

ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF BUDDHA STUPA: AN OVERVIEW OF TEXTUAL NARRATIVES

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ABSTRACT

Stupa is the India's oldest object of veneration in the architectural form. Stupa and Buddhism are synonyms of each other. Oldest Known stupas are of Buddhist religion. The construction of its shape is inspired from nature itself e.g. bulbulakaar, uplakaar and dhanyakaar. This is a solid structured platform in which the body relics of Buddha and his disciples were kept. Initially the stupas of mud were constructed over the bodily remains of Buddha after his Mahaparinirvana. Thereafter, the Mauryan Emperor Asoka constructed numerous stupas made of bricks all over India. During the Sungas and period that followed after the stupas were beautifully adorned by stones that covered the stupas. The remains of this stupa have been obtained from different parts of India namely Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Punjab, etc., and also from Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Keywords: Mesolithic, Megalithic, thup, Stupa, Buddhism, Buddha, relics, Ajatshatru, Ashoka, Kushans, Kanishka.

BACKGROUND

Human being is progressive creature from the beginning. Man began to socialize himself with his fellow beings since the time he started covering his body and started eating his food after roasting. From the beginning, the matters relating to know about death, fear, mystery, faith, and devotion has been the source of curiosity for the human being. He thought deeply regarding the sudden death of his relatives and close associates, and between various kinds of curiosity to honour the deceased, he started putting their bodies by digging the ground and laying down their bodies in it and closing it which is referred to as buried. It was begun by Neanderthalhuman (100,000– 35,000. B.C). In the course of time, complication and variety came in the method of matters related to cremation. Men started keeping some special objects along with the body. eget the archaeological evidences of it since Stone Age. The three ancient sites of Middle Stone Age namely Sarainahar Rai¹, Mahdaha² and Damdama³ of Pratapgarh district of Uttar Pradesh are of prime importance. The burials of Sarainahar Rai were shallow and were

oval in shape, were dead bodies were kept. In one burial four human skeletons, male female both were buried together. With these skeletons huge pebbles were also found. A skeleton from Mahdaha bears a necklace made of five seals made from the horns of deer have been obtained. Another skeleton wears a necklace of twelve seals and also wears a circular earring made of horn. Thus, the burial of Damdama gives special information in context with the burial system of Middle Stone Age. From these burials along with the human skeletons, arrow made from horns, jewellerys and the bones of animals have been obtained as crematory materials have been obtained.

From Burjahom⁴, the ancient site of Neolithic Age, the evidence of the remains of full and semi both types of burials have been obtained from the residential area. The Ochre coloured has been sprinkled over the skeletons that have been obtained from these burials, which are of great importance. This obviously might have been an evidence of either some kind of tradition or some kind of blind faith. Along with the human being dogs, goats and other type of domestic animals were also buried. In partial burials probably the bones of human being were buried only.

Followed by Megalithic age there was a widespread transformation and amendment in the crematory process. In this era seven kinds of burials were made- Dolmenaid, Cairn circle, Menhir, Umbrella stone, Hood stonecist etc. In these the bodies were kept after death and from these the human remains have been found. Probably in the burial the ashes of the dead bodies have been obtained. The bases of these ash-pots were made of the bones of animals like sheep or elephants. In the Dolemonaid cist a *gavaksh* (port hole) was made through which probably the objects being liked by the dead were poured down on the special occasion. These kinds of burials have also been found in North India also in which the burial of Cairn circle cist is of special importance. These types of burials have also been found from Kakoria –Chandauli, Kotia, Koldihwah, Khujari, Magha and Manuhai.

Here we find the chronological development in keeping the crematory objects along with the dead bodies. Over these burials varieties of stones of different types of stones were kept so that the burials can easily be recognized from a distance. This proves that the contemporary human being wanted to keep the memories of the deceased for the time immemorial and thus used to do these activities. The description of Umbrella stone cist which has been found especially in Kerala state of South India would be appropriate. Over these kinds of burials four pillars of stone on each direction were built. These stone pillars were broad at the base and became narrow from above. Over this a huge stone in the shape of umbrella used to be kept that used to depict its presence from a distance.

In the ancient sites of Harappa's burials along with the body relics, the bones of domestic animals, their jewellerys etc too were buried. From Dhaulavira⁵, a historic structure similar to that of a stupa has been obtained. It is quite similar to the stupa of Sanghol. Vedic period is a dark period in context with the art and architecture, because

no archaeological evidence of this period has been found. There is mention of stupa in *Vedic samhita* and structures similar to stupa in post Vedic literature. The first evidence of stupa has been found from Mahajanapada period, which was developed later. It must be noted, there was only one purpose and emotion working on the construction of burials constructed from Stone Age to the historical period that was to keep the memory and respect for the loved one who have died on a permanent basis. And these same emotions led to the construction of building for the first worship or memorial, which in course of time were converted into stupas, *chaityas*, sculptures and temples.

BUDDHA STUPA

The origin and development of memorial or stupa began with common memorial of ordinary deceased. In course of time the sculptures and temples in memory of the deceased distinctive figures or great men of society were built and not for every deceased. The same fact must have been used for the burial of deceased person in the beginning. Many people would have died during Stone Age and period followed by it, but everyone wouldn't have been buried. The earliest ancient Indian architecture is the stupa art. Stupa was a big *thuhai*. i.e. a dome shaped structure made of mud which was placed over the body of a great man. This word has been originated from the Sanskrit word 'stupah' and Prakrit word 'thup' which means to accumulate or *to hoard*. Thus, the huge mound of mud was termed as stupa. This has been proved by the word mentioned in *Amarkosha* 'rashikritmritikaadi'⁶.

