Buddhism in Bihar from the eighth to the twelfth century with special references to Nland

Autor(en): **Darian, Steven**

Objekttyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **Asiatische Studien : Zeitschrift der Schweizerischen Asiengesellschaft = Études asiatiques : revue de la Société Suisse-Asie**

Band (Jahr): **25 (1971)**

Heft 1-4

PDF erstellt am: **27.04.2024**

Persistenter Link: https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-146286

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Inhalten der Zeitschriften. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern.
Die auf der Plattform e-periodica veröffentlichten Dokumente stehen für nicht-kommerzielle Zwecke in Lehre und Forschung sowie für die private Nutzung frei zur Verfügung. Einzelne Dateien oder Ausdrucke aus diesem Angebot können zusammen mit diesen Nutzungsbedingungen und den korrekten Herkunftsbezeichnungen weitergegeben werden.
Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. Die systematische Speicherung von Teilen des elektronischen Angebots auf anderen Servern bedarf ebenfalls des schriftlichen Einverständnisses der Rechteinhaber.

Haftungsausschluss

Alle Angaben erfolgen ohne Gewähr für Vollständigkeit oder Richtigkeit. Es wird keine Haftung übernommen für Schäden durch die Verwendung von Informationen aus diesem Online-Angebot oder durch das Fehlen von Informationen. Dies gilt auch für Inhalte Dritter, die über dieses Angebot zugänglich sind.

Ein Dienst der *ETH-Bibliothek*
ETH Zürich, Rämistrasse 101, 8092 Zürich, Schweiz, www.library.ethz.ch

http://www.e-periodica.ch

BUDDHISM IN BIHAR FROM THE EIGHTH TO THE TWELFTH CENTURY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO NĀLANDĀ

STEVEN DARIAN

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY, U.S.A.

Our period, from the eighth to the twelfth century, encompasses the end of an age, and the beginning of a new era in Indian civilization. Beyond the personal agony wrought by the Moslem invasions, the greatest victim was Buddhism, caught in a delicate period of transition, unable to find strength in its more traditional patterns, and denied the luxury of a leisurely evolution.

From the first to the eighth century A.D., Buddhism had undergone a change, from the austere ethic of Theravāda, to a more compassionate, theistic world view. The final period of its development, marked by the rise of Tantrism, was cut short, and we will never know for certain what would have been its natural denouement. Many scholars claim that tantric practices weakened the religion, contributing greatly to its eventual collapse. This paper will examine the thesis in an effort to determine the effect of tantra on Buddhist institutions during this critical period. Our focus is Bihar, the original home of Buddhism, which attracted the greatest scholars and radiated the strongest cultural impulses to the countries beyond India. At once the repository and creative center of Buddhist thought, the University of Nālandā deserves special mention. Here we can observe most clearly those forces working their way toward new religious values: an attempt to break through the barren ritualism that every creed is heir to, greater eclecticism in art and thought, leading to a rapprochement with Hinduism.

During the period, there were two great Buddhist centers in India: Bengal-Bihar, and far to the west, the region of Gandhāra-Kapiśa,

which lay like a saddle on both sides of the Khyber Pass. Fascinating as it is, this western region deserves a separate study.

POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

Since Gupta times rulers in Bihar and the Middle Ganges Valley had patronized Buddhism or adopted a definite policy of toleration. In the Gupta period, it becomes fused with the national ethos, and already, Buddha appears in the Brāhmaṇic pantheon as an incarnation of Viṣṇu.[1] Between 500 and 520, the religion suffered greatly in Bihar from the depredations of the Huṇa Mihirakula, a Śaiva and a sworn enemy of Buddhism. From 554 to 580, the Upper Ganges Valley was ruled by the Maukharis, whose control extended across Magadha. Though Hindus, they supported Buddhism and patronized the University of Nālandā.[2] Two of their seals were found among the ruins, next to an inscription of Harṣa.[3] The only indigenous threat to Buddhism during this peaceful period was Śaśāṅka, king of Gauḍa from 602 to 625, who destroyed many Buddhist monuments and monasteries in Magadha. Though a Śaivite, his motives may have been more political than religious.[4] Śaśāṅka was followed by the last Maukhari king, Pūrṇavarmā, a Buddhist and a student of the Law.[5] Hiuen-Tsang describes his considerable efforts to restore the holy places destroyed by Śaśaṅka's persecutions.[6] After Pūrṇavarmā's death, around 637, Magadha came under control of Harṣa,[7] whose profession of

1. Radha Kamal Mookerji, *Glimpses of Ancient India* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1961), p. 68.

2. Bhagwati Verma, *Socio-Religious, Economic and Literary Conditions of Bihar* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1962), p. 66.

3. H. Heras, "The Royal Patrons of the University of Nālandā," *Journal of Behar and Orissa Research Society*, XIV Pt. 1 (1928), p. 17.

