

STŪPAS OF PREVIOUS BUDDHAS

- B. GHOSH

The fact of some of the preceding Buddhas has been substantiated by the Archaeological findings like Asokan inscription cited in the concluding portion of this article, as well as the account of Chinese pilgrims, who visited the stupas of last three Buddhas, prior to Sakyamuni.

"Display of miraculous power of Sakyamuni shown in the appearance of stupa, being opened by him, discloses to sight the frame of the expired Tathagatas Prabhutaratna, who is desirous of hearing the exposition of the Lotus of the True Law (Saddharma-Puṇḍarika/Damcho Peme Karpo). How the Sakyamuni in a former birth strove to acquire the Lotus. His great obligations to Devadatta. Episode of the wise daughter of the ocean and her change of sex" (**Sadharma-Pundarika**, trans, H.Kern. SBE, Vol. XXI Ed. F. Max Muller, Int. P.XXX). In the above text there is an edifying chapter "Apparation of Stūpa"/Stūpa-darśana-Parivarta (Ch.XI). The chapter begins thus : "Then there arose a Stupa consisting of seven precious substances from the place of the earth opposite the Lord, the assembly being in the middle" (Ibid p.227). One may see the same legendary account of the apparation also from the edition of Saddharma-Puṇḍarika by N. Dutt with N.D. Mironav's text: Central Asian Manuscripts of Asiatic Society (Calcutta 1953) on the Apparation Max Muller cites remarks of Senart. "Between the Lord (i.e. the sun) and the **Stupa of Seven Ratnas**, i.e. here it would seem the rainbow of seven colours, we shall see that stupa has also another function that of symbolising the celestial **dhishnya** in which sun and moon are standing." (Ibid p. 227)

Buddha Sakyamuni, it is relevant to note in his parable often referred to Buddhas of the past, who trod the path Sakyamuni had discovered. In Digha Nikaya Buddha disclosed the clan, family life span and Enlightenment of Six Buddhas preceeded him thus :

"इतो सो भिक्खवे, एकनुवृत्तिकप्पे यं विपस्सी भगवा अरहं सम्मासम्बुद्धो लोके उदपादि।
 इतो सो, भिक्खवे, एकींसे कप्पे सिखी भगवा अरहं सम्मासम्बुद्धो लोके उदपादि।
 तस्सिज्जेव खो, भिक्खवे, एकींतंसे कप्पे वेस्सभू भगवा अरहं सम्मासम्बुद्धो लोके उदपादि।
 इमस्सिज्जेव खो, भिक्खवे भद्दकप्पे ककुस्सधो, भगवा अरहं सम्मासम्बुद्धो लोके उदपादि।
 इमस्सिज्जेव खो, भिक्खवे, भद्दकप्पे कोणागमनो भगवा अरहं सम्मासम्बुद्धो लोके
 उदपादि। इमस्सिज्जेव खो, भिक्खवे, भद्दकप्पे कस्सपो भगवा अरहं सम्मासम्बुद्धो
 लोके उदपादि। इमस्सिज्जेव खो, भिक्खवे, भद्दकप्पे अहं एतरहि अरहं सम्मासम्बुद्धो
 लोके उप्पनो। (Dig. Nik. Pali, II, Mahavagga, Mahapadanassutta, 1)

Practice of erecting stupas over corporal relics was older than the time of Buddha Sakyamuni. In reply to Ananda's query about the rites to be performed after the demise of the master, Buddha remarked that his mortal remains left after cremation, should receive the honour of a universal monarch by creation of stupas over such remains the crossing of four highways, a carin should be erected to the Tathagatas, a Pratyeka Buddha (individual Buddha), a disciple of the Tathagata and Chakravarti Raja (universal monarch) (Dig Nik. Pali, VI 50).

