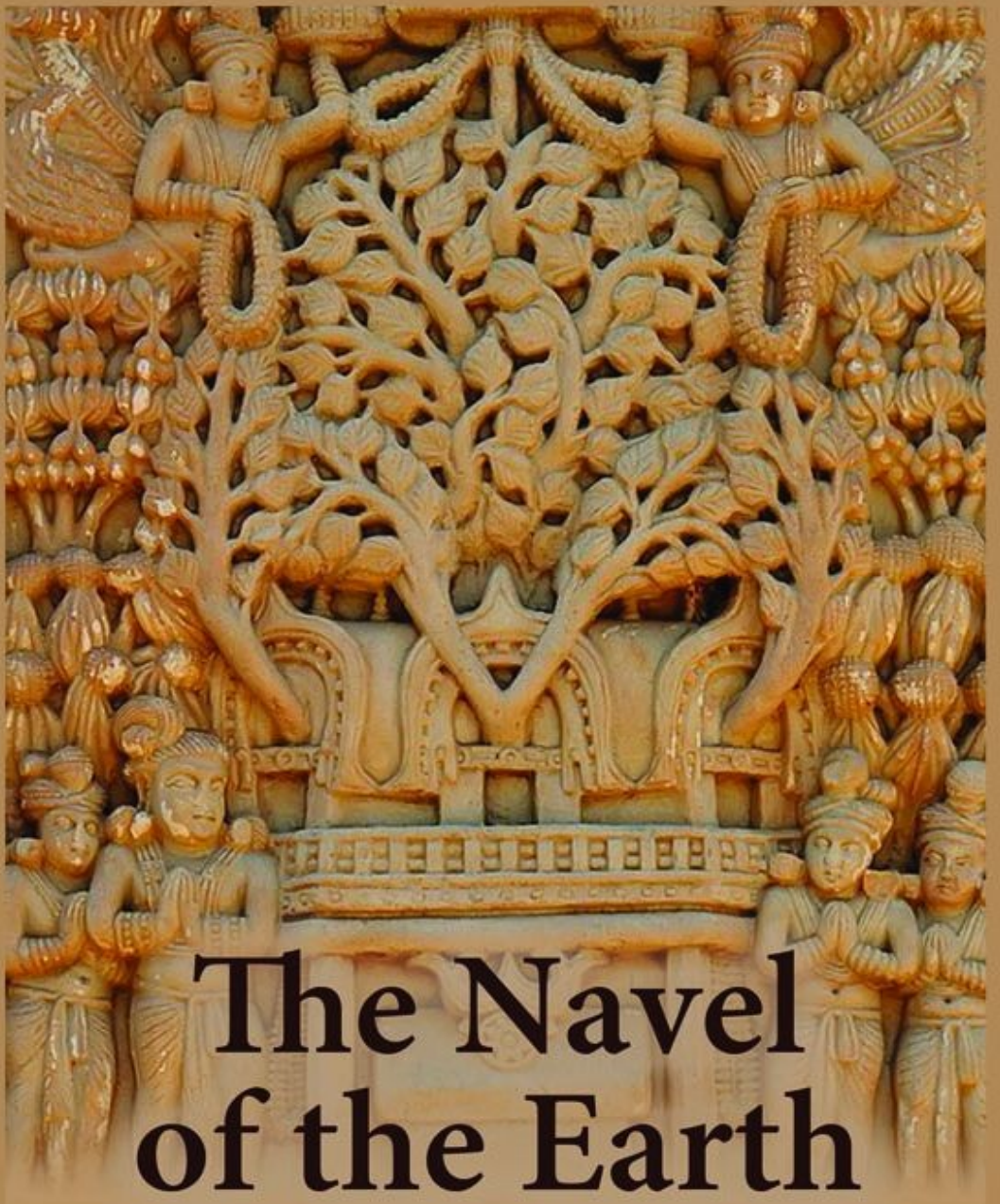

# The Navel of the Earth

## The History and Significance of Bodh Gaya

S. DHAMMIKA

**Buddhism / Nature** **BP630s**

# The Navel of the Earth

The town of Bodh Gaya in the north Indian state of Bihar is the site of the Buddha's enlightenment and the most sacred place in the Buddhist world. For over 2000 years pilgrims have made their way to Bodh Gaya from every corner of Asia, often leaving records of their visits in inscriptions, memoirs, travelogues and even graffiti. Using these and other sources this book chronicles the place's long and fascinating history. It recounts the magnificent ceremonies that once took place there, the saints and scholars associated with it, and the various legends that grew up around it. Including previously overlooked information, it also challenges the popular belief that Bodh Gaya was destroyed at the end on the 12th century and was forgotten and unvisited by Buddhist pilgrims for the next 700 years. *Navel of the Earth* should prove to be of interest to Indologists and social historians as well as to Buddhists.

Bhante S. Dhammika was born in Australia and was ordained as a monk in India in 1976. Since then he has lived and taught Buddhism in Sri Lanka and Singapore and now resides in Australia. Amongst his many books are those published by the Buddhist Publication Society including *Matrceta's Hymn to the Buddha, The Edicts of King Asoka, Middle Land Middle Way, The Buddha and His Disciples* and *Nature and the Environment in Early Buddhism*.

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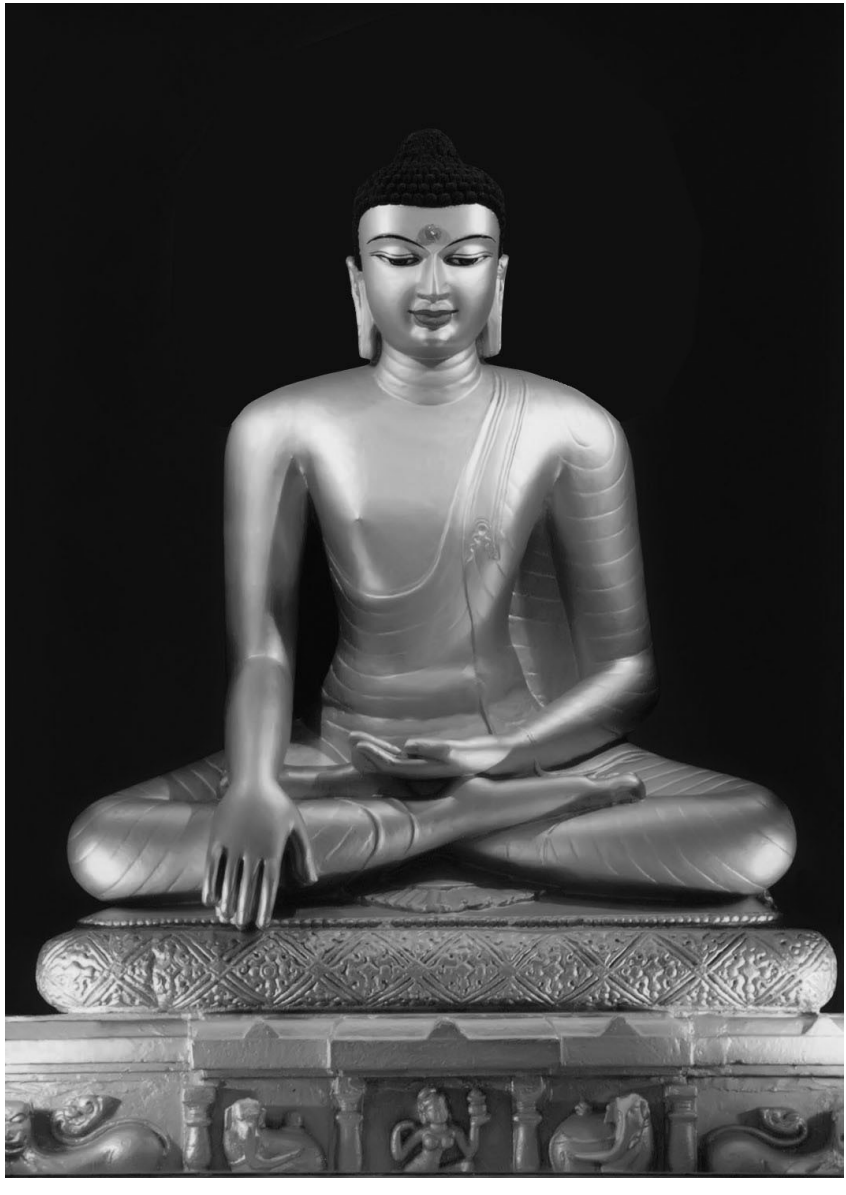

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# Preface

India has literally thousands of places that its rich and enduring civilization has adorned with magnificent monuments. Although Bodh Gayā has not attracted as much attention as Agra with its Taj Mahal or Khajuraho's temples with their erotic sculptures, it is nonetheless one of the most interesting and significant of these places. Bodh Gayā's historical significance it due to it having a longer and more complete history than almost any other place in the subcontinent, a history supplemented by epigraphical and literary sources from China and Tibet, Burma, Thailand and Sri Lanka. Nor is this history merely an outline of events or a list of doubtful dates, as so often encountered in the study of India's past. Rather, it includes detailed descriptions of Bodh Gayā's now vanished temples and shrines, accounts of the elaborate ceremonies and doctrinal disputes that once took place there, and even details of how time was kept in its monasteries. This history is also made more interesting by the participation of some of Asia's greatest personalities, from Asoka to Curzon, from Xuanzang to Anagārika Dharmapāla.

From the artistic and architectural point of view Bodh Gayā again ranks high in importance. The Mahābodhi Temple is the sole surviving example of what was once a whole architectural genre. It even had an international influence through models and plans of it which were carried throughout Asia by pilgrims and from which copies of it were built. The stone railing around the temple is perhaps the earliest example of Buddhist art and the large number of statues in it of Pāla period sculpture make it the richest repository of sculpture from that period.

But far overshadowing these considerations is Bodh Gayā's religious significance. For millions of Buddhists it is the Navel of the Earth, the geographical centre of their faith. Here Siddhattha Gotama became the Buddha and from here the phenomenon now called Buddhism began its gentle progress to the furthermost reaches of the globe. In keeping with Buddhism's emphasis on calm detachment Bodh Gayā has never evoked in Buddhists the intense fervour that Mecca, Benares, Jerusalem or Amritsa have in the millions who hold those places sacred. It has nonetheless inspired countless pilgrims throughout the centuries to undergo hardship and danger for the

blessing of just being able to walk on its sacred ground. The story of pilgrimage to Bodh Gayā is one of the great dramas of human history and it is one that continues to unfold.

