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Various aspects towards decline of buddhism in ancient Maharashtra

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Abstract

India is the home of Buddhism. The study of Buddhism has in recent years become quite a vogue in the India and Maharashtra. Buddhism has existed for well over two thousand years. Today Indians are feeling proud for their antiquity of Buddhist philosophy, art, architecture and literature. History of Buddhism in ancient Maharashtra has great importance in Modern socio-economic and cultural perspective. The process of the discovery of Buddhism in India and Maharashtra is still going on. Many researcher, scholars and historians discovered the journey of Buddhism in ancient Maharashtra. This research paper deals with the process of decline of Buddhism in ancient Maharashtra. Also, this paper discuss about the various cause of disappearance of Buddhism in ancient Maharashtra.

Keywords: Buddhism, Vogue, Existed, Antiquity, Perspective, Discovery, Ancient Maharashtra.

1. Introduction

According to Ankur Barua, Initiated in India by the Sakyamuni Buddha, Buddhism has now become a world religion and at present, the Buddhist population is the third largest religious community in the world. Buddhism lasted over a thousand years in India, the land of its origin. But the supreme irony of the history of Indian Buddhism still remains with the unexplained question regarding what led to the disappearance of Buddhism from India. Many scholars of Indian history and religion are devoted to unraveling this puzzle. Due to the lack of historical and archeological evidence, the debate continues for centuries and there is no absolute consensus on this matter till date.

We may see the similar situation of about the emergence and decline of Buddhism in ancient Maharashtra. Due to the religious tolerance policy of Satavahana, Vakataka, Chalukya and Rashtrakuta systematic spread of Buddhism had took place in ancient Maharashtra. Also for the propagation of Buddhism many of chaitya, stupa, vihara and rock cut architecture were carved in the ancient Maharashtra by the devotees of this religion. But in the course of time Buddhism has come to an end, but not totally vanished due to several factors.

In this research paper researcher will throw the lights on different causes of the decline of Buddhism from ancient Maharashtra. Also the opinion of various historians and scholars about the decline of Buddhism in India and Maharashtra. Finally researcher will state his own opinion and thoughts about the decline of Buddhism from ancient Maharashtra.

2. Objectives:

- To through light on the process of gradual disappearance of Buddhism in ancient Maharashtra.
- To explore the cause of the decline of Buddhism in ancient Maharashtra.

2.1 Expansion of Buddhism in ancient Maharashtra

Buddhism was an outcome of various vices and rituals which crept into Hinduism in course of time. The supremacy of Brahmanism and its orthodox rituals and sacrifices had made Brahmanism very unpopular in ancient Maharashtra. Buddhism was based on the spirit of equality. Caste system had no place in it. The Buddha laid stress on the middle path and the eight-fold path, it was not difficult for the general masses to understand the simple theory of four Aryan Truths and the eight fold path. Thus The Buddha made his religion easily intelligible to all people.

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The simplicity of Buddhism also contributed to its rapid growth in ancient Maharashtra.

Ashoka did play a major role in the propagation of Buddhism both within and outside his empire. He used the state machinery of Rajukas and Mahamatras-adding a new specialized cadre of Dharma-Mahamatras-to disseminate a universal code of simple everyday ethics culled out by himself from his favorite Buddhist texts. He replaced the call of drums for military services with that for Dharma. The propagation of his code of ethics was viewed by him as a conquest through Dharma. He commenced the teaching of the Dharma ten years after the coronation, according to his Greek /Aramaic inscription. He began inscribing his messages on rocks twelve years after the coronation and appointed Dharma-Mahamatras thirteen years after the coronation. He issued Pillar Edicts twenty-six and twenty seven years after the coronation. The dissemination of Buddhism proper with all its doctrinal and practical complexities was an initiative of the Sangha. Ashoka's role in this endeavor had been to extend his patronage and support. His major contribution appears to have been in the form of exploratory missions to prepare the receptivity of host countries for missions by monks.

