

# PREFACE

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Buddhism, a revolutionary-reformative religion and a dynamic socio-cultural system, dominated the life of people in India for more than 2500 years and is still doing. Buddhism from the beginning had a revolutionary and inspiring impact on the Indian art movement. Among the main architectural forms found in Buddhism ‘Stupa’ acquired a place of its own in the history of Indian architecture.

In this thesis also the Stupa architecture in Orissa has been taken up and at the same time an attempt has been made to trace the historicity of Buddhism in Orissa on the basis of the architectural development of the Stupa architecture. According to the literary references the history of Buddhism here can be traced back from the time of the Lord himself as there are references of his visiting Orissa during his life time. But archaeologically it can be dated from the third-second century BCE onwards till thirteenth-fourteenth century CE only.

While working on the subject “A Study of Stupas and Votive Stupas in Orissa” the following considerations have been kept in mind.

The main Stupas from all the excavated sites have been discussed but when the minor Stupas and votive-Stupas were taken up, each and every structural and votive stupa reported from Lalitgiri, Langudi and Udaygiri has been discussed in detail as the excavation report of these sites are not published, but as the material is huge in the case of Ratnagiri, only the representative samples having some distinctive and distinguishing architectural feature or features are taken up for study.

Some regional influences have been observed that have contributed in some way or the other in the variations in the Stupa architecture in Orissa.

The Stupa architecture and more particularly, the embellishments and sculptures on the various parts of the structure throw enough light on the socio-economic-cultural-religious practices and traditions prevalent in the then society.

While dealing on the embellishments especially the sculptures, no detailed discussion has been attempted for sculptures does not form the main area of the thesis and it itself forms a altogether another topic for study.

As the Stupa architecture in Orissa is spread over a time period of more than 14-15 centuries, covering the reign of various rulers and dynasties, only relevant references have been made to them in the main chapters, though a complete chapter has been dedicated for giving a brief to the historical background of these Stupas and votive-Stupas in Orissa.

During the course of excavations at none of the sites conservation was carried out simultaneously, they have been carried out by conservationists without mostly consulting the excavators at much later periods; because of which many alterations have taken place in the location of the structures and in their appearance and surprisingly no account of these have been maintained. About which one of the excavators D.Mitra (Mitra, 1981, vi) mentions in her “Ranagiri” report in the following words-

*“Some of these works are not upto my expectation; and this is of course natural when the conservator had not the occasion to work at the site during the excavations”*

So authenticity and provenance of many a minor Stupas and votive-Stupas is questionable.

In Orissa no Buddhist texts on architecture are available. As the work deals with Stupa architecture, the philosophical and the religious aspects applicable for Stupa discussed in various texts available in the country have been used and they have also only been discussed either as a source material or as supporting evidences to the Stupa architecture.

As this thesis deals mainly with the Stupa architecture, no effort has been made to question the history and chronology of the various Stupas except that at Langudi. Dates have been used only at places where they throw some light on the architecture or to explain

the stages in development in a historical context. The dates used are mainly those that have been suggested by their excavators.

The source material used in the research material is mainly the Books published on Buddhism, Buddhist architecture in general and Stupa architecture in particular; reports and publications of the Archaeological Survey of India; articles published by the various scholars in various journals both regional, national and international; and personal interactions with the excavators or people who were directly related with the excavation works in various Buddhist sites in Orissa.

I am conscious of the shortcomings in the work but still hope that this thesis will shed some more light on the history of Stupa architecture in Orissa in general and in particular if it has in some way helped in evolution of a separate regional style or has helped in influencing the art of the neighbouring regions or elsewhere or vice versa.

The nomenclature of my topic was Orissa when I registered for my PhD. now it has been changed to Odisha. Henceforth I have spelled the name of the state as Orissa instead of Odisha in my entire thesis.