Stupa is related to Buddhism. Hence, the ancient Buddhist text *DighaNikaya*⁷ and *AnguttaraNikaya*⁸ *thup* word has been used in abundance. The description in *MajjhimNikaya* is as follows-

*KaspasyaBhagavatodwaadasYojanikaan Kanak Thoopika!*⁹

In *Jatakas*¹⁰, the *thupa* or *thupika* has been referred to as the high mound or memorial. From archaeological evidence point of view, there is description about the construction of stupa in an inscription form Taxila-

*Marrirkhensamyakenthuvoprattistavito!*¹¹

In context with the origin of the word stupa, it would be appropriate to look into the other facts too. Some scholars consider the origin of the word stupa from the English word Tomb. The difference is that the body was buried under the earth, but stupa was a pious in which ashes of the deceased were kept. The origin of the stupa word from English is baseless. The wish to keep away the impurities and the feeling of Buddhist stupa is vested in the mound of mud. The lower portion of the *bhasmapada* is called as *dhatu garbh* (body-ashes). From this *dhatu garbha* originated the word *Dagba* from *Sinhalese* Language. The tradition of making building over the same *garbha* reached Sri Lanka. The use of the word stupa has also been used in almost all the literary texts besides Buddhism, which shows its antiquity. The word stupa has been used in the ancient literary *samhita* i.e. Rig-Veda. Here the rising flames of fire is called stupa-

Juvasva nah samidhamagneadyashochaabrihadyajatamdhoommridhvan!

Up sprishyadiviyamsaanustupaihsamrishimbhistatanahsuryasya!!¹²

Actually, fire while burning independently takes the shape of a stupa (i.e. broad at the base and tapers towards above), because of this it probably is referred to as stupa. Stupa has been compared with the spreading of a tree canopy. It must be remembered here that there is no mention of either structured fact or it indicates towards it. This is related only to the description the flames of fire.

Abudhne raja varunovansyodhaviestupamdadatepootadaksha!

Neecheenahswaroparibudhnaeshamasmeantarnihitahketavahasyuha!!¹³

In Rig-Veda, the name of one of Angiras's son was Hiranyastupa. He praises the god *Savita* of *Dyuloka*. *hiranyastupa* means the *thupa* or hoarding of gold. As per Vedic imagination Sun is a *hiranyastupa*, the rays of which are spread all around in the shape of stupa.

HiranyastupahSavitaryathaTwangukarasojuhveVaajeAsmin!

Eva twarchannavassevandamaanahsomasyevaanshumpratimjaagraaham!!¹⁴

Jaina Literature also mentions about the imagination of some stupa made of gold as basic element, where the ancient stupa of Mathura has been referred to as the stupa constructed by god. Hence, *Hiranya stupa* was another name for huge breathing constituent. Here the meaning of *Hiranya* is distinctive breathing constituent. The stupa was related to the great men prior to that of Gautam Buddha. The imagination of its life with the high burning form of *Agni-skandha* or *Agni*. Lord Buddha because of his enlightenment became the *Agni –skandha* and his worship in the form of stupa was considered appropriate.

In the *pitramedha* hymn of Rig- Veda, it is said over the mortal body lump of *log* or extremely hard mound made of mud were made. In the centre of it was fixed the pillar made of wood or *sthunna-*

Ut testambhanabhiprithvimtwatapareemlogam,

Nidadhanmoahamrisham!

Etaamsthunnampitrodharyantuteshaamyamah

SaadanateBhinotu!!¹⁵

Probably, here the word *log* has been used for *chaitya* or stupa, the earthen pillars which were made by crushing hard mud which is known as *prithvi-stambh* and in the centre of it a *sthuna* was attached for the purpose of sitting for *Yam*. It seems that it was structured object like stupa, because the description of it suggests it like the stupa but still it cannot be said with authenticity. There is definitely the mention of stupa in Rig-Veda, but there is no description of any structure like that of stupa.

Agnidagadha in Rig Veda i.e. to burn fire with fire and *agnidagadha*¹⁶i.e. it describes about the burying of body. In another place at Rig Veda, the word *agnidagadha*¹⁷ has been used for the memorial. Here there is no expression of it being burnt by fire. The

body was being buried with full customs mannerism and clothes over the body of the deceased. Probably the word *bhumigraha*¹⁸ i.e. the ‘house in the earth’ is indicative of the keeping up of the body in the earth. All the necessary objects considered necessary for the deceased were kept for the deceased body. There is the description of keeping bow in the deceased’s hand.¹⁹ In the Vedic Age memorial was also constructed over burial of the deceased. There is a description of it in Yajur Veda-

*EmamJeevebhayaparidhidhadhamiMaishanum’sGaadpuroarthametam.*²⁰

The summary is that the memorial was encircled by wall, so that the pious land of the memorial to be kept away from the unholy atmosphere of world or should be secured. In course of time this encircled wall was given the name of railing. In *Vajsaneyi Samhita*²¹ there is a hymn for burying of the deceased. *Shatpath Brahmana*²² there is mention that the mounds of different shape should be constructed for the four *Varna*’s (castes). There is mention of *Bhumi graha* in *Taitreya Brahman*²³. Hence in the Vedic tradition both the process of the body of the deceased was either buried or burnt was carried away.

