

THE REAL BIRTH PLACE OF BUDDHA YESTERDAY'S KAPILAVASTU, TODAY'S KAPILESWAR

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It has long been taken for granted that Kapilavastu, the capital city of the Sakyas, and Lumbini, the actual birth place of Goutam Buddha, were situated in the Nepalese Tarai. The main basis of this belief is the inscribed pillar of Rummindei, recording the visit of the Mayuran emperor Asoka, the great to the place where Buddha was born. It is little known that the same fact in similar words and script existed in Orissa. So much has been taken for granted on this issue that few scholars are now prepared to go deep into the matter. That Buddha was born in India and not in Nepal, needs to be accepted on the basis of a number of proofs, which are discussed in this article.

Dr. Cunningham in his "Ancient Geography of India" points out the place where from the Tarai inscription had been discovered is not at all related to the name Kapilavastu or even the name Kapila. And the noted historian Dr. Smith asserts that the place of the discovery of the Tarai inscription was never called Rummindei; it was a forged name given to it by archaeologist Dr. Fuhrer. Besides it has been proved that Buddhism had not been adopted in Nepal till the 6th century A.D. In face of all these clear-cut statements of noted scholars, it is quite sane to focus our attention on the village Kapileswara in Bhubaneswar in Orissa.

The centuries old Kapileswara village has got some similarity with the Kapilavastu in name and a region nearby called Lembai is similar to Lumbini. According to Tripitaka, Lumbini was a small estate with its capital at Kapilavastu. Till recently, as can be seen from maps of 1817 AD there was a Lembai Pragana; and Kapileswara was a part of it. Besides, the inscription of Kapileswara village corroborates the statement of Tripitaka and the Kalinga war of Asoka. The mention of the era of Buddha and the name of the scribe in the said inscription help us to take this as genuine.

Out of four places hallowed in memory of Buddha, one is his birthplace Kapilavastu. When the birthplace sculptures were destroyed, the Buddhist monks searched for a new place in the dense forests of Tarai region in Nepal and put another stupa there. As other places associated with the life of Buddha such as his enlightenment, turning the Wheel of Dharma and his death, all happened to be in the North, it was quite natural to locate it again in the same North. In no Buddhist literature there is any description relating to history or

geography of the so-called Kapilavastu or Lumbini of Nepal. Only because the Tarai inscription was discovered there, the place attained celebrity status throughout the world.

Dr. Fuhrer discovered the Asokan stone inscription in the Nepal Tarai in 1896. The Kapileswara birth-plate, also evidently an Asokan stone inscription, was discovered 32 years later. A great deal of discussion on the Kapileswara plate appeared in the Indian Historical Quarterly (vol. V) in 1929, but no research was conducted on it. Research scholars both inside and outside Orissa and India did not examine the evidence with any seriousness and it was left at that, till Chakradhar Mahapatra conducted extensive research on the subject and brought out a book named "The Real Birth Place of Buddha" published in 1977.

Mr. Chakradhar Mahapatra argues that an Asoka-pillar existed at the then Kapilavastu and the present Kapileswar, which recorded the birth. It was destroyed in religious disturbances in Orissa. The Buddhists erected a second pillar in the then inaccessible Nepal Tarai, and engraved on it a duplicate of the original inscription. This is why, we are told, the date of the epigraph in "the Buddha era" and the name of engraver, Chundray, are not mentioned on Rumindei pillar. The duplicate plate makers were at least honest enough to remain silent on the date of the inscription and did not repeat the name, "Chundray". It is also a fact that this pillar is devoid of the characteristic Asokan capital. It looks very much different from the standard Ashoka pillars.

The noted historian V.A.Smith challenges this statement of Dr. Fuhrer and comments – "This gives no further evidence for Fuhrer's assertion and it appears that neither the Nepalese officials nor the hill-men called it Rumindei." This was forgery of the name by Fuhrer in order to convert his discovery to a conclusion and to relate it with the name Lumbini. And uptill now it has become the conclusion. But later on he (Dr. Fuhrer) admitted that there was no such name ever called Rumindei in Nepal. From the Mahabansa section of the Tripitaka published later, it came to be known that Lumbini was a vast feudal (zamindari) area, and not a village or a place.

In Nepal, not only the name Lumbini, but also the name Kapilavastu is rare. The statement of Dr. Cunningham in his book 'The Ancient Geography of India' bears testimony to this: No trace of Kapila has yet been discovered at the foot of the Himalayas. After the recognition of these areas as the birth-place of Lord Buddha, only recently (within sixty years) these names are being used in the maps and official documents. Another important fact is that a temple of Mayadevi, Buddha's mother, is also found at so called Lumbini. But R.R.Diwakar says that this temple must have been built later, as the building of temples was not yet in vogue during the time of Asoka.

