

## CHAPTER-6

# CONCLUSION

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Among all the religious monuments of the world, the stupa has the largest uninterrupted historical development spanning more than 3 millenniums. It had its beginning as a tumulus, in due course was enlarged, beautified and developed as one of the most elaborate edifice of Buddhism. The stupa as a religious object was adopted and sanctified by the Buddha himself as his Truth Body (*Dharma Kaya*). The Lord also proclaimed the Arhats, Bodhisattvas, and Tathagatas as worthy of a stupa and whoever may pay respects and understands the significance of erecting stupas with experience furtherance in their minds (Longhurst 1992: 22). As a result of this assertion the stupa changed from a monument for the dead into a monument for the living. Over the course of time, more and more religious and spiritual values were added to it and were eventually considered as the miniature of the entire cosmos. Stupa architecture spread wherever Buddhism flourished, but it acquired various architectural shapes and size spread over different space and time. As a result, stupas along with its various manifestations are found spread throughout the length and breadth of the country and beyond. The Stupas at Taxila, Sanchi, Sarnath, Nagarjunakonda, Keshariya, Paharpur in Bangladesh and those in the Southeast Asian countries are appropriate examples of this phenomenon.

Buddhism is believed to have been known to the people of Orissa from the life time of Buddha itself i.e. sixth century BCE and continued with or without royal patronage up to its decline in the sixteenth century CE and subsequently survived under disguise or getting assimilated in to the fold of Brahmanical Hinduism (Vaishnavism) in an incipient form. During this long expanse of its history of more than 2500 years, it is but natural that the cultural remains of this period is bound to be large, spread throughout the length and breadth of the state. In this connection D. Mitra (Mitra 1980:224) aptly remarks:

*“The entire land of Orissa is dotted with the images of Buddha and divinities of the Buddhist pantheons. The number of stray images all over the state is indeed overwhelming”.*

At the present state of knowledge three hundred and twenty-four sites have been reported (Chauley 2005). Out of the 324 sites only 21 sites have been excavated and the rest 303 are explored sites. Further, of the 324 sites only 108 sites have remains of Buddhist establishments in the form of stupas, monastic complexes, *Chaityas* and temples. The remains scattered at the sites are in the form of brick-bats, architectural fragments, potsherds, sculptures, votive stupas etc. The other 199 sites only have sculptural remains, sometimes along with votive stupas. But mostly, these sites, at present have one or two images or are housed/placed in some modern temple, under a tree, in someone’s personal collection or had some remains but are missing now. At 19 sites rock-cut cave have been identified and from 52 sites votive stupas have been reported. It is at the same time surprising to note that the largest concentration of the Buddhist sites are in the vicinity of the Brahmanical establishments and are largely confined in the districts of Balasore, Bhadrak, Cuttack, Kendrapara, Jajpur, Jagatsinghpur and Puri (Fig-1). The reason for this could be firstly, these are well populated areas and secondly, as the surface is mostly even, even the hinterlands are well connected. Whereas, the rest of the state, especially the northern and north-western districts are mountainous regions and are sparsely populated, densely forested and are crisscrossed with large number of rivers and are inaccessible. So, very little research work has been undertaken in these areas.

The largest concentrations of sites are reported from Cuttack and Jajpur district, one hundred and ninety eight sites are located here. Among them four are the most important excavated sites i.e.; Lalitagiri, Langudi, Udayagiri and Ratnagiri. All these sites are located in a radius of 20 km, and they show wide diversity.

In Orissa the earliest Buddhist site to be excavated was ‘Ratnagiri’, which was excavated from 1958-60, thereafter 20 sites have been excavated by the State Archaeology Department and the Archaeological Survey of India. Of the 21 sites excavated 4 are 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).

The present study has taken a review of the available data pertaining to stupa architecture in Orissa, on the basis of the records available from the major excavated sites.

The research is more focused in understanding the development of stupa architecture, their architectural features, sculptures, ornamentation and attributes in order to understand and highlight their chronological development, spectral affiliation made of construction, patronage and the iconographic representation seen on the stupas of Lalitagiri, Langudi, Udayagiri and Ratnagiri.

These attributes have been taken into consideration to not only see the changing pattern in the construction of major stupas, stupas of intermediately character but also smaller stupas including votive stupas. In the major excavated sites where large volume of data is available a systematic documentation has shown that sites emerged as Buddhist centres as early as second-third century BCE and continued till the thirteenth-fourteenth century CE. By this period Buddhism which was one of the most important religion in the early historical India, had already ceased to exist in other parts of the country.

