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Did Chaitiya / Chaitika School Monastery Exist in Junnar Caves?

Abstract

By the time Buddhism spread in Western India, it was already divided into different schools. Epigraphs of early centuries reveal that Bhadrayaniya, Dharmottariya, Mahasamghika Chaitiya/Chaitika and Aparasaila sects were flourishing in Western India. Though the influence of different schools of Buddhism can be seen in inscriptional evidences it will be difficult to say that a certain area had an influence of a particular school or a particular school influenced the architecture of the cave.

Dr. Nagaraju has raised this issue that differences in ideological values and religious practices could have demanded different varieties of architectural forms.. He has tried to recognize the possibility of development of sectarian architecture. Contemporary Epigraphical evidences in the different Buddhist Caves show that different sects flourished in different areas of the Deccan. Chaitiya/Chaitika School is mentioned at the Junnar Caves and also in Amaravati and Nasik Cave.

In this paper, I intend to study if the school of Chaitiya/Chaitika which is mentioned in inscriptions at Rock-cut caves of Junnar in the Pune district of Maharashtra state, India really existed at that particular place on the basis of other archaeological evidences found at this place during that particular period and the possibility of influence of philosophy on architecture.

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Keywords : Buddhist Architecture, Rock Cut Architecture, Junnar Caves, Ambika Caves, Caitiyaschool, Caitikaschool, Chaityagriha, Inscriptions.

सारांश

बौद्ध धर्म का पश्चिम भारत में विकास होने तक वह विभिन्न परम्पराओं में विभाजित हो चुका था। आरम्भिक शताब्दियों के अभिलेखों से ज्ञात होता है कि पश्चिम भारत में भद्रयान, धर्मोत्तर, महासांघिक चैत्य/चैतिया और अपरशैल सम्प्रदाय पल्लवित हो रहे थे। किन्तु फिर भी यह कहना कठिन है कि किसी क्षेत्र विशेष ने वास्तु परम्परा पर प्रभाव डाला या किसी परम्परा ने किसी गुहा के वास्तु पर प्रभाव डाला। डॉ. नागराजू ने इस मत का प्रवर्तन किया कि आदर्शात्मक मूल्यों और धार्मिक व्यवहार में भिन्नता ने वास्तु के विभिन्न प्रकारों की आवश्यकता पर बल दिया। उन्होंने साम्प्रदायिक वास्तु के विकास को चिह्नित करने का प्रयास किया। बौद्ध गुहाओं से प्राप्त होने वाले लेखों से दकन के विभिन्न क्षेत्रों में विभिन्न सम्प्रदायों के विकास के अभिलेखीय प्रमाण मिलते हैं। चैतिय या चैतिका परम्परा का जुन्नर के साथ ही अमरावती और नासिक की गुहाओं में उल्लेख मिलता है।

प्रस्तुत शोधपत्र में मैंने भारत के पुणे जिले में स्थित जुन्नर की शैलोत्खात गुहाओं का अध्ययन करके यह जानने का प्रयास किया है कि क्या वास्तव में ये वहाँ स्थित थीं। इसके लिए उस काल के उसी स्थल से प्राप्त पुरातात्विक साक्ष्यों को प्रमाण बनाया गया है। साथ ही वास्तुकला पर दार्शनिक प्रभाव की संभावना पर भी विचार किया गया है।

प्रमुख शब्द : बौद्ध वास्तुकला, शैलोत्खात, वास्तुकला, जुन्नर, गुहाएं, अम्बिका गुहाएं, चैत्य परम्परा, चैतिका परम्परा, चैत्यगृह, अभिलेख

Introduction

It is believed that Buddhism was introduced in Deccan during the reign of Asoka. Dipavamsa and Mahavamsa state that the third Buddhist Council was held during the reign of Asoka. Mogaliputta Tissa was its president. After the Council, Mahasthavira Tissa sent monks for preaching Buddhism in different parts. Dipavamsa states that Mahadharmarakshita was sent to Maharashtra.

As Buddhism spread in the Deccan and the number of Buddhist monks increased, the need of Viharas for their residence, Chaityas for their prayers and Stupas for their worship began to be felt, and they were

excavated and carved in the hills of Deccan during two or three centuries before and after Christ. Even today, Western India is very rich in Buddhist monuments. There are numbers of Buddhist monuments of ancient times spread all over this region like Bhaje, Bedse, Nasik, Ajanta, Karle, etc. These were the very important centres in ancient times which had played a very important role in the growth and development of Buddhism and are still playing an important role as a rich source of history of Buddhism.