Many historians are of opinion that the scripts found in the Tarai inscription have no similarity with the script of other inscriptions of Asoka's time. If scholars take up the study of this Tarai inscription with all seriousness, it will be crystal clear that this inscription does not belong to the time of Asoka, nor does the pillar containing the inscription.

In the month of March 1928 a stone inscription like the one found in the Tarai region was found in Kapileswara, a village then one mile away from Bhubaneswar, the present capital of Orissa State. Now it has become a part of the city of Bhubaneswar, the part called the old town.

The Kapileswara plate, first brought to public notice by Mr. Harenchandra Chakaldar of the Calcutta University was procured about March 1928 by Mr. Birendranath Roy for his private museum at Puri from a farmer of the village of Kapileswara, situated nearly a mile to the south of the famous Lingaraj temple at Bhubaneswar. The farmer had found the inscribed stone slab set in the mud wall of his hut. This is all the information which Mr. Roy and others could gather from him.

The lingam (phallus) of the Bhaskareswara temple of Bhubaneswara was proved to be a portion of an Asokan pillar by the eminent historian Mr. Rajendralal Mitra in 1880 and then supported by Dr. N.K.Sahu and Dr. K.C.Panigrahi, two eminent historians.

The Orissan specimens of Asokan arts have no lustrous polish as exemplified by the elephant figure at Dhauli, and that they exhibit indigenous characteristics, being the products of the local school of art, executed in local stone. Even the Kapileswara stone inscription has got a number of spots, and it is not polished.

Prof. Dr.K.C.Panigrahi, who accepts the sculpture of the Lingam as an Asokan one on the supposition of its indigenous nature of workmanship, assures us that the figure was detached from the original column of Asoka by the 5th century A.D. when, according to him, it received on its body the two short lines of Brahmi inscriptions, and that the chisel marks on it indicate the attempts of breaking it into pieces by the fanatic Saivas, who transformed the Buddhist column into a Siva lingam.

The Linga formed out of a piece of the original Asoka pillar was named Bhaskareswara, another name of Buddha meaning the Sun God certainly it had connection with Buddha, because of the fact that Buddha is frequently designated as 'Arkabandhu' and 'Adityabandhu' meaning of friend of Sun God.. As the lingam was converted from the broken pillar containing Buddha's mortal remains, the name Bhaskareswara was given to the lingam. Even the name Bhubaneswara is derived from one of the names of Lord Buddha.

A group of people of Kalinga during the lifetime of Buddha had accepted Buddhism, because the first two Buddhists, Tapusa and Bhallika were inhabitants of Kalinga, and Buddha had come to Kalinga twice after his enlightenment. But after the death of Buddha when the emperor of Kalinga Brahmadutta made Buddhism the religion of the state, Buddhism got spread in every part of Kalinga, but unfortunately taking advantage of the death of Brahmadutta, the kings of Nanda dynasty of Magadha attacked Kalinga and occupied some parts, and partially destroyed, many Buddhist monuments.

As mentioned in the book of Mr. Mohapatra, when all the sculpture of Kapilavastu, the birth place of Buddha, were destroyed, some of the most devout Buddhists led by

Bhikshu SANKASA in 5th century AD thought over as to how to keep the memory of Buddha intact.

The seal scribed with “OM DEVAPUTRA BIHAR KAPILAVASTU BHIKSHU SANKASA” alleged to have been recovered from that place relates to 5th century. Because the BHIKSHUS kept it concealed in such an inaccessible place after the original birthplace was damaged. That could never have been the palace of Sudhodana surrounded by the paddy fields. Retaining the text in a copy, they had handed over the original plate to the faithful Mallas and went away to Nepal. The said original plate contained 90 letters. So following the principle of truth they also kept 90 letters in this latter version of the birth plate. But they dropped the name of the scribe and the date, because they would have been far from the truth, the cardinal principle of Buddhism.

In course of time it so happened that Buddhism became completely extinct in the real birthplace of Buddha. Likewise the followers also could not take the image of Konakamana. They took an exact copy of the inscription installed in the Konakamana stupa, and placed it building a pillar in the Himalayan Tarai area. As the image and pillar of Konakamana were situated in the seashore, likewise they constructed the pillar on the bank of a great tank. The present Konark was the site of the Konakamana stupa and the Ashokan inscription.

After a long interval they also shifted the image of Mayadevi and placed it in that secret far off place in Tarai region of Nepal. Then after some time they perhaps took away the remnant of bones and sacred ashes of Buddha from the ruined stupa at Kapileswara and after constructing a new stupa put those bones and ashes there.

