



Impact of Buddhist Philosophy in Sculptural Art of Assam

Dhiraj Das

Assistant Professor, Department of History,

Bilasipara College, Bilasipara, District: Dhubri, Pin- 783348, Assam, India

Abstract:

The Tantric structure of Buddhism had emerged as well-liked religious belief in the first millennium A.D. in Assam. Hajo and Kamakhya was the famous centre of Tantric Buddhism in the region. The present paper highlights the influence of Buddhist philosophy in sculptural art of Assam with its historical identity. More often than not Brahmanism sculptures are seen in the temple sites of Assam; however, the sculptures bear sometimes the point of Buddhism. More than a few archaeological sites show the image of Buddha and female goddess. As a result, Buddhism is strongly connected to Tantricism which was major in ancient Assam.

Keywords:

Impact, Buddhist Philosophy, History, Sculptural Art, Assam

Introduction:

Buddhist philosophy highlights to the idealistic explorations and systems of question that developed among a variety of Buddhist schools in India following the *parinirvana*, i.e. death of the Buddha and later spread during Asia. The Buddhist ways unite both rational way of thinking and considerations.

Buddha pictures are observed in the explanations as single and sometimes found gaining with some other outlines. A lot of positions can be seen from the historical and archeological elements that Buddhism associated with ancient Assam. It is very important that, the Mauryan emperor Ashoka was recognized as first major patron of Buddhist art in India. It is also important that, in Buddhist art, many phases of art development can be identified. Throughout Hinayana Buddhism of before 1st century AD, Buddha was by no means highlighted in human shape. The attendance of Buddha was exposed emblematically similar to a throne, a riderless horse, footstep, Bodhi tree, stupa etc.

Review of Literature:

The different literatures relating to the study are:

1. Binita Nath (2017) in her paper titled “Buddhism as a Cult of Ancient Assam: A Historical Study” highlights that Buddhism has made a significant role to the improvement of Indian art, culture and society.
2. Tapas Kumar Aich (2013) highlights in the study titled “Buddha philosophy and western psychology” that four noble truths as extended by Buddha are that the life is



full of suffering (Duhkha), that there is a reason of this suffering (Duhkha-samudaya), it is probable to stop suffering (Duhkha-nirodha), and there is a way to quench suffering (Duhkha-nirodha-marga).

Statement of the Problem:

There are many literatures on the importance of Buddhism and Buddhism in Assam but the historical and archeological impact of Buddhism in Sculptural Art of Assam is of great value.

Objective of the Study:

The main objectives of the paper are-

1. To study the importance of Buddhism in Assam.
2. To highlight Buddhism in Sculptural Art of Assam.

Research Question:

The research questions are-

1. Is there any importance of Buddhism in Assam?
2. Is there any impact of Buddhism in Sculptural Art of Assam?

Importance of the Study:

Recognized as a lively place of ancient Tantrism and one of the few remaining places in India that still prides itself in conserving the practices of the occult, very few outside of Assam would identify that a lot of centuries ago, Assam was a hotbed of Buddhism too. Varying trends in religious impact and social metamorphosis might or might not have changed who or how some ancient shrines that have survived till contemporary day Assam are worshipped today, but artefacts, historical and archaeological findings and word of mouth show to reveal the Buddhism has had its days of splendor in ancient Assam.

Research Methodology:

The research paper is stands on secondary sources similar to research papers, research articles, edited books, journals, newspapers, periodicals, paper clips, internet, website etc.

Impact of Buddhism in Assam:

Buddhism exercised profound impact in shaping the range of facets of Indian society. The moral system of Buddhism was simpler based on charity, cleanliness, self sacrifice, and honesty and manage over passions. Buddhism greatly prejudiced China and has shaped it into the nation it is today. From side to side the extension of Buddhism, other philosophies in China



have developed and changed. Implementing the Buddhist way of paying homage through art, Taoist art began being shaped and China developed its architectural culture. It laid huge importance on worship, fairness and passivity. The influence of Buddhism in the society and culture of Assam have its great value. The vital role of Lord Buddha was the establishment of popular, simple, comprehensible and straightforward religion. Buddhist thought and edicts impacted the people of Kamarupa.

Discussion and Results:

