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BUDDHISM IN ANCIENT ANDHRA- A STUDY

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Introduction

The discontent against the Brahmanical system formed the background for the rise and spread of Buddhism in Andhra. The historical mission of Buddhism had been to bring into a synthesis various and divergent systems of religious thought prevalent in the country and to reconcile the mutually hostile elements into a harmonious social life. We will see in this section to what extent the mission of Buddhism was successful in Andhra.

The innumerable sites that do Andhradesa from Salihundam in the north to Pedaganjam in the south and from Gooty in the west to Bhattiprolu in the east were the clear proof Buddhism in the Andhra, for about one thousand years (c. 300 B, C.-A. D. 400), Buddhism had a glorious career in Andhra

Objectives

1. To find out advent of Buddhism in Andhra
2. To find out spread of Buddhism
3. To find out royal and laymen patronage towards Buddhism
4. To find out new social sections in the society

CAUSES OF THE TRIUMPH OF BUDDHISM:

The causes for the phenomenal triumph of Buddhism in Andhra are not far to seek. Andhras shared in no small measure the spiritual unrest, springing from the cruel sacrifices and unfair social distinctions. They found in Buddhism a simple religion of self-improvement, which tried to pull down all artificial social distinctions.

Another important factor is that helped the spread of Buddhism and its teachings did not come to the Andhras as entirely new. Buddhism was not only a revolt against the decadent Vedic ritualism but also an attempt at the synthesis of all the best elements in Aryan and non-Aryan religions. H. Jacobi traces certain important features of the new religions Buddhism and Jainism to the primitive currents of religious speculations which were essentially non-Aryan (H.Jacobi,JainismP.465) whereas A. L. Basham concludes that the heretical religions Buddhism, Jainism and Ajivikism-sprang against "the primitive animist

background" (A.L.Bhashyam,Ajivakas,P.284) Especially, there is much in common between the Buddhist principles of Sila, Samadhi and Prajna and the cardinal principle of Saivism, namely Yoga. It may be recalled that the Pasupati of Harappa was a Mahayogi. The Buddhist symbolism and iconography have drawn very liberally upon Saivism. The seated Buddha with deer on either side resembles the Pasupati of Mahenjodaro (C.Sivaramamurthy, A.S.I,P.61-62)

ASOKA -ANDHRA BUDDHISM:

The Kalinga War: The event that turned Canda Asoka into Dharma Asoka was the famous war of Kalinga, the only war waged by that monarch. According to the Classical and the Chinese writers the kingdom of Kalinga at that time extended up to the mouths of the river Godavari on the east coast. This is supported by inscriptions and native literature. The Bodderi grant of the Eastern Calukyan king Kokkilivarma I, issued from Elamancili (Visakhapattanam Dt.) states that Bodderi is situated in Madhyamakalinga.

After the great change, the activities of Asoka in favour of Buddhism consisted of (1) the convocation of the third Buddhist council with the hope of bringing unity in the Sangha. (2) Issuing Edicts and erecting pillars with instructions to his officers to liberalize administrations and to promote social happiness through the spread of Dharma (3) Building Stupas and Viharas for the benefit of the Buddhist monks and (4) Dispatching missionaries for propagation of Dhamma. In all these activities, Asoka bestowed special attention on Andhradesa as he found out the preference of Andhras to Buddhism (ithamrajavisaya - andhra -- dharmamanusarante). Asoka might have hoped that if he made Andhra a stronghold of Buddhism, it would serve him as a Center for spreading the Gospel in the far south, including Tambapannidvipa.

RISE OF BUDDHISM IN ANDHRA

A very interesting feature of Buddhism in Andhra is that to a large extent it progressed independent of royal patronage. Very rarely we come across donations by kings to the Buddhism and almost all the Buddhist monuments were the results of pious private munificence and at times of donations made by the ladies of the harem. ,

ATTITUDE OF KINGS:

After the death of Asoka, all the dynasties that ruled over Andhra, with the exception of one or two individual rulers were Brahmanical in religion. As the establishment of the Sunga dynasty (Comprehensive History of India, K.A.N, Sastry) in the north, that of the Satavahanas in the south, appears to have synchronized with a vigorous movement for the revival of Vedic rituals. According to the Jain sources, the first Satavahana was a Jain and was overthrown in a popular revolution (K.Gopalachary, Early History of Andhra Country) in fact the word Srimukha does not sound as a personal name but is more like a title as Priyadarsi. His successor, Kanha or Krsna appears to have had Buddhist leanings according to a Nasik cave inscription (E.P.Ind, viii) after him there seems to have been a sudden change in the religious policy of the Satavahanas in favour of Vedic ritualism. In all probability, due to the influence of the developments in the north, the Satavahanas should have felt it expedient to identify them with the Brahmanical religion. The third king, Satakanrni and his queen Naganika were stout champions of Brahmanical faith with its rituals and austerities(ibid) They handed one of their sons as Veda Sri", the Glory (K.Gopalachari,opcit) The most illustrious of his successors, GautamiputraSatakarni was a great Vaidika and took the title Ekabrahmana. He crushed the pride and honour of the Kshatriyas (Ksatriyadarpanianamardana) and promoted the fortunes of the families of Brahmins (dvijavarakutumbavivardhana) and stopped the mixture of castes (vinivartitacaturvarnasankara) (Nasik inscription of Balasri) However, he and his successor Pulomavi made some gifts to the Buddhists of the Nasik region but purely out of political considerations. One of his successors was Yajnasri and the latter is credited with the performance of Yajna (Luders list, 1024) probably to indicate his name. All this only proves that the Satavahanas resurrected faith in the Vedas, revived Vedic sacrifices, restored the caste