Being desperate of failure in preserving intact the main citadel of Buddhism in the real birthplace of Buddha, an artificial seat of Buddhism was constructed in the Tarai region in the foot of the Himalayas. The sculpture of it was quite different from the Asokan period. But unfortunately this place has wrongly become famous as the birthplace of Buddha. But at last the original birthplace has come to light.

If the pillar, which was built by Asoka, after 240 years of Buddha's death in Buddha's original birthplace, would have been present now along with the plate, then, there would have been no such arguments as raised now. But due to ill luck, Buddhism was rooted out from Orissa.

After Asoka made Buddhism the state religion in the empire many fictitious stories were fabricated about Buddhism. Many legendary tales completely distorted the true history. One of the tales says that there were many 'Buddhas'. Out of the six 'Buddhas' the fifth Buddha was named 'Konakamana', who was also known as 'Konakamuni'. But these six 'Buddhas' were no other than the same Gautama Buddha.

The two edicts of Asoka i.e. (i) The Kapileswara inscription referring to the birth of Buddha and (ii) the Konakamana inscription prove undoubtedly that Buddha was a historical person.

In the end we must give serious attention to the fact that Lumbini never existed in Kapilavastu, rather according to the old Buddhist literature Kapilavastu, was the capital of Lumbini. But the stone-pillar, which Asoka got erected in the birthplace of Buddha, the name of Kapilavastu never occurs. Because Sakyamuni was born in Lumbini (Asoka refers to Buddha as Sakyamuni), Asoka gave up the idea of realizing land revenue from the residents of Lumbini and he offered his worship at the place where Buddha was born.

During the time of Goutam Buddha, Bramhadutta was the Emperor of Kalinga. Buddha was the son of a small estate owner a Jamidar as can be seen from the book "Bhagaban Buddha" by Dharmananda Kosambi. Suddhodana, his father, was the proprietor of a small estate in the vast kingdom of emperor of Kalinga. After the death of Buddha his left molar tooth was given to the then Emperor of Kalinga and not to any other King.

It is written in the Mahapadan Sutta of Mahavaga that Lumbini was an Estate of Buddha's father. His capital was Kapilavastu. Ashok constructed the pillar in Kapilavastu where Buddha's birth rites were performed. Had Kapilavastu been a city of some standing, Ashok would have named it in the inscription on the stupa. Compared to the vast Indian Empire of Ashoka, Lumbini was a very small estate and Kapilavastu of those days was its headquarters without much of urban characteristics to be called a town (nagara). But the forest area where Buddha was actually born became famous later as Bhubaneswar which is actually one of the other names of Buddha. Till 1940s the present new capital of Orissa was actually a dense 'sal' forest.

After renouncing the world Buddha went out aimlessly and reached Rajagriha, the capital of Magadha. In 'Suttanipata' Buddha himself has said that Toshala was a part of Lumbini region. When Bimbisara, the Emperor of Magadha, saw Buddha, he was astonished looking at the most handsome ascetic and asked his whereabouts.

In Niravana Katha Jataka edited by Bhadanta Ananda Kausalyana it is mentioned that it took 60 days for Buddha to travel from Rajagriha to Kapilavastu to cover a distance of 60 yojanas i.e. 675 kms. at the daily average rate of 1 yojana which is 11 kms. Kapilesvara (Kapilavastu of Orissa) is at a distance of 650 kms. from Rajagriha straight while the so called Kapilavastu region of Tarai area is only a distance of only 300 kms. from Rajagriha.

The same Hemavantagiri as mentioned by Buddha later on was known as Swarnakuta. Swarna and Hema both stand for gold. This hilly region also included the forest area of Chandaka which was named after Chhandaka, the Charioteer of Buddha. Khandagiri, Dhauligiri and Udyagiri hills belonged to this area. They were all in the Capital of Toshala and Kapilavastu was situated in the foot of the Hamavanta. The Dhauri rock edict of Ashoka was specifically addressed to the people and Administrators of Toshali, and not Kalinga an empire, which contained the state of Toshali and the region of Lumbini.

Buddha Replied,

“Ujum janapado raja hemavantassa passato”
“Dhana viriyana sampanno tosalesu niketino”

Translated it reads -

“there is O’ king, a country on the slop of the Hemagiri, rich in wealth and heroes, who dwell among the Tosalas i.e. straight from here the rich the prosperous Tosali which lies in the foot of Hemavanta, is my residence”.

These holy words of Buddha are quoted in Pabbajja Sutta in Suttanipata published by Palli Publication Board. Thus according to Buddha Himself he belonged to Toshala.