Not surprisingly, there has been much written on Bodh Gayā. The first book on the subject was Rajendralala Mitra's *Buddha Gaya: the Hermitage of Sakya Muni* published in 1878 by the Government of Bengal. However, Mitra's book was marred by numerous mistakes, it was not well received by scholars and so no revised edition was ever published. Its value today is mostly for the information it contains about the Mahābodhi Temple before its restoration. Sir Alexander Cunningham's book *Mahābodhi or the Great Buddhist Temple Under the Bodhi Tree at Buddha Gayā*, published in 1892, was the culmination of its author's nearly 30 year intimacy with Bodh Gayā and its antiquities. Although now obsolete in parts because of subsequent advances in Indology, Cunningham's book is still essential reading for an understanding of Bodh Gayā's past. In 1931 the first volume of Beni Madhaba Barua's *Gayā and Bodh Gayā: Early History of the Holy Land* was published, the second volume being released three years later. Benefiting from the quarter century of research since Cunningham, and including important information on Bodh Gayā from the Hindu perspective, Barua was able to produce what was to remain for decades the most informative study of Bodh Gayā. In 1981 the Buddha Gaya Temple Management Committee published Dipank Barua's *Buddha Gaya Temple: Its History* which in many ways mirrored the body that published it; poorly organized, full of errors and badly produced.

In the two decades since the publication of *Navel of the Earth* numerous monographs and books on Bodh Gayā have appeared examining its sociological, anthropological and economic significance and of course the politics surrounding the place. Some of the more important of these are *The Revival of Buddhist Pilgrimage at Bodh Gaya*, by Alan Trevithick (2006), *Cross-disciplinary Perspectives of a Contested Buddhist Site Bodh Gaya Jataka* by David Geary and Matthew R. Sayers (2012), and David Geary's *The Rebirth of Bodh Gaya: Buddhism and the Making of a World Heritage Site* (2017). It is clear that as its history continues to evolve much still remains to be said about the place where the Buddha was enlightened, and the present book has benefited from some of what has been said.

# GOING TO SAMBODHI

Bodh Gayā is a large village situated at latitude 24° 41' 45" N, longitude 85° 2' 2" E, in the southern part of the Indian state of Bihar. The environment around the village is rural, being made up of cultivated areas interspersed with open ground on which grow mango, tamarind and palm trees. Beside the village flows the wide but shallow Lilañjan River. In Buddhist scriptures, this river is called Nerañjarā, a name derived from the words pleasant (*nelaṃ*) or alternatively blue (*nīla*), and water (*jalaṃ*). About a mile downstream from Bodh Gayā, the Lilañjan joins the Mohana to form the Phalgu River which flows past Gayā and is considered sacred to the Hindus.

The name Bodh Gayā has been spelt variously as Boodha Gayā, Buddh Gyā, Bauddha Gyāh, Bodhi Gayā, Buddhagayā and Buddha Gayā. In any of its forms, it is not an old name, first occurring in the spurious inscription of Amaradeva, a document of uncertain but recent date.[1] At the time of the Buddha, the village was named Uruvelā. According to 5th century commentator Dhammapāla, it was given this name because of the large amount of sand (*vālukā*) in the area. Dhammapāla tells a delightful story to explain the presence of all this sand. In the distant past, long before the Buddha, a company of ascetics lived in the area. They could tell which one of their fellows committed an unwholesome bodily or verbal act, but not if they had an unwholesome thought. So they came to an agreement among themselves that whoever thinks an unwholesome thought should bring sand in a leaf basket. Soon the whole area was covered with sand.[2] Other sources say the village was given the name on account of a vilva tree (*Aegle marmelos*) growing nearby.[3]

It seems that within two centuries of the Buddha's enlightenment, the name Uruvelā fell into disuse and was replaced by four other names; Sambodhi, Bodhimaṇḍa, Vajirāsana and Mahābodhi. The oldest and least commonly used of these names was Sambodhi, meaning 'complete enlightenment'. In his Eighth Rock Edict issued in 256 BC, King Asoka says he "went to Sambodhi" (*ayāya*

1. Mitra, 1878:201.
2. *Udāna Aṭṭhakathā*, p.26.
3. *ASI*, 1908–9:144.

*sambodhi*) referring to his pilgrimage to Bodh Gayā four years previously.[4] Another ancient name, Bodhimaṇḍa, refers to a circular area around the Bodhi Tree. The Kāliṅgabodhi Jātaka describes the Bodhimaṇḍa before the Buddha's enlightenment as being covered with silvery sand without a blade of grass growing on it and with all the surrounding trees and flowering shrubs bending, as if in homage, towards the Bodhi Tree.[5]

The exact place where the Buddha sat when he was enlightened was called Vajirāsana meaning 'Diamond Throne'. It was believed that when the universe is finally destroyed, this would be the last place to disappear and that it would be the first place to form when the universe began to re-evolve again. The Vajirāsana was also sometimes called 'The Victory Throne of all Buddhas' (*sabbabuddhānaṃ jayapallaṅkaṃ*) or the 'Navel of the Earth' (*paṭhavīnābhi*).[6] In later centuries the name Vajirāsana (Sanskrit: *vajrāsana*) came to be used for the exact location of the Buddha's enlightenment, for the temple built over it (*vajrāsana gandhakuṭi*) and for the general location.

The most widely used and also the most enduring of Bodh Gayā's names was Mahābodhi meaning 'great enlightenment'. Originally a term for the Buddha's experience, it later came to be used as the name for the place where that experience had occurred. Cunningham mentioned that this name was still in vogue in the 19th century.[7] The Buddha's experience at Uruvelā not only resulted in the location changing its name to Bodh Gayā; it has also meant that this otherwise obscure village has been the focus of attention for millions of pilgrims for over two millennia. It became very early and remains even today, the most important place of Buddhist pilgrimage. Those who see Buddhism as an entirely rational religion will insist that it has no place for practices like pilgrimage. However, this view is somewhat at odds with what the Buddha himself said. Just before his final Nirvana, he encouraged all his disciples to visit at least once the places where the pivotal events in his life occurred: Lumbinī, Bodh Gayā, Isipatana and Kusinārā:

4. Dhammika, 1993:12.
5. *Jātaka* IV, 233.
6. *Jātaka* loc. cit; *Buddhacarita*, XIII, 68.
7. Cunningham, 1892: 2–3.

> "Ānanda, there are four places the sight of which will arouse strong emotion in those with faith. Which four? 'Here the Tathāgata was born'; this is the first place. 'Here the Tathāgata attained enlightenment'; this is the second place. 'Here the Tathāgata set in motion the Wheel of the Dhamma'; this is the third place. 'Here the Tathāgata attained final Nibbāna without remainder'; this is the fourth place. The monk or nun, layman or laywoman, who has faith should visit these places. And anyone who dies while making a pilgrimage to these places with a devout heart will, at the breaking up of the body, be reborn in heaven."[8]

While it is true that the Buddha had high regard for reason, he did at the same time recognise the importance of emotion in all human endeavours, including the quest for enlightenment. For the devout person, seeing the Buddha or even thinking about him can evoke a joy which, when controlled and purified, can be transformative. Going to a place made sacred by the Buddha's presence, or even the process of getting there, can have a similar effect. On the open road, away from mundane preoccupations and familiar surroundings, the pilgrim has time to think about his or her life and practice of the Dhamma. The arduous but steady progress towards the goal may become analogous to the pilgrim's journey on the Eightfold Path and stimulate the determination to walk that Path with more commitment. On finally reaching the goal, the pilgrim will see places and sights associated with the Buddha which can arouse intense faith and provide the opportunity for deep contemplation.

In ancient times, there were several approaches to Bodh Gayā. Pilgrims coming from the west could go overland from Benares, taking the same road that the Buddha took in the first year after his enlightenment. The other way was to sail further down the Ganges to Pāṭaliputra and then take the road south to Gayā, or alternatively, the slightly longer road that passed through Nāḷandā, Rājagaha and Kurkihar. Pilgrims from Bengal or Orissa would sail up the Ganges or take the road that linked Magadha to Tamralipti. These approaches were an integral part of the great road system that connected the towns and cities of the Ganges valley. There were three main routes

8. Dīgha Nikāya II, 147.

in this system—the northern which paralleled the Himalayan foothills and connected Ahicchatra, Sāvatthī , and Sāketa to Benares; the central which followed the Ganges and passed through Hastinapura, Sankasya and Kanyakubja to Prayāga; and the southern which followed the Yamuna, passed Kosambī and joined the central route at Prayāga. A branch of the northern route went from Sāvatthī, through Kapilavatthu, Kusinārā and Vesālī to Pātaliputra. Pilgrims from Kashmir, Bactria and beyond followed the great trunk road that started at Taksila and ran to Hastinapura where it joined the northern route. Few records of pilgrims from these regions have survived.

A monk named Viradeva from Bactria is known to have visited Bodh Gayā twice, once as a young man, and again many years later when he was appointed head of the great monastery at Nāḷandā.[9] Yijing mentions a monk from Samarkand who came to Bodh Gayā, where he burned lamps for seven days and set up statues of the Buddha and Avalokiteśvara at the foot of the Bodhi Tree.[10]

Sindh was a predominantly Buddhist region until the Arab invasion in the 8th century. The earliest record of pilgrims from this region coming to Bodh Gayā is an inscription thought to date from the reign of King Gopāla II (950–970).[11] From Sindh there were three ways to the Ganges valley, one starting at Roruka and another at Sibipura, which both converged at Sairisaka from where it ran to Indraprastha and Mathura. Another possibility was to go from Patala to Gujarat, and then take the main road to the north through Ujjayini and Vidisa. The southern end of this road passed Nasikya and Ajanta, and was the main route for pilgrims coming from Deccan and the cities on the northwestern seaboard.

Pilgrims from the Tamil country and Andhra could go either by foot or ship up the east coast to Tamralipti. No evidence of visits by South Indian Buddhists have yet been found at Bodh Gayā, but pilgrims from Kerala and particularly from Kanchipuram are known to have visited Kurkihar in large numbers during the 10th and 11th

9. *IA*, Vol. XVII, 1888:310.
10. Lahiri, 1986:44.
11. *JRAS*. NS, Vol. IV, 1908:104.

centuries.[12] It is inconceivable that they did not go the extra 16 miles to Bodh Gayā.

