

# THE BUDDHIST ART OF ANCIENT ARAKAN

(An Eastern Border State beyond Ancient India,  
east of Vanga and Samatata)



San Tha Aung

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***SAN THA AUNG***

**Director-General  
Department of Higher Education  
Ministry of Education  
Rangoon, Burma.**

# C O N T E N T S

<b>PREFACE</b>		<i>Page</i>
<b>CHAPTER</b>	<b>I Geographical Description</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>CHAPTER</b>	<b>II The Early History of Kingdom of Arakan up to 1000 A.D.</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>CHAPTER</b>	<b>III The Cities of Dhanyawadi and Vesali</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>CHAPTER</b>	<b>IV The "Fat Monk" Image</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>CHAPTER</b>	<b>V Miniature Stupas</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>CHAPTER</b>	<b>VI A Tablet of Auspicious Symbols and a Lustration Pot</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>CHAPTER</b>	<b>VII Dedicatory Inscriptions of Nīticandra and Vīracandra of Vesali</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>CHAPTER</b>	<b>VIII A Copper-Plate Land Grant</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>CHAPTER</b>	<b>IX Two Inscribed Ancient Bronze Bells</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>CHAPTER</b>	<b>X Five Ancient Bronze Lamps</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>CHAPTER</b>	<b>XI A Ceti Dedicatory Inscription from Eighth Century Vesali</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>CHAPTER</b>	<b>XII Ancient Miniature Bronze "Cetis" of Vesali.</b>	<b>48</b>

<b>CHAPTER</b>	<b>XIII</b>	<b>Different Indian Schools of Art</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>CHAPTER</b>	<b>XIV</b>	<b>The Head, the Hair and the Uṣṇīṣa</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>CHAPTER</b>	<b>XV</b>	<b>Crowned Buddha Images</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>CHAPTER</b>	<b>XVI</b>	<b>Posture and Gestures of Buddha Images</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>CHAPTER</b>	<b>XVII</b>	<b>Great Events of the Master's Life</b>	<b>83</b>
<b>CHAPTER</b>	<b>XVIII</b>	<b>The Life of Gautama Buddha</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>CHAPTER</b>	<b>XIX</b>	<b>Evolution of Buddhism in India</b>	<b>94</b>
<b>CHAPTER</b>	<b>XX</b>	<b>Fundamentals of Theravada Buddhism</b>	<b>101</b>
<b>CHAPTER</b>	<b>XXI</b>	<b>Buddhism in Arakan</b>	<b>108</b>
<b>CHAPTER</b>	<b>XXII</b>	<b>The Mahamuni Sculptures</b>	<b>112</b>
<b>REFERENCES</b>			<b>121</b>
<b>ABBREVIATIONS</b>			<b>123</b>
<b>LIST OF PLATES</b>			<b>124</b>

## P R E F A C E

The Arakan State is situated on the boundary of Bangladesh and Burma. It is a constituent unit of the Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma. It is separated from Burma proper by a range of mountains known as the Arakan Yomas, which has acted as a barrier against inter-communication between the people living on either side of it. Though descended from the same stock, worshipping the same faith and speaking the same language as the Burmese, the Arakanese have witnessed the flowering of a distinct culture, and have preserved a distinct dialect.

In olden days, Arakan was a thriving, independent ancient border state beyond ancient India. Situated east of Vanga and Samatata, Indologists, writing about the history and culture of ancient India, never mentioned this area where high standards of living, culture and art flourished. The present work is an attempt to fill the missing link between ancient India and Burma proper by presenting a few aspects of the rich cultural heritage of Arakan.

Images in stone and bronze, representing the Buddhist Art of Ancient Arakan (before 1000 A.D) are presented in this book.

A Fat Monk image, miniature stupas, a tablet of auspicious symbols, dedicatory inscriptions fallen out of old ruined stupas and caityas, a relief sculpture of preaching Buddha discovered from the Selagiri hill and sculptures found on the platforms of the Mahamuni Shrine are all sculptured out of, or inscribed on stones.

The miniature cetis (caityas), bells, lamps and numerous Buddha images, crowned and uncrowned, are all made of bronze. These bronze artifacts provide evidence of a flourishing school of bronze castings. The time of casting ranged from the 5th century A.D. to the 10th century A.D.

*it*

I have presented many varieties of bronze Buddha images, both crowned and uncrowned, of Arakan having different gestures. I have also explained these gestures one by one. Any one who is interested in Buddhist iconography, I hope, will be able to find in the images I have presented, new types and variations till now unknown to them, and also remarkable affinities with those that they are more or less familiar with. In both cases, I fervently hope that, a really interested mind will have much to take delight in.

These Buddha images, covering a period of nearly five hundred years, recorded the artistic achievements of bronze-casters from the period of experimentation (5th century A.D) to the period of culmination (10th century A.D) in the well modelled graceful figures of the last period. The metal caster's art, especially in the fashioning of crowned Buddha images, remained throughout at a high level. The pictures of these images, which I have presented in this book, amply testify to the truth of my remarks.

Although the Mahamuni Sculptures represented the earliest group of the Buddhist Art of Arakan, they are described in the last chapter of the book for reasons which will become apparent after reading the Chapter on "Buddhism in Arakan".

I want to record my gratitude to those who assisted me in one way or another in writing this book.

To Sao Hso Hom formally of the Higher Education Department, for the pains he took in carefully reading the whole text and suggesting many corrections.

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*September, 1979.*

**SAN THA AUNG**

ever, the Arakanese have to some extent retained the old name of the kingdom, and it is still known as the Kingdom of Arakan. The Arakanese have been ruled by various dynasties, and the kingdom has been a part of various empires. The Arakanese have a long history, and their kingdom has been a part of the history of the region. The Arakanese have a rich culture, and their kingdom has been a part of the history of the region. The Arakanese have a long history, and their kingdom has been a part of the history of the region. The Arakanese have a rich culture, and their kingdom has been a part of the history of the region.

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## CHAPTER I

**Geographical Description**  
 The Arakan State is situated between Burma proper on the east and Bangladesh on the west. It extends from Lat. 21° 20' N at its northernmost limit to Lat. 16° N at Pagoda Point, its southern extremity. From west to east it extends from the Naaf River at Long. 92° 40' E to the crestline of the Arakan Yoma at Long. 95° 20' E. See Map I and II.

The latitudinal and longitudinal extensions given above do not give a true idea of the area of the present day Arakan, because it is mostly a narrow coastal strip. The only area where there is space to speak of is the area around Akyab which formerly was the centre or nucleus of the ancient Arakanese kingdom. See Map III.

The north-south extension (latitudinal spread) of the present day Arakan State is 360 miles as the crow flies, but in the Akyab district, the cradle, so to speak, of Arakanese civilisation, the extent is only about 160 miles or so. The east-west extension is even less. At the broadest part, that is the northern end, the extent from the Bay of Bengal to the crestline of the Arakan Yoma is about 100 miles. Further south, about the latitude of Sandoway, the breadth is only about 25 miles. The coastal strip continues narrowing down still further to the south until it ends at a point, known as Pagoda Point. The present area of the Arakan State is 14,200 square miles.

2.

In time past, the limits of the old Arakanese kingdoms have varied according to the prowess of the ruling king. In times of greatness, the area of the kingdom of Arakan has covered twice the area of the present day State. There were times when Arakan controlled the Dacca area as far afield as Mushidabad. The Chittagong area was most of the time under Arakanese rule till 1666 A.D., when the Mogul Emperor annexed the area because of the Shah Shuja affair. Chittagong is an Arakanese word signifying "the head of the army" or a fort.

### **The Peoples of Arakan**

The earliest people who lived in Arakan were Negritos who are mentioned in the chronicles as "Bilus" (cannibals). They appear to have been the direct neolithic descendents of the Arakanese soil. Later, waves of peoples of different races came into this land from the north. Late-comers were the Mros and Saks, followed by the Chins, the Khamis, the Daingnets and the Chaungthas.

All the Arakanese Chronicles mention the coming to Arakan of Indo-Aryan peoples from the Ganges Valley and the founding of the cities of Dhanyawadi and Vesali by their kings. The Indian chiefs who came over probably ruled over the native population, gradually impressing on them their culture and religion. There can be no doubt either that Buddhist adventurers, traders and missionaries managed to reach Arakan at a very early period, even before the advent of the Christian Era.



## CHAPTER II

## The early history of the kingdom of Arakan up to 1000 A.D.

Up to now historians have largely neglected Arakan. This is mainly due to its geographical position on the boundary of India and Burma. Burmese historians have directed their efforts to elucidating such facts as can be ascertained about Burma proper, and the Burma Archaeological Service have not undertaken any serious excavations in Arakan. Indologists on the other hand have shown little interest in an area in which, even at the period dealt with here (up to 1000 A.D), Indian Civilization was not a natural product, but was something imposed on the country from without.

About forty years ago, all that was known of the early history of Arakan up to 1000 A.D. was the dynastic lists given in the local chronicles. The lists of kings began with those who were dated from about 3000 B.C. The first king mentioned was Marayu. He was the son of a prince from Kapilavastu who must have been driven into this region on political grounds. Marayu married the daughter of a powerful Mro tribal chief of whom the deer was held sacred. When the young prince came of age he led the whole of his mother's tribe, as well as all his father's followers from India and conquered Arakan. He founded the first city of Dhanyawadi. His descendants numbered fifty four kings among them.

Then came Kanrazagri and his twenty eight kingly descendents. He founded the second city of Dhanyawadi.

The dynasty founded by Kanrazagri was succeeded by the Suriya kings the first of whom was **Canda Suriya**. He founded the third city of Dhanyawadi. According to the chronicles it was during his reign that the Buddha visited Arakan with his five hundred disciples. It was mentioned that the famous Mahamuni image (which is at present in Mandalay) was cast with his consent as a memento of his sojourn in the country. A palm-leaf manuscript entitled, 'appadanapakarana, provides a detailed account of the casting of this image. The Suriya dynasty consisted of forty eight kings and was succeeded by the Candra dynasty.

The founder of the Candra dynasty was **Maha Taing Candra**. He ascended the throne in 788 A. D. and built the city of Vesali which he made his capital. Vesali collapsed due to the invasion of the Shans in 957 A. D. Though under unsettled conditions it continued as capital till 1018 A. D.

At present other evidences rather than the chronicles are available to elucidate the early history of Arakan. Epigraphic and numismatic materials are now available. They are the prasastis, the votive inscriptions, the copper plate land grant, the bell inscriptions and numerous early coins struck for the purpose of currency.

Out of these the most important one being the Anandacandra Inscription inscribed on the west face of the pillar now at the Shitthaung Pagoda at Mrauk-Oo, Arakan. See Plate 1. It is a prasasti of king Anandacandra who ruled Arakan about 720 A. D. See Plate 2.

It had been dated on palaeographic grounds to the beginning of the 8th century A. D. by Dr. E. H. Johnston, and Dr. D. C. Sircar. Dr. Johnston was the first to read the inscription fully. His readings reveal a list of kings which he considered to be reliable from the beginning of the Candra dynasty.

The first part of the inscription contains three sections quoting the names of the kings who were believed to have ruled over the area before Anandacandra, together with the duration of their reigns. The first of these three sections deals with certain kings who altogether ruled for a total of 1016 or 1060 years. The beginning of this section is damaged; but, as all the five kings at the commencement of the extant portion are stated to have ruled for 120 years, it is clear that this section (or at least the earlier part) is mythical. We may refer to this section as the 1st period. The second section

With the candra kings, sixteen of whom are stated to have ruled for a total of 230 years. The list, however, enumerates only thirteen names although their reign periods as quoted in it come up to 230 years. This is possible because three kings of the dynasty, who may have ruled for a few weeks or months, were omitted from the list. We may call this section the 2nd period. The last of the three sections deals with the family to which Anandacandra belonged and quotes the names of his eight predecessors stated to have together ruled for 119 years and 9 months. We may call this section the 3rd period. See Tables I, II and III for the names of the kings and their ruling period.

The second part of the inscription is an eulogy of Anandacandra recounting the king's pious activities in the first nine years of his reign. From this we can conclude that the inscription was apparently engraved in the ninth year of his reign. He was evidently a Buddhist by personal religion and he calls himself an upasaka, but following the Buddhist tradition of religious tolerance he did not neglect the Brahmins in his display of liberality.

The candra dynasty mentioned in the second section began in the middle of the fourth century. Out of the list of thirteen kings of this dynasty we are now in possession of coins struck by nine kings. See Plates 3, 4, 5. These early coins are all of silver. They seem to have been issued in three or four denominations and to have been struck to certain weight standards. They were coined to serve as currency. The patterns on the coins persist without major changes for about 600 years. This is further proof that the coins were used as currency.

In addition to the nine different coins belonging to nine different kings of this dynasty of the 2nd period, two epigraphic records of kings Niticandra and Viracandra were also found at the Vesali site about the year 1956. See Plate 15. This Candra dynasty came to an end with the king Dhrticandra. Taking the time estimate of Dr. Johnston and Dr Sircar, this would have happened about the end of the 6th century.

After them, there seems to have been trouble in the area. The 3rd period begins with king Mahavira who may have come from another kingdom (Purempura). For the next fifty years or more, it seems none of the rulers were able to establish a dynasty. Johnston calls this the confused period in early Arakanese history. The names of the two kings on the list of this period tallies with the coins found in that area. They were Dhammawizaya and Dhammacandra. See Plate 6.

The north face inscription of the pillar at Shitthaung Pagoda, Mrauk-Oo was, according to Dr. Johnston, written in a Bengali script of the 10th century A.D. The letters in the script are badly cut and vary considerably in shape. The inscription amounts to sixty nine lines, when counted on the right side. Parts of them are entirely gone; the rest is written in a slipshod hand, and the rubbing itself seems to have been inefficiently done so as to make reading of it chancy. There appears to be at least three inscriptions, all in much the same script. According to Dr. Johnston, a competent epigraphist, working on the stone instead of the rubbings, should be able to produce a fair reading of the inscriptions. He concluded that North Arakan again produced in the tenth century a dynasty of some importance. The history of Arakan for the period between Anandacandra and the 10th century will be enlightened if these inscriptions of the north face of the pillar are properly deciphered. A number of coins that fall within this period have also been found. The most notable one being that of king Sri Simgha-  
ndacandra. See Plate 6. By studying the writings on this coin palae-  
ographically we can place this king's rule about the end of the ninth century or the beginning of the tenth century.

This is all that we know about the history of ancient Arakan. The standard of culture and the civilisation of the people residing in the country during this period can be judged from the silver coins they used as currency and the religious art which I am presenting in this book.

**TABLE I.**  
**THE FIRST PERIOD**

Name Of King	Length Of Reign	Dr. Sircar's Tenta- tive Assignment
1. Lost	120	638 B.C
2. Lost	120	518 B.C
3. Lost	120	398 B.C
4. Lost	120	278 B.C
5. Bahubali	120	158 B.C
6. Raghupati	120	38 B.C
7. Lost	120	82 A.D
8. Candrodaya	27	202 A.D
9. Annaveta kings	5	229 A.D
10. Lost	77	234 A.D
11. Rimbhyappa	23	311 A.D
12. Kuverami	7	334 A.D
13. Umavirya	20	341 A.D
14. Jugna	7	361 A.D
15. Lanki		368 A.D

**TABLE II.**  
**THE SECOND PERIOD**

Name Of King	Length Of Reign	Dr. Sircar's Tenta- tive Assignment
1. Dven candra	55	370 A.D
2. Raja candra	20	425 A.D
3. Kala candra	9	445 A.D
4. Deva candra	22	454 A.D
5. Yajña candra	7	476 A.D
6. Candra bandhu	6	483 A.D
7. Bhumi candra	7	489 A.D
8. Bhuti candra	24	496 A.D
9. Niti candra	55	520 A.D
10. Vira candra	3	575 A.D
11. Priti candra	12	578 A.D
12. Prthvicandra	7	590 A.D
13. Dhrti candra	3	597 A.D

**TABLE III.**  
**THE THIRD PERIOD**

Name Of King	Lenth Of Reign	Dr. Sircar's Tepta- tive Assignment
1. Mahavira	12	600 A.D
2. Vrayajap	12	612 A.D
3. Sevinren	12	624 A.D
4. Dharma sura	13	636 A.D
5. Vajra sakti	16	649 A.D
6. Dharma vijaya	36	665 A.D
7. Narendra vijaya	3	701 A.D
8. Dharma candra	16	704 A.D
9. Ananda candra	9	720 A.D

### **CHAPTER III**

#### **The Cities of Dhanyawadi and Vesali**

##### **Location**

The capital cities of the former kingdom of Arakan, may be divided into two groups: one group comprising those cities situated in the Kaladan Valley and the other, those of the Lemro Valley. Mrauk-Oo (Mrohaung), the last of the Royal Capitals of Arakan is unique, because it occupies a narrow valley in the hills between the Lemro and the Kaladan rivers. Commanding the only big gap between the two valleys, the city exerted control over both those valleys which were easily accessible by means of streams and roads.

However, since our present concern is with the Arakan of the period before 1000 A.D., we shall be dealing only with the cities of the Kaladan Valley. Of these, the most important by far are the cities of Dhanyawadi and Vesali, both located just west of the ridge which lies between the Kaladan and the Lemro rivers. The sites of these cities are about 16 miles apart, but both were built on the well-drained foothill area of the ridge, with their backs against the ridge. As a matter of fact, the eastern wall of Vesali is built on the ridge itself. The ridge is 1200 feet high behind Dhanyawadi, but decreases in height towards the south. Behind Vesali it is 400 feet high.



## Dhanyawadi

Dhanyawadi (Lat, 20° 52' N., Long 93° 3' E.) is located 6 miles east of the Kaladan river, and about 60 miles up-river from its mouth at Akyab. The city site is about 16 miles north of Vesali, and some 21 miles north of Mrauk-Oo (Mrohaung). See Map III. The city is backed up against the ridge which separates the Kaladan valley from the Lemro valley. The remains show that there was an outer and an inner city. Parts of the walls and the moats can still be seen in many places. The modern village of Thayettabin lies in the southwestern part of the outer city, and the Mahamuni Shrine lies just to the north of the inner city. See Map IV and Plate 7. The old city was of fairly large size, almost circular in shape, with the eastern wall at the base of the ridge. On the western side only a small portion of the outer wall remain because of the ravages of the Thare Chaung, a tributary of the Kaladan. The chaung may have once formed the moat on the west. The remaining parts of the former moat have been silted over and have become paddy fields.

The inner city was the site of the Palace. Royalty and officialdom resided within the inner city. The common people occupied the outer city whose walls also enclosed the fields which they cultivated. The area of the inner city was only 64 acres. In those days of insecurity, when the country was often subject to raids by various hill tribes, the people felt safer within the walls. By enclosing the paddy fields, the people would have an assured food supply even under siege, thus permitting them to withstand the seige.

Dhanyawadi was built at a time when only the upper Kaladan was above high water level. To the south, below the latitude of Mrauk-Oo (Mrohaung), the country was still one vast area of mangrove swamps. Only the edges of the islands were then reclaimed for cultivation. Small sailing ships could come right up the Thare Chaung to the city. Indian influences penetrated into the city by sea and by land.

According to local chronicles, this Dhanyawadi is the third Dhanyawadi I have mentioned in Chapter II, and it is supposed to have been the Capital of Arakan from the 6th century B.C. to 788 A.D. Dr. E.H. Johnston, however, after deciphering Anandacandra inscription of Shitthaung Pagoda which is situated in Mrauk-Oo, dated the founding of Vesali as 350 A.D. Dr. Sircar of the Indian Archaeological Survey also agrees with Dr. Johnston, in differing from the local

chronicles, and he has suggested the date of the founding of Vesali to be about 370 A.D. If we are to accept these dates, then Dhanyawadi was the Capital of Arakan up to 350 or 370 A.D.

Dhanyawadi controlled the Kaladan Valley and also the Mayu Valley on the west. At that time the Lemro had probably not as yet built up any well-drained flood plain in its upper reaches. This region was then in all probability occupied by hill tribes. Even in the lower Lemro valley, the flood plain was mainly to be found on the western side, the hills reaching the river along most of the eastern bank.

### **Vesali**

Vesali (Lat: 20° 40' N., Long. 93° 9' E.) lies 16 miles south of Dhanyawadi. See Map III. It has on its western flank the Rann Chaung, a tributary of the Kaladan, and on its eastern side, the ridge which separates the Kaladan Valley from the Lemro Valley. The shape of the city is rather unusual since the walls were built in such a way as to obtain the fullest advantage of the well-drained land to be found in the foothill zone. The shape is somewhat oval, the north and east running in more or less straight lines, while the walls on the south and the west are curved. See Map V and Plate 8. A tributary of the Rann Chaung now traverses the city site. According to the local chronicles, the city's full name is "Vesali, the city with the stone stairs". These stone stairs led to the pier where sailing ships must have docked in those days. Remains of those stone stairs leading to the pier can still be seen at ebb-tide, on the northwest of the city.

The north-south diameter of the outer walls at the widest part is nearly 10,000 feet, while the east-west diameter is only about 6,500 feet at the widest. The area of the city is about 2.7 square miles, very definitely larger than Dhanyawadi. Like Dhanyawadi, Vesali also has a smaller inner city: the palace site. It is rectangular in shape with a length of 1500 feet and a width of 1000 feet. A moat surrounds the walls of this inner city.

Vesali, a bigger city, was even more secure than Dhanyawadi, with the population tilling their fields inside the city walls. It is noteworthy that Vesali, lying further south, was even more open to western influence. According to local chronicles, Vesali was the capital of Arakan from 788 to 957 A.D. when conditions became unsettled. Actually it continued as the capital till 1018 A.D. under

those unsettled conditions. According to Johnston and Sircar, Vesali was founded even earlier than the date given in the local chronicles; they give the date as 350 or 370 A.D. In any case, Vesali was a larger and more thriving port than Dhanyawadi.

Both the cities of Dhanyawadi and Vesali being built on the well-drained foothill area of the ridge which lies between the Kaladan and the Lemro rivers, are well preserved from the ravages of the rivers. Many and varied antique pieces have been found from these two places from time to time. Systematic excavation of these two sites are sure to harvest rich rewards. The majority of the images shown in this book were obtained from the relic chambers of ruined pagodas situated in these places.

## CHAPTER IV

### The "Fat Monk" Image

According to *Gordon Luce*, writing in his book "Old Pagan" the Fat Monk image is a widespread and ancient type of image frequently found in old relic chambers at such well known sites as Sriksetra, Rangoon, Pegu, Mandalay, Pagan and so on. The Fat Monk is invariably depicted with a bulging belly, always sitting cross-legged, usually in padmasana, either in dhyana mudra, or with both hands supporting his belly. He is often depicted sitting on a double lotus throne, sometimes on a bare pedestal, and on rare occasions, with a back-slab behind him. His statuettes, always small (up to 9 inches in height), are made from many kinds of material including stone, bronze, silver-gilt, bronze-gilt, plaster, terracotta, and even unburnt clay, sometimes lacquered and gilded.

Luce's book "Old Pagan" contains pictures of ten different images of the Fat Monk, together with an account concerning them. Luce raised the question of who the Fat Monk could have been, and tried to answer it with some conjectures of his own and of others. We read therefore that *Charles Duroiselle* first took the Fat Monk to be the pot-bellied Jambhala or Kubera, Lord of the Yakasa and as such, the god of wealth. He is later said to have accepted the idea that the monk might be Kaccayana monk, a scholar and the author of the first Pali Grammar. We are also given *U Mya's* view that these figures probably represented Gavampati, the patron saint of the Mons. Since Luce could not be sure about whom the

Fat Monk represented, he merely stated that he leant towards U Mya's opinion, giving his reasons for his stand.

In 1922, one small stone image of such a Fat Monk was found in Arakan. It was found by a **taung-ya** cultivator from among the ruins of an old brick pagoda at panzeemyaung phyar about three miles east of the old Vesali site. The image is 4.4 inches high, 2.4 inches wide and 0.9 inch thick. The Fat Monk is depicted in a sitting posture, with his right foot placed on his left thigh. He is shown sitting on a lotus throne, with a back-slab behind him. The back-slab is decorated with flower petals around the border. The monk is in dhyana mudra with his left hand placed on the right hand, and he has a piece of cloth wrapped around the chest, with one end of the piece hanging down over the left shoulder. See Plate 9.

It appears that the image is no longer in its original form. This tampering with the original was due to the thought-less acts of beautification by the later possessors of the image. Although the process of beautification set in motion through good intentions and pious impulses, the net result was that it ruined the original art. Fortunately, however, the backside of the back-slab has not been tampered with, and still possesses a line of inscription in the Brahmi script. See Plate 9. According to the palaeographical consideration of the script, the image can be dated around the beginning of the Christian era. The line can be translated as **Saccakaparibajaka(ji) na**.

**Saccakaparibajaka** was a Nirgrantha Jina ascetic. He lived in **Vesali** during the lifetime of the Buddha. He was a philosopher and teacher. He was said to have challenged Mahavira and the Buddha to a discussion with him about whose philosophy was the best. We are told that at the end of the debate he had to bow down to the Buddha and acknowledge the Buddha's superiority. In Dr. **Udall's** Dictionary of Pali Proper Names, Saccaka was mentioned as one of those who became a follower of the Buddha.

This Fat Monk discovered in Arakan, whose identity was revealed in the inscription at the back of the back-slab, has now enlightened us regarding the Fat Monks found in other parts of Burma, as has already been mentioned by Gordon Luce.

## CHAPTER V

### Miniature Stupas

To Buddhist the world over, the stupa is an emblem of Buddha's **parinirvana**, for the stupa is a monument erected over relics of the Buddha. And because Buddhists revere the relics of the Blessed One, it naturally follows that the stupa should play a leading role in Buddhist architecture.

The oldest stupas extant are full hemispherical domes constructed of brick or stone, usually raised on a terrace. The stupas of Sanchi, Andher and Mankiala near Rawalpindi, in India and Pakistan, all belong to such a type. At a later period, a solid cylinder or drum was added beneath the hemisphere, thereby gradually raising it above the ground-level. Later still a square piece of stone came to be placed on top of the hemisphere. This square piece acted as the support for the **hti** or finial. Still later on an architect added a niche to one side of the drum. Later architects developed this idea by adding four niches to the drum, each niche facing one of the cardinal points. Today these niches each contain an image of the Buddha. See Plate 10. Generally four Buddhas are figured around votive stupas. [There are some stupas with five niches, but these are very rare.]