It is difficult to infer at what particular point in history Stupa building started in Orissa. Archaeologically, the earliest Stupa reported is datable to the Asokan period. Paleographically the Stupa unearthed at Lalitagiri is datable to the third-second Century BCE. This is evident from the inscription, read as “*VIKRANTA GHOSHA*” in Mauryan *Brahmi* on a brick on the north-western side of the Stupa. This was later stone veneered and renovated. This is the only site in Orissa till date which yielded relics from a Stupa.

The Buddhist vestiges at Langudi have been dated from the second-first century BCE to the ninth-tenth Century CE by the excavator. The *vedhi* of the main Stupa is rectangular in shape and the *medhi* is square. The outer wall of the *vedhi* was constructed of laterite blocks kept one above the other. The staircase was originally flanked by railing pillars connected by cross bars, which is evident from the remains of square postholes. The date of the stupa according to the excavator i.e second century BCE does not hold true in the light of evidences from the site.

Firstly, the size of the bricks found in the stupa are 37 x 25 x 9, 36 x 26 x 6, 34 x 23 x 7 and 34 x 23 x 8 cm, which is close to the brick size found in the Kushan-Late Kushan period (First to third century CE) i.e. 35 x 23.5 x 5 cm (Dhavalikar 1999:163).

Secondly, the architecture also negates the date. It was in the first century CE that the Greco-Buddhist school of Gandhara for the first time introduced a square platform at the base of the earlier circular plinth of stupas to strengthen it (Marshall 1951:233). The new structures that emerged had elevated domes and high drums exhibiting receding terraces. The *Theravadins* who migrated to the Krishna basin from the Gandhara region in the first century CE brought along with them the new concept of stupa architecture, which according to

Murty (2006-07: 30-31) was intended to safeguard the circular plinth from erosion. At Nagarjunakonda this was introduced in the third century CE by the Ikshvakus (Sarkar & Mishra 1980: 35-37). Thus, it was about this time or could be still later that this was introduced in Orissa.

So, the date of second century BCE for the stupa is not acceptable and so on the basis of the above evidences it can be dated not before third century CE if not later. It is further observed that not only the platform is rectangular but even the *medhi* is square, which reminds of the stupas at Keshariya (seventh-eighth century CE Bihar) and Paharpur (eight-ninth century, Bangladesh), where the plans are square and are of later date. Not far from here, at Udayagiri also the plan of the stupa is square and is placed over a square platform and is dated to the seventh-eighth century CE. Then the stupa at Ratnagiri, which is square with *triratha* projections on plan (a much later feature) and an spoked central plan with a central hub above the *medhi* (also a later feature) is datable to around ninth century CE by the excavator (Mitra 1980: 155). So, the date of the Langudi stupa is at present questionable.

At Udayagiri the plan of the Stupa is square platform with a low boundary-wall around it, from one side which is connected to the enclosure wall of the monastery datable to the seventh-eighth Century CE. The Stupa has a low *vedhi* and is *tri-ratha* in plan. Around the *medhi*, on all the four cardinal directions are four inset niches with seated image of *Dhyani* Buddhas flanked by a pair of Bodhisattvas.

And the Stupa at Ratnagiri has a *tri-ratha* base in plan, with each *ratha* further divided into two, thus making five recesses and six projections on each side is datable to the ninth Century CE by the excavator. The date for Ratnagiri could be accepted, for architecturally the Stupa is square with *triratha* projections (a much later feature), spoked central plan with a central hub above the *medhi* (also a later feature) and on the basis of the circumstantial finds from near the Stupa complex, suggests this date. Among all the four sites large number of stupa are reported from Ratnagiri (Fig. 13).

According to the present available date these sites show gradual development from Hinayana to Mahayana to Vajrayana sect.

To sum up, the characteristics of the Orissan Stupas can be discussed under the following heads:-

### **Location**

The Main Stupas were constructed on the highest point of the mound or in the open. The Stupa at Lalitagiri is on the highest point of the hill and it has no other structures near it

except for a water cistern. Stupa at Langudi is in an open area, away from other structures. The one at Udayagiri is at the beginning of Udayagiri-I, towards its east are no structures but on the west it is connected to the monastery by a boundary wall and in between are a number of structures. Ratnagiri Stupa is also located on the highest point of the hillock. A large number of structural and monolithic Stupas are lying around the main Stupa.

