CHAPTER V
JAINISM AND BUDDHISM

This chapter is devoted to the study of the elements of Jainism and Buddhism noticed so far in early Bengal epigraphs. It is known that both the religions had a great influence over the ancient people of India under the leadership of the great thinkers like Mahāvīra and Buddha. Both the leaders were scions of Kṣatriya clans of non-Brāhmaṇical origin. Both of them renounced worldly comforts in search of nirvāṇa. Only two early Bengal inscriptions referring to Jainism are till now noticed. But many of the inscriptions, discussed below, help realising the advent, rise and decline of Buddhism in Bengal. Scholars find it difficult to determine the exact period when Buddhism was established in the Bengal region. D. C. Sircar doubts¹ about whether Buddha at all visited Sumha or Rāḍha country as described in the Samyuttanikāya (about 3rd-2nd century B. C.). The Jain canonical work Āyāraṅgasutta² of the same age describes the people of the Rāḍha as rude folk, who attacked peaceful monks. Even Mahāvīra was attacked by them.³

2. I, 8, 3; as cited in Hist. Beng., edited by R. C. Majumdar, Ch. I, p. 9.
3. Ibid., p. 36.
JAINISM

The earliest epigraph containing evidence for the existence of Jainism in Bengal is the Pahadpur copper-plate inscription\(^1\) of the Gupta year 159, belonging to the reign of Budhagupta (c. 475-495 A. D.). The grant of the year 479 A. D. records that a Brāhmaṇa named Nāthaśarman and his wife Rāmi, deposited three dināras (gold coins) to the city council (Adhiṣṭhānādhiṭṭhikarana) to secure 1 kulyavāpa and 4 dronavāpas of land, for the maintenance of worship of the divine Arhats at the vihāra of Vaṭagohāli with sandal, incense, flowers, lamps etc., and also for constructing a resting-place at the vihāra, which was presided over by the disciples and the disciples of the disciples of the Nirgrantha preceptor Guhanandin, belonging to the Pañca-stūpa-nikāya (section) of Kāśi (Vārānasī). Jainism is believed to grow in north-eastern India as a rejection towards the caste-oriented and ritualistic Brāhmaṇical religion.\(^2\) The Jain doctrines were preached by twenty four Tīrthaṅkaras, of whom the first twenty-two were mythical figures and the last two, Pārśva and Mahāvīra are regarded as historical.\(^3\) The two sects of Jains are known as 1) Śvetāmbara (white-clad), followers of Pārśvanātha and 2) Digambara (sky-clad or naked), followers of Mahāvīra.

Another interesting tradition of Jain mythology lies in the emblems like Bull, Elephant, Horse, Moon, Hawk, Tortoise, Snake, Lion, etc. associated with the twenty-four Tīrthaṅkaras, which, as scholars just observe, definitely indicate the tribal tradition attached to the religion.\(^4\)

It is known from the Pahadpur inscription that there was a Jain vihāra at Vaṭagohāli (modern Pahadpur) and the local people were so much influenced by the Jain religion that the Brāhmaṇa couple wanted to donate for the religious establishment of a different faith. Besides that, it was a busy place where people

---


269
used to visit from outside, otherwise no resting place was required. It is also understood that this part of Bengal was an important seat of the Nirgrantha or Digambara sect of Jainism, who had a close connection with the Pañcaśūpa sect of Kāśi.

Continuity of the prevalence of Jainism in the eastern part of India for about two centuries more is evident from the account of the Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsang, (spelt differently by different scholars) who visited this part in the second quarter of the 7th century A. D. According to his account, there were 100 Deva temples, where sectarians of different schools congregated and the Nirgranthas were most in numbers. K. G. Goswami remarks that Jainism also could not escape the devotional touch of the period and the deity was worshipped with flower, sandal paste, incense etc., just like Brāhmanical religions. So during the Gupta period the whole religious atmosphere was pervaded with essence of bhakti, irrespective of faiths.

Another inscription showing the existence of Jain faith was found in the Badgaon near Bihar, the site of the ancient Nālandā. Four stone pillars of the same design of an old Jain temple were discovered amidst the ruins. The record of five lines, incised on one of the stone-pillars states that in the year 24 of the reign of the illustrious Rājyapāla (Rājapāla), one Vaidyanātha (Vaidanātha), son of Manoratha of the merchant family bowed in the temple. It is noticed that after this record inscriptions of early Bengal contain no reference to Jainism.

BUDDHISM

According to some scholars the earliest Buddhist inscription found in Bengal is the Mahāsthāngadāḥ (Bogra District of present Bangladesh) fragmentary stone plaque inscription of the 3rd century B.C.

According to D. R. Bhandarkar, the inscription records a grant of order to Govardhana of the Sarīvaṇgiyas (member of the Sarīvaṇgiya tribe) to get sesamum and mustard seeds and also paddy from the prosperous city of Puṇḍranagara.

B. M. Barua thinks that the inscription found in the Bogra District refers to an establishment of Sadvargiya sect of the Buddhists at Puṇḍranagara. R. C. Majumdar suggests that the two sects of Buddhists, the Chavaggiyas (the band of six men) and the followers of Devadatta, probably existed in Bengal. D. C. Sircar remarks that if this suggestion is accepted then it indicates the early entry of Buddhism in North Bengal.

The eastern frontier of Āryāvarta at Kajaṅgala near Rajmahal, on the eastern fringe of Bihar is mentioned in the Vinayapitaka belonging to pre-Asokan time. D. C. Sircar thinks that “Buddhism gained a firm hold in most part of Bengal during the reign of the Maurya emperor Aśoka (269-232 B. C.)". According to him, around 3rd century A. D. Vaṅga (southern and south-eastern Bengal) was one of the centres of Buddhism. However, the flourishing condition of Buddhism

1. Cf. S. Bandyopadhyay in Abhivādana, A Volume on Aspects of Early Indian History and Culture edited by I. W. Mabbett, (pp. 87-88; p; 98).

271
in Bengal is known from the account of the Chinese traveller Fā-hien\(^1\) who visited India in the first decade of the 5th century A. D. According to him, Buddhist monks resided in Tamralipta in twenty-two monasteries. The record of the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen-Tsang,\(^2\) who visited India in the seventh century A. D. states that Aśoka built numerous Buddhist monasteries in different parts of Bengal. Study of the early Bengal inscriptions reveals that it was a custom of the medieval period to donate for the religious establishments and thus different religions enjoyed the royal patronage as well as donations from the common men, as has been pointed out by S. Bandyopadhyay in his 'Presidential Address' for the Seminar on Early Bengal Epigraphy and Cultural Life, Jadavpur University, Kolkata.\(^3\) Buddhism was of no exception. Here we discuss below arranging in chronological order the Bengal inscriptions, besides the Mahāsthāṅgaḍh inscription discussed above, which registers faith in Buddhism.