Pilgrims from beyond India travelled on the international trade routes. Sri Lankans embarked from either Mahatittha or Jambukola and sailed up the coast to Tamralipti, sometimes stopping at Kanchipuram or Amaravati on the way. Going directly with a favourable breeze, the pilgrim could be in Tamralipti in as little as 14 days. The *Rasavāhinī*'s mention of a four month journey from "the further shore" (i.e. the Indian coast opposite Sri Lanka) to Bodh Gayā must have applied to those who made the whole journey on foot.[13] Xuanzang was going to sail down the east coast of India to Sri Lanka until a South Indian monk advised him that it would be safer to go by foot to the Tamil country and then take a ship across the Palk Straits.[14]

Pilgrims from Sumatra and Java usually arrived at Tamralipti via south Indian ports, taking advantage of the large number of ships that sailed between the two regions. Others may have landed in south Indian ports. The king of Sumatra had built a great monastery at Nāgapatanam in the 10th century and although this establishment was mainly for Indonesian monks studying in India, it was probably also used as a staging point for Indonesian pilgrims heading north.[15] During the 11th century, Ācārya Dharmakīrti of Sumatra, probably the greatest Buddhist scholar South-east Asia ever produced, made a pilgrimage to Bodh Gayā, Lumbinī and Kapilavatthu, although it is not known what route he took to India.[16]

Ships from Burma avoided the open sea because of the sudden storms in the Bay of Bengal, but as a consequence were often a prey to the notorious Malay pirates that infested the Arakan coast. Amongst the numerous graffiti that pilgrims scratched on the rocks

12. *JBORS*, Vol.XXVI, 1940: 306. Kurkihar is a village between Gayā and Rajgir built over the ruins of a large ancient monastery. In 1930 a hoard of over 200 bronze images of Buddhas and bodhisattvas was unearthed there. Scattered around the village were also numerous stone images although most of these have been removed to museums.
13. *Rasavāhinī* II:124-25.
14. Beal, 1911:133.
15. *EI,* Vol.XXII, 1933–4:213ff.
16. *JBTS*, Vol. I, pt. 1, 1893:8–9.

at Mount Uren, the probable abode of the yakkha Āḷavaka, are some in Burmese script.[17] Pilgrims from Burma sailing up the Ganges to Bodh Gayā via Pāṭaliputra must have broken their journey there to visit Mount Uren's shrines.

It was also possible for Burmese to go overland through Assam, but few seemed to use this particularly dangerous route. According to the famous Kalyāṇi inscription, a 13th century Burmese monk took advantage of the psychic powers he had developed in meditation to fly to Bodh Gayā each day and sweep the temple courtyard.[18] While this story may not be true, it does reflect the intense desire that many Burmese had to visit the site of the Buddha's enlightenment.

Chinese and Korean pilgrims had two choices, to go by ship through South-east Asia or overland through the mountains and deserts of Central Asia. This second route in particular posed numerous difficulties, some of which the monk Sung Yun described. "Along the road, the cold was very severe while the winds, driving snow and the pelting sand and grit were so bad that it was impossible to raise one's eyes without getting them filled."[19] A few Chinese pilgrims went by a third route, through Tibet and Nepal, a journey that was still a formidable undertaking well into the 20th century. The Korean monk Yuan Tai went this way to Bodh Gayā. On his return journey through Central Asia, he met another monk going to Bodh Gayā and decided to accompany him. After this second visit, he managed to return safely to his homeland.[20]

The only Japanese known to have attempted a pilgrimage to India in ancient times was Prince Takaoka, who had been an heir to the throne before becoming a monk. In 866 AD, at the age of 70, he set sail from Guangzhou but was never heard of again. He is thought to have died somewhere in the Malay Peninsula.[21]

Vietnamese began going to India on pilgrimage soon after the introduction of Buddhism into their country in the 6th century. One of the earliest such records concerns two monks, Khuy-Sung Phap Su and Minh Vien, who took a ship to Sri Lanka, sailed up the west coast

17. Waddell, 1892: 13.
18. *AI*, Vol.XXII, 1893:17.
19. Beal, Vol.I, 1893:ixxxv.
20. Lahiri, 1986:20.
21. Reischauer, 1955:279.

of India and then went from there by foot to the holy land. The two companions reached Bodh Gayā and then continued on to Rājagaha where poor Khuy-Sung died. He was only 25 years old.[22]

According to Shes-bya-kun-khyab, the first Tibetan to go to Bodh Gayā was Akaramatiśīla who was sent to India by King Srong-btsan-sgam-po to get a statue of Avalokiteśvara. On the way back he stopped in Bodh Gayā to get leaves from the Bodhi tree and sand from the Narañjara River. The earliest evidence of pilgrims from Nepal coming to Bodh Gayā is a number of coins dating from the reign of the Nepalese King Paśupati (circa 400 AD).[23]

Most pilgrims travelled on foot or by bullock cart, except where it was possible to ply the Ganges or the Yamuna. Monks slung their bowl and water pot over their shoulder and carried either an umbrella or staff.[24] The Vinaya says that a monk's staff should be four times the length from the fingertips to the elbow of a man of average height. In later times, the staff, called a *khakkaraka*, because of the jingling sound made by the metal rings on its top, became a symbol of wayfaring and pilgrimage, much as the bourdon did in medieval Christendom. The pilgrim could use it to ward off unfriendly dogs or wild animals, and give notice of his presence when he went begging for alms. Kṣitigarbha, the bodhisattva who protects travellers, is always depicted holding such a staff. Senior monks from more wealthy monasteries travelled by palanquin, accompanied by an attendant with their belongings.[25] The travelling kit of Sri Lankan monks on pilgrimage within their own country would consist of a water strainer, needle and thread, a small jar of oil for massaging the feet, nail clipper, tinder and flint, and a pair of sandals with a case to put them in.[26] Those who went to India may have been similarly outfitted. Local guilds, philanthropists and kings sometimes built simple rest-houses along main roads which offered shelter, although little more, for pilgrims and traders. The *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* eulogised the 8th century King Gopāla as "a maker of beautiful rest-houses and bridges".[27]

22. Lam Trung Quoc, 1981:79.
23. Cunningham, 1892:20.
24. Takakusu, 1896:29.
25. Ibid., 30.
26. Rahula, 1955:192.
27. *MASI*, No.66, 1942:74.

There were no inns in ancient India; centres of pilgrimages had simple resthouses, but beyond that, travellers arriving at a town and needing accommodation had to go from door to door looking for someone who might take them in. It was a little easier for monks. Wayside temples would take in travelling monks for three or in some places five days, after which they would have to move on.[28] But temples were not always hospitable, particularly if the monk seeking accommodation was from a rival sect or a foreign country. Xuanzang visited a monastery east of Benares named Aviddhakarṇa Vihāra (Monastery of the Unpierced Ears) and was told an interesting story of why it was built and how it got its name. A group of monks from beyond India's north-western frontier were on pilgrimage but could find no monastery that would take them in. One day, the king happened to see them in the street and, recognising that they were not Indians by the fact that their ears were unpierced, asked them why they were so ragged and thin. When they told him, he decided to build a monastery for the exclusive use of foreign monks. Indians, that is those with pierced ears, were not allowed to stay there and hence the monastery's name.[29] There are known to have been several other monasteries for foreign monks travelling or studying in India, one at Bodh Gayā for Sri Lankans, one at Nāḷandā for Javanese and Sumatrans, and another east of Nāḷandā for Chinese.[30] This 'Cheena Vihāra' had been built by King Śrī Gupta and allotted 24 villages for its upkeep.[31] But even when monasteries were unavailable, lay people were usually happy to help travelling monks. In the *Sīhaḷavatthupakaraṇa* there is a story of seven Sri Lankan monks who arrived at Pāṭaliputra on their way to Bodh Gayā. The daughter of a rich merchant saw them in the street and invited them into her home for a meal. On being told they were on their way to Bodh Gayā, she gave them golden flowers, incense and lamps to offer at the Bodhi Tree on her behalf. She also provided them with servants and a bullock cart for the final stage of their journey.[32]

28. Beal, 1884, Vol. II, p.27.
29. Beal, 1884, Vol. II, p.62.
30. *EI,* Vol.XVII, 1923–4: 310.
31. Lahiri, 1986:49.
32. *Sīhaḷavatthuppakaraṇa*, p.99.

In 1202 the Japanese monk Myōe Shōnin (1173–1232) decided to undertake a pilgrimage to India. As part of his preparations for this seemingly impossibly difficult undertaking he actually tried to calculate the distance involved and the time it would take if he set out from Ch'ang-an, the Chinese capital. His calculations are to be found in *Dai Nihon Shiryō* apparently in his own handwriting.[33] He wrote:

> "I am unable to contain my affection and longing for India, the land where the Buddha was born, and so I have drawn up plans for the journey thither. Oh, how I wish I were there! If I walked 7 long *ri* a day, I could reach India in 1, 130 days, arriving on the 20th day of the second month of the fourth year of my travels. And if I walked 5 *ri* a day, I could at long last arrive on the 10th day of the sixth month of the fifth year, a total of 1, 600 days."[34]

Myōe was not making a complete stab in the dark, he had carefully studied Faxian's and Xuanzang's accounts of their pilgrimages to India and had at least some idea of what was involved. Nevertheless, his calculations were highly unrealistic and as it happened he never even set out on this would-be journey. But what determination he had and what ingenuity!

For safety's sake, pilgrims usually travelled in groups or teamed up with caravans that plied the main trade routes. The monk Nāgasena travelled from north-western India to Pāṭaliputra with a caravan of 500 wagons. The caravan leader supplied all his food and, when they finally parted, gave him a beautiful woollen blanket.[35] In about the middle of the 11th century, the envoy sent to invite Atiśa to Tibet travelled to Bodh Gayā with the king of Nepal and his entourage before completing his mission.[36] Another Tibetan, Dharmasvāmin, and 16 other pilgrims on their way to Bodh Gayā in 1234, travelled through northern Bihar with a party of 300 Nepalese Hindus taking their deceased parents' ashes to immerse in the Ganges.[37] When Xuanzang was in Kanchipuram in the 7th century some 300 Sri

33. *Dai Nihon Shiryō* VII, pp.427–8.
34. Morrell, 1987:105–6.
35. *Milindapañha*, p.17.
36. Chattopadhyaya and Chimpa, 1981:415.
37. Roerich, 1959:58.

