



Relevance of Buddha Circuit of Bihar From Past to Present: A Historical Study

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ABSTRACT

Lord Gautam Buddha was born in Lumbini, Nepal with the name Siddhartha and lived a domestic life till the age of twenty-nine but he renounced his household at the age of twenty-nine. In search of knowledge, Siddhartha travelled to various places in India, especially Bihar. Ultimately, when he attained enlightenment on the banks of the Niranjana River in Bodh Gaya, he became known as the Buddha. To spread his knowledge, he travelled to various places in Bihar. At the places he visited in Bihar he spread his knowledge and left his own distinct religious mark. Before and after the death of Buddha, to mark these places of religious importance, various kings established stupas, viharas, caves, temples, schools, statues of Buddha in various postures and pillars propagating the teachings of Buddha. Considering the historical and religious importance, the present Bihar Government has included these sites in the Buddha Circuit under its circuit plan. At present, Buddhist devotees coming from different places of India and abroad can easily visit various Buddha sites of religious importance with the help of Buddha Circuit. Therefore, the Buddhist Circuit Scheme is not only the places of religious and historical importance but also the places of tourism and economic importance for the Government of Bihar, in this context we can study the various places included under the Buddha Circuit.

KEY WORDS

Buddhist circuit, Buddha, Temple, Cave, Stupas, Tourism.

INTRODUCTION

The Origin of Lord Buddha

In the Pali canon explain the buddha is representing as a man with extraordinary body bore the 32 signs of a mahapurusha. He is the Tathagata means Tatha (one who come thus) and gata (gone thus) and free himself from the cycle of birth, death and rebirth. The buddha was son of suddhodana, chief of the sakya clan in kapilavastu and his mother's name was maya gave birth in Lumbini. The buddha known as Siddhartha in childhood. his father didn't want his son look world's great pain and shield him from world's sorrow and pain and bringing him up in luxury and pleasant atmosphere. Siddhartha married with a young woman named yashodhara and they had a son named Rahul. At the 29-year age, Siddhartha encountered four scene that entirely changed his view of life- an old man, a sick man, a corpse and a recluse. Siddhartha left his home to seeking the truth and wandered over six years.

He indulged in deep meditation, in this state he starved and near to death then a young woman named Sujata offered him a bowl of milk-rice then Siddhartha realized that it is difficult to attain higher knowledge with starve. He once again sat under the tree in Niranjana River in Gaya, resolving not to get up until he had attained enlightenment. He rises to higher states of knowledge through meditation and Siddhartha ultimately attained enlightenment and became known as buddha- those who attain the enlightenment. The buddha preachify his first sermon to his five former companions in Sarnath (Banares), that event known as dhammachakka parivattana. Sooner his five disciples realized the truth and known as arhats. The buddha wandered over four decades to delivered his knowledge and teaching. During that time, he established an order of monk and nuns known as the sangha, he died at the age of 80 at Kushinagar.

The Teachings of Buddha

The core teachings of buddha express in the four noble truth; Dukkha, Samudaya, Nirodha and Dukkha Nirodha Gamini Pratipada means eight-fold path such as; right view, right effort, right speech, right livelihood, right action, right intension, right concentration and right mindfulness. This path referred as middle path- one between extreme indulgence and extreme ascetics. The buddha taught that everything is suffering and the reason for suffering is human propensities such as desire, attachment, greed, pride and thirst. Human can only attain nirvana after liberate himself from these things.

Patichcha-samuppada is another important aspect of the buddha's teaching. It's meant the law of dependent origination. These laws were representing as a wheel consist of twelve nidanas, each of one leading to next: avijja (ignorance), sankhara (formations), vinnana (consciousness), vedana (feeling), tanha (craving), upadana (attachment), bhava (becoming), jati (birth) and jara-marana (old age and death).

The attainment of nibbana was absolute goal of buddha's teaching. The ideas of transmigration (samsara) were accepted by the buddha's teaching but the theory of atman.

Buddhist Circuit

After Siddhartha became lord buddha and attain enlightenment, he travelled to different parts of Bihar to spread his teachings. The Bihar Government, on its own effort and with foreign help started the buddha circuit to preserve these places and established new places whose historical importance from past to present and then onward it remains relevant. These Buddhist places are of the following's types:

Bodhgaya

It is a sacred place where lord buddha became the enlightened and he established middle path.

Buddha temple was built in third century ad. It is a model example of rich and ancient temple architecture of India.

Mahabodhi tree lord buddha attain the enlightenment under this tree at the age of 35. For enlightenment he sat under the tree for 49 days. The present tree is the fourth-generation offspring of the original.

Animesh lochan stupa and Chankraman asthal at these place lord buddha spent the 2nd week and 3rd week after his enlightenment.