1) The Jagadiśpur copper-plate inscription\(^4\) of the Gupta year 128 (447 A. D.) records the purchase of one *kulyavāpa* of fallow land by Kṣemāka, Bhoyila and Mahidāsa to donate the earnings of the land perpetually (*aṅkya-nivṛtti*) to:

i) the *vihāra* (Buddhist monastery) built for the worshipful Arhats, at the *siddhāyatana*,

ii) the *viharika* (small *vihāra*) built for the worship of the Arhats at Gulmagandhika and

iii) the temple of the Sun-god. Of the one *kulyavāpa* of land purchased by the three persons, three fourth or six *dronavāpas* were entrusted to Balakunda described as the *Sramaṇak-ācārya*, perhaps the monk in charge of the two Buddhist establishments.

2) The earliest epigraphical record of a Śaiva king donating land for Buddhist

---


272
monastery is the Gunaighar copper-plate1 inscription of Vainyagupta (c. 495-509 A. D.) dated in the Gupta year 188 (508 A. D.) It states that the king who was Mahādeva-pādānudhyāta, granted eleven pāṭakas of uncultivated land (khila-kṣetra) for the congregation of Buddhist monks (bhikṣus), belonging to the Vaiśvāttika sect of Mahāyāna, which was established by a Buddhist monk, Ācāryya Śāntideva, in a vihāra, dedicated to Avalokiteśvara. The record states that the income of the land would be spent for providing gandha-puspa-dīpa-dhīpa to Lord Buddha thrice daily; for supplying cloth, food, sleeping place and providing medical treatment for diseases of monks (bhikṣu-saṅghasā ca cīvara-piṇḍapāṭāsaya-saṅḡājanaprattyaya bhaiṣajyādīparībhogaya) and also for repairing the monastery.

Besides the Avalokiteśvarāśrama-vihāra, we come to know about two more vihāras like Rājavihāra (line 19) and Rājavihār-kṣetra (line 22) and also at the end of the land of the monastery of śākya-bhikṣvācārya Jitasena. The epigraph clearly indicates that there was a strong-hold of Buddhism around the ancient village Guṇikāgrahāra (modern Gunaighar). Line 25 mentions of Buddhāka-kṣetra-simā in course of defining the boundaries. D. C. Sircar points out2 that the inscription does not inform anything about the religion of the subordinate ruler, on whose representation the grant was made.

3) The Jayrāmpur copper-plate inscription3 of regnal year 1 of Gopacandra (c. 540-580 A. D.) registers the gift of the village Śvetabālikā for the construction of a vihāra at Bodhipadraka agrahāra, where god Avalokiteśvara was installed. The benefit of the gift of the village was offered to the bhikṣusāṅgha of the Mahāyāna school.

---

4) The Mallasārul inscription\(^1\) was issued by *Mahārājā* Vijayasena, during the reign of Gopacandra, to grant land to a Brāhmaṇa within the Varddhamāna *bhukti*. Vijayasena held a responsible post under Gopacandra and issued this charter under his own seal. The circular seal, soldered on the left side of the plate, bears in relief a standing figure of a two-armed deity with a *cakra* in the back-ground. The deity is most probably Lokānātha and the wheel is *dharma-cakra*. The record begins with an adoration to god Lokānātha. K. G. Goswami\(^2\) remarks that he is not sure about the representation of the god. Line 1 of the inscription eulogises god Lokānātha (*jayati śrilokānlathā yah puṁsāṁ sukṛta-karma phalahetuḥ*), Dharma (*satya-tapo-maya-mūrttir-loka-dvayasādhano dharmaḥ*), and the saints (*santaḥ*) i.e. the Buddhist Saṅgha.\(^3\) Thus it seems that the donor Vijayasena was a Buddhist. But N. G. Majumdar points out that definite identification of the figure on the seal is not possible as it is too indistinct.\(^4\)

5) The undated Nichanpur copper-plate inscription\(^5\) of Bhāskaravarman (c. 600-625 A. D.) of the Varman dynasty of Kāmarūpa presents two remarkable verses, one praising Mahādeva and the other adoring Dharma. But it is astonishing that the king, who calimed their descent from the great lineage of Naraka (mythological son of Viṣṇu) would praise Dharma, the second jewel of Buddhist *tri-ratna*. Verse 3 of the inscription eulogises Dharma as the sole friend of creation, the cause of prosperity in both this world and the next world, whose form is good for others, who is unseen, yet whose existence is inferred from the results.

---

P. Bhattacharya says\(^1\) that from the account of the Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsang it was found that Kāmarūpa was almost free of Buddhists in Bhāskaravarman's kingdom. From one of the chapters of the Harṣacarīta it is found that the ambassador of king Bhāskaravarman declares in the court of Harṣa that the prince would not pay homage to any-one, other than Śiva. Then the cause of praising Dharma might be due to gain popularity among the people of Karnasuvarṇa region, where Buddhism had a great influence over the people. Bhāskaravarman was perhaps also influenced by Buddhist king Harṣavardhana. Thus it is thought that at the beginning of the 7th century, Buddhism was in vogue among the people of Karnasuvarṇa.

6) From the Kailān copper-plate\(^2\) inscription of regnal year 8 of Śrīdhāranarāṭa (c. 660-670 A. D.) we come to know that Jayanātha, the Mahāśāndhivigrāhika (minister for war and peace) approached the king for grant of land of 25 pāṭakas which he was to donate to Bhagavat Tathāgata or Ratnatraya i.e. Buddhist trinity of Buddha, Dharma and Saṅgha (line 22— Bhagavata-stathāgataratnasya), for the worship of Buddha, the reading and writing of Buddhist religious texts (line 23— lekhanavācanārthamārya-saṅghasya) and the provision of food, clothing and other necessities of the Ārya-Saṅgha as well as to the Brāhmaṇas for performing pañca-mahāyajña.

7) The inscriptions issued by the Khadga dynasty bear a seal of a recumbent bull, facing the proper left of the plate. It was inscribed as Śrīmad Devakhadga. The Aśrāfpur plate\(^3\) issued in the 13th regnal year of Devakhadga (c. 658-673 A. D.) records that 9 pāṭakas and 10 droṇas are granted to Buddhist monastic establishments, probably by Devakhadga to secure the longevity of his son Rājarāja Bhaṭṭa. The land was transferred from the owners to the royal

---

1. Ibid., p. 70.
preceptor, Saṅghamitra, who apparently was the head of the four vihāras and vihārikās (large and small monasteries). The order was written by Puradasa, a devout worshipper of Buddha (paramasaugato-pāsaka). D. C. Sircar observes¹ that Devakhadga perhaps brought the end of the Rātas.

