

EVOLUTION OF BUDDHISM AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS IN LUMBINI

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During the end of the Upanishad period the Uttarapath (northern highway) was made. It linked the fertile lands of Yamuna and the Ganga Valley, the rich fertile as well as the iron and copper-mine regions of north-eastern areas of Jambudvip with Malwa, Rajasthan, Punjab, Iran and west-Asia. This led to the period of second urbanization in the Indian sub-continent. It made the region economically very rich and which gave birth to several new religious sects and philosophical ideas. Among them the chief religious sects which germinated within the region were Vaishnavism, Saivism, Buddhism and Jainism.¹ The earlier two sects were developed upon the age old Vedic and Vedottara (Post Vedic) traditions. But Jainism and Buddhism were fostered by heterodox leaders denying the supreme authority of Vedas and Gods. Though they still inherited some of the old traditional methods of Tap, Yoga, Bhaikshacharya (begging alms), charanatika (wanderer), Ekantvasa (living in seclusion), asmvavasa (staying away from the common mass in the hermitage), and live at a fixed place during the rainy season (“dhruvashilo versasu” as propagated by Gautam dharmastra). In this way they were influenced by the Rigveda. Mundaka Upanishad, Brihadaranyaka Upanishad and Apastamba Dharmasutra,² The Hindus used to address their saints as Muni, Bhikshu and Sramana. These terms were also inherited by the Buddhists.

Jainism followed the extreme rigorous path of austerity, whereas, Buddhism selected the middle way (Madhya-Marga). Buddhism devoted itself to the service of society, following the “four noble-truth” (Chatura-Arya Satya) and the “Eight-fold Path” (Astangika-Marga). It aimed at supreme liberation (Nirvana). Though Buddhism deviated and denied the Vedic religion and philosophy in the earliest phase, its Mahayana branch (the Mahasanghikas after the 1st cent A.D.) brought a closer connection with the Hindism. Mahayan adopted most of the Hindu and pre-Hindu Gods into its own pantheon. They started making images and performing worship, Yagyas (fire-offerings) and religious procession (Devayatras) of their Gods on festive occasions (G. Roreich; Biography of Dharmaswamin, 1959, 54, 92; S. Beal, Siyuki, 1981, I, 80). Latter on, Buddhism was divided into eighteen sects.³

Prince Siddhartha was born around 563 B.C.⁴ at Lumbini Vana (Asokan Pillar inscription reads- “Hida Buddhhe Jate..... Lummini game”). He was married at the age of sixteen. About twelve years latter he got a son named Rahul. Only a week after the birth of his son, at the age of twenty-nine Buddha left his home and became an ascetic and a wanderer. He made severe austerities for six years and at thirty-five or forty years of his age at atlas received Sambodhi at Bodhagaya (the Lotus sutra, VI, 1-2, reads ‘Prapto si bodhim

nagare gayahvaye, catvarimsad-varسانی'). At Saranathi (Mrigadavaka) he started preaching Dhamma (Dharmachakka Pravartan) and his Sangha was also formed at the same place. During his lifetime his son Rahula took the tonsure and became a monk. Similarly, his foster-mother, Gautami Prajapati became the first nun of the Buddhist order. His wife Yasodhara also followed Prajapati and became a nun. Gautama Buddha died (received Mahaparinirvana) in the Upavattana Salavana near the city of Kushinagara, at the age of eighty.

Lumbini Garden-the Birthplace of Sakya-Muni.

Lumbinivana was situated within the Majjhimadesa, in the Ganga Valley and this was the place where Lord Buddha was born.⁵ It was situated between the two cities-Kapilvastu and Devadaha (or Vyaghrapur). This garden was connected with the Uttarapath. Now it is within the Rupandehi district of Lumbini Anchal in Nepal Tarai and about 22 kilometers west of Bhairahawa town. The Buddhist literatures have highly lauded about Lumbini. It had several names like Lavani, Rummindei (Lumbinidevi, after the name of the queen of Anjana, king of the Koliyas), Pramodvana, also compared with chittalatavana, Paradimoksha (place of liberation or Nirvana) and Mokta (named by the Mughal historian Abul fazal; Cunningham, Ancient geography, 1963, p. 351).

The important persons who had visited Lumbini in the historical days were Asoka (between 257-250 B.C.), the Yueh-Chih monk Sengtsai (in around 350 A.D.) belonging to the Chin dynasty (265-420 A.D.),⁶ Fahian (399-413 A.D.), Yuan-Chwang (around 636 A.D.) and Wukung in 764 A.D. (T. Watters, On Yuan-Chwangs Travels, Delhi, 1973, II, 17).

