, south of the Vindhyas bore an important part, but it does not appear to be the Tamil country, or South India proper that really played the most important part. The honour of it perhaps must be ascribed to a region further north than the Tamil country - the country of the Andhras".

**Effects of Vajrayana.**

Moral Degradity: Buddhism is held to have reached its culmination in Vajrayana, in the sense that it reached the common man. Lama Anagaraka Govinda declares "just as the Buddha was a revolutionary against narrow dogmatism of a privileged priestly class, so the Siddhas were revolutionaries against the self-complacency of a sheltered monastic existence, that had lost all contact with the realities of life".

But it cannot be denied that through Tantrism the forces of darkness - ignorance and superstition -- conquered the philosophy of enlightenment. Lama Anagaraka Govinda himself admits that in India the Tantric

---

1. Some contributions of South India to Indian Culture, prooee, PP. V-VI.
4. Edward Conze, Buddha Thought in India, PP. 270-274.
traditions went "underground" and lingered mainly in the lower strata of society, where it became mixed up with various popular cults and finally deteriorated into superstition which discredited both the Buddhist and the Hindu Tantras. The normal depravity that resulted from the introduction of the Tantras is counted as the most important cause for the decline of Buddhism in general and for its disappearance from the land of its birth. But some scholars reject the above view and argue that Tantrism which is still flourishing in Hinduism cannot be accepted as a cause for the decline of Buddhism.

In fact, by the time that Vajrayana came to the fore, Buddhism was on the decline as stated in the above pages owing to a number of political and economic factors. On the other hand, the few places to which Vajrayana was confined in Andhra and the small size and number of Vajrayana images of Andhra represent only the earliest and probably the best, but not the last and the worst phase of Vajrayanism. They are simple, less ornamented and do not show signs of depravity. Nor do they demonstrate fanatical hostility to the Hindu deities. In some of the North Indian sculptures, the Buddhist gods are represented as riding or travelling upon the Hindu deities. Such boldness of the North Indian Vajrayanists was probably the result of the liberal patronage and protection of the Pala kings they enjoyed. The Andhra Buddhists had to labour under very discouraging conditions. They lost patronage. Rival faiths appeared. Especially, Jainism, with its simple and austere practices began to assert itself and attract the people. The disputations of the illustrious Jaina logician Akalanka belong exactly to

1. 2500 Years of Buddhism, P. 362.
2. E.T. Thomas, History of Buddhist Thought, P. 120.
3. B. Bhattacharya, Buddhist Iconography, P. 329.
this period. According to the Jains accounts, on the Diamond Coast, the Buddhists being defeated by Akalanka, sought refuge under their goddess, Tara.\(^1\) The age of intellectual activity and accomplishment seems to have come to an end in the History of Andhra Buddhism. Prof. Bhattacharya rightly observes that the Buddhists "had already lost faith in their own exertions and required the help of god for their salvation."\(^2\) It is not unreasonable to assume that the Buddhists, having lost all intellectual vitality resorted to Tantric worship with the fond hope of acquiring supernatural powers\(^3\) by which they probably thought that they could arrest the decline of their religion and rehabilitate it with the people again. Thus, it may be said that Tantrism did not lead to the decline of Buddhism in Andhra; on the other hand, the decline of Buddhism induced the desperate Buddhists to resort to Tantric practices.

However, the Andhra Vajrayanists were not completely free from depravity. According to Rahul Sankrityayana "The monasteries and temples were gorged with riches due to the pious offerings made by the multitudes. The life of the monk became more comfortable than that of the layman. The discipline weakened and many unfit persons entered the community. The easy life associated with the culture of a sensual art under the cover of cultural paintings, meditation, gods

---

1. J.P. Jain, Jaina Sources, etc., P. 173.
2. B. Bhattacharya, op. cit., introduction, P. xvii.
3. One of the Sadhanas composed by Sthavira Anupama Raikhita who flourished some time before A.D. 1165, is believed to confer the following powers on the Sadhaka: "Generally speaking, those who meditate on Bhagavati in this manner, all supernormal powers fall at their feet, and other smaller powers come to him as a matter of course. Whoever meditates on Bhagavati in the lonely caves of mountains expiates her with his own eyes. The Bhagavati herself gives him his breath, nay, more, even the Buddhahood which is most difficult to attain comes to him like a plum on the palm of his hand". Ibid. P. 23.
and goddesses must have inclined the minds towards sensuality.¹