According to B. M. Morrison² the vihāras and vihārikās indicate a sacred complex, which may be the seven monasteries centered in the Lalmai hills.

8) Another Aśrafpur plate³ is issued from the same centre, in the 13th regnal year of Devakhadga and beneficiary is also the same Saṅghamitra, the revered preceptor of the monasteries. But the donor seems to have been the prince Rājaraja.

Both the inscriptions begin with verses in praise of Buddha or his religion. Lines (1-2) eulogise the chief of the sages, who is the cause of destruction of ignorance (avidyā) and who has crossed the great ocean of samsāra or the cycles of births and deaths jayatyavidyā-hati-hetu-bhutaḥ sanātana-samsāra-mahāmbu-rāśiḥ anuttāra-vāpti bhagavān munindrah). Lines 12-15 tell about the transfer of land from the present owner to Saṅghamitra (in charge of vihāra-vihārikā-catuṣṭaya).

9) Inscription of Anandadeva Baṅgalamṛgāṇka (c. 750–775 A. D.) recovered from Śālban Vihāra⁴ carried a seal centered at the top, with a symbol of the wheel of the law with the flanking deer (dharmacakra). The plate was issued from Devaparvata.

B. M. Morrison tells nothing about the contents of the inscription. But the seal with dharmacakra symbol confirms the faith in Buddhism of the king.

2. Lalmai, A Cultural Centre of Early Bengal, Ch. III, p. 100.
4. B. M. Morrison, Lalmai, A Cultural Centre of Early Bengal, p. 102.
10) The inscription of Bhavadeva (c. 775-800 A.D.), issued in the 2nd regnal year of the king, also contains a seal at the top centre, bearing the Buddhist wheel flanked by two deer with a writing Śrī Abhinava-mrgāṅka. The meaning may be ‘the fortunate, new deer-marked one’ or ‘the fortunate, new Moon’. But the symbol suggests that Bhavadeva was also a follower of Buddhism. The inscription records transfer of land to a small monastery (vihārika), which was either called Vendamati or lay in the locality called Vendamati. No information is given about the monastery.

11) A few more copper-plates of this Deva dynasty were found during the excavation of the Śālban monastery of Maināmati. Many of them were too damaged to be deciphered. An information of a terracotta sealing is reported by D. K. Chakrabarti from this excavation, which reads Śrī-Bhavadeva-mahāvihāra-bhikṣu-saṅghasya, i.e. ‘of the noble order of monks of the great monastic establishment of Śrī Bhavadeva’. Two monasteries named after two kings Ānandadeva and Bhavadeva of the Deva dynasty prove the flourishing condition of Buddhism in the Comilla region. According to G. Bhattacharya Devatideva (c. 715 A.D.), Kāntideva (c. 800-825 A.D.) and Aṭṭākaradeva (c. 10th century) of the Deva dynasty from Chittagong were followers of Buddhism.

12) A metal vase inscription of Devatideva (A.D. 715) reveals the fact that this ruler of the Chittagong area who belonged to the Khasa tribe, was a devout worshipper of Buddha G. Bhattacharya points out that this vase perhaps contains the earliest epigraphic reference of this type. Line 1 of the inscription around the neck of the vase invokes Sugata (Jayatijita-sarvo- māras=sarvoaṣj̄as=sarvoa-dharmma-va-[ṣa]vartti sar[vva]- gata dharmma- mūrttis=sarvoa-ṣuṇ-aṅkṛtatas =Sugataḥ).

1. Ibid., pp. 102-103.
3. Ancient Bangladesh, p. 80.
5. Ibid., p. 473.
This is obviously a Buddhist record, line 1 of which on the body of the vase, presents Devatideva-bhattāraka as a pious Buddhist king belonging to the non-Aryan Khasa tribe of the ancient Harikela kingdom (probably modern Chittagong). The regnal year 77 refers perhaps to the Burmese era starting from A.D. 638 and G. Bhattacharya assigns the year to A.D. 715.

The object of the record is to donate several pātakas of land to the Haritaka-Dharmasabhā-vihāra (Line 7) for the requirements of noble Buddhist monks who worshipped Buddha and Dharma and for renovation and repairing work of the monastery.1 Line 8 mentions about a donation for the religious merit of all as sarvātihoga-bhoga, Line 10 refers to Pañcamaṭhiya Brāhmaṇas and Line 11 mentions the Ācārya Śāntideva and the inhabitants of the Dharmasabhā monastery in connection with a land transaction.

13) G. Bhattacharya writes2 about another undated vase inscription belonging to c. 10th century A.D., of a ruler mentioned in this record as Rājādhirāja Aṭṭākara-deva. His capital is inscribed as Vardhamānapura which has been identified as a village of Chittagong by scholars.

The inscription on the vase records the construction of a mathikā by the great Mahāpratihāra Sahadeva, a feudatory of King Aṭṭākaradeva, son of Kalyāṇadeva and Varadevī, in honour of Munīndra-bhattāraka (Buddha) for the attainment of perfect enlightenment (samya-k-sambodhi) and for increasing the religious merit of his parents and all beings. Thus it seems that in the 10th century A.D. also Buddhism enjoyed popularity in the Harikela area.

14) The undated Chittagong inscription3 (incomplete) of king Kāntideva (c. 800–825 A.D.) may be mentioned in this connection. Here Parama-saugata Parameśvara Mahārājādhirāja Kāntideva is described as the son of Dhanadatta

---

1. Ibid., pp. 474-477.
2. Ibid., p. 475.
and Vindurāti (devotee of Śiva) and grandson of Bhadradatta, a Buddhist.
The plate was discovered from an old temple at Chittagong and the mention of Harikela and Vardhamāna indicates that Kāntideva was the ruler of south and east of Bengal.

Verse 1 of the inscription eulogises Buddha as jinendra who won over the vast, irresistible forces of Māra (jayat=udār a durvāra-Māra-viṣarasya jayī) and brought all the three worlds into the domain of light by dispelling dense darkness, caused by passion (moha) by means of the jewels of dharma.

A large number of epigraphical records throw interesting light on the religious faiths of the rulers of the prosperous Candra dynasty having sway over the south-east Bengal around modern Comilla between c. 900 – 1050 A. D. King Suvarṇacandra of this dynasty became an ardent Buddhist and his successors followed his faith. All the Candra inscriptions bearing the seal of dharma-cakra and flanked by two seated antelopes were issued from Vikramapura in the Dacca region. There is controversy among scholars about the original home of the Candras in Rohitagiri. But after they succeeded the Pālas in some parts of East Bengal, their inscriptions show that Buddhism received their patronage.