By the time Buddhism spread in Western India, it was already divided into different schools. Epigraphs of early centuries reveal that Bhadrayaniya, Dharmottariya, Mahasamghika Chaitiya/Chaitika and Aparasaila sects were flourishing in Western India.

Though the influence of different schools of Buddhism can be seen in inscriptional evidences it will be difficult to say that a certain area had an influence of a particular school or a particular school influenced the architecture of the cave.

Dr. Nagaraju has raised this issue that differences in ideological values and religious practices could have demanded different varieties of architectural forms. (Nagaraju, 1981 : 35). He has tried to recognize the possibility of development of sectarian architecture.

Contemporary Epigraphical evidences in the different Buddhist Caves show that different sects flourished in different areas of Deccan. Chaitiya/Chaitika School is mentioned at Junnar Caves and also in Amaravati and Nasik Cave.

In this paper, I intend to study, if the school of Chaitiya/Chaitika which is mentioned in inscriptions at Rock-cut caves of Junnar in Pune district of Maharashtra state, India really existed at that particular place on the basis of other archaeological evidences found at that place during

that particular period and the possibility of influence of philosophy on architecture.

Chaityaka School

The School called Chaitiya/Chaitika is a sub-division of the Mahasamghika. Dipavamsa (Tripathi, 1996:70) and Mahavamsa (Tripathi Mahavamsa, Buddha Aakar Granthamala Pushpa - 7, 1996, p. 56) mention these sects of Buddhism.

Dr. Nalinaksha mentions that this sect is named so because of a Chaitya situated on a mountain where its founder Mahadeva lived, and secondly, due to its emphasis on the erection, decoration and worship of the Chaityas. It is also said that the Chaitiya/Chaitika and Lokottaravadins are identical. Vasumitra and Bhavya agree with Kathavatthuas far as the three sub-divisions are concerned if the name Chaitiyas can be regarded as an alternative to Lokottaravada. In Mahavastu, which is an avowed text of Lokottaravada, a branch of the Mahasamghikas, worship of Chaityas is given prominence. The Mahasamghikas, Ekavyavaharikas and Chaitiyakas (or Lokottaravadins) had generally common doctrines with minor differences, which have not been minutely distinguished by Vasumitra. Lokottaravadins developed leanings towards Mahayanist, and in fact, prepared the ground for the advent of the Mahayana school.

Taranath in his 42nd Chapter furnishes us with very important identifications of the different names of the schools appearing in the lists of Bhavya, Vasumitra, Vinitadeva and others. After reproducing the several lists, he gives the following identifications :

Chaitiya-Purvasaila- Schools of Mahadeva

The Chaitiyavadins are known to have flourished in Andhradesa contemporaneously with Pubbaseliyas or Uttaraseliyas, Aparaseliyas schools. In the Kathavatthu, the views discussed are mostly of the

Mahasamghikas who migrated to the south and settled down in Andhra Pradesh around Amravati and Dhanyakataka. These were the Pubbaseliyas or Uttaraseliyas, Aparaseliyas, Siddhatthikas, Rajagirikas and Chaitiyakas, collectively designated as the Andhakas by Buddhaghosa in the introduction to this commentary on the Kathavatthu.

According to Bareau, based on the sources from the northwest, the Chaitiyas appeared right at the beginning of the third Century CE, following an internal schism of the Mahasamghikas. According to the Sammaityas, they emerged from a later schism which occurred at the heart of the Gokulika School.

To give a chronology of this school Bareau refers to Vasumitra who explains the birth of the Caitiyas in the second century CE. There was a heretic who had left home, abandoned the wrong and taken refuge in the right and whose name was also Mahadeva. Having 'left home' in the Mahasamghika School, he received full ordination. Learned (*bahusruta*) and filled with vigour (*viryā*), he dwelled on the Mount of the Sanctuary (*chaityasaila*). Along with the community (*samgha*) of that school, he again examined the five propositions (of the first Mahadeva) which provoked discussions and a division into three schools : Chaityasaila, Aparasaila and Uttarasaila.