Today almost every hillock in Arakan is crowned with a pagoda, but old stupas dating before 1000 A.D. are now extremely rare. They have either collapsed due to weathering, [annual rainfall in the

Arakan State is over 200 inches), or have been destroyed by vandalism, or been encased in pagodas built by later kings. There is no doubt, however, that they were once plentiful. The inscription of Viracandra, a king of the Candra dynasty states that a hundred stupas were constructed and dedicated by King Viracandra because of his love for the True Law. See Plate 15. To date, over thirty stone inscriptions bearing, in Gupta characters, the Yedhamma verse in full, have been found from all over Arakan. These stone inscriptions are the remains of the old stupas built before the 6th century A.D.

Recently miniature stone stupas with the Yedhamma verse inscribed on them have been found in Arakan. I now present three of them. The first miniature stone stupa was found at the foot of the Kyauktaw Hill when an old stone stupa collapsed to reveal the miniature encased inside. See Plate 10 for the stupa, and Plate 11 for the Yedhamma verse inscribed on it. By studying the characters used in inscribing the verse palaeographically, we can establish the date of the stupa. In the case of the present stupa we can roughly assign the date to be somewhere about the 5th century A.D.

This miniature stupa consists of two pieces. The lower piece is a square base which may be regarded as a plinth. The height of the plinth is about seven inches. The upper piece is the stupa proper, about two and a half feet in height. This piece has a square platform made to fit in the base. Above this platform is a cube. The complete Yedhamma verse is inscribed on one of the faces of this cube. There is another square platform on the cube. Above the platform are three terraces, and above the terraces is the cylindrical drum decorated with three bands. The middle band is broader and thicker than the other two. The top of the cylinder is hemispherical. It looks like an inverted bowl or a bell. On the top of the hemisphere is a ring of beads surmounted by moulding which support the *hti*.

The two other miniature stupas were found at Meechaungwa village, twenty miles north of Kyauktaw town. The village lies on the bank of the Kaladan river. The erosion of the banks brought to light the two stupas which were stuck in the mud about 20 feet below ground level. They are now kept for safe custody and preservation in Akyab town. See Plate 12. The miniature stupa in Plate 12 is almost exactly like the first one, except that the Yedhamma verse is incomplete and is inscribed in a single line on one of the sides of the square platform. The verse reads: **Yedhamma hetu**

**prabhawa hetu.** See Plate 12. The stupa is complete with plinth and **hti**. The third stupa which is shown in Plate 13, however, no longer has a plinth. The part above the cylinder has also been broken off and is missing. The incomplete Yedhamma verse is inscribed in two lines. **Yedhamma hetu** on the square platform above the cube and **Prabhawa hetu** on the cube itself. See Plate 13. This stupa is slightly shorter than the first one, whereas the second is slightly taller. From studying the handwriting on these two stupas, (palaeographical examination), they can also be assigned to the 4th or 5th century A. D.

These three surviving miniature stupas carved out of stone in a bygone age, and by chance spared by the climate, together with other stone inscriptions fallen from old pagodas, each bearing the Yedhamma verse in Gupta characters, are sufficient to establish positively, the fact that Buddhism flourished in Arakan not later than the 4th or 5th century A. D.

Why did the people of that era inscribe the Yedhamma verse on religious sculptures and monuments? What do the words signify? It will not be out of place to answer these questions here.

After having attained Enlightenment, Buddha preached his first sermon to the five ascetics who were his former companions, in the Deer Park (Mrigadava) on the outskirts of Benares. These five became his first disciples. Buddha then proceeded to Rajagriha where King Bimbisara gave him the park known as the Bamboo Grove. While Buddha and his disciples were sojourning there, a remarkable incident occurred.

Assaji, the youngest of the five disciples, went into the city of Rajagriha with his alms-bowl, where he met an ascetic by the name of Upatisya, who was later to become one of the chief disciples of Buddha under the name of Sariputra. Upatisya was greatly impressed by Assaji's dignity and composure and was moved to ask who was Assaji's teacher and what were his teachings. Assaji replied that his teacher was Gautama Buddha, but that as regards Buddha's teachings, he being newly ordained, could not explain the dhamma completely. The eager Upatisya, however, pressed Assaji to tell him a little of what he knew. Assaji complied by reciting the Yedhamma verse.



"Ye dhamma hetu prabhava hetum tesam tathagato,

Hyavadattesanca yo nirodha evamvadi mahasramanah"

Out of all the laws, the law of cause is the origin.

Tathagato (i. e. Buddha) has spoken of the conditions arising from a cause. He has also spoken of their cessation. This is the doctrine of the great 'Sramana (i.e. Buddha).

Upon hearing the verse, Upatisya's higher consciousness was awakened immediately. (He became a **Sotapan**, the first stage for becoming an **Arahat**.)

The Yedhamma verse, therefore, gives the cream of Buddhism. According to the comments made by G. Coedes "The extraordinary conciseness of this stanza, that gives in four verses the quintessence of the teaching of the Master, might alone be considered sufficient justification for its choice and explanation of its popularity. But there is more in it than that. According to the tradition preserved in the most ancient writings, it was by means of this stanza that the Buddha secured the adherence of the two disciples Sariputta and Moggallana, afterwards revered in the circles of the Brotherhood as second only to the Master himself. A formula which had so speedily convinced the two most notable followers of the Master, must rapidly have acquired in the eyes of the ancient Buddhists a sort of magic virtue, and may well have seemed to them a quite irresistible charm for the conversion to the Faith of any who had not yet heard it."

## CHAPTER VI

### A Tablet of Auspicious Symbols and a Lustration Pot

The square tablet of porous white sandstone which can be seen in Plate 14, was found together with a bronze pot, a stone dinner plate, and two cart-loads of artefacts, in 1965 by workers of the Construction Corporation, while digging earth to build the Mrauk-Oo Vesali road. The site of the find lies on the right of the road as one proceeds from Mrauk-Oo to Vesali, and about one furlong before one reaches the Thinkyattaw Junction Pagoda. The tablet and the pot are now deposited in the Mrauk-Oo archeological shed.

The face of the tablet measure  $6\frac{1}{2}$  inches by  $6\frac{1}{2}$  inches. This square face is divided by three bands in the form of concentric circles, into a radiant design. The innermost band surrounds a circular-shaped depression about two inches in diameter. This innermost band and the next which is about 0.7 inch from it, enclose what one might consider as 43 lotus petals, or perhaps the spokes of a wheel. The outermost band is 1.03 inches from the middle band, and these two concentric circles enclose the twelve auspicious symbols.

The twelve auspicious symbols, taken anti-clockwise, beginning with the srivatsa symbol, are: - (1) a srivatsa diagram, (2) a deer, (3) a peacock king (Mauryaraja), (4) a pair of fly-whisks (Camara), (5) a brahmani duck (Hamsaraja), (6) a right-voluted conch (Sankha), (7) a dhvaja-stambha, (8) a bull king (Usabharaja), (9) a goad (Ankusa), (10) a white umbrella (Chattra), (11) a full vase with a plant (Purna kalasa) and (12) a pair of fish (Suvannamacchayugalam).

The four corners of the tablet which lie outside the third band, are decorated with reliefs that look like lotus buds and leaves. These are finally surrounded by a square, beaded border.

The bronze pot, which was found together with this tablet, has a rounded base, three bands around its neck, and a detachable lid. Its rounded base fits exactly into the depression at the centre of the tablet.

But what actually is the tablet? As it has twelve symbols, is it a tablet representing the twelve signs of the Zodiac? Or is it a tablet of worship like the Visnupattas of the Hindus and the Ayagapata of the Jains? Or is it something else?

The twelve signs of the Zodiac are: Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricornus, Aquarius and Pisces. In Spiritual Cosmology, Aquarius, the eleventh sign of the Zodiac, is symbolised by the Water-carrier, carrying a pitcher full of water, and Pisces, the twelfth sign, by a pair of fish, depicted with the head of one placed against the tail of the other. In the Vesali tablet, the eleventh and the twelfth figures are a full vase and a pair of fish respectively. The fact that these figures correspond in this manner may not be accidental. Rather it seems to show a recognition of the divinity of the signs of the Zodiac.

Hence it may be deduced that the Srivatsa diagram occupies the first sign, viz. Aries of the Zodiac. It is also the first cardinal point, i.e. the East. The first, fourth, seventh and tenth signs, or the four cardinal points (the East, North, West and South) are occupied in the Vesali tablet by Srivatsa, the Fly-whisk, Dhavjastamba, and the White Umbrella respectively. Actually these four figures represent the King's regalia. They derive from the concept of the King as cakravartin or "world ruler". Hence it is difficult to interpret this tablet as representing the twelve signs of the Zodiac.

Let us now compare this tablet with the Visnupattas of the Hindus and the Ayagapata of the Jains.

N.K. Bhattasali, in his book "Iconography of Buddhist and Brahmanical Sculptures in the Dacca Museum, 1929, p.p.89-93" has described the Visnupattas in detail. According to him these are square slabs of stone or metal, with the image of Visnu engraved

on one side and his ten incarnations depicted on the other. They are a special class of votive relief, and Hindus usually hang them on the mat-wall of their dwellings as a sacred object to receive occasionally homely worship.

Dr. G. Buler, in his article "Specimens of Jaina Sculptures from Mathura, p 314, *Epigraphia Indica* Vol. II", wrote about the Ayagapata of the Jains as follows:- Ayagapata is an ornamental slab, bearing the representation of a Jina or of some other object of worship, and the term may be appropriately rendered by "tablet of homage or worship" since such slabs were put up in temples, as the numerous inscriptions on them say "for the worship of the Arhats".

In the light of the above descriptions, can the present tablet be a Buddhist "Ayagapata"? Here we do not have any image of the Buddha. Instead there is a vacant spot in the centre of the tablet in the shape of the circular depression. Perhaps the explanation of the absence of the Buddha image can be found in Dr. Foucher's book "The beginning of Buddhist Art". In this book he wrote about the ancient stone-carvers of India carrying out the strange undertaking of representing the life of the Buddha without Buddha. After citing a number of examples he wrote that those selected examples sufficed to demonstrate that the ancient Indian sculptors abstained absolutely from representing either Bodhisattva or Buddha in the course of his earthly life. Such is the abnormal, but indisputable fact of which every history of Buddhist art will have, at the outset, to render account.

After Buddha's parinirvana (death), the Law alone was of importance to the Buddhist Order. In *Milindapanha*, we find the venerable Nagasena teaching King Menander that the Blessed One is no longer visible except in the form of dharmakaya.

The four principal episodes in the life of the Buddha are, his birth, his enlightenment, the preaching of his first sermon as the Buddha, and his death. Symbolic representations of these episodes are: the lotus or the bull for the nativity, the tree for the enlightenment, the wheel for the sermon and the stupa for the parinirvana.

Assuming that the vacant spot in the centre of our tablet is a representation of the Buddha without Buddha, we can go on and surmise that the two concentric circles surrounding this spot and containing 43 lotus petals or spokes, represents the Wheel of Law, a symbolic representation of Buddha's first sermon on the outskirts of

the city of Benares, in a park then known as Mrigadara. This first sermon has come to be known to Buddhists as the turning of the Wheel of the Law or Dharmacakra pravarttana. If our assumption is correct, the twelve figures above the wheel should represent the sacred symbols connected with Buddha's life. A study of the representation of the Buddha's footprint will reveal that many of the symbols can be found among the 108 traditional marks of the footprint.

U Mya's "A note on the Buddha's Footprints in Burma", published in the Archaeological Survey of India Annual Report, (1930-34) gives some very interesting information regarding these auspicious marks. U Mya made a study of the Buddha's foot-prints in Burma and examined them from the historical and symbolistic points of view. He traced the evolution of the Buddha's foot-prints bearing the 108 marks in Burma from about the 11th century A.D to the present day. In his article, he also gave a list of these marks as are to be found in the **Jinalankaratika** and the **Anagatavamsa Atthakatha**. He also remarked that the growth in the number of marks in the Buddha's foot-prints has been gradual. The Lakkhana-sutta mentions only one mark on each sole. It is a wheel with a thousand spokes. The Buddhavamsa adds to it, a streamer, a vajra, a flag, a vaddhamana and a goad. The atthakatha of the Mahapandana sutta mentions more marks in addition, but still leaves the total number far below the final 108 marks. Thus the growth in the number of auspicious marks is gradual till the 108 marks are mentioned in the Jinalankaratika and the anagatavamsa atthakatha in about the 5th or 6th century A.D.

Ten of the twelve figures on our tablet can be found in the list of 108 auspicious marks.

Our surmise that the centre vacant spot represents Buddha without Buddha, now appears to be a distinct probability. But some questions still remain unanswered. If our surmise is true, then our tablet must be a very old one, that is, it should have been made within two or three centuries after Buddha's parinirvana. (Since the tablet contains no inscription, it is impossible to date it palaeographically). If this tablet is as old as it should be, the number of figures represented should be less than twelve. Then there is also the question of the bronze pot that exactly fits the central depression or vacant spot. If the tablet is made at the same time as the bronze pot, then it would mean that it was made at a period when Buddha's image could also be carved on the tablet. So it appears that, after all, our tablet is not a votive tablet at all.

Of course, the twelve auspicious symbols can be identified with the symbols used in the Buddha's foot-prints. However, it must be remembered that the same symbols are also used to identify the Cakravatin. We must consider whether there is a special reason why these twelve particular symbols have been chosen, and whether there is a reason for arranging them in that particular order.

My conclusion is that these twelve symbols can best be interpreted as symbols connected with the cakravatin concept. I shall now attempt to explain why these specific figures have been chosen as auspicious marks, why they have been arranged in that order, and what they signify.

A digression on the individual significance of each is necessary to appreciate their function. Some of the symbols on the tablet have been found on the early coins of Arakan. The Arakanese kings had impressed on their coins the sun and moon symbols, and these were associated with the srivatsa and water symbols in such a manner as to suggest the king's link with the water which represents the fertility of the country, srivatsa, an auspicious home, sun [power] and the moon [peacefulness of the country].

### **The Peacock and the Deer**

These two symbols appear side by side on the tablet, seeming to indicate that they should be interpreted together. They represent the sun and moon. In Buddhist literature the sun and moon first appear as marks on the feet of Buddha as cakravartin, in the Mahapadana sutta.

The peacock is a royal bird in India and has been considered to be the emblem of the Maurya dynasty. Arakanese historians have given the Mauryas a solar origin, from which they trace their own royal lineage.

Mrganka, "deer-marked", is one of the names for the moon in Sanskrit literature. Hence the peacock and the deer symbols may be interpreted as representing the sun and the moon.

### **Srivatsa**

Followers of the Brahmana, Jain and Buddhist religions all use designs similar to the Srivatsa symbol, which resembles a house, as auspicious symbols, but the origin of the symbol is probably rooted in Brahmana belief.

According to the Brahmana, the srivatsa symbol originated in the following manner. The sitting goddess Sri used to be depicted with her arms and legs bent and upraised. A general outline drawing to represent this posture of the goddess, later developed into the Srivatsa symbol.

The goddess Sri is said to dwell in exalted places and to be full of honour and glory. People therefore believe that she promotes wealth and happiness.

According to Hindu tradition, Srivatsa is the symbol of the goddess Laksmi or Sri, Consort of the god Visnu. This is the reason why the Srivatsa symbol usually adorns the chest of the images of Visnu.

The Jains who believe that their Great Teacher is an incarnation of Visnu, worship images whose chests are also adorned with the Srivatsa symbol.

The Arakanese refer to the Srivatsa symbol, which resembles the picture of a house, as "an auspicious home". The reverse side of ancient Arakanese coins bear designs which seem to have derived from this symbol. Even the thrones of the Arakanese kings are very similar in shape to the Srivatsa symbol.

On the tablet, the Srivatsa symbol is placed on two lines of beads. On the ancient coins the lines underneath the symbol represent water. Perhaps, on the tablet, the water symbol is separated from the Srivatsa symbol and represented by the pair of fish.

### **The pair of fish**

The pair of fish, Suvannamacchayugalam, first appeared on Buddhapadas and Jaina ayagapatas among symbol associated with the Buddha and Mahavira as cakravartin.

U.P. Shah, in "Jaina Art and Architecture, Vol. III p. 492, interpreted the pair of fish as the symbol of Cupid's banner. The pair of fish are said to have come to worship the Jina who had defeated the god of love.

- On our tablet the symbol is obviously connected with the fruitfulness of the waters.

### **A full vase with plant (Purna Kalasa)**

This is the vase of plenty. When such a vase is formally offered, it is an expression of the wish that the recipient, or in general all those present, may enjoy health, wealth and long life. The plants spilling out on either side reflect the idea that wish-granting trees grow out of the vase.

As a symbol it belongs to the order of ideas characteristic of the ancient life cults of fertility and fruitfulness.

### **The white umbrella (Chattra)**

The white umbrella is a symbol of royal power. The figure on the tablet has a thick handle tapering towards the lower end. The shade is rather small in comparison with the handle, and this shade is surmounted by a square knob. The umbrella is decorated with flying streamers on either side. It belongs to the regalia of a cakavartin king. It appears as an auspicious mark on the feet of a cakravartin, as also in the Buddha's footprints. Among the royal regalia it symbolises the royal dominion and the protective function of the king.

### **The goad (Ankusa)**

This is an elephant goad which retrains the animal designated as the vehicle of Indra, and synonymous with terrestrial kingship and power. It also is an auspicious mark found on the Buddha's footprints and on the feet of cakravartins. The goad on the tablet is decorated with streamers.

### **The Bull**

The representation on the tablet is of a humped bull, seated on a pedestal. This humped bull is the royal insignia of the Vesali kings. This insignia was used on coins issued by Vesali kings from about 350 A. D. to 1000 A. D. As the Vesali kings were all Buddhists one should not assume the kings to be Saivite. The bull can also represent the full-moon day of the month of Vaisakhā, which marks the date of the birth, the enlightenment and the parinirvana of Lord Buddha.

The importance of the bull in royal ritual has its origin in the Vedic rajasūya ceremonies. Circumambulation of a sacred bull was believed to strengthen the invincibility of a king. This circumambulation ceremony could well have been performed annually in Arakan in ancient days.



### **Dhvaja-stambha**

This figure looks like a pillar standing on a round base. There seems to be some sort of decoration around the circumference above the centre of the shaft, which widens towards the square capital from which banners fall to either side. On top of the capital is a hollow rounded construction. This type of banner was used on the occasion of a cakravartin consecration. The pillar which represents a dhvaja-stambha is erected to ensure the coming of the monsoons and thereby guarantee the fertility and prosperity of the country. It may also be a kind of pillar erected for the purpose of paying homage to the guardians of the planets. Banners are among the auspicious marks to be found on a cakravartin's hands and feet.

### **A right-voluted conch (Sankha)**

The winged conch depicted on this tablet is quite rare, but may be seen at the Jaina Stupa at Mathura, where it exudes coins or pearls, suggesting wealth from water. A winged sankha standard carried in royal processions is depicted on the Borobudur reliefs. The conch shell is prized for its shape, particularly when the central crevice is turned to the right. The conch was used in Southeast Asian ritual as a trumpet, or as a vessel to hold lustral water. It also represents riches and wealth or the material abundance of the land under the reign of a cakravartin.

### **A Brahmani Duck (Hamsa)**

The Hamsa is a water bird associated with the monsoon rains and the abundance and fruitfulness of the water under the sovereignty of the king. The water that revitalizes the earth and rejuvenates humanity. The hamsa depicted here is holding a string of flowers or jewels in its beak. This suggests that the figure may be connected with the idea that offerings to the king and deceased progenitors were eaten by birds and thus taken to heaven. The hamsa on this tablet might represent communication between earth and heaven, the main function of the king.

### **A pair of fly-whisks**

A king's attendants carried fly-whisks in olden days. A pair of fly-whisks together with the white umbrella are the most important items of the king's regalia. The fly-whisks were placed around caityas as early as the 5th century B.C.

Now that the individual significance of each symbol has been presented, we can now consider their collective function. It is clear that the twelve symbols arranged around the central lustration pot, are intimately associated with the cakravartin king who is the most enviable being in this mundane world.

Although the symbols are placed within a circle, the arrangement can be seen to be symmetrical. The symbols representing the sun and the moon, the regulators of the heavens, are in contraposition to the symbols of the ankusa and the bull, denoting the power of the authority of the king to regulate the country. The Srivatsa emblem which embodies the king, is placed opposite the dhvaja-stambha, which donates the king's relation with the heavens. The pair of fish, the earthly water symbol is opposite the winged conch, the water symbol of a triumphant cakravartin. The hamsa, which represents the king's earth-heaven link, is placed opposite the full vase with plant, symbol of the product of that link. The pair of fly-whisks, the king's immediate regalia, are opposite the white umbrella, the regalia item representing his entire domain.

The centre of the tablet, the vacant depression on which the lustration pot filled with water used to be placed, can be seen to represent Mount Meru, the axis of the world and the mythical abode of Indra.

In Hindu-Buddhist cosmology, the whole circular universe was thought to be surrounded by an enormous rock-wall represented on the tablet by the right-angled square beaded border, enclosing an ocean with four insular continents, each set in cardinal directions here symbolized by the lotuses set in each of the four corners. At the centre was Mount Meru which was represented by the lustration pot containing lustral water.

We should regard the qualities symbolized by the twelve figures on the Vesali tablet as being incorporated into the water contained in the bronze pot at the centre during the religious ceremony. The lustral water used will thus be most effective.

Thus, the tablet seems to be a receptacle used for holding a lustration pot, the water from which is to be used in religious ceremonies.

## CHAPTER VII

### Dedicatory inscriptions of Niticandra and

#### Viracandra of Vesali

The first inscription, which is the inscription of the time of Niticandra, is engraved on a slab recovered from the ruins of an old Stupa on the Unhissaka hill situated to the east of Vesali in 1956.

The second inscription, which is the inscription of Viracandra, is engraved on a slab belonged to what is called the Anandacandra Stupa standing on Thinkyattaw hill which is closely situated to the Unhisaka hill. It was found about the same time.

The name of Niticandra and Viracandra are mentioned in Anandacandra inscription inscribed on the west face of the pillar now at Shitthaung Pagoda at Mrauk-Oo, Arakan. The first part of this inscription contains three sections quoting the names of the kings together with the durations of their reigns.

In the second section of the first part, we found the names of Niticandra and Viracandra. The verses 28 and 29 described them very briefly. "(V 28). Then the renowned Niticandra, who removed strife by policy, reigned like Mahendra for 55 years. V(29) After him. King Viryacandra reigned three years; then King Priticandra (ruled) for 12 years." Dr. Sircar's chronology gives Niticandra's ruling period as 520-575 A.D. and Viracandra's 575-578 A.D.

The alphabets of both the records has a close resemblance with the alphabets used in certain Eastern Indian inscriptions of the fifth and sixth centuries A.D. However, a certain amount of local development is noticed in the palaeography of these inscriptions. Careful study of the consonants, initial vowels and medial vowels revealed this. The inscriptions can also be dated palaeographically as those belong to the last quarter of the sixth century. Comparative studies of the alphabets, initial and medial vowels of Arakanese script with those of Eastern India will reveal a very interesting information about the Arakanese scripts.

### **Inscription of the time of Niticandra (See Plate 15)**

#### **TEXT**

1. *Ye dharmma hetu-prabhava hetum tesha Tathagata*
2. *aha tesham ca yo nirodho evam vadi Mahasramana*
3. *sri Niticandra sya candravat-parchi na sya devi savitam*
4. *Candrasriya nama pa re mó po si ka sya*
5. *deyya dharmmo yamm sarvva satvonamm anuka (tta) ma*

#### **Translation**

Out of all the laws, the law of cause is the origin. Tathagato (i.e. Buddha) has spoken of the conditions arising from a cause. He has also spoken of their cessation. This is the doctrine of the great Sramana (i.e. Buddha).

This is the pious gift of the queen of Sri Niticandra, who is likened to the moon. The queen by the name of Savitam Candrasriya, is a devout lay worshiper of the Buddha. Let all creatures acquire the best knowledge (acquiring Nirvana) as a result of having given this meritorious gift.

### **Inscription of Viracandra (See Plate 15)**

#### **TEXT**

1. *Satya-dharmmanu ragenā Kritamsvarthena bhūbhūja*
2. *parartha ghatanodyoga samyanni hita ceti sa*
3. *Sri-Viracandradevena mahi mandala mandanam*
4. *dharmma dhigata rajyena Buddha stupa satam (ceti)*

### **Translation**

Sri Viracandra deva, the king who obtained sovereignty through righteousness, whose heart is fully set on exertions for effecting good to others, constructed a hundred Buddha stupas, which are the ornaments of the earth, with his own wealth, owing to his love for the true law.

These two dedicatory inscriptions are very important for us as they are the only epigraphic records so far found of kings Niticandra and Viracandra of the Buddhist royal family of the Candras of Arakan. Ofcourse, the names of these rulers are known from the coins issued by them as well as from the Anandacandra inscription of Shitthaung Pagoda in Mrauk-Oo as mentioned above. See Plate 4 again.

The inscriptions give us the following informations.

1. Flourishing of Buddhism in Arakan during the sixth century A.D.
2. The existence of many Buddha-Stupas built by the kings of that period.
3. Partial confirmation of the genealogy of the Candras of Arakan given in the Anandacandra inscription.
4. The name of the queen of King Niticandra.
5. Type of scripts used during the sixth century A.D.
6. The use of Sanskrit Literature by royal families.

## **CHAPTER VIII**

### **A Copper-Plate Land Grant**

#### **Site of find**

A copper-plate, bearing writing on both sides, was discovered in Arakan about 40 years ago. See Plate 16. This is the only copper-plate found, so far, in Burma. The place where the plate was found was a small brick mound situated 2 furlongs south-west of Tharlar-waddy village. The village lies close to the Mrauk-Oo-Kyauktaw road which passes through the south-west section of the old Vesali city wall. The Vesali city site is about 5 miles north of Mrauk-Oo.

The plate was discovered accidentally while the brick mound was being removed by the owner of the plot who wished to dig a drainage channel for his farm.

The plate was bought by the late historian U Tha Tun Aung of Mrauk-Oo from the finder. During the second world war the Japanese soldiers took the plate and cut off two pieces, one at the top and the other the right hand portion of the plate, to test whether the plate was made of gold. They also carried out flame tests on the remaining plate which damaged it even further. U Tha Tun Aung received the plate back from the Japanese in this damaged condition. At present the plate is in the safe custody of the Archaeology Department of the Ministry of Culture in Rangoon.