The Lumbini pillar and the Nigalisagar pillar inscription of Ripumalla (the Khasa King) records that he had visited Lumbini in 1312 A.D. The Asoka pillar at Lumbini also bears the name of his son Sangrama Malla. Most probably Ripumalla had built a huge stone temple and image of Buddha at Saina-Maina (the Samagama hill monastery of Digha-Nikaya, Pasadika-Sutta; Samagama Suttanta of Majjhim Nikaya, and Papancha Sudani of Budhaghosa). Samagama is about 9 kilometer west - south of Butwal. Two pillars, one with erased

Khasa inscription and the other reading - "Om-Mani Padmehum", in Tibetan script was found from the place. A stone Buddha image was also brought from the site to Lumbini and had been displayed in the garden before the exhibition hall.

The Divyavadana and the Asokan pillar at Lumbini Site records about the visit of king Asoka to Lumbini. In the Divyavadana Sthaviara Upagupta indicating the place to king Asoka says that- "in your province, at this place Lord Buddha was born" (Asmin Maharaj Pradesa Bhagawan Jatah). The emperor went to the Nativity tree and also talked to the guardian genius. Divyavadana also narrates about the construction of a temple at the Nativity spot of Lumbini. He had donated 1000 tolas of gold and according to the pillar inscription reduced the land tax (Athabhagiya cha). The reduction of land taxation over the agricultural product and the words of Divyavadana that "in your majesty's territory Lord was born" clearly proved that the territory belonged to Emperor Asoka at that period. This is further supported by the statement of Fa-hian that the name of the town of Krakuchanda Buddha was Napei-Kea.⁷ It is to be noted that in the inscription of Asoka from Kalasi and Shahbazgarhi, Nabhaka was one of the province of Asoka (Iha raja Vishaye). J.W. Mcrcrindle also describes about a tribe named Nabhaka who were living north of Ganga and south of the Himalayas.⁸

The Vihsnupurana also describes about king Nabhi of Hima, on the southern plains of Himalaya, who was the son of King Agnidhara of Jambudvip.⁹ Eggermont writes that Asoka's Nabhakas and Nabhapantis lived in Nepal or on both sides of the present frontier between Nepal and the Indian subcontinent. This is also supported by the statement of Lama Taranath who says that- "People of the hilly countries like Nepal and Khasya revolted. Asoka was sent with army to subdue them. Without difficulty Asoka subdued the hilly races". The Asokavadan also says that-Asoka, during his youth, subdued the country of the Khasas.¹⁰

Description of Lumbini by the Chinese Travelers Monk Seng-tsais visit

Yueh chih monk of the Chin dynasty (264-420 A.D.) was the first Chinese visitor to come to Lumbini around

350-370 A.D.. In his *Wai-kuo-shih* he writes "the marvelous tree, which the excellent queen grasped when the Buddha came to life, is called Asoka. King Asoka made, out-of Lapislazuli, a statue of the queen in the act of grasping (the tree) and giving birth to the prince. When the old tree had no more offshoots, all the Sramana took the old trunk and planted it, and over and over again it continued itself till the present time. The branches of the tree are as of old, and they still shelter the stone statue. Also the outlines of the marks of where the prince walked seven steps, are still preserved today. King Asoka enclosed the marks with Lapislazuli on both sides, and again had them covered over with one long slab of lapislazuli. The people of the country continuously make offerings to them with sweet smelling-flowers. One still sees clearly the outlines of seven footprints., although there is now a slab covering them, it makes no difference. And again, people may cover them thickly with several layers of heavy cotton (Karpasa) and fasten these on the chiseled stone., and yet (the marks) shine through them and are even brighter than before" (L. Petech, 1950, 35-36).

Fa-hsien's visit

The next Chinese pilgrim to visit Lumbini was Fa-hsien, around 604 A.D.. His description about Lumbini is quoted from his own writings- 'Fifty le east from the city was a garden, named Lumbini, where the queen entered the pond on the northern bank, after (walking) twenty paces, she lifted up her hand, laid hold of a branch of a tree, and with her face to the east, gave birth to the heir-apparent. when he fell to the ground, he (immediately) walked seven paces. Two dragon-kings (appeared) and washed his body. At the place where they did so, there was immediately formed a well and from it, as well as from the above pond, where (the queen) bathed, the monks now constantly take the water and drink it" (James Legge, Delhi, 1971, p. 67).

