



Jagannath and Buddha

Ajit Kumar Tripathy

(Most of the research materials contained in this article are taken from a book named "The Real Birth Place of Buddha" by late Chakradhar Mohapatra- published in 1977 by Grantha Mandir, Cuttack)

In the Buddhist literature, Lord Buddha is named as Nath, Jagannath, Lokanath, Jeena, Bhubaneswara, etc. (vide - Jagannath Swamy- an article in Oriya by Sri Prahallad Pradhan, the Prof. in Sanskrit of Utkal University and the former Professor of Sanskrit, Peking University, China. This article was published in the Oriya monthly 'Paurusha' -2nd Year, 2nd issue, 1969).

Asoka came to Kalinga to worship Buddha in his birth place after 12 years of the Kalinga War. After inaugurating the installation of the inscribed vase containing the sacred relics of Buddha in the secluded Stupa, Asoka started to join the car festival. He got decorated a water field earthen vase, replica of the original vase containing the relics of Buddha, and installed it inside the car in great reverence under the cover of thousands of umbrellas and accompanied by different gorgeous music. The Malas (later on known as Malias, who were in charge of the sacred relics of Buddha, were also in charge of this car festival. With great pomp and grandeur the car proceeded on. The car moved in the same path, in which Buddha had paced forward to attain enlightenment. The people thought the earthen vase to be the living remnant of their beloved

Buddha and forgot their all miseries in the War after 12 years.

This came to be known as the Ashokastami Rathayatra. From the beginning till some hundred years, this car every year was going upto the Mausī Ma's house i.e. Aunty's (mother's sister) house. There till mid-night the worship continued and in the last part of night, the earthen vase containing water was immersed in a nearby tank, in a secret manner. The Vase was immersed in the last part of the night, because Buddha had breathed his last in the last part of the night. After immersion of the vase, the car was dismantled and hence was called non-returning car. This shows, Buddha had died in an alien place and did not return back to his birthplace. The tank, where the immersion ceremony was done is still present, at Bhubaneswar, and at present is known as "Asoka Jhara"

This Aunty is the step mother of Buddha, Goutami Prajavati. After the death of Suddhodana, out of sorrow and misery, she left Kapilavastu, at present Kapileswara and went out in a pilgrimage and resided in Puri in a house, which is still known as 'Mausī Ma Ghara' or Aunty's house. The memory of her offerings to



Lord Jagannath is still in vogue. It is true that neither Suddhodana nor Goutami was the followers of Buddhism. It was Gopa, wife of Goutam and his Son Rahul who had taken to Buddhism. In order to spread Buddhism some Buddhist religious books have included them as Buddhists.

This is evident that it is an image of Mausī Ma made of black stone, which is erected in a standing posture on a Lotus base, situated in the Mausī Ma temple in Badadanda. It has two prolonged hands and two legs. But its original face is covered with another bigger sized face, made of some gummy substance, resembling that of Subhadra. The Pujaka of this deity is a Brahmin of Kaundinya clan. The worshippers of Lord Jagannath call this image as Arghaseni. That means as she was a daughter-in-law of Sakya dynasty, it is quite natural that she is called Seni. Moreover, as her hands are very very long, she is called Arghaseni.

After continuing pilgrimage for 12 years Goutami returned back to her palace in Kapilavastu. But she did not find peace there. So she resided in a separate house which is known as Mausī Ma's Ghara, at Aunty's house at present. Even afterwards the road in Bhubaneswar was named after her as Mausī Ma Danda or Aunty's road which is still present. So it is a proven fact that Asoka's car was going upto the Aunty's house. Neither Lord Shiva nor Lord Krishna had any aunty (Mausī) in Hindu mythology who was worshipped. The practice of Lord Shiva and Lord Jagannath visiting an Aunty both at Puri and Bhubaneswar points to the fact that both the yatras perhaps had a Buddhist origin.

After worshipping Buddha at Kapilavastu and joining the Rathayatra, Asoka went to the Charitra port of Kalinga. It was a famous port in the whole world at that time. By that time the Emperor of Kalinga had built a port in the southern

region of Orissa, which was named after the famous lady Bisakha, who was born in Bhadrak and was one of the great disciples of Buddha. The port was thus named Visakhapattana. The great port Tamralipti was in the north, and Charitra port was in the middle. The people of Kalinga had built a statue of Buddha in Charitra port, and worshipped him. Ashok got this renovated. According to Ptolemy, Charitra was a great foreign port. This Charitra, after the installation of the statue of Buddha (Konakamana) was transformed into Konarka. Now this statue of Buddha is in the Dharmaraja or Indra temple inside the Jagannath temple. Even there, the image of Mayadevi (Buddha's mother) was worshipped. After the name of Gopa, the wife of Buddha, the village was also established which is perhaps now known as Gop.