system and upheld the superiority of the Brahmin (Luders list) all the fundamental institutions of Brahmanism which were severely criticized by Buddhism.

There is a strong tradition that Acharya Nagariuna succeeded in per suadingYajnasri not only to be tolerant of Buddhism but to patronize it (Ramarao, NagarjunakondaSouviner) from that time, there appears a change in the attitude of the Satavahanas to Buddhism. One of the last Satavahana kings, Vijaya actually visited Sriparvata on Vaisakha Purnima (J.R.A.S.1934) But this change was soon followed by the overthrow of the Satavahana dynasty itself by Chantamula of the Ikshvaku family (Subramanyam,Ikshvaku Coins) From the inscriptions of the Ikshvakus, we learn that Chantamula was a devotee of Mahasena, Virupaksa was a performer of Vedic sacrifices including Asvamedha, Agnistoma and Vajapeya (E.I.xx) We can conclude that Chantamula led the Brahmanical reaction against the pro Buddhist later Satavahanas (P.I.H.C,1955) That the claim of Chantamula to have been an Asvamedhin is not a vain boast is proved by the discovery of an AsvamedhaVedika in the Nagarjunakonda valley (I.A.R,1956-57) The performance of Asvamedha just under the shade of the Mahachaitya that enshrined Dhatuvara of the Mahakarunika speaks, besides many other things, of the spirit of vengeance exhibited by the revived Brahmanism under royal patronage (ibid).

The names of Chantamula's successors such as Virapurisadatta (M.Ramarao, Ikshvakus of Vijayapuri) and Rudrapurisadatta (ibid) indicate that they were of Brahmanical faith with Saivite leanings. Some scholars are inclined to the view that Virapurisadatta became a Buddhist in view of the great Buddhist activity of his, reign (B.V.Krishnarao, 1942) Some even identify a piece of sculpture of a king crushing under his feet a five-hooded serpent as that of Virapurisadatta suppressing Brahmanism (M.Ramarao, opcit) But there is not even a single inscription that records a gift ever made by Virapurisa to the Buddhist institutions in order to sustain the above view. R. S. Panchamukhi also rejects the above identification but he explains the sculpture as "to represent the demolition and the destruction of malice, avarice and distrust which were deprecated by Asoka (Panchamukhi,Buddhist Art in Andhradesa) But neither the above identification nor this explanation seems to be



Fig. 7: MandhataJataka

Correct. The sculpture in question appears to be a part of the famous MandhataJataka which was a popular theme with the Andhra sculptors; the sculpture represents Mandhata's conquest of Nagaloka, At Nagarjunakonda (T.N.Ramachandran, M.A.S.I). it is discovered a complete Panel with the entire MandhataJataka and one scene in it resembles exactly the above piece of sculpture, therefore it is not correct to hold, on the evidence of this piece of sculpture, that Virapurisa embraced Buddhism and suppressed Brahmanism.

APPENDIX II B

Sample of Early Donatory Brāhmī Inscriptions, Eastern Deccan, second century BCE-second century AD*

S No	Site/Location	Ins. No.	Name	Caste/Prof. group	Alluding to	Ref.
1	Amarāvati	1206	No Name an <i>upāsikā</i>	<i>gahapati</i>	Gift of daughter of merchant, KIN	<i>EIX</i> p. 141
2	—do—	1209	1 Sivaka 2 Pusila	<i>gahapati</i>	Gift of 1 son of 2 merchant, KIN	<i>EIX</i> p. 141
3	—do—	1213	1 Mūlasiri 2 Bodhi- samma	<i>vāṇija</i>	Gift of 1 son of 2 trader & his mother, KIN	<i>EIX</i> p. 142

* Sample based on, H. Lüeders, 'A List of Brahmi Inscriptions', Appendix, *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. X (Calcutta 1912).

Here we shall provide a list of sites mostly excavated examples and some recently discovered ones from the village to village explorations.