15) Six charters have been found so far issued by Śrīcandra (c. 925–975 A. D.) of the Candra dynasty. Verse 1 of the Paścimbhāg copper-plate inscription of his regnal year 5, which is same as the beginning of other charters like i) the Rāmpāl plate (undated), ii) the Kedārpur plate (undated), iii) the Madanpur plate of regnal year 46 (8 verses describing the history of Śrīcandra’s dynasty are identical with those of Rāmpāl and Kedarpur plate),

---
2. D. K. Chakrabarti, op. cit., p. 84.
5. N. K. Bhattasali in ibid., Vol. XVII, pp. 188 ff.
iv) the Idilpur plate¹ and v) the Dhulla plate² is in adoration of the Buddhist trinity — the Jina, Dharma and Saṅgha(Vandyo Jinaḥ sa bhagavān=karuṇ-ai [ka] pātraṁ Dharmmo=py=asan). The verse states that “May that Lord Jina (i.e. Buddha) who is the unique receptacle of mercy, be venerated; and triumphant also be Dharma, the unique lamp of the world— in consequence of whose worship the entire noble-minded saṅgha of monks transcends the series of continuous existence (samsāra).”³

16) Verse 3 of the Rāṃpāl copper-plate as well as the Idilpur plate and the Dhulla plate describe Suvarṇacandra as the prince who became a follower of Buddha, because he was born in the family of the Moon-god who bore on his lap the Buddha, born in a previous birth as hare (Śaśaka-jātaka).

17) In the Paścimbhāg grant, the donor Śrīcandra is introduced as Paramasaugata Parameśvara Paramabhaṭṭāraka Mahārajaḥdhiraja Śrīcandradeva, who meditated on the feet of Paramasaugata Parameśvara Paramabhaṭṭāraka Mahārajaḥdhiraja Trailokyacandra. In the later grants of Śrīcandra, his father is endowed with the title Mahārajaḥdhiraja only.

It is to be mentioned here that study of the epigraphs of the Candra dynasty reveals that after Śrīcandra, the later members of the lineage, Laḍahacandra (c. 1000-1020 A.D.) and Govindacandra (c. 1020-1055 A. D.), adopted the faith of Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism respectively, as is evident from the Maināmaṭṭī copper-plate inscriptions⁴ belonging to the 6th regnal year of Laḍahacandra and another undated one belonging to the reign of Govindacandra. But the two kings were called as Paramasaugata and used the dharmacakra emblem on their seals according to the family tradition. It is believed that it was an indication of absorption of Buddhism within the fold of Brāhmanism.

18) The 13th century inscription of Harikaladeva Raṇavaṅkamalla (c. 1204-1230 A. D.) belonging to his 17th regnal year and dated in Śaka 1141, known as the Maināmati copper-plate1 of Comilla District, is a definite proof of continuation of Buddhism in that area.

The inscription records a grant of land measuring 20 *dronas* in favour of a Buddhist Monastery built in the city of Paṭṭikerā (Verse 6)2. Verse 6 further elaborates that the *vihāri* was dedicated to goddess Durgottārā, a form of Buddhist goddess Tārā, according to some scholars.3

Verse 1 of the record mentions the name of ‘Hedi-eba’, in whose pure mind Dharma played like a swan in the clear Mānasa lake. The name of the actual grantor of land is given as Dhadi-eba in Verse 4. He is described as a follower of Sahajiya cult (*sahaja dharmma*), a late form of Mahāyānist Buddhism with many affinities to the Siddhayoga. Verse 3 also mentions the name of the teacher as Aviraha. D. C. Bhattacharyya suggests4 that the names ending with ‘eva’, seems to be of Burmese origin. Presence of Buddhists in the Tippera region might be taken as a faint trace of the Burmese connection in the 13th century. Paṭṭikerā was an important seat of Buddhism. A Cambridge manuscript of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* containing a picture of a sixteen-armed goddess named as *Paṭṭikere Cundā-varabhavane Cundā*, suggests the popularity of worshipping the goddess in the Bengal region.5 P. Niyogi suggests6 that Deva dynasty, assigned to the first half of the 8th century A. D., raised the Maināmati-Lalmai range to a position of a celebrated Buddhist centre and the Candras enhanced its glory.

---

2. For a discussion on Paṭṭikerā, see, S. Bandyopadhyay’s Article in the *Bharati*, No. 17, pp. 198-202.
19) Reference may be made to the Vajrayoginī inscription\(^1\) of Sāmalavarman (c. 1127-1137 A. D.), where the king of east Bengal, grants some land in favour of a Buddhist temple of Prjñāpāramitā and other deities founded by him. It is interesting that Sāmalavarman donates for a Buddhist shrine to please his patron deity Viṣṇu.

20) Another inscription may be referred to in this connection. The Ṣobhārāmpur (Dacca District) copper-plate inscription,\(^2\) dated Śaka 1158 of the Arirāja Cānuramādhava Dāmodaradeva, (c. 1230-1255 A. D.) of the Deva dynasty of Vaṅga-Samataṭa mentions the name of Dāmodaradeva’s minister as Gautamadatta, who is given the title of mudrādhikāri-saciva and is said to be devoted to the feet of Śrī-Gautama. Here, the minister was perhaps a Buddhist.\(^3\)

21) The Irda plate\(^4\) of regnal year 13 of the Kamboja king Nayapāla (c. 1030-1055 A. D.) bears a seal of purely Buddhistic symbol, though the king is a worshipper of Śiva.

We now discuss about the position of Buddhism under the Pāla rulers, who ruled in Bihar and Bengal from the eighth to the twelfth century and most of whom were devout followers of the Lord Buddha. From the epigraphical evidences we have found earlier that Buddhism was well established in parts of Bengal, before the Buddhist Pāla dynasty. But during the Pāla regime Buddhism got new colours with new ideas and philosophy, and perhaps “got its last resort mainly in Bengal and Bihar as a religion encouraged and embraced by royal patrons.”\(^5\) The Pāla kings used the epithet parama-saugata and used the dharmacakra emblem on the seals. It consisted of a number of concentric circles, of which the innermost had in

4. See above, p. 33.
its upper part a representation of a wheel flanked on two sides by two antelopes\(^1\) as a remembrance of Buddha’s first sermon at Sārnath.