As noted above, the Andhaka monk permitted sexual relations with the object of attaining mystical powers. With the advent of Vajrayana, such practices became widely prevalent. In Telugu, the popular term used to denote the site of an ancient Buddhist establishment is Lampa Bibba (Mound of the Prostitute).² This term is sufficient to show how Buddhism came to be despised by the people and moral depravity of the Buddhists lived in the memory of the people for a long time. As noted above, the Buddhists resorted to Tantric practices with the hope of checking the decline of Buddhism. But it produced results quite contrary to their expectations. Through it, Buddhism came to be despised and the Buddhists became detestable. The inevitable consequences was that Buddhism soon disappeared from Andhra, its erstwhile stronghold.

Bridge between Buddhism and Hinduism: The most important effect of Vajrayana, which Andhra shared with the rest of India is that Tantrism narrowed down the differences between Buddhism and Hinduism. Mircea Eliade points out that Tantrism served as a vehicle by which a large number of foreign and exotic elements made their way into Hinduism and in that respect Tantrism continued and intensified the process of

---

1. Rahul Sankrityayana, op. cit.
2. K.R. Subrahmanyam, Buddhist Remains in Andhra, P. 36 and Note 2.

About the art of Amaravati, Deviprasad Ghosh writes:
"The joyous note pervading the marbles of Amaravati is at once most significant and arresting. The fair damsels of Amaravati -- anticipate the charming luscious nymphs of Bhuraneswar and Konark in voluptuous beauty, alluring poses and inviting gracefulness. They are the sweetest productions of the artist's imagination. It is an epic in stone of youth and its overflowing exuberance. The secular flavour openly manifests itself through the veneer of religiosity. Indeed the hieratic character of the earlier schools is so astonishingly absent, that one may naturally question the truly Buddhistic mentality of the artist of Amaravati." "Development of Buddhist Art in South India", L.H.A.Q., III, PP. 264, 272 and 486-507.
Hinduisation that began in the post-Vedic period. A comparative study of the Buddhist and Hindu Tantric philosophies and pantheons of deities would convince what Eliade has said about foreign elements is true even in the case of Buddhism.

Philosophical Correspondence: S.R. Dasgupta points out that there is no essential difference — metaphysical and theological — between the Hindu and Buddhist Tantrisms. To judge by essentials both stress upon: (1) the fundamental postulate that truth resides in the human body and that the body is the best medium to realize the truth; (2) the theological principle of duality in nonduality; (3) the metaphysical principle that the duality manifests in the physical world in the form of male and female, and (4) the ultimate goal of the perfect state of union — union between the two aspects of reality — the realization of the nondual nature of the self and the non-self.

Correspondence between Pantheons: There is remarkable correspondence between the pantheons of gods that both worshipped, and other religious practices: (1) It is already pointed out that the Brahatsamhita of the 5th century A.D. and the Nagajumakonda and Salihundam sculptures conceived the Buddha as the Father of the Universe (jagava pitara). Among the Dhyani Buddhas, at least

2. S.R. Dasgupta, Introduction to Tantric Buddhism, Ch. I.
two — Vairocana and Amitabha are of solar character, and it is known that solar deities are abundant in Vedic religion. This tendency of connecting divinity with light was found appropriate in the case of the Buddha, the truly enlightened, the dispeller of ignorance. The Buddha is actually given the title "aditya Sandhum" and the cult of Avalokiteswara seems to be a Buddhist adaptation of the sunworship. (3) Yoga, which is believed to be non-aryan and saivite in its origin came to be gradually associated with divinity in general, in all probability because of Tantrism. First it came to be associated with sun-worship and the purpose of Yoga was understood to be to homologise the human body and life with the celestial bodies, the Sun and the Moon. The Yoga is explained as the union of the sun (ha) and the moon (tha). In later yogic conceptions, Siva and Sakti were identified with the moon and sun respectively. Among the Vaisnavite deities, Narayana is described in the Puranas as a Mahayogi and the Bhagavadgita calls Krsna as Yogisvara.