### **Description of the plate**

The plate has a big seal affixed to the left margin and lines of writing running along its length. The top length of the plate is 32.4 c.m. and the bottom length is 30.5 c.m. The breadth at the right end is 22.2 c.m.. The thickness is about 0.5 c.m.. The diameter of the seal is 12.7 c.m. and it is 1.5 c.m. thick. It weighs 10 lbs.

It can be inferred that a strip of about 4 c.m. has been cut off along the top of the plate (really the top of the obverse but the bottom of the reverse). Since a single letter of the epigraph is usually about 0.8 c.m. in height while a conjunct or letter endowed with vowel marks has nearly double that length, we can infer that the lost part contained only two lines of writing on the first side of the plate. The reverse side has no engraved lines on the lost part.

This copper plate was a royal document issued by a Vesali king of the sixth century A.D. The grant of land for religious purposes was engraved on it. It contained well known imprecatory and benedictory stanzas written on the reverse side. These stanzas make it possible for us to estimate the length that has been lost on the right-hand side. By careful study of the stanzas we have found that seven or eight words endowed with vowel-marks or conjunct were lost in the said portion. Each word being about 1 c.m broad, the measurement of length covered by seven or eight of them would suggest that the lost strip would be about 10 c.m in breadth. By correcting these losses we can estimate the original size of the plate as about 42 c.m in length and 26 c.m in breadth.

### **The Seal**

The obverse side of the seal seems to represent a recumbent bull which was the royal insignia of the Vesali kings and the reverse is probably the pericarp of a lotus symbol.

### **Palaeographic determination of date**

There are twelve lines of writing on the obverse side of the plate. Since we have estimated that two lines at the top were cut off, the original number of lines on this side must be 14. There is no loss of any line on the reverse side which contains only 8 lines. Thus the writing on both sides of the plate originally contained 22 lines.

A palaeographic study of the characters of the present record shows that the characters exhibit a local modification of the late Brahmi of East India, which may be assigned to a date about the sixth century A.D. The engraving was very neatly and carefully done. See plate 17 for the alphabets used. The language of the document is Sanskrit, though it contains local elements in the personal and geographical names.

The inscription was dated in the regnal reckoning of the issuer of the charter. It was the 11th regnal year of the king.

Since we have to assign the charter on palaeographical grounds to a date about the sixth century A.D., the king who issued the copper plate should be a member of the Candra dynasty of Arakan of the second period.

### **The Candra dynasty of Arakan**

The early history of Arakan is best elucidated by the Anandacandra Inscription inscribed on the west face of a stone pillar now at Shiuthaung Pagoda at Mrauk-Oo. The inscription contains 69 lines. It is a prasasti of King Anandacandra who ruled Arakan about 720 A.D.

It has been dated on palaeographic grounds to the beginning of the 8th century A.D. by Dr. E.H. Johnston and Dr. D.C. Sircar. Refer back Chapter II for more details.

### **Issuer of the charter**

Considering the Gupta style of representing the reigning monarch as a descendent of the founder of the family through a number of successive generations, which was borrowed by many dynasties, lines 1-8 of the record appear to have originally contained the names of eight kings, the last of them mentioned in line 8, being the issuer of the grant.

Line 1 may have thus contained the name of a king who was the founder of the royal family. The donor of the grant was then mentioned along with seven of his ancestors. It is not improbable that line 1 could have mentioned Dvencandra, the founder of the dynasty. In that case, it was Bhuticandra (No. 8) who was the father of Niticandra and ruled in 496-520 A.D., i.e., about the beginning of the sixth century A.D., who was probably the issuer of the charter.



(See Table II). As the last line of the inscription indicates the date of issue as the 11th regnal year of the king, accepting D.C. Sircar's dates for the Candia kings, the inscription would have been engraved in 507 A.D.

### **The queen mothers**

As lines 1 and 2 are lost we may start from line 3. Lines 3-8 mention six kings and describes them as padanudyata (meditating on or favoured by the feet of his predecessor), as Paramamahesvara (a devout worshipper of the god Mahesvara or Siva) and as born of a particular mahadevi (chief queen). The kings enjoyed the title of Maharajadhiraja, indicating independent and imperial status in the Gupta age.

It is very unfortunate indeed that the name of the issuer of the charter and all his ancestors are engraved on the end portion of the lines, which were cut off by the Japanese.

However, the names of the queens can be read in lines 4-8, the queen's name in line 3 being damaged. Thus we are privileged to know the donor's mother, grand mother, great grand mother, great great grand mother and great great great grand mother. Their names were respectively Kalyanadevi, Kyawdevi, Sukanya devi, Kimdal devi and Kimton devi.

Out of these names, Kalyanadevi and Sukanyadevi suggest contact with Sanskrit tradition. Other names starting with Kim are worth nothing. They suggest Tibeto-Burman affiliations.

### **Persons addressed**

In lines 9-10 the issuing king addresses the charter to the rulers of his own family and of other dynasties in respect of the grant.

### **Purpose of issuing the charter**

Lines 10-13 state that a village called Dengutta was granted by Kimmajuvdevi in favour of a vihara (Buddhist monastery) built by herself. It is probable that she was the queen of Bhuticandra as the palaeography of the inscription points to the beginning of the 6th century and we know the name of the queen of Niticandra, the son of Bhuticandra, as Savitam Candrasriya from a separate inscription,

Kimmajuvdevi was doubtless a Buddhist, although her husband and his ancestors were mentioned as Paramamahesvara. So far as I have noticed, there is practically no evidence of Saivism in the archaeological assemblage of Arakan. *It may be conjectured that Saivite ritual may have been confined to certain court ceremonies necessary to legitimize kingship, but incompatible with Buddhism, performed by a small group of court Brahmins.*

Again the lines mentioned that the income derived from the gift village was meant to be utilised on behalf of the Ratna-traya (Ratna-tray-opayogaya) in respect of the catushpratyana and the repairs of breaks, cracks, etc, in the monastery. The expression Ratna-traya (i.e the three Jewels) indicates the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, while catush-pratyana are the four necessities of the Buddhist priest, viz. civara (clothing), pindapata (food), sayanasana (bedding) and bhaishajya (medicine).

A damaged passage in lines 12-13 seems to suggest that the gift village was placed in charge of the fraternity of the holy monks of all lands including the elders of Jetavana, who were already in the monastery and who might in future come to reside there in. The original Jetavanna was in the suburbs of Sravasti (modern Set-Maheth in Uttar Pradesh), the capital of the ancient Kosala kingdom. It was built by the Financier Anathapindika for the use of the Buddha himself. It is difficult to say whether the original Jetavana is referred to in our record or whether it was an establishment in the neighbourhood of Arakan or elsewhere called by the ancient name.

The gift village called Dengutta is described as yielding 3000, the reference being apparently to the revenue income in the standard coin.

The boundaries of the village Dengutta are described in lines 13-14 forming the concluding part of the writing on the obverse side of the plate. Unfortunately, the end of the lines being cut off, the details are not available in all cases. Thus the words indicating the boundaries in the east and the north of the gift village are lost. In the south, there were the Srilakkajola, a row of stone boulders and a mango tree, while Vangenkhalla lay on the west. The word jola seems to mean a channel and the word khalla seems to mean a canal.

### **Imprecatory and benedictory stanzas**

The reverse of the plate starts with line 15 which contains the request of the issuer of the charter to the effect that those addressed

should protect the gift out of a desire for religious merit (dharma-bhikṣat) and out of great respect for the royal donor.

Lines 15-20 contain five of the well-known imprecatory and benedictory stanzas identical to those found in the early 6th century inscriptions of Bengal. The verses were written by Vyasa and addressed to king Yudhishtira and have the following meaning. "He who confiscates land that has been given, whether by himself or another, becomes a worm in ordure, and sinks into hell together with his ancestors. The earth has been enjoyed by many kings, commencing with Sagara; who-soever at any time possesses the earth, to him belongs, at that time, the reward (of this grant that is now made, if he continue it): The giver of land enjoys happiness in heaven for sixty thousand years; (but) the confiscator (of a grant) and he who assents (to an act of confiscation), shall dwell for the same number of years in hell!"

#### **Executor of the grant**

Line 21 contains the name of the Mahamantrin (literally, the great minister). His name was Rengadityadasa. He seems to be the Prime Minister of the king who issued the charter and may have been the executor of the grant.

#### **Date of issue**

The last line of the record contained the date of issue. It is the 11th regnal year of the king who issued the charter.

#### **Present location of the village of Dengutta and the Vihara**

The village of Dengutta must be close to the spot where the copper plate was found. That is to the south west of Vesali. The Vihara built by the queen might be on the spot where the copper plate was found or on the spot where the tablet of auspicious symbols, lustration pot and two cart loads of artifacts, which I have mentioned in Chapter VI were found. That spot is also not far away from the spot where the copper plate was found. I am sure we will be richly rewarded if we could only excavate these spots.

The copper-plate grant, apart from giving us the interesting information presented above, provides us with a very neat and tidy example of the alphabets used in Arakan during the sixth century A. D. and before. See plate 17 again.

## **CHAPTER IX**

### **Two Inscribed Ancient Bronze Bells**

All over the world bells have been rung to attract the attention of people. They ring out the hour of the day, call people to prayer at home or in the monastery, announce news of joy or sorrow, and remind people of something of the past.

The bell in the monastery sounds the signal for rising at a particular time in the morning, it indicates the time for the morning meal, the time for prayer and it sounds the retiring signal at night.

In Burma, we have caitya bells (pagoda bells) also. They are hung under the hti or the finial. Their constant ringing remind celestial devas, men and creatures of the nether world, of Buddha's endless compassion and charity, and it is hoped people would thus be persuaded to follow Buddha's path and thus gain release from the cycle of rebirths and attain nirvana.

People donate bells producing sweet sounds, to gain merit. They believe that by donating bells that produce sweet sounds, they will have sweet voices in their next existence. In general, people donate bells primarily to gain any wish relating to the voice, in their next existence.

So far, we have found two inscribed ancient bells from the vicinity of Vesali in Arakan. One of the bells seems to be a caitya bell and

the other a monastery bell. Both of them are made of bronze, that is, an alloy of copper and tin. The dates of their casting can be determined paleographically. Both of them are found by this method to have been casted in the sixth century A.D.

Both of these bells are of the cup form, as by definition, a cup form has nearly equal height and diameter, with convex sides;

The caitya bell (see plate 18) was found in the vicinity of Appaungdaw Dattaung ceti which is situated close to Tharlarwaddy Village, near the South-west corner of the outer wall of Vesali about 12 years ago. It was brought to my notice in September, 1973. The bell is about 11.5 cm. high, the inner diameter of the mouth is 9.9 cm. and the outer diameter 11.5 cm. It weighs over 2 lbs. The shape resembles the top part of a stupa. There are two bands at the lip of the bell. It is thus thickened to strengthen it at the point of clapper impact. This thickening of the lip also improves the tone of the bell. There are two bands, bare of decoration, just below the neck of the bell. From the size of the neck which has an inner diameter of 2 cm. and outer diameter of 3.4 cm., it can be inferred as a caitya bell.

Two lines of writings have been inscribed around the centre. The first line contains 18 words endowed with vowelmarks or conjunct and the second line 14 words. The language is a mixture of ancient Arakanese and Sanskrit. They record the donation of the bell, which is described as a naraghanta. The inscription ends with the so-called "garuda" symbol, found at the end of the 8th century caitya inscription and Anandacandra's parsasti of Arakan.

## TEXT

1. matapitroh hiritathettr Kimmayana Dhanayah - -nama
2. naraghantayad datteyam samarira svarah

Word for word translation in Sanskrit does not make sense as some of the words are ancient Arakanese. Translation can be roughly rendered as follows.

Obeisance - - - for the welfare and Punya of (my) mother and father, Kimmayana - - -this nara bell with a sweet sound is given.

At least one personal name can be identified. This is, Kimmayana. The palaeography is exactly the same as that of the copper plate. Therefore, it can be dated around 507 A.D. The copper plate grant was issued by a Vesali king saying that a village by the name of Dengutta was granted by Kimmajuvdevi in favour of a vihara (Buddhist mon-satery) built by herself.

Notice that the names of the donor of the bell and the donor of the village to be somewhat related.

The second bell, (see Plate 18) which seems to be a monastery bell was found by the late U San Shwe Bu at Prinedaung village, about six miles north of Vesali in 1918. The bell is 9.8 c.m. high and has an inner diameter of 9.5 c.m. and outer diameter of 10.5 c.m. It weighs about one pound. This bell is of smaller structure than the first one but is better cast. It weighs only half that of the first one. The neck of the bell is rather wide and seems to have an arrangement for fixing a handle. Hence it is inferred as a monastery bell. It has a band below the neck decorated with flower petals. There are also bands without decorations around the shoulder and the lip. The lip of the bell is also thickened.

Here again, two lines of writing were inscribed between the bands around the shoulder and the lip. The writings can be palaeographically assigned to the pre-or early Niticandra period, that is around 520 A.D. The writings reveal the dedication by a monk for the benefit of his spiritual preceptors, etc, and his mother and father.

## TEXT

1. deyadharma' yam Sakyabikso ..... yac atra punyam tad bhavatu matapitrpurvangamam krtva.
2. caryyopadhyayanam sarvvasatvanan ca anuttarajjanavaptaye iti.  
It can be translated as follows:

This is a pious offering of the Buddhist monk.....

May the merit that is therein be for the gaining of supreme knowledge (acquiring nirvana) by teachers, tutors and all beings in company with his mother and father.

Both these bells are at present in Akyab. These bronze bells show us that the people of Arakan of that age already possessed an advanced metallurgical technology.

## CHAPTER X

### Five Ancient Bronze Lamps

A lamp is a vessel for burning oil with a wick, and so giving light. The oil used may be animal, fish or vegetable oil.

Of all the forms of gifts to the gods (devadanam), there is perhaps none which can equal in merit-winning capacity, that which is offered in the form of lamps or dipan, (from the Sanskrit *dipa* "to light"). All over the world, the lighting of lamps form an assential part of temple and shrine worship.

When such gifts (in the form of lamps) were made in ancient days, they were usually accompanied by the offering of cows, buffaloes, sheep or goats, from the milk of which the necessary clarified butter was extracted for the perpetual use of the lamps in the temples or shrines.

Many ancient bronze lamps have been found, in Arakan, wrought in various forms. I now present five such lamps which were found in the vicinity of Vesali and Dhanyawadi. Three of the lamps are in the form of human statuettes bearing the vessel for the oil in their hands. The other two contain the figure of birds in their design. Two of the lamps in the form of humans, represent women and the other represents a hero prince.

The first lamp with a human figure, (See Plate 19) was found by the late U San Shwe Bu at Prinedaung village, about six miles north of Vesali. The height of the lamp, including the pedestal, is nine inches. It represents a woman holding out in front of her, a rather elongated spear-shaped receptacle, intended to hold the oil which is meant to be burned before the image of the Buddha, by means of wicks. We can notice six indentations at the edges of the receptacle for placing such wicks.

The woman stands on a high pedestal. Her features are sharp and pointed. The ears are large and the nose is long, prominent and well-defined. The hair is coiled on the crown of the head, slightly pushed back. She wears a plain necklace and an amulet on each upper arm, fastened by a broad band. There is a bangle round each wrist and a similar one round the middle of each forearm. Apart from these few ornaments, the upper body is bare. A girdle encircles the waist, and another band lower down over the hips fastens the close-fitting drapery which falls in folds to a length which reached just below the knees. One end of the cloth is apparently brought from the back between the thighs and after being slipped over the girdle, it is allowed to fall in front in graceful folds.

The statuette is similar to the South Indian statuettes. But the peculiar mode of wearing the hair in a top knot and the arrangement of the drapery, are unlike anything in the collections of India. Indeed the general impression suggests that the statuette is more inclined towards either the Egyptian or Assyrian rather than towards the Indian type in both design and execution.

There is a line of inscription in Arakanese characters, around the upper part of the pedestal. The inscription reads:

Ayana Kaung Mu (the gift of Ayana). This name immediately reminds me of the name of the donor of the Vesali caitya bell, Kimmayana. If we remove the prefix Kim from that name we are left with Ayana, which seems to have been a common name in Arakan in olden days. The word Kim is a proto-western Tibeto-Burmese word meaning "house".

The inscription is of particular importance especially when considered in relation to the statuette with which it is associated. For, to whatever age the statuette may have belonged, it is difficult to get away from the inference that Arakanese literature must have also been current at that time.



According to Arakanese historians, Vesali ceased to be the capital of Arakan about the middle of the 10th century. So though there is nothing definite to go by in determining the age of this figurine, if any reliance can be placed on the data afforded by Arakanese historians, it may confidently be assumed that it must belong to the tenth century or earlier. The statuette is at present in Kyau.

The second lamp in the form of a woman (See Plate 20) was found at a site near the Mrauk Oo-Vesali road just before one reaches Vesali. It is a little shorter than the first, being only about four inches high. Here also the figure is that of a woman. She is depicted in the act of holding out in front of her, some type of vessel [missing] intended to hold oil and the wick. She also stands on a pedestal which is only half an inch in height. Nothing is inscribed on the pedestal.

This second lady seems to be better dressed than the lady of the first lamp. She wears a headdress and her hair falls behind her back neatly and stylishly braided into a long single plait. (See Plate 20). Her features are also sharp and well-defined. She wears a pair of large circular earrings and a necklace with a small locket. She is dressed in a short-sleeved blouse with an open neck. She has a bangle around each wrist. Her pants are a tight fit and reach down to her ankles where they are folded slightly. An apron with naturalistic folds is fastened above the hips. She wears a pair of ornamental ankle rings. The statuette is at present in Mrauk-Oo.

The third lamp (See Plate 21) was found in the vicinity of Dhan-yawadi. It is about the same size as the second lamp. The figure is that of a hero-prince. He wears a helmet that has a mask covering the face. He appears to be wearing a coat of mail with air holes around the neck, shoulder and breast. He stands in a crossed-legged posture on a pedestal of pyramid form. A pasoe (ceremonial longyi) is gracefully worn round the waist and falls in folds to cover the knees. One end of the pasoe is brought round from the back and allowed to fall in front in graceful folds. This end is held between the crossed legs. The figure has its arms outstretched as if holding out some sort of vessel to hold the oil and the wick. The vessel is missing, but as the arms are stretched quite far apart, it must have been a wide one. There is a handle fixed to the back of the figure. This lamp is at present in Kyauktaw town.

The fourth lamp is a hanging lamp with its bowl surrounded by birds in flight. (See Plate 22). The lamp has a hook or loop at the top by which it can be suspended. Below this is a cinquefoil handle,

The upper and outer angles are decorated with arabesques. There are nine triangular projections for wicks coming out from the central circular oil-bowl. Each of these alternates with a bird in flight, with wings outstretched. Only two of the birds remain completely intact. The rest have lost their heads. The base of the lamp is also decorated with a wide band with holes punched through it to present a lacy effect. The lamp can also be placed on the table instead of being hung from the rafters. This lamp was found inside the old Vesali walls and is at present in Mrauk-Oo.

The fifth lamp (See Plate 32 ) is also a hanging lamp. It has only one bird in its design, without feathers, but with its bones and spinal column prominently displayed. If we look at the lamp from above we will see that it resembles a four-pointed star, with the bird over one point. There is a ring for suspension at the back of the bird's head. The bird itself is hollow, appearing like a skeleton, probably to allow free air circulation. Each of the four triangular projections can hold a wick. The whole lamp is ingeniously balanced so that while in a hanging position it will not be tilted. It can also be placed on a table instead of being hung. This lamp was also found somewhere inside Vesali together with the fourth lamp described above, and is at present in Mrauk-Oo.

It is a great pity that no competent authority has ever thought it fit to properly survey the site of this famous old city of Vesali and to excavate it. In days long gone by, more than a thousand ships are said to have annually put in at the harbour of Vesali, laden with merchandise of all descriptions extracted from the great emporiums of the Eastern World. One has simply to understand its past history, its former greatness, to enable one to form a pretty shrewd idea of the store of priceless art treasures lying buried beneath the soil of its site.

## CHAPTER XI

### A Ceti Dedicatory Inscription from Eighth Century Vesali

#### Site of find

This piece of stone inscription (See Plate 24) was found in Vesali village which is situated five miles north of Mrauk Oo. It was actually found somewhere on the brick mound which is situated at the edge of the so-called canal. This place is situated at the southwest corner of Vesali village and the northwest corner of Tharlarwaddy village.

We can well imagine that about one thousand two hundred years ago, the so-called canal was the moat of the Vesali inner city or palace, and the mound, a spot at the southwest corner of the moat. From the contents of the inscription we can infer that this stone inscription has fallen out of a now-ruined ceti (of which there is no longer any trace at present) which formerly stood on that mound.

#### Script and size of the inscribed stone

The script was inscribed on a piece of stone slab 9 inches in length and 7 inches in breadth. The script resembles that of the Anandacandra inscription, inscribed on the west face of a stone pillar, now to be seen at the Shitthaung Phara at Mrauk.Oo. The characters illustrated here appear to be a little earlier than the Anandacandra inscription, as can be inferred from the way *gha* and *sa* were written. The chracters are also more square in form. Again unlike the dandas used in the Anandacandra inscription, the first member of the double dandas curves inwards, as in earlier Vesali inscriptions. After the final dandas, there is a symbol consisting of a circle with four V shapes, above, below and on either side of the circle, followed by two double dandas.

The upper portion of the stone slab has broken off and been lost. The missing part probably contained the beginning of the inscriptions, which normally would have mentioned the name of the donor and of his ancestors. We are left with only ten lines of inscription. The language of the inscription is Sanskrit. The lines illustrated in Plate 24 belong to two complete verses. The first verse being in Vasantatilaka metre and the second in anustubh sloka. The missing part probably contained one verse. The inscription commemorates the construction of a caitya (ceti). A line by line transliteration of the characters from the stone slab to modern Burmese characters is shown in plate 24.

### Palaeographic Determination of Date

Palaeographically, we can assign the inscription to the late 7th or early 8th centuries, possibly to the reign of Dharmacandra, (704-720 A.D), the father of Anandacandra.

### TEXT

Verse 1. (Lost)

Verse 2. punyam mayaptamatulam yamihadya caityam nispadya  
tena bhavasagrato hi param, trsna taranga bhrsa cancala  
raudra nadat satvah prayantu sukhina trimala prahinah.

Verse 3. yati prajvalitam ghoram bhedako rauravam param.  
divyakalpa sahasrani svarge tisthati palaka iti

### Translation

Verse 1. Lost. Might have contained the names of the donor and his ancestors.

Verse 2,	punyam	meritorious deed
	maya	myself
	atam	gained, attained
	atulum	incomparable
	yam	this
	iha	in this place
	adya	today
	caityam	ceti
	nispadya	completed, finally done
	tena	that is why
	bhavasagrato	ocean of becoming
	param	to the other shore
	trsna	craving
	taranga	waves

bhrsa	violently
cancala	moving and striking
raudra	frightening
nadat	fierce, roaring
satvah	living beings
prayantu	let them reach
sukhina	happily
trimala	three impurities (lobha, dosa, moha)
prahinah	discard

As I have completed the building of the ceti in this place today, I have gained the incomparable merit. For the meritorious deed I have done let all beings be able to discard the three impurities (lobha, dosa, moha) and cross the ocean of becoming which is roaring fiercely due to the waves of craving and striking violently, and reach the other shore (nirvana) happily.

Verse 3.	yati	reaches, goes
	prajvalitam	flaming brilliantly
	ghoram	terribly frightening
	bhedako	the one who destroys
	rauravam	"roruwa" hell
	param	after death
	divya kalpa	time scale of devas;
		heavenly aeons
	sahasrani	thousands
	svarge	heaven
	tisthati	stay
	palaka	the one who looks after
	iti	this is the end

The one who destroys the ceti goes to terrible and flaming "roruwa" hell after death and the one who looks after (it) stays in heaven for thousands of heavenly aeons. This is the end.

We should note that to attain nirvana, one has to discard the three impurities (lobha, dosa, moha). This is stated in the inscription. Discarding the three impurities is nothing but purifying one's own mind. This is the teaching of Buddha and the Buddhism at that time was based on the teachings of Buddha. (See verse 183 of the Dhamapada).

The ceti mentioned in the inscription is no longer in existence. But we still have the dedicatory inscription with us. What was the shape of the ceti? How large and how beautiful was it? We can only speculate and dream about what the answers to these questions may be.

## **CHAPTER XII**

### **Ancient Miniature Bronze "Cetis" of Vesali**

In Burmese, the solid religious edifice of the Buddhists is called a ceti. This is an abbreviation of the Indian word "caitya", which may generally be translated as something built or piled up. The word is used for funeral mounds; built in honour of heroes, teachers or prophets. The ceti is an object of veneration and serves as a place of worship.

A ceti is called a pagoda in English. This is a foreign word and is not used by the Burmese people.

In Burma, cetis are memorials in monumental form, constructed mainly to preserve the memory of the Buddha. Most of these contain relics of the Buddha, his images or scripture, recording his teachings. They are placed in sealed chambers known as relic chambers often located in the basement, and sometimes up in the datu-gabbha which lies between the bell and the finial.

In the building of cetis, Buddhists are motivated by certain sentiments. The building of a ceti is considered an act of great religious merit for the person or persons concerned. The merit, thus gained, spells elevation to a better life in the hereafter or elevation to some heavenly abode or even to nirvana in some future existence. People, by the generations, can also use these cetis for religious worship and for the practice of Buddhism. The cetis themselves help ensure the preservation and perpetuation of the religion for a long time.

A typical solid ceti consists of the following essential parts:

1. The base platform; the plinth)
2. Receeding terraces;
3. The bell;
4. The spire with mouldings tapering upwards;
5. Lotus petals;
6. The banana bud;
7. The umbrella.

In general, therefore, a ceti is an edifice which possesses all the essential parts mentioned above. These different parts are ornamented and decorated in many beautiful ways. At the corners of the plinth we may find guardian animals, (mythical or otherwise). Some cetis have beautifully executed niches in the body with figures of the Buddha facing the four cardinal points. The terraces are polygonal in shape and may have floral edges. There may be small cetis or kalasa pots at the corners of the terraces. The number of terraces vary with different cetis. Above the terraces comes the bell. On top of the bell is the ringed spire telescopically tapering upwards. At the apex of the spire are the down-turned and upturned lotus petals with a row of ornamental beads in-between. Above the lotus petal mouldings, is the banana bud. An artistic hti or umbrella crowns the whole edifice.