During the four centuries of the Pāla rule, Bengal and Bihar were flooded with new ideology of Buddha and Bodhisattvas in the most developed Mahāyāna form.\(^2\) K. G. Goswami suggests\(^3\) that this part of India borrowed the new name Vajrayāna which was highly influenced by Tāntric religion. As the occult yogic and psychic practices of Tāntric idea began to penetrate the Vedic-Purānic-Brāhmaṇism, Buddhism also fell under that spell of Tāntric ideology. The Mahāyāna Buddhism was transformed in Bengal into Tantra-yāna and its ramifications the Kālacakra-yāna, the Vajra-yāna (concerned with elaborate ritual and ceremonial worship with bija-mantras or mystic syllables of power and mudrās, for attainment of Bodhi) and Sahaja-yāna (concerned with eighty-four great adepts of mysticism known as Siddhas, who discouraged rituals and cultivated virtues and hidden power within the body by yoga practices.\(^4\)

22) The earliest epigraph of the Pālas, showing their religious leaning towards Buddhism is the Khālimpur copper-plate inscription\(^5\) of Dharmapāla (c. 775-810 A. D.). Kielhorn suggests\(^6\) that Verse 1 of the inscription may indicate two meanings. In one sense Buddha is invoked as Vajrāsana to protect all. The lord is eulogised as the possessor of ten powers. He attained the fortune and sustained omniscience with great passion and conquered the quarters where many of the Evils (māras) exist. In another sense Dharmapāla is glorified as the powerful king who attained the omniscience and conquered the ten regions defeating his vast number of enemies. Vajrāsana properly means Buddha’s diamond throne. Here in Verse 1 it is a name of Buddha himself (Vajrāsanasya bahumāra-kulopalamabhāḥ).

The ten powers (daśabala) of Buddha here probably means the ten ways of success preached by the Lord which are gift, purity of character, forgiveness, prowess, meditation, intellect, strength, union with Supreme Soul, prayer and knowledge. (dāna-śīla-kṣamā-vīrya-dhyāna-prajñā-vaśāni ca.upāyaḥ prāṇavijñānām daśa Buddhabalāni vai).¹

According to the Buddhist mythology,² Buddha is not a proper name. It is a generic name applied to a being who attains Enlightenment. The Buddha is superior to all, human or divine, because of his knowledge of truth and that is called Dhamma or Dhanna. He possesses ten powers consisting of perfect comprehension in the ten fields of knowledge. The Buddha repulsed the Māra’s forces and became the master of the ‘Tree of Knowledge’. The light of absolute truth is Bodhi and the Tree of knowledge, where the absolute truth is revealed to the Lord, is Bodhi-Tree.³

In Pāli literature Māra is generally the personification of evil spirit who tries to mis-guide virtuous people and destroys all those who seek to evade from this saṁsāra. The number of Māras varies with different texts. There are various legends in Buddhist mythology⁴ regarding Māra.

When Bodhisattva sat firmly beneath the tree for attaining Bodhi, the Devaputta-Māra attacked him with all his forces. All the devas and nāgas fled in fear. But Bodhisattva remained fearless and called to his assistance the ten pāramīs which he practised with perfection. Ultimately Māra was defeated.

The Dhammapada tells that those who can restrain their mind and attain the noble eight fold path can be free from Māra.⁵ The Majjhimaniyāka Commentary

---

5. Ibid., p. 154.

284
says that Māra Devaputta followed Buddha for seven more years and finding no fault of him, became a worshipper of Buddha.¹

23) An image inscription² of god Madhusrenika of the time of Dharmapāla was discovered by D. C. Sircar from Vālgudar which was lost later. The inscription records the installation of the god at the city of kṛmilā by Ajhuka, wife of Sālo. Dharmapāla has been credited in building the gigantic Buddhist monastery Somapura in Pāhāḍpur of the Rajsahi District.

24) Some terracotta sealings found from Pāhāḍpur excavation give the reading, Śri somapure śri Dīarmacaladevamahāvihāre.³ The upper part of the seal bears ‘wheel of law’. K. N. Dikshit suggests⁴ that the first monastery was built in the beginning of the 9th century A. D. But there are clear indications of repairs and restorations carried out in three subsequent periods. The 10th-11th century A. D. was perhaps the most flourishing period, while the repairs of latest period indicate the bad time of the monastery. From an account of Tāranātha we come to know that Dharmapāla was the founder of the mahāvihāra Vikramaśilā.⁵

25) Devapāla (c. 810-847 A. D.) was also a devout Buddhist. The copper-plate inscription of Nālandā⁶ belonging to his reigning year 35 or 39 states that the king granted five villages for the maintenance of the great Nālandā Monastery where writing or copying of Buddhist religious texts dharmaratnas were done. This was done by the request of Mahārāja Bālpudrādeva of Suvarṇadvipa (Lines 37-42). From the excavation report of Nālandā we find a fragmentory stone inscription⁷ belonging to Dharmapāladeva which states about the construction of a stūpa by a local mason.

¹. Ibid., p. 156.
⁴. Ibid., 1929-30, pp. 138 ff.
⁵. Rama Chatterjee, cp. cit, p. 233.
26) A metal image inscription\(^1\) of the 3rd regnal year of Devapaladeva from Nalanda confirms the involvement of the king in pious activities towards the Buddhists.

27) The famous Hillsa statue inscription\(^2\) of the 35th regnal year of Devapala is another example of the above mentioned fact which is described below in details.

28) The Ghostrawá stone-slab inscription\(^3\) (undated) of Devapala begins with adoration to Buddha and tells about a person Viradeva, born of a Bráhma family who adopted the teaching of Sugata (Line 5). Having studied all the vedas and śāstras Viradeva went to Kaṇiska vihāra and became the disciple of the teacher Sarvajñāśanti and formally embraced the Buddhist faith as an ascetic (Line 7). He visited the diamond-throne of Mahābodhi (or Bodh-Gaya) and from there went to his native country (Line 9) to the Yasóvarmapura Vihāra. There he enjoyed the patronage of King Devapala for a long time (Line 10). Viradeva erected two caityas on the hill Indrasaila (or Giriyek-Line 11). He was elected by the Saṅgha to preside over the monasteries at Nalanda.

29) The Monghyr copper-plate inscription\(^4\) of 33rd regnal year of Devapala begins with salutation to Lord Sugata. At this period the fame of Nalanda reached far across the sea to the Indonesian islands. An interesting aspect of Buddhism, as known from the early Bengal epigraphs, is the great respect for reading and writing or copying the Buddhist religious texts. We can cite a few examples here. i) Line 23 of the Kailān copper-plate inscription,\(^5\) discussed above, (ii) lines (37-42) of the Nalanda copper-plate inscription\(^6\) of

---

1. Ibid., p. 87.
2. Ibid., p. 87.
5. See above, p. 5.
6. See above, p. 96.
Devapala, discussed above and (iii) lines (39-44) of the Jagajjibanpur copper-plate inscription\(^1\) of Mahendrapala discussed below, reveal that one of the reasons for the grant of the land was the writing (lekhana) of the Dharmaratnas or Buddhist religious texts particularly of the Prajñāpāramitā.