II

"Fuhrer located the ruins of Krakuchchhanda's Natal town in mounds near Lari-ki-Kundan (Kodan) 1½ mile south west of Taulihawa (U.P.) and nearly 1¼ mile north-east of Gotihawa. According to him the four mounds at this place represent the three **stupas** and monasteries mentioned by Fa-hien and Hiuen Tsang. Mukherji (P.C. Mukherji, **A Report on a Tour of Exploration of the Antiquities in the Tarai, Nepal**, Archaeological Survey of India, Imperial Series XXVI Pt. I, Calcutta 1901) also held the mounds representing stupas and monasteries. General His Highness Prince Khadga Sumsher Jung Rana Bahadur while regarding the mounds as **stupas** and monasteries felt that "it must have been the place where Buddha held athletic sports; if not, the place belongs to his **Gosthis**, i.e. relatives". W.Vost took Kodan as suburbs of Kapilavastu and identified (i) the northernmost with the stupa adjoining to the spot where 'the elephant (thrown by Gautama Buddha) falling on the ground caused a deep and wide ditch", (ii) the next mound (which is the largest of all) with the remains of two temples (one with the representation of Gautama and the other with the likeness of Yaśodharā and Rāhula) which Hiuen Tsang saw by the side of hasti-garta, (iii)

the third mound with the site of the school room of Gautama and (iv) the fourth mound with the remains of the temple which lay without the southgate (of Kapilavastu) and contained a representation of sick man. The tanks on the banks of which these mounds are located has been identified by him with the hasti-garta (pit caused by the fall of the elephant)".

According to Mr. Mitra "All these presumptions have been proved baseless by our excavations at the mounds at Kodan which can neither be regarded as the natal town of Krakuchchhanda nor a part (or suburbs) of Kapilavastu for want of vestiges of Buddhist character. Of the four mounds, one is reduced to the last stage of decay. The excavations at the remaining three mounds yielded the remains of three bricks Brahmanical temples which were originally decorated with various motifs carved on the facing brickwork. None of these temples is earlier than the eighth century A.D. The tank was the offshoot of the constructions of the temples which demanded a huge quantity of earth not only for the mortar and bricks, but for the extensive filling material in the foundation of the temples". Devala Mitra: **Buddhist monuments**, Sahitya Samsad (Calcutta 1980 pp.250-251). Dr. Mitra further remarks that 'Smith's (V.A. Smith): The Birthplace of Gautama Buddha (JRAS of Great Britain and Ireland for 1887, pp. 615-21)' tentative identification of Gotihawa with the site of Nyagrodharama, which lay 3 or 4 li south of Kapilavastu town, does not seem justified. Hiuen Tsang did not notice any Asokan pillar at Nyagrodharama. Gotihawa with the lower portion of Asokan pillar and stupa, certainly represents the supposed site of Nirvana of either Kanakamuni (Konākamana, Asokan edict, Koṇāgamana the 23rd buddha of the **Buddhavamsa**-Pali) or Krakuchchhanda. It is very likely that the two fragments (one with Asoka's inscription recording the enlargement of the stupa of Kanakamuni and erection of the pillar) of the upper portion of an Asokan pillar at present lying at Nigali-sagar (as already noted by P.C. Mukherji the pillar fragments of Nigali-sagar are not in situ. Traces of any ancient vestiges, not to speak of the **stupa** of Kanakamuni mentioned in the inscription on the pillar, are not sight within the immediate neighbourhood. The fragments, evidently were brought from some other site formed the upper parts of the pillar in **situ** at Gotihawa. As is well-known, the upper portion of the gotihawa pillar is missing, but a major fragment of the bell-shaped capital was found here (removed to the Taulihawa

inspection bungalow). The corresponding lower part of Nigali-sagar pillar and also the capital is missing. The fragments of the Nigali-sagar pillar are smaller than the Gotihawa pillar in diameter, so that the former can easily be the upper parts of the latter, all these fragments being tapering and of identical stone. If this presumption is correct, the **stupa** (which by the size of the bricks looks Asokan) in front of the pillar at Gotihawa is the one of the Kanakamuni which Asoka claims to have enlarged in the inscription on the lower of the two pillar-fragments at Nigali-sagar. In this connection it may be noted that Gotihawa, which is east of Śrāvastī, does not fit in with Fa-hien's heresay (south-east) of Krakuchchanda's place in relation to Śrāvastī' (Ibid p. 252)