Very near to the present Bhubaneswar and the then Kapilavastu rising from the 'Andhari' region river Rohini was passing by the foot of the Khandagiri hill. This flowed through Chandaka (some part of which is the Utkal University campus now). Enough evidence is there in favour of this water body as a part of the old Rohini river. One portion of the river has become a corn field near the river Kuakhai near the South-Eastern Railway line (Howrah-Madras line). A very old bridge of stones can be seen in the corn fields, resembling the 'Atharanala' bridge of Puri. While on the way from Cuttack to Bhubaneswar the ruins of this bridge can be seen on the left side of the highway, after passing the Kuakhai bridge. When there was no Kuakhai river, this river Rohini passed through the present 'Atharanala bridge' and was an obstacle to car festival (to reach Gundicha Bari). It went through Puri town and fell into the sea at Banki Muhana (estuary named as Banki). So the sands of this river were famous as 'Saradhabali'. During the time of Bhanudeva-I of Ganga dynasty, there were six cars during car festival. But this emperor filled



the river with soil and three cars were used. He filled the Banki muhana (mouth of the river Rohini) with soil (vide Madala Panji P.36). The sand of the river Rohini was for a long time in the Badadanda or the main highway of Puri. This sand was known as Saradha Bali (Utkal Itihasa- by Pandita Krupa Sindhu Mishra, P.119). One of the portions of this river is now known as Lahunia or Lahania and Ratnachira. But the Buddhist scriptures prescribed a sacred bath in the river Rohini - '*Rohinyanca Mahodadhi*'. Religious merit (Punya) is achieved by taking bath in the river Rohini and in the sea (i.e. Bay of Bengal) then known as Kalingasagar. But only a portion of Rohini river can be seen now near Bhubaneswar. It is quite evident that this river was very much utilized for irrigating the corn fields in the past in the Lembai kingdom with Kapilavastu as the capital.

In the *Nidana Katha* of the Jataka and in many other old Buddhist literature, it is written that the seed sowing ceremony was celebrated by Suddhodana every year. That day the idols of gods were put in a Vimana (i.e. a carriage borne on men's shoulders) and they were worshipped and were carried in the well decorated streets. The people putting on new garments, garlands and sandal paste were accompanying the gods. After the ceremony was over, the king himself was tilling the land with golden plough. Then all other were celebrating the seed sowing ceremony. This is a true fact that Suddhodana was symbolically tilling his own land. That is, cultivation was one of his professions. So during his meditation, Buddha addressing his own tongue said-"you have taken for three years' old scented rice. Why are you worried then ?" So Buddha was quite acquainted with paddy and paddy fields. Such scented rice is never cultivated in Nepal.

This seed-sowing ceremony as described in the Buddhist literature is still celebrated in Orissa in the Aksaya Trutiya (i.e. 3rd day of the bright

half of the month of Vaisakha corresponding to the month of April-May). On this day the idols of gods are carried in the main streets, and garlanding and sandal pasting still persists. This festival still can be seen in Bhubaneswara and Kapileswara. Throughout Orissa this seed sowing ceremony is in vogue, and from this day the cultivation with sowing of paddy starts. This festival is not seen in any other part of India or Nepal. Specially the Lembai region including the Kapileswara village still contains vast areas of paddy fields. Of course the habited area now is a part of the old town of Bhubaneswar.

The Sakya people very much liked rice. So Buddha's father was named Suddhodana i.e. literally one who liked pure rice. Buddha's grand father Sinhayana had five sons; and they were known as Amitodana i.e. who liked unmeasured rice.

Dhautodana who liked washed rice, Suklodana who longed for white rice, and Sukhodana who liked fine rice.

Orissa is famous for rice. The Mahaprasada or rice offering to Lord Jagannath and Lingaraj is famous in the world. Washed and watered rice is a traditional and cultural heritage of the Oriyas. It is also given in the Jagannath Puja. The rice offering was first of all adopted by Brahmadutta in the Konakamana temple. It continued in that place till the Konarka temple was destroyed. This type of rites have come from the views of the Buddhist thought. This rite is still to be found in the temple of Kapileswara. So the seed sowing ceremony was a peculiarity of Kalinga, and Suddhodana was a man of Kalinga. The big kitchens unearthed now very close to the Konark temple bear evidence that cooked rice was offered as Prasad to Aditya Vishnu. "Vaishnav Lilamruta" describes how Srichaitanya and Panchasakha were relishing the Khiri Prasad (sweetened rice boiled in milk) at Konark temple.