Kapilavastu of Toshala, (later known as Toshali) which is presently Kapileswara of Bhubaneswar is situated to the south of Rajagriha and both of them stand almost on the same meridian. Rajgiri is on 85° 30’E and Bhubaneswara is on 85° 45’E but Kapilavastu of Nepal and Rajagriha, capital of Magadha by no means located in a straight line. If straight location is taken from the stand point of latitude, Rajagriha is situated on latitude 25° North while Kapilavastu of Tarai region is located on the latitude 27°30’N.

Dharmananda Kosambi in his book “Bhagawan Buddha” has written that the Sakyas and Buddha belonged to Aditya clan who were of solar origin. Sakyas belonged to the Aditya clan. As quoted in Suttanipata, Buddha himself has said the following: -

“Adichcha nama gottena Sakiya nama jatiya
Tamhakula pabbajitomhi na kame abhipatthayam”

Translated into English, it means that “I am a descendant of the Sun, Aditya by clan and Sakya by birth. From that family I have gone out, having no longing for sexual desires.” This explanation he has given to Bimbisara, the then Emperor of Magadha. It is very amazing to note that still Aditya clan can be seen Orissa among the Kshyatriyas. The feudatory king of Narasinghpur ex-princely state of Orissa in Cuttack district and Kshatriyas of Kujanga in Jagatsinghpur district belong to the Aditya clan, known in the history as solar kings. The Vaneswara valley site of Narasinghpur (now a Block and Tahasil in Cuttack district) contains images of Prajnaparamita, Tara, Buddhadeva, Padmapani Avalokiteswara etc. Many parts of Narasinghpur estate are full of Buddhist sculptures. Remnants of a pillar with images of Buddha can be seen in Bhattarika temple on Mahanadi near Badamba. Due to religious upset by Saivism, the Rahula group of Buddhas are seen in Narasinghpur as Shivaworshippers.

In the whole World as has been described earlier, two persons who for first time accepted Buddhism were the two merchants of Kalinga, Tapussa and Vallicka as can be seen from Lalitavistara – 24th canto. The two merchants came traveling from Kalinga referred to in Lalitavistara as Utkal and they had approached Buddha and offered him rice and honey cake. They had offered him “Arisha pitha” described as ‘madhupindakam’ in

Rajayatana Katha. This was lump of sweet food made of rice powder, gur, ghee and other ingredients, still a popular delicacy in Orissa today.

After enlightenment, Buddha had accepted food first of all from these two merchant brothers of Utkal (Kalinga) and they embraced the new religious thoughts by Buddha. In one sense they could be called the first two converts. Buddha then went in their cart to the Mrugadava forest of Varanasi now called Saranatha and while these merchants were on the way back from Hastina, Buddha came with them to Rajagriha. All these descriptions indicate that Buddha and these two brother merchants belonged to one region i.e. Kalinga now (Orissa) as has been mentioned by Sir Edwin Arnold in his book 'The Light of Asia'.

Buddha had given his teachings in Pali language. It is known that the then language of Kalinga was Pali. The stone inscription of Kharavela as can be seen in Udayagiri hill near Bhubaneswar is written in Pali.

The news spread that the Tathagata was going to have His Parinirvana (demise) in the estates of the Mallas on the fullmoon day of month of Vaisakha which also happened to be Mesha Sankranti, the first day of the solar month of Aries. The bereaved Mallas who belonged to the Vasistha clan came to Him with their families and worshipped Him. They cremated Him after his 'Maha Parinirvana' (great demise) with the respect of a 'Rajachakravarti' as given in Maha Parinirvana Sutam . Mallas denied to give his ashes and bones to any body and they came to His birth place, Kapilvastu. The Mallas had entered Kalinga with Buddha's ashes and bone. Emperor Brahmadutta had received them and worshipped the tooth of Buddha keeping it inside a golden casket and renamed his capital as "Dantapura". He also built a stupa with the statue of Buddha, also known as "Konakamana" in that city of Charitra port, then in the middle of Kalinga as that was the route by which Buddha had travelled with his wife and children. A stupa was built in His birthplace by Brahmadutta, Emperor of Kalinga and the ashes and bones were kept there. The Mallas migrated with their kins to Kapilvastu to worship the relics of Buddha as can be seen from the book Bhagavan Gautam Buddha by Uttama Bhikshu.

The Mallas belonging to Vashistha clan are still to be seen at Kapileswara near Bhubaneswar. They are now nearly 500 families. Families have inter marriage system only among themselves. They are now known as Mallias. After the religious transformation they have become worshippers of Shiva, but all of them strongly believe that Buddha was born at Kapileswar.