Lankan monks arrived in the city. It seems they had found it judicious to come to India on pilgrimage at that particular time due to political upheavals in the island following the death of the king. Later, Xuanzang travelled through the Tamil country with 70 of these monks; apparently they were on their way to north India.[38]

To help pay their way, many pilgrims would buy goods in one destination to sell them in another. Visāka of Pāṭaliputra sewed coins into the hem of his garment before setting out on his journey. He used the month he was kept waiting for a ship to do some business and managed to make a handsome profit.[39] A Tibetan monk earned 12 gold *zos*, enough money to finance his pilgrimage to India, by copying out two sets of the *Satasāhasrikāprajñapāramitā Sūtra*. Two other, Tibetans Khyungpo Neljor and Marpa, both had to visit gold mines in Tibet to get gold dust before departing for India.[40] Some incurred expenses even before they set out. Hindus from Kashmir going to Gayā had to pay a special pilgrim's tax, and we can assume it must have been the same for Kashmiri Buddhists going to Bodh Gayā.[41] For Chinese pilgrims it was not taxes but the formidable imperial bureaucracy that posed the greatest obstacle. Before leaving the country they had to apply for and obtain a passport.[42]

The popularity of pilgrimage gave rise to a whole body of literature, mainly sutras praising the holy places and exhorting the faithful to visit them.[43] Sri Lankan monks had small handbooks (*muṭṭipotthaka*) listing the Buddha's virtues which they could read while they travelled.[44] There were also guide books (*mahatyaya*) to help pilgrims to find their way, and inform them of the times of particular festivals that were held at each sacred place. Some of the early biographies of the Buddha like the *Lalitavistara*, are thought to

38. Beal, 1911:139; 146.
39. *Visuddhimagga*, 312.
40. Roerich, 1949:1052; Huber, 2008:68.
41. Stein, 1962, VI, 254.
42. *JRAS*, Vol. XXIII, 1927:546–7. On the difficulties that foreign and even local monks could have with the bureaucracy see Reischauer, pp.256, 267.
43. *IHQ*, Vol.XVII, 1941:223. Some Mahāyāna sūtras also encourage pilgrimage to Bodh Gayā; see *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, edited by P. L. Vaidya, 1960:28.
44. Rahula. 1955:192.

have been based upon such guide books which in turn grew out of the patter that guides at the various holy places used.[45] Only two examples of guide books have survived to the present. The 10th century *Route to India* (*Xitian lujing*) gives a bare list of all the places from Kaifeng, then the Chinese capital, to Bodh Gayā.[46] The other is the recently rediscovered *Extended Guide to the Diamond Throne* (*Rdorje gdan rgyas bshad*) by Bcom Idan rig pa'i rel gri (1250–1311).[47]

Ancient Buddhist maps always showed either Mount Meru or Bodh Gayā in their centre. The most famous of these is the Map of the Five Indias (*Go Tenjiku Zu*), drawn by the Japanese monk Juaki in 1364. This map is based carefully on Xuanzang's account of his pilgrimage to India and even marks his route with a red line. Mount Meru and Lake Anotatta with the traditional four rivers flowing out of it is shown in the centre while Bodh Gayā is located towards the southeast. The purpose of maps like the *Gotenjiku Zu* was didactic and scholarly rather than practical. This is clear from Juaki's own words. He says:

> "With prayers in my heart that Buddhism might prosper, I engaged myself in the task of making this copy, wiping my eyes which are dim with age and feeling that I myself were actually travelling through India."[48]

However, route maps meant to be used by those going to India did exist too. These were probably not available for ordinary pilgrims but were made by and for royal embassies visiting India. One of the few such maps that survives, from northern Thailand, was drawn in the 19th century although based on a much earlier prototype, probably by someone who had actually been to India. The map shows important pilgrimage sites like Rājagaha, Kusinārā, Campā and Doṇa's stūpa, and gives their direction and the number of days needed to reach them from the Mahābodhi Temple, which is depicted in the centre of the map.

In order to facilitate both trade and pilgrimage, King Asoka had main roads lined with trees, and wells dug at regular intervals along

45. Lamotte, 1988:665.
46. Van Schaik and Galambos, 2012:52–5.
47. See Decleer.
48. Harley and Woodward, 1994. p.777.

them.[49] He also had the road from Bodh Gayā to his capital at Pāṭaliputra straightened and repaired.[50] However, throughout most of India's history, roads were appallingly bad and travel for any reason was difficult and dangerous. The remains of two finely built roads that ascend the hill at Sāñchī show the capabilities of ancient Indian engineers. But these roads were probably only for royal processions; pilgrims had to scramble up the hill as best they could. At Chikni Ghati on the northeastern side of the hill, the feet of generations of pilgrims have worn the rocks smooth.[51] Bridges were rare and rivers usually had to be forded or crossed by ferry. According to the *Lalitavistara*, a ferryman refused to take the Buddha across a river because he had no money to pay the fee, a story that must have mirrored the experience of many a wayfaring monk and poor pilgrim. A 13th century Tibetan pilgrim mentions crossing the Ganges on a craft that consisted of two square rafts lashed together. The river was full of crocodiles that would sometimes try to upset craft or snatch passengers off their decks.[52] In some areas the distances between one town and the next were considerable, and pilgrims were in danger of getting lost or running out of provisions. In the Aṅguttara Nikāya we read of the traveller's relief on coming upon a pond where he could drink and perhaps swim, eat some lotus roots and rest in the shade before moving on refreshed. Others might have to get down on all fours and drink from a wayside puddle because no other water was available[53]. Less lucky pilgrims perished from hunger and thirst.

Sickness was always a threat, especially for those not used to India's dust, heat, and poor food and water. The Korean pilgrim Hsuan-Ko made it all the way to Bodh Gayā only to die of sickness a few days after his arrival.[54] One of Faxian's companions died of altitude sickness while crossing the Hindu Kush.[55] Wild animals were

49. Dhammika, 1993:9.
50. *Mahāvaṃsa*, XVIII, 23.
51. Pilgrims to Sāñchī came from all over central India and at least three are known to have been Greeks from Śvetapatha. See Marshall and Foucher, Vol. I, 1982:287–300.
52. Roerich, 1959:63.
53. Aṅguttara Nikāya, III, 187.
54. Lahiri, 1986:21.
55. Giles, 1929:19.

another problem. The road from Kosambī to Prayāga was notorious for elephants and tigers, as was the area around Kusinārā.[56] One record mentions that in the forest around the latter place pilgrims could sometimes be attacked by rhinoceros.[57] To ward off beasts at the Gijjhakuṭa at Rājagaha pilgrims had to beat drums, blow conches and carry bamboo tubes that emitted sparks.[58] But the perennial problem of travel in India was banditry. Nearly every traveller in the subcontinent up to the last century mentions this danger. The boat that Xuanzang took down river to Prayāga was attacked by river pirates who dragged it to the shore, robbed the passengers, and then decided that the Chinese pilgrim with his fair skin would be a suitable sacrifice for their goddess Kālī. It was only by a stroke of luck that he escaped with his life.[59] These pirates seem to have been the predecessors of the notorious river thugs who used to infest the Ganges between Calcutta and Benares until they were suppressed by the British.[60] After returning from Tibet in 1426, the Indian Tantric adept Vanaratna planned to go to Bodh Gayā to pay his respects and erect a statue of his teacher. But upon learning that bandits were laying in wait to steal the Tibetan king's gifts that he was carrying, he had to cancel his trip. Some poor pilgrims had to endure all these difficulties and more. In the account of the Tibetan guru Marpa's third journey to India, during which he went to Bodh Gayā, he complained that he encountered bandits, wild animals and suffered greatly from fever and the searing heat of the Indian plains. Other Tibetan sources mention most of these difficulties but some add the sheer size of the country, uncertainty about which road to take, and the numerous road tolls they had to pay.[61]

56. Beal, 1884, Vol.I, p.234; Vol. II, p.31.
57. Yang Han Sung, Jan Yun Hua, et al, undated, p.43.
58. Roerich, 1959:88.
59. Beal, 1911:86. The practice of waylaying travellers and murdering them was one of the more unpleasant aspects of Hindu Kālī worship later incorporated into Tantric Buddhism. A band called 'The Eighteen Robber Monks', all disciples of the Tantric adept Prajñāgupta, used to kidnap lone travellers and sacrifice them until U-rgyan-pa instructed them in a less literal interpretation of Tantric texts. See Roerich, 1949:696–7.
60. Crook, 1906:473.
61. Roerich, 1949:798; Trungpa, 1982:143–4; Huber, 2008:187.

The vicissitudes faced by the Chinese pilgrim Yijing during his journey to Bodh Gayā in the 7th century, were perhaps typical of many. Before leaving China, Yijing met with the captain of the Persian ship he was travelling on, visited his teacher's grave and said farewell to his family and friends. Embarking at Guangzhou in 671 AD, the ship took 20 days to reach Bogha (probably Jambhi in Sumatra) where he stayed for two months learning Sanskrit in preparation for his arrival in India. After a further two months' stay in Kedha in the Malay Peninsula, he set sail again. Ten days out, the ship stopped at the Andaman Islands where water and provisions were exchanged with the natives for iron. Another half a month sailing across the Andaman Sea and Yijing's ship finally arrived at Tamralipti. There, to his delight and surprise, he met a monk from his homeland. After a few more months' study at one of Tamralipti's monasteries, the two men joined up with a party of several hundred merchants and monks heading for Magadha. Ten days journey from Bodh Gayā, the party passed through a wilderness and Yijing, being sick, fell behind. Around sunset, a group of men approached the lone pilgrim and began insulting him and threatening him with their weapons. Finding that he had nothing of value to steal, they stripped him of his clothes, obliging him to cover himself with a handful of leaves. Staggering on through the darkness, Yijing finally arrived at the next village where he was able to rejoin his companions. Twenty monks in the party were going directly to Nāḷandā and not wishing to travel alone, Yijing decided to accompany them and proceed to Bodh Gayā from there. On finally arriving at his goal, he offered the silk and canopies that had been given to him for the purpose by friends in China to the Mahābodhi Image, and prayed for the peace and prosperity of his homeland. Later Yijing visited all the other sacred places and then spent ten years studying at Nāḷandā, before finally returning to China in 695 AD.[62]

Despite these and other difficulties, pilgrimage remained an important and popular religious practice for centuries. During Buddhism's heyday in India, millions of people from both within the subcontinent and beyond its borders travelled to Bodh Gayā and other sacred places. This great movement of people had a significant impact on Indian culture. Going to any place of Buddhist pilgrimage

62. Takakusu, 1896: xxvii ff.

required passing at least several others, which helped widely separated monastic communities to keep in contact with each other. It also facilitated the spread of new ideas while allowing Indian Buddhism to retain a unified character. Foreign pilgrims brought news of the conditions of Buddhism in far off places and stimulated Indian monks to travel abroad. They also carried back to their homelands relics, books, statues and even plans of Indian temples, all of which had an impact on the art and thought in other parts of Asia.