Bareau has also stated that inscriptions record the presence of the Chaitiyas in Amaravati in the reign of Vasisthiputra Siri Pulumavi that is in the first half of the second century CE. The Chaitiyas must, therefore, have been one of the first schools of the Mahsamghika group in the south. Not only do inscriptions prove it but Vasumitra and Bhavya's Mahasamghikas attest to the fact as well. The Chaitya is the oldest school whose presence in Andhra is indicated by inscriptions. It also seems that other Andhaka schools, Aprasailas, Purvasailas or Uttarasailas, Tajagirikas and Siddharthikas were merely sub schools that split from the

Chaitiya school at different times. It is also possible to consider their probable relationship with the Bahusrutiyas whose presence in this region is also attested by the epigraphy and to seek for their origin among the latter, or at least among the Gokulikas, as the Sarvastivadin tradition would have it.

We know nothing about their literature or the time of their disappearance. Vasumitra is the only one to give us some information on their doctrine which moreover he does not distinguish from that of the Aparasailas and Uttarasailas.

Junnar

Junnar was an important ancient centre of Theravada Buddhism as it is clear from the number of Buddhist caves. Now it is the chief town in the Pune District of Maharashtra, India. It is among the largest religious establishments of Buddhism in Maharashtra. There are around 300 rock-cut excavations. All these caves are spread in the surrounding hills in an area of three miles.

River Mina is not far off from Junnar and therefore ancient Minnagara, the capital of Nahapana, is identified with Junnar. The name Junnar is said to be a corruption of Junanagara, implying "The ancient city". It has also been linked to Tagara but Tagara has been identified with Ter in the Osmanabad district of Marathwada (Nagaraju, 1981 : 133). Some scholars have also identified Junnar with ancient Dhenukakata.

Most of the Junnar caves have been carved during the Satavahana period in various phases from the earliest Satavahana phase (around first century BCE) to later Satavahana period (second century CE), but later Junnar lost its importance and hence no architectural activity continued after this period. Dr. Dhavalikar dates them to later Satavahana period, contemporaneously with Pubbaseliyas or Uttaraseliyas, Aparaseliyas. These Buddhist caves are spread in different directions and for schools. In the Kathavatthu, the views discussed are mostly of the

convenience have been distributed into five different groups based on localities:

1. In the scarp of the Sivaneri hills fort to the west-south-west of the town,
2. The group known as Tulja cave to the west,
3. The Ganesha cave in the Sulaiman hills to the north of the town,
4. The second group of the Sulaiman hills about a mile from the Ganesh cave,
5. The caves in the Manmodi hill south of Junnar.

Manmodi Hill lies to the south of the present town Junnar. The caves stretch to a length of about 1.5 km and are divided into three sub-groups, each separated from one another by a distance of about 150 to 400 m.

1. Bhimashankar group
2. Ambika Group
3. Bhutlinga group

Ambika Group

Chaitiya/Chaitika school emphasized the erection, decoration and worship of the Chaityas.

There are around twenty-four excavations in the Ambika group out of which two are Chaityagriha, Cave 25 and Cave 26. The Cave 26 is unfinished which belongs to first century CE.

Thus, it appears that the whole of the Ambika group had no Chaityagriha till third century CE when the small Cave 25 was made.

Cave 25 Ambika Group, Junnar (Fig.1)

According to Dr. Dhavalikar, this is small but an extremely



Fig. 1 : Cave 25 Ambika Group, Junnar

Figures : by the author

interesting shrine which is situated adjoining the Chaityagriha 26 on the east. It is quadrangular on plan with a broken front and has a flat roof (Dhavalikar, 1984 : 19). A stupa is carved in the rear, touching the ceiling.

The stupa has a thick moulding at the base. The upper margin is embellished with the vedikaband. The harmika over the *chhatra* must have been rock-cut because the *chhatra* is carved in the ceiling. This stupa is of a very developed type with its drum having tapering sides and with tenon and railing decoration at the brim (Nagaraju, 1981 : 146). The dome is somewhat bulged like an inverted *ghata* or $\frac{3}{4}$ circle. There is a single *harmika* on the top and from this arises a stone shaft which reaches to an umbrella cut in stone in the roof. This stupa is indicative of the fact that Chaityagriha 26 belongs to about third century CE (Nagaraju, 1981 : 146).