Yuan Chwangs visit and notes about Lumbini

"From the arrow-Spring, the pilgrim proceeds, a walk of 80 or 90 Li north-east brought one to the La-fa-ni Grove. In this grove was the beautiful bathing tank of the Sakyas, and about twenty-four paces from it was the old Asoka tree at which the Buddha had been born into the world. On the east of this was an Asoka tope,

at the place where two dragons washed the newly born prince with hot and cold water. To the east of this were two clear springs with topes where two dragons emerged on the birth of the Pusa and produced two springs. South of these was a tope where Indra received the newborn infant Pusa. Next to it were four topes to the four Devrajias, who had taken charge of the baby Buddha after his birth. Near these topes was a stone pillar set up by Asoka with the figure of a horse on the top. Afterwards the pillar had been broken in the middle, and laid on the ground, by a thunderbolt from a malicious dragon. Near this pillar was a small stream flowing south-east, and called by the people the oil river. It was originally a tank of a pure oily liquid produced by the devas for the use of the Buddha's mother in cleansing herself from earthly soil after the birth of her son. The tank had become changed into a stream of water which, however, still retained its oily character-(watters, 1973, II, 14-15).

The Archaeological Pursuits In Lumbini

Lumbini was discovered jointly by Gen. Khadga Shamser and Dr. Fuhrer in the year 1896. After cleaning the debris around the Asoka Pillar Fuhrer made available the fresh Asoka inscription. He had left notes about the nativity sculpture and the temple. As reported by fuhrer the sculpture was discovered and the new temple was made by a Hindu Sanyasi living at that site, six years before his arrival, around 1890. Latter on Dr. Hoey also visited Lumbini and has given the description of the nativity panel. In 1898 P.C. Mukherjee had excavated the brick temple and few small chaityas around the temple. According to his description the moulded brick temple was made of saptarath sikhara style and attached with a mukha mandap on the east. The head of Mayadevi had also been discovered by Mukherjee. From 1933-1939 onwards Gen. Kaisher shamsher started digging at Lumbini. He had exposed many stupas and monasteries, incased the Sakya pond with brickedging and steps. He had also excavated the basement of Asoka pillar and remade the modern temple housing the nativity image. From the dugout soil of the archaeological site, he made two artificial stupas in the south and on the northern boundary lines. The antiquities were not recorded and left uncared in the hands of the monks. No trained archaeologist was

involved in his excavations and therefore, the site had to suffer more damages.

After a long gap in 1962 February, a trained archaeologist Mrs. Devala Mitra of Archaeological survey of India had explored Lumbini. She had also excavated the Asoka pillar and excavated its hammer-dressed portion up to the depth of 51 cm. She had recorded the antiquities left from the Kaisher-shumsher's excavations (D. Mitra, 1972, 196205, PLX.cxv.cxx). In 1970-71, Dr. N.R. Banerjee (then adivisor in Doa) with Babu Krishna Rijal had excavated the old village area (site No-2) of Lumbini. The NBP, Kushan and Gupta period pottery and antiquities were discovered from this site. According to the excavators ten successive stratum were discovered from this site. The other finds were, mud-walls, Kushan t.c. figures, terracotta ring wells, Kushan period circular burials with bones kept in the burial pots, as well as three Kushan brick wells. In 1983 a Kushan period well made of concave bricks and engraved with various mark like-V, Trisula, bow and arrow, cross within circle, wavy bands, triangle and square was found within the new nursery area indicating about the ancient highway which passed near the village on the west. A t.c. plaque mould of Lord Buddha in earth-touching pose (Bhumi sparse mudra) belonging to the Gupta art school was found. From the antiquities the village site can be dated from 400 B.C. to the Gupta period, 8th Cent A.D. The village habitation has been found within an area of 600 m (East-west) and 300m (North-South).

B. K. Rijal had also conducted archaeological excavation and conservation of earlier exposed monuments from 1974 till 1983 in and around Lumbini Nativity site. Within this period many small and a big chaitya, on the west, north and east of the Nativity temple, were dug-up to the bottom and than conserved. On the east of Mayadevi temple over a high plinth of a temple (like Bodhagaya) was built in Tribhuvan-Mandal or Panch-Ratna concept which was also conserved.¹¹ But Rijal calls it a stupa (Archeological Activities. In Lumbini- 1976-78, LDC, PL - 12). The most important structural discovery was made in 1975, on the north of Asoka pillar, at a distance of 30 feet (9.15cm). This was an oblong burnt brick shrine measuring 15' 4" or

7.6m (north-south) and 12' 5" or 3.8 m (east-west), discovered at the depth of 2 feet below the present ground level. It had two layers of burnt bricks of 17"*8"*5" size. Over this structure a square chaitya (5.9"*5') of Maurya period was also found. Most probably this was the earliest and pre-Mauryan structure on the site.¹² The important antiquities found were- the Horse capital, t.c. Boddhisattava, few Kushan t.c. heads, a plaque of Dharmachakra in terracotta, a relic casket along with a Sung copper coin, from the surface of a Mauryan square Stupa base and a t.c. ladder.