During the period of *Sutra*’s there is special description about the process of burning. *Aasvalayangrihasutra*²⁴ there is description about keeping up the burnt relics or ashes of the deceased in the Urn and burying it under the earth and creating a big mound over it. That is, there was the prevalence of the burning of the body after which the ashes were kept in an Urn and a memorial over it being constructed. *Katyayanstrota sutra*²⁵ mentions about the memorial of *chakravartin* persons.

Prior to the said descriptions, the ancient Buddhists texts have given the description about the stupa, but the most important description must be mentioned. The famous Buddhist texts *Mahaparinibbana Sutta* mentions about the description about the detailed conversation between Buddha and his favourite disciple Anand which is given below prior to *Mahaparinirvana* of Lord Buddha. Anand asked Buddha-

Anand- ‘*Kathmayambhantetathagatsyasarirepatipanjam’ ti?*

Buddha- ‘*Avyavattatumhe Anand hothatathagatsyasarirapujaya!
Ingavamtumhe Anandsadatheghatatha ...!*’

Anand- ‘*Kathampanabhantetathagatasyasarirepatipajjatabbam’ ti?*

Buddha - ‘*Yathakho Anand Ranjjochakkvatissasarirepattipajjanti’ ti?*

Buddha-’ *.....ChattumpatheRanjjochakkvatissathupamkaronti!
Evam.....DhatumhapathetathagatamyathupoKatvo!*²⁶

MEANING

Anand- “Oh Bhante! In what way we should pay respect to the relic and objects of the tathagata ?”

Buddha- “ Oh Anand! Don’t get anxious over the worship of tathagata’s body. But oh Anand! Keep in mind the virtuous instructions propounded by the tathagata!”

Anand- “Oh Bhadant ! How we should pay homage to the body and object of the tathagata ?

Buddha on the repeated request of Anand said, “Oh Anand! The way in which the body relics or objects of Chakravartin king are revered, in the same way the body of tathagata should be revered.”

Anand- “Oh Bhante! How is the body of the Chakravartin king should be revered?”

Buddha- “For a Chakravartin king a stupa should be constructed over the crossroad where the four roads joining the four highways meet. A stupa of tathagata too should be constructed over the similar kind of chatushmhaapathe.”

From this conversation it is clear that stupa was constructed prior to the Buddha also and Buddha was acquainted with it. Along with-it stupa was symbol of Chakravartin king and Buddha. Thus, we can say that Buddha favoured the construction of stupa and he forced to continue the tradition of building stupa.

It must be kept in mind, that though Buddha has mentioned about the tradition going on prior to him, but there is clearly no mention about stupa in the texts of Vedic period. There is mention of the word stupa in *Rig Veda*, but it is not for the structural object. *Yajurveda* mentions about the railing surrounding memorial. There is mention about the burial mound in *shatpath brahmana* but there is no mention of stupa as such.

As stupa was a Hugh mound (*thuha*) of mud, which was built in place of funeral pyre. Hence it was also called **chaitya**. *Chaitya* word has been obtained from *chi* object which means to choose, as the bricks and stone were chosen for the construction of the memorial.

Chiyatepaashannadinaitichaityam!

Along with it after the end of the *yajna*, the process of collecting pious objects like ashes etc. too were called chosen (*chayan*). Hence *chaitya* indicates the States where the chosen processes were held. *Chaitya* word is also associated with the *chit* or *chita* (funeral pyre). The ashes of funeral pyre i.e. memorials were constructed by keeping the remains in to vessel which were called *stupa*. The word *chaitya* has not been referred to in *samhitas*, but in *aitreyabrahaman*, *shatpatha brahmana*, and *taitreyasamhita* the word *chitya* and *agnihave* been used. This fact is very important that in place of *chaitya*, the word *chitya* has been used. In *taittreysamhita* the word *agni- chitya* has been used in which offerings is given. For the first time in *Aashvalaayangrihasutra* the word *Chaitya Yajna* has been used for the first time-

*chaitya YajnepraakSwistakritashchyatyayebalimharet!*²⁷

According to it the sacrifice of *chaitya* has to be given. In *Ramayana* the burial ground has been compared to *chaitya*-

*Shamshaan chaitya Pratimah!*²⁸

The memorials named *chaityas* were constructed in the memory of the deceased kings or great men. In this great epic it is described that-

Tato dhyanaadhanopetaandaansheelajanashreetwaan!
*Akutishchabhadayaarmyaan Chaitya yoopasamaavritaan!*²⁹

When Rama was going to the Dandak forest he witnessed that the country was surrounded from all the sides by *yoopas* and *chaityas*. In the *YuddhaKaanda* of *Ramayana*³⁰ the mention about *Nikumbhila chaitya* has occurred frequently.

The Mahabharata Era too has also been associated with the *chaitya* or *chitya*. This special area is considered pious because of *chaityas* and *yoopas*-

Bheeshmennadharmatoraajansarvatahparirakshite!
*Vabhuvaramneeyashcha chaitya yooPaShataangikta!*³¹

In another contexts of the same epic there has been all praises for the various *yoopas* and *chaityas*-

*Yatra yoopamannipriyaschaapihiranyamaya!*³²

Actually, in *Mahabharata* the *chaitya* is regarded as *yajna sthal* (sacrificial ground). In *Shabdakalpadrum* the word *chaitya* has been referred to as *yajna shala* (sacrificial abode) which is considered a pious place for performing *yajna* (sacrifice).