### Plan

Architecturally, none of the Stupas unearthed in Orissa till date, are of the dimension, as have been reported from other parts of the country i.e. Sanchi, Sarnath, Nalanda, Amravati, Nagarjunakonda, etc. The most unique feature about all the four Stupas is that they are completely different in their plan and execution from each other. The Stupa at Lalitagiri is circular on plan from the base to the top, including the *pradakshinapatha*; the one at Langudi is rectangular at the base and square at the *medhi*, the *anda* is missing; the Udayagiri Stupa has a square platform, a *tri-ratha vedhi*, a square *medhi* and probably had a hemispherical *anda*. The portion of the Stupa above the *vedhi* was found in a very dilapidated condition; whereas the Ratnagiri Stupa is *tri-ratha* on plan (*medhi*), but in the later phase (around thirteenth century CE) it was made circular, both at the *medhi* and the *anda* and was provided with a quadrilateral boundary wall.

### Harmika

Except for Stupa at Lalitagiri, evidence of *harmika* has not been reported from any other sites. The one from Lalitagiri was also very fragile. Except for the base of the stone *harmika* with a central perforation and fragments from around the Stupa, nothing else was reported. During conservation it was not restored atop the Stupa.

### Chatra

*Chatra* has not been reported from any other site<sup>1</sup>, except from Langudi's main Stupa, which is a fragment beautifully carved on the inner side and is now displayed in the office of the Orissa State Archaeology. Many *chatras* and *yastis* have been reported from Ratnagiri,

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<sup>1</sup> The reason for absence of all the *chatravali* and *harmika* could be best summoned in the words of Longhurst (Longhurst 1992: 15) where he states “*the installation of this architectural member was, and still is, a very important and often costly religious ceremony, because before the chatravali was fixed in position on the summit of a stupa, or a temple, valuable offerings in the form of gold coins or jewels were placed beneath it and built into its foundations. As this custom still prevails and is well known in India, whenever a stupa or a temple fell into disuse, thieves immediately removed these crowning ornaments and stole the offerings placed beneath them. This is one of the chief reasons why all the structural harmika and chatravali have disappeared in India*”.

Lalitagiri and Udayagiri from the minor Stupas. Ratnagiri has the distinction of exhibiting the largest variety of *chatras* on monolithic and structural Stupas.

### **Pradakshinapatha**

The Stupa at Lalitagiri has a *pradakshinapatha* around the *medhi*, there is a provision of a ledge around the *anda*, but as no steps were found, it is presumed that it was meant for keeping offerings. The Stupa at Langudi had provision for *pradakshina* around the square *medhi* on the rectangular platform. At Udayagiri also *pradakshinapatha* was provided around the square *medhi*. At Ratnagiri in the earlier Stupa, no evidence of *pradakshinapatha* is available but in the later phase when the Stupa was made circular, *pradakshinapatha* was provided at the base drum.

### **Material used**

The materials used for making the Stupas also differ to some extent. i.e. the Stupa at Lalitagiri in its earlier phase had bricks and in the later period was veneered with khondalite stone pieces and the interior was filled in with soil; at Ratnagiri and Udayagiri they are made of fine brick and at Langudi the Stupas platform is veneered with laterite blocks, filled in with earth and morrum, the Stupa is brick veneered and the core, earth filled and stone slabs have been used for veneering the steps to make the surface smooth. Mud mortar is used as mortar between the bricks at all the sites. Lime paste was used for plastering the surface, evidences of which has been reported from Ratnagiri and Udayagiri.

### **Minor Stupas**

Besides the main Stupas, all the sites have unearthed several minor structural and monolithic Stupas with varying dimensions and base forms. The votive stupas founds in Orissa may be grouped in to three types, they are,

**Rock-cut stupas:** This variety has only been reported from Langudi, carved on the rock surface and they are seventy altogether and are of different size and shapes.

**Monolithic stupas:** This variety has been reported from fifty-two sites in Orissa. They are also of various shapes and sizes; with or without decorations; with or without images of Buddhist divinities carved on them. Some of the votive stupas bear inscriptions also on them. The stupas reported from Lalitagiri, Langudi, Udayagiri and Ratnagiri are made of khondalite stone measuring from 26 cm to 112 cm (Plates- CIX andCXXXIX).

**Structural stupas:** They are made of stone and bricks. The stone stupas can be further divided into two types. The first variety is made of two, three or four stone pieces i.e. the *vedhi*, *medhi*, *anda* and *harmika* carved separately or one or two part carved together and placed one above the other. In the second variety, multiple dressed stones are put together to form a single stupa and these are generally bigger in size than the monolithic and the first variety of structural votive stupas.