There are many cetis built by various kings of the Mrauk-Oo dynasty (1430-1784 A.D), still standing in Arakan. They are generally similar in structure and differ only in details. Each of them presents some interesting and individual features. But one very rarely come across cetis built before or around 1000 A. D. Many cetis had, in fact, been built by earlier kings, and records of such cetis, inscribed on stones, have been discovered. These cetis have either collapsed due to weathering, or been destroyed by vandalism, or been encased in pagodas built by later kings.

However, from the ruins of old cetis or stupas built on or near the old Vesali city site, we have recovered a few miniature bronze cetis. As the ruined cetis or stupas may be dated somewhere about 1000 A.D (i.e before the fall of Vesali), we may assume that the bronze miniature cetis were made about the same time or even earlier. Looking

at these miniature cetis, one is tempted to pose the question: Are these miniature cetis representations of the monumental cetis in existence at that period? No one can say for sure. Anyway it is interesting to compare and find out the similarities between these miniature cetis and the full-size cetis existing at the present time.

I now present three miniature bronze cetis, which have come to my notice. See Plates 25, 26 and 27. The first one was found in Tharlarwaddy village which is located within the southern city walls of old Vesali city. The second one was found in Dharmarit village which lies very close to the old Vesali site. The exact location where the third one was found is unknown.

All the three miniature cetis have conical structure. They are thus in stable equilibrium and are in no danger of falling down by themselves from slight disturbances.

All of them have miniature image halls placed on high decorated pedestals. The cetis proper are placed on top of these image halls.

The first miniature ceti (Plate 25) has a square pedestal wrought in the form of a royal throne. At the four corners of the base platform are four guardian animals. It is difficult to distinguish whether they are lions or dogs. Most probably they are lions. On the pedestal is the image hall. This tiny hall has four openings decorated with arches, and each opening faces one of the cardinal directions. The design of the arches over the openings is similar to the structure behind the thrones of the Arakanese kings. Looking through the arches we can see four seated Buddha images in bhumisparsa-mudra, in the tiny hall, with their backs to the central pilaster. Three circular bands, successively diminishing in diameter, thus forming receding terraces, are placed on the square roof of the image hall. Then comes the bell. The lip of the bell flares out to encompass the topmost circular band. The curve of the bell is first concave and then convex towards the top. The bell is decorated with rings. Above the bell is the datu-gabbha. Above this is the spire, with moulding telescopically tapering upwards. The mouldings are nine in number. The topmost moulding contains the downturned lotus petals. After this comes a ring separating the downturned petals from the upturned petals. Above the lotus petal mouldings is the banana bud. There is no hti on top of the banana bud on this miniature ceti.



The second ceti (Plate 26) also has a square pedestal, although of a different design. The four corners of the base platform are guarded by four mythical animals, each having the head and torso of a man attached to a lion's body, which in turn divides into two towards the rear, thus forming an artistically balanced corner decoration. The four corners at the top of the pedestal have miniature caityas. There is an image hall on the pedestal with four openings decorated with arches in the four cardinal directions. The design of the arches of this ceti is different from that of the first ceti. Again there are four seated Buddha images in bhumisparsa mudra with their backs to the pilaster inside the hall. There are five receding terraces placed on the square roof of the image hall. Above these is the bell. The bell is decorated with a ring around the middle. The datu-gabbha which lies between the bell and the spire is not as prominent as in the first ceti. The spire consists of nine layers of mouldings tapering telescopically upwards. The uppermost moulding is decorated with downturned lotus petals. Then comes the ornamental beads and the upturned petals. Above the lotus petal mouldings is the banana bud. Above the banana bud is the hti.

The third ceti (Plate 27) is a rare type. It has a pentagonal pedestal. At the five corners of the base platform are five guardian lions. There is a circular seat decorated with flower petals on the pedestal. The image hall is placed on this seat. This hall has five openings decorated with arches similar in design to the structure backing the throne of kings. There are five seated Buddha images in bhumisparsa mudra within the arches. Above the roof of the pentagonal image hall are the circular terraces. The transition from the pentagon to the circle is smoother than from square to circle of the former cetis. There are three circular terraces, bare of decoration. On top of these is another circular seat decorated with flower petals. The bell is placed on this. The bell has three rings round its middle. There is no datu-gabbha above the bell. The ringed spire is placed immediately on top of it. The spire which telescopically tapers upwards, consists of twenty rings. The banana bud on top of the spire cannot be seen properly because it is hidden by the hti, which has a peculiar shape.

After a careful study of the structure of these miniature cetis, none of which is much more than a cubit in height, one can but wonder at the striking similarities between these little cetis of the past

52

and the big modern cetis to be seen today. Who were the craftsmen who cast these miniature bronze cetis? Did they first draw plans of the structure before casting the cetis? How did they draft the details or sections? How did they prepare the models? Were these made of wood or clay? There are so many questions we cannot answer. But one thing is certain. Whoever these craftsmen in bronze may have been, there is no denying of their fine eye and skill, which are apparent in their handiwork.

## CHAPTER XIII

### Different Indian Schools of Art

According to the Arakanese historical annals and the Selargiri tradition, Buddhism was introduced into Arakan during the life-time of the Buddha. The legend asserts that during the reign of king Candasuriya, the king of Dhanyawadi (Ancient Arakan) who was a contemporary of Buddha, Gotama Buddha visited Arakan with five hundred disciples. On the Selargiri mountain, which is opposite Kyauktaw town on the Kaladan river, Buddha held a prophetic discourse.

King Candasuriya went to Selargiri hill to meet the Blessed One. He invited the Blessed One to his capital which was about five miles to the east of the hill. The Blessed One stayed in the city for seven days. When Buddha made preparations to depart, the king requested the Buddha to leave an image of himself. The Blessed One complied with the king's request. With the consent of Buddha, Sakra and Visvakarman cast an exact replica of the Blessed One on the Sirigutta hill, which was situated on the north-east side of the inner palace of Dhanyawadi City. This image has been called Mahamuni since then. King Candasuriya erected the Mahamuni Shrine on the Sirigutta hill in commemoration of Buddha's visit and the casting of his image. See Plate 80.

Apart from this tradition, we have found miniature stupas with Yedharma verses on them (Chapter V) and also many dedicatory stone inscriptions, dedicating the building of stupas and caityas, (Chapter VII and XI) all around the old cities of Dhanyawadi and Vesali. We can determine the dates of these inscriptions palaeographically and can state that the earliest ones were inscribed during the fourth and the fifth centuries A.D. We thus have solid evidence that Buddhism flourished in Arakan not later than the above mentioned period. In addition to these inscriptions we have found many Buddha images of various types made from stones, rocks and bronze from the relic chambers of ruined ancient stupas and cetis. Miniature cetis, (Chapter XII) dedicatory bronze bells, (Chapter IX) copper plate land grant for the repair and maintenance of vihara built for Buddhist monks (Chapter VIII) and lamps used for worship of Buddha images (Chapter X) have also been found.

### **Indian Schools of Art**

Independent Ancient Arakan which lay beyond the eastern frontier of Ancient India was naturally influenced by the Ancient Indian Schools of Art during the succeeding centuries. It will not be out of place, therefore to first survey here, very briefly, the different Ancient Indian Schools of Art before we survey the Buddhist Art of Ancient Arakan.

Scholars of Buddhist Art in Ancient India generally classify the Schools of Art as follows.

#### **1. The Mauryan School of Art**

The earliest school of art belongs to the Mauryan period in the eastern provinces of Northern India. Some examples of the specimens of Mauryan art may be seen at the caves at Barabar in Gaya District and on the inscribed pillars of Asoka in the northern district of Modern Bihar. Specimens belonging to an earlier period, may exist, but either their earlier date has not been confirmed or is still a matter of controversy.

#### **2. The Gandhara School of Art**

The next is the Gandhara School of Art which came into being in the second century B.C. It has left many specimens of its production scattered over the North western districts of ancient India (Afghanistan and western Punjab). The sculptures left are mainly

Buddhistic and portray scenes from the life of the Buddha and also those of his previous existences. Besides the Buddha images, there are images of Kubera, Jambhala, Maitreya, Indra, Hariti and unidentified Bodhisattva images. The most flourishing period of the Gandhara art was during the reign of King Kaniska, the great Kushan Emperor.

### **3. The Mathura School of Art**

The Mathura School followed closely. It can be either contemporaneous or somewhat later than the Gandhara School. The school left numerous Buddha and Bodhisattva images along with those of Kubera, the Yaksas and Nagas. No images with Tantric flavor are found in this school. Not even the images of Avalokitesvara and Manjusri were found.

The Mathura sculptures included the following events of the life of Buddha. (1) Birth, (2) Illumination or Sambodhi, (3) First Sermon, (4) Visit of Indra to Buddha, (5) Buddha thinking of leaving his palace, (6) Buddha leaving his palace, (7) the change of garments, (8) Descent from Heaven of the thirty three gods, (9) The gift of the Jetavana, (10) The Taming of the elephant Nalagiri, (11) The presentation of alms bowls, and (12) Death or mahaparinirvana. Apart from these, many of the Jataka stories are also represented in this school. The Mathura school extended to the early Gupta period.

The bas reliefs of Bharhut and Sanchi show the majority of human figures wearing a peculiar headdress. It appears that the Gandhara school influence this school during the first decades of the second century A.D. The important feature borrowed from the Gandhara School was the representation of the scenes of the life of the Buddha.

### **4. The Benares School of Art or the Magadha School of Art**

The next is the Benares School. It may also be called the Magadha School. This school of art belongs to the early Gupta period. This school included the images found in Sarnath, Nalanda, Odantapuri, Gaya and other ancient sites in Bihar. The majority of the sculptures are Buddhist. A new form of bas-reliefs representing scenes from the life of Buddha are produced which are entirely different from the old bas-reliefs of Sanchi and Bharhut. They are in the form of steles.

### 5. The Eastern School of Bengal and Bihar

A new school of sculptures rose in the North Eastern Provinces of India in the later part of the mediaeval period. That is, from the middle of the eighth century A.D. to the end of the tenth. The period coincides with the rise of Palas and the new school is therefore also called the Pala School of Art. But we must note that this school of art should not be identified with Palas alone. Because, there is no epigraphical evidence to show that any part of Eastern Bengal was included in the dominions actually ruled by the Pala kings. The ancient kingdoms of Eastern Bengal were Vanga or Harikela and Samatata. These places were firmly under the control of the Candra kings. So, we will generalise the name of this school as the Eastern School of Bengal and Bihar. The Artists in this school attenuate the limbs in accordance with the favourite descriptions of India poets. Their aim being the reproduction of sublime beauty in figures.

In this school, artists developed new forms of representation of the important incidents of the life of Buddha. Two different styles of adaptation of the bas-reliefs can be noticed. The first consists of the representations of a single incident of Buddha's life in the form of an image. In the second style an image of Buddha representing one particular incident of the Blessed-One's life surrounded by numerous other images representing the majority of the important incident.

The development of the second style can be explained as follows. Buddha on his death-bed, in answer to his well loved disciple Ananda's question, mentioned four places which an honourable worshiper should visit with religious emotion. They are those of his Birth, his Enlightenment, his First Sermon, and his Parinirvana. These four scenes were common to almost all the steles which show the scenes from the life of Buddha. But the artists and the sculptors were not long content with these alone. In course of time the number of scenes increased. Finally the number and order of scenes tend to get fixed at eight scenes. Steles having more than eight have also been found.

## CHAPTER XIV

### The Head, the Hair And The Ushnisa

#### **Buddha Images**

The biography of Buddha relates that Prince Siddhattha, son of Sudhodana, king of the Sakyas, made the great renunciation at the age of 29. One night he rode off from the palace and when far from the city he stripped off his ornaments and royal robes. He cut off his long hair with his sword. He received a monastic robe from Brahma Ghatikara. From that moment till his death he wore nothing but the monastic robe.

A student of Buddhism, who is accustomed to think of the Buddha only as a human being, would naturally expect to find the Master represented in art, like any other Buddhist monk, with a shaven head.

As a matter of fact, Buddha is always represented as a deity, with a nimbus, certain physical peculiarities and all the characteristic marks proper to the conception of a Cakravartin or king of the world. Texts implying the deification of the Buddha and possessing all the characteristic marks of a Cakravartin are older than the oldest images of Buddha. We can thus suppose that the images of Buddha are intended to be visual realizations of literary descriptions. The styles of art and fashions in iconography are characteristic of period and place.

## Representations of the head

The heads of Buddha images may be classified as follows:

- (1) The head smooth, with a spirally twisted projection on the crown. See Plate 28 (a). Early Kusana type.
- (2) The head with long flowing locks gathered together on top of the head to form a top-knot. See plate 28 (b,c). Early Gandhara type.
- (3) The head with a cranial protuberance (Usnisa). The whole head together with the protuberance being covered by small curls. See Plate 28 (d). The usnisa appeared about the middle of the 2nd century A.D. Both Gandhara and Mathura used this type. This type spread from both areas to the Far-East and South-east Asia. The vast majority of the Buddha images belong to this type. In a comparatively late form, the usnisa is surmounted by a flame tip, a flame niche or a lotus bud. In some of the Buddha images of Arakan, the usnisa itself is represented as a flame. See Plates 29 and 30.
- (4) The head with a crown. This type of Buddha is usually called crowned Buddha. Such images are common in the Eastern School of Bengal and Bihar and in Arakan school of art. See Plates 31 and 32.

## The hair

In the reliefs and sculptures showing the act of Bodhisattva cutting his hair, he is represented as grasping the whole of the hair in a single tress in the left hand, and cutting it with the sword in the other. The turban has already been removed. If this is the case, the most natural way to represent the remaining hair will be to reduce the single thick tress to a single thick short curl. The Plate 28 (a), which was an early kusana Buddha, represented the hair in this form. The smooth head seen in the plate meant simply that all the long hair was drawn up close and tight over the scalp into the single tress and not that it was shaved.

The Nidanakatha tells us that "the hair was reduced to two inches in length, and curling from the right, lay close to the head, remaining of that length as long as he lived".

A new type in which the whole head was covered with many small curls appeared about the middle of the second century, becoming almost universal, in Gandhara, in Mathura and in later art throughout the East and South-east Asia. The length and curling of the hair could



still be accounted for from the literary tradition as mentioned in Nidanakatha. But to have curls with equal length all over the head, the original hair instead of being cut off at a single stroke, should have been done by a succession of strokes.

Anyway, we can note that the Buddha's hair may be represented either in one curl or in many curls.

### **The cranial protuberance (Usnisa)**

The Mahapadana-Sutta mentioned a list of the thirty two lakkhanas (superior marks) proper to a person, who is destined to become a Cakravartin or a Buddha. The last one being *unhiso-siso*. Similarly, the Mahavastu and Lalita-Vistara mentioned *usniso-siso*. The interpretation of this phrase is very important. Etymologically, it meant a sunshade or a turban (often a royal headdress) or a royal umbrella. The lakkhanas were recognized in infancy. They must be present on the body, since then, as a physical appearance. This results in a new interpretation of the phrase unhisa or usnisa as a cranial protuberance. That is, a bony protuberance on the top of the skull.

When the tonsure was reinterpreted as resulting in crop of short curls instead of a single coil, the cranial bump became conspicuously evident.

## CHAPTER XV

### CROWNED BUDDHA IMAGES

#### Crowned Buddhas

As has been mentioned in Chapter XIV, we know that Prince Siddhattha discarded the royal robes and adornments after the great renunciation. Also, Buddhist monks are forbidden to wear any other robes except monk's robes. These two facts will naturally suggest that the presentation of a crowned Buddha garbed in royal robes and ornaments like a Cakravartin king, is uncanonical and unorthodox. But we have found many crowned Buddha images in Arakan throughout different ages. See Plates 31 to 50.

Are they Maitreya images mentioned by many authorities? We should have found other Bodhisattva images also together with these images. But we have not. The hand gestures of these crowned Buddhas are all in line with ordinary Buddha images. They do not hold any attributes assigned to a Maitreya as mentioned in ancient Indian literature. The sitting postures of our crowned Buddhas are also in line with ordinary Buddhas. The attendant figures are also the same as those found together with ordinary Buddha images. For example, the presence of Vasumdhari. There are too many crowned Buddhas in existence in Arakan. It is hard to believe and is illogical to assume that Buddha images are discarded and instead Maitreya images are worshipped. We must conclude that the Arakanese worshipped Buddha images. The only difference is that the images are garbed in royal robes instead of monk's robes.

We have to note that the Buddha image came into being only after the Buddha had been regarded as a Devatideva, god of gods. Again, in the iconographic development, the Cakravartin concept played a great part. The Buddha was provided with all the lakṣhanas of a Cakravartin. They belonged to the Mahayana theology and must have been present in some form from very early times. These conceptions are sufficient to account for the presentation of the crowned Buddha with all the royal attributes at different ages.

In some cases, although the Buddha wears a crown, ear-pendants, necklace and torque, we can notice the robe of a monk on his body with shoulder flap on the left and a bare right shoulder. See Plates 47, 49, 50. In some cases, we can find Buddha dressed up with all the attributes of a Cakravartin King; crown, ear-rings, necklets, armlets, bracelets, anklets and a waist band. See Plates 36 to 43.

Again, some of the eight scene steles of the school of Bengal and Bihar and Pagan in Burma have a central crowned Buddha in Bhūmisparsa mudra surrounded by representations of the Eight Great events of Buddha's life. See plates 51 and 52. For such cases, the reader will agree that it would be far simpler to suppose that we have to do with a glorification of the earthly Buddha, by addition of the kingly attributes, which reminds us that the Buddha is more than man. The earthly Buddha, originally a man, has been transformed into a deity.

The crowned Buddha image most probably came about because of the desire of kings and commoners alike to worship the Buddha as the "King of Kings" as has been explained in the Maha Parinibbana-Sutta.

Anyway, the Buddha is equally a Great Being, a deity, whether he appears in monastic robes or in royal robes.

Since separate images of Buddha represent incidents of the Blessed One's life, we must be able to explain the crowned Buddha with all royal attributes, holding the ambrosia jar and sitting in Dhyana mudra, vajra sāna. An article by U Mya about the crowned Buddha image written in the Report of the Director, Archaeological Survey, Burma for the year ending 30th September 1955, and published in 1961 is presented here. This is the Burmese version of the explanation of the existence of Crowned Buddha.

The majority of Buddha images depict the Buddha attired in simple robes like those one sees on present-day Buddhist monks. But crowned Buddha images were to be found throughout Burma and especially in the Shan States and in neighbouring Laos and Thailand, since olden days.

The Wetmasut Wundank, a Minister of King Mindon, was intrigued by the crowned Buddha images and was moved to ask the Taungkhwin Thathanabaing Sayadaw, the Buddhist Patriarch of his days, to let the people know whether the casting and worship of such regally-attired Buddha images was based on some incident in Buddhist Literature. (Vide Gulattha Vinicchaya Vol. I pp. 20-23).

Even before that time, in the year 1172 of the Buddhist Era, (about 1810 A.D) during the reign of King Padon, the founder of the Royal City of Amarapura, the same question was put by Sayadaw Thirimalar of Monywa to the learned Monyway Jetavan Sayadaw. The two answers given were similar, and the following is an extract from the answer of the Monyway Jetavan Sayadaw which appears in the Samanta cakkhu dipani Vol. I pp. 429-532.

"It is clerally stated in the Maha Parinibbana Sutta that the Lord Buddha did not adorn himself with the royal regalia, such as the crown, necklaces, rings, bracelets etc. However, because the Buddha delivered many of his sermons from the thrones of kings, certain inhabitants of the far-flung universes were under the impression that it was their king who was speaking to them. According to our elders, it is this impression in the minds of those extra-terrestrial beings, of the Buddha in royal regalia, which gave rise to the production and worship of the crowned Buddha images."

### **The story of King Jambupati**

There is another version about how the crowned Buddha images came into being. The version is given in Dipeyin Sayadaw's book, the Tathagata udana dipani which was completed in 1134 B.E or about 38 years earlier than the Samanta cakkhu dipani quoted above. Chapter 153 of the Tathagata udana dipani describes in detail the story of King Jambupati. The reason for the crowned Buddha image given in this story is different from those given in the Samanta cakkhu dipani and the Gulattha Vinicchaya. This story seems to have been exaggerated beyond the meaning conveyed by the Pali texts, and one might even consider it to be imaginative fiction. However, one must accept the fact that the Dipeyin Sayadaw no doubt based his writings on what he had been taught by his mentors. In any case the Sayadaw's story has gained such currency that the images of the Buddha, regally-attired in royal regalia are today known as Jambupati images, so named after the proud and powerful King Jambupati.

The story of King Jambupati taken from the Tathagata udana dipani is, briefly, as follows:

"During the life time of the Buddha, Jambupati became king of the kingdom of Pancala. The king was extremely powerful, especially since he possessed supernatural powers. At the time of his conception, it was said that a pillar of gold 18 cubits high appeared out of the ground in the Royal Courtyard. When the future king was born, pots of gold appeared out of the earth, dropped from branches of trees and floated up out of the water. From Vepulla mountain came the ruby-encrusted sandals called Manijotiyasa, seeking the royal feet. It was heard that these omens heralded the fact that the Prince was destined to become the supreme ruler over the entire Jambudipa, and that his sovereignty would extend one league above the surface of the earth, one league below it, and even as far as the kingdom of the Nagas who lived under the oceans. For by wearing the ruby sandals he could fly up one league into the air.

When the Prince began learning the Martial Arts, he used to shoot his arrows not only through the air but into the ground as well. For sixteen years the Prince practised this warrior's craft. The first year the arrow shot from his bow travelled one league through the air. The second year the arrow travelled two leagues, and so it went year by year until he could shoot an arrow to a distance of seven leagues. Shooting into the ground he made his arrow penetrate one league. Shooting into the water the arrow caused the water to vapourize and also managed to travel one league. If he shoots his arrow towards the abode of the Nagas, he could turn the whole place to ashes. When he wished to summon the one hundred and one kings of Jambudipa, he would send his special arrow to fetch them, and the arrow by its supernatural powers, would pierce the ear-lobes of the kings and bring them back like blossoms strung on a thread.

In due time, King Jambupati held a grand coronation at Pañcala, where accompanied by his queen Kañcana Devi, he had himself crowned as Emperor. One month later, while out on the terrace in the evening of the fullmoon day of Tazaungmon, he saw the moon in all its splendour in a cloudless sky, seemingly attended by a host of stars. This sight brought to his mind the thought that he himself was like the glorious moon, while those who attended upon him, including the one hundred and one kings of Jambudipa, were like the attendant stars. The thought led him that night, to attire himself in full royal regalia, put on the ruby sandals and fly up into the air in order to visit the one hundred and one kings and to receive their homage. On his return, he perceived the palace of King Bimbisara of Rajagriha. He saw that the spire or graduated turret.

surmounting the roof of the palace was imposingly tall and that it was decorated with numerous small ornamental spires. He did not know to whom the palace belonged, but this evidence of the presumptuousness on the part of the unknown king angered him. He therefore aimed a kick at the tip of the spire. However, since King Bimbisara was a devotee of the Buddha, the powers of the Buddha were ever present to protect him and his property. King Jambupati's kick missed its mark, but his knee hit the tip of the spire. As a result his knee was injured and began to bleed. This roused the proud king to a fury and he drew his royal sword to strike the spire. Again the power of the Buddha caused the gods to transform the spire into solid iron, thus ruining the king's sword.

King Jambupati returned to his palace in a rage. Taking hold of his unique arrow and laying it on the palm of his hand, he ordered it to bring back to him the king whose palace lay towards the south. The arrow shot into the air taking the form of the garuda which instils fear in the nagas. Then the arrow roared like the lion, declaring: 'I am the Messenger of the Great King Jambupati. I shall cut off the head of King Bimbisara. I shall split open his breast. Stay clear of my path!'

King Bimbisara was very frightened, when at daybreak he heard a commotion high above his head. As soon as the sun had risen, he hurried to the Veluvan Monastery, where he threw himself at Buddha's feet and related his horrifying experiences. At that very moment the arrow followed him into the monastery and began to intimidate him again. The king was terrified, and touching the Buddha's feet with his forehead he implored the Buddha to save him, declaring that the Buddha was his sole refuge. The ever-compassionate Buddha by his powers created a weapon to counter the arrow. He then said: 'O worthy Cakka, you are the representative of my power. Go forth and discipline the arrow!'

The arrow, unable to stand the punishment meted out by the cakka, had to flee. King Jambupati then sent his ruby sandals. The sandals took the form of a naga with a hundred heads and thousands of hoods like those of the cobra. Emitting smoke and flame like hell-fire, the naga came towards the monastery where King Bimbisara had taken refuge. Assuring Bimbisara that he had nothing to fear, the Buddha created an enormous garuda with a thousand heads and millions of wings, and despatched it aloft. The naga, unable to withstand the stupendous powers sent against it also had

to flee. Seeing the naga fleeing back towards him, King Jambupati felt like a bird that had lost both its wings, and for the first time fear entered his heart.

The Buddha looked into King Jambupati's future, and seeing that he was destined to become an Arahant, (one who is free from all fetters, defilements and impurities through the realisation of Nirvana in the fourth and final stage, and who is free from rebirth) summoned the Thagyamin (Indra) king of the gods, and requested him to fetch King Jambupati by telling him that he was being summoned by the King of Kings, Rajadhiraja.

Thagyamin accordingly went to Pancala and illuminated the whole kingdom with the brightness emanating from his body. Then entering the palace and standing before the ministers of the Court he addressed the king thus.

"Why have you not presented yourself in homage before the King of Kings with gifts and offerings? O uncivilized king, why have you stayed away from the King of Kings like the ignorant deer of the forests? You will no longer be permitted to remain like this. I have been sent to fetch you and you must come along with me at once."

When King Jambupati heard these words he was furious at the breach of diplomatic practice and at the apparent lack of reverence towards his august self. Therefore, taking a poison-tipped arrow, he shot it towards the envoy's ear. Thagyamin countered with his own powerful weapon. The arrow could not overcome the weapon sent against it by the king of the gods, and had to beat a hasty retreat. In this manner, using his varied and wonderful powers of persuasion, the Thagyamin finally managed to drag King Jambupati into the presence of the Buddha.

The Buddha, on his part, had made fitting arrangements to welcome King Jambupati. The road by which Jambupati came was beautifully decorated. And, for himself, the Buddha created an enormous and wonderful palace in which he sat waiting on a throne encrusted with seven different kinds of gems under a Royal White Umbrella. His glory shone forth as though he were a Brahma. Buddha also created as his attendants and courtiers, a magnificent host.