There is description in the *Sabhaparva* of *Mahabharata*-

*ChaityayooPaEvochhita!*³³

There is a pillar made of wood in the centre of the top of *chaitya*, which is called as *Uchhachita* (uprooted) *chaitya yooPa*. In continuation to it is described that – ‘it seemed that Lord Krishna mounting on Garuda’s back as if a *yooPa* standing on the *thooPa*’.

The word *chaitya* has been used for pious place in various contexts, where the god and goddesses were worshipped. For example-

*AakroshashadadevchaityaanaamDhannamarhati!*³⁴
DaivatamChaityamSiddhapunnyasthanamoopapadikam!
*Vaaraannavutathapya yatra Samajabhamjiveta!*³⁵
Evam GriheetdurgonvaprashchyaChaityamusthayaas!
*Daivatpratimachidrampravishyaseeta!*³⁶

In the same text it is mentioned that people used to worship in *chaityas*, so that they should be safeguarded against the demons. The *Mrichchhakatikam*³⁷ written by

Shudraka during Gupta Period the *chaitya* has been associated *Brahamaghosha* and *Yajna mandapa*.

The words related to *chaityaslikechatyagriha*³⁸, *chaitya prasada*³⁹ and *chaitya vriksha*⁴⁰ have also been obtained that have the relations with the *chaityas*, the mention of which has been done in Ramayana. These words have also been found in Mahabharata.⁴¹

In *Mahabharata*⁴² there is mention of *chaitya* in relation to *Devvriksha*, because the gods reside in auspicious trees. Describing about the *chaitya* trees, the Kautilyan *Arthashastra*⁴³ mentions, these trees can be on burial ground also. According to *Manu Smritis*⁴⁴ *chaitya vriksha* can be in burial ground also under which the lower caste people and *chandals* resides. According to *Yajnavalkya Smritis*⁴⁵ trees and *chaityas* determines the boundaries of a villages. But these were not only for the burial ground, the worship of trees in India is being done from the time immemorial. Some trees were worshipped that were surrounded by a wall. Such kinds of trees have been depicted in the Bharhut and Sanchi stupas which are the finest example of tree worship in Buddhism. Cutting up of the branches of a *chaitya* tree has been opposed by *Yajnavalkya*.⁴⁶

The same kinds of descriptions have been founded in Buddhism also. According to *DighaNikaya*⁴⁷ Buddha spend for some time in the Anand *chaitya* of Bhoja Nagar. There is description in *Mahaparinibbanasutta*, Gautam Buddha had given his opinion about the usefulness about the construction of metallic *chaityas*, and that he had travelled at the *chaityas* of Udayen, Gautam and *Sattambak chaitya*. *Lalitvistara*⁴⁸ mentions that a *chaitya* called *ChhandakNirvan Chaitya* was constructed at a place from where the *Chhandaka* had brought the jewelleryes of Lord Buddha. The hair of Lord Buddha was worshipped by *trayasimvashagods* and in honour of him a *chaitya* was constructed. *DighaNikaya* mentions about the *thupa* or stupa of *tathagata*, and stupas of *prateyaka* Buddhas and *Chakravartin* Kings. In *Jatakas* the *thupa* has been used for memorials. According to Buddhist tradition the construction of *chaityas* and stupas began with the Buddhist period. Because of its multiplicity the commentators of medieval period used the meaning of *chaitya* in volumes (*Boddhayatan*). *Sayanna* of sixteenth century mentions about the stone railings while describing about the boundaries of the burial mounds. Actually, *chaityas* were considered pious place or a place of pilgrimage. Of these *chaityas* the *Purnabhadra chaitya* was most important. In the Jain text *Antagadhdasao*⁴⁹ there is description of *Mograpannijakkha*,⁵⁰ in which the sculpture of the *Yaksha* with the same name was installed.

It would be appropriate to give the explanation about the description of Jaina exponents-

Chitarlepyadichayanasyabhavah karma vahchaityam !

Tachhasangyashuddhatvaddevatabimbaprasiddhamtatah !

TadashrayabhootamyadadevataayahGrihamtadyupchaarchchayamuchyate !!⁵¹

In the memory of the deceased kings and great men memorial with its name *chaityas* were constructed on the burial grounds. Hence, we do find the description of *chaitya* and stupa here and there in comparative evaluation. The hall with the remains were definitely called stupa, but in *chaityas* only the imagination of the body relics was done. It is because of this reason that in the inscriptions of Amravati stupas are called as *chetiya* or *Mahachetiya*-

BhagavatoMahachetiya padamalaiapno!

Dhammathaan diva khamyopatithavito!⁵²

That is, in the main portion of *Mahachetiya* a lamp pillar is constructed.

Mahachetiya chetikiyanaamnika sparineh !

Apardhaare Dhammachakkamdedhammathapith !

That is, Dhammachakka has been established near the *chaitya* of god as a result of donation. The essence is that remains have a direct connection with the *chaitya*. Hence stupa can also be considered as a synonym of *chaitya*. The only difference is that *chaitya* is constructed by tunnelling the rocks, in which the shape of the stupa already remained. The caves in the mountains were both natural and manmade. In these no remains were kept. This was the symbol of Buddhist sect. But in the inner part of stupa, the remains were established in a vessel, a building was constructed. This stupa was constructed on a plain ground away from mountain. In an ordinary cave because of its shape like that of a stupa it was referred to as *chaitya*.