'One of the reasons for the difference between Fa-hien and Hiuen Tsang on the location of Kapilavastu with reference to Lumbini and the natal town Krakuchchanda and Kanakamuni, two of the Manushi-Buddhas who preceded Gautama Buddha. According to Fa-Hien Kapilavastu is somewhat less than a Yojana east of Kanakamuni's town, the latter situated less than a Yojana north of Na-pi-ka, Krakuchchanda's town, which is 12 Yojanas south-east of Śrāvastī. Hiuen Tsang places Kapilavastu 500 **li** (800 **li** according to the Hiuen Tsang's life) south east of the town of Kasyapa near Sravastī and 50 **li** north of Krakuchchanda's town, the latter being 30 **li** south-west of town of Kanakamuni. Though the two pilgrims agree tolerably on the distance between the native towns of these three Buddhas, they differ materially regarding the directions. Thus Kapilavastu according to Fa-hien was to the east of Kanakamuni's town and north east of Na-pi-ka, and according to Hiuen Tsang, to the north west of Kanakamuni's town and north of Na-pi-ka. Fa-Hien places Lumbini 50 **li** eastward of Kapilavastu while Hiuen Tsang took bearings from **Śara-Kūpa** (Arrow-well), 30 (or 32) **li** south east of Kapilavastu to Lumbini, the latter being 80 to 90 **li** north of Sara Kupa' (Ibid 248).

III

The nineteenth century discovery of two fragments of an inscribed pillar by the side of Tank called Nigali-sagar, the lower portion of Aśokan pillar in **Situ** and a stupa of Gotihawa, a pillar in situ with the record of Aśoka at Lumbini and a conspicuous **stupa** with exceptionally precious deposits and reliquaries at Piprahwa (U.P.), one

of the reliquaries from Piprahwa, as is well known bears an inscription in Maurya Brahmi character recording the deposits of Buddha relics. The discoveries promoted further researches in the field, scholars turned their attention toward the Nepalese Tarai for the sites of the towns of Buddha, Krakuchchhanda and Kanakamuni,

In the older books of Pitakas six Buddhas are mentioned as preceding Buddha Sakyamuni namely Vipassi, Sikhi, Vessabhū, Kakusanda, Konagamana and Kassapa (Dig. Nik Pali, 14 Mahāpadanasutta, Therag 499 Samjutta Nikāya, Pali XII, 4-10).

According to Sir Charls Elliot: Hinduism and Buddhism, vol. I p. 342 "the last three at best may have some historical character. The Chinese pilgrims Fa-Hien, who visited India from 405 to 411 A.D. saw their reputed birth places and says that there still existed followers of Devadatta (apparently in Kosala) who recognised these three Buddhas, but not Sakyamuni. Asoka erected a monument in honour of Konagamana in Nepal with dedicatory inscription which has been preserved."

In the Majjhima Nikaya, 50, Maratarjaniasuttam, we find a story about Kakusandha and his disciple and Gotama Sakyamuni once gave (Dig. Nik. 14) an extensive account of Vipassi, whose teaching and career are represented as almost identical of his own.

In Māratajñiya Sutta (Maj. Nik. vol. I 50 Kasyap. Int. p XVII), the legend of former Buddha is narrated thus: "The venerable Mahamoggallāna was walking up and down in the open. Then, Māra, the Evil one entered his stomach and produced a girgling sound Moggallāna knew it. He chided the māra for making a mischief, narrating his previous life- "O Māra, long ago I was born in the mara-realm, my name was Dūsi, I had a sister called 'Kālī' whose son was none but you. Thus, you are a dear nephew of mine. Then there flourished the Buddha called Kakusanda. I, as the 'Dūsimara', took possession of the people called and gave a hard opposition to the Lord Kakusanda and his order. Due to evil result of it, I was born in the hell and had to undergo a long torture burning in its fire".

Yuan Chwang in his travel account states that "There is Asoka stone pillar not far from the stairs was a tope

where the Four past Buddhas had sat and walked up and down" (on Yuan Chwang's Travel in India Thomas Watters, vol. I 1961 p 334). From Ayudha the pilgrim travelled east above 300 li and crossing the Ganges to the north, arrived in the A-ye-mu-k'a and close to the Ganges, were an Asoka tope at the place where the Buddha had preached for three months, traces of sitting and walking place of the four past Buddhas and a dark blue stone tope with Buddha-relics" (Ibid vol. I p 359).

Yuan Chwang found in Samatata Tan-mo-lib-ti (Tamralip-ti) its capital above ten li in circuit, besides the capital was an Asoka tope and near this were vestiges of the four past Buddha's sitting and exercise ground (Ibid vol. II p. 190).

In Karna suvarna- near the monastery were several topes built by Asoka at spots where the Buddha had preached and also a shrine (ching-she) where the four past Buddhas had sat and walked for exercise. (vol. II p.191)

In Maharashtra- within and outside the capital were five Asoka topes where the four past Buddhas had sat and walked for exercise (vol.II.239).