In these Stupas the elevation is composed of *vedhi*, *medhi*, *anda*, *harmika* and *chatravali*. The *vedhi* are both circular, square and *tri-ratha* and in few instances it is octagonal and star shaped also. The stupas of Hinayana phase are either devoid of *vedhi* portion or it is in circular shape (Plate-XLIX and XLVI). The *medhi* portion is simple, devoid of any moulding (Plate- L and LI). *Anda* portion is more rounded and bulbous (Plate-XLVIII and XLIX).

The Stupas belonging to Mahayana phase have either a circular or square *vedhi* with or without moulding (Plate- LXII, LXVI and LXVII). The *medhi* portion is carved with bands and in some instances with niches on it (Plate-LXV and LXIX). The *anda* is cylindrical in shape with rounded top corners. The *harmika* is square in shape with few bands and the *chatra* is in the form of a semicircular disc (Plate-LXXIV).

Stupas of Vajrayana phase are abundantly found at Ratnagiri which shows influence of Orissan temple architecture on the stupas and few stupas at Udayagiri. From Lalitagiri sculptures of Hariti, Jambhal, Tara etc are reported but not a single stupa is found at the site bearing image of Vajrayana sect. Influence of Vajrayanism is not seen at Langudi. The stupas carved during this phase are more intricately carved. The *vedhi* is carved into 2 mouldings (*khura* and inverted *khura* Plate-CCXIV and CCXVI) /3 mouldings (*khura*, *kumbha* and inverted *khura* Plate- CCXXIII) and 4 mouldings ( *khura*, *kumbha*, *pata* and inverted *khura* Plates-CCXXIV). The *medhi* portion is highly decorated; *vajra* is carved along with other scroll, floral and geometrical patterns (Plates- CCXLIII, CCXLIV, CCXLV and CCXLVI). The *harmika* is carved with floral motifs and in some instances *tri-ratha* in shape (Plate-CCLIX, CCLX and CCLXIII). *Chatravali* are also of various shapes and sizes (Plate- CCLXVIII, CCLXXI, CCLXXIII and CCLXXVI)

These Stupas are of stone, brick and of stone and brick masonry. They are even more elaborate in their surface treatment than the main Stupas. They are repositories of iconographic representations of Buddhist deities, mainly Vajrayana, which are housed in decorated niches on the body of the Stupa. From within the structural Stupas a variety of objects and antiquities have been reported. I.e. images of Buddhist pantheons made on stone,

terracotta and metal; charred bones; beads; stone slabs, terracotta plaques and tablets inscribed with Buddhist creed, *dharanis* and *pratyasamut-pada-sutra*.

At Lalitagiri, the main concentration of the monolithic Stupas was found in the excavations from around the apsidal *chaityagriha*, which were found arranged alternatively with sculptures of Buddha in the excavations, besides some are displayed on front of the Sculpture-shed. Besides, monolithic Stupas many structural Stupas also exist at Lalitagiri and they are located to the south and west of the apsidal *chaityagriha*. Here very few Stupas have iconic representations and except for Buddha none other Buddhist deity has been depicted on the Stupas. In all there are 70 structural and 89 votive stupas reported from the site.

At Langudi Stupas are mainly carved on the rock surface and 64 of these have been reported from the eastern rock-cut group area. Besides, 6 free standing monolithic Stupas are also reported. Two of the monolithic Stupa depicts dhyani Buddha; the Stupas are more like in the shape of a terra-cotta plaque. These are the only two Stupas reported from the site having iconic representation. In the western group only one monolithic Stupa exists surrounded by Mahayana deities. No minor structural Stupas have been reported from here.

At Udayagiri the stupas are reported from within the enclosed area between the main Stupa and Monastery-I; in front of Monastery-II (only monolithic) and the largest concentration is on the east of Monastery-II within an enclosure, around the apsidal structure. These are mostly structural. Here 192 minor Stupas which include 44 monolithic and 148 structural (both masonry and brick) Stupas have been reported. Four terra-cotta plaques have been reported out of it only one was found intact. Here more monolithic Stupas are *Panchayatana* (5 Stupas in one stupa) and *Trayodashayatana* (13 Stupas in one stupa) type. Like Lalitagiri and Langudi very few Stupas have iconic representations but here along with Buddha and Avalokitesvara, deities of Vajrayana sect has also been depicted i.e. Bhrukuti and Chunda.