4. Verma, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

5. Samuel Beal, *Travels of Hiouen-Thsang* (Calcutta: Susil Gupta, 1958), III, p. 346.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 347–348.

7. R.R. Diwakar (ed.), *Bihar Through the Ages* (Calcutta: Orient Longmans, 1959), p. 268.

Buddhism is widely known. Between Harṣa's death and the rise of the Pālas, Madhyadeśa was beset with wars and anarchy.

By far, the greatest stimulus to Buddhism between the eighth and twelfth century came from the Pāla kings. Gopāla, the eponym (reigned c. A.D. 750–770) was born a *kṣatriya*[7a] or *Śūdra*.[8] It is not known why he converted to Buddhism, but as a ruler freely elected by the people, it seems unlikely he would choose an unpopular creed. Under Dharmapāla, his successor (A.D. 770–810), Pāla influence reached to Gandhāra and the lower Kabul valley. The empire itself included Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and possibly Nepal.[9] Dharmapāla patronized the Buddhist author Haribhadra. According to Bu-Ston:

> 'Haribhadra, who belonged to the kṣatriya caste took orders, became versed in all the heterodox and orthodox philosophical systems and especially studied during a long period of time the subjects of the Prajñāparamitā.'[10]

After Haribhadra's death, the king took as his spiritual advisor the monk's disciple Buddhajñānapāda, who promoted study and teaching of the *Guhyasamāja*, one of the earliest tantric texts.[11]

Devapāla (c.A.D. 810–850), the last strong Pāla ruler for over a century, extended the empire eastward to Assam and south as far as the Vindhyas.[12] Under his reign, Bihar experienced a heightened cultural intercourse with distant countries: close relations were established with king Bālaputradeva of Ceylon, whose monastery at Nālandā received five villages for its maintenance.[13] Marked contact

7a. R.C.Majumdar (ed.), *The History and Culture of the Indian People*. Vol. IV: *The Age of Imperial Kanauj* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1955), p. 272.

8. K.P. Jayaswal, *An Imperial History of India* (Lahore: Motilal Banarsidass, 1934), p. 45.

9. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

10. Bu-Ston, *History of Buddhism*. Pt. II: *The History of Buddhism in India and Tibet*. Translated by E. Obermiller (Heidelberg: O. Harrassowitz, 1932), p. 157.

11. R.C.Majumdar, *The History of Bengal*. Vol. I: *Hindu Period* (Dacca: University of Dacca Press, 1963), p. 270.

12. Majumdar, *The Age of Imperial Kanauj*, p. 50.

13. Diwakar, *op. cit.*, p. 313.

with the Śailendra empire of Śrīvijaya[14] led to proselytizing activities on behalf of Buddhism.[15]

For the next hundred years, the Pāla dominions were ruled by kings concerned more with piety than with power, and the empire gradually dwindled to the regions of Magadha and Aṅga. Later kings like Mahīpāla recovered parts of Bengal and North Bihar, but it would never again reach the grandeur known under Devapāla. At no time in their history did the Pāla rulers make Buddhism the state religion but actually showed deep reverence for the Brāhmaṇical gods, the largest number of gifts recorded in Pāla inscriptions donated to Brahmins rather than Buddhists.[16]

Though Magadha was ruled by Pāla kings almost continually from the eighth to the twelfth century, and by local Hindu rājas of the Buddhist faith up to 1285,[17] political life in Northern India offered little stability. Throughout the Pāla period, the Pratīhāra empire to the west remained a constant threat, and from the south, the Rāshṭrakūṭas undertook several successful campaigns against both states.[18] A delicate equilibrium between the three great powers could not remain for long. By the tenth century, there was no political center of the country. In the end, India tore itself apart and lay helpless before the armies of the Prophet.

14. Majumdar, *The Age of Imperial Kanauj*, p. 57.

15. Even in this Indonesian form, one begins to find a mixture of Mahāyāna and Hindu cults and the tendency toward tantric mysticism that becomes more and more apparent in India. Rather than assume Indonesian origins, it seems more likely that this eclectic impulse came from India itself, especially Bengal and Bihar. See: D.G.E. Hall, *A History of South-east Asia* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1955), p. 39.

16. R. C. Mitra, *The Decline of Buddhism in India* (Santiniketan: Visva-Bharati, 1954), p. 53.

17. Diwakar, *op. cit.*, p. 326.

18. While avowed Hindus, the Pratīhāras seem to have showed no animosity towards Buddhism. The great Pratīhāra ruler Bhoja, who annexed large parts of the Pāla empire, followed Vaiṣṇavism, a creed that had already begun a rapprochement with Buddhism. Moreover, Bhoja's son, Mahendrapāla, went beyond mere toleration by erecting several small stūpas at Nālandā. Thus, there was no direct political threat to Buddhism until the coming of the Moslems. Even under the Hindu Sena and Gāhaḍavāla kings, Buddhist monasteries continued to exist as before.