Foreign pilgrims occasionally kept in contact with Indians they had met during their travels, sometimes for many years. The most remarkable example of such long-distance relationships are the letters that passed between the Chinese monk Xuanzang and two monks from Bodh Gayā, Prajñādeva and Jñānaprabha. Seven years after his return to China in 641, Xuanzang received letters and several rolls of cotton cloth from these monks. In their letters, they wished Xuanzang well, passed on the regards of a mutual friend and offered to send him any books he might need for his studies. Two years later, when a Chinese monk was setting out for India, Xuanzang gave him two letters to be delivered at Bodh Gayā. In his reply to Prajñādeva, Xuanzang expressed his delight in hearing from his friend after so long, talked about the weather and his work, and also gave a list of books he wanted sent. While in India he had been Prajñādeva's opponent in a debate at Kanauj, and now he expressed his satisfaction that the doctrinal differences between the two men did not prevent them from remaining friends.

> "During my sojourn in your country, I had the honour of meeting Your Reverence. In the convocation at Kanauj we were engaged in debate and argued out our respective view-points in the presence of princes and thousands of devotees. As one of us expounded the tenets of the Mahāyāna School, the other advocated the aims of the Śrāvakayāna. In order to defend the truth there was scant regard for personal feelings. In the course of the debate our arguments unavoidably got heated. Then there were clashes. But as soon as the debate was over we did not take each other amiss."[63]

63. Devahuti, 1983:286. See also Wang and Sen, 2012:95-100.

The fact that letters, gifts and books could be passed from one individual to another over such vast distances indicates that pilgrim traffic to and from Bodh Gayā must have been very considerable.

The dangers and expense involved in going to India on pilgrimage meant that only a very small number of devotees were able to do it. Most had to be content with visiting the centers of pilgrimage that grew up in their own lands, and this trend was extenuated after the Muslim conquest of India. This diversion of people away from Bodh Gayā was a factor in its gradual decline, and also in its inability to recover from the blows inflicted on it in the 13th century. However, although the stream of Buddhists to Bodh Gayā declined dramatically, it never stopped completely. A trickle of pilgrims, mainly from Tibet, Nepal and Burma, continued right up to the 19th century. But it was not until the Mahabodhi Society started organising pilgrimages in the 1890s that significant numbers of people began coming again. Going to Bodh Gayā is once more a part of Buddhist practice and perhaps more pilgrims make the journey today than ever before in history.

# A GOOD PLACE FOR STRIVING

Almost nothing certain is known about the Buddha before he began to proclaim his Dhamma in the year 527 BC. Details of the 36 years of his life prior to this are hard to come by. He is known to have been born into a warrior caste family, brought up in relative luxury, married at an early age and, after the birth of his son, to have renounced the world to become a wandering ascetic. Except for saying that he meditated in "fearful forests", the Buddha says nothing about where he spent the next six years.[64] According to the Pāḷi Tipitaka, shortly after his renunciation he resided for a while on the east side of Mount Pandava (Ratna in modern Rajgir).[65] Later literature and tradition says he practised austerities at Gayāsisa (Brahmayoni Hill near Gayā), Pragbodhi ("Before Enlightenment"), now Dungeshwari Hill, and on the banks of the Nerañjarā. What is certain is that after being deserted by his five companions he wandered alone until he arrived on the outskirts of the small village of Uruvelā and impressed by its sylvan environment and convenience for getting alms, decided that it would be a suitable place to continue his meditation:

> "Then being a quester for the good, searching for the incomparable, matchless path of peace, while walking on tour through Magadha I arrived at Uruvelā, the army township. There I saw a beautiful stretch of ground, a lovely woodland grove, a clear flowing river with a beautiful ford and a village nearby for support. And I thought: 'Indeed, this is a good place for a young man set on striving.' So I sat down there, thinking: 'Indeed, this is a good place for striving.'"[66]

A few nights later, as he sat at the foot of the local holy tree, "seeing arose, understanding arose, wisdom arose, knowledge arose, light arose" and the young ascetic became the Buddha, the Fully Enlightened One.

64. Majjhima Nikāya I, 17.
65. Sutta Nipāta 414.
66. Majjhima Nikāya I, 166–7.

As enlightenment is primarily a psychological experience, and is therefore private, it has few outward manifestations. Consequently, the first Buddhists must have found the description of the Buddha's experience at Bodh Gayā too bland so they embellished it with a series of appealing, not to say intriguing, stories in which a dragon king, a milkmaid, a gift of crystal bowls and a struggle with the Evil One are all included.[67] These stories, rich in symbolism and meaning, have been the mainstay of pedagogues, artists and poets throughout Asia for centuries. The Buddha spent the next five weeks at Bodh Gayā moving to a different location each week. From an early period legend extended this to seven weeks and seven locations. These seven locations (*sattamahātthāna*) and the shrines later built over them were the main attractions for pilgrims coming to Bodh Gayā. After leaving Bodh Gayā the Buddha headed for Isipatana near Benares where he taught the Dhamma for the first time. He spent the rainy season there and then returned to Bodh Gayā. It was during this second visit that he met and converted the three Kassapa brothers and their 1000 disciples.[68] After this he left for Gayāsīsa in Gayā and later for Rājagaha, apparently never returning to Bodh Gayā again.

Bodh Gayā seems to have taken time developing into a religious centre of any importance. The Buddha's regular visits or long sojourn in places like Sāvatthī, Rājagaha, Vesālī and Kosambī had stimulated the growth of monastic communities. His brief stay at Bodh Gayā had meant that this did not happen there. In about 483 BC, when the monk Yasa toured the main monastic centres in North India trying to elicit support for his censure of the Vesālī monks, Bodh Gayā was not one of the places he visited.[69] But this relative unimportance was soon to change. In about 262 BC, Asoka Maurya, emperor of all India, converted to Buddhism and began a campaign to promote his new faith. It is sometimes difficult to reconcile Asoka's activities as described in the many edicts he issued with those attributed to him in Buddhist literature like the *Asokavadāna*, the *Divyāvadāna* and the *Mahāvaṃsa*. But as far as his connection with Bodh Gayā is concerned, three things are certain or at least highly probable—that he made a pilgrimage to Bodh Gayā, that he built a temple there and that he had

67. Vinaya I, 1–6; Sn.426 ff.
68. Vinaya I 23 ff.
69. Vinaya II 298.

a branch from the Bodhi Tree sent to Sri Lanka. Asoka's pilgrimage is described in details in the *Asokavadāna* and also mentioned briefly in one of his edicts. In the Eighth Rock Edict issued in 256 BC he says:

> "In the past kings used to go on pleasure tours during which there was hunting and other entertainment. But ten years after Beloved of the Gods coronation he went to Sambodhi and thus instituted Dhamma tours."[70]

According to the *Asokavadāna*, the pilgrimage included all the main sacred sites while in his edicts Asoka says only that he went to Bodh Gayā in 260 BC and to Lumbinī ten years later. Asoka's pilgrimage must have added prestige and legitimacy to what was already becoming a well-established institution. It soon passed into folklore and legend and was even depicted on the east gateway of the great stūpa at Sāñchī.

Modern historians are reluctant to give credence to the tradition that Asoka built the first temple at Bodh Gayā, mainly because it is not mentioned in any of his edicts. However, the evidence that he did build such a temple, albeit indirect, is compelling. Firstly, Asoka is known to have been a devout Buddhist, to have been enthusiastic about spreading his religion and to have visited Bodh Gayā at least once. This being the case, it would be quite natural for him to embellish the centre of his religion with a new temple. Secondly, ancient sources are unanimous in attributing the building of the first temple to him. Thirdly, there is archaeological evidence that some sort of structure existed around the Bodhi Tree during the Mauryan period. Proof of this was uncovered by Alexander Cunningham when he did exploratory digging under the Mahābodhi Temple in 1881. What is thought to be a depiction of this early temple is found on a relief from the Bharhut stūpa. The relief shows a two storied gabled roofed tree shrine (*bodhi ghara*) built around the Bodhi Tree. The upper story is supported on octagonal pillars and at the base of the Bodhi Tree is a stone slab on which people are offering flowers. The whole temple is surrounded by a railing beyond which is a pillar with an elephant capital reminiscent of those known to have been raised by Asoka. The relief dates from approximately 150 BCE.