From 1984-1986 Tara Nanda Mishra from the Dept. of Archaeology, HMG, had excavated at the Nativity mound. The excavations exposed six successive layers in the site, beginning with NBP (400B.C.)¹³, Asoka period (267-240B.C., Eggermont, 1991, 246-251)^{13A}, Sunga-Panchal period (200-100B.C.), Kushan period (100-200 A.D.), Gupta period (360-8th cent. A.D.) and early medieval period (9th-13 the cent A.D.).

During the period three monasteries were excavated, thirteen big and small stupas were partly excavated and all these structures were repaired and preserved. The saptarath mauled brick temple was also exposed. The seriously damaged Nativity sculptural panel in relief (Patta pratima, ardha-chitra)¹⁴ was repaired as well as conserved. Among the missing two pieces of this sculptural panel. One piece was found from the back of the sculpture. The other piece was also located from the accumulated stone pieces. All the four pieces were fixed.¹⁵ The Asoka-pillar was excavated to its flat basement stone which was supporting the 30ft. 10 inches stone monolithic chunar sandstone shaft. There was also a brick rail (vedica) in square shape around the pillar made originally during the Ashoka period. The crowning features of the shaft including the horse figure was broken before the visit of Yuan-Chwang, which has been recorded by him (watters 1973, pp. 40-50). The bell capital of the pillar was broken into two halves, which had been placed over a new brick platform, within the iron railing of the pillar. The fissure in the middle of the pillar and the cracks were filled with a paste made of chunar sandstone power mixed in araldite.

The excavation of Mayadevi Temple complex.

Phase I (around 249 B.C.)

The excavation of the Nativity temple (Mulhagandhakuti)¹⁶ was done within Feb. 1993-1995 March. The excavations were carried out by Satoru Uesaka of Japan Buddhist federation, Babu Krishana Rijal from Lumbini Development project, Kosh Prasada Acharya from Dept. of Archeology, H.M.G., Nepal. During these excavation several periods and phases of constructions in the Mayadevi temple had been found.

The pillar inscription of Asoka mentions about a term reading "Sila-bigada- bhicha". This means a big (Vikata) stone (Sila) Bhattika (wall), indicating about the temple erected by Asoka, which has also been mentioned by Divyavadana. D.C. sircar interprets it as - "Prastar Khachita istika Prakar" (the temple made of stone and bricks). But P.L. Gupta means it as, "a high stone wall around the Nativity spot". The Dhammapada Atthakatha and Malvikagnimitra (V,I) refers about the Shrines enclosed with walls or railings (Prakara, Vedika or Bhittikabandha', Coomaraswamy, Yakasas, Delhi, 1971, I, pp. 22-23). The Asokan shrine discovered at Lumbini has also encircling thick walls in two phases. The Chinese pilgrim Seng-tsai (around 350 A.D.) provides the clue about a temple and a Nativity panel made by king Asoka (L.Petech, Roma, 1950, 35- "Asoka enclosed the marks with Lapislazuli on both the sides.").

The excavator Satoru Uesaka describes about two phases of outer walls built around the temple, measuring 26 (east-west) x 21 m (north-south). The second phased walls were 30 to 20 cms. shorter than-the first phased walls. There were fourteen square platforms within the outer walls. Those platforms were most probably, encased with burnt-bricks, which were robbed to be used in the latter constructions. The box-chambers packed with rammed clay were meant to support the upper beams (of sala wood?) to produce higher plinth (Jagati) to the upper structure as Krishna deva has mentioned in his notes about the temple. The size of the central chamber (garbhagriha) was 2.70x2.20m. It is to be noted here that during the period of Asoka, structural apsidal temples were built at Sarnath, Sanchi (temple No. 40) and a rubble built, Chaitya-Griha at