Facts about the Marriage of Buddha :

Buddhadeva married to the daughter of his maternal uncle. This was a custom only confined to Kalinga. Still it is in vogue in the southern part of Orissa. Although largely this custom had been abolished in other parts. It is well-known to everyone that many Oriya kings and Kshatriyas are used to get married to the daughters of their maternal uncles. This is an age-old custom of the priests of the temple of Jagannath. Even this custom is seen now among the Karans and Brahmins to some extent.

During the 13th century AD Narasingha Deva (the 1st), the Gajapati king of Orissa, in order to excel the sculpture of Jagannath temple built by his grand father Gajapati Anangabhima Deva, built the world famous temple of Konarka (also known as Black Pagoda). In that temple Konakamana was worshipped as Aditya Vishnu. He also established vast Navagraha images in one stone in this temple according to the tradition. When these are taken into consideration, it is known that Konarkadeva (Konakamana) is not the Sun. Still now He remains as Buddha (Dharmaraja). But in course of time the main part of the Konarka temple was destroyed. So Konarkadeva was brought to Puri. After a great religious upset due to the revival of Shaivism and Vaishnavism, these things were quite possible. So in absence of the Konakamana image and the Stupa, the dense forest region of Nepal cannot be taken as the place of Konakamana Buddha.

The image of Konarkadeva which was originally Konakamana can easily be identified in the Indra temple inside the precincts of the Jagannath temple. But the real image of

Konakamana had been hidden and second image of Sun god had been put there. Still when proper investigation is carried out, it becomes quite obvious that the hidden image is none but Buddha. The temple which is known as Indra temple, is also known as Dharmaraja temple. Dharmaraja i.e. Buddha. It is written in Tripitaka. '*Chakkavatti dhammiko dhammaraja*' P.193, Mettasuttam (itivuttakam) Suttapitaka-Khuddakanikaya Suttanipata, pp. 355, 357, 358 and P.14 Mahavagga (Dighanikaya). The assumption of Bisan Swarup (1910) regarding this image is quite correct.

Sri M.M.Ganguli has described - 'and on a higher elevation is seen the figure of Dharma or Surya Narayana and behind the stone background of this figure is seen the beautiful image of a mutilated Buddha in a sitting posture with several carved figures all in black stone. The image is in *padmasana* and in *bhumi-sparsa-mudra* (a type of sitting posture). Aruna the emblem of the Sun god, is not present. Besides the Sun god is always represented in a standing posture. This image has got a crown and ear ring. The bosom is adorned with a necklace. There are two hands which are broken. There is an umbrella above the crown. There are two demi goddesses (Vidyadharis) in the two upper angles of the image. One can notice the halo round above the head. In the lower portion there are two female figures with chowries in their hands. The size of this image is 6 feet X 3 feet.

This image can be said to be the first image of Buddha. The people of Kalinga were worshipping Buddha in the likeness of a prince. Thus the connection between Buddhism and Jagannath cult is well established.





The Creation of "Baihandi Mahadei Mahaprasad"

Pitambar Pradhani

Baihandi is famous amongst the cooks (Suar) and super-cooks (Maha Suar) of Puri Jagannath Temple as an earthen pot that contains Prasad which can satisfy hundred persons along with dal, curry, and sour curry (khata). The legend behind the creation is very astonishing and interesting too.

In a village named Pandarpur of Maharashtra Province, lived a lady named "Karmabai" who was not only wealthy, but also was cultured, intelligent and a great devotee of Lord Jagannath. She

was deeply devoted to Lord Jagannath. Once she had an opportunity to come to Shrikhetra (Puri) with her religious teacher, Indravarma to pay homage to the Lord of the Universe, Lord Jagannath.

But after having a glance of Lord Jagannath, she got a spiritual calling to stay back in Shrikhetra,

hence she did not return back to her native village Pandarpur, and she lived in Puri by the side of Grand Road by building a house for the rest of her life with her religious Guru, Indravarma.

Lady Karmabai had a very soothing and fine tone and she sung devotional songs with all

her heart and other devotees gathered to hear her singing with utmost respect and attention. Indravarma used to explain the essence of the Jagannath culture to the devotees in an articulate manner.



Lady Karmabai kept an effigy (Idol) of Lord Jagannath in her house and gave her holy offerings every day. Once she thought of offering "Khechudi" (specially cooked mixed rice) to the Lord. Hence she purchased an earthen pot from the local traditional potter (Kumbhara) and cooked "Khechudi" and offered it to the Almighty with all