It has been suggested that this stupa may be a votive stupa. In this group, the only stupa is in Cave 26 which is in an unfinished state because of the stratum of loose rock running through the middle obliquely (Dhavalikar, 1984 : 19). Hence the entire group has no shrine and it is, therefore, likely that cave 25 may have served as a stupa though quite small (Dhavalikar, 1984 : 19). The latter is completely finished, indicating that it may have been carved after the work on the main Chaityagriha 26 was given up, it should also be noted that the small stupa chamber is in alignment with the entire veranda of the main Chaityagriha 26 adjoining it. It is therefore, highly likely that only after the work on 26 was given up, the small stupa chamber was carved in order to serve as a Chaityagriha and it may not, therefore, be a votive stupa (Dhavalikar, 1984, *Ibid.*).

Cave 26 Ambika Group, Junnar (Fig.2)

Next to cave 25 is the largest excavation of the group. This was intended to be a large Chaityagriha but has been left unfinished due to the occurrence of bands of soft rock inside, from which water percolates. Now, this consists of an apsidal hall with a verandah in the front. The hall is unfinished. The aisles and pillars have not been formed but attempt to make the pillars can be recognised (Nagaraju, 1981 : 147). An Attempt has



Fig.2 : Cave 26 Ambika Group, Junnar

interesting shrine which is situated adjoining the Chaityagriha 26 on the east. It is quadrangular on plan with a broken front and has a flat roof (Dhavalikar, 1984 : 19). A stupa is carved in the rear, touching the ceiling.

finished. A more noteworthy feature of this Chaityagriha is the verandah (Dhavalikar, 1984:17). Dr. Nagaraju has dated it to first century CE (Nagaraju, 1981 : 150).

Cave 29 Ambika Group, Junnar

Cave 29 is an unfinished excavation. At present this consists of a verandah only. It appears to have had two pillars in front and two engaged ones (Nagaraju, 1981 : 148). The pillars are broken and the pilasters are unfinished. From what remains of a pillar it appears to be of the usual pot-capital with inverted stepped pyramid type .

Dr. Nagaraju has dated this cave to second century CE (Nagaraju, 1981 : 150).

Outside the verandah to the left is an inscription which mentions a donation by a monk of Chaityaka school. Dr. Nagaraju has dated this inscription to third century CE. (Nagaraju, 1981 : 148)

Conclusion

Dr. Nagaraju (Nagaraju, 1981: 35) has tried to recognize the possibility of development of sectarian architecture. This period was considered as a transitional phase. So far many stalwarts have studied the different aspects such as chronology, architecture, and epigraphy; still, it is difficult to say that philosophy of these schools had influenced the architecture. Epigraphical evidences in the different Buddhist Caves show that different sects flourished in different areas of Deccan. Chaitiya/Chaitika School is mentioned at Junnar Cave no. 29 but it does not specify that donation was given to the cave of Chaitika school but the monk belonging to Chaitiya/Chaitika school is giving a donation here.

If we see the architecture of Cave 29 it is an unfinished cave which was built in second century CE and the inscription which mentions Chaitiya/Chaitika school is dated to third century CE. In my humble

opinion, it is not possible to have any influence of the philosophy of the Chaitiya/Chaitika school on the architecture of cave 29.

The School called Chaitiya/Chaitika is a sub-division of the Mahasamghika. It is said that the sect is so named because of a Chaitya situated on a mountain where its founder Mahadeva lived, and secondly due to its emphasis on the erection, decoration and worship of the Chaityas. There are two Chaityas or stupas in this group first Cave 26 which is unfinished and belongs to first century CE. Thus it appears that the whole of the Ambika group had no Chaityagriha till third century CE when small Cave 25 was made. Dr. Dhavalikar has identified such architecture with late Theravada architecture. Chaitika School belongs to Mahasamghika group but emphasis was given on erecting and worship of stupa. Donation by Chaitiya/Chaitika school also dated third century CE. My humble opinion is that it is possible that by 3rd Cent. CE Chaitiya/Chaitika school must have become very popular or must have taken over the caves of this particular Ambika Group of Junnar and we can say hypothetically that in Cave 29 a Chaityagriha was built by them. Thus, I can conclude that hypothetically Chaitiya/Chaitika School Monastery existed in Ambika Caves of Junnar in 3rd Century CE.

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