Rajgir. At Sirkap an apsidal temple stands on a raised platform in the middle of a spacious, elevated rectangular courtyard (The Archaeology, vol-I, No. 1, 1988, Karachi, p.57). The apsidal temple at Sanchi was built on high rectangular platform of stone measuring 87ft x 46ft x 11ft. and was provided with stepped approaches on the east-and western sides. The original structure was probably of timber (D. Mitra, Sanchi 1957, 46). It has also a rectangular compound wall (H. Sarkar, Early Buddhist Architecture, Delhi 1967, p. 38). Similarly, at Lumbini the brick prakara of the temple was 78ftx62ft and if we leave a gap of 4ft on all the sides, the temple would have been probably of 70ftx54ft. The face was naturally on the east, which was the feature of the last phase of Gupta temple. We can expect a similar apsidal temple whose upper structure was built of Sala wood at Lumbini. A natural conglomerated stone boulder (70x40x10cms) was found encased with a course of bricks on all sides, in the nativity place.

Temple phase II (200-100 B.C.)

The plinth of the Nativity temple was again raised by erecting similar brick-chambers over the Mauryan besement (adhithana). Five such chambers in rectangular sizes were made of bricks measuring 13 inches x 9.5 inches x 2.5 inches. In the central chamber of this phase a beautiful corobelled niche had been made on the eastern face of the brick sanctum . This niche contained some pieces of chunar sandstone slabs. This discovery also conforms the statements of the Yuelchih monk Seng-tsai (circa 350 A.D.) that king Asoka had covered the seven foot-steps of Lord Buddha with long stone slab. As the Sung-Panchal period of temple construction also confirms about the similar technique being followed by the Mauryan builders, they might have followed the same apsidal style.

Phase III Early Gupta period 350 A.D.

The present nativity sculptural figure, which is a product of Early Gupta art of Mathura, on the mottled red sandstone,¹⁷ can be dated to about 350 A.D. Krishnadeva has also dated this panel as belonging to the 4th cent. A.D.¹⁸ where as, D. Mitra (Excavations In Nepalese Tarai, 1972. 198) simply ascribes it to the

Gupta period. It can be presumed that the temple to enshrine the Nativity panel must have been made in the early Sikhara Style with-bricks. A brick-platform measuring 3ft. 5.5" x 3ft. 4.5" of only one course of bricks from this phase was found during the excavation.

Phase-IV, Late-Gupta temple (7th-8th cent. A.D.)

During this phase the temple was built with carved bricks in Saptaratha and Sikhara style, which had been excavated and drawn by P.C. Mukherjee in 1898. The old Mathura Nativity Panel was again enshrined within this temple, which had a small Mukha-mandap on the east. It is to be noted that carved brick-temples were very frequently built at Paisa, Kudana and many sites in the region during this period.

Phase-V, Modern temple (1990-1933-39 A.D.)

Dr. Fuhrer reports that a Hindu Sanyasi living on the site of Lumbini had built a modern small temple after the discovery of the present Nativity panel. General Kaisher Shumsher had also improved the same temple within 1933-1939.

From these excavations the ancient plan of Lumbini nativity site has been made visible. The most important Vastu (monument) of this site naturally, is the place where Lord Buddha was born and at this place Emperor Asoka had built a temple. The Asoka pillar and the Sakya pound also had prime importance and all these three monuments make the central area or axis, around which monuments in several concentric circles are made. Around the central area there are big and small stupas made in different styles ranging from 300 B.C. to 13th-14th A.D. within the second line of constructions there are also some temples, and a prayer hall (on the east of Mayadevi temple, built in the Kushan period). On the third line from the central axis, are made brick monasteries from 3rd cent B.C. to the late Gupta (8th-9th cent A.D.) period. These monuments have not been properly studied for their typologies, dates and their associations to the different sects of Buddhism. Apart from this, Lumbini is, according to the Mahaparinirvana-Sutta and other literatures, one among the four and the eight pilgrim places¹⁹. The Lumbini pillar Inscription and biographies of Asoka, confirm

that he had visited the place during his pilgrimage. Again, there are still many monuments hidden within the earth and waiting for further spade work at Lumbini, on the east, south-west and north of the Nativity temple. The typical structure attached to Buddhism which have not yet been discovered from the site, are the chankramana sala (the structure used for walking).²⁰ Similarly, Serman halls (Uposthagara Salas) have not been found from the site. Thus further archaeological works in and around Lumbini is urgently needed so that they are discovered, preserved and properly studied before their destruction in the name of gardening or urban development and planning. There are still fifty percent of monuments hidden below the earth. All those important structures have to be exposed and the ancient glorious picture of Lumbini has yet to be revived.

Foot Notes.