30) Lines 39-44 of the Jagajjibanur inscription of Mahendrapala records\(^2\) that mahāsenapati Vajradeva caused a vihāra to be constructed in Nandadirghikā udraṅga for the enhancement of the religious merit of his parents, himself and all the living beings. The grant is needed for meeting the expenditure of worshipping (pujana), writing or copying of the Buddhist religious texts (lekhana) etc., garments (cīvara), food or alms (piṇḍapāta), beds (śayana), seats (āsana), medicines for the sick and other requirements of the monks. It is also needed for repair of the vihāra of Divine Lord Buddha (Bhagavato-Buddha-bhaṭṭārakasya), a place of Prajñāpāramitā and all other female religious leaders or divinities (Prajñāpāramita-ādi-sakala-dharmma-netri-sthānasasya), the group of Bodhisatvas of the noble Avaivarttika order and the noble monks adhering to the individual eight holy personages (aṣṭa-mahāpuruṣa-pudgala-ārya-bhikṣu-saṅghasya).

It appears from the above mentioned epigraphs that writing the Buddhist religious texts was considered as an act of piety. In this context we may refer to a couplet of the Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā\(^3\) where the donor describes that his meritorious gift would lead to Sambodhi and hopes that it would stay till the whole world achieve the wisdom. We may also refer to a plaque\(^4\) discovered from the ruins of the Jagajjivanpur monastery. It shows a sacred text is kept on a full

---

2. *Lock cit.*, p. 77; p. 89.
blown lotus and is wrapped with a piece of cloth whose ends are tied with threads. It seems that the plaque suggests that religious texts were regarded as sacred things in Buddhism. Prajñāparamitā is also described as one of the three principal aspects of Buddhist goddess Tārā.¹

31) Verse 1 of the Bhāgalpur copper-plate² of regnal year 17 of Nārāyaṇapāla (c.876-930 A.D.) adores Buddha as the remover of ignorance with the clear water of the river of knowledge of supreme enlightenment and repeller of aggression of Māra (kāmakāriprabhavamabhībham). Here Māra is the personified Kāma. The record begins with adoration to Lokanātha.

32) The Bāṅgaḍh copper-plate inscription³ of regnal year 9 of Mahipāla I (c. 989-1037 A.D.) and

33) the Āṅgāchī copper-plate inscription⁴ of regnal year 12 of Vighrahapāla III (c. 1043 – 1070 A.D.) begin with the same verse adoring Lord Buddha. In the Bāṅgaḍh plate, father of Mahipāla I, is mentioned as parama-saugata. It may be mentioned here that in the Bhāgalpur plate, Nārāyaṇapāla is not described as pammasaugata but it was issued in the name of Śiva-bhaṭṭāraka.

In Verse 1 of the Āṅgāchī copper-plate inscription of regnal year 12 of Vighrahapāla III, Gopāladeva has been compared with Daśabala almost with the same expression as, who washed away ignorance with knowledge and ensured peace by defeating attacks of princes who were led by their own passions.

34) Verse 1 of the Bodh-gaya image inscription⁵ of Buddha invokes him as the

---

¹ D. C. Bhattacharya in The Śakti Cult and Tārā, edited by D. C. Sircar, p. 137.
Lord who defeated the huge army of Kandarpa (kandarpasena pralaya-
jalanidherdhyanabhhnapramosi) and Kāma, like fierce fire in anger.

35) The Manahali inscription¹ of the 8th regnal year of Madanapāla (c. 1143-1161
A. D.) opens with adoration to Buddha (Om, namo Buddhāua) and Verse 1
refers to Lokesvara or in the other sense king Gopāla also. Madanapāla is
mentioned as Paramasaugata. It is interesting to find that the king made a gift
of land to a Brāhamaṇa in the name of Buddha bhāṭṭāraka, as a fee for reciting
the Mahābhārata before paṭṭamahādevī Citramatika.

1. Ibid., pp. 147 ff.
INSCRIBED IMAGES

It is noticed that there was an increasing trend of worshipping Buddha images with the advent of Mahāyānism. A large number of inscribed images of Buddha found from Bengal-Bihar region help us realising the fact and we discuss below those inscriptions in chronological order.

1) An inscribed stone slab discovered from the ruins of a Buddhist temple at Nālandā belonging to the 6th-7th century A. D. is now preserved at the site Museum in Nālandā as we come to know from G. Bhattacharya.¹

2) Two inscribed metal sculptures² were found from Nālandā, one of Pañcika dedicated at the 3rd regnal year of Devapāla and another of Hāritī of the time of the same king.

Tārā

A large number of inscribed images of Buddhist goddess Tārā are found in Bengal. Goddess Tārā or Tārīṇī is considered as an important goddess of the Buddhist pantheon. Lamas believe that Tārā is incarnated in all good women.³ Originally Tārā was associated with Avalokiteśvara- mahākāruṇīka. A legend tells that a drop of tear fell from the eye of the god in the valley beneath and formed a lake. From a lotus of the lake came out the pure goddess Tārā.⁴ According to the Sādhanamālā Tārā is of four complexions, mostly green (śyāma or harita), white (sita), yellow (pita) or black (kṛṣna). We discuss below about fourteen inscribed images of Tārā.

---

³. A. Getty, The gods of Northern Buddhism, p. 120; cited by G. Bhattacharya, op. cit., p. 461.
⁴. Ibid., p. 120.
i) An image of inscribed seated Tārā is preserved now in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, as we come to know from G. Bhattacharya. The goddess sits on a full-blown lotus showing varada-mudrā with the right hand and holding a nilotpala in the left hand. Two transcendent Buddhas, Ratnasambhava and Aksobhya are shown on top and a standing angry goddess with asi is shown at the left bottom of Tārā. She is Ekajātā, a companion of Tārā. Bhattacharya thinks that the image may belong to the early 8th century A.D.

ii) Another inscribed image of a standing Tārā (find-spot not known) is now in the collection of the National Museum at New Delhi, as we come to know from G. Bhattacharya. The inscription engraved at the left below the right hand of the goddess tells that this is the gift of a merchant’s wife, Nattukā. According to Bhattacharya, the image should be dated in the early 8th century A.D.

iii) The Hilsā (Patna District) image inscription of Tārā of the 25th regnal year of Devapāla (c. 810-847 A.D.) informs us about the great vihāra of Nālandā. The deity is accompanied by Ekajātā and Hayagrīva. The Buddhist creed is engraved on the lotus petals and the Tārā-dhāraṇī (om tāre tātāre ture svāhā) is engraved on the back-plate. The pedestal inscription states that a devout worshipper (param-opāsaka) Gāngādhara donated the image for the religious merit of his teacher (ācārya) Mañjuśrideva of Nālandā mahā-vihāra.

iv) Goddess Tārā is found with a four-armed standing Avalokiteśvara image, dated in the regnal year 25 of Devapāla. The image is attended by two smaller female deities who are i) Tārā (at the proper right) the consort of