When King Jambupati saw such magnificence, far beyond anything he had known, he fell to his knees and paid homage to the Buddha. In this receptive frame of mind, the words of the Buddha had an

immediate effect, and Jambupati and all his followers became Bhikkhus or monks and disciples of the Buddha. Queen Kancana Devi and her ladies-in-waiting also went to Bhikkhuni Gotami, the foster-mother of the Buddha, to be ordained as Bhikkhunis."

It is because of this story that the crowned Buddha images came to be known as Jambupati images. So far, however, no evidence has been found to suggest that the book which contains the story of the emancipation of King Jambupati, was based on authentic Buddhist texts.

By tradition, the story is said to have originated in the City of Chiangmai, in Ayuthia. The reason for the story seems to have been the desire on the part of the writer to reform a very proud and despotic king by making up an appropriate story and giving it a Buddhist background.

Apart from the reasons given by the writers above, another reason for the appearance of the crowned Buddha images may have been the Tantric Mahayana form of Buddhism that flowered in Bengal and Orissa during the reigns of the Pala kings.

Some crowned Buddha images may have come about due to the people mixing up the Buddha image with that of the Bodhisattva Arimetteya.

To sum up, the crowned Buddha image most probably came about because of the desire of kings and commoners alike to worship the Buddha as the "King of Kings" as has been explained in the Maha Parinibbana Sutta.

### **The Arakanese version of the Crowned Buddha Image**

I now present the Arakanese version of the explanation for the existence of crowned Buddha images. This explanation is derived from the palm-leaf manuscript entitled "Buddha Abhiseka Mangala." The manuscript is an Arakanese manuscript and the name of its scribe is given as one Maung Oo, a protege of Thakin Nanda Aindia. The manuscript also contains the information that the transcription was completed before noon on Sunday, the 5th waning of the month of Tabang, in the year 904 of the Burmese Era (1543 A.D.). Since the manuscript is a copy and only the name of the copyist is given, the name of the original author is not known.



According to unbroken tradition, the kings of Arakan, during their Coronation Ceremonies, take their oath of Office by holding aloft a specially cast image of the Buddha, beautifully ornamented and depicted in full royal regalia. For this reason, such images of the Buddha have come to be known either as Mahakyain Phara (Royal Oath Buddha) or Nantet Phara (Coronation Buddha). Later, due to the passage of time the word Mahakyain became corrupted and the image also came to be called Mahakyi Phara.

Arakan has ever been a land where Buddhism has flowered and its kings have been devout Buddhists. At the ascension of each king the first requisite is the casting of a Mahakyain Phara (also called a Nantet Phara). This image then plays an important part in the Coronation Ceremony. Although it is not certain at what period and in which reign this practice began, a study of the style and workmanship of the old Mahakyain Phara images extant, reveals that they were probably cast during the 4th century A.D. during the reigns of the Vesali kings.

### **The casting of the Mahakyain Pharas**

The first step in the process of casting the Mahakyain Phara is taken by the Chancellor or Prime Minister, who, in consultation with other learned ministers and court Brahmins (Royal astrologers), chooses the most auspicious day and hour for the casting.

After this, the site for the casting is chosen with the same care. The ground is levelled and to cleanse the site (i. e. to ward off evil spirits), monks are invited to the site, offered food, and requested to recite the Kammava, the Parittas, the Mangala Sutta and the Bhumijala Mantra.

A large temporary hall is then erected over the site. This hall is enclosed by three lattice-work fences, one inside another. The wood of certain trees which have an affinity for the planets-such as the Gangaw (Mesua Ferrea), the Saga (Michelia Champaca), the Chaya (Mimusops Clerigi) and the Jackfruit are selected in order to obtain wooden posts free from blemish. The selected pieces of wood are then shaped into eight posts, lacquered and gilded, and then planted inside the Hall at the eight points of the compass to represent the eight planets. Staves with streamers, magical banners and yak-tail whisks are also put up. At each corner of the boundary lines marked off by the three light fences, a banana plant bearing fruit is planted, making a total of

68

twelve banana plants. The innermost fence is draped with white cloth, while the two outer ones are draped with red cloth. Nine silver pots containing pure water together with nine white umbrellas (the insignia of royalty) are placed at each of the eight posts representing the planets and at the actual site where the casting is to take place. To melt the precious metals for the image, new melting pots and a new fireplace are needed. For fuel only scented woods are used.

When the appointed day and hour arrives, eight Brahmins invested with certain sacerdotal functions, stand at the planetary pillars and blow on their right-voluted conches, thereby ceremonially inviting the guardian Nats (gods) of the planets, the Lokapala Nat, the Guardian Nats respectively of the Religion, the Country, the Sky, the Earth and the Trees. They follow this up with a recitation of mantrams or spells such as the Grahajaya Verse, the Saranasirishinda Bhumijala Verse and others. It is at this moment that the sculptors who are to cast the image, wearing pure white clothing, begin to kindle their fire, using sandalwood. Then the precious metals which are to be used for casting the image, are placed in the new pot to be melted. This melting down of the metals is done only during the day. The pot must not be removed from the fireplace at this juncture. Neither must the fire be extinguished. It has to be allowed to die down by itself. The melting process continues for nine whole days till the auspicious moment arrives for the sculptors to cast the Mahakyain Phara. During the casting, the image is made to face the east. While the casting is in progress, the Brahmins strew coloured artificial flowers, made from rice grains parched till they burst open, and they recite the verse beginning "Anekajatisamsara...."

### **Buddha Abhiseka Mangala Ceremony**

When the sculptors have added the final touches to the Mahakyain Phara image, the Brahmins ceremonially wash the image in pure water and then spray scent over it. A golden salver, ornamented with the nine varieties of gems, on which is laid a piece of most expensive cloth, which is in turn covered by a piece of white cloth, is brought forward, and the image is transferred onto the salver. At this moment the Brahmins recite a mantram, a sort of prayer to ward off evil.

For the ceremony of the Buddha Abhiseka Mangala, the Chancellor has to invite, in advance, five, seven or nine Buddhist monks, venerable of age and renowned for their holiness. These invited monks sit in a circle around the image, their fingers holding the white cloth on which the

image reposes. Then they recite in unison the Buddha Abhiseka verse. When the recitation ends, the Brahmins blow on their right-voluted conches, while the lay musical bands stationed outside the Hall produce an outburst of music on their instruments, and this outburst of sound marks the conclusion of the Buddha Abhiseka Mangala Ceremony.

Then with the Chancellor leading the way, the image is transferred to the Royal Palace, the King, Queen, Princes and Princesses as well as the court officials await in readiness to greet the arrival of the Mahakyain Phara, and to pay obeisance to it with scents, before taking it to be placed in the altar room.

### **The Postures**

The posture of the Mahakyain Phara images is the usual cross-legged posture, but the Mahakyain Pharas are distinguished from ordinary images in that each wears a crown just like that of a king who takes part in a Coronation Ceremony. The ears are adorned with royal ear-rings. The body is covered, not with the monk's robe but with royal garb. This garb is an exact representation of the royal garb worn by the king at whose command the image was cast. For this reason, the royal garb of one Mahakyain Phara is quite distinct from that of another, and it can clearly be seen that with progress the royal garb became increasingly more elaborate.

Among the images two types of cross-legs posture can be seen. One type has the left foot placed under the right leg, and the right foot placed on the left thigh. See plates 33 to 35 and 44 to 45. The other type has the two legs crossed so that both feet are brought to rest, soles upwards, on the thighs. See plates 36 to 43 and 46 to 50.

The images can also be divided into three types according to the position of the hands. The first type is known as the "bhumisparsa mudra", a type wherein the left hand is placed palm upwards on the lap, and on the open palm is placed a golden bowl. The right hand rests, palm down, on the right knee, the fingers all pointing downwards and the fingertips touching the ground or the throne on which the image is seated. See plates 45 to 48. The second type is known as the "dhyana mudra". It portrays the Buddha in meditation, with both hands resting in a relaxed manner on the lap, both palms upward,

70

the right hand resting on the left. Certain images of this type show the two thumbs with their tips touching each other, while the fingers are slightly spread in the normal manner. On the outspread palm, a begging bowl, a nectar bowl or a golden bowl is usually placed. See plates 36 to 43.

The third type depicts the Buddha with his right arm bent at the elbow, the hand raised towards the shoulder is closed as if grasping something. The left hand is placed on the lap, palm turned upwards, but the fingers again clasped as if holding something. See plates 75 and 76.

### **The Size**

The sizes of the images also vary, from a handsbreadth to a cubit, in accordance with the wishes of the kings who commissioned the casting. The weight too varies a great deal because of the differences in size. These Mahakyain Phara images are still to be found all over Arakan.

### **The use of Crowned Buddha In Coronation Ceremony**

For his Coronation Ceremony, an Arakanese king first selects the most renowned pagoda within his kingdom as the site, and then proceeds towards it in Royal Procession, passing out of the Palace grounds through the Mangala Gate. Arriving at the platform of the selected pagoda, each personage takes up his assigned position. The King then raises the Mahakyain Phara to the top of his head, and holding it there, he makes three circuits of the pagoda. He completes the third circuit at the temporary Hall where the coronation is to take place. The Coronation Ceremony itself follows traditional rites. At the conclusion, the Thathanabaing Sayadaw (the Patriarch or Principal Monk of the kingdom) and a number of monks who can recite from memory the whole of the Tipitakas (the three main canonical divisions of the Buddha's teachings are divided into *Vinaya*, Code of Discipline, *Sutta*, Discourses, and *Abhidhamma*, Higher Doctrine), then hold the Mahakyain Phara over the King's head and exhort him to uphold justice in the tradition of his forefathers, to venerate the Triple Gem (Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha), to encourage the Buddhist religion within his kingdom, and to suppress the enemies of Buddhism. The King has to take an oath and declare that he will faithfully discharge his duties as enumerated above. This oath-taking is the high point of the ceremony.

In this manner, every king of Arakan (according to tradition), has had a Mahakyain Phara cast for his coronation. The images are shown crowned and in the royal garb of the kings who had cast them, so the mode of dress of the Arakanese kings can be conjectured very accurately from a study of these images.

### **The Arakanese Tradition**

The Arakanese peasantry in olden days very often used a Buddha image to take an oath in trying to settle conflicting claims or even criminal cases. This practice was no doubt, in some measure, due to their belief and faith in Buddhism but could just as easily have derived from the King's Royal Oath-taking.

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## CHAPTER XVI

### Postures and Gestures of Buddha Images

Different images of Buddha represent distinct incidents of the Blessed-One's life. These incidents can be identified from the posture of Buddha's hands or some attendant figures.

The technical term used to denote the hand poses of the images is *mudra*. Mudras usually indicate some action in which Buddha was engaged. The action is depicted by means of a particular gesture which is the expression of an idea.

We can recognize the following mudras in the Buddhist Art of Ancient Arakan.

1. The Bhumisparśa mudra
2. The Dhyāna mudra
3. The Dharmacakra mudra
4. The Abhaya mudra
5. The Abhaya and Varada Combined mudra
6. The Internal Varada mudra

We recognize four attitudes for these images.

They are :-

(1) and (2) In standing or walking posture. Generally speaking, this posture is used in depicting the taming of the Nālagiri elephant or the descent of the Buddha from the heaven of thirty three gods where he went to preach the true law to his mother since reincarnated as a god, for three months. See Plate 53,

(3) In sitting posture. Generally speaking this posture is used in depicting the calling upon Mother Earth to stand witness or the preaching of the Dharmacakra Sermon or the Buddha in deep meditation. See Plates 47, 73 and 42.

(4) In reclining posture. This posture is used in depicting the death or the Mahaparinirvana.

We can further differentiate the sitting postures as follows. The term "sana" is used to denote the sitting posture as well as the seat.

(a) The legs are placed one upon the other with both the soles invisible. This sana is called the *pariyanka sana*. The position of the legs, right on left, is a sign of antiquity. See plates 33 to 35;

(b) The legs are closely crossed with the feet brought to rest on the thighs and the soles of the feet turned upwards with the right foot forward. This sana is called *vajra sana* or *vajraparyarika sana* or *padma sana*. The padma sana is also used to denote the lotus seat. See plates 37 to 43.

(c) A European style of sitting in which both the legs are made to dangle down from the seat. This sana is called *pralambana sana*.

### The Bhumisparśa Mudra

In this mudra, the left hand rests on the lap with palm upward and the right, palm down resting on the right knee and touching the seat or ground below. See Plates 44 to 50, 54 to 70.

This mudra illustrates the story of Buddha's calling the earth as his witness for testifying to his attainment of perfect knowledge.

The representation of the Enlightenment or Sambodhi and the incidents connected with it, form the favorite themes with the Buddhist artists of all schools. According to the wellknown story of the Blessed-One's life, he called on the earth-goddess Prithivi or Vasumdhari to come and be the witness of his perfect knowledge by touching the earth. This mudra indicates the moment when he ceased to be a Bodhisattva and became Buddha. He did this because Mara, the evil one, while attacking the Blessed-One with his fourfold army, challenged him to do it by saying that there was no body near at hand to witness his attainment of perfect knowledge or enlightenment.

In Buddhist iconography, this particular posture of touching the earth has become one of the mudras or special attitudes. It is called the Bhumisparśa mudra or the attitude of touching the earth.

The representation of Enlightenment by the artists can be divided into two or three parts. They are (1) the temptation of Bodhisattva by Mara's daughters, (2) the attack on the Bodhisattva by Mara's followers and (3) the call on Vasumdhari, the earth-goddess to stand witness.

Mara had three beautiful daughters. Desire, Pleasure and Passion. The temptation by Mara's daughters, are depicted in one case as follows. There are three groups with two female figures in each group. In one group one female is dancing and the other has adopted an elegant posture. This represent the daughters of Mara exposing their physical charms to the Bodhisattva in order to disrupt him from attaining enlightenment. In the next group both the females or one of them is addressing the Bodhisattva when their allurements have failed. In the remaining group, both females are kneeling in submission with dishevelled hair.

The attack on Bodhisattva by Mara's followers is represented by pictures of Mara himself in the act of shooting arrows towards the Bodhisattva with followers represented as demons. In the story of Mara's attack, Mara with his demon army attacked Bodhisattva with whirlwind, tempest, flood and earthquake.

In one huge stele at Jadispur near Nalanda, the demonic army of Mara ranged in vertical rows on both sides of the Blessed-One. They were attacking him with all sorts of weapons. On the leftside of the Blessed-One's head was a demon with a wheel on one hand while another one below him was shooting at him with arrows. Below this demon was a dwarf throwing stone. A man behind him seemed to be rushing through the air with a sword in his hand. There were four figures on the other side of the Blessed-One representing the army of Mara. They were also rushing to the attack on the Blessed-One.

The answer of Vasumdhari, the earth goddess, to the call of the Master is represented by a woman usually placed on the front side of the pedestal below the Blessed-One. See Plates 33, 58 and 59 again. She is kneeling mostly towards the left but facing front and is wringing the water from her hair brought in a tress in front of her breast testifying the Blessed-One's merit. Vasumdhari, in this form, is very common in Arakanese Buddhist art.



We have a tradition, which is observed to this day to close a meritorious ceremony by the donor dropping droplets of water from a cup while the presiding monk offers prayers for the merit done, thereby treating the mother earth as a witness.

### **The Dhyana Mudra**

This mudra is also called samadhi mudra, or meditative mudra or samahita mudra. See Plates 33 to 43.

In this particular pose, the palm of the right hand is placed in that of the left hand and both together are laid in the crossed legs of the seated image. This is the attitude of ardent meditation. Occasionally, an alms bowl or mendicant bowl or a vase round, oval or pointed, may rest on the hands. See Plates 36 to 43.

This mudra, unlike the Bhumisparsha mudra, belongs to many moments showing Buddha's life before and after Enlightenment. Some of the moments are listed below.

1. When after seeing the last of the four signs namely a wandering religious monk, he sat on his pleasance, thinking.
2. When after hearing the news that his wife Yasodhara had given birth to a son one morning, he sat up in bed that same night and saw his women sleeping like corpses.
3. When he did his first meditation after renunciation.
4. When after six years of fast and penances, he rejected extreme asceticism and accepted Sujata's rice - alms. Here the alms bowl is present.
5. When he sat with alms bowl in lap under the hood of Muchalinda Naga. It has been said that after enlightenment, there was a great storm in Bodh Gaya and rain fell in torrents for several days. At that time a Naga king, named Muchalinda, protected the Buddha by coiling his body around that of the Blessed-One and spreading his hood as an umbrella over the Blessed-One's head.
6. When he sat in the House of Gems (Ratana Gharā) meditating the abhidhamma in the fourth week after his Enlightenment.
7. On his first visit to Rajagriha, before he gained enlightenment, when he was visited by king Bimbisara who offered him his throne.
8. On his second visit to Rajagriha, after enlightenment, when king Bimbisara presented the Bamboo Grove (Veluvana).

9. When he reformed a very proud and despotic king Jambupati. Here Buddha was regally attired in royal regalia and could be seen as a Cakravartin or King of the world. He was in dhyana mudra with a mendicant bowl in his hands.

In addition to the above moments there may be many more moments showing Buddha's life with Buddha in this mudra.

### **The Dharmacakra Mudra**

This pose symbolizes the first preaching of the law by the Buddha at Sarnath. Buddha preached his first sermon at the outskirts of Benares city in a park then known as the Deer Park (Mrigadava). This place is now called Sarnath.

Indian images of the Buddha in Dharmacakra Mudra from the Gupta period onwards have the left hand held near the heart with the tips of the middle finger and the thumb joined together. The palm of the hand turned towards the heart. In the case of the right hand the tips of the thumb and the forefinger are made to touch each other, so as to form a circle, the other fingers are kept open. The palm of the hand is facing the front. See Plate 71.

The Gandhara image of the Buddha in Dharmacakra Mudra, however, has a different positioning of the hands. The palm of the left hand in a cup form is turned upwards and that of the right hand turned towards the heart. See Plate 72.

Figuratively speaking, the posture of the hands in both cases, is setting thence-forward the wheel of the law in motion. The ideology here is characteristically expressive. Buddha was in the act of explaining and teachings the true knowledge he obtained through his own efforts.

What is this true knowledge? An extract from Dhammacakkappavattanakatha; Mahavagga, Part I, pp 15-16, about this true knowledge will not be out of place here.

"Now this, O monks, is the noble truth of pain: birth is painful, old age is painful, sickness is painful, death is painful. Contact with unpleasant things is painful, separation from pleasant things is painful and not getting what one wishes is also painful. In short the five khandhas of grasping are painful.

Now this, O monks, is the noble truth of the cause of pain: that craving, which leads to rebirth, combined with pleasure and lust finding pleasure here and there, namely the craving for passion, the craving for existence, the craving for non-existence.

Now this, O monks, is the noble truth of the cessation of pain: the cessation without a remainder of that craving, abandonment, forsaking, release, non-attachment.

Now this, O monks, is the noble truth of the way that leads to the cessation of pain: this is the noble Eight-fold Path, namely, right views, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration."

This Dharmacakra mudra hand pose is not only used to represent the first sermon at Mrigadava (Sarnath) but also the miracle of Sravasti. In addition to these, this hand pose represents the preaching of Dharmacakra sermon as in the case of our Arakanese Sculpture which will be discussed below.

### **The first sermon at Mrigadava**

After attaining Enlightenment the Buddha was in doubt whether he should spread his wisdom to the world. The god Brahma descended from heaven and persuaded him to do so. He then left the place and journeyed to the Deer Park (Sarnath). There he met his five former companions. These five companions were his former disciples who had left him when he gave up the austerities. To these five former disciples he preached his first sermon thus setting in motion the wheel of the law. They were very much impressed with his teaching and once more became his disciples.

### **The miracle of Sravasti**

In the sixth year after his enlightenment six Tirthika teachers or Naked Ascetics, tried to vanquish Buddha in various manners. They invited Buddha to a disputation. Prasenajit, king of Kosala, invited the different parties to a meeting in the capital of Kosala which was Sravasti.

Buddha performed here a number of miracles, the climax of which is Yamakapratihara or Twin Miracles. In these miracles, Buddha made fire and water issue simultaneously from different parts of his body and preached to the spectators simultaneously from the four

cardinal points. Flames came out from his shoulders, while water poured from his feet. His body issued six-coloured rays which spread over the universe. Replicas of himself in different mudras can be seen at the four cardinal points. The Tirthikas, seeing these miracles, fled in disarray and were thus vanquished.

Just by seeing the hand pose of Dharmacakra mudra one cannot make out what scene the sculpture represents. There need to be additional information. The first sermon at Benares had the wheel and deer mark in all cases. They were absent in the case of miracle at Sravasti. The two scenes were usually found in eight-scene steles in the same horizontal row, one on each side of the central Buddha image.

We have found one relief sculpture in dharmacakra mudra from the base of Selargiri hill, opposite Kyauktaw town in 1923. This scene represents neither the first Sermon nor the Miracle at Sravasti. Instead it represents a local tradition which I have mentioned before as Selargiri tradition. In this tradition Buddha came to Arakan and stopped at the Selargiri hill. King Canda Suriya of Dhanyawadi whose city was only five miles east of the hill, came to Selargiri hill to meet the Blessed One and invite him to his city. Buddha preached the dharmacakra sermon to the king. See Plate 73.

The Buddha image has an elliptical halo behind his head. The cranial protuberance is not outstanding. The spiral knots of the curly hair, which appear from a distance as small circles are in rows. The rows are curved slightly downwards above the forehead. These spiral knots of hair are in the form of Mathura Buddhas. But the curving of the rows slightly downwards above the forehead are similar to Sarnath Buddhas. The eyes are downcast, the nose prominent, the lips full and appear as if expressing something. The ear lobes are large but do not touch the shoulder. The neck has the Trivali or the three graceful folds. The right shoulder is bare. The upper garment, uttrasanga, can be seen over the left shoulder. The flaps fall gracefully. The hand pose is in Dharmacakra mudra. This hand pose is more akin to Gandhara art than that of any other Indian art from Gupta period onwards. See plates 71 and 72. again. We can see the lower garment, antaravasaka, from the waist. The legs are crossed with the right knee slightly raised. The Buddha sits on an undecorated hexagonal raised seat.

Close to the seat below him is a royal figure sitting at ease on the ground listening to what he says. The headdress of this figure consists of a lower diadem and three receding tiers. The open end

of the headdress is decorated all around with a floral motif. Some curls of hair can be seen protruding under the headdress. He also has prominent features. His eyes are also downcast. The ear lobes are extended because of his heavy earrings which fall below the shoulders. His head is bent slightly backwards and his facial expression shows great satisfaction to hear the sermon given by the Blessed One. He wears a jewelled necklace, upper arm bands and belt. His left arm is bent across the chest and the hand is placed on the upper right arm showing respect to the preacher. His right hand falls on the leg. In the background and above the royal listener a tree and an architectural design can be noticed.

The sculptor had masterfully done the carving of this piece of art. The landscape background and the positioning of the human figures give us an admirable three dimensional effect.

It is regrettable to note that scholars who had seen this sculpture, although admitting that the relief is unique in Indian and Southeast Asian art, cannot accept the Arakanese Tradition. After all, this sculpture was found in Arakan and the place found was also the traditionally famous Selargiri Hill. Why should not the sculptor present the local tradition in his relief sculpture? Just by seeing the present status of the place one should not discard the greatness of the Ancient Arakan and its Art. To compare, one can travel to the present Rajagriha and see for oneself the quiet place and reflect whether it could have been the centre of a mighty empire at one time.

The form of the hand postures and the headdresses may be used to determine the date of this relief. It should definitely be earlier than the fifth century A.D. This relief supports the Selargiri Tradition. We can conclude from this dating that this tradition is an age-old one.

### **The Abhaya Mudra**

See Plate 74. The plate shows a standing figure of Buddha with his right hand raised and the palm turned to the front with fingers directed upwards. The left hand hangs down by the side of the body. It is the posture of protection and is called Abhaya mudra. This mudra stands for the assurance of fearlessness, tranquility and protection given by the Buddha.

A figure of standing Buddha in this mudra represents the incident of the attempted assassination of the Blessed-One by assassins at the instigation of Devadatta a cousin of Buddha.

If there is an elephant near the feet of the Blessed-One, the figure represents the incident of the taming of Nalargiri elephant.

If there is an umbrella over the head of the Buddha, the figure represents the descent of the Buddha from the heaven of the thirty three gods after preaching his Mother.

### **The Varada mudra**

The Varada mudra symbolizes the bestowal of boon or benediction by the Buddha. In art this pose is depicted by putting the palm spread outwards with the fingers pointing downwards. A standing figure of Buddha with his hand in varada mudra alone denotes the descent of the Buddha from the heaven of the thirty three gods.

### **A Combination of Abhaya and Varada mudras**

See Plate 74 b,c. Here the right hand of the standing Buddha is in Abhaya mudra. But, the left hand, instead of hanging down, is bent like the right hand with the hand palm spread outwards and the fingers pointing down. The gesture of the left hand is in this Varada mudra. Therefore, this standing Buddha, is posing a combination of Abhaya and Varada mudras.

Here again, the figure represents the descent of the Buddha from the heaven of the thirty three gods.

### **Internal Varada Mudra**

See Plates 75 and 76. The royal garbs of the two Buddha images, such as the crown, the ear-rings and the necklets, are quite different. But both of the images sit with their right legs placed on the left legs, which is a sign of antiquity. And both of them made the same gesture of hands. Of course, the attendant figures are different.

The Buddha image in Plate 75 b wears a crown consisting of low pointed leaves enclosing an almost cylindrical usnisa. The image wears small round ear-rings which do not touch the shoulders. Instead two curve ear pendants dropped from the middle of the ears onto the shoulders. The image wears arm-lets and a lowered torque decorated with jewels which falls on the breast (a sort of an ornament for the chest).

The Buddha image in Plate 76 wears a crown consisting of six high pointed leaves enclosing a stupa shaped usnisa. The crown has two horn-like flaps curving upwards just above the top of the ears. The image wears circular ear-rings in the form of a four petal flower which rest on the shoulders. There is a shoulder flap on each of the

shoulders. The neck has trivali or the three graceful folds. The upper garment is ornamented on the whole of the front part. The image wears a necklace with a locket. The lower garment reaches below the knees. The image does not have armlets or bracelets.

The pedestals of both the images are hollow and are perforated and ornamented with artistic designs. Such perforated pedestals show that the images are rather old.

In each case, the right hand of the Buddha image is bent upwards. The palm of the hand holds a small object and is turned towards the chest. It reaches almost near the right shoulder. The three middle fingers which hold the object can be clearly seen. The palm of the left hand is placed on the lap and appears to hold some object.

The posture appears as if something is to be given away. If it is so, this mudra may be called as the internal varada mudra, the gesture of hands shown by Buddha while conferring boons.