1. A.K. Coomaraswamy writes- 'We are sufficiently aware of the spiritual revolution in the Upanisads and Buddhism, whereby the emphasis was shifted from the outer world to the inner life, salvation became the highest goal and knowledge, the means of attainment' (Yaksas, Delhi, 1971, p. I).

E.H. Hopkins reviews that- 'The Brahmanic period is so knit with the size of the Upanishads, Sutras, Epics and Buddhism' (Religions of India, Delhi, 1970, 217).

R.C. Majumdar Writes- 'The Vedic religion lost credit, an theistic movement denied necessity (and) the reality of the Vedic gods. In the 6th cent. B.C. an upheaval of new ideas leading to the rise of philosophical tenets, and religious sects, often of a revolutionary character (The Age of Imp. Unity, Bombay, 1968, 360).

A.L. Basham says - 'He (Buddha) was certainly the greatest man to have born. The story of his life has influenced the lives of countless millions throughout the whole Asia east of Afghanistan.' (The Wonder that was India, 1963, 256).

2. R.K. Mukherjee, Hindu Sabhyata, 1965, 225-226.

3. Lama Taranath, Ed. by D.P. Chattopadhyaya. Delhi, 1990, 339; Dipavansa, V, 5; Mahavansa, V, 10; Buddha, in Dating of the Hist. Buddha, Ed. H. Bechert,

15. T.N. Mishra- The Origin and Development of Buddhism, In Buddhist collection of National Museum of Nepal, 1998, pp. 9-32; Tara Nanda Mishra, The archaeological Activities at Lumbini During 1984-85, paper presented in the first SAARC Archeological congress held in 1986, New Delhi; Samrat Asoka Ra Nepal sanga unko sambandha, Pragya 82 kha, 4-72; Buddha Janmasthan Ra Lumbini ka Utkhanit Mandir Haru, Pragya, 84, pp.7-12; The Archaeological Activities in Lumbini, Ancient Nepal, DOA No. 139, pp. 36-48; The Nativity Sculpture of Lumbini and its conservation, Rolamba vol-10, No. 4 1990; Unesco, The Silk Roads, Buddhist route Expedition, Sept. 1995, 74-98;

16. Buddhist temples have been addressed as Gandhakuti; the Vinayapitaka refers about four Mahasthanas (Sakyamunis residences) at the Jetavana Monastery in Sravasti. They are named as Karerikuti, Kosambakutim, Gandhakuti and Salala-ghara. From Bharahut and Bodhagaya, gandhakutis are mentioned in the 2nd century B.C. The Saranath inscription of Mhipala mentions about-'Asta-Mahasthana Gandhakutim' (P.K. Acharya, Dict. of Hindu Archit, 1995, 161-162). In Patan, Chapatol, a Buddha image has an inscription mentioning Gandhakuti (Dhanavajra, 1973, 382).

17. Mathura School of Bodhisattva-Buddha and other images during the Kushan period (1st-2nd cent A.D.) have been found from Sravasti, Saranath ('Bodhisatvo chhatrayasti pratisthapito Varanasiye Bhagavato Chankame' and 'Bodhisatvo Chhatra dandascha Savastiye Bhagavato chankame kosamba Kutiye'- B. Upadhyaya, Ancient Indian inscriptions, 1961, vol-II, 38-39), Kausambi (S.K. Sarasvati, Indian Sculptures, 1957, 64), central Asia, Taxila (Sarasvati, 1957, fig. 88) and Kathmandu Handigaon (G. Verardi, Excavations In Handigaon, 1992, 114, fig 85) and from Mathura (N.R. Ray, Age of Imp. unity, 1968, 522). Mathura had also supplied two Buddha images to Bodhagaya (Twon Planning Authority, Bodhagaya, 1966,6) and Sanchi (dated images of Bodhisattvas made in the rule of Kushan king Vasishka Vasakushana and

Gupta periods before A.D. 450-451, D. Mitra, Sanchi, 1257, p.6). At Kushinagara a Buddha image (of circa 5th A.D. and a chunar sandstone Buddha in Mahaparinirvana pose (A.D. 413-455) have been found. Similarly at Lumbini a Kushan period Buddha head in red mottled Sandstone was found. Apart from this a Vajrapani and a Devotee in bronze as well as a t.c. figure depicting Siddhartha and his wife Yasodhara in their bed have been excavated (D. Mitra, Exploration in the Tarai, 1972, figs. CXIXA and CXX, VIII, p. 199 and p. 203); T.N. Mishra, Buddhist collection of the National Museum of Nepal, 1998, 18).