While political events of the ninth and tenth century may have had little effect on Buddhism, economic realities behind them did. Above all, warfare meant a major dislocation of the economy. Kings often launched campaigns to coincide with the harvest, ensuring abundant crops for their forces. For this reason, village cultivators suffered greatly in time of war.[19] Taxes increased, materials grew scarce, and a general decline set in. Fewer funds were available for the monasteries, some of which had reached considerable proportions.

Another element threatening Buddhism and the state was the rise of feudalism. Encouraged by Harṣa and the Pratīhāra emperors, feudatories became especially strong in the Pāla dominions from the time of Nayapāla (c. A.D. 1030–1045). Mazumdar describes the period from 1030 to 1194 as "the heyday of feudal anarchy",[20] with central authority crumbling almost everywhere. Many of the recent Buddhist converts were śūdras,[21] and a feudal system, with people wedded to the land, made it difficult for Buddhist preachers to reach them. At this time the caste system also began to fragment. "Between 600 and 1000 A.D., the first three castes remained undivided. But after 1000, each caste split into hundreds of subcastes, each with its own differences."[22] Superimposed, these two factors present a gridlike image of tiny, semi-independent political units, stagnant, isolated, and unable to support the economic and political institutions necessary for a viable society. Such conditions could hardly sustain the great sprawling establishments that characterized the more famous vihāras. With the destruction of the monasteries about A.D. 1200, the institutional focus of Buddhism was lost. The religion had never

19. R.C.Majumdar (ed.), *The History and Culture of the Indian People*. Vol. V: *The Struggle for Empire* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1957), p. 177.

20. B.P.Mazumdar, *Socio-Economic History of Northern India* (Calcutta: K.L.Mukhopadyay, 1960), p. 11.

21. Verma, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

22. C.V.Vaidya, *History of Medieval Hindu India* (Poona: Oriental Book-Supplying Agency, 1921), III, p. 375.

preoccupied itself with rules governing secular life, and without the monasteries, there were few guidelines left for the layman. Those who were great followers migrated to Nepal and Tibet, while others disappeared in the sea of Hinduism.

MAHĀYĀNA AND TANTRA: HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Mahāyāna developed slowly from the old, original cast of Buddhism. Six centuries after its birth, Hiuen-Tsang reports only one-sixth of the followers converted to the new sect. During that six centuries, Mahāyāna had evolved from a somewhat antinomian position to one stressing sympathy and good deeds. Evidently the message had tremendous appeal, for some time after the seventh century, "Hīnayāna was practically dislodged from the mainland of India."[23]

One of the widest gulfs separating Mahāyāna from Theravāda was their interpretation of nirvāṇa. In early Buddhism, it stood as a cosmic question mark, holding out no tangible hope for immortality, offering a passionless peace, an extinction of pain. In Mahāyāna, the concept is wholly transmuted, with its promise of paradise for the faithful. This development of Mahāyāna reflects the change from a private monastic code to a universal vision embracing all casts and creeds. From the institutional standpoint – an increase in adherents – Mahāyāna clearly represents a stronger form of the religion.

Lama Tāranātha states that Buddhism was widespread in Magadha, Bengal, Orissa, and other border countries during the first half of the eighth century.[24] This date coincides with the emergence of tantra as the dominant theme in Buddhism: "L'époque florissante des Tantras peut difficilement se placer avant l'an 700 de notre ère."[25] By the end of the century, "le mouvement avait atteint toutes les régions de

23. Majumdar, *The Struggle for Empire*, p. 413.
24. Majumdar, *The Age of Imperial Kanauj*, p. 359.
25. Hendrick Kern, *Histoire du Bouddhisme dans L'Inde* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1901), II, p. 458.

l'Inde, du Cachemire au Bengal et au pays tamoul, Ceylan et Insulande.'' [26] As it developed, tantric Buddhism spread far beyond the borders of India: to China, Mongolia, Tibet, Balkh, and even Persia.[27] Until the end, Bihar-Bengal and Gandhāra, the two strongholds of Buddhism, were at once the tantric regions par excellence. Snellgrove asserts that from the eighth to the twelfth century, Buddhism shows no decline in India: 'The monasteries of Sārnāth and Nālandā, of Vikramaśīla and Vajrāsana (Budhgayā) were flourishing concerns, housing many hundreds of monks.'[28] We may wonder, then, at the oftenmade assertion that the disappearance of Buddhism ''was hastened by the growing unpopularity of tantric practices it had adopted.''[29]

Briefly, tantric Buddhism may be defined as the main force in Indian Buddhism from the eighth to the twelfth century. It combines the *śūnyatā* philosophy of Nāgārjuna, the physiology of Hatha Yoga, and a heightened use of *mantras*, *mudrās*, and *maṇḍalas*, to help achieve psychological identity with an absolute or unifying principle in the universe. The state of mind is very much akin to Zen, which is derived from tantra.