In India the construction of stupa is being carried on since time immemorial. In the Vedic age society, there was the prevalence of *pitramedh*. The ashes or body remains were collected from the burial ground and were collected in an Urn. Just over it a memorial was constructed, which is famous in literature as a stupa. In the previous pages of this chapters it has been described in detail that how the word stupa has been used in Veda in one way or the other. Here it has only been a repetition that like in previous way there is mention of the word stupa in themandals 1, 7 and 10. The period assigned to Rig Veda by scholars is considered between about 1500 B.C. to 1000 B.C. and this was the same time when the phase of Indus Valley was declining and coming to an end. In this way we can say that Rig Veda was composed during the ending phase of Indus Civilization. Since there is mention of stupa in this text, then it is important from archaeological context that there must have been some structure like stupa prior to the Rig Veda phase or contemporary to it.

Dhaulavira, an ancient site of Indus Valley is situated in Kachchh district of Gujarat. The excavation of which was carried away under the direction of famous archaeologist Dr. R.S. Bisht. Here along with the various valuable antiquities and structures have been found a circular structure, which can be closely associated with the historical stupa. The structure of this stupa bears close similarity with the stupa of Sanghol. This find is the evidence of the prevalence of stupa prior to that of Vedic Age and belonging to Harappan Civilization. Along with it also contradicts the existentialism of the mere description of Vedic stupa.

There is the availability of the existence of burial in the *Shatpath Brahman*. At one place in the text there is the description that the burial ground should be made either in Circular or square shape-

*Tedikkahparabhavamstasmadyaadevyahpragyaschashuswakteeni
Taahshamshananikurvaitathayaaasuryaprachyastavedyevaparimandulaneel!*⁵³

Several scholars believe that broken remains of this kind of burial mounds (made of mud) have been found from Lauriyandargarh and Champaran district of Bihar. Scholars are of the opinion that these are burial stupas of Vedic age. These stupas or high *thuha* made of mud are in three rows. The two rows are situated in North West and one is in East West direction. In the local saying it is regarded as the burial stupa of Chakravartin king Uttana Pada. On the top and middle of one of these stupas a wooden pillar has been obtained. This definitely clears the doubt that this stupa was a burial *chaitya*. These types of pillars in Mahabharata were called as *uchchitachaityayooopa*.⁵⁴ In this great epic there is mention that ‘it seemed that Lord Krishna mounting on *Garuda*’s back as if a *yoopa* standing on the *thoopa*’. There is five *thuhasin* East-West direction and in the inner North –South row there are six *chaityas* or *thuhas*. In the outer North –South direction there are five big and seven small *thuhas*. The *thuhas* of East-West rows has the height between 35-40 feet. The *thuhas* of Northwest has the height between 15-55 feet.⁵⁵

Two *thuhas* are made up of white mud. The mud of it has been made very hard after kneading. While cutting the mud a blue coloured sparkle is visible. This kind of white coloured mud is not available in the vicinity. This must have been brought from somewhere else and would have some specific purpose.

There is mention in the *pitramedhmantra* of Rig-Veda,⁵⁶ that over the mortal body lump of *log* or extremely hard mound made of mud were made. In the centre of it was fixed the pillar made of wood or *sthuna*. The *sthuna*’s *Vidhrutipitar* were the ancestors while the upper portion was the place for sitting up of the *Yam* i.e. *Yamsadan*. A close association between this mantra and the *thuhas* of *Lauriyandargarh* has been established. Here the word *loghas* been used for the stupa. Mr. Blakh has obtained a seal of golden leaf over which a female figure of goddess earth or *mahimata* (goddess of

Earth) has been depicted which ensures the identity of these *thugas* as more relevant. Cunningham has assumed and assigned it to the period between 1500B.C.- 600 B.C. But it would be more appropriate to keep the construction period of it between the Shaishunag to Nand dynasty.

The stupa constructed between seventh - sixth century B.C. at Vaishali has been mentioned in DighaNikaya. Lord Buddha has mentioned about the stupas of Lichhavis. There is description in *Mahaparinibbanasutta* that Vajji Sangha use to respect and worship the *chaityas* both inside and outside as well-

*Vajjichetayaniavayamtaranichava!*⁵⁷

Lord Buddha himself praised the Vajji Sangha. His words were that a memorial must be made on the ashes or remains of the great men. From the internal sources of literature, it is known that lord Buddha had given his hair to the two traders named *Tapus*, and *Bhallik*, who constructed memorial over it in Odisha. Followed by this Gautam had his Nirvana in 483 B.C. at Kushinara. His body relics were divided into eight parts. The archaeological evidence of which is engraved on the western and eastern ridgepole of the roof of Sanchi stupa in which is depicted a casket kept over the head of eight elephants and an umbrella covering the casket and an elephant rider sitting on the elephant.