Muchalind tank, lord buddha spent sixth week after his enlightenment. Muchalind, the snake king living in this tank, he saved lord buddha from heavy storm and rain sent by the dark forces during his meditation.

Temple Jai Shree Mahabodhi mahavihar is the ancient relic casket of main disciples of lord Buddha named sariputra and mahamalyayan, are preserved.

Gaya

Gaya is besides the bank of river falgu. There is bramhayoni and dungeshawari hill related to Buddhist circuit. Buddha came to bramhayoni hill in search of nirvana before his enlightenment and spent few days on this mountain.

In the Dungeshwari mountain, the divine powers suggested buddha to travelled to Bodhgaya for realisation of truth and enlightenment. The mountain known as ancient pragbodhi mountain.

Kauvadol hills, consist of Buddhist temple and the huge image of lord buddha in Bhumi spars mudra in monastery of silbhadra.

Vaishali

In this place buddha relic place (Lichhavi stupa) is known as 'buddha Asthi kalash Asthal'. This stupa with the 8th part of holy mortal remains (relic) of lord buddha.

Kolhua buddha stupa in the remembrance of main disciples Anand of lord buddha by republic of lichhavis in kolhua, Vaishali.

Amrapali stupa built in the memory of one of the followers' great dancers Amrapali of Magadha dynasty in tola dargah village, Vaishali.

Vishwa shanti stupa built by indosan nipponji of Japan. There is a golden statues of lord buddha on top stupa.

Chakramdas (stupa) of Buddhist period, there was a holy tank near to a shelter house (Chapaal chaitya) where lord Buddha travelled and took shelter on his trip of vaishali.

Rajgir

This place situated 12km from Nalanda and surrounded by 5 hills of 48 kilometer. After buddha parinirvana, the first meeting of Buddhist commune was also held here. Gridhkoot hill is a historical place where lord buddha used to preach his disciples during rainy season. He gave his second sermon to king Bimbisara to Buddhism.

Amarvan (jeevak amarvan vihar) according to Pali texts jeevak gifted his amarvan to lord buddha.

Karandataal was used by lord buddha for bathe during stay in rajgir.

Peepal gufa (jarasandh ki baithak) is famous for main disciple of lord buddha and the first chairman of the Buddhist union resides here.

Nalanda

Nalanda had a world-renowned university, where besides Indian, Chinese Sri Lankan, Tibetans and Mongolians scholar and intellectuals came here for study. Many emperors and kings also got constructed temples at the Nalanda university. The great emporer king Ashoka construct a vihar and emperor kumargupta setup art and crafts university, king of kannauj Harshvardhan had constructed temple. Lord buddha had come to Nalanda for treatment of his joint pain at the hot spring of Nalanda. Ruins of Nalanda university was a satellite township of rajgir.

Nalanda museum has a treasure trove of Buddhist eras. Here statues of Lord Buddha in various postures, coins, utensils of copper founded during excavation have treasured here.

In jagdishpur (mahamaya place) founded mahamaya temple, today this place known as Rukmini asthal, inside the temple a black stone statue of Lord Buddha in bhoomisparsh (ground- touching) posture is found.

Jahanabad

There are caves found on the hill of mirabigha and Nagarjuna hill of the Mauryan dynasty period from 300 bc to 200 bc era. The satdharva caves are a group of seven caves. Four of these caves are in the barabar hill and rest three in the adjacent Nagarjuna hills. Barabar caves are the most conspicuous are the peak known as murli, sandhayagiri, suryankgiri, kauvadol and nagarjun. The caves engraved from solid rocks carry details of the life of lord buddha.

The Karan Chupar cave, Barabar, it consists of a single chamber. A damaged inscription of five lines of the 19th regnal year of Ashoka.

Sudama cave built by king Ashoka in 252bc, in the 12th year of his reign. He donates this cave to ajivikas. It is consisting of two chambers. At the doorway Ashoka inscription in ancient Pali language.

The cave of lomas rishi in barabar, it was unfinished cave be composed of two chambers. The doorway is imating an ornate arched entrance of wooden building.

The visvazopri cave, barabar, its faces south and consist of an outer apartment. An inscription recording its excavation in 12th regal year of Ashoka for the Ajivikas. there is an inscription in Pali languages on the doorway of cave,

The Nagarjuna cave, Barabar, three rock cut caves such as Gopi, Vapi, and Vahiyaka or Vedathika cave. Gopi cave is the longest cave. main doorway is circular and with an inscription in Pali language.

Bhayak cave was built by grandson of Ashoka Dashrath. This cave known as bappi cave.

Vaidantik cave are ancient buddha vihar. Cave is also inscription on the doorway.