In the Madhyamika school of Nāgārjuna, the Middle Path of early Buddhism is redefined metaphysically and indicates a non-acceptance of opposing views concerning existence and non-existence, eternity and non-eternity, self and non-self. Reality is *śūnyatā*; all knowledge is relative. There is neither origination nor cessation, permanence nor impermanence, unity nor diversity. In *śūnyatā*, no things have an intrinsic nature but take their value from contrast with other things. Subjective and objective, passive and active, internal and external are all interdependent and do not exist separately.

26. André Bareau, W. Schubring, and C. von Fürer-Haimendorf, *Les Religions de l'Inde.* Vol. III: *Bouddhisme, Jaïnisme, Religions Archaïques* (Paris: Payot, 1966), p. 200.

27. Mitra, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

28. D.L. Snellgrove, *The Hevajra Tantra* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), I, p. 1.

29. Majumdar, *The Age of Imperial Kanauj*, p. xiv.

This unity is best expressed as a conjunction of opposites, a fusion of all the disparate elements, physical and mental, that helps the adherent reach a state of oneness. To this end are directed all the various aids – *mantras*, *mudrās*, and *maṇḍalas* – but the most important symbol is "the union of male and female in the ecstacy of love",[30] which different scholars interpret as fingurative or real. This concept, plus several other ambivalent practices has exposed tantra to charges of gross immorality. Evidence exists for and against such a charge, but there is not enough space to pursue the argument here.

We have seen how the dream of nirvāṇa evolved in later Buddhism. Just as the concept found wider appeal in its Mahāyāna form, the tantric interpretation brings to it an even greater immediacy. In Mahāyāna, one could reach an ill-defined nirvāṇa, but seldom in a lifetime. The celestial city, gained through aeons of effort and suffering, could suffice only the most tenacious of spirits. The tantric ideal (Mahāsukha), attainable while still alive, could not fail to attract more adherents than either of the earlier forms.

HINDUISM AND BUDDHISM; BUDDHA AS AVATĀRA

The religious history of India from the eighth to the twelfth century reveals tantra, Vaiṣṇavism, and Vedanta as its dominant motifs. It is often asserted that Śaṅkara's philosophy undercut Buddhism and weakened it considerably,[31] but closer observation fails to support this. Śaṅkara attacked all the systems equally, including Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism,[32] and there is no proof that Buddhism suffered more than any other creed. On the contrary, it flourished in Bihar during the next two centuries, sharing with greater intimacy the values of a new

30. Anagarika Govinda, "Principles of Tāntric Buddhism", in P.V. Bapat (ed.), *2500 Years of Buddhism* (Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1959), p. 365.

31. Majumdar, *The Age of Imperial Kanauj*, p. xxi.

32. Kern, *op. cit.*, p. 456. Also H.C. Raychaudhuri, *The Early History of the Vaishṇava Sect* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1936), p. 179.

Vaiṣṇavism. Without belief in a personal god or in some higher benevolent reality, there was little common ground between Buddhist and Vaiṣṇava. This common ground was joined, as Mahāyāna assumed a more theistic, more antinomian quality. At this time, Vaiṣṇavism, championed by the Guptas, began to permeate Mahāyāna. A natural point of contact was the mahāvihāras. Supported by the Guptas as institutions of secular learning, they brought within their purview all the knowledge of the times.

Indications of the rapprochement appear in literary works, in statues of Buddha as an Avatāra of Viṣṇu, in ceremonies, and fleeting personal observations. Both creeds show the strong stamp of *bhakti*, which insisted on "single-minded devotion to the object of adoration as the only way of salvation."[33] Nowhere does the fervor of *bhakti* shine more brightly than in these lines out of Śānti-Deva's *Bodhicharyāvatāra*, from the eighth century:

> Take me for your chattel, O noble beings; I make myself in love your slave. By being your chattel I am freed from fear in life, and work good for living creatures; I escape my former sins, and do evil no more ...[34]

while the *Kāla-Cakra-Tantra* reveals a strong association of Hindu and Buddhist deities, "which may be the result of conscious effort to unite the Hindus and Buddhists in common against foreign cultural penetration."[35] This resemblance between Buddhism and Hinduism grew even more striking with the emergence of tantra.[36]

Absorption of Buddha into the Vaiṣṇava pantheon may have begun early in the Gupta period. By the eighth and ninth century, it is a familiar feature. In the tenth Canto of Kṣemendra's *Daśāvatāra*, Buddha appears as one of the ten incarnations of Viṣṇu,[37] while Jayadeva, the

33. Sukumar Dutt, *Buddhist Monks and Monasteries of India* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1962), p. 179.

34. L.D.Barnett, *The Path of Light*. Rendered from the Bodhicharyāvatarā of Sānti-Deva (London: John Murray), p. 38.

35. Mitra, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 58.

37. Dutt, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

devout Vaiṣṇava poet of Bengal, describes Buddha as the ninth incarnation of Keśava (Viṣṇu), in his lyric poem the *Gita-Govinda*.