2. Ibid., p. 464.
Avalokiteśvara and (ii) Bhṛkuṭī (at the proper left). The image contains two inscriptions. The first one is on the back-plate of the central figure giving the usual Buddhist creed in one line. The second one is a dedicatory inscription of two lines. It records that “this (image) is the gift of the son of Müsekadāmūka, the oilman (and) on account of kind great devotion, keeping in front (his) parents.”¹

v) Another seated Tārā image,² dated in the 31st regnal year of Devapāla is now preserved in a private collection of Berlin. Here the goddess is shown alone with a small stūpa at the left on top of the image. The Buddhist creed followed by the name of the donor, the devout worshipper and the name of the ruling monarch is engraved on the pedestal.

vi) A similar seated Tārā image was found from Kurkihār.³ The usual Buddhist creed is engraved on the back plate. The inscription on the pedestal states that this is the meritorious gift of the Buddhist nun Guṇamati. G. Bhattacharya assigns⁴ this inscription to the 9th century A. D. and draws our attention to the fact that this image is a gift of a nun.

vii) Another early inscribed image of Tārā⁵ is now in the collection of the Indian Museum, Kolkata. The goddess sits on a lion-throne and a small lotus is shown near the right foot of the deity. The inscription on the Prabhā-maṇḍala at the back contains the Buddhist creed and the pedestal inscription states that this image is the gift of Buddhacandra hailing from the Colika District. G. Bhattacharya assigns this image to the early 9th Century A. D.

2. Ibid., p. 463.
5. Ibid., pp. 464-465.
viii) An inscribed standing image of Tārā in the possession of Russek collection of Switzerland tells that the image is the gift of Umadūka, wife of Eddāka. G. Bhattacharya thinks that the image should be dated in the 9th century and the probable find-spot should be Kurkihār.

ix) A stone image of Tārā is found from Iḵhauri of the Hazaribagh District, Bihar, in the year 8 of Mahendrapāla.

x) The Tetrāwām Tārā image belonging to the 3rd regnal year of Rāmapāla records the installation of the image as a gift from Bhaṭṭa Iccha (Īśvara), son of Bhaṭṭa Nābha, a follower of Mahāyāna.

xi) The two-armed seated Tārā image from Guneri of Gaya District is now in the Indian Museum, Kolkata. It has a four-line inscription on the back plate and one line on the pedestal. According to R. P. Chanda the image is of the 9th century A.D. G. Bhattacharya assigns it to the 11th century A. D. and draws our attention to the interesting fact that the image is the gift of Kevarttaka, (kaivarttaka) a fisherman whose father is called as Bhaṭṭa (generally Brāhmaṇa) in the inscription.

xii) We come to know from G. Bhattacharya about a unique inscribed relief with acārya motif, originated in Varendra or North Bengal. The relief contains a large seated central male figure surrounded by five smaller human figures. On top, in the middle of the back-plate goddess Tārā is sitting on a large lotus showing dharmacakra-mudrā and with a blue lotus in hand. The dedicatory inscription on the pedestal reads that the image is the gift of a

1. Ibid., p. 465.
lady called Álaś. G. Bhattacharya thinks that the central figure represents the preceptor of the donor. Perhaps the preceptor himself was a worshipper of Tārā. The inscription is written in script of about the 11th century A. D.

xiii) An inscribed image of Tārā from Lakhi Sarai, (Monghyr District of Bihar) belonging to the 12th century A.D. records that “this (image) is the meritorious gift of the merchant, Jaśadevaka, son of the merchant Cājū, the lord of gifts, (and) hailing from Mathura or a kāyastha by caste.”² The five dhyanī Buddhas are shown on the top of the image and Ekajātā is at her left. G. Bhattacharya thinks³ that the two human figures, one male and one female, may be the donor couple.

xiv) Another stone image of Tārā similar to the one discussed above has a third eye on the fore-head of the deity like a tilaka, as we come to know from G. Bhattacharya.⁴ The exact find-spot is not known. But G. Bhattacharya observes that it may be from Bihar belonging to the 12th century A.D.

Kurkihār was one of the important seats of Buddhism where 226 images of gods and goddesses of Buddhism belonging to the 9th to 11th century A. D. have been found, of which 93 are inscribed.⁵ The image inscriptions of Kurkihār belong to the period of Devapāla, Rājyapāla, Mahipāla and Vigrāhapāla.⁶ The inscriptions record that the images are gifts made by various donors and inform about various monasteries like Āpaṇaka and people coming from distant places like Kāṇci, Kerala, Mallapora etc. to Bengal. Most of the donors are devout worshippers of the Mahāyāna Buddhism. The Buddha images are found mostly in ascetic form.

---

1. Lock, cit., p. 380
4. Ibid., p. 467.
6. Ibid., p. 238.
But a good number of images are found with crowns also. These be-jewelled figures are accepted as Ādi-Buddha. The inscribed images of Kurkihār are dealt with below chronologically as mentioned earlier.

4) Two stone images from Uddanḍapura belonging to the 3rd regnal year of Śūrapāla I (c. 862-875 A. D.) contain identical inscriptions and reveal the name of another vihāra Pāḍikramaṇaḥ.

5) Another undated image is found from Nālandā of the time of Śūrapāla I.

6) Cunningham reports of a pedestal image inscription of Buddha mentioning only the name of Vighrapāladeva.

7) A small inscription probably on a pedestal of an image records the erection of an image in the ninth year of Nārayaṇapāla (c. 876-930 A. D.), by a Buddhist elder, named Dharmamamitra, an inhabitant of the Andhra country.

8) Kurkihār presents two image inscriptions of Buddhist goddess Vasudhārā belonging to the 31st or 32nd regnal year of Rājyapāla (c. 930-967 A. D.).

According to the Buddhist mythology, Buddhism absorbed the names of different gods and goddesses gradually. In the Pāli literature we do not find anything about supreme god. The Dīghanikāya says that Buddha is superior to all gods. The Aṅguttaranikāya says of Śakka, who is the ruler of the gods, but inferior to a bhikku (who became Arahant by driving away all defects).

Some of the important vedic gods and goddesses are included in the fold of Buddhism by making changes required by the Buddhist conception. During the

Pāla period, due to the flourishing condition of Vajrayāna phase, importance of goddesses rose high in accordance with tāntric influence in the religion. Goddess Vasudhārā became the guardian of wealth and prosperity as Lakṣmī in Brāhmanical religions. Jambhala is the god of wealth in Buddhism and Vasudhārā as the emanation of Akṣobhya or from Ratnasambhava, becomes the counterpart of Jambhala.¹

It can be mentioned here that the mark made on the wall, in many auspicious rituals of to-day, is called Vasudhārā. S. Bhattacharji observes² that perhaps Lakṣmī with her Buddhist name returns in this way to bless an auspicious ceremony.

9) The Naulāgaḍh inscribed stone image³ of the 24th regnal years of Vigrahapāla III, shows the lower half of a female figure which may be of Vasudhārā. It records the installation of the image by Āsokā, wife of Dhāmmajī and the daughter of Mahāmatī.