East Champaran

It is saying that when Gautam buddha left his home then he reached lauria Areraj in Shakya kingdom in search of knowledge. He meets to his first teacher called alar kalam and stay his ashram for few days.

Buddhist stupa, Kesaria, it was the highest stupa in the world. On the pinnacle of the stupa lord buddha's statue in which his last meeting with his disciples. According to mythology when lord buddha came to kesaria via rajgir and Vaishali, people started succeeding him as they want to go along with him. However, buddha used his yogic power to cut a deep river on the land to stopped people from succeeding him. When he was departing, he gifted them his begging bowl (bhikshapatra) and asked them to go back home. in the remembrance of this event, folk of lichchavi dynasty built the kesaria stupa.

Pillar of Ashoka in Lauriya Areraj, it was believed that this place was ashram of aalar kalam in the buddhist era and buddha had gone to meet with him and stay. as he realise that the teachings of ashram inadequate to fight the bouts worldly sorrows, he decided to quit the place. Emperor Ashoka constructed Ashokan pillar and a stupa to depict this event in the life of Gautam buddha.

West Champaran

According to Buddhist's text, Gautam buddha changes his robes at this place when he left his home along with his sarthi chandak. He abandoned his princely dress, cut his hair and became bhikshu. During the last journey of his life, buddha returned from Vaishali and Kesariya to Kushinagar, where he achieves

Mahaparinirvan. From 241-42 BC. Ashokan pillars were constructed at areraj, lauriya and rampurva. These places had been epicenter of Asian and south east Asian traditions.

Ashokan pillar, lauriya nandagarh, it was halting station for the Buddhist monks who want to go to China from Nepal and Tibet to propagate of the Buddhism . In lauriya nandgarh is a rare Ashokan pillar that has image of peacocks engraved on it. The six edict is scriptural in Brahmi and Prakrit scripts on the pillar. this pillar has a lion statue placed on the its tops.

Buddhist stupa, lauriyanandgarh, it is one of the colossal stupas. It is feigned that it was constructed during shunga dynasty. Image of Kanishka and havik have been founded.

Ashokan pillar, rampurva, two pillar discovered at this place. six edicts of Ashoka are inscribed on it. It also has the effigy of vrisha (bull) on the top. statue of lion on the pinnacle of the second pillars. it was important route During Buddhist era which started from srivasta and connected kapilavastu and passed over today's rampurva, lauriya and nandagarh etc.

Patna

Buddha smriti park was set up to commemorate the 2550th year of lord buddha's mahaparinirvana. The theme of the park is based on the historical relationship between Buddhism and the state of Bihar. The Park has two plants of the sacred bodhi tree brought from Bodh Gaya and Anuradhapur (Sri Lanka). stupa dedicatory of the holy relics of the lord buddha.

- **Bodhi Trees:** The park has plants of devine bodhi trees which have been received from mahameghavana Anuradhapur (Sri Lanka) and Bodh Gaya (India).
- **Meditation Center:** This center is construct for practice of meditation for Buddhist monks peacefully. The design of this meditation center inspired by ancient Mahavihara of Nalanda. The view of the stupa contained the sacred relics of lord buddha.

Patna Museum

The museum has consisted of large number of sculptures of the mathura and the gandhara art which is period of kushans.

The gandhar art also known as Greco-Buddhist art are made of blue schist of swat valley and the collection of lords buddha images.

The carving art of Mathura school portray buddha. Bodhisattvas', hariti, and jataka scenes etc. The museum preserved a large number of carving art of the Pala sena school of art, dated in between 8th and 12th century AD. these sculptures are diverse in nature and comprise of Brahmanical, Buddhist and jaina sculptures. These are made of a collection of three image of, maitreya, avalokiteshvara and buddha in bhumisparsh posture from Vishnupur (Gaya).

CONCLUSION

Thus we can conclude that most of the sites related to the Buddha Circuit are concentrated in some areas of Bihar for example: Bodhgaya, Gaya, Nalanda, Vaishali, Patna, East Champaran, West Champaran and Jahanabad. From ancient India itself, various travelers from foreign countries came to visit these sites, such as Fa Hien, Huientsang and Itsing etc. The pilgrims visited these sites and took their description and went to their countries to expand Buddhism. Impressed by the Buddha sites, kings from abroad donated large amounts of money for the development and preservation of these sites. In the present context, these places are not only the main centers of Bihar tourism but these places also contribute to the economic development of Bihar. Along with this, these places play a significant role in strengthening diplomatic relations of India with the South East Asian countries. Apart from this, in this world plagued by tension and mutual distrust, the Buddha Circuit gives the message of mutual harmony and goodwill.

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