Other examples attest to the fusion with Hinduism. We read of a religious festival from the twelfth century: "The twelfth half of the bright half of the month of Śrāvana was known as Buddhadvadāsi ... a golden image of the Buddha was to be worshipped and then offered to a Brāhmaṇa."[38] While visiting India early in the thirteenth century, the Tibetan monk Dharmaswāmi came upon a sacrifice conducted by non-Buddhists, in which 300 buffaloes and 300 loads of rice were offered to the Tantric Mother Goddess, while *maṇḍalas* were made of embers from the fire.[39] Even today, many Buddhist images in Bihar are worshipped as Hindu gods, without thought for their iconographic details.[40]

HISTORY OF NĀLANDĀ

Nālandā appears early in the history of India. Jain texts indicate that Mahāvīra spent four rainly seasons within its precincts. Similarly, Buddhist literature mentions it as a spot often visited by the Master. According to Roy Chaudhuri, Nālandā in these ancient days was "a very prosperous temple city, a great place of pilgrimage and the site of a celebrated university."[41] In early times, it served as a distribution center along the trade route from the northwest, only a few miles from the Magadha capital of Rājagṛha.[42] As a seat of learning, Nālandā does not become prominent until the fifth century when the Gupta king Śākraditya (Kumāragupta I?) built a monastery there. This must have happened some time after A.D. 414, as Fa-hien makes no reference to

38. B.P. Mazumdar, *Socio-Economic History of Northern India* (Calcutta: K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1960), p. 284.

39. Diwakar, *op. cit.*, p. 336.

40. P.C. Roy Chaudhuri, *Temples and Legends of Bihar* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1965), p. xiii.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 87.

42. Dutt, *op. cit.*, p. 328.

it in his travels through the region. Heras dates the founding of Nālandā around A.D. 427.[43] At any rate, there are no archaeological remains prior to Gupta times.[44] After Śākraditya's monastery, four more were added by later Gupta kings and under their patronage, the educational function of the vihāra soon overshadowed its narrow identification with Buddhist culture.[45] Largely for this reason, the Guptas founded other monasteries as well, providing for their support with land grants and villages.[46] Evidently Gupta interest in Buddhism went beyond its value in public education. A succeeding king, Pura Gupta (Tathāgatagupta) appointed Vasubandhu as teacher of his son and sent his own wife to study under the famous Buddhist philosopher.[47] The lessons seem to have been well-learned, for according to Hiuen-Tsang, Narasiṃha Gupta (Bālāditya-rāja) became a Buddhist.[48] It is even said that in old age he abdicated and entered the *saṅgha*.[49] During Narasiṃha's reign, Mihirakula issued a decree declaring his purpose of uprooting all Buddhism and its priests. Pursuing Narasiṃha into Bengal, he levelled many sites in Bihar, and Nālandā itself was probably destroyed for the first time.[50] Narasiṃha rebuilt much of monastery after the Huṇa's death. For the dedication, he called a great assembly, attracting 10,000 priests from all over India. Two came from as far as China,[51] so great was the fame of Nālandā.

The center continued to grow under Harṣa and the Pāla kings. Hiuen-Tsang's biographer, Hwui-Li, mentions the ruler of Kanauj: "The king of the country respects and honours the priests, and has remitted the revenues of about 100 villages for the endowment of the

43. Heras, *loc. cit.*, p. 3.
44. Dutt, *op. cit.*, p. 197.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 331.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 197.
47. Heras, *loc. cit.*, p. 4.
48. Jayaswal, *op. cit.*, p. 168.
49. Heras, *loc. cit.*, p. 2.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
51. Beal, *op. cit.*, III, 384.

convent."[52] The founding of several more such institutions during Pāla times, notably Odantapurī and Vikramśīla, attests to the mahāvihāra's increasing importance in the cultural life of Bihar. The names of five come down to us in Bihar-Bengal, all within the province of the Pāla kings.[53] In his memoirs, I-tsing reports that Nālandā housed over 3,000 priests.[54] Hwui-Li places the number at 10,000,[55] but this seems too high. Judging from the construction of new edifices, however, enrollment must have grown considerably under the Pālas. Support for these sprawling institutions came not only from kings, but from private individuals and heads of the Vaiśyas.[56]

Around 1200, Nālandā, with its priceless heritage of learning, was destroyed by the Moslem invaders. The Tibetan monk Dharmaswāmi, who visited the site in 1235, describes the Turuṣka soldiers prowling the ruins, while he and his guru lay hid in a deserted monastery.[57] At this time only two vihāras remained in serviceable condition, where before there had been fourteen large monasteries and eighty-four small ones.[58] Still, learning continued in the flickering light of ancient glories, and Dharmaswāmi spent several months studying under Rāhula-śrī-Bhadra, one of the last remaining teachers, who had gathered about him a band of seventy followers.[59] The monastery continued to receive support from a few wealthy merchants, and from Buddhasena, king of Magadha, who professed allegiance to his Moslem overlords.[60] On authority of the *Pag-Sam Jon Zang*, Vidyābhūsana states that the temples

52. Heras, *loc. cit.*, p. 16.

53. Dutt, *op. cit.*, p. 327.

54. J. Takakusu (trans.), *I-tsing's Record of the Buddhist Religion in India and the Malay Archipeligo* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1966), p. 154–155.