18. Krishna Devas 'Report on Latest-Archaeological excavations at Lumbini, submitted to the LDT, 1995, two pages; K. Deva writes "The Gupta temple that enshrined the image of Mayadevi, stylistically datable to circa A.D. 400, which is expected below the existing 8th cent. Saptarath temple of carved bricks, should be located"

19. Mahaparinirvana Sutta Rhys Davids, SBE, Vol-II, Pp. 95-96; "Chattari Samvejaniani Thanani", and they are Lumbini, Bodhagaya, Saranath and Kushinagar. The eight holy places have been mentioned by Itsing; in the inspt. Of Mahipala, dated 1026 A.D. from Saranath, (Acharya, Dict. of Hindu Archit. 1995, p. 162); Lama Taranath, 1990, p. 62; Astamahasthana Chaitya Bandana Stava, written by Harshadeva of Kashmir; and another book by Nagarjun, (Lama Taranath, 1990, Delhi, 62).

20. Chankraman Salas have been found at Karna Suvarna (watters, On Yuan Chwang, 1973, II, 191), Sravasti, Sankasia (watters, 1973, I 369). At Sanchi, south gate, on the east pillar, promenade (chankama) has been carved (D.Mitra, Sanchi, 1978, 34). At Bodhgaya it was ten paces long and three feet high (watters, 1973, II, 120-121). At the same place Cunnigham discovered a brick-wall 53 feet-long 3ft. 6ft broader and a little more than 3 feet in height. At Sarnath it was 50 paces (100ft) long and 7ft high made of stone wall, 52-53).

I, 1991 p. 285; Samaye Bhedoparacana-cakra of Sarvastivada, Dating of Hist. Buddha, I 1991, pp. 277-278.

4. The dating of the Historical Buddha, Ed. H. Bechert, Part I, p. 20 Gottingen; The age of Imp. unity, Ed. By R.C. Majumdar, 1968, 365.

5. According to A.K. Coomarswamy (Yaksas, part I, 1971, p. 35) the Acchariyabbhuta Sutta (No. 123) in the Majjhim Nikaya is the earliest Account of the birth of Buddha. This follows Nidanakatha (chalmers, JRAS, 1894), Buddha charita of Asvaghosa (E.H. Johnston, Delhi, 1972, II pp. 2-3; part I cant i. v. 8-9); Jatakakatha, Lalitvistara, Sinhalese Pujavali; Tibetan Life of Ratnadharmiraja; Rockhills-Life of Buddha and the Bhadrakalpavadana; D.C. Sircar in his book (Indian Epigraphy, Delhi 1965, pp. 436-437) writes about the Kapileshvara inscriptional slab (19 inch x 12 inch x 7 inch) discovered in 1928. He says that it will be seen that such a record had no place outside Lumbinigrāma. We have little doubt that the Kapileshvara copy of the Rummidei inscription is a recent forgery.' Furthermore, the people of Orissa have claimed the site also, apart from, Kapileshvara (which is near Bhuvaneshwar), at a site called Baudapur in the Cuttack district of Orissa. All these places have no archaeological evidences to be proved as the birth place of Sakyamuni, far apart and away from the Shakya country.

6. Luciano Petech, Northern India According to The Shui-Ching-Chu, ISMEO, Roma, 1950.

7. James Legge, The Travels of Fa-hien, Delhi, 1971, 64, - 'Going on South-east from the city of Sravasti for twelve Yojanas came to a town named Na-peikea, the birth place of Krakuchanda Buddha'.

8. J.W. McCrindle, Ancient India as described by Megasthenes and Arrian, London, 1877, p. 137.

9. H. H. Wilson, The Vishnu Purana, Calcutta, 1961 PP. 131-133, (Book II, chapt-I); P.H.L. Eggermont, The year of Mahaviras Decease, in The Dating of the Historical Buddha, Ed, H. Bechert, Part I, Gottingen, 1991, 139-140, 'He (King Agnidhara)

gave to Nabhi the country called Hima, south of Himavat By his queen Meru (King Nabhi) had the magnanimous Rishabha; Rishabha resigned the sovereignty of earth to the heroic Bharat, and adopted the life of an anachoret, practising religious penance and became famous as a great Jain saint.' Eggermont also thinks that- 'there is a link between Nabhi-and the next Asokan inscription' (P. 141). N.P. Chakravarti (Ancient India No. 4, ASI, 1947-48, p. 19) have also similar views; Dr. Upendra Thakur, History of Mithila, Darbhanga, 1956, p. 115.