The eight states that received the body relics of Buddha's were –

Ajatshatru- Rajgrih

Shakya – Kapilvastu

Buliya- Alpakkam

Koliya- Ramgam

Malla- Pava

Lichchhavi- Vaishali

Malla- Kushinara

Drona - Vethadweep

These people established stupa at the said places. There is description in *Mahavamsa*⁵⁸ that the Great Emperor Asoka during his reign got opened these stupas and took out somebodyremains and on these remains he led to the construction of 84000 stupas. He was not successful in opening the stupas of Ramgam because the snakes were guarding the stupas. Here by guarding the snakes might mean that the stupa was guarded by the powerful rulers of Naga dynasty. This was a new revolution in the construction of stupas. From the research episodes of Archaeology, of these eight stupas, the stupa of Vaishali has come to the light that was got opened by Emperor Ashokaand it was reconstructed by him. The parts of the remains have also come to the light. The stupa of Vaishali is of small size in which there is no place for *harmika* and *medhi*. Similar kind of

stupa is that of Piprahawa in the district Basti of Uttar Pradesh. This is made up of bricks. Over its Casket, there is an inscription engraved on it-

*Sukitishatinamsabhaginikaam
Saputdalanamiam, salilanidhane
Budhasbhagavatesakiyaanam!*

It means that the two persons with name Sukirti and Bhakti along with wives and sons donated the casket in the memory of Lord Buddha. From the written script it seems that this stupa was constructed prior to that of Ashoka. Emperor Ashoka constructed the stupas at two kind of places –

1. The stupas at the places related to the life of Buddha.
2. The places related to Buddhism.

Stupas are of four kinds-

1. *Sharirik stupa*- is the stupas in which the mortal remains of Buddhas as bones, teeth, hair, nails. etc was kept.
2. *Paribhogik stupa*-the stupa that contains the objects used for daily use like alms bowl, *chivar*, footwear etc.
3. *Uddeshik stupa* or Commemorative stupa- the stupas constructed on the places associated with Buddha and were built with some specific purpose. For example Sanchi stupa. This is constructed at the *chauraha* where four paths meet and in this the remains of *Sariputra* are kept.
4. *Manauti stupa*- This stupa were *manauti* stupa or religious rite as observance of fast stupa- These kinds of smallstupas were constructed around the big stupa to either mark as for wishing something to be fulfilled or after the fulfilment of a wish.

As regards the construction of stupa architecture also there are differences in the stupas. We have to find about it from nature and folk art. During Gautam Buddha's time rice and wheat were grown in ample quantity. The place where *tathagata* appeared and the place where the propagation of his religion took place, there too the rice and wheat were grown in ample quantity in the contemporary society. When the crop is collected then it took a specific kind of shape broad at the base and it tapers towards above which resembles like a stupa. So taking inspiration from this the stupas constructed was called *dhanyakaar* stupa. The name of Buddha's father Suddhodhana is made from two words *shuddha* + *odhan* meaning pure rice. Kesariastupa of East Champaran of the same shape(fig.03). The drops that bubbles in the rainy water when the rain pores down, too became the inspirational source in the construction of stupa. The shape of these semi-

circular bubbles too became the inspirational source of making semi-circular stupa, which were called *bulbulakaar* (bubbles shaped) stupa. The Great stupa of Sanchi is Semi-circular in shape that is the *bulbulakaar* stupa (fig.01).

In villages *Upaleorkande* (a dried cake used for fuel purpose) made from the cow dung of animals like cows, buffaloes, oxen etc are kept over one another and are made like a dome from the above. to keep them safe during the rainy season it is covered with plaster of cow dung or 'les' which in local language is called 'badiya' or 'kador'. Being influenced by this too the shape of stupas were formed. Example of this kind of stupa is the Dhamekh stupa at Sarnath (fig.02).

During the reign of Emperor Ashoka extensive stupas were built and at numerous places. Buddha spent his rainy seasons at Sarnath, Nalanda, Samkisa, Rajgriha, Sravasti, Bodha Gaya, Vaishali etc and gave his preaching. Hence stupas were constructed here. Taxila, Bharhut, Sanchi, Amravati etc. are the places where Buddha neither went, nor do these places have any religious importance, but because being situated at the *chatuspatha* (i.e. at the crossroads where four principle roads or highways meets) Ashoka the Great led the construction of stupas.

During the Sunga's period i.e. second century A.D. the planning to give stupa a permanent form was implemented. The stupa of Bharhut and Sanchi were covered with stone. The wooden railings were replaced by the stone railings and were beautifully decorated. These stone slabs were engraved and adorned with various kinds of decorations like the Dhamekha stupa of Sarnath, the covering of which is referred to as *devdushya* meaning the clothes of gods. The tradition of making the shape and adoration of small stupa bigger and more respectively began. Small stupas were called *alpeshakhya* and big stupas were called *maheshakya* respectively. The Jaina stupa of Mathura also began during Sunga period which is referred to as *stupa constructed by god* in Jaina literature. The detailed description of it is given in the forthcoming pages.

The worshipping of stupa was led by Emperor Asoka during his reign. The reason was that Lord Buddha had four principal symbols through which the important events of Buddha's life was expressed.