2. Har Dayal, Bodhisattva Doctrine, P. 39 & Note 39 on p. 431-32
4. Vide Supra, P. 55-56.
6. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
Pancaratra system of the Vaisnavites is connected with Yoga.\(^1\)
Thus Yoga linked the important religions of India -- sun-worship, Saiivism, Buddhism and Vaisnavism. (4) Many Vajrayana gods resemble the Saiivite deities. The name Avalokiteswara sounds like Protaguru,\(^2\) one of the names of Siva. There is striking agreement between the several forms of Avalokiteswara and those of Siva.\(^3\)

In the Sadhanas, Halahala Lekanatha is described as having three faces, three eyes, matted hair, crown of crescent and as being fond of tiger-skin,\(^4\) which description recalls to our mind the image of Mahadeva. Another Vajrayana god, Heruka is said to smear his body with ashes and wear garlands and crown of skulls.\(^5\) The names of many of the Vajrayana deities are Saiivite. (5) Nariti is probably the earliest of the goddesses to be worshipped by the Buddhists.\(^6\) A temple of Hariti has been excavated at Nagarjunakonda.\(^7\) By about the 5th century A. D., she lost her sectarian character and became the family deity of the Gudukyas, who were Brahmanists by faith.\(^8\)

The most important of the Buddhist goddesses is Tara, who is "the epiphany of the great goddess of aboriginal India, the Divine Mother"\(^9\). Tara is given all the names of Kali,\(^10\) the Sakti of Siva, and is made very interestingly the consort of Avalokiteswara.\(^11\)

---

5. Ibid. p. 473.
7. Ibid.
8. They called themselves as Haritiputranam in their inscriptions: vide Infra, p. 330.
11. Ibid.
But the Sivasaktisangama Tantra associates Tara with aksobhya and gives the two names as the synonyms of Sakti and Siva. The Tantra is sometimes called Aksobhya-Tara Samvada. Siva is called Aksobhya because he was not disturbed even by swallowing Halabala.

There are more than ten Taras in the Buddhist pantheon and some are represented in sculpture as Sarasvati. Regarding Tara it is remarked, "Here we have if not the borrowing by the Buddhists of a Saiva deity, at least the grafting of Saiva conception on a Bodhisattva." This process of Hinduisation of Buddhist deities is best revealed by one of the Marici images from Salihundam. According to the Sadhanas, Marici mounts a chariot, drawn by seven swine. She has three faces, the front being a human face and the other animal, especially the left being that of a pig. But in the Salihundam image of Marici all the three faces are human and the chariot is drawn by seven horses. This is a clear violation of the Sadhanas. But this violation may show the anxiety of the sculptor to bring Marici very close to her Hindu counterpart, the Sun.

The culmination of this process is marked by the admission of the Buddha into the pantheon of Hindu gods as an incarnation of Narayana. Narayana is a god of great antiquity who gradually came to be identified with Vasudeva-Krsna and Vrsna and by about the

3. Dhanada Tara is described in the Sadhanas; Candrasaraprabha Samyam -- caturbhujam aksasutra varada utpala pustakadarsho Sadhanamala II, P. 213. An image answering exactly to this description is discovered at Amravati, Pl. II, Fig. 1.
4. Ibid.
5. B. Subrahmanyan, Salihundam. Fls. XXII, XXII A, XXVII C.
6. B. Bhattacharya, Buddhist Iconography, PP. 207-209.
Gupta period a supreme syncretic god has been produced out of him. The Lalitavistara of the Mahayanists actually called the Buddha as Narayana, Mahanarayana and Mahayurusa. It seems that the concepts of Adi Buddha and Narayana-Vishnu developed simultaneously. One meaning of the word "Narayana" is "the refuge of the human being" and it is not impossible that it suggested the Buddhist phrase "Buddham Saranam Gacchami". Gradually, the Buddha entered into the Brahmanical literature as supreme god, identical with Narayana. The Bhagavata, Agni and Varaha Puranas include the Buddha in the list of the Avataras of Visnu. In the beginning, there appears to be some opposition to the inclusion of the Buddha in the Hindu pantheon. The Harivamsa does not include the Buddha in the Avataras whereas the Vrddha Haritasamhitâ forbids the worship of the Buddha. In any case, the Buddha must have been recognised as an avatar before the time of Gaudapada who lived about A.D. 728. On the other hand, the Buddhists began to identify the Buddha or the important emanations from him with the spirit of the universe, just in the same way as the Hindus were doing with their Supreme God.