70. Dhammika, 1993:12.

The bringing of a cutting of the Bodhi Tree from Bodh Gayā to Sri Lanka is mentioned in most of the island's chronicles and, after the introduction of Buddhism itself, is perhaps the most celebrated event in the country's long history. When the first Sri Lankan youths became monks, Anulā, the wife of King Devanampiyatissa's youngest brother, and numerous other women, expressed the desire to become nuns. Consequently, it was decided to invite Saṅghamittā, a senior nun and the daughter of King Asoka, to Sri Lanka. A mission was dispatched with an invitation to Saṅghamittā and a request asking her to bring a cutting of the Bodhi Tree with her. According to the *Mahāvaṃsa*, Asoka was reluctant about granting either of these requests but finally he agreed to do so. Accompanied by a retinue of monks, princes and soldiers, he proceeded to Bodh Gayā where the Bodhi Tree was "decked with manifold ornaments, gleaming with various jewels and garlanded with many-coloured flags".[71] He worshipped the tree, circumambulated it and then placed a golden bowl beneath the southern bough which miraculously detached itself and took root in the bowl. After returning to Pāṭaliputra, he gave the cutting to Saṅghamittā who, together with 11 other nuns and a mission of nobles, craftsmen and attendants, set sail down the Ganges. Before reaching the river's delta the mission disembarked and took the land route across the Viñjhā Hills to Tamralipti. Exactly why they did not sail the whole course of the river is not clear—perhaps it was blocked by sandbars during certain seasons. When Saṅghamittā and her party arrived at Jambukola, Devanampiyatissa welcomed them and accompanied them to Anuradhapura where the cutting of the Bodhi Tree was planted at the Mahāvihāra.[72] In the centuries that followed, the Bodhi Tree, usually called the Sri Mahā Bodhi in Sri Lanka, became almost the palladium of the Sri Lankan state and was worshipped with magnificent ceremonies, as indeed it still is today. When Faxian visited Anurādhapura in the 5th century, he noticed that the Mahāvihāra's rival, the Abhayagiri, had its own Bodhi Tree which was likewise an offspring of the original tree at Bodh Gayā.[73] As King Mahāsena (334–362 AD) is credited with having

71. *Mahāvaṃsa* XVIII, 30–1.
72. Paranavitana, 1960:131–41.
73. Giles, 1929:68.

built the first temple around this Bodhi Tree, it is likely that it had been brought during his reign.[74]

Some time in either the 2nd or 1st century BCE, a stone railing was erected around the Bodhi Tree at Bodh Gayā and whatever temple existed there at that time. Ancient Indians thought it appropriate to demarcate sacred spaces with such railings and this one in stone probably replaced an earlier wooden one. The railing enclosed an area approximately the size of the present temple and Cunningham reported finding the plinth on which it originally stood under the temple's foundations. Four different inscriptions on the railing tell us who erected it and something about them. All the inscriptions are in Brahmi characters on the coping, crossbars and pillars of the railing which are now housed either in the Indian Museum in Kolkata or the Archaeological Museum at Bodh Gayā. The first inscription which occurs in 15 different places reads:

"The gift of the noble lady Kuraṅgī."

The honorific noble lady (Sanskrit *arya*) shows that Kuraṅgī was a woman of high social standing and probably that she was of advanced years. Both these assumptions are confirmed by another inscription to be discussed below where Kuraṅgī is described as the wife of King Iṃdāgimitra and also as the mother of Kuraṅgī sons (*jīvaputrā*). This later designation indicates that despite Kuraṅgī's age her sons were still living, a source of great pride for Indian women then as now. The next inscription reads:

"The gift of Nāgadevī, the wife of King Brahmamitra."

The third inscription reads:

"The gift of Kuraṅgī, the mother of living sons and the wife of King Iṃdāgimitra, son of Kauśikī. The gift also of Sirimāyā of the royal palace shrine."

The meaning of the words *rājāpāsāda cetika* in this inscription are not certain and have given rise to much discussion. Barua takes *cetika* as a feminine form of *cetaka* (Prakrit, *ceyaga*) meaning a female donor. *Cetika* cannot mean a shrine, he says, because it is "inconceivable" that a shrine or temple could have existed at Bodh

74. *JRASCB*, NS, Vol.VI, Special Number, 1959:144.

Gayā prior to the 5th century CE. I would contend that it was inconceivable that a shrine of some sort did not already exist. However, I do not think that *cetika* here refers to a shrine at the Bodhi Tree, but rather to another shrine built nearby. A shrine at the Bodhi Tree would have inevitably been called Vajirāsana Gandhakuṭi.[75]

If, as the inscription indicates, King Iṃdāgimitra and the members of his family were devout Buddhists, and if Bodh Gayā was in his domain, which seems likely, he could be expected to build a shrine as such a sacred place, something akin to a private royal chapel. Therefore I follow Cunningham and Bloch in taking *cetika* to mean a shrine. The fourth inscription reads:

"The gift of Sirimā of King Iṃdāgimitra's royal palace shrine."

Altogether two kings and their wives, the mother and father of one of the kings and one other person are mentioned in these inscriptions. Who were these people and what was the connection between them? It is unlikely that the two kings ruled at the same time and, as Kuraṅgī was an older woman and the wife of Iṃdāgimitra, we may assume that he was the deceased predecessor and father of Brahmamitra. This assumption is reinforced by Kuraṅgī's designation as the mother of living sons, while Brahmamitra's wife apparently had no sons as yet. Both kings are mentioned in coins found in North India and were members of a minor dynasty that ruled parts of Magadha. In the Hāthigumpha inscription mention is made of a Bahasatimitra of Magadha who was killed by Khāravela in the 12th year of his reign.[76] It is likely that this Bahasatimitra was the successor of Brahmamitra. So it would seem that King Iṃdāgimitra, the predecessor and father of King Brahmamitra, had built a shrine at Bodh Gayā. After his death his widow, the dowager Kuraṅgī and her daughter-in-law Nāgadevī, together with Sirimā, perhaps a member of the family living at the royal palace shrine, further endowed Bodh Gayā with a beautifully carved railing.[77] When the present Mahābodhi Temple was built this

75. An inscription on the railing (see Chapter 3 page??) i.e. at note 39) describes it as "the great Diamond Throne Perfumed Chamber temple" (*vajrāsana-brihad-gandhakuṭi-prāsāda*); Cunningham 1892:23, 58.

76. Barua, 1929:268.

77. All the inscriptions are discussed fully in *IHQ*, Vol. VI, 1930. On the railing carvings see Coomaraswamy, 1935.

railing was dismantled and later, with new sections added by King Pūrṇavarma in the early 7th century, reassembled to enclose a larger area.

Proof that the railing has been moved at least once, perhaps more than once, is to be seen in the mortice holes found in several of the pillars. By the medieval period, a legend had developed that the railing had been built by *yakṣa* artists during King Asoka's time. Later Mahāyāna legend attributed its construction to Nāgārjuna. The Tibetan historian Tāranātha says:

> "Moreover, when the Bodhi Tree of Vajrāsana was being damaged by elephants, he built two lofty stone pillars behind it and for many years there was no more damage. As, however, there was damage again, he established on the top of each pillar the image of Mahākāla riding on a lion and holding a club in his hand. This proved effective for many years; but the damage started again. So he built a stone wall surrounding it and also one hundred and eight shrines with images beyond it."[78]

By the 19th century, 33 pillars from the railing had been taken to the Mahant's palace, nine were used in the construction of the Pañca Paṇḍu Temple and several others lay buried under the rubbish that had accumulated around the temple. Standing as long as it did and surrounding the most sacred spot at Bodh Gayā, the railing was used for centuries by pilgrims to record their visits and the donations they made. To the modern archaeologist it is almost a stone book recording an important part of Bodh Gayā's history.

Dating from about the same time as the railing, and presumably built by the same people, is the Ratnacaṅkrama Caitya which is situated beside the north wall of the Mahābodhi Temple. This shrine marks the place where the Buddha paced up and down during his third week at Bodh Gayā. The shrine originally consisted of a raised plinth with a row of pillars on each of its longer sides supporting a roof above it. Along the top of the plinth were lotuses carved in stone intended to mark the Buddha's footsteps. Only one of the pillars survives and is now housed in the museum at Bodh Gayā. Its octagonal shaft has an elaborately coiffured and bejewelled female figure in high relief on it. The pillar bases on the south side of the

78. Chattopadhyaya and Chimpa, 1970:107.

plinth are now buried under the foundations of the temple. Those on the north side are still exposed and have a sequence of Brahmi letters on them, probably mason's marks.[79] An inscription carved on the railing shortly after its erection is the first evidence from Bodh Gayā itself of pilgrims coming on pilgrimage from outside India. Written in Brahmi characters of about the 1st century BC, the inscription is carved on a crossbar which may have been donated to replace one that had been broken. The inscription reads:

"The gift of Bodhirakṣita from Tāmrapaṇṇi."

The name Tāmrapaṇṇi could refer either to the region near the Tāmraparṇī River in South India or to Sri Lanka. This inscription almost certainly refers to the latter place. It would seem that the fervour of the island's inhabitants for their new religion was already motivating some of them to journey all the way to India to see the place where the Buddha became enlightened. The name Bodhirakṣita, "protected by wisdom", indicates that this early pilgrim was a monk.[80]

During the early decades of the 4th century CE, a monastery was established at Bodh Gayā that was to have a continual and powerful influence there for nearly a thousand years. It seems that the younger brother of King Meghavana of Sri Lanka (304–332) had gone on pilgrimage to India. Although he was both a monk and of royal birth he was given tardy hospitality in all the monasteries he stayed at and on his return complained bitterly of this to his brother. Consequently Meghavana sent an envoy to the king of India, probably Samudragupta, with a gift of jewels and seeking permission to build monasteries at all the sacred places for the convenience of Sri Lankan pilgrims.[81] The Indian king could not have been anxious to have so many foreign outposts in his realm but he gave permission for one such monastery to be built at a place of Meghavana's choice. Bodh Gayā was chosen and thus the Mahābodhi Monastery came to be built just beyond the north gate of the sacred precincts.[82] There

79. *IHQ*, Vol.VI, 1930:1–6.

80. *IHQ*, Vol.VI, 1930:10.

81. The Allahabad pillar inscription says that the Saimhala (Sri Lankans) were amongst the peoples who paid homage to Samudragupta; *CII*, Vol. III, p.4.

82. Beal, 1894, II: 133–6.

had been contact between the monks of Bodh Gayā and Sri Lanka for several centuries. The *Mahāvaṃsa* informs us that in 104 BCE a monk named Cittagutta led a delegation from the Bodhimaṇḍa Monastery to Sri Lanka to participate in the opening ceremony of the great stūpa at Anuradhapura.[83] According to the *Rasavāhinī*, a monk named Cūḷa Tissa and a group of lay people went from Sri Lanka to Bodh Gayā at around the same time.[84] Xuanzang saw the Mahābodhi Monastery in the 7th century and described it thus:

> "Outside the northern gate of the walls of the Bodhi Tree is the Mahābodhi Monastery. It was built by a former king of Sri Lanka. This edifice has six halls, with towers of observation of three stories; it is surrounded by a wall of defence thirty or forty feet high. The utmost skill of the artist has been employed; the ornamentation is in the richest colours. The statue of the Buddha is of gold and silver, decorated with gems and precious stones. The stupas are high and large in proportion; they contain relics of the Buddha."[85]

Within the monastery was a proclamation by Meghavana inscribed on a copper plate emphasising the establishment's policy of hospitality. It read in part: "To help all without distinction is the highest teachings of all the Buddhas, to exercise mercy as occasion offers is the illustrious doctrine of former saints."[86] Cunningham's account of the Mahābodhi Monastery's partial excavation in the 19th century gives some idea of its huge size and splendour.