(a) Mauryan (Hinayana phase)

1. Amaravati (Guntur) Structural Stupas and Monasteries of brick.'
2. Bhattiprolu (Guntur) Earliest phase of the Stupa.
3. Vaddamanu (Guntur) Earliest phase of the Stupa on Hill top and an inscribed brow of water trough.
4. Garikapadu (Krsna) Brick Stupa and Vihara.
5. Guntupalle (West Godavan) Rock-cut VrittaCaitya.
6. RampaErrampalem (East Godavari) Rock cut stupas and. cells.

(b) Post-Mauryan but Pre-Christian (Hinayana phase):

Apart from the above sites which continue till later periods other notable examples with early Buddhist remains, basically non-Mahayana sites, dated to second century B.C. are:

1. Jaggayyapeta (Krsna) Structural Stupas and Caityas.
2. Sankaram (ViSakhapatnam). Besides, monolithic Stupas and rock cut Vihara cells, later brick caityas too.

3. Kapavaram (East Godavari)(Rock-cut as well as open air structural establishments remain to be explored fully.
4. Salihundam and Kalingapatnam (Srikakulam) besides Viharas and Stupas of the early period of medieval Vajrayana phase is extent at the former site as well as at Ramathirtham, district Vijianagaram.
5. Dhulikatta (Dist. Karimnagar), Stupas provide an exclusive Hinayana phase during second century B.C.
6. Kondapur (Medak), Structural Stupas of brick.
7. Chandavaram (Prakasam) Structural Stupas of brick.
8. Kesanapalli (Guntur) Structural Stupas of Brick.
9. Bavikonda (Visakhapatnam district).

SECTS OF ANDHRA BUDDHISM:

Sectarianism is a normal development in any religion and it is caused by certain historical forces. Human thought is rarely static and as religious and philosophical thought advances new ideas about the goals of religious practice and new methods of achieving them would arise and they gradually crystallize into religious sects. In the same process, Buddhism also came to be divided and subdivided into a number of schools and sects. Besides the intellectual, the factors mentioned below led to the growth of sectarianism in Buddhism. The early writers (E.J.Thomas, 1963) mentioned eighteen schools, but the number seems to have gone up to thirty two, which were classified into four broad heads (T.N.Ramachandran,opcit) (M.A.S.I,no.71,p.35-36)

- | | | |
|-------------------------|-----|--------------|
| 1. Theravada | and | Mahasanghika |
| 2. Sarvastivada | and | Mahisakasa |
| 3. Bahusrutiya Caityaka | and | Saila |
| 4. Sammitiya | | |

From the above names we learn that some of the sects were formed around local teachers and in support of this view we come across in inscriptions and literature terms like Acaryakula (Luders list,no340)Personal jealousy and rivalry also might have led to the formation of sects as in the case of Devadatta (N.Duutt,1945) The Buddha did not leave any written word behind and naturally doubts and disputes arose regarding the interpretation and even the very text of the teachings of the Master (Charles Elliot,1957) Further, the Buddha did not prescribe any rites regarding births and deaths and expected the laity to continue their old practices. As Buddhism spread too many places (Luders list, 1105) the number of such practices multiplied and controversies became inevitable. The differences in discipline were gradually given doctrinal significance (G.C.Pande, 1957) and the gulf came to be widened. The Sangha lost its solidarity.

DECLINE OF BUDDHISM:

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

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

LOSS OF PATRONAGE:

In the midst of such momentous political developments, Andhra experienced an economic revolution as well. The decline of the Roman Empire in the 4th century A.D. seriously affected the trade between Andhra and Rome and it had hit hard the mercantile community, which had been the chief patron of Buddhism. Longhurst remarks that besides the general wane of religion, the decline of Buddhism to be traced to certain economic agents which were at work "such as the decline of seaborne trade with the west which caused vast quantities of Roman gold to pour into Southern India".(Longhurst.,op.cit) No longer the merchant community was in a position to patronize Buddhism. Curiously, from almost the 5th century to the 12th century, we rarely come across grants made by merchants. Rarely the Buddhist Church had permanent endowments, and it depended mainly on the charity of the pious from time to time. As the main source of that charity dried up, they lost their sustenance and languished.

REFORMED HINDUISM:

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

Conclusion

However, it cannot be denied that Buddhism came to Andhra at a time when conditions were such that it was able to create cohesiveness and order in the society that was going through a change. Newly emerged professional groups found social respect and spiritual satisfaction by associating themselves with Buddhist institutions. The concept of "dana"(donations) helped not only to boost the morality of the public but also gave a further boost to the economy. While Buddhism flourished with the traders' patronage, it was also spread by these trading communities from the Krishna River Valley to other regions of India and across the seas to Sri Lanka, regions of Southeast Asia and beyond.

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