The first Kapileswara Lingam was previously worshipped by the sage Kapila and then by Suddhodan father of Gautam Buddha. The second Kapileswara lingam was installed by the Mallas who were worshipping the sacred relics of their beloved Goutam Buddha, in a stupa. After the stupa and then the pillar erected by Ashoka was destroyed by the religious fanatics, the vase containing the relics of Buddha was removed and it still lies vacant, and on it a Lingam is installed which is third lingam of Kapileswara. It is like a coverlid and bears a hole and reminds the Mallias the birth place of Buddha, as mentioned

by A. Barth and Dr. A. Cunningham in their book 'Religions of India' published by the Archeological Survey of India. The Mallias who are the main worshippers now claim that the out let was aimed at respiration of Lingam. Now only the third Lingam is worshipped.

The Brahmins of Kaundanya clan who were the priests of the Sakyas are still living in Kapileswara area since last 2500 years. They were worshipping the stupa till 5th century AD and after the stupa along with the pillar was destroyed it was replaced by a Shiva Temple. Then they have become the cooks of the Kapileswara Temple.

It has been referred to in many puranas written after Gautam Buddha that Kapila Muni the propounder of Sankhya philosophy meditated for many years at Kapilavasthu and the place was known as Kapilavasthu after him. After the extinction of Buddhism, Kapilavastu became a full-fledged seat of Saivism, and renamed as Kapileswara. The people of Kapileswara believe that their place was sanctified both by Kapila Muni and by the birth of Buddha. Even those Mallas (Now Mallias) who are worshipping relics of Buddha while pouring water upon the Shiva Lingam use to call aloud - "Oh Sage ! Kapila".

Emperor Ashoka had invaded Kalinga in 261 B.C. defeated them and was himself converted to Buddhism. 29 years after this he died in 232 B.C. After his death the non-Buddhists again became powerful in Kalinga and destroyed the Buddhist monuments and other memorials built by Asoka. During this period, the Kapileswara (Kapilavastu) pillar and the sacred stupa, built before, were destroyed. The distinguishing features of birth plate of Kapileswara, the proofs from the adjoining areas, the ruined fragments of the Asokan pillar, all these prove perfectly that this birth plate on the pillar had been installed by Asoka. Besides, it is doubtless that the present Konarka area as the Konakamana region. The remnants of the temple of Mayadevi in the premises of the present ruins of the Konark temple clearly establish that Konark was a Buddhist shrine. The image of Buddha recovered from this area is worshipped as Dharmaraja at Puri Jagannath temple. Mayadevi is not the name of any Hindu Goddess. The Mayadevi temple bears ample evidence of the fact that the site of Konark temple was a Buddhist shrine.

This worship at the birthplace of Buddha was taken up by Asoka after twelve years of Kalinga war. After two years of his conversion to Buddhism, he had been to Uruvela, the place of enlightenment of Buddha. Then again he came back to Pataliputra and got himself busy in preparing the installing the rock edicts in different parts of India. Nearly five years passed like that. When Asok was doing all the work for the propagation of Buddhism, is it not something unusual for him not to visit Buddha's birth place for paying his homage, when the so called birth place Kapilavastu of Nepal was so near to his capital, Pataliputra?

Why was there delay on the part of Asoka to go to the birthplace of Buddha? This doubt can be removed only by the assumption that Asoka very much hesitated to enter the war ravaged Kalinga immediately after accepting Buddhism. He had to wait for along period of 12 years to come to the birth place of Buddha, because by that time, the situation in war-ravaged Kalinga had changed for the better because of his love for peace, efficient and

gist administration, and his affectionate messages to the people. Asoka never had a battle with Nepal. If Buddha was born in Nepal, after embracing Buddhism, Ashok would have visited Nepal more than once in 12 years.

There may be a question that in case we accept Toshali of Kalinga as the region where Buddha was born, why did it not occur to Hiuen Tsiang to come over to the birth-place of the Lord during his sojourn here? The answer is that by the time Hiuen Tsiang came, the whole region of Kalinga was a land of Savites, and the Buddhist monuments were in utter ruins. The Sakya and the Kolas had left the country and took refuge in far off forest tracts because of the oppression of the Savite Kings. We do not find a single name place starting with Kapila in Nepal today. 'Rummindei' is a creation of Dr. Fuher. When the same Sakyas Kolas are still found exclusively in Orissa, and when Mallas (Malias), the true worshippers (Upasakas) of Buddha are found in great numbers in Kapileswar near Bhubaneswar, will it not be ridiculous to put the birth place of Buddha in the Tarai region of Nepal? Would the historians answer this question?

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