Or else, is it Tarpana mudra? By definition, this mudra is the mudra of doing homage to the departed fathers (in this case departed former Buddhas). This mudra is also called the mudra of Nama Sangiti. Any arm showing this gesture is bent and is raised upward in a line with the shoulder. The palm of the hand is turned inwards with fingers slightly bent and pointed towards the shoulder.

In order to interpret the scenes shown by these images, we need to study the presence of the attendant figures also.

In Plate 76 there are two small cetis at the back side of the pedestal, one on each side of the Buddha image. Placed on special brackets fixed at the middle side of the pedestal are two small sitting Buddhas in Bhumisparsha mudra. The one on the right hand side of the central Buddha image is broken off and is missing. In the front part of the pedestal are two human figures kneeling in prayers and facing the Buddha image. Here again, the one on the left hand side is broken and is missing. Fixed to the front part of the pedestal is the figure of kneeling Vasumdhari, the Earth Goddess, wringing her hair with her hands, brought in a tress over the left shoulder in front of her breast. We can notice the head of an animal fixed at the left side of the base of the pedestal.

The two front figures in prayers and facing the Buddha image may be the merchant brothers Taphussa and Bhallika offering rice cakes and honey to Buddha sitting under the rajayatana tree, south of the Bodhi tree, at the end of the seventh week after enlightenment.

The Buddha accepted the offerings in the bowl presented by the four Lokapala nats. After finishing the meal, the Buddha preached the Law to the two brothers. The presence of the earth touching Buddha and the two small cetis can best be interpreted as Professor Luce had done in his book "Old Burma - Early Pagan." "The earth touching symbol is generally associated with the oldest symbol in Buddhist art the caitya. The latter symbolized the Death or parinirvana as the former the Triumph or Enlightenment. On these two poles move the axis and philosophy of Buddhism". We can interpret them as follows. The Cetis remind us that the decay is inherent and the Enlightenment remind us that one can work out his salvation with diligence. Buddha must have preached the two merchant brothers about these facts. The presence of Vasumdhari or the Earth Goddess is to testify the enlightenment of the Buddha.

After the Sermon the brothers requested the Blessed-One to give them something in order that they may worship as the Blessed-One's self while they live in their own land. The Buddha complied the request by giving them His Hairs.

In Plate 75 there are only two attendant figures. They are two kneeling human figures in prayers, one on each side of the Buddha image. Their hands are clasped against the chest, palm to palm, both of which are extended upwards with all fingers erect. Both of them wear a sort of horned like conical cap. At the back side of the pedestal an image of an elephant is perforated.

The scene shown by this image may be interpreted either as-

1. Buddha giving His Hairs to merchant brothers Taphussa and Bhalika.

or 2. The emancipation of orgres Suciloma and Kharaloma. This happen during the fourteenth year after Enlightenment. The two orgres lived near Gaya Village close to the Mahabodhi tree. The Blessed-One went to the abode of Suciloma and stayed there waiting for the orgre to come. The orgre sensing the presence of Buddha create himself a terrifying figure and tried his best to frighten the Blessed-One. When he failed to do so, he asked several questions to the Buddha which the Buddha answered to his satisfaction. The orgre Kharaloma also listened the Buddha's answers and both of them were emancipated.

or 3. The conversion of Uruvela Kassapa and his brothers. The Buddha succeeded converting the hermits Uruvela Kassapa and his brothers after showing many Miracles including bringing of different fruits from the Jambudipa Island.

The elephant present at the back side of the pedestal may be the elephant king of the Parileyyaka forest.



## CHAPTER XVII

### Great Events Of The Master's Life

#### The Method of representing the eight-scene stele

When formerly groups of scenes from the life of the Master were depicted by artists, the various scenes had mostly been roughly of equal size. Some of the scenes were a combination of several successive scenes in one.

The method of representing eight scenes by the artists and sculptors of the Eastern School of Bengal and Bihar and of steles found in central Burma, was to unite the whole by giving prominence to a central scene. Here the main figure represent one particular incident of the Master's life, while on the back slab seven other principal incidents are depicted. The main scene is enlarged and the size of the other scenes are reduced. In the majority of cases of such steles the central scene is the scene of Enlightenment. A small bas-relief representing his death or mahaparinirvana is over head. There are three smaller images or bas-reliefs on each side of the main image making a total of eight scenes representing the important incidents of the Master's life. The following four scenes are common to almost all of them: (1) the birth, (2) the enlightenment, (3) the first sermon and (4) the death or mahaparinirvana. I will present here two steles from Arakan, showing Great Events of the Master's life. The first one is an eight scenes stele which seems to be a product of 8th or 9th century A.D. and the second one, a ten scenes stele which may be dated some time in the 10th century A.D. Both of them are found from the Vesali site and is at present in Mrauk-Oo.

### The Eight Scenes stele of Arakan

See Plate 77. It is made up of andagu rock which is translated as dolomite by some authours and as steatite by others. The size of the stele is 6 cm at the base and 9.5 cm in height. The arrangement of the scenes are normal.

At the top is the parinirvana scene. There is a caitya and a reclining figure on a couch. Underneath the couch, there are five mourners.

The death or parinirvana forms the last one of the Four Principal incidents of the Master's life. When he reached his eightieth year the end came. He was at Pava, which was situated north of Vaisali. He was entertained by Cunda, a blacksmith of the town and ate a meal of rice, cakes and *sukaramaddava*, which cannot be translated correctly. It may be a boar's tender flesh. After the meal he was attacked by dysentery. However, he went on to *Kusinogara*. On the outskirts of the town, he laid down between two sal trees and that night he died. The death or parinirvana of Buddha took place on the full moon of Vaisakha (May) as did his birth and enlightenment.

Digha-nikaya, Part II of Maha parinibbana-Sutta gave us the following last words of the Master: 'Behold now brethen, I exhort you, saying, "Decay is inherent in all component things! work out your salvation with diligence!"'

Below this scene is an archway of peepal foliage, having five branches, shading the main figure of Buddha in Bhumisparsa mudra and in Vajra sana. The *usnisa* is somewhat conical. He has a forehead mark and a neck with three graceful folds (trivali). He is sitting on a double lotus throne with elephant/lion/vyala motifs under it. There was a flaming halo behind the Buddha and we can see the backrest of the throne also. This is the scene of Enlightenment. He attained this under a large peepal tree on the outskirts of the town of *Gaya*.

If we start from the top right, the first scene is the Descent from Tavatimsa. Here the standing Buddha is flanked by indistinct figures.

After the miracles performed at Sravasti were over, the Buddha went to Tavatimsa where he preached his true law to the god who has in the previous existence been his mother for three months. The Buddha then descended from Tavatimsa to *Samkasya* in the company of Indra and Brahman.

The top left shows the attempt of Devadatta on the Master's life by using the Nalagiri elephant. The scene consists of a standing Buddha in abhaya mudra and a small elephant kneeling near the left leg.

Devadatta tried to kill Buddha on many occasions on account of his jealousy and hatred. One of the occasions was when the Master was walking through the narrow street of *Rajagriha*, the capital of Magadha. Devadatta persuaded the keeper of a mad elephant named Nalagiri, to let it loose in the street through which the Master was passing. The elephant charged at Buddha. But when it came close to Buddha it was subdued and it bowed down before the Master.

The middle left and right figures of Buddha are in Dharmacakra mudra and in vajra sana. As usual, the left one represents the First Sermon and the right the Miracles at Sravasti.

After enlightenment, he was in doubt whether he should preach the Dharma to the people of the world. Brahma and other gods came and begged him to do so. He then searched for some one who could understand his Dharma. His own teachers Alara Kalama and Udraka Ramaputra who could have understood were dead. He set out for the Deer Park (Mrigadava) near *Varanasi* Sarnath), where his five former disciples had settled to continue their penances. He preached his *First Sermon* to them, thereby setting in motion the wheel of the Law (Dharmacakra-pravartana).

Buddha and his disciples travelled far and wide and taught his Dharma to the people. The Blessed-One's arguments were persuasive but sometimes he performed miracles to support his claim. As a result of a challenge from rival teachers, he was said to have performed miracles at *Sravasti*, the capital of the kingdom of Kosala. The climax of the miracles was the Yamaka Pratiharya or twin Miracles. Here he made fire and water issue simultaneously from his body and preached to the audience from the four cardinal points simultaneously.

The lower right scene is the scene of Nativity, that is, the birth of Buddha. It consists of a standing female figure holding on to a branch of a tree over her head with her right hand and a standing child to the left of the female. On the right of her there are two indistinct figures which cannot be identified. The female figure is Buddha's mother Maya devi, The tree is a sal tree representing the Lumbani garden near *Kapilavastu*. The child is Buddha.

Maya devi, the queen of the Sakyas, was travelling from Kapilavastu to Devadaha, her parents' home for her confinement. On the way she gave birth to her child in the Lumbani grove between two tall sal trees. At birth he was supposed to have stood upright, to have taken seven steps and to have spoken: "This is my last birth— henceforth there is no more birth for me".

86

The lower left scene is the scene of Parileyyaka retreat. Here Buddha is sitting in pralambanasana, that is, sitting with the legs hanging with almsbowl in lap, receiving the offerings of Elephant or Monkey.

According to Jinatha pakasani, Buddha went to Parileyyaka forest alone after finding his monks in dispute over a small matter. The forest was seven Yuzanas away from Kosambi town. There, in the forest a lone king elephant looked after him day and night, offering him food and protecting him from the wild animals. A monkey seeing the pious deeds done by the elephant had the desire of serving Buddha. The monkey searched for some eatables to offer to the Blessed-One and found honey which it offered to the Buddha. When Buddha accepted its gift, the monkey was overjoyed and started dancing on a tree nearby. While dancing the branches gave way and it fell down on a sharp stump which was underneath and was impaled.

The above eight scenes occurred in the following eight sites.

1. Parinirvana	-	Kusinagara
2. Enlightenment	-	Bodh-Gaya
3. Descent from Tavatimsa	-	Samkasya
4. Nalagiri elephant	-	Rajagriha
5. The First Sermon	-	Varanasi
6. Twin Miracles	-	Sravasti
7. Nativity	-	Kapilavastu
8. Parileyyaka Retreat	-	Kosambi

These places are the eight chief places of pilgrimage for Buddhists. The Eight Great Events of Buddha's life can thus be represented on a small stele measuring 6 cm at the base and 9.5 cm in height.

### **The ten scenes stele of Arakan**

See Plate 78. The size of this andagu stele is 13 cm at the base and 18 cm in height.

At the top is caitya and Parinirvana scene. Figures on the left and right end of this scene appear to be holding some kind of branches. In between them and the couch are two pots holding flowers. There are three mourners below the couch.

Underneath this scene is an archway of peepal foliage. This archway also has five branches but are arranged in a different way. The foliage shades the main figure of Buddha who is in Bhumisparsa

mudra and in vajra sana. He is sitting on a leather mat placed on a double lotus throne. He has the usṇīṣa and forehead mark and is dressed in monk's robe. The neck has the usual three graceful folds.

The double lotus throne rises on a stalk and is supported at the corners by two wide-straddling Naga kings and in the middle by two mythical figures. The upper part of the base which supports the Naga kings and the mythical figures consists of crouching elephant in the middle with lions at the sides. Below this is the lower base consisting of seven auspicious symbols out of which a prancing horse, a walking elephant and a seated figure with one hand upraised can be seen distinctly. Other figures are indistinct.

At each side of the main figure of Buddha stand two Bodhisattva. Above them the under the outer branches of the peepal tree are Mara's soldiers attacking Buddha. At the top right, one of Mara's daughters can be seen flying. Since the top left is broken a similar flying daughter of Mara might be there too.

At each side of the Bodhisattvas are two columns of figures in four tiers. The top three tiers of these columns present the usual six scenes. This time there are two figures for each scene. On three tiers on the left, we have the taming of Nalagiri elephant, the First Sermon at Mrigadava and Parileyyaka Retreat scenes. On three tiers on the right we have the Descent from Tavatimsa, Twin Miracles and Nativity. The lowest tier consists of the Naga Mucalinda sheltering the Buddha on the right and the scene of the fast or Dukkha-cariya on the left.

It was said that a few weeks after the Enlightenment, there was a great storm in Bodhi-Gaya and the rain fell in torrents for several days. During this period, a Naga king, Mucalinda by name, protected the Buddha by coiling his body around Buddha's body and keeping his hood as an umbrella over his head. This story produces the Mucalinda scene.

The Fast or Dukkha-cariya was done by Buddha in the hope of wearing away his karma and obtaining final bliss. For six years he tortured himself until he was reduced to a skeleton. Yet he did not get the real knowledge. He finally realized that his fasts and penances had been useless. See Plate 79.

The two inner figures of the top tier show the standing Buddha. The outer figure of the top right scene seems to be Indra or Brahma. The two inner figures of the second tier sit in Dhyana

mudra without alm bowls. The two outer figures are in Dharmacakra mudra. The two inner figures in the third tier sit in Dhyana mudra. The outer figure on the left sit in paralambana sana with an alm bowl on the lap. The outer figure on the right is a standing female figure with a child standing by her side. The left outer figure of the lowest tier, that is the fourth tier, is the figure of Buddha sitting in Dhyana mudra. Beside him is a figure kneeling in prayer. The right outer figure of the lowest tier is the figure of Buddha in Dhyana mudra sitting under the hood of Mucalinda Naga. The right inner figure is also a figure kneeling in prayer. These two figures kneeling in prayer are indistinct. But we can make out by comparing this stele with an andagu Eight Scenes, Seven Sites (Tabayin) stele presented in Plate 401 in Gordon Luce's Book "Old Burma—Early Pagan". They may probably be Sariputta and Moggallana.

The main Buddha image in our stele is uncrowned and is with usñisa and curls of hair. The Buddha wears monk's robes only, whereas, the main Buddha image in Tabayin stele is crowned and wears ear pendants, necklace and torque on top of the robe of a monk on his body. Also our stele has Mara's flying daughters on the top right and left corners and seven auspicious symbols at the base. These are not present in Tabayin Stele shown in Luce's Book.

In his book, there are a number of Eight Scene steles which were found in other parts of Burma. He had analysed their functions and explained all the scenes exhaustively.

Since we have two extra scenes, viz, the protection of the Master's body from wind and rain by Mucalinda Naga and the Fast or Dukkha-cariya before Enlightenment, we call our stele as a ten scene stele. Since the two extra scenes occurred in Bodh-Gaya, the number of sites do not change from eight.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### The Life of Gautama Buddha

In the seventh century before the Christian era, there was a small kingdom of the Sakya located in the North-eastern part of India along the southern edge of Nepal. The Sakyas were of the Ksatriya solar race. Their king at that time was Suddhodana and the chief queen was Mahamaya devi. The capital of Sakya kingdom was Kapilavastu.

One night Mahamaya dreamt that a great white elephant holding a lotus blossom in his trunk entered her womb. This dream was interpreted by wise men to mean that she would give birth to a son who would either be a Universal Emperor or a Buddha.

While Mahamaya devi was travelling from Kapilavastu to her parents' home in Devadaha for her confinement, she gave birth to her child, a son, in the Lumbini grove between two tall sal trees. At birth the baby was supposed to have stood upright, to have taken seven steps and have spoken: "This is my last birth—henceforth there is no more birth for me". This happened on the full moon day of Vaisakha (May,) 623 B.C. *This is the First Principal incident of the Master's life.*

The boy was named Siddhattha, or one whose purpose has been fulfilled. His family name was Gautama by which he was referred to in Buddhist literature.

An old sage, named Asita, visited the new-born child and predicted that a saviour had come to the earth for the salvation of the people. The other sooth sayers prophesied that he would become a Universal Emperor.

Maya devi passed away seven days after the birth of her child and the child was nursed by his mother's sister Mahaprajapati Gautimi.

To prevent the prophecy of his becoming a Universal Teacher from coming true, his father reared him in delightful palaces and took great precautions not to let him know the sorrows of the world. He thus grew up in luxury and led a sheltered life from which the world's miseries were hidden.

As a student he learned all the arts that a prince should learn. When he grew into a young man, he married his cousin Yasodhara after winning her in a contest of arms.

In spite of all the efforts of his father, he saw the "four signs," an old man, a sick man, a dead body and an ascetic. At the sight of each he asked his charioteer the meaning of what he saw. These sights and the answers he obtained from the charioteer made him ponder deeply. He realised that all men must grow old, fall sick and die. These were the miseries of existence. The ascetic, peaceful and calm, showed him a way of escaping from them. He could never forget the four signs.

One morning he learnt that Princess Yasodhara had given birth to a son. That night there were great festivities. The dancing girls after performing their dances fell asleep on the floor of the dancing hall in unbecoming postures. Prince Siddhattha sat up in bed and saw his women lying around like corpses. He sat meditating for a while and then made up his mind to leave the palace that night. He went to the chamber where Yasodhara was fast asleep with the baby in her arms. After having caught a glimpse of them he turned away. He woke up Chhandaka, his charioteer, and asked him to saddle his favorite horse Kanthaka. He then rode away towards the forest unknown to any body else. The rejoicing demigods cushioned the fall of his horse's hooves so that no one should hear his departure.

When he reached a place far from the city he discarded his royal robes and cut off his long hair and sent them back to his father through Chhandaka. He put on a hermit's robe provided by an attendant demigod and became an ascetic. He was twenty nine years old at that time. This was the Great Renunciation.

He left his home, wife and child to meditate on human suffering, its causes and the means by which it could be over come. He first went to a teacher named Alara Kalama and then to another named Udraka Ramaputra. He learned from them the techniques of meditation and realised that they had to reach him. But his quest for Truth was not attained. He moved on and reached a place near Bodh Gaya.



He was not convinced that men could obtain liberation from the miseries of the world by mental discipline alone. He found five ascetics who were practising the most rigorous self-mortification in the hope of wearing away their craving and he joined with them. For six years he practised rigid austerities and resorted to different kinds of self-torture and was reduced to a skeleton. See Plate 79 again.

He aimed at a spiritual experience in which all selfish craving is extinct and with it every fear and passion. He wanted to reach a stage in which there is neither old age, nor disease, nor birth, nor death, nor anxieties and no continue renewal of activity.

His self-tortures became so severe that one day, being too weak, he fainted. After a while he recovered consciousness, and realised that his fasts and penances were useless, and this was not the way to achieve enlightenment. He decided to take food again and his body regained its strength. The five ascetics who recognised him as their leader left him in disgust.

One morning, while he sat beneath a large Bodhi tree on the outskirts of the town of Gaya, Sujata, the daughter of a rich merchant, brought him a bowl of rice boiled in milk. After accepting the food, he bathed in the Niranjana river. Then he ate the food and spent his midday in a grove of sal trees on the river bank. In the evening he went back to the Bodhi tree. On his way he met a grass cutter who gave him a bundle of grass. He spread the grass at the foot of the Bodhi tree and sat in meditation. He made a solemn vow that he would not leave his seat without attaining enlightenment, even though his skin and bones should waste away and flesh and blood dry up.

For forty-nine days he sat beneath the tree meditating ardently. During this period, Mara, the Buddhist devil approached and tried to shake Gautama's resolve by temptations of all kinds. He attacked Gautama with whirlwind, tempest, flood and earthquake. He attacked using his demon army, shooting arrow, throwing stones, and using all sorts of weapons. He then challenged Gautama to produce evidence of his goodness and benevolence. At this, Gautama touched the ground with his hand, and called on the mother earth as a witness. The great Earth roared and sound with a deep and terrible sound: "I am his witness". Mara then used his three beautiful daughters, Desire, Pleasure and Passion, who tried every means of seduction. But Gautama sat firm and meditated more vigorously. At last Mara gave up the struggle leaving Gautama alone.

At the dawn of the forty-ninth day he attained enlightenment. He had found the Law of Causation, a cycle of twelve causes and effects conditioning the universe. That is, he had found out that the world is full of suffering and unhappiness of all kinds, and also what man must do to overcome them. Thus his understanding opened and he attained enlightenment. This is also called Illumination or Sambodhi. He was thirty five years old then. *This is the Second Principal incident of the Master's life.* This again took place on the full moon day of Vaisakha (May).

As he attained bodhi or supreme knowledge, he became a Buddha and he referred to himself as Tathagata.

The newly awakened Buddha met two merchant brothers Taphussa and Bhallika, who offered the Blessed One some food. Buddha broke his fast by eating the food and gave the two brothers some strands of his Hair for them to worship when they reached their home land.

For a while he was in doubt whether he should preach the Dharma to the people of the world. The god Brahma himself descended from heaven and persuaded him to do so. He then searched for someone who could understand his Dharma. His teachers Alara Kalama and Udraka Ramaputra, who could have understood, were dead. He set out for the Deer Park (Mrigadava) near Varanasi (Sarnath) where his five former disciples had settled to continue their penances. He preached his First Sermon to them, thereby setting in motion the wheel of the Law (Dharmacakra-Pravartana). *This is the Third Principal incident of the Master's life.*

Buddha collected a large number of disciples among whom were Sariputra and Moggallana who were revered in the circles of the Buddhist order as second only to the Master himself. Buddha and his disciples travelled far and wide and taught his Dharma to the people of those places. The Blessed-One's arguments were most of the time persuasive but sometimes he had to perform miracles such as the miracles at Sravasti. In course of time he became wellknown throughout North-East India. He had many followers whom he gathered together into a disciplined body of monks or Sangha (called bikshus in Sanskrit and bhikkhus in Pali). They had a common discipline. Many stories are told of his long years of preaching. The Sangha continued to increase in strength. He allowed the formation of a community of nuns at the request of his foster mother Gautimi.

Buddha's cousin Devadatta tried to kill Buddha on many occasions on account of his jealousy and hatred.

For about forty five years Buddha and his sangha travelled from place to place, preaching to people of all walks of life. The greatest kings of the time favoured him and his Sangha.

He was in a place near Vaisali during the last rainy season of his life. After the rains he and his followers journeyed northwards. On the way he arrived at the town of Pava where he was invited by Cunda, the blacksmith, to a meal. He ate "sukaramaddava" which may have meant boar's tender flesh and was taken ill with dysentery. Despite his illness he moved on to the nearby town of kusinagara. Here on the outskirts of the town he laid down between two sal trees.

He asked the weeping Ananda, the devoted disciple and constant companion of the Buddha, not to weep, telling him that from all that One loves One must part. He told Ananda that the doctrine he preached will be Ananda's master after he himself has passed away. According to Digha-nikaya of Mahaparinibbhanasutta, Buddha's last words were quoted as follows: "Then the Blessed-One addressed the bretheren, and said: 'Behold now, brethern, I exhort you, saying, "Decay is inherent in all component things; Work out your salvation with diligence! "This was the last word of the Tathagata!"

After uttering the last words, his spirit sank into the depths of mystic absorption. When he had attained to that degree where all thoughts, all conceptions had disappeared, when the consciousness of individuality had ceased, he entered into the mahaparinirvana. *This is the Fourth Principal incident of the Master's life.* This end came at the age of eighty in 544 B.C. This incident also took place on the full moon day of Vaisakha (May) as did his birth and enlightenment.

His body was cremated and the ashes were divided between various groups of his disciples. Eight Stupas were built over those divided ashes by the various recipients in different parts of India.

## CHAPTER XIX

### The Evolution of Buddhism in India

Immediately after the parinirvana of the Buddha, a large number of monks led by *Mahakassapa* gathered at Rajagriha, the capital of Magadha, under the patronage of Ajatasatru, to recite Buddha's teachings. This was the First Great Buddhist Council. The *Vinaya Pitaka*, the rules of the order, as prescribed by the Master, were recited by *Upali*, one of the chief disciples of Buddha, as recollected by him. The *Sutta Pitaka*, the collection of the Blessed-One's sermons on the matters of doctrine and ethics were recited by *Ananda*, the devoted disciple and constant companion of Buddha.

There seemed to have no written records of the teachings at that time and they were handed down from mouth to mouth by reciting and memorizing. Thus the teachings were preserved through memory.

A Second Great Council was held at Vaisali about one hundred years after the parinirvana of Buddha. It was held in the reign of King Kālāsoka, a descendant of Ajatasatru. The Venerable *Yasa* led the Council. This council resulted in a schism among sanghas over ten points of monastic discipline. The orthodox Sthaviravadins (Pali Theravadi) won in this case and the Mahasanghikas seceded from the orthodox sanghas.

The Third Great Council was held at Pataliputra under the patronage of the great king Asoka (276 B.C). This council resulted in the expulsion of many heretics and false monks from the sangha community and also in the firm establishment of the sthaviravada school. *Tissa Moggaliputta* led the council and succeeded in restoring the original teachings of the Buddha. It was at this council that the *Abhidhamma Pitaka* was supposed to have been added,

The Fourth Great Buddhist Council was held in Kashmir under the patronage of the great kusan king Kaniska (1st-2nd century A.D). The Sarvastivadins, another sect of orthodox Buddhists, were strong in this region and the sect's doctrines were codified in a summary called the Mahavibhasa. This council made sanskrit the language of Buddhist scriptures.

New ideas were developed from the Sarvastivadins and the Mahasanghikas which were to form the basis of the division of Buddhism into the *Lesser Vehicle* (Hinayana) and the *Great Vehicle* (Mahayana).

These were the Four Great Councils held in different parts of India after the parinirvana of Buddha. Scriptures of Buddhism developed by a long process covering several centuries, and many sects of Buddhism developed during these years. But, whatever may be the sects of Buddhism which formed in course of time in the evolution of Buddhism, the "Four Noble Truths" and the "Noble Eightfold Paths" (Refer P 76), are accepted by all sects as basic tenets of Buddhism.

### The Lesser Vehicle (Hinayana)

The Buddhism of the Lesser Vehicle is a religion without souls and without God. Buddha was a man, not God, a teacher and not a saviour. His supreme insight was gained by his own efforts. He was only a guide who had pointed out a way from the world of suffering to a beyond, the undying, and those who follow the path of liberation may also cross to the wisdom beyond.

Buddhists believe in the round of rebirths-Samsara. In page 14 of "The Word of the Buddha" by Nyanatiloka, the word is defined as: Samsara-the wheel of existence, lit, the 'Perpetual Wondering',-is the name given in Pali scriptures to the sea of life ever restlessly heaving up and down, the symbol of this continuous process of ever again and again being born, growing old, suffering, and dying. More precisely put: Samsara is the unbroken sequence of the fivefold Khandha-combinations, which, constantly changing from moment to moment. Of this Samsara, a single life time constitutes only a tiny fraction".