1. Elephant depicted Buddha's birth
2. *Bodhi* tree depicting enlightenment
3. Chakra depicted Dharma
4. Stupa depicting Parinirvana

The worship of stupa i.e. symbol of *parinirvana* began because it made the presence of Lord Buddha's felt through mortal remains of his like nails, hair, teeth etc that it contained. Hence the stupa was an object of veneration. Asoka was the first who felt the pious importance of it and thus decided the celebration of *deepkotsava parva* (the

festival of lights). On this occasion the stupas were worshipped by illuminating up of the *diyas*(lights) in series. This fact has been proved by availability of ample number of *diyas* that have been obtained during the archaeological excavations. Several scholars are of the opinion that the present *deepavali* festival is the converted form of the *deepkotsava* festival. The first century B.C. again witnessed the rise of the reconstruction of stupa. Kushana king Kanishka was the follower of Buddhism and he led to the construction of various stupas. Hiuen –Tsang has described that Kanishka had led to the construction of about 400 feet high stupa at Peshawar, the railing of which was about 150 feet high⁵⁹. Unfortunately, this stupa has been damaged. During this period stupas were constructed in the North- Western India and Afghanistan. The net of stupas during the extensive territory of Kanishka had spread up to Balkh and Khotan i.e. the Central Asia. The Chinese Traveller has mentioned about several *viharas* that were spread up to North-West and Kabul. The European Scholars have discovered thousands of stupas in the region round Jalalabad and Gandhara. They are generally built over square platform. The domes of stupa are generally not available. From the broken remains it seems that the *anda* or dome of stupas were either semi-circular or were sharpened in shape. There are bulks of remains of Buddhist memorial over the land portions of small hills of Khyber, no knowledge of its other part is known except its base portion.

The most famous stupa of Gandhara is the Manikyala stupa which is twenty miles away from Rawalpindi. An inscription has been obtained from this place which belongs to the eighteenth regnal year of Kanishka's reign-

Sam10-4+4 kartiyasmasas divase20
eitpurvayemaharjaskannekasyakushannavanshasamvardhakkaldandannayagovesp
ashiskshatrapashormurtosatasapnagebiharehormurtoeitragannabhagwan
Buddha Jhuba (thuva- stupa) pratistavayiti!

It means, that in the eighteenth year of Maharaja Kanishka on the occasion of fifth day of the *shuklapaksh* of *kartik* month (20day) prior date for the cause of the prosperity of Kushana dynasty, Lalnayakdandnaya (an official), *Vaishya Kshatrapa* (governor) *hormurtidaanpati* near his *Vihara* established the stupa of Lord Buddha.

The base of Manikyala stupa is circular in shape, over which is semi hemispherical dome. It has the circumference of 127 feet 4 inch and spread in the area of about 400 feet⁶⁰. The excavation at Ambaran, Akhnoor, District Jammu, Jammu-Kashmir were done under the direction of famous Archaeologist Dr. B.R. Mani between 1999-2001. Of its Kushana period structure the base and its broken *anda* were obtained. An important achievement of it was the availability of the relic casket, in which body relic and golden relic box were obtained. Besides relic box, the circular beads made of gold etc were also found.

The Buddhist stupas were also constructed in the South also. Of these the most important is the Amravati stupa made up of Lime sandstone belonging to the first –

second century A.D (fig 04). Similarly, the magnificent stupa of Nagarjunakonda was established in about third century A.D.

In the fourth century the Gupta dynasty came into prominence. They were *parambhagavat* i.e. they were the followers of Vaishnavism. During their reign the stupas were constructed at Sarnath, Sravasti and Kasia. In the post Gupta period, the construction of stupa became limited. Actually, the construction of stupa was a huge religious work, in which peace, money and people all were needed in ample quantity. The post Gupta period was not peaceful, hence the huge constructions like that of stupa was not possible. Another reason that led to the limited construction of stupa was the construction and development of Buddhist sculptures in abundance. Leaving some exceptions, the construction of Buddhist sculpture began during Kushana period and was made in ample quantity during Gupta period. These sculptures were constructed in less cost with less effort and which could be established either permanently or movable. That the sculptures were available in both the forms movable or immovable. The construction of it was possible without any donation or by royal patronage. This could have been constructed by common people, *shreshthi*, *samant*, rulers and all for the cause of their personal religious use while the stupa could not be transformed and be movable. The conclusion is that in its construction no great amount of expenditure is required, as a result people gave more importance to the sculpture in place of stupa.

Another reason which limited the construction of stupa was that the actual representation could be observed in the sculptures of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. The followers of Buddhist sects imagined the image of Buddha exactly as they saw in the sculpture by watching its face, ushinish, hands, feet etc. which was quite close to their religious feelings and used to fulfil their religious cravings.

Bengal and Bihar were governed by Pala kings from period between 750 A.D. to eleventh century A.D. Probably they did not construct the stupa or was very much restricted. But they definitely led to the restoration of the stupas. During this period there was increase and refinement in the shape and size of the Nalanda stupa. A huge stupa Atichaka has come to light from the district Bhagalpur in Bihar which was constructed by the Pala king Dharma Pala.

CONCLUSION

From the above study it is clear that the word *stupa* has come in one way or other in the *Rig Veda*. There is lack of evidence regarding the structural facts in the *Rig Veda*. But in *Atharva Veda* there is mention of *bhumigraha*. Thus, it is clear that during the time of *Atharva Veda* there were definitely some structures, there is description about the railings surrounding the burial in the *Yajur Veda*, but there is no clear mention about the stupa. In *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* there is mention of *chaitya* in place of stupa. There is mention of a hymn regarding the entombment of the body in *Vajsaneyi Samhita*. *ShatpathBrahman* mentions about the construction of various kinds of burial

mounds. The point to be noted here is that the period assigned to this literary work is about between 1000B.C.-800 B.C. and this is the same period of Megalithicburials, the purpose which was definitely related to the piousness and worshipping process. Prior to this a structure similar to a circular stupa has been obtained from the Harappan site of Dhaulavira. It is quite similar to Sanghol stupa but in this context, there is an excessive need for research.