2.2 Causes of Decline of Buddhism in Ancient Maharashtra

In spite of its ever growing popularity and expansion, Buddhism failed to swallow up Hinduism entirely. Later on when Buddhism tended towards its decline, Hinduism again rose to prominence. With the passage of time the old power and prestige of Buddhism completely disappeared from Maharashtra .The revival of Hinduism was not only the cause of its decline, but some internal factors also contributed to its decline. According to V. A. Smith, "Buddhism passed away in India not from Brahmin persecution, but rather from internal causes such as, relaxed discipline overgrowth of monasticism."

Many causes were responsible for the gradual decline and downfall of Buddhism in ancient India, although it continued to flourish in countries beyond India for centuries. Even today, it has a large number of followers all over the world. Various causes of decline are as follows:

1. Lack of Royal Patronage
2. Oblivion of Ahimsa and Aprigraha Principles
3. Lack of powerful personalities
4. Defects in Buddhism
5. Buddhist Sangha
6. Dispute over Wealth and Leaderships in Buddhist Monasteries.
7. Islamic Invasions
8. Assimilative Power of Hinduism
9. Adi Shankaracharya
10. Buddhists Were Persecuted by Brahmins
11. Tantricism
12. Adi Shankaracharya had Preserved Buddhism by Incorporating It into Hinduism

2.3 Causes of disappearance of Buddhism in Ancient Maharashtra from researcher's view

Ashoka's reign was the Golden Age of India. His vast empire became a land of peace and happiness. Here was a ruler who ruled according to the law of the Buddha. Ashoka was imbued with the spirit of the teaching of the master; he was one who lived the Law. He looked after the people as a saint

looks after humanity. He completely gave himself up to the Master, to the Dhamma, to the Sangha and to the people. Inscribed rocks and stone pillars, still found from Kashmir to Orissa, bear testimony to the extent of Ashoka's Empire, the righteousness and wisdom of his rule and the nobility of his character. His kingdom from plain to the mountain - cave was freedom's home. The spread of Buddhism in India at first was due to the efforts of the Sangha which handed down the Dhamma, the teaching of the Buddha. The Emperor Ashoka took a personal interest in spreading his new faith in India, and in foreign countries with which he had political and commercial relations. But sometimes adulation exceeded the limits of accuracy.

After reading literary references and study of archeological evidence researcher got some ideas about the causes of the gradual disappearance of Buddhism in ancient Maharashtra. These causes may be assisted to the disappearance of Buddhism from Maharashtra. These are opinions of researchers. I may not consider that everybody will agree with these opinion.

3. Rise of feudalism

In the post Gupta era rise of feudalism found in India. In course of time Due to feudalism, many of problematic impact found on the Indian subcontinent. We may say that, the remarkable impact of feudalism was the downfall of trade and commerce. Before this period India has good trade relation with other countries. Due to political stability, growth in trade and commerce took place in India and Maharashtra. But in the period of feudalism due to political instability we found downfall in trade and commerce.

In Maharashtra we found many of Buddhist Monasteries were constructed by donations of traders. Due to downfall of trade and commerce Buddhist monasteries stop to get donations and economic conditions becomes pathetic. After this nobody gave them donations. May be this was the main cause the disappearance of Buddhism in ancient Maharashtra.

4. Lack of Buddhist Education centers

Nalanda, Vikramshila and Vallabhi were the Buddhist education centers in ancient India. For many centuries, these were played the prominent role in the educational development of India. Foreign students were persuade the wealth of knowledge from it. These were also got royal patronage from north Indian rulers. But in the course of time these universities vanished due to Muslim invasions. We may say that these universities become social, religious, philosophical and cultural centers of ancient India.

If we critically see towards Ancient Maharashtra we may find that there was no establishment of Universities or Education centers like Nalanda, Vikramshila and Vallabhi took place. Due to which exchange of knowledge and progress also stopped. In researcher's view, this was also the tremendous cause because of which spread of Buddhas teaching and dictums have not reached toward whole lay mass. According to researcher's opinion, Buddhist Universities like Nalanda were not established in Ancient Maharashtra; otherwise it would prevent the decline of Buddhism from Maharashtra.