The goal of every Buddhist is to attain Nirvana, which is a state where one becomes free from sensual passion, free from the passion of ignorance, free from the passion of existence, free from Samsara.

There are three different ways to attain nirvana. The disciples can attain nirvana through Arahatsip. The two other ways are to become Pratyekabuddha or the Supreme Buddha. Pratyekabuddhas attain full enlightenment but do not teach the Dharma to others. The supreme Buddha att in full enlightenment and teach the Dharma to others. In order to become a Pratyekabuddha or a Supreme Buddha one has to request a living Buddha to grant the boon of being allowed to become such a Buddha. These three ways lead different type of beings, with different intellect, to nirvana.

To attain Arahatsip there are four stages. Before going to these stages we need to recognize the ten 'Fatters' -samyojana- by which beings are bound to the wheel of existence. They are (1) Self Ilusion (Sakāya-ditthi), (2) Sceptism (vicikicchā) (3) Attachment to mere Rule and Ritual (sīlabhataparāmāsa), (4) Sensual Lust (Karmarāga), (5) Ill-will (vyāpāda), (6) Craving for Fine Material Existence (rūpa-rāga), (7) Craving for Immaterial Existence (arūpa-rāga), (8) Conceit (māna), (9) Restlessness (Uddhacca) and (10) Ignorance (avijjā).

One who is freed from the first three Fetters is called a *Sotapan*, i.e, one who has entered the stream leading to nirvana. This is the first stage. One who has overcome the fourth and the fifth Fetters in the grosser form, is called a *Sakadagam*. This is the second stage. One who is freed from the first five Fetters is called an *Anagam*. This is the third stage. When one is freed from all the ten Fetters he becomes an *Arahat*, a worthy man. This is the last stage.

The Buddhists of the Lesser Vehicle believed in a cosmological scheme based largely on the prevalent Indian ideas. The universe is cyclic with Buddha cycles and empty cycles. We live in a Buddha cycle of five Buddhas (Bhadrakalpa). Out of the five Buddhas four have already taught in this world, the last one being Gautama Buddha. A fifth is yet to come. The four passed Buddhas were Krakucchanda, Kanakamuni, Kasyapa and Gautama. The future Buddha is Maitreya who is at present passing the life of a Bodhisattva in the Tusita heaven, preparatory to his descent to the earth in human form. He is supposed to come to the earth full 5000 years after the parinirvana of Gautama Buddha for the deliverence of all sentient beings.

The Pali canon of the Sthaviravadins consists of three sections called pitakas. They are known as the *Vinaya Pitaka* (Rules of the order), *Sutta Pitaka* (the Teachings or Sermons) and *Abhidhamma Pitaka* (a complex mixture of metaphysics, psychology and mind development).

The Sutta Pitaka is divided into five "Groups" (Nikaya). One of the Groups, "Khuddaka Nikaya," contains the Jataka Stories. These stories are usually described as histories of the previous lives of Gautama Buddha as a Bodhisattva. In these stories the Buddha is shown to have done many deeds of kindness and mercy in a long series of rebirths as a Bodhisattva before he achieved the final birth as Gautama Buddha. This collection of myth and legend contributes greatly to the Buddhist art up to the present day. They are also among the most important ethical teachings.

### **The Great Vehicle (Mahayana)**

From the Mahasanghikas developed a new doctrine. This is the doctrine of Bodhisattva. The ideal of Arahant for the disciples who achieved nirvana by themselves without helping other living beings were looked down as selfish. According to them men should aim at becoming Bodhisattva instead of trying to become Arhats. They believed that they could attain Buddhahood with their own unaided efforts. A Bodhisattva is a being who is only a stage short of Buddhahood. He is a being having a great loving heart to all sentient beings. Instead of becoming a Buddha as soon as possible he will bide his time until all the living beings of this world are in possession of the supreme knowledge and obtain freedom from worldly miseries.

As mentioned above, the Buddhists of the Lesser Vehicle already have the Bodhisattva concept. Buddha himself was a Bodhisattva for a long series of rebirths before he became the Buddha. And there is the Bodhisattva Maitreya waiting in Tusita heaven to become the Fifth Buddha in this world. The orthodox Sthaviravadins believe in the existence of many Buddhas (not less than twenty five) prior to Gautama. So it is only logical to assume that there should be more Buddhas to come after Maitreya. For these unknown Buddhas there must be Bodhisattvas existing at present in this universe who are doing all good things and passing the merit earned thereby for the welfare of all living beings.

By practising Right Action one acquires merit. Acquiring merit means assurance of pleasant consequences for his deeds.

This doctrine of gaining merit is a useful application of *Karma* to the daily life. Anybody can store up merits or good karma by daily acts of kindness. In a day to come each act will bring its due reward. In doing merit, motive is more important than the deed. Since the mind is the maker of karma, good or bad, the intention of the mind at the time of action determines the resulting merit.

The idea of transference of merit is a natural development of the doctrine of compassion for all life. The transfer is from actual earner to some particular or general beneficiary. It is a special feature of the Mahayana.

According to the orthodox Hinayana a man can only help another on the way to nirvana by showing example and giving advice. Each being had to work out his way to attain nirvana. But in course of time the Hinayana sects also accepted the idea of the transfer of merit.

### **The doctrine of the Three Bodies (Trikaya Theory)**

When Mahayana evolved into an advanced stage, the idea arose that Gautama Buddha was not a mere man, but the earthly expression of a mighty spiritual being. From that, a religion was developed around the life and personality of the Buddha instead of a religion based on his teachings.

The spiritual being has three bodies, namely, Dharmakāya, Sambhogakāya and Nirmāṇakāya. Dharmakāya may be interpreted as a body of Essence, Sambhogakāya as a Body of Bliss and Nirmāṇakāya as a created Body. Dharmakāya is the body in which alone is the Buddha truly himself. This body of Essence eternally penetrates and permeates the universe. The other two bodies emanate from it and are supported by it. Sambhogakāya is his manifestation as the Bodhisattva and it exists in the heaven. Nirmāṇakāya is the only Body seen on the earth coming to help people gain salvation. This body is in the form of a person descending from heaven and goes through the process of leaving home, practicing austerities, gaining enlightenment, teaching people and dying on earth.

As mentioned above, Bodhisattva Maitreya is at present waiting in Tusita heaven to descend to the Earth in human form 5000 years after the parinirvana of the Gautama Buddha. This Bodhisattva is the only one worshipped alike by the followers of Lesser Vehicle as well as the Great Vehicle.

Another Bodhisattva, Avalokitesvara is now said to be looking after the world. He looks after the world during the period between the disappearance of the Mortal Buddha, Sakyamuni (Gautama Buddha) and the advent of the Future Mortal Buddha Maitreya. He is said to refuse Nirvana, until all creatures living possess Bodhi knowledge.



### **The Vehicle of the Thunderbolt (Vajrayana)**

The Great Vehicle, then, developed into the Vehicle of the Thunderbolt. In this new Vehicle feminine divinities were added into the Buddhist pantheon. The Buddhas and Bodhisattvas were all endowed with wives who were the active aspects of the "force" or "potency" (Sakti) of their husband. They were the "Saviouresses" (Taras). By reciting mantras (formulas) or drawing yantra (magical symbols) in the correct way one can compel the gods to bestow magical power on the worshipper and lead him to the highest bliss.

As time passed from century to century the Buddhism of Gautama Buddha found entirely different expressions.

Vajrayana introduced the theory of five Dhyani Buddhas. These Buddhas were the embodiments of the five skandhas or Cosmic elements such as rupa (form) vijnana (thought), vedana (sensation), samjna (perception) and samskara (conception). It introduced the kulas or families of these five Dhyani Buddhas from which deities emerge. As mentioned above feminine divinities were also added, thereby creating a large number of gods and goddesses. It introduced the sadhanas for the purpose of visualisation of these gods and goddesses together with Mantras, Yantras, Tantras, Mandalas, Mudras, Vahanas, Symbols, mystic realisations and psychic exercises. We may summarize the above remarks regarding the Dhyani Buddhas, Mortal Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Saktis and Mandala in the following Table.

<i>Skandha</i>	<i>Dhyani Buddha</i>	<i>Mortal Buddha</i>	<i>Bodhisattva</i>	<i>Sakti</i>	<i>Mandala</i>
Rupa	Vairocana	Krakucchanda	Samanbhadra	Locana	Centre
Vijnana	Aksobhya	Kanakamuni	Vajrapani	Mamaki	East
Vedana	Ratnasam bhava	Kasyapa	Ratnapani	Vajradh- atvisvari	South
Samjna	Amitabha	Sakyamuni	Padmapani	Pandara	West
			Avaloki- tesvara		
Samskara	Amoghasiddhi	Maitreya	Visvapani	Tara	North

Another conception of the Vajrayana is the theory of the highest god Vajradhara, also called Adhibuddha. He is the originator even of the five Dhyani Buddhas. Sometimes there is an additional Dhyani Buddha. This sixth Dhyani Buddha is known as Vajrasattva. He is regarded as the priest of the Five Dhyani Buddhas.

100

Professor A.L. Basham in P 282 of his book, "The wonder that was India" summarized the three Yanas thus:

*"The Lesser Vehicle* taught that release was obtained by the gradual loss of individuality through self-discipline and meditation; *the Great Vehicle* added that the grace and help of the heavenly Buddhas and Bodhisattvas assisted the process. The followers of the new teaching taught that it could be best attained by acquiring magical power, which they called vajra ("thunderbolt", or "diamond"). Hence the new school of Buddhism was called *Vajrayana, the Vehicle of the Thunderbolt*.

In a later phase of Vajrayana, corrupt practices, which were entirely opposite to the rules which formed the basis of Buddhist Discipline, were encouraged and practised. All sane people revolted against these practices and Buddhism slowly faded away in India.

## CHAPTER XX

### Fundamentals of Theravada Buddhism

Happiness and sorrow exist in this world. Happiness means lucky, successful, possessing or enjoying pleasure or good. Every human being likes to be happy. But in some form or other sorrow is inevitable in every aspect of life. Man, weak as he is, is subjected to sickness, old age and death. Contact with unpleasant things, separation from pleasant things and not getting what one wants are all painful. From all that he loves man must part. Nothing is permanent.

Buddhists believed in the conception of the world as *samsara*, a stream without end, where the law of Karma functions. All beings are subject to rebirth, decay, disease, death, and again rebirth. The process is continuous.

The doctrine of the Chain of Dependent Origination or the Chain of Causation (*Patticca-samuppāda*), a series of twelve causes and effects, explain this chain of rebirths or the wheel of existence.

**Avijja-paccayā sankhārā:**

"Through ignorance conditioned are the *sankhāras*," i.e. the rebirth-producing Volitions (*cetana*) or karmaformations.

**Sankhāra-paccayā vinnāṇam:**

"Through the karmaformations (in past life, is conditioned Consciousness (in the present life)."

102

<b>Vinnānapaccayā nāma-rūpaṃ:</b>	"Through consciousness are conditioned the mental and physical phenomena (namarupa)", ie. that which makes up our so called individual existence.
<b>Nāma.rupa-paccayā sa āyatanam:</b>	"Through the mental and physical phenomena are conditioned the 6 bases." ie. the 5 physical sense organs and consciousness as the sixth.
<b>Sa āyatana-paccayā phasso:</b>	"Through the 6 bases is conditioned the (sensorial and mental) impression.
<b>Phassa-paccayā vedanā:</b>	"Through the impression is conditioned feeling."
<b>Vedanā-paccayā taṇha:</b>	"Through feeling is conditioned craving".
<b>Taṇhā-paccayā upādānaṃ:</b>	"Through craving is conditioned clinging".
<b>Upādāna-paccayā bhavo:</b>	"Through clinging is conditioned the process of becoming", consisting in the active and the passive life process ie. the rebirth producing karma-process (kamma bhava) and, as its results, the rebirth process (Uppatti-bhava).
<b>Bhava-paccayā jāti:</b>	"Through the (rebirth producing karma) process of becoming is conditioned rebirth".
<b>Jāti-paccayā jarā-maranam:</b>	"Through rebirth are conditioned Old age and death (sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair. Thus arises, this whole mass of suffering again in the future)."

The highest goal of a man should, therefore, be the stage in which there is neither birth, nor disease, nor fear, nor anxieties, nor old age, nor death, and in which there is no continuous renewal of activity.

Buddha meditate, for six years, on the human suffering, its causes and the means by which it could be overcome. He had found the secret of sorrow, and understood at last why the world is full of suffering and unhappiness of all kinds, and what man must do to overcome them. He pointed a way from the world of suffering to a beyond, the undying,

and those who follow the path for liberation may also cross to the wisdom beyond. The goal is to attain *Nirvana*, which is a state when one becomes free from sensual passion, free from the passion of ignorance, free from the passion of existence, free from Samsara.

The sermon of the Turning of the wheel of the law, which Buddha preached to his first disciples, the five ascetics at Varanasi, is the kernel of Buddhism. This contains the "Four Noble Truths," and the "Noble Eight-fold Path" which are accepted as basic categories by all Buddhist sects.

The voluminous writings of Pali Canon, which consists of three sections called ti-pitakas or three pitakas, known as Vinya (Rules of the order), Sutta (the Teachings or Sermons) and Abhidhamma (a complex mixture of metaphysics, psychology and mind development), in the final analyses, all lead to the Four Noble Truths. Refer page 76.

The last of the Four Noble Truths is the Noble Eight-fold Path which is the Path leading to the cessation of Pain and Sorrow.

Now, we are shown the Path. How shall we traverse this Path? From where shall we start? The following is the method usually practiced by Theravada Buddhists.

Out of the three pitakas the largest is the sutta pitaka, which is divided into five "groups" (Nikaya). They are:-

1. Digha Nikaya,      2. Majjhima Nikaya,      3. Samyutta Nikaya,
4. Anguttara Nikaya and      5. Khuddaka Nikaya.

The Dhamapada, a part of the Khuddaka Nikaya of the Sutta Pitaka, has in the Pali version 423 verses divided into 26 chapters. The verses of the Dhamapada were believed from very early times, i.e. from the period of the First Council which settled the Canon, to have been the utterances of the Buddha himself.

Verse 183 of the Dhamapada states

"Sabbapāpassa akaraṇam  
kusalassa upasampadā  
sacittapariyodapanam  
etaṃ buddhāna sāsanaṃ"

We may translate the verse as follows.

"To abstain from all evil,  
to do good deeds,  
to purify one's own mind,  
these are teachings of all the Buddhas."

### To abstain from all evil

All evil mean evil courses of action (*akusalakammapatha*). They are ten in number and are called ten *duccaritas*. They are—

Kaya kamma (bodily action)	1. Pāṇātipatā (destruction of living beings)
	2. Adinnādāna (stealing)
	3. Kamesumicchacārā (unlawful sexual intercourse)
Vaci kamma (verbal action)	4. Musāvādā (lying)
	5. Pisunavācā (tale-bearing) (slander)
	6. Pharusavācā (harsh language)
	7. Samphappalāpa (frivolous talk)
Mano kamma (mental action)	8. Abhijjha (covetousness)
	9. Vyapada (ill-will)
	10. Miccha ditthi (wrong views)

All these actions are unwholesome. They all cause to unfavourable kamma results and contain the seed to unhappy destiny or rebirth. He who does these actions, if reborn as man, will be short lived, afflicted with diseases, ugly looking, poor and needy and born of parents of inferior or mean lineage, ie. of low descent.

### To do good deeds

Good deeds mean ten *sucaritas* or ten good courses of action (*kusala kamma patha*) and ten *punya-kariya* or ten domains of meritorious actions.

*Ten sucaritas* are nothing but the courses of action opposite to ten *duccaritas*. They are —

1. To abstain from killing
2. " " " stealing
3. " " " unlawful sexual intercourse
4. " " " lying
5. " " " tale bearing
6. " " " harsh language
7. " " " frivolous talks
8. Absence of covetousness
9. Absence of ill-will
10. Right understanding.

### **Ten punnya-kariya are**

1. dāna - alms giving or charity
2. sīla - morality or precept
3. bhāvana - mental development
4. apacāyana - to honour or worship teachers, parents and tri-ratana.
5. veyyāvacca - to do service or to attend to above
6. pattidāna - sharing of one's merit or transference of merit
7. pattānumodana - to approve, to express gratitude to other people doing meritorious deeds
8. dhammasāvana - to listen to dhamma discourses
9. dhammadesana - to lecture dhamma discourses
10. ditthijukamma - to have right view

Ten sucaritas are the courses of action practiced to avoid the ten duccharitas. These actions prevent one from going to four lower courses of existence, ie, the nether or infernal world mostly translated with hell, in future births.

Ten punnya-kariya are the ten domains of meritorious actions which will provide kusala-kamma (favourable results), and will follow in future births as one's pure and real property.

People following these actions will be reborn in heaven; or reborn as man he will be long-lived, possessed of beauty, influence, noble descent and knowledge.

### **To purify one's own mind**

When one's mind is defiled one is tempted to do evil deeds and talk evil words. When one's mind is pure one does good deeds and talk good words. For that reason one should control one's own mind from being defiled.

"Defilements" are called the mind-defiling passions. They are ten in number and are known in Pali as ten kilesas. They are:-

1. Lobha (greed)
2. Dosa (hate)
3. Moha (delusion)

4. Māna (conceit)
5. Ditthi (speculative views)
6. Vicikicchā (sceptical doubt)
7. Thīna (mental torpor)
8. Uddhacca (restlessness)
9. Ahirika (shamelessness)
10. Anottappa (lack of moral dread or unconscientiousness)

All these kilesas sprang from the three basic kilesas namely, lobha, dosa and moha. With these three kilesas as roots other kilesas formed in the mind. In order that they do not occur in mind or to purify the mind one should control with bhāvanā or mental development. Some interpret bhāvanā as meditation. Actually it is the mental development and not meditation. This mental development may be distinguished into two kinds: Development of Tranquillity (samatha-bhāvana), ie, concentration (samādhi), and Development of Clear sight (Vipassanā-bhāvanā), ie, wisdom (panna).

Tranquility (samatha) is the unshaken, peaceful and, therefore, undefiled state of mind. It bestows a threefold blessing: favourable rebirth, a present happy life, and purity of mind which is the condition to insight. This samatha bhāvana, if practiced, can send a person only upto Brahma's abode as the highest award. So, a person should not be satisfied with samatha bhāvana alone.

Insight (vipassanā) is the intuitive insight into the Impermanency, Misery and Impersonality (annica, dukkha, anattā) of all bodily and mental phenomena of existence, included in the five khandha. Man is actually a compound of five psychosomatic elements, the five khandha, namely corporeality group or form, consciousness, feeling, perception and mental formation. Only vipassanā bhāvanā can open a person to supermundane insight (lokuttara). So, one should give more attention to this vipassana bhāvanā.

In addition to suppressing lobha, dosa and moha with bhāvanā, one should develop the four sublime states, ie, all embracing Kindness, Compassion, Altruistic Joy and Equanimity called brahma-vihāra.

In conclusion, sorrow (dukkha) is inherent in human life. It is due to craving for individual satisfaction. The craving is the cause of human misery. It is ultimately due to ignorance which leads to the delusion of selfhood. Ignorance concern primarily with the fundamental



107

nature of all bodily and mental phenomena of existence included in the five khandha, which has three striking characteristics. They are impermanency (annica), misery or sorrow (dukkha) and impersonality (anatta). Sorrow can only be stopped by stopping that craving which is the cause. This can only be done by taking a middle course between self-indulgence and extreme asceticism and leading a moral and well ordered life. This can be done by observing and practising the rules mentioned in Dhamapada verse 183.

If one observes these rules, which are nothing but the essence of Buddhism, he is a person who believes in Theravada Buddhism or to state simply, he is a Buddhist.

If he strives diligently by practicing bhāvanā, especially vipassanā bhāvanā, he can attain a state of perfect inward peace, accompanied by the conviction of having attained spiritual freedom, a state in which words cannot describe. Only he who has experienced it knows what it is. Finally, he can attain nirvana.

## **CHAPTER XXI**

### **Buddhism in Arakan**

Two thousand five hundred years have passed since the time of parinirvana of Gautama Buddha. Throughout the centuries, ever since the introduction of Buddhism up to the present time, Arakanese professed Buddhism without break.

The present-day Buddhism in Arakan is the Theravada Buddhism using the Pali canon of Tripitaka which are Vinaya (conduct), Sutta (Sermon) and Abhidhamma (a mixture of metaphysics, psychology and mind development) Pitakas.

The Buddhist's here worshipped caityas and stupas. They believed that one can acquire great merit by building and decorating them. The Buddha images are also worshipped after glorifying by conducting a ceremony called Anekasa, that is recitation by a number of monks surrounding the image.

The people worshipped these caityas, stupas and Buddhas images by offering flowers, food, incense, light and prayers. They believed these acts to be meritorious. They believed in the idea of the transfer of merit. That is, by making gifts one can acquire religious merits and one can also transfer such merits to one's near and dear ones or their welfare and happiness. By performing meritorious deeds like offering alms and the four necessities to the sanghas and giving charities to the poor and the needy, and doing good deeds personally or in words or in thoughts, one gains merit and will go to devas abode after death. Whereas by doing evil deeds or getting involved in evil acts personally or in words or in thoughts, one falls into a downward state of existence, a state of suffering or even to the abyss of hell such as Rauruwa, Avici etc., after death.

They believed in the three ways to salvation, i.e., the Arahatsip, the Pratyekabuddhahood and the supreme Buddhahood. The lay people strived for Arahatsip as the way to Nirvana. They accepted the idea that the universe is cyclic and that they live in a Buddha cycle called Bhadrakalpa and are expecting the coming of the fifth Buddha, Maitreya.

There are many members of the Buddhist Order, that is, the monks (sangha) who wear yellow robes and strictly observe the Vinaya pitaka. They have given up all the worldly pleasures and lived a pure life striving to attain Nirvana.

The lay people have noviciating ceremonies for boys who spend sometimes, usually a week or more, in a monastery under the guidance of a revered abbot to experience the life of the monkhood. During his stay in the monastery as a monk, the boy learns for himself the religion of his parents, the abbot guiding him of course. If he likes the life of a monk and wants to forego the worldly pleasures, he can become a monk for life. But he will be qualified for full membership of the Order only after attaining the age of twenty. If not, this ceremony can be taken as a preparation for adult life. In Arakan State, unlike Burma proper, the noviciating of a boy is done only when the boy reaches an age when he can understand and assimilate Buddha's teaching.

Especially during the period of Wasoe (Buddhist lent which falls during rainy season), people used to keep sabbath taking five, eight, nine or ten precepts. People in more advance stage of piousness used to meditate to free themselves from ten "fetters", i.e. Samyojana.

Such are the beliefs and practices of present-day Buddhists of Arakan State.

The same is true for the past centuries. To state very briefly, the historical periods of Arakan may be divided into the following dynasties.

1. Dhanyawadi (? - 370 A.D) (According to our historians, Dhanyawadi came to existence since about 3,000 B.C)
2. Vesali (370 - 994 A.D)
3. Sambawak or Pyinsa (1018-1118 A.D)
4. Parein (1118 - 1142 A.D)

5. Khrait (1142 - 1250 A.D)
6. Launggrat (1250 - 1404 A.D)
7. Mrauk-Oo (1430 - 1784 A.D)

One can travel to Arakan and see for oneself numerous Caityas (pagodas), Stupas and innumerable Buddha images built and made by the kings of these dynasties. Especially the town of Mrauk-Oo (former Mrauk-Oo city), being the last of the Arakanese capitals, is rich in these religious edifices and images.

From the inscriptions and palm-leaf manuscripts, we can find that the kings used to choose the way to Nirvana by desiring to become a Supreme Buddha, the first step of which is the Bodhisattvahood. In our literature, when a king died, he was not mentioned as dead, but mentioned as went to the abode of devas. We can read many descriptions of this kind in the Anandacandra inscription, inscribed about 729 A.D. Since Bodhisattva in advanced stage used to reside in the abode of devas, it is natural that the kings should go there after their death. As the king promised to look after the welfare of all the people in his dominion during the abhesika ceremony, it is only natural that he should not strive to attain Nirvana alone. He should also help his subjects attain Nirvana. So he should aim to become a Bodhisattva.

I have shown in this book miniature stupas, miniature caityas, bronze bells, bronze lamps and many types of bronze Buddha images, crowned and uncrowned. These were obtained from the relic chambers of the old ruined caityas and stupas. They belong to the period of Dhanyawadi and Vesali.

When did Buddhism first introduced into Arakan? And what type of Buddhism was that?

According to tradition and our historical annals, Buddhism was introduced into Arakan during the life-time of Buddha himself. Keeping tradition part, let us search for concrete evidences which will give us at least the upper limit for the period of introduction and the type of Buddhism introduced.

I have mentioned in Chapter IV that we have found one Fat Monk image with a line of inscription in Brahmi script used about the beginning of the Christian era. This Fat Monk, Saccakaparibajaka, was related to an incident in Buddha's life. Images of Buddha were also found together with this image. As there were no inscriptions nor dates inscribed on them, it is difficult to assign them to the same period as the Fat Monk.

Apart from this image, we can search for more concrete evidences. We may take the miniature stone stupas with Ye dharma verses on them, the stones with Ye dharma verses fallen out of the ruined stupas or caityas, and the inscription found on one of the Mahamuni sculptures as the solid evidence for dating the upper limit of the introduction of Buddhism in Arakan. The dating can be done palaeographically and these writings can be assigned to some time about the 4th or the 5th century A.D.

I have explained the Ye dharma verse and mentioned that it reveals the cream of the teaching of the Buddha. See Chapter V. It is very clear that the people who made these stupas and who inscribed the Ye dharma verses for the posterity professed the type of Buddhism based on the teaching of the Buddha and not on the personality of the Buddha. Again, the word *Mahasramana* in the verse means the Great Monk. By using this word, it is clear that the Buddha was referred to as a Great Monk and not as a God. Again in Chapter XI we have seen a ceti dedicatory inscription from eighth century Vesali. The inscription mentioned one to purify his own mind to attain nirvana. The three impurities, lobha, dosa and moha should be discarded revealing that the Buddhism practiced at that time was based on the teachings of Buddha. Therefore, we can definitely say that the Buddhism that flourished during this period was not Tantric Buddhism nor the advanced Mahayana with plenty of Gods and Goddesses.

We can infer that the Tantric Buddhism, which is an advanced state of Mahayana Buddhism, never flourished in Arakan. Even in India, this type of Buddhism became popular only after the 8th century A.D. According to scholars studying Indian Buddhist Iconography, the monks who professed Tantric Buddhism in Bengal fled to Nepal, instead of Arakan which was more easily accessible, during the Muslim invasion. This definitely proved that there was no ground for them to flourish in Arakan and the Arakanese never accepted the Tantric Buddhism.