> "The mound is from 1, 500 to 2, 000 feet in length from west to east and nearly 1, 000 feet in breadth from north to south... Here, in November 1885 Mr Beglar and myself discovered the remains of a great monastery, with outer walls 9 feet thick, and massive round towers at the four corners. The enclosure that surrounded the monastery had already been traced by Mr Beglar, at a distance of about 100 feet all round ... The plan consists of 36 squares, six on each side, of which the four corner squares are assigned to be

83. *Mahāvaṃsa* XXIX, 41.
84. *Rasavāhinī*, II, p.58.
85. Beal, 1884, II: 135.
86. Ibid., II:133

> the corner towers, and the four middle squares to an open pillared court containing a well ... A long covered drain leads from the well to the outside of the walls on the north-northeast, ending in a gargoyle spout in the shape of a large crocodile's head, of dark blue basalt, richly carved."[87]

In the centuries after its founding, the Mahābodhi Monastery grew so powerful that it eventually came to control the Mahābodhi Temple itself. This situation may have developed because, continually revitalized by monks and funds from Sri Lanka, it was relatively unaffected by the dynastic changes, local politics and fluctuating patronage that would have periodically weakened the power of the Indian monasteries at Bodh Gayā. It is usually assumed that, being staffed by Sri Lankan monks, the Mahābodhi Monastery was a Theravadin establishment, but this is not necessarily so. The Mahāyāna had a large and vigorous following in Sri Lanka right up to the beginning of the medieval period and the island produced some great scholars of that persuasion.[88] There were periods when the two schools were bitter rivals and other periods when they shared the same monasteries as indeed they sometimes did in India.[89]

Whether Theravādin or Mahāyānist monks staffed the Mahābodhi Monastery probably depended on which school was in favour with the ruling monarch in Sri Lanka. It is even possible that it was monks returning from Bodh Gayā who introduced the Mahāyāna into Sri Lanka in the first place. King Silākāla (518–531), who encouraged the Dharmadhātu cult in Sri Lanka, had spent his youth as a novice at Bodh Gayā.[90] However, there seems little doubt that Theravādins were the predominant community at the Mahābodhi Monastery during most of its existence. This strong Theravādin presence was one of the reasons why Bodh Gayā developed into the premier study centre for the early Buddhist schools in northern India. Sadly, almost nothing is known about Bodh Gayā's academic life because, unlike Nāḷandā, no accounts by students who studied there have survived. Bodh Gayā was probably not a single university

87. Cunningham, 1892:43.
88. Paranavitana, *CJS*, Vol. II, 1928:35–71.
89. *Cūḷavaṃsa* L, 68.
90. *Mahāvaṃsa* XXXIX, 46.

but a collection of loosely affiliated or even independent seats of learning in one locale.

The Mahābodhi Monastery would have specialized in Theravada of the Mahāvihāra tradition but the Sarvāstivāda and other early Buddhist schools would have had their own monasteries too. However, while the Mahāyānists, and later the Tantrayānists, were never significant at Bodh Gayā, they were not entirely absent. This is confirmed by Tāranātha who says: "The Mahāyānists did not have any special importance at Vajrāsana, though some yogis and Mahāyānists continued to preach there."[91] If what we know of other places in India was true of Bodh Gayā also, they would have stayed at and studied in the monasteries of the other schools, considering a knowledge of the Śrāvakayāna to be an essential part of a well rounded education. The number of monks at Bodh Gayā seems to have always been large. Tāranātha says that the brothers Udbhaṭa and Śaṃkarapati once provided requisites to 500 śrāvakas there.[92] This was probably some time during the Gupta period. During Xuanzang's visit there were a thousand monks residing in the Mahābodhi Monastery alone. He noted: "They carefully observe the Dhamma Vinaya, and their conduct is pure and correct."[93] In the reign of Rāmapāla (1087–1141) there were 40 Mahāyānists and 200 śrāvakas, while for special festivals up to 10, 000 śrāvakas would assemble there.[94] Even in the dark days of the 13th century Dharmasvāmin counted 300 Sri Lankans at the Mahābodhi Monastery, although it seems that the other monasteries were deserted by then.[95]

It was essential for monks residing in the great monasteries to know the exact time so that they could finish their meals before midday, be punctual for the daily offices and know when classes were to commence. To this end, water clocks were used. These clocks consisted of a large bronze bowl filled with water in which floated a

91. Chattopadhyaya and Chimpa, 1970:101. It is interesting to note that the *Bhadrakalpa Avadāna*, *Guṇakāraṇḍavyūha* and the *Svāyambhū Purāṇa*, all works attributed to the Bodhisattva Jayaśrī, are amongst the few Tantric works set in Bodh Gayā; see Mitra, 1882:42; 94; 137; 245.
92. Chattopadhyaya and Chimpa, 1970:10.
93. Beal, 1884, Vol. II, p.133.
94. Chattopadhyaya and Chimpa, 1970:313.
95. Roerich, 1959:73.

smaller bowl made from extremely thin metal with a tiny hole in its bottom. When this bowl filled with water and sank, a bell was struck. The second time the bowl sank, the bell was struck again, and so on. Different monasteries divided the day differently, but at Bodh Gayā the bell was struck 16 times before noon.[96]

History has preserved the names of but a few of the great scholars who were associated with Bodh Gayā. Tāranātha mentions a Sarvāstavādin scholar from south India named Saṅghadāsa who studied there for many years.[97] Another south Indian, Dharmapāla, famous for his ability to recite from memory large numbers of scriptures, taught at Bodh Gayā for 30 years.[98] He is said to have composed the *Mādhyamakacatuḥsatikā* while there. This Dharmapāla was not the more famous scholar of the same name, but probably the Dharmapāla who ordained Xuanzang's preceptor Śīlabhadra.[99] According to the *Cūḷavaṃsa*, after Buddhaghosa finished his literary labours in Sri Lanka "he set out for Jambudīpa to worship the Bodhi Tree" while later tradition asserts that he wrote both the *Atthasālanī* and the now lost *Ñāṇodaya* at Bodh Gayā before going to Sri Lanka.[100] Prajñadeva and Jñānaprabha, both staunch śrāvakas, are known to have been at Bodh Gayā in the 7th century.[101] According to Wang Hiuen Ts'e, a monk from the Mahābodhi Monastery wrote a book in which the dates of all the important events in the Buddha's life were calculated. The year of the Parinirvāna was given as the equivalent of the year 537 BCE.[102]

The last Theravadin monk whose name is mentioned in connection with Bodh Gayā is the Sri Lankan pundit Ānandaśrī who subsequently lived and taught in Tibet. He is eulogised in one Tibetan book as "foremost amongst the many thousands in the Saṅgha of the island of Siṃhala, a disciple of Dīpaṅkara, residing at Vajrāsana, a great scholar... skilled in two languages, one who seeks the benefit of

96. Takakusu 1896:144. In ancient Sri Lankan monasteries time was kept with an instrument called a 'time pole' (*kālatthamba*) probably a type of sun-dial.
97. Chattopadhyaya and Chimpa, 1970:185.
98. Ibid., 213.
99. Dutt, 1967:25.
100. *Cūḷavaṃsa* XXXVII, 246.
101. Devahuti, 1983:286; Wang and Sen, 2012:95-100.
102. Chatterjee, 1967:25.

the Saṅgha, the excellent one". As Ānandaśrī was translating Pali texts in the Land of Snows at the very beginning of the 14th century, it is likely that he was teaching at Bodh Gayā, and by implication, that it continued as a centre of Theravāda, albeit a small and feeble one, at least up to the end of the 13th century.[103]

Yijing informs us that during the time he was in India a significant number of Chinese monks did part of their education at Bodh Gayā. One Hsuan-chao studied the Vinaya and Abhidhamma of both the Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna schools for four years, while another monk, Chin-hung, studied the same subjects plus Sanskrit for two years. Yijing also says that one of his countrymen was actually appointed head of a monastery at Bodh Gayā.[104] The Sri Lankan scholar monk, Paṇḍitaratana Śrījñāna, probably the author of the *Sabdārthacintā*, is known from an inscription to have been in Bodh Gayā in the 9th century.[105]

Atiśa studied the Vinaya for some time at Bodh Gayā under Śīlarakṣita, the head of a monastery there called Matavihāra.[106] The frequent mention of the study of the Vinaya t Bodh Gayā is a further pointer to its importance as a centre for early Buddhism. The Tibetan tradition preserves the names of several great Tantrayānists who studied or taught at Bodh Gayā. They are usually said to have moved on from there to either Nāḷandā or Vikramaśilā. The lay Tantric adept Ratnavajra (979–1040) travelled from Kashmir to finish his education at Bodh Gayā. Later he was appointed Gatekeeper Scholar (*dvāra paṇḍita*) at Vikramaśilā.[107] The famous Tibetan translator Rinchen Sangpo (958–1051) likewise studied at Bodh Gayā. His biography says he did a *pūja* at the north gate of the sacred precinct.[108] Ratnaparasvāmin (died 1117) spent several years meditating at Bodh Gayā before going to China. Legend says he used his psychic powers to fly back to Bodh Gayā from time to time. Other great names associated with Bodh Gayā include Naropa (956–1040), Buddhakīrti, Abhayākaragupta (died 1125), the grammarian and logician Yamari, and Sāriputra, head of an academic

103. Skilling, 1993, 89–90.
104. Lahiri, 1986:5–10, 89, 95.
105. Mitra, 1878:197.
106. Chattopadhyaya and Chimpa, 1970:81.
107. Ibid., 301.
108. Snellgrove, and Skorupski, Vol. II, 1980:99.

institution established at Bodh Gayā by Cingalarāja in the early 15th century and the last Buddhist monk known to have lived or taught there. Only a few monks from Bodh Gayā are known to have made a name for themselves outside India. Two of them, Saṅghānandamokṣa and Kaśyapa, were translating Buddhist texts in China in 653. Another monk from Bodh Gayā, Praguṇaviśvana, compiled a work in Chinese, but his dates are not known.

