

## **Buddhist sites in India: Political and Economic issues**

**Correspondence Author: Dr. S. N. Upadhyaya  
Reader**

**T.D.P.G.COLLEGE  
V.B.S. PURVANCHAL UNIVERSITY  
JAUNPUR (U.P.) INDIA  
E. MAIL:shashankcemb@gmail.com  
: ccmbshashank@gmail.com**

This account of selected archaeological sites in India which relate to Buddhism is not intended to be a comprehensive treatment of the subject. It is limited both in terms of place and time. It will deal (with one exception) with archaeological remains in the area where the Buddha exercised his ministry. This area comprises the present day States of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Thus it leaves out the extensive Buddhist remains in the North-West of India (including Afghanistan), in the West of India (such as Ujjain, and the Ajant and Ellora complexes) and in the South of India (such as Nagarjunakonda and Amaravati). Even in the area concerned some important sites such as Bharhut will be left out.

In terms of time we will deal with the earliest period of Buddhism in India. However many sites important for this period have seen a continuous development over the centuries, and it is often difficult to tell the old from the later developments. Where a stupa or a monastery has been rebuilt the old has been totally replaced by the later construction. Very often what we see is not what was there originally.

The plan we shall follow in this is to first consider some general matters relating to Buddhist archaeology including a brief consideration of the pre-Buddhist phase in Indian archaeology. We will then consider twelve ancient Buddhist sites on which most of the archaeological work has been done. We shall conclude with a few general observations.

On the whole, it is a very rich tapestry of religious development on the subcontinental scale. At the same time, let it be clearly understood that there was no Buddhist period of Indian history; Buddhism provided only a segment- albeit an important segment-of the composite religious culture of India. The kings and the members of their families who donated villages for the upkeep of the monasteries need not have been Buddhists themselves; the Satavahanas and the Ikshvakus of the Deccan, who must be counted among the great donors to Buddhist monastic organization, were not Buddhists. They, in fact, were great believers in Brahmanical rituals. In contrast, only Buddhism did not thrive under the monarchs who were Buddhists themselves. More Hindu gods and goddesses were sculpted in eastern India than in any other earlier or later periods under the Pala rulers, who introduce themselves in inscriptions as 'great devotees of Sugata or the Buddha'. Although the issue of patronage is clear in the context of the distribution of Buddhist sites in the subcontinent, it has to be admitted that our understanding is still on a

general level. Details can emerge only when enough micro-studies are undertaken. One of the primary necessities is to try to understand these religious establishments as archaeological sites in their proper geographical and settlement contexts.