It is interesting to note that in the Pāla period, women are often found to install images of deities.

10) An undated inscription of a Buddhist image from Bodh-Gayā⁴ belonging to the period of Gopāla III (c. 967-984 A. D.), records that the image was dedicated by Śakrasena, known as Dhārmabhīma, for the mitigation of the suffering of the world.

11) Another inscribed sculpture, depicting eight life scenes of Buddha from Bodh-Gayā⁵ belongs to the regnal year 10 or 11 of Mahipāla I.

---

12) A sculpted door frame of a temple in Nalanda of the 11th regnal year of Mahipāla I records, the gift of Bāladitya, a noble follower of Mahāyāna school, who came from Kauśambi.

13) Mahipāla I built many monuments for propagation of Buddhism. A pedestal inscription of a seated Buddha image of Sārnāth tells of such incidents in Kāśi.

14) Cunningham's report of the Archaeological Survey of India excavations tells of an image inscription of Ascetic Buddha found from Tetrāwan, Patna District, belonging to the period of Mahipāla I.

15) Kurkihār presents another image of Cunda in the 31st regnal year of Mahipāla I. It bears an inscription giving the information that the image was the gift of the son of a goldsmith Keśava.

Cunda is a popular female deity of Buddhist pantheon. According to the Buddhist mythology, she sprang from Vajrasattva. The goddess is one of the twelve dhāraṇī deities recognised by Buddhist Ācāryas. Her images found from Kurkihār, Niyāmatpur of Rājshāhi and Tippera region prove that the goddess was worshipped in Bengal.

16) The crowned Buddha image inscription of Kurkihār belonging to the 3rd and 19th regnal years of Vigrahapāla III (c. 1043-1070 A. D.) give the names of the donors.

5. A. Getty, Gods of Northern Buddhism, p. 129.
6. R. Chatterjee, op. cit., p. 298.
17) Two inscribed images of Buddha in votive stūpa were found from Uren¹ (Monghyr District) of the time of Rāmapāla (c. 1072-1126 A. D.), one being undated and another belonging to the 14th regnal year of the king.

18) Another broken pedestal image inscription found from Nongaḍh² of the Monghyr District belonging to the period of Madanapāla records the installation of the image of a deity. The pedestal inscription states that it was the deva-dharma of dānapati Seja and his vadhū Aśokā. D. C. Sircar observes that deva-dharma is used in the sense of deya-dharma i.e. religious gift. The expression dānapati indicates a person who fulfils his vow to install a shrine if his desire is satisfied. The passage is followed by a globular mark used by the Mahāyāna Buddhists. It implies that the inscribed object was a Buddhist image.

At the end of the inscription in lines 2-3, the date is quoted as the year 201. According to D. C. Sircar, it is actually Vikrama 1201 corresponding to the year 1144 A. D. and the figure 1 is probably omitted by the engraver.

19) The stone pillar inscription of Ārma³ belonging to the 14th regnal year of Madanapāla records the grant of a village in favour of a Buddhist monastery. Lines 5-12 mention the name of the village granted by the queen (rājñī) of Mahānāḍalika for the Dhavala-saṅgha, perhaps a local Buddhist monastery. The name of Piṭhipati Ācārya Devasena as the ruler of the territory is mentioned in lines 4-5 of the epigraph.

20) From the report of Cunningham we come to know about a pedestal inscription⁴ of a Buddha image from Jayanagar belonging to the 19th regnal year of Madanapāla (c. 1143-1161 A. D.) It contains the usual formula of gift.

---

It is found by scholars\(^1\) that the inscribed images of Buddha found in Bengal are presented in different forms. Perhaps the Buddhists were not satisfied with only Buddha-Śākyamuni and created predecessors and future Buddha Maitreya. Later Mahāyāna system conceived five Buddhas or Pañca-Tathāgatas as Amitabha (red), Akṣobhya (blue) Vairocana (white), Ratnasambhava (yellow) and Amoghasiddhi (green)\(^2\). A brief discussion on the changes of ides in Buddhism may be interesting here.

In the medieval Bengal-Bihar region Akṣobhya, Buddha-Śākyamuni and Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara played a vital role. Mahāyānaism was prevalent in medieval Bengal, but it had a close connection with Hinayānaism in Buddhist mythology.\(^3\) One can find easily a resemblance with Brāhmanical concepts adopted in Buddhism. The Ādi-Buddha was produced from the mystic syllable \textit{aum} which was manifested in the perfect void (mahāsūnyata). Just like Brahmā the Ādi-Buddha revealed himself in the form of a flame over a lotus. He never descended on earth. He left the creation work with the Dhyāni-Bodhisattva, Padmapāṇi, a non-tantric form of Avalokiteśvara who created the actual world. Avalokiteśvara's father Amitābha is a spiritual son of the Ādi-Buddha.\(^4\) The Anguttaranikāya states that Buddha is supreme and lokottara. He is not a Deva Gandharva, Takkha or man; he is Buddha.\(^5\) He is embodiment of knowledge. Thus Mahāyānists derived the concept from the Hinayānists and time to time invented different ideas. Gradually Mahāyāna form assumed the forms of Vajrayāna, Sahajayāna and Kālacakrayāna. In early medieval Bengal images and inscriptions, all these concepts are noticeable.

---

1. G.Bhattacharya, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 29.
Lines 33-34 of Tarpanadighi copper-plate inscription\(^1\) of Laksmanaśena mentions of a deity in a Buddhist monastery in connection with the eastern boundary of the donated land where existed the wall of rent free land belonging to the monastery (Śrī Paṇḍravardhanabhuktyantahpātiṇorṇḍrīm pūrve buddhavihārī devatānikaradeyā mālabhūmyā adhāvāpapūrvāliḥ śīmā). So there existed Buddhist vihāra during the time of Laksmanaśena. All these suggest that there existed traces of Buddhism in some parts of medieval Bengal before the invasion of Muslims. D. C. Sircar points out\(^2\) that in early medieval Bengal, the religious distinction between Brāhmaṇism and Buddhism gradually died out. Traces of Buddhism are found in the inscriptions of later Pāla ages. But the antipathy of the Sena rulers of Bengal may have added force to the decline of Buddhism in the country.

Gradually Buddhism was absorbed within the fold of Brāhmaṇism. D. C. Sircar observes\(^3\) that in the early medieval period, Buddhists of eastern India were attracted by every trait of Brāhmaṇism, gods and goddesses, the epic-purānic literature, the religious festivals and the rich and mesmaric mythology and they had nothing special to contribute. Similarly, Buddha was accepted as an incarnation of Viṣṇu and many of the Buddhist festivals became popular among the Hindus. As a result a class of Hinduised Buddhists began to grow.

---