1. Buddhist art highlights to the wealthy and varied representations of religious images, sculpture, dance, visual legends and symbols deriving from the various Buddhist societies found around the world.
2. In real sense Buddhist art is art influenced by Buddhism, covers depictions of Buddhas and bodhisattvas, noteworthy Buddhist outlines both historical and mythical, narrative scenes from their existence, mandalas, and physical facets connected with Buddhist practice, such as vajras, bells, stupas and Buddhist temple architecture.
3. Abundant archaeological records highlight that Buddhism influenced Kamarupa partly in ancient name of Assam. A lot of Buddhist ruins, counting Buddhist remains, monolithic votive stupas etc. have been excavated throughout Assam. Antiquities including the stone, bronze images of the Buddha and other divinity like Tara have been explored.
4. More than a few archaeological sites exhibit the Buddhistic images like Buddha, Buddhistic female image, image of Bodhi tree etc. In this regard major Hannay seen numerous archaeological sites all through Assam and remarked that the temple remains were undoubted Buddhist origin
5. In the 16th and 17th centuries Tibetan historian Taranath mentioned that Buddhism was extensively widen in Kamarupa during the time of Buddhist preacher Dhitika who came to be highlighted as early as third century BC.
6. The origin of Tantricism is highlighted from Buddhism. Buddhism gave a turn to the judgments and notions that overcome at the time, shaped the character of the nation, and sent Hindu civilization running during a novel channel.
7. The Tantric Buddhistic structure was typically well-known in ancient Kamarupa. Mahayana and Vajrayana and perhaps Hinayana Buddhism prevailed in Kamarupa and in the Tantric-Buddhist days it was one of the significant *seats* in eastern India securing patronage of the Pala rulers.
8. The Vajrayana scripture Sadhanamala highlights four *pithas* or sacred places specifically, Kamakhya, Sirihatta, Purnagiri and Uddiyana. Some writers observed that Kamakhya and Sirihatta are obviously in Kamarupa. As per the influence, Tantric Buddhism was first developed in Uddiyana.



9. Early Assam was identified by many names in Buddhist tradition. The second Buddhist synod was held in the early part of 400 BC in Assam and at that time in the Buddhist tradition, Assam was acknowledged as *Wesali Long*.
10. The literatures of Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsang inform that monarch Bhaskaravarman of Kamarupa had bottomless honour to Buddhism. Throughout 7th century AD, Hiuen Tsang visited Kamarupa at the call of Bhaskaravarman. The Chinese pilgrim had composed concerning Kamarupa in his valuable book '*Si-Yu-Ki*,' where he highlighted Kamarupa as *Kia-mo-lu-po* and exposed that the people of Kamarupa thoughts on *Devas* and had no trust in Buddha.
11. Quite a few artistic representations of the ancient temple sites focus that the importance of Buddhism is famous in the sculptural art of Assam. The oldest proof of Buddhist art can be seen on the *Sri Surya pahar* of Goalpara district in Assam.
12. The famous historical Madan Kamdeva temple of Baihata Chariali site of 11th -12th century AD exhibits an image of Buddhist affinity.
13. A picture of Dhyani Buddha flanked by two Bodhi trees is observed at the Pingaleswar temple site of 9th - 10th century AD. Fascinatingly, one erotic sight is placed near the image of Buddha. Perhaps, owing to the Tantric impact of Buddhism on the Pingaleswar temple place, the Buddha image is demonstrated with the erotic figures. The Vajrayana is a combination of monistic viewpoints, magic and erotics, with a little admixture of Buddhist thoughts.

Findings of the Study:

The very findings of the study are mainly:

1. Literatures and historical evidences highlight that conceivably there were formerly a small number of Buddhist temples which were recreated as Hindu temple with the old materials in ancient Assam.
2. Due to the importance of Tantric Buddhism, a number of sculptures of ancient Assam reflect the scenery of Buddhism.
3. Early Assam was recognized by different names in Buddhist practices.
4. Quite a few artistic representations of the ancient temple sites indicate that the influence of Buddhism is prominent in the sculptural art of Assam.
5. The Madan Kamdeva temple of Baihata Chariali site of 11th -12th century AD exhibits an image of Buddhist similarity.
6. Plentiful archaeological records specify that Buddhism influenced Kamarupa partially ancient name of Assam.
7. In the 16th and 17th centuries Tibetan historian *Taranath* stated that Buddhism was extensively spread in Kamarupa throughout the time of Buddhist preacher Dhitika



8. A number of scholars had ideas that the Buddhism prevailed in ancient Assam. It is thought that initially there was a Buddhist place of pilgrimage at Kamakhya temple of Guwahati in Assam.

Conclusion:

Buddhism is one of the world's chief religions and originated 2,500 years ago in India. Buddhists consider that the human existence is one of suffering, and that thought, religious and physical labor and fine behavior are the ways to attain illumination or nirvana. Buddhism prejudiced the sculptural art of Assam partially. Different types of literatures and historical evidences notify that perhaps there were formerly few Buddhist temples which were reconstructed as Hindu temple with the old materials in ancient Assam. In this regard, merchants, monks carried small transportable Buddhistic images to Assam from other places. Owing to the impact of Tantric Buddhism, some sculptures of ancient Assam echo the nature of Buddhism.

References:

1. Barua Bahadur, K. L., Early History of Kamarupa, Shillong: 1933
2. Baruah, S. L., A Comprehensive History of Assam, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi: 1997
3. Chattopadhyaya, D., Taranatha's History of Buddhism in India, Matilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, Delhi: 1990, p. 47
4. Choudhury, P. C., The History of Civilization of the People of Assam to the Twelfth Century AD, Spectrum Publications, Delhi: 1987,
5. Jaschke, H. A., A Tibetan-English Dictionary, The Charge of The Secretary of State for Indian in Council, London: 1881
6. Neog, M., The Indian Historical Quarterly, Volume XXVII, 1951