

# The Study in Buddhist Sites in Karnataka State

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## **Abstract:**

Time erases civilizations, kingdoms, and culture of the world. It has been an effort to know and understand the study of Buddhist sites in Karnataka. There are many sites, Ashokan Rock Edits, Literature and Places of stay are here in Karnataka. It is absolutely necessary to go and search the sites, the writings and the culture in Karnataka which will profoundly show its impact of Buddhism in Karnataka State. For this search the knowledge of Buddhism and the life of Buddha, impact of Buddhism on kings, kingdoms and their supports to preserve and propagate Buddha Dhamma are the yardsticks. This paper focuses on some of the aspects of Buddhism, The Life and Teachings of Buddha, Emperor Ashokan Rock Edicts. Inscriptions and a few habituated sites by Buddhist monks in Karnataka and the growth of Buddhism and decline. Additionally this study shades lights on the impact of Buddhism on the culture, architecture and history of Karnataka. So in this paper mainly we concentrate on our field work, and survey of a few historical sites and residential places –Viharas.

**Introduction:**

Buddhism entered Karnataka before Emperor Ashoka's time 274 to 235 B.C. By the time Ashoka conquered Kalinga kingdom, most of the well populated Buddhist centers in Karnataka had already developed into vibrant urban centers. That is why Ashoka sent his Buddhist missionaries to Vanavasa (Banavasi) and Mahishamandala (Mysuru).

**Purpose and Objectives:**

The purpose of the study is to analyze the impact of Buddhism in this Southern part of India, Karnataka State. During the time of Emperor Asoka the entire southern india was under his rein. Since he was a devoted, committed follower of Buddha and his Teachings, he sent ambassadors (Dhammadutas) in different directions, and constructed many stupas and in the borders of his kingdom he established the rocks edicts.

By doing a research on these sites extensively we will be able to understand the encompassing nature of Buddhism in this jurisdiction. Even though Buddha and Buddhism prevailed in 2600 years back it was followed by Bhikkhus and Bhikkhunis, Lay Devotees in this area, by understanding the prevalent monuments and we can understand and prove the Buddhism flourished in this part of Karnataka.

**Methodology:**

Since we are dealing with the pages of history and historical sites, actual survey has to be done on the sites. Findings in the sites and surrounding areas are to be noted and proper systematic and scientific investigation approach has to be applied in processing the data.

Times have changed, the following has changed, the patronage has changed, hence the tints and shades of the existence of Buddhist sites has just appears in the pages of history. The foot prints of the Buddha, his dispensation and the monk followers are to be recorded with utmost care and actuals, without any exaggeration or boish views.

### **Sources:**

**Primary Sources:** The remains or relics of a given historical period. These could include photographs, coins, skeletons, fossils, tools, weapons, utensils, furniture, buildings and pieces of art and culture Though these were not originally meant for transmitting information to future generations they could prove very useful sources in providing reliable and sound evidence about the past. Most of these relics provide non-verbal information.

**Secondary Sources:** A secondary source is one in which the eyewitness or the participant i.e., the person describing the event was not actually present but who obtained his/her descriptions or narrations from another person or source. Another person may or may not be a primary source. Secondary sources, thus, do not have a direct physical relationship with the event being under study. They include data which are not original.

## **Buddhism – Buddha – Dhamma – Sangha**

### **The Buddha**

Siddhartha Goutama the prince of Sakya clan was born in Lumbini Gardens (Nepal) in 623 B.C. which was in Jambu

dvipa - India. After his princely life of twenty nine years, he became an ascetic-wonderer. He studies under many Gurus but the answer for which he was searching was not materialised. Six years of very hard penance and meditation he got Bodhi-Enlightenment at the age 35 years, at Bodhgaya in Bihar state under the pipal tree.

He gave his first sermon and set in motion the Wheel of Truth-Dhammachakkapavattana Sutta at Saranatha, U.P. From this day onwards for another forty five years Bhagawan Buddha wandered in many places and gave teachings to one and all. Through the establishment of Sangha thousands of monks and nuns came to the shelter of Buddha Dhamma, practised, preached and propagated the Dhamma. At the age of 80 years Buddha attained parinibbana at Kushinara in UP State in 543 BC.

The teachings were very simple and profound. Buddha taught in the Pali language which was the common language of the masses and the area of that time.

### **The Dhamma:**

After the Bodhi at Bodhgaya, Buddha travelled to modern Sarnath and at the Deer Sanctuary he expounded the Dhamma. He enunciated the basic formulas of his discovery- the Middle Path- avoiding the two extremes, the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path and the Law of Dependent Origination or the Wheel of Conditioned Existence.

The Middle Path- discovered by the Tatagata, which avoids these two extremes of sensual indulgence and self-mortification. The Noble Eightfold Path-The Arya Atthangika

Magga- Samma Ditti-Right Understanding, Samma Sankappa-Right Thought, Samma Vaacha-Right Speech, Samma Kammanta-Right Action, Samma Aajiva-Right Livelihood, Samma Vayaama Right Effort, Samma Sati-Right Mindfulness and Samma Samadhi-Right Meditative Concentration.

The Eightfold Path can be reduced to three modes of development. Sila- virtue through practice of moral precepts leading to purification of morality. Samadhi-Concentration through meditative practice leading to purification of mind. Panna-Wisdom through the practice of Samatha (tranquility) and Vipassana (insight) meditation leading to transformation of the mind and therewith realisation of Nibbana-Liberation.

### **The Sangha:**

His saying is- as every river which flows towards the sea, joins the sea and has lost its identity and becomes the sea itself. Similarly any human being who joins the Sangha - order of Bhikkus and Bhikunis is a member of the Sangha only, he has no personal identity.