In the tenth-eleventh century CE when the *Tantrayana* form of Buddhism flourished as an offshoot of Mahayana, Orissa become one of the main regions where Tantrayan form of Buddhism evolved (Panigrahi 1981: 133) and Ratnagiri was one of the foremost centres of it. At Ratnagiri the concentration of these minor Stupas are around the main Stupa and in the area around the Mahakala temple. The largest number of monolithic Stupas is reported from this site. There are more than 750 minor Stupas reported from the site and more than 200 stupas bear images of different Buddhist pantheons of Mahayana and Tantrayana phase (Fig.14). Here, the monolithic and the

structural Stupas are found mixed and two minor Stupas reported have *ayaka* pillars on *ayaka* projections and two other are of the *sarvatho-bhadra* (accessible from all the four sides) type. These finds are unique for this region, for, the former is mostly found in the Andhra region and the latter type of Stupa are rare and are found reported in the Gandhara region and later from the Ladak-Tibet region where they are referred to as 'Descent from the Heaven type'. This is the only site yielding large number of Stupas bearing images belonging to Vajrayana sect as in this period a large number of Vajrayana Buddhist pantheons evolved i.e. Manjuvara, Marachi, Tara, Arya-Sarasvati, Cunda, Hariti, Heruka, Jambhala, Maitreya, Vajradharma, Vajrapani, Vajrasattava, Vasudhara, etc.(Chauley 1997). (Fig. 15) Many new varieties of Votive stupas are found. They are of different shapes and sizes, with different types of mouldings and bands, variety of *harmikas*, the niches housing the images of Buddhist pantheons are of various shapes and sizes but are mostly rectangular or square in shape. The borders of the niches are also of different types. They are decorated with floral designs, some have *chaitya* window motives above them, some are square, and others have a semicircular top. Like in the earlier periods the different parts of the stupa are separated with the help of bands and recesses. In this period, some of the bands are elaborated with decorations of beads, floral motives, *vajras*, etc. where as in some the band between the *medhi* and *vedhi* is a double petal lotus motive and then after a gap, there is a circular band with floral or secular motives.

To summarise from the discussion above, it can be said that Stupa architecture underwent development from second century BCE to thirteenth-fourteenth century CE. Such development can be seen in the structural as well as monolithic stupas discussed in Chapter 4 and above. The main factor influencing this development is the changes occurring in the Buddhist thought and sectarian developments therein. Such ideological developments and variations also saw their way in the embellishments on Stupas and motifs. These can be well understood with the help of instances from Lalitgiri (Plate Nos. XLIX, LXIV), Udaygiri (Plate Nos. XXVII, XXVIII). Ratnagiri helps us to understand the influence of Vajrayana to a larger extent. This has been discussed in detail in Chapter 4 and 5 and hence repetition is avoided. Thus there is no harm to state that the sectarian development facilitated the depictions over the long span of Buddhist stupa art in Orissa.

The minor Stupas reported from Lalitgiri, Udaygiri and Ratnagiri highlights the influence of *Kalingan* temple architecture in the Stupa architecture. The *vedhi* portions bears mouldings as seen in the pabhaga and are with *tri-ratha* and *pancha-ratha* projections on

plan as in the contemporary Brahmanical Orissan temple (Plate XXXVIII & Plate CXI); the niches are highly decorated with *kirti-mukhas* and flying *vidhyadhars*. The stupa with a star-shaped base (Plate- XXXIII) even have *adhistana*. The female deities are bedecked with highly ornamental jewellery.

Some of the stupa's overall depiction along with the *vedhi*, *medhi* and *chatravali* (Plate CCLXVIII) strongly reminds us of the concept of miniature temples. As it has been seen this period was quite active in the construction of Brahmanical temple. In eastern Orissa the artisans who were employed were probably working on both the places which might have influenced such kind of development.

But it also shows that the strict principle of stupa construction which was probably governed by the *sangha/ sastras* or monastery itself was not strict or mindful for such an acceptance. So, probably the strong differentiation in structural concept had already diluted, acceptance of the motif like *bho* motifs, *kirtimukhas*, scrolls, floral designs, *marakara* etc, have no problem in appearing in the Buddhist stupas.

The architecture was coming very close to the temple form except for the basic elements of a stupa. This was showing a strong amalgamation of Buddhist and Brahmanical traditions probably by the ninth century CE, by this time Buddha had been taken as an incarnation of Vishnu as seen on the *mukha-mandapa* of Puri temple and which is also reflected in the literary source like Geeta Govinda by Jayadeva.

Lastly, it can be concluded with the following words -

*“The Stupa developed gradually with the development of Buddhism and recede to the background with its decadence”.*