In Kapilavastu- outside the capital to the south of the city, he tells us and at distance of above 50 li (about 10 miles) from it, was old city with a tope. This was birth place of the past Buddhas Ka-lo-ka-tsun-te (that is Krakuchunda or Krakuchchanda the Kakusandha of Pali scriptures, not far to the south from this city was tope to mark the spot at which Krakuchunda having attained to Perfect Enlightenment (that is, having become Buddha) met his father. Another tope, which was to the south-east of the city marked the place in which bodily relics of this were deposited. In front of this tope was a stone pillar erected by Asoka, above 30 feet high with a carved lion on the top and an account of (Krakuchunda's) decease (Parinirvana) on the sides. Above 30 li (six miles) north east from this old city was another "old large city" which also had a tope. Here the past Buddha ka-no-ka-Mau-ni (kanakamuni) was born. Near this city, on the north east, was the tope which marked the spot where this Buddha, after attaining Bodhi, admitted other into his religion, and north of this was a tope with bodily relics of Kanakamuni Buddha. Here too was a stone pillar above twenty

feet high, with a lion on the top and as record of the circumstances of this Buddha's decease on the sides, this pillar also had set up by Asoka (vol. II p.5-6).

Fa-hien places the old city of Krakuchunda (called by him Ku-lu-chen Buddha) twelve Yojanas (about 96 miles to the north).

Hereunder we quote the Asoka's edict on stupa of former Buddha with its translation:

"The beloved of the gods, king Priyadarsin (when) crowned fourteen years, enlarged the stupa of Buddha Kanakamuni to double (its former size) and (when) crowned (twenty) years himself came (here), worshipped (and a stone-pillar) was erected."

Text of Nigālisāgar (Nigali sagar) pillar inscription:
Devānām piyena piyadesina tājina codavāsabhisitena Budhasa
Konākamanasa thube dutiyum vaḥhite, sabhisitena ca atana
āgaca mahīyite- papite.

Text Sanskritised :

Devānām priyena priyadarśinā rājnā caturdaśa varṣābhi-
śikṭena Buddhasya Kanakamuneḥ stūpaḥ dvitīyaṃ vardhitā,
(vimsāti-var-) śābhisikṭena ca ātmanā āgataya mahītam,
(śītā-tambha ca ut-) sarpitam.

Date : Regal year 20 (?)=c 249 B.C.

Subject Asoka's visit to the stupa of Kanakamuni. (Asoka's
Edict: Amulya Chandra Sen (Calcutta 1956 pp. 124-125)

GLOSSARY OF PLACE NAMES

- A-ye-mu-kha : Ayamukha (Hayamukha 'Horse mouth' Daundia-
khara on the northern bank of Ganges
(D. Mitra)
- Ayudha : Present Kakapur, The country lying between
vitasti (Jhelum) and the Sindhu (Indus)
Nundo Lal Dey: The Geographical Dictionary
of Ancient and Mediaeval India, Fourth
Edition 1884, New Delhi
- Gotihawa : (Gutiva) 2½ miles of Taulihawa (Mitra)

- Karna-Suvarṇa : (Kansona) now called Rangamati in the district of Murshidabad, on the right bank of Bhagirathi, six miles south of Berhampur in Bengal(Dey).
- Kośala : Oudh, Ayodhya divided into two, Uttara Kosala (Northern) and Dakshina Kosala (Southern). During Buddha, the kingdom of Kosala under Prasenjit's father Mahakosala extended from the Himalayas to the Ganges and from the Ramganga to the Gandak (Dey).
- Lari-ki-Kundan : (Kodan)
- Na-pi-ka : Natal town of Krakuchchhanda, 12 Yojanas south-east of Sravasti (Mitra)
- Nigāli-sāgar : 4½ miles north-east of Taulihawa in Nepalese Tarai (Mitra)
- Nyagrodhārāma : 'Banyan grove' lays half a mile to the south of Kapilavastu
- Piprahwa : District Basti, Uttar Pradesh
- Situ : at Gothihawa 7 miles south east of Nigali-sagar Tank (Mitra)
- Śrāvasti : Sahet-Mahet on the bank of Airavati or Achitravati (modern river Rapti) in the district of Gonda in Oudh (Dey).
- Ta(n)-mo-li(h)-ti: Tamralipti, Tammalipti (litti) perhaps modern Tamluk (Thomas watters: on Yuan Chwang's Travel in India (London 1961)
- Taulihawa : In Nepalese Tarai