55. Dutt, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

56. Verma, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

57. George N. Roerich, *Biography of Dharmasvāmin* (Patna: K. P. Jayaswal Research Institute, 1959), p. 94.

58. *Ibid.*, p. xx.

59. *Ibid.*

60. *Ibid.*, p. xli.

and monasteries were rebuilt after the Moslem destruction,[61] but no clear evidence supports this. Stray bits of information do appear: we read in a Korean inscription of the monk Dhyānabhadra, born in Magadha and ordained at Nālandā early in the fourteenth century![62]

PHILOSOPHY, EDUCATION, AND FUSION

Originally, the pursuit of secular knowledge held little value for the Buddhist monk, interested in freeing himself from worldly attachments, and the monasteries must have been high, if lonely, homes for the seekers of truth. But from the second or third century A.D., they began to evolve as seats of learning and scholarship.

> A time came ... when the emphasis latent in primitive Buddhism on intellectual ability and the urge to know, to think and reason for oneself seems to have outweighed the original purpose of secluded spiritual cultivation.[63]

Eventually the monasteries outgrew their original focus on the Buddhist Canon and came to offera wide range of secular subjects. During his stay at Nālandā, Hiuen-Tsang studied philosophy, grammar logic, medicine, and the *Atharvaveda*.[64] I-tsing indicates that all of Pāṇini's existing grammatical texts were taught, including the *Ashṭādhyāyī*.[65] The mahāvihāra may have emerged as an institution of secular learning in the Gupta Age. Before this times, the saṅgha was open only to men who had renounced the world. Now, it accepted even those planning to resume the life of the householder after completing their studies. Responding to the needs of society, the monasteries also added vocational subjects to the curriculum,[66] though still requiring the study of Mahāyāna philosophy.[67]

61. S.C. Vidyābhūsana, *History of the Medieval School of Indian Logic* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1909), p. 149.
62. Mazumdar, *op. cit.*, p. 165.
63. S. Dutt, "Buddhist Education", in Bapat, *op. cit.*, p. 193.
64. Roy Chaudhuri, *op. cit.*, p. 89.
65. Takakusu, *op. cit.*, p. 167.
66. H.D. Sankalia, *The University of Nālandā* (Madras: B.G. Paul, 1934), p. 32.
67. Dutt, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

By the ninth century, tantrism had come to dominate the Buddhist part of the curriculum.[68] As centers of tantrism, Nālandā and Vikramaśīla gave shape and direction to the new creed. Here, studies "did not consist in a mere theoretical knowledge of the subject. The student was required to perform religious rites and worship of the images which he had read in books."[69] However, rules of conduct at these institutions were quite strict, and one can only conclude that orthodox tantric practice was far more strict than many scholars suggest. One monk, for example, was expelled from Nālandā for having a flask of wine in his possession.[70] While at Vikramaśīla, Atīśa turned out several tantric teachers, including the priest Divākarachandra, who led a married life.[71] There are other cases where similar kinds of misconduct resulted in expulsion.

Once admitting all knowledge as their province, institutions like Nālandā quickened the dialogue between Buddhist and Hindu. What high times these must have been, when the patter of the day's affairs had faded from the great halls, and men sat into the small hours of the morning, working their way towards the great sodality that lies at the end of all religious, and towards oblivion:

> The uninhibited scope and freedom of these discussions at Nālandā and also at the other monastic universities must be counted as a great contributing factor in that process of fusion of Brahmanical and Buddhist thought and culture.[72]

EMINENT TEACHERS; EXPANSION OF BUDDHISM

Until the rise of Vikramaśīla, Nālandā was the intellectual center of Buddhism, attracting scholars from the entire Buddhist world. Nāgārjuna studied at Nālandā in the second century. From Peshawar came Āsaṅga and Vasubandhu, and Dinnāga and Dharmapāla from the

68. Sankalia, *op. cit.*, p. 185. 69. *Ibid.*, p. 128.
70. *Ibid.*, p. 187.
71. Mazumdar, *op. cit.*, p. 155.
72. S. Dutt, "Buddhist Education", in Bapat, *op. cit.*, p. 188.