5. Lack Permanent Military

Many of Buddhist monasteries, Chaitya, Vihara, Educational and cultural centers were destroyed by Muslim invasions.

Due to which many of Buddhist monks and nuns were lost their life. Many monks and nuns migrated into other countries and many have changed their cast. Some scholars consider that this was the main cause of the decline of Buddhism in India.

In case of Buddhism in ancient Maharashtra, these Buddhist monasteries were situated in inaccessible places. These monasteries have tremendous wealth, but they don't have permanent military for the security of this. If these monasteries met accidentally with any robbery, then it is very difficult to fight with them because of the principal of Ahimsa they don't have the permission to fight. So maybe this was also a great cause of disappearance of Buddhism from ancient Maharashtra.

6. Use of Sanskrit Language

The Buddha laid stress on the use of mass / common language i.e. Pali for preaching and propagation. Buddha never gave significance to the Vedas and Sanskrit language. The superiority of the Vedas was not accepted by him. Buddha preached, then teachings in spoken language and Sanskrit language began to lose its importance. This was also the cause of rise of Buddhism in India and Maharashtra.

In Maharashtra many Buddhist rock cut architecture, chaitya, Vihara and monasteries were found, If we critically observe to the language of the inscriptions found in these monasteries, most of which we may see Sanskrit language has used. Common peoples were less knowledge of Sanskrit Language and it was very difficult to understand .Since lay peoples were gradually become gloomy about Buddhism. Since Buddhist monks started using Sanskrit they lost their relations with common man, which resulted in common man going away from Buddhism. This is also the great cause which assisted to disappearance of Buddhism from ancient Maharashtra.

7. Lack of Powerful Personality

Lord Buddha, the founder of Buddhism has a unique and popular personality in ancient India. His magnetic personality was helped to Buddhism for its rapid spread in India and the world. People were spellbound when they listened to the sermon of Lord Buddha. After Buddha Emperor like Ashoka, Kanishka and Harsha accepted Buddhism and they propagated Buddhism. Due to their systematic tactics spread of Buddhism took place.

In Maharashtra's perspective, we may not find the personality like Buddha or any other person who inspired peoples and propagate the Buddhism, due to which limited people were attracted. We may say that this is the cause due to which gradually Buddhism was disappeared from ancient Maharashtra.

6. Conflicts in Sangha

Monks and Nuns in Buddhist Sangha were came from different regions, in their debts may be there were conflicts .Some Monks become mighty and their relation with layman become weakened this issue was also affected to disappearance of Buddhism in ancient Maharashtra.

7. Other Causes of Disappearance of Buddhism

Above causes of disappearance of Buddhism in ancient Maharashtra were prominent but in researchers view some few causes also assisted to decline of Buddhism in ancient Maharashtra.

1. Natural disasters like earthquake, drought, National Calamities were affected.
2. Buddha never visited to Maharashtra.
3. Relation with laypeople weakened.
4. Hinduism becomes mightier than Buddhism.
5. Foreign Invasions.
6. Lack of good followers.
7. Lack of Science and Technology.
8. Lord Buddha's teaching and Dictums were forgotten.
9. Rites and Rituals were rose in course of time.

May be these above issues were also helped to disappearance of Buddhism in ancient Maharashtra.

8. Conclusion

In this modern era of globalization, tourism plays vital role in the development of the country. In this point of view the causes of decline of Buddhism in ancient Maharashtra has great importance.

According to Ankur Barua, it is important to understand that Buddhism was never wiped off from India on a single day and in any single event. Like the causal web of a disease, it was a multi-factorial causation. The process of decline and subsequent disappearance was gradual and lasted for many centuries. So, before we get into the details of any historical analysis, we should first arrange the factors in a chronological order and observe the interdependency of a previous event leading to the next.

In conclusion, we may say that the disappearance of Buddhism in ancient Maharashtra took place due to the above said causes which assisted to the gradual disappearance of it through ancient Maharashtra.

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