10. Taranatha's History of Buddhism In India, Ed. by Deviprasad Chattopadhyaya, Delhi, 1999 p. 51 and p. 365. Tarananada Mishra, Samrat Asoka ra Nepal Sanga Unko Sambandha, Pragnya, 82 kha, pp. 61-66.

11. Satish Grover, The Architecture of India, New Delhi, 1980, p. 96, pl. 87-88; Percy Brown, Indian Architecture, Bombay 1969, pl-xxxviii, p. 43.

12. B.K. Rijal., Archaeological Activities in Lumbini in 1976-78, pp. 24-27 Archeological Activities in 1978, p. 31; Mrs. D. Mitra had also noticed about this oblong structure in 1962, Excavations and Explorations, 1972, 197.

13. Herbert Hartle (Archaeological Research on Ancient Buddhist sites, in The dating of the Historical Buddha, Ed. by H. Bechert, Gottingen, 1991, part I, p. 70) writes- 'It is more than probable that the first settlements in Lumbini do not reach even the 5th cent, B.C.'.

13A. P.H.L. Eggermont, The year of Buddhas Mahaparinirvana, In Dating of the Hist Buddha, part 1, 1991, Gottingen, PP. 246-251; R.K. Mukherjee, (Asoka, The Great), gives the date of Asoka ranging from 273-236 B.C.; H.C. Ray Chaudhary, The Date of Asoka pp. 92-94, in The age of Imperial Unity, 1968, Bombay. Raychaudhary places Asoka between 277-253 B.C.

14. Manasarasilsastra (E.D. by P.K. Acharya, 1927, Allahabad, p. 70) calls it "Ardha-chitra" (only half transparent); D.R. Regmi, (M. Nepal-IV, 1966-41) in an inscription of NS. 713 (A.D. 1591) the steles of Manjusri and Lokeshvara are called Patta- pratima. (Steles) "Mityesam patta pratimam Kritva."

Report on Latest Archaeological Excavation at Lumbini

By Krishna Deva

At the outset I must express my gratitude to the authorities of the Lumbini Development Trust for the kind invitation they have extended to me to visit the recent archeological operations at Lumbini and express my opinion.

I visited the archeological works in progress at Lumbini on 15th- 16th March '95 together with my old friend and colleague Prof. A.H. Dani and felt extremely happy at the momentous discoveries the joint archeological team of Nepal and Japan have made. They have clearly and convincingly exposed the earlier stages of the Mayadevi Temple, built successively on the same spot and confirming to the almost identical shape and size and going down to the Mauryan age.

The lowest stage of the temple has yielded multiple brick lined pits, tentatively called by the excavators kundas, which are in fact box chambers. Packed with rammed mud, meant to economies bricks and produce high plinth to carry the main structure. Some more careful excavations are needed to explore the nature of the lowest central structure which could either be a shrine, a stupa or a chaitya to be finally determined after clearance.

The central mass of the toughed brick structure should be carefully cleared from the top downward to determine the character and structural feature of each stage of the temple from the latest to the earliest, noting the respective antiquities including pottery of each stage and plotting them both on the plan (s) and section (s). The Gupta temple that enshrined the image of Mayadevi, stylistically datable to c.A.D. 400, which is expected to lie below the existing 8th century saptaratha temple of carved bricks, should be located.

Greater emphasis is needed to draw, besides plans also stratified sections showing meticulously the nature of

the soil, strata and their relation with important structures, plotting and projecting them on significant finds which would help dating.

To explore the stratigraphical & chronological relationship of the Asokan Pillar to the contemporary temple as also to the tank, long trenches should be driven and the results documented in longitudinal section must also be carried out together with video-recording.

Further works, as recommended above would require another season to be successfully completed. Temporary conservation measures should be undertaken at the close of the present season and final preservation measures should be carefully devised and conducted after the next years concluding operations, keeping exposed viewing only significant monumental remains of each chronological stage of the temple of Nativity.

The members of Archaeological team and the authorities of LDT. are to be as much congratulated on these momentous discoveries as the Japanese Buddhist Federation for their pious dedication and generosity in providing funds and facilities to conduct archeological operations at the great site of Lumbini.

It would be in the fitness of things if the JBF. are provided a suitable site in close proximity to the Asokan pillar and the visitors are able to worship at the new temple and also pay homage to the ancient Mayadevi Temple and the Asokan pillar without travelling long distance, as at the equally sacred Buddhist site at Sarnath.

Lumbini
Sd. Krishna Deva
17.3.95