South. The theory of Yogāchāra and Vijñānavāda developed largely at Nālandā and created a revolution in Buddhism, leading to expansion of the Buddhist pantheon.[73] At least twelve of I-tsing's sixty pilgrims who visited India in the seventh century stayed for a while at Nālandā.[74] Śāntideva dwelt there; likewise the monk Viradeva, who had come from Jalalabad in the second half of the ninth century.[75] In the eleventh century, Marpā, the guru of Milarepā, journeyed from Tibet to study under Nāropa.[76]

One of the most famous groups associated with Nālandā was the Siddhas, who flourished in India between the eighth and the twelfth century. A further reflection of the monastery's contact with everyday life, they came from all parts of India and all levels of society but chiefly from socially inferior professions, such as hunting, gardening, and woodcutting.[77] Sarahapā, born in the eighth century, embodies the message of the Siddhas in his strong criticism of caste distinctions, book learning, superstition, and the worship of deities with pompous rituals.[78] From the very beginning, Buddhism had been a proselytizing religion, and the later Siddhas, active among śūdras and untouchables, made many converts.[79]

Many of the later luminaries of Nālandā were also active in carrying Buddhism to foreign countries. The distinguished Āchārya, Śāntarakṣita, went from Nālandā to propagate the faith in Tibet. He was joined by Siddha Padmasambhava, originally from Uḍḍayāna in the North-west,[80]

73. N. Aiyaswami Sastri, "Approach to Hinduism", in Bapat, *op. cit.*, p. 340.

74. Edouard Chavannes, *Memoire Composé à l'époque de la grande dynastie T'ang sur les Religieux Eminents qui Allèrent chercher la loi dans les pays d'occident, par T-tsing* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1894), p. xv.

75. F. Kielhorn, "A Budhist Stone-Inscription from Ghosrawa," *Indian Antiquary* (November, 1888), p. 309.

76. Jacques Bacot, *La Vie de Marpā* (Paris: Paul Geunther, 1937), p. 2.

77. H. de Glasenapp, *Mystères Bouddhistes* (Paris: Payot, 1944), p. 59.

78. Diwakar, *op. cit.*, p. 356.

79. Verma, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

80. D.L. Snellgrove, *Buddhist Himalaya* (Oxford: Bruno Cassirer, 1957), p. 151.

who had been educated at the monastery.[81] One of the greatest Buddhist teachers, Atīśa, was also called to Tibet, in 1039.

During our period, Buddhism made considerable progress as well in China and Indonesia. The oldest Buddhist inscription of Java, dated A.D. 778, refers to the foundation of a temple dedicated to Tārā,[82] and there are several indications of influence emanating from Nālandā.[83] Starting in the seventh century, scholars from Nālandā began to play a considerable role propagating the faith in China.[84]

One is faced with an endless number of theories, in trying to understand the decline of Buddhism in India. Among the most popular is the assertion that tantric influences weakened the faith, leading to its destruction in the eleventh and twelfth century.

Central to any hypothesis of decline is a carefully drawn picture of historical conditions. In examining this picture, we are often confronted with the strengths of the religion, not its weaknesses. From the time of the Pālas, we notice an extraordinary increase in enrollment among the Buddhist universities of Bihar. This, plus a wide offering of vocational courses and other secular subjects, hardly suggests a loss of contact with the people. Moreover, the Siddhas, closely connected with Nālandā, and active until the very end, reveal a strong proselytizing strain in the religion.

To the common man certain tantric interpretations of the Doctrine had far greater appeal than in their Mahāyāna form: the possibility of attaining nirvāṇa in one lifetime is a distinct improvement over patient suffering through countless aeons. By not demanding adherence to a monastic code, Sahajayāna could be followed by the masses. Turning to the more dubious tantric practices, they no doubt existed. But

81. Sarat Chandra Das, *Indian Pandits in the Land of Snow* (Calcutta: Firma K.L.Mukhopadhyay, 1965), p.vi.

82. J.Ph.Vogel, *Buddhist Art in India, Ceylon and Java* (Oxford: University Press, 1936), p.91.

83. Diwakar, *op. cit.*, p.366.

84. Prabodh Bagchi, *India and China* (Bombay: Hind Kitabs, 1950), p.49.

determining their popularity and influence is another matter. Clearly, certain aspects of Buddhism in Bihar from the eighth to the twelfth century indicate elements of considerable strenght and the likelihood that natural senescence was less important in its disappearance than a confluence of historical misfortunes.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BACOT, JACQUES, *La Vie de Marpā*. Paris: Paul Geunther, 1937.

BAGCHI, PRABODH, *India and China*. Bombay: Hind Kitabs, 1950.

BAPAT, P.V. (ed.), *2500 Years of Buddhism*. Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1959.

BAREAU, ANDRE, SCHUBRING, W., and VON FÜRER-HAIMENDORF, C. *Les Religions de L'Inde*. Vol. III: *Bouddhisme, Jaïnisme, Religions Archaïques*. Paris: Payot, 1966.

BARNETT, L.D., *The Path of Light*. Rendered from the Bodhicharyāvatarā of Śānti-Deva. London: John Murray, 1947.