The Holy Order is the spiritual field for the seekers of enlightenment to acquire spiritual merit, which is essential to get liberation- nibbana. Merit stands for moral virtue and spiritual excellence. The members of the Sangha are the Dhammadutas and Torch bearers of Buddha s Teachings.

Sangha has in its fold monks and nuns as well as upasakas and upasikas who are spiritual achievers. The order of Mankas and nuns is continuing till today from the time of the Buddha from 588 BC.

### **Historical Sites:**

## **Rajaghatta – Vihara**

In Bengaluru rural District, is Doddaballapura Taluk in that Kasaba Hobali, there is this Rajagatta Village, This is a place where in south Karnataka scholars have found a big and extensive site of Buddhist heritage. This site lies in the direction of Doddabalapura City towards Nandi Hill Road, at about 8 Km. From Bengaluru it is 48 Km. In the Southern direction of this village Boodigundi - Ashpit is the name of the place. In this excavation conducted here, The scholars have found old stoneage stone graves, earliest stages of history, middle ages of history- that is the ruling of Gangas, Hoysalas, Vijayanagara Period ruins have also been found. From this we can assess that Rajaghatta area was an active politically, religiously, socially and economically rich and habited place. But due to passing of time, it has lapsed its importance and has become a ruined site of historical importance.

## **Kalya – Stupa**

Kalya or the ancient Kalleha is a small town in the Magadi near Bangalore at present. This place is identified with the Kalavati town mentioned as Buddhavaasa Mahapuri in the Turuvekere copper plates dated 1533 A.D by Dr M Chidananda Murthy (1992).

The copper plate inscription, while mentioning the boundaries of the grant states that- on the southeast was the Kalavati which was the Buddhavasa Mahapuri and to its north was Harinatavi - the deer forest. This is a clear indication that Kalya was a Buddhist settlement at the time of the grant.

From this it becomes clear that Buddhism existed as late as the end of the medieval period, in this part of Southern Karnataka. The previous reference for the prevalence of Buddhism in Karnataka comes from Koliwada inscription. After the Turuvekere copper plates make an incidental reference to Kalavati of Buddhists.

### **Banavasi - Vihara**

Prakrit inscription of Banavasi of the 3rd century CE is also a Buddhist inscription. It informs us that Sivaskanda Nagasari, wife of Mahabhoja, daughter of the king, on an auspicious day of the 12th year of the reign of Haritaputra, Vinhukunda Chutukulananda donated along with the prince, the serpent idol (Nagapratima), tank and vihara.

His Nagapratima is now in the premises of the Madhukeswara temple at Banavasi. Excavations near Banavasi in 1971 revealed some remnants of a stupa. The bricks of the stupa indicate the period of the stupa as 2nd to 3rd century CE. An idol of Maitreya Buddha has been discovered near the Madhukeswara temple. A Buddhist lamp post (Dipastambha) has also been found at Togarsi near Banavasi.

### **Sannati – Inscription**

Sannati was Buddhistic centre during the Satavahanas period. Traces of Buddhist culture have been found on both sides of the river Bhima flowing through Sannati. The finds contain remnants of a stupa, a holy stone pot containing holy bones and ayaka stambhas. The ayaka stambhas give symbolic representations of the birth, pariniskramana, enlightenment, preaching and Nirvana of the Buddha. Buddhist stupas have

been carved on the stones. On another stupa, the feet of the Buddha are carved.

ASI during excavations in Sannati has discovered a five foot tall statue of king Ashoka. The statue was found in two parts and is probably the only statue to show how king Ashoka looked and attired. The ASI, which began excavation at Sannati in 1954, has found several Buddhist monuments, including 81 sculptures, two stupas, a protection wall, four scriptures engraved on stones and statues of Buddha that throw light on the influence of Buddhism and how it developed and flourished during the rule of Emperor Ashoka.

### **Kanaganahalli – Mahastupa**



Another place of Buddhist importance is Kanganahalli barely 3 km from Sannati where the ASI carried out excavations during the years 1994-98 and 2000-2002. Numerous artifacts, remnants of shrines and sculpture have been discovered here which include the remains of a massive stupa with its architectural members and several brick structures in the form of chaityas. All these remains probably belong to the Satavahanas period. This is called as Mahastupa.



## **Kadri – Vihara**

Buddhism started declining in Karnataka around 7th century CE. Avalokiteswara of Tantric Buddhism was worshipped at places in the guise of Maheswara. Evidence of Avalokiteswara being worshipped as Maheswara can still be seen in the Manjunatha temple at Kadri and in Mangaluru

## **Badami Caves - Buddha image**

In the accounts of Huen Tsang Badami was also a Buddhist centre where sangharamas, viharas and chaityas were found. The caves of Badami might originally have been Buddhist caves they were Mayana basti, now called mena basadi. Mayana is a Buddhist expression derived from Mahayana Buddhism. The Buddhist chaitya of Aihole (on Meguti hill) belongs to a period prior to the Chalukya period. This has Mahayana influence. It was built around the 5th century CE. It is 25 feet high and on the first floor is carved an idol of Buddha.

There are many more sites in Karnataka to be unearthed and to be studied.

## **Conclusion:**

From the time of the 2nd great council - Mahishamandala, Bavavasi and some other parts of Karnataka State were following the teachings of the Buddha.

Monks were residing in viharas. Chaityas and stupas were built in a large numbers. After the 10th Century AD the following of the Buddhism declined.

Now after the independence of India Buddhist following is increasing. The Maha Bodhi Society of Bangalore, started in 1940 is catering to the needs of buddhist followers in Karnataka.

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