A substantial amount of Buddhist Art which may be assigned to this earliest period belongs to the stone sculptures of the Mahamuni Shrine. The relief sculpture found on the Selargiri Hill representing Buddha preaching King Candasuriya also belongs to this period. This is the period of the famous Candra dynasty mentioned in Anandacandra inscription of Shitthaung Pagoda, Mrohaung (See Table II).

The Mahamuni sculptures are varied and many. If one does not study the Buddhism prevailing in the country at the period of making these sculptures, one may presume these to be the Gods and Goddesses of the Tantric Buddhism. That is why these sculptures are described in the last chapter of the book after discussing about the various aspects of Buddhism and the type of Buddhism flourishing in Arakan at that time.

## CHAPTER XXII

### The Mahamuni Sculptures

If we travel from Akyab, the capital of the Arakan State, northwards by boat along the Kaladan river, we reach Kyauktaw town. The town is about 60 miles up the river from Akyab and is situated on the left bank of the river. See MAP III.

On the right bank, opposite kyauktaw town, is the famous Selagiri Hill. According to tradition, Gautama Buddha journeyed to Arakan and landed on this hill first. At present, there is a standing Buddha image on the top of the hill pointing out to his disciples the various places in which his former lives had been passed. There are also one Buddha image in a reclining posture (parinirvana scene) and two caityas (one old type and the other new type). The entire view of the hill with these images and caityas is very scenic. This hill commanded a view of the rice plains towards Dhanyawadi which is situated about 5 miles east of the hill. See Chapter III for the description of the city of Dhanyawadi.

Sirigutta hill, on which the Mahamuni shrine was built, lies on the northeast corner of the site once occupied by the ancient city of Dhanyawadi, whose walls are still traceable at present. See plate 7, the aerial photo map in Chapter III. The Mahamuni precincts occupied the whole hill which is levelled into three flat surfaces. These surfaces are surrounded with square-cut blocks of granular sandstone forming three enclosures. The lowest enclosure, which has an area of 500'x580', is the base where there is a reservoir, known as Candasuriya reservoir,

fed by a perennial spring. The second enclosure is thirty feet up and has an area of 220' x 240'. The third enclosure is again thirty feet up enclosing the levelled summit on which is built the shrine. It has an area of 116' x 155'. There are a number of sculptures standing on these platforms. At the four cardinal points of the lowest enclosure are gates from which covered step-ways led to the shrine. See Plates 80 and 81. It is the oldest and most revered Buddhist site in Arakan.

In the central chamber of this shrine is the throne on which the Mahamuni image was once placed. The image was removed in 1784 to Mandalay. According to tradition, as well as the palmleaf manuscript *Sappadanopakarana*, Lord Buddha, while sojourning in Dhanyawadi, consented to the request of the king Candasuriya to leave an image of Him. The king collected the necessary metals and with the help of Sakra and Visvakarman made the image which was said to be exactly like the Blessed One. The Blessed One breathed upon the Image to impart life to the Image. King Candasuriya placed the Image on a throne in the shrine which he built on top of the Sirigutta hill. The image faced west where lay the places of the Four Principal Incidents of the Master's life.

The entire religious history of Buddhistic Arakan centres around this "younger brother" of Gautama. The Image was believed by the people to be the original resemblance of Gautama taken from life and was very highly venerated. Pilgrims have for centuries come from various Buddhist countries to pay their devotions at the foot of the Image.

According to Arakanese historical records the shrine was destroyed by fire or by pilferage on many occasions throughout the centuries and was again and again rebuilt by pious kings of these centuries.

Of the original shrine, nothing remains except the three walls surrounding the three flat surfaces of the Sirigutta hill made of square-cut blocks of granular sandstone, a reservoir at the southeast corner of the first enclosure, a number of stone sculptures standing along the terraces, and a few original architectural fragments.

The stone sculptures are the earliest group of specimen of the Buddhist Art of Ancient Arakan so far found. They consist of single images, diads and triads. They are all made out of the same type of fine-grained red sandstones and the sculptures are rather similar in design and dresses. The sizes of the slabs having single images are almost the same whereas the slabs having diads and triads are a little smaller.

Fortunately for us, there are some writings on one of the single images out of which two lines are still legible. See Plate 82. We can read Senāpati Panada very clearly and therefore this image is the image of the Yaksa General Panada. Panada was one of the 28 Yaksa generals. Studying palaeographically, we can assign the writing to the 4th or 5th century A.D. This gives us the age of the group of these stone sculptures.

Unfortunately, one of the hands of most of the images are broken. In some cases both the hands are broken. The headdresses are abraded due to weathering and lapse of time. Almost all of them have the attributes of royalty such as ornate headdresses: sometimes with crown, earrings, necklets, armlets, bracelets, anklets and a waist band tied in different fashions.

The slabs consist of raised unornamented ledges about one foot high on which the images are seated. The back slabs are mostly plain and the tops are usually rounded. In some cases there are nimbuses behind the head, elliptical or otherwise in shape. Some of the slabs have decorations in the form of rows of coils behind the shoulders.

The images have no overt sexual characteristics. The sculptor or sculptors executed a balanced composition of the figures which have smooth curves of the flesh. The artists seem to be aiming at the reproduction of sublime beauty in figures by an attenuation of the limbs and waists. The faces are oblong and have round smooth chins. Most of them are seated with their knees raised in different fashions and the postures of one of the hands can be made out to be either in Abhaya or Varada mudras. The other hand may be resting on the knee or holding a sword.

To interpret these images, we must note that the Mahamuni Shrine was built to house the exact replica of Sakyamuni, the Buddha. The Arakanese called this image in adoration as Mahamuni. So, the Greatest will be the Image of Buddha in this shrine. Any other image found around the shrine cannot be superior in status to this Buddha Image. One should not interpret the images found here as the images belonging to the Buddhist Pantheon mentioned in many advanced Mahayana Suttras devoted to meditation and perception of the deities, such as Sadhanamala, Nispannayogāvali, etc. According to these Suttras, there exist Dhyani Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Mortal Buddhas and Saktis. In order to identify our sculptures with these gods and goddesses one has to search for attributes held in hands and the



images of Dhyani Buddha on the headresses. When the hands are broken and the headresses abraded, one can speculate in many ways as one likes. It is only natural that the prejudicial mind will draw conclusions according to what one likes to.

In order to interpret these broken and abraded images found in the shrine, one should first of all determine what stage the Buddhism has reached in Arakan at the period of making of these images. As we know the approximate date of making of these images as the 4th or the 5th century A.D., the Buddhism prevailing at that time cannot be advanced Mahayana. Please refer to the last two chapters. So they should not be associated with the Buddhist Pantheon mentioned in the advanced Mahayana Suttras. What do these images represent then? We have known that all beings, men, Nats (celestial devas), Brahmas and creatures of the nether world worshipped Buddha and listened to Buddha's preachings. According to Buddhist Iconographical Texts, there are eight classes of beings who listened to Sakyamuni's preaching. They are Devas, Yaksas, Gandharvas, Asuras, Garudas, Kinnaras, Mahoragas and Nagas. I am strongly convinced that the Mahamuni sculptures represent these figures.

Among the sculptures of the Mathura School of Art there are numerous Buddha and Bodhisattva images together with those of Kubera, the Yaksas and Nagas. Images of Tantric flavour are not met with here, not even the images of Avalokitesvara, Manjusri are to be found in this school. This school extended to the early Gupta period.

The situation in Arakan School of Art during the period of making the Mahamuni sculptures are the same as that of Mathura School. We found here Naga kings, Yaksas, Kinnaras, Asura diads, deva triads and numerous royal figures whom may also be taken as Bodhisattvas. Bodhisattva concept is already in existence ever since very early times of Buddhism. The Bodhisattvas here, however, should not be mixed up with the Bodhisattvas mentioned in advanced Mahayana Suttras after the advent of the doctrine of Three Bodies and the theory of Five Dhyani Buddhas.

116

### **Mahoraga or Naga (Serpent King)**

See Plate 83a. There can be no doubt about this figure. The outspread hood of a cobra with five heads rises above the head. The figure wears a three-pointed crown enclosing a two coiled jata with a lotus bud-like top. The figure sits with left knee raised with the foot drawn back to the centre and pointing to the side. The right leg is folded under. The right hand is in Abhaya mudra, i.e. the palm turned towards the front with fingers raised upwards. The left hand falls on the side of the raised left knee. The figure wears a pair of large circular earrings, plain and wide necklaces, plain Brahmanical cords, a stiff belt, tied at the front with the buckle in the form of a horse shoe and anklets.

### **Nagi (Female Naga)**

See Plate 83b. The outspread hood of a cobra with nine heads rises above the head. The face is shown frontally while the torso bends to the right. The arms are broken and the legs in kneeling position are turned towards the right. The figure is sitting in a feminine way.

### **The Yaksa General Panada**

See Plate 82. The figure is a small one with a high back slab. There is a trefoil nimbus behind the head. On top of the nimbus is a flag. The headdress does not contain a crown. As usual with all the figures, the figure wears large circular earrings. Both hands are broken and the body is also badly damaged. The figure sits with left knee raised with the foot drawn back to the centre and pointing to the side and the right leg folded under. The left hand may have held a sword. On the upper portion of the stone behind the figure are traces of 12 lines of an inscription which contains only a few legible letters. The lines must have continued to the base. Only the two lowest lines are legible now. Fortunately, the lines contain the name of the figure, Senāpati Panada. See Plate 82a. As mentioned before, we can date the sculpture paleographically to either the 4th or 5th century A.D. Panada, as mentioned in Suttras of the Digha Nikāya, was one of the 28 Yaksa Generals led by Kubera.

### **Other Yaksa Generals**

See Plate 84a. The figure is similar to that of Panada, but is better preserved. There is a trefoil nimbus at the back of the head on top of which is a flag. The figure sits with the left knee raised with the foot pointing to the side. The right leg is folded. The headdress does not have a crown and as usual wears large circular earrings. There is no necklace but two straps pass over his shoulders twist over the chest and behind the arms. There is a girdle around his hips. The right hand is broken now, but it may once be in varada mudra. The left hand is moved sideways behind the raised right knee and is holding a sword.

There may be more images belonging to the group of Yaksa generals.

### **The Gandharva (The Deva Musician)**

See Plate 84b. The headdress has no crown but consists of four narrow coils on top of which is a bulbous bun. There is a flag above and two spikes can be seen to protrude from either side of the headdress. The figure wears, as usual, large circular earrings, plain wide necklaces, armbands, a short tunic and a belt. He sits with his right knee raised with the foot pointing to the side and the left leg folded with knee and toes touching the ground. The right hand is bent with elbow on the right knee and is holding a sword broken at the top. The left hand is placed flat on the left thigh. Small wing-like decorations sprout from behind the shoulders. At the back of the figure is a rounded dhoti at the top whose height is about the eye level.

### **Kinnaras**

See Plates 85 and 86. The headdresses consist of five pointed crowns enclosing three or four coiled jata with bud-like tops of different shapes. From the sides of the headdresses issue flower-like projections and from these fly tripartite feather-like objects curved outwards at the ends. Each figure has large circular earrings inserted in the lobe. The neck has three graceful folds and the necklaces are plain and wide. All have upper arm bands with a single fleuron projections, bracelets and armlets. A belt is always worn around the waist and is tied in front in various fashions. A belt is sometimes discernable around the hips. All figures, except one, sit with the right knee raised, foot pointing forward, and the left leg folded under. The right hands fall freely on the side of the raised

118

right knees. The left hands are broken from the elbow. The left hands most probably may be either in abhaya or varala mudras. (To compare see Naga image). The exceptional one has left knee raised with the left hand on the side of the raised knee. The right hand may be in abhaya mudra.

The group is distinguished by round projections decorated with coil-like rows behind the shoulders. These projections seem to represent the wings of the Kinnaras. The feather-like tripartite objects issued from the sides of the headdresses and the wing-like projections behind the shoulders leads to the interpretation of this group of images as personified Kinnaras. Or the wing-like projections represent the blazing glory which emanates from the body of Bodhisattvas? In this case, the group may be identified as Bodhisattvas. See Plate 87.

We must note that Garudas also have wings.

### **The Lokapalas**

See Plates 88 and 89a. The headdresses are similar to the images of Kinnaras but they contain four coils instead of three. The ornaments and the sitting postures are also the same. The right hands are in varada mudras. That is, the hands are folded with the palms spread outwards with the fingers pointing down. The left hands hold swords with their buds on the left knees. There are elliptical nimbuses behind the heads.

### **The Diads**

See Plates 89b and 90a. There are two diads. One of them had been modified by chiselling out of the original. The other is intact. Here again, the ornaments and dresses are the same. The only difference is in the headdress. The headdress consists of a crown and, like that of Naga, has two coils only and topped with a bud-shaped protrusion. Two straight horns come out from the left and right sides of the top coil and two curved horns from the sides just below the lower coil. Two straight horns can also be discerned below the curved horns. The right image has both hands broken from the elbows, whereas the left image has the right hand broken from the elbow. The left hand in this case is placed on the leg. Both of them are sitting with their legs folded but not crossed. The left leg is in front of the right. There is a nimbus at the back of the head. By carefully studying the headdress, one can speculate that the images belong to a different type of celestial being. Hence I want to interpret these images as images of Asuras.

## Triads

See Plate 90b. All the three figures have the same type of headdresses. They are more complicated than the headdresses of the other images and crowns cannot be discerned. There are elliptical nimbuses behind their heads. They wear the same type of ornaments as other Mahamuni images. All of them are seated with their legs folded and the left legs are slightly raised. The central image has his right arm raised in front of the body and left hand rests on the left leg. The hands of the side figures are broken from their elbows. The inner hands of these images appear to hold long stalk-like objects, wider at the top. Are these spears or some sort of musical instruments? The outer hands are also raised in front. They can either be Devas or Gandharvas (Deva musicians) and definitely not Dhyani Buddha sitting together with two Bodhisattvas at his sides, since they cannot have been developed in this region at this period even if one wished to.

In addition to the above sculptures, there are two more types left. One is an unfinished standing dvarapala (See Plate 91a), and the other, a squatting figure with the upper portion of the body together with the head lost. See Plate 91b.

These are the strange sculptures of Mahamuni. They have been interpreted as Hindu deities by many people. Some are attempting to interpret these as deities of the Buddhist Pantheon of the advanced Mahayana Buddhism. But after studying carefully the stage of Buddhism reached in Arakan in its evolution during the period of making these sculptures, one can conclude that they are the personified images of the Devas, Yaksas, Gandharvas, Asuras, Garudas, Kinnaras, Mahoragas and Nagas, who used to listen to Buddha's preachings. They can be distinguished only from their headdresses and the decorations behind the head and the shoulders as all other ornaments worn are almost the same.

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### *A BBREVIATIONS*

<b>BSOAS</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, London.</b>
<b>EI</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>Epigraphia Indica.</b>
<b>JASB</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta.</b>
<b>JBRs</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>Journal of the Burma Research Society, Rangoon.</b>
<b>JRAS</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, London.</b>
<b>JASP</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>Journal of the Asiatic Society, Pakistan.</b>



## LIST OF PLATES

- MAP I Arakan with respect to Bengal and Burma.
- MAP II The Present-day Arakan State.
- MAP III Sites of the old capitals of Arakan.
- Plate 1 Shitthaung Pagoda, Mrauk-Oo, Arakan.
- Plate 2 The Anandacandra Inscription.
- Plate 3 Coins struck by Devacandra, Yajña candra and Candrabandu.
- Plate 4 Coins struck by Bhumicandra, Nīticandra and Vīracandra.
- Plate 5 Coins struck by Prithvicandra, Priticandra and Driticandra.
- Plate 6 Coins struck by Dhammawijaya, Dhammacandra and Sri Simghagandacandra.
- MAP IV City of Dhanyawadi.
- Plate 7 City of Dhanyawadi (aerial photo).
- MAP V City of Vesali.
- Plate 8 City of Vesali (aerial photo).
- Plate 9(a) The Fat Monk Image; (b) Inscription on the back of the Fat Monk Image (Saccakaparibājaka jina).
- Plate 10(a) Miniature stone stupa with niches; (b) Miniature stone stupa from Kyauktaw Hill.
- Plate 11 Yedhamma verse on miniature stone stupa from Kyauktaw Hill.
- Plate 12(a) Miniature stone stupa 1 from Meechaungwa  
(b) Yedhamma verse on miniature Stone stupa 1 from Meechaungwa.
- Plate 13(a) Miniature stone stupa 2 from Meechaungwa.  
(b) Yedhamma verse on miniature stone stupa 2 from Meechaungwa.
- Plate 14(a) A Tablet of Auspicious Symbols. (b) A bronze illustration pot.
- Plate 15(a) Dedicatory inscription of the time of Niticandra.  
(b) Dedicatory inscription of Sri Viracandra.

- Plate 16(a) Copper-plate Land Grant (Obverse). (b) Copper-plate Land Grant (Reverse.)
- Plate 17 The alphabets used in the Copper-plate.
- Plate 18(a) The Caitya Bell (Ahpaungdaw Dettung Ceti).  
(b) The Monastery bell (Prinedaung Village).
- Plate 19(a) Bronze Lamp (Lady 1 (a)). (b) Bronze Lamp (Lady 1 (b)).
- Plate 20(a) Bronze Lamp (Lady 2 (a)). (b) Bronze Lamp (Lady 2 (b)).
- Plate 21(a) Bronze Lamp (Hero Prince (a)). (b) Bronze Lamp (Hero Prince (b)).
- Plate 22(a) Bronze Lamp (Birds in flight (a)). (b) Bronze Lamp (Birds in flight (b)).
- Plate 23(a) Bronze Lamp (Skeleton Bird (a)). (b) Bronze Lamp (Skeleton Bird (b)).
- Plate 24(a) A ceti dedicatory inscription of Vesali.  
(b) Transliteration of characters into modern Burmese.
- Plate 25 Miniature Bronze Ceti of Tharlarwaddy Village
- Plate 26 Miniature Bronze Ceti of Dharmarit Village.
- Plate 27 Miniature Bronze Ceti (3).
- Plate 28(a) Early Kusana type,  
(b) Early Gandhara type,  
(c) Gandhara type,  
(d) Sarnath type.
- Plate 29 Heads of Buddha Images of Arakan. Uncrowned (1).
- Plate 30 Heads of Buddha Images of Arakan. Uncrowned (2).
- Plate 31 Heads of Buddha Images of Arakan. Crowned (1).
- Plate 32 Heads of Buddha Images of Arakan, Crowned (2).
- Plate 33(a) Crowned Buddha of Arakan. Bronze. Dhyana Mudra. Right leg on left leg. (b) Crowned Buddha of Arakan. Bronze. Dhyana Mudra. Right leg on left leg. Two attendant figures in Bhumisparśa mudra and Vasumdhari,
- Plate 34(a) Crowned Buddha of Arakan. Bronze. Dhyana Mudra. Right leg on left leg. Two attendant figures in Bhumisparśa mudra. (b) Crowned Buddha of Arakan. Bronze. Dhyana Mudra. Right leg on left leg. Two attendant figures in Bhumisparśa mudra and two caityas.

- Plate 35 (a) Crowned Buddha of Arakan. Bronze. Dhyana Mudra  
Right leg on left leg. (b) Crowned Buddha of Arakan.  
Bronze Dhyana Mudra. Right leg on left leg. Two  
broken caityas, Vasumdhari and a guardian Lion.
- Plate 36 Crowned Buddha of Arakan. Bronze. Dhyana Mudra.  
Legs crossed.
- Plate 37 Crowned Buddha of Arakan. Bronze. Dhyana Mudra.  
Legs crossed.
- Plate 38 Crowned Buddha of Arakan. Bronze. Dhyana Mudra.  
Legs crossed.
- Plate 39 Crowned Buddha of Arakan. Bronze. Dhyana Mudra.
- Plate 40 Crowned Buddha of Arakan. Bronze. Dhyana Mudra.  
Legs crossed.
- Plate 41 Crowned Buddha of Arakan. Bronze. Dhyana Mudra.  
Legs crossed.
- Plate 42 Crowned Buddha of Arakan. Bronze. Dhyana Mudra.  
Legs crossed.
- Plate 43 Crowned Buddha of Arakan. Bronze. Dhyana Mudra  
Legs crossed.
- Plate 44 Crowned Buddha of Arakan. Stone. Bhumisparsa  
Mudra. Right leg on left leg.
- Plate 45 (a) Crowned Buddha of Arakan. Bronze. Bhumisparsa  
Mudra. Right leg on left leg (b) Crowned Buddha of  
Arakan. Bronze. Bhumisparsa Mudra. Right leg on  
left leg.
- Plate 46 Crowned Buddha of Arakan. Bronze. Bhumisparsa  
Mudra. Legs crossed.
- Plate 47 Crowned Buddha of Arakan. Bronze. Bhumisparsa  
Mudra. Legs crossed.
- Plate 48 Crowned Buddha of Arakan. Bronze. Bhumisparsa  
Mudra. Legs crossed.
- Plate 49 Crowned Buddha of Arakan. Bronze. Bhumisparsa  
Mudra. Legs crossed.
- Plate 50 Crowned Buddha of Arakan. Bronze. Bhumisparsa  
Mudra. Legs crossed.
- Plate 51 Eight-scenes Plate of Bengal.
- Plate 52 Eight-scenes Plate of Pagan.
- Plate 53 (a) Standing Buddha. White Bronze. (b) Walking Buddha;  
White Bronze.

- Plate 54 (a) Bronze Buddha of Arakan. Bhumisparśa Mudra. Right leg on left leg. (b) Bronze Buddha of Arakan. Bhumisparśa Mudra. Right leg on left leg.
- Plate 55 (a) Bronze Buddha of Arakan. Bhumisparśa Mudra. Right leg on left leg. (b) Bronze Buddha of Arakan. Bhumisparśa Mudra. Right leg on left leg.
- Plate 56 (a) Bronze Buddha of Arakan. Bhumisparśa Mudra. Right leg on left leg. Two attendant figures praying and Vasumdhari. (b) Bronze Buddha of Arakan. Bhumisparśa Mudra. Right leg on left leg. Two attendant figures in Bhumisparśa Mudra and Vasumdhari.
- Plate 57 Bronze Buddha of Arakan. Bhumisparśa Mudra. Right leg on left leg. Two attendant figures in Bhumisparśa Mudra and two Caityas.
- Plate 58 Bronze Buddha of Arakan. Bhumisparśa Mudra. Right leg on left leg. Two attendant figures in Bhumisparśa Mudra. (b) Bronze Buddha of Arakan. Bhumisparśa Mudra. Right leg on left leg. Two attendant figures in Bhumisparśa Mudra and Vasumdhari.
- Plate 59 (a) Bronze Buddha of Arakan. Bhumisparśa Mudra. Right leg on left leg. Two attendant figures in Bhumisparśa Mudra and Vasumdhari. (b) Bronze Buddha of Arakan. Bhumisparśa Mudra. Right leg on left leg. Two attendant figures in Bhumisparśa Mudra and Vasumdhari.
- Plate 60 (a) Bronze Buddha of Arakan. Bhumisparśa Mudra. Right leg on left leg. (b) Bronze Buddha of Arakan. Bhumisparśa Mudra. Right leg on left leg.
- Plate 61 Bronze Buddha of Arakan. Bhumisparśa Mudra. Right leg on left leg.
- Plate 62 Bronze Buddha of Arakan. Bhumisparśa Mudra. Right leg on left leg. Guardian Lions.
- Plate 63 (a) Bronze Buddha of Arakan. Bhumisparśa Mudra. Right leg on left leg. (b) Bronze Buddha of Arakan. Bhumisparśa Mudra. Legs crossed.
- Plate 64 Bronze Buddha of Arakan. Bhumisparśa Mudra. Right leg on left leg.
- Plate 65 Bronze Buddha of Arakan. Bhumisparśa Mudra. Right leg on left leg.
- Plate 66 Bronze Buddha of Arakan. Bhumisparśa Mudra. Legs crossed.

- Plate 67 Bronze Buddha of Arakan. Bhumisparśa Mudra. Right leg on left leg.
- Plate 68 Bronze Buddha of Arakan. Bhumisparśa Mudra. Legs crossed.
- Plate 69 Bronze Buddha of Arakan. Bhumisparśa Mudra. Legs crossed.
- Plate 70 Bronze Buddha of Arakan. Bhumisparśa Mudra. Legs crossed.
- Plate 71 Buddha in Dharmacakra Mudra. Sarnath.
- Plate 72 Buddha in Dharmacakra Mudra. Gandhara.
- Plate 73 Buddha in Dharmacakra Mudra. Kyauk-taw Arakan.
- Plate 74 (a) Standing Buddha. Bronze. Abhaya Mudra.  
(b) Standing Buddha. Bronze. Abhaya and Varada Mudra.  
(c) Standing Buddha. Bronze. Abhaya and Varada Mudra.
- Plate 75 (a) Crowned Buddha of Arakan. Bronze. Internal Varada Mudra. Right leg on left leg. (b) Crowned Buddha of Arakan. Bronze. Internal Varada Mudra. Right leg on left leg. Two praying attendants.
- Plate 76 Crowned Buddha of Arakan. Bronze. Internal Varada Mudra. Right leg on left leg. Two attendants in Bhumisparśa Mudra. Two praying attendants. Two Caityas. Guardian animals and Vasumdhari.
- Plate 77 Eight Scenes Plate of Arakan.
- Plate 78 Ten Scenes Plate of Arakan.
- Plate 79 The Fast. (Dukkha-cariya) Gandhara.
- Plate 80 The Present-day Mahamuni Shrine, Kyauk-taw, Arakan.
- Plate 81 Plan of the Mahamuni Shrine.
- Plate 82 (a) Yakṣa General Panada. (b) Legible Inscription of the Yakṣa General Panada.
- Plate 83 (a) Naga King of Mahamuni Shrine. (b) Naga of Mahamuni Shrine.
- Plate 84 (a) Unidentified Yakṣa General. (b) Deva Musician.
- Plate 85 (a) Kinnara. (b) Kinnara.
- Plate 86 (a) Kinnara. (b) Kinnara.
- Plate 87 (a) Bodhisattva. (b) Bodhisattva.
- Plate 88 (a) Lokapala. (b) Lokapala.
- Plate 89 (a) Lokapala. (b) Diad.
- Plate 90 (a) Diad. (b) Triad.
- Plate 91 (a) Dvarapala. (b) Squatting Figure.