The ancient stupa that has been obtained is from Lauriyandangarh which is made up of mud. The date ascribed to it by Cunningham is between 1500 B.C.- 600 B.C. Following this were the stupa belonging to the period between seventh and sixth century B.C. various stupas like the stupas of Vaishali, Piprahawa, Rajgriha, Nalanda, Sarnath, Bharhut, and Sanchi etc were constructed. For the purpose of the construction of stupas Kanishka chose Gandhararegion of which the most famous stupa was the Manikyalastupa. The Gupta and Pala emperors too led to the construction and restoration of stupas. Under these series if the stupa of Dhaulavira would be added than we can say that the construction of stupa continued uninterruptedly from the Harappan and Mahajanapadaperiod till 1200 A.D.



Fig 1: Stupa, Sanchi



Fig 2: Stupa, Sarnath



Fig 3: Stupa, Kesariya



Fig 4: Stupa, Amravati

NOTES

¹ A. R. K. Kenneth, Lovel N.C. and Burrow C.B. Mesolithic human remains from the Gangetic plain: Sarai Nahar Rai (New York, Cornell University, 1986), 2,3

² Sarai Nahar Rai, Mahdaha and Warikalan-Damdama, all in the district of Pratapgarh (Uttar Pradesh) have been excavated by the department of Ancient Indian History Culture and Archaeology, University of Allahabad. Excavations furnished valuable information about the settlement pattern, burial practices, fauna, flora, bone objects, lithic technology of the Mesolithic culture. Ajay Partab, Prehistoric Rock Art Imagery of the Vindhya, Uttar Pradesh, India. https://www.academia.edu/16512644/Article_in_Ancient_India

³ Thomas, P. K. et al. A Preliminary Report of the Faunal Remains from Damdama. In *Man and Environment XX (I)* – 1995, pp.30-36.

http://www.rhinosourcecenter.com/pdf_files/142/1422583383.pdf

⁴Bhat, A. Sartajand Dubey, M. C. Burzahom (Burzohama) a Neolithic Site in Kashmir. In *International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development (IJTSRD)*, Volume – 3, Issue – 2, Jan-Feb 2019, pp. 582-585 @ www.ijtsrd.com eISSN: 2456-6470

⁵ Balakrishna Dilip, (2015). Dholavira Report.

https://archive.org/details/dholavirareportpreliminaryjan2015_860_K/page/n17/mode/2up

⁶Amarkosha, 3/5/19

⁷DighaNikaya, 2/142

⁸Anguttara Nikaya,1/177

⁹MajjhimNikaya, 2/244

¹⁰Jataka, 3/156, 3/39/116

¹¹Epigraphica Indica, Part-2, Vol-2

¹²Rig Veda, 7/2/11

¹³ ibid,1/24/7

¹⁴ ibid,10/17/20

¹⁵ ibid,10/18/13

¹⁶ ibid,10/15/14

¹⁷ ibid,10/18/8

¹⁸ ibid,7/8/9/1; Atharva Veda,5/3/14

¹⁹ Vedic Index, Part -1, p.8

²⁰Yajur Veda, 35/15

²¹Vajsaneyi Samhita, 18/1/3

²²Shatpath Brahman, 13/8/3/11,18/8/1

- ²³Taitreya Brahamana,3/1/17
- ²⁴Aashvalayangrihasutra, 4/5
- ²⁵KatyayanStrotasutra, 21/4/13
- ²⁶Mahaparinibbanasutta, 3/36-47
- ²⁷Aashvalayangrihasutra, Anand Ashram, Vol. -1,12/1/3
- ²⁸ Valmiki Ramayana, 5/22/29
- ²⁹ ibid, 2/50/8
- ³⁰ ibid, 6/85/29, 6/82/24,6/84/14 etc.
- ³¹Mahabharata, 2/109/13
- ³² ibid, 2/3/12
- ³³ ibid, Sabhaparva,22/20
- ³⁴KautilyaArthashastra, 3/18
- ³⁵ ibid,5/2
- ³⁶ ibid, 12/5
- ³⁷Mrichchhakatikam, x/12
- ³⁸ Valmiki Ramayana, 5/12/15
- ³⁹ ibid,5/43/3
- ⁴⁰ ibid, 5/12/8
- ⁴¹ Mahabharat,6/3/40
- ⁴² ibid, Adi parva,150/33
- ⁴³ Arthashastra,13/2/2
- ⁴⁴Manusmriti, 10/50
- ⁴⁵ Yajnavalkyasmriti,2/15/1
- ⁴⁶ ibid,2/15/2
- ⁴⁷DighaNikaya, Part II, p.123
- ⁴⁸Mahaparinibbanasutta, 3/36-47
- ⁴⁹Lalitvistara, 15/277-278
- ⁵⁰Antagadhadasao, Sam. Aagmodaya Samiti,13/10

⁵¹ Commentary on Bhagavatisutra,1.1

⁵²Shatpatha Brahamana,18/8/1

⁵³ ibid,13/8/1/5

⁵⁴ Mahabharata, Sabhaparva, 22/20

⁵⁵ Vasudeva Sharan Agrawal, Bhartiya Kala, Varanasi, 2004, p.90

⁵⁶ Rig Veda, 10/18/13

⁵⁷ Mahaparinibbanasutta,3/46

⁵⁸ Mahavamsa, 5/176

⁵⁹Beal, S. Buddhist Record of the Western World, Vol.I, p.100

⁶⁰Cunningham, A. (1871) Archaeological Survey of India Report Vol.II, p.159

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