For example, the Karandavyuha bestowed on Avalokiteswara all the

2. Ch. xv, 202; xxi, 221.
3. Ch. xv, 229.
4. Ch. xiii, 353; xxvi, 426.
6. Ibid., pp.
8. Ibid.
9. Gaudapada invoked the Buddha in his commentary on the Mandukyopanisad in the following sloka:
   "Jnanakasakalpena dharma yogagopasam
   Jayabhinnana Sambuddhah stot vande dvipadamvaram
   (Ananda Prasad’s Granthavali Series), P. 146.
   N. Aiyaswami Sastri, "Approach to Hinduism", 2500 years of
   Buddhism, p. 355.
attributes of Brahma and Isvara. According to it, Avalokiteswara "has a hundred thousand arms and several millions of eyes. The sun and moon have sprung from his eyes; Brahma and other gods from his eyes; Brahma and other gods from his shoulders, Narayana from his heart and Saraswati from his tooth; He has innumerable pores (vivaras), which are intangible like space. In each pore there are many Buddhas, gods, mountains of gold and silver, etc. Ficous worshippers can be reborn in these pores and attain felicity. Above all they should learn and recite the mysterious formula "Om mani padme hum" which is called the "lota of six letters or syllables." It is Avalokiteswara's special gift to the world and leads to Noksa". This is similar to the concept of Narayana as a god embodying the whole universe or the idea of Viratpurusa popularised by the Gita.

An interesting sculpture, representing the Buddha as an incarnation of Visnu is found at Alampur in the Mahaboobnagar district of Andhra. Alampur is taken to be identical with Halampur of the Gurijala inscription of Rudrarupinidatta of the 3rd century A.D. Later, Alampur developed into one of the important Sakta Pithas of India. It is found out that some of the temples of Alampur were originally Buddhist structures. They might have been converted into a Saivite shrines during the early Pallava period. At Alampur today, there is a temple of Surya which is

2. Bh. C, xi.
4. D. C. Sircar, Sakta Pithas, Passim
5. K. A. Nilakanta Sastrl, op. cit.
generally assigned to the 10th century A.D. In the ceiling of the
temple there is a square panel, depicting the first nine avatars
of Visnu. The panel is repeated in one of the Papanasaram group
of temples outside the town of Alampur. The most interesting fea-
ture of the panels is that the Buddha is given in it the central
position and his image is bigger than those of the other avatars
that surround him. The panels give the impression that the Buddha
was conceived, as Mahapurusa and that the avatars emanated from
him. Therefore, the sculpture is more Buddhist than Vaisnavite
and suggests that the Buddha-Narayana identification became almost
established by the time it was produced.

Another interesting point is that the Buddha, who from the
beginning had Saivite affinities could ultimately become an incar-
nation of Visnu by the 5th century A.D. A suggestion may be hazar-
ded to explain such a development. The Guptas, in whose time the
Narayana-Vasudeva—Visnu-Krsna syncretism was achieved, were
vaisnavites and because of their influence Narayana—Visnu became
the Supreme God. At the same time in the South, the Pallavas, the
Vishnuvardhanas and the Early Calikyas were also Vaisnavites. It was
during this age, the theory of incarnations developed and the Buddha
was converted into an avatar of Visnu.

1. The significance of this panel can best be appreciate when it
is compared with the Dasavatara sculpture recently discovered at
Yelosvaran. The sculpture is assigned to the 10th century. In
it Visnu is the central figure and Buddha is shown as one of the
ten avatars in a very insignificant way.
A. Wahed Khan, A Monograph on Yelosvaran Excavations, pl. XIX.
Thus, Vajrayana and its predecessor, Mahayana helped Hinduism to absorb Buddhism. E. J. Thomas notes that by the 8th century A.D. the Buddhists worshipped deities differing little from the Hindu gods and that there was no essential principle to distinguish Hinduism from Buddhism^1 and that was the real cause of the final collapse of Buddhism.

**Final Collapse of Buddhism.**

Absorption by Hinduism alone cannot explain the disappearance of Buddhism from Andhra. It was not such a simple development. Nor was it so peaceful. Occasional acts of violence on the part of the champions of rival religions that pulldown the Buddhist institutions and mischievous propaganda that vilified the Buddha and his teachings assisted the process that completely wiped out Buddhism from its stronghold.