Having monks of so many different persuasions living together inevitably led to jealousies and on a few occasions to even more serious incidents, the worst of which took place during the reign of Dharmapāla (815–854).

> "In the temple of Vajirāsana there was then a large silver image of Heruka and many treatises on Tantra. Some of the Sendhava śrāvakas from Siṃgha Island (Sri Lanka)[109] and elsewhere said that these were composed by Māra. So they burned these and smashed the image into pieces and then used the pieces as money. From Baṃgala (Bengal) people used to come to Vikramaśilā for offering worship. The śrāvakas said 'That which is called the Mahāyāna is only a source of livelihood for those who follow the wrong view. Therefore keep clear of those so-called preachers of the True Dharma.' In this way the śrāvakas drew people towards themselves."[110]

When King Dharmapāla came to know of this desecration, he was going to punish the śrāvakas, but was eventually talked out of it by the royal preceptor, Buddhañānapāda.

One day, while the Tibetan monk Dharmasvāmin was visiting one of the Bodh Gayā's shrines, a Sri Lankan monk enquired from him

109. The Sendhavas are sometimes mentioned in inscriptions, e.g. *MASI*, No.66.1942:105. They may have been a Śrāvakayāna sect originating in Sindh.

110. Chattopadhyaya and Chimpa, 1970:279. To be fair to the Theravādins, they were not the only ones to disapprove of Tantra. In the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* a group of bodhisattvas, no doubt representing the conventional Mahāyānists, faint with horror on hearing what some Tantric practices entailed, something that may well have happened in real life. On the more bizarre aspects of Tantra and early Mahāyāna opposition to it see Snellgrove, Vol.I, 1987:160–76, 186–7.

what book he was carrying. When he replied that it was copy of the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* the monk said: "You seem like a good monk, but to carry on your back a Mahāyāna book is not good. Throw it in the river." The monk added: "The Buddha did not teach the Mahāyāna, it was enumerated by one called Nāgārjuna, a man of sharp intellect." Later, when Dharmasvāmin was worshipping a statute of Avalokiteśvara, the same monk again commented: "You seem like a good monk, but it is improper to worship a householder."[111]

However, despite these rather unseemly incidents relationships between monks of different schools at Bodh Gayā were generally good. Tāranātha says that when the Mahāyānist Abhayākaragupta became a teacher at Bodh Gayā in about 1090, even the śrāvakas respected him because of his knowledge of the Vinaya.[112] Dharmasvāmin commented that the śrāvaka monks he had contact with at Bodh Gayā generally treated him with more courtesy than did his fellow monks in Tibet.[113] We do not know how the Sri Lankan monk Ānandaśrī came to be invited to Tibet but it seems likely that a mutual respect and friendship between him and some Tibetan monks at Bodh Gayā had something to do with it.[114]

By the 2nd century CE, the nature of Buddhist worship was beginning to change; aniconic representations of the Buddha like stūpas, footprints and trees were losing popularity to statues. The earliest Buddha statue so far found at Bodh Gayā comes from around this period. The statue is made of pink Mathura sandstone and like many early images produced in Mathura, its left hand, now missing, was placed on its knee, while the right hand, also now missing, was probably raised in the *abhayamudrā*. This much damaged, though nonetheless still impressive, statue was found in the ruins of a small shrine just south of the Mahābodhi Temple and is now displayed in the Indian Museum. A fragmentary inscription on the statue's pedestal reads:

> "Just prior to Samvat 64 of the fifth day of the third month of the hot season in the reign of the great King Tirkamāla, the fellow

111. Roerich, 1959:73–4.
112. Chattopadhyaya and Chimpa, 1970:313.
113. Roerich, 1959:87.
114. Gunawardana, 1981, 199–206.

> monk ... conversant in the Vinaya disciple ... set up by his own efforts two lion-supported stone images of the Bodhisattva in the monastery erected by the royal minister. By a female lay disciple who was a helper in doing this meritorious deed... a work of merit has been done by the preacher of the Dhamma... Let this act of good benefit (my) mother and father..."

The date mentioned in the inscription is equivalent to 383 AD.[115]

In about 402, the Chinese monk Faxian arrived in Bodh Gayā after a truly heroic two year journey through the mountains and deserts of Central Asia. He was the first Chinese pilgrim known to have reached India, but he was not the first to have attempted the journey. Some time during the decade after 325, another monk, Yu Fa Lan, had set out for India by the so-called southern route, but he only managed to get as far as Indo-China before dying.[116] Unfortunately, the information Faxian gives about Bodh Gayā is rather scant. Perhaps he only stayed for a short time, or perhaps he lost the notes he took during his stay, and later, when writing about it, had to rely on his memory. He mentioned seeing stūpas marking all the sacred places around Bodh Gayā as well as three monasteries, one of which must have been the Mahābodhi Monastery.

> "At the place where the Buddha attained perfect wisdom, there are three monasteries, in all of which there are monks residing. The families of the people around provide the congregation of these monks with abundant sufficiency of what they require, so that there is no lack or stint. The disciplinary rules are strictly observed by them. The laws regarding their demeanour in sitting, rising and entering when the others are assembled, are those that have been handed down since the Buddha was in the world, down to the present day." [117]

When Faxian returned to China in 413, he wrote a book about his travels which was to inspire numerous others to set out for India. As far as China was concerned the golden age of pilgrimage, which was to last for the next 600 years, was about to begin.

115. *IHQ*, Vol. IX, 1933:149. For an alternative translation see *ASI*, 1922–3:169.
116. *Kao seng chuan*, *Taishō* no. 2059.
117. Giles, 1929:55.

# LIKE A STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN

Exactly when the present Mahābodhi Temple was built is something of a mystery. Guesses have been made which range from the 2nd to the 10th century CE. The temple itself is little help in determining its age as no inscriptions concerning its construction have been found and few temples from prior to the 6th century CE, which could be used for comparative dating, have survived. In any case, any evidence as to the temple's age that might have been derived from its style has been rendered unreliable by both ancient and modern renovations. Literary records are equally unsatisfactory. The only certainty is that the temple already existed substantially the same as it is today when Xianzang visited Bodh Gayā in about 637 CE.

Two hundred years earlier Faxian reported seeing a stūpa (Chinese, *ta*) marking the place where the Buddha was enlightened. Opinions differ as to whether this refers to the Mahābodhi Temple or some earlier structure. Another possible piece of evidence is the so-called Bodh Gayā Plaque.[118] This small clay disk found at Kumrahar and now in the Patna Museum, depicts a square inwardly sloping tower with a *chattrāvali*-like pinnacle on its top and an arched chamber at its base. Within the chamber is a seated figure that seems to have its right hand in the *abhayamudrā*. The tower is surrounded by a railing beyond which is a collection of smaller structures. At the gate of the railing is a pillar with an elephant capital. Towards the bottom of the plaque is a barely discernible inscription in Kharosthi script. Some have argued that the plaque depicts the Mahābodhi Temple and others that it does not. The main arguments against such an identification are that Kharosthi was not used in northern India after the 3rd century CE, meaning that the plaque must predate this period, and structures like the Mahābodhi Temple had not evolved at that time. Moreover, if the plaque does depict the Mahābodhi Temple one would expect the Bodhi Tree to be shown, which it is not, and also the statue within it to be in the *bhūmisparśamudrā* rather than the *abhayamudrā*. However, the evidence that the plaque does depict a temple at Bodh Gayā outweighs these objections.

118. *JBORS*, Vol. I, 1915:1; Vol. II, 1916:375; Vol. XII, 1929:179.

A relief from Bharhut shows an early temple flanked by a pillar with an elephant capital. This temple is identified as being at Bodh Gayā by its accompanying inscription. Whether the relief depicts the temple as it really was or only the artist's conception of it, the pillar would not have been depicted unless there actually was one. A similar pillar is shown on the plaque. There was known to have been a railing and subsidiary shrines at Bodh Gayā from an early date and both these features are depicted on the plaque. In fact, five structures are more pronounced and these, together with the oblong structure to the right of the railing gate (the Ratanacaṅkama Cetiya) and the tower itself, could well represent the *sattamahāṭṭhāna* shrines marking the Buddha's seven weeks at Bodh Gayā. Further, the plaque shows not just a Buddhist temple but one revered enough for a pilgrim's souvenir, which is undoubtedly what the plaque should be considered to be. As for the objections to the plaque representing a temple at Bodh Gayā these can be satisfactorily answered. The plaque seems to be an attempt to represent Bodh Gayā's shrines in the proper perspective and, as such, the Bodhi Tree should be hidden behind the temple. Again, there are good reasons why the figure in the chamber is in the *abhayamudrā.* All the earliest Buddha statues have their hands in this gesture as indeed does the earliest statue found at Bodh Gayā. The *bhūmisparśamudrā* does not appear in Buddha statues from Bihar until about the 6th century CE.[119] All this points strongly to the Bodh Gayā Plaque being a depiction of a temple at Bodh Gayā.

However the temple it depicts cannot be the structure seen by Xuanzang in the early 7th century and which, much repaired, is still seen today. Firstly, the plaque shows a simple tower whereas the tower of the Mahābodhi Temple rises from a terrace. This terrace could not be a later addition, as Mitra discovered when he cut through its top and found it to be bonded to the tower.[120] Secondly, the Mahābodhi Temple represents an architectural genre that evolved from tower shrine like that shown on the plaque and only after the period from which the plaque comes. Therefore the Bodh Gayā Plaque must depict a tower shrine built at Bodh Gayā after Asoka's temple was destroyed or demolished and before the

119. Leoshko, 1988:30.
120. Mitra, 1878:79.

Mahābodhi Temple was built. Dating from perhaps the 1st or 2nd century CE, this tower shrine was still standing when Faxian saw it at the beginning of the 5th century. Sometime after that, and before the 7th century, it was either demolished to make way for a more grand and up-to-date temple or more likely was overthrown by an earthquake.[121]

Being destroyed in this way, something that would have been considered most inauspicious, would explain why Xuanzang was