BEAL, SAMUEL, *Travels of Hiouen-Thsang*. 4 Vols. Calcutta: Susil Gupta, 1958.

BHATTACHARYYA, B., *Indian Buddhist Iconography*. Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1958.

– *Introduction to Buddhist Esoterism*. Varanasi: Chowkhamba, 1964.

BROADLEY, A.M., "The Buddhist Remains of Bihar," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, XLI, Pt. I (1872), p. 209–302.

BU-STON, *History of Buddhism*. Pt. II: *The History of Buddhism in India and Tibet*. Translated by E. Obermiller. Heidelberg: O. Harrassowitz, 1932.

CHAVANNES, EDOUARD, *Memoire Composé à l'époque de la grande dynastie T'ang sur les Religieux Eminents qui Allèrent chercher la loi dans les pays d'occident, par I-tsing*. Paris: E. Leroux, 1894.

CHOUDHARY, R.K. *History of Bihar*. Patna: Motilal Banarsidass, 1958.

Das, SARAT CHANDRA, *Indian Pandits in the Land of Snow*. Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1965.

DASGUPTA, SHASHI, *An Introduction to Tantric Buddhism*. Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1950.

DIWAKAR, R.R. (ed.), *Bihar Through the Ages*. Calcutta: Orient Longmans, 1959.

DUTT, SUKUMAR, *Buddhist Monks and Monasteries of India*. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1962.

ELIADE, MIRCEA, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1958.

GHOSH, A., *Guide to Nālandā*. Delhi: Government of India Press, 1950.

GLASENAPP, H. DE, *Mystères Bouddhistes*. Paris: Payot, 1944.

HALL, D.G.E., *A History of South-east Asia*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1955.

HERAS, H., "The Royal Patrons of the University of Nālandā", *Journal of the Behar and Orissa Research Society*, XIV, Pts. I (1928), p. 1–23.

JAYASWAL, K.P., *An Imperial History of India*. Lahore: Motilal Banarsidass, 1934.

KERN, HENDRICK, *Histoire du Bouddhisme dans L'Inde*. 2 Vols. Paris: E. Leroux, 1901.

KEYT, GEORGE (trans.) *Sri Jayadeva's Gita Govinda*. Bombay: Kutub Popular, 1965.

KIELHORN, F., "*A Buddhist Stone-Inscription from Ghosrawa*," *Indian Antiquary* (November, 1888), p. 307–312.

LEGGE, JAMES, *A Record of Buddhist Kingdoms*. New York: Paragon Reprint Corp. and Dover Publications, 1965.

LÉVI, SYLVAIN, and Chavannes E., "Itineraires d'Ou-K'ong," *Journal Asiatique* VI (1895), p. 341–384.

MAJUMDAR, R. C. (ed.), *The History and Culture of the Indian People*. Vol. IV: *The Age of Imperial Kanauj*. Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1955.

– *The History and Culture of the Indian People*. Vol. V: *The Struggle for Empire*. Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1957.

– *The History of Bengal*. Vol. I: *Hindu Period*. Dacca: University of Dacca Press, 1963.

MAZUMDAR, B.P., *Socio-Economic History of Northern India*. Calcutta: K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1960.

MITRA, R.C., *The Decline of Buddhism in India*. Santiniketan: Visva-Bharati, 1954.

MOOKERJI, RADHA KAMAL, *Glimpses of Ancient India*. Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan 1961.

RAYCHAUDHURI, H.C., *The Early History of the Vaishṇava* Sect. Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1936.

ROERICH, GEORGE N., *Biography of Dharmasvāmin*. Patna: K.P. Jayaswal Research Institute, 1959.

ROY CHOUDHURY, H. C., *Temples and Legends of Bihar*. Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1965.

SANKALIA, H.D., *The University of Nālandā*. Madras: B.G. Paul, 1934.

SANKRTYAYANA, RAHULA, "Recherches bouddhiques: L'Origine du Vajrayāna et les 84 Siddhas", *Journal Asiatique*, CCXXV, No. 12 (1934), p. 195–230.

SNELLGROVE, D.L., *The Hevajra Tantra*. Vol. I. London: Oxford University Press, 1959.

Takakusu, J. (trans.), *I-tsing's Record of the Buddhist Religion in India and the Malay Archipelago*. Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1966.

TARANATHA, *Mystic Tales of Lāmā Tāranātha*. Translated into English by B.N. Datta. Calcutta: Ramakrishna Vedanta Math, 1944.

VAIDYA, C.V., *History of Medieval Hindu India*. 3 Vols. Poona: Oriental Book-Supplying Agency, 1921.

VERMA, BHAGWATI, *Socio-Religious, Economic and Literary Conditions in Bihar*. Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1962.

VOGEL, J. Ph., *Buddhist Art in India, Ceylon and Java*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936.

VIDYABHUSANA, S.C., *History of the Medieval School of Indian Logic*. Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1909.