The part of Simhavarman and Trilocana Pallava in destroying Sriparvata and Dhanyakataka respectively has been mentioned above. Following that, the radical Saivite sect, the Kalamukhas, appeared in Andhra and established their Simhaparistas at places like Bawada and Amaravati^2. The statement of Yuan Chwang that there were hundreds of Dova temples in Dhanyakataka is attested by the Tadikonda inscription of Amararaj II of the 9th century A.D.^3

There is a strong view that the Saivite temples of Pampa aramas

---

2. The Tadikonda Inscription of Amara, B. L., XLIII, F. 161 ff.
4. The inscription reads: tomas Amaratwara fadatana parana devyatana nivasina Kalamukharam etc., op. cit.
were built on the ruins of Buddhist Stupas. Curiously all these five are two-storeyed temples and the ground storey is permanently closed down. Especially, the temple of Amarasvāra at Amaśavati contains slabs and pillars which originally belonged to a Buddhist establishment. The linga is unusually tall and has a large hole on its top. It suggests that it should have been the shaft of the umbrella that surmounted a Mahācaitya. The temple of Daksārama contains almost a similar linga. The Kapotesvāra temple of Gejerla is another example of the Saivite occupation of a Buddhist institution. It is remarked "from a closer examination of the Gejerla temple and its environs including some early inscriptions, it was found that the present Kapotesvāra temple could have been originally one of the apsidal caityas usually found associated with either monastery or a large Stupa in those parts of the Kṛṣṇa valley."

B. Hai records the tradition about a conflict between the Buddhists of both the Tankaravas and the Vaiśnavitas of the nearby Vaiśnavitas. The latter place yielded a few coins of the Eastern Calkyadas of the 7th century A.D.

Side by side, the champions of Brahmanism and Jainism started their polemical attacks on Buddhism. The great Mīmāṃsaka, Kumariṇa is associated with the persecution of the Buddhists. He was

2. N. Ramasen, Temples and Legends of Andhrapradesh, p. 57-94.
5. R. C. Mitra, Decline of Buddhism in India, p. 128.
followed by Sankara who too was responsible for the suppression of Buddhists. The exploits of the great disputant Akalanka also belong to this period. The Jain propaganda contains much vilification of the Buddha. The Hindus appear to have emulated the Jains in inventing and popularising stories about the mischief of the Buddha in distracting the attention of the Raksasas from Vedic sacrifices as the ninth incarnation of Visnu.

The Buddhists appear to have been unable to counteract the propaganda of their rivals. No doubt, there were great logicians and commentators among the Buddhists even in this period. But more of them had the qualities of leadership to command public sympathy and respect and to hold the people to the bosom of Buddhism. Their literary and philosophical activities were limited to their own monastic cells. The Amaravati inscription of about the 8th century A.D. tells us that Simhavarman heard the discourse of the Acarya in secrecy. As a result of such developments, the process of decline could not be arrested and slowly Buddhism died out.

Shorn of all its glory and grandeur, the worship of the Buddha continued in Andhra till about the close of the 12th century A.D. An inscription from Abbur, dated in the year A.D. 1182 records the gifts made by Kota Ketaraja of Dharaniyaka and his courtesans.

---

1. Sankaragudvijaya describes those exploits.
2. One Jain writer says: Buddhastu raudro niranagrasa.
3. K. K. Handiqui, Varastiloka and Indian Culture, p. 374, F.I.
6. S. I., VI, p. 146.
to the Buddha. But it may be added that Ketaraja and his courtesans worshipped the Buddha under the impression that he was an avatar of Visnu, as in the case of Gangadhara of the Karimnagar inscription. Another inscription of about the same time records the installation of a lamp to Buddhadeva at Amaravati. The Sowfallu inscription of the Kakatiya period mentions that a certain Mallaraddi built temples for the Buddha and other gods.

The last blow at the remnants of Buddhism in Andhra was delivered by the Virasaiva movement under the leadership of Kallikerjuna Panditaradhyya. His biography in Telugu by palkuriki Somanatha records the Pandita's debate with the Buddhist in the court of Candol and how his disciples murdered the Buddhist acaryas and destroyed his place. The whirlwind campaign of the Pandita swept away all the traces of Buddhism from Andhra.

1. S. I., I. IV. No. 749.
2. Telangana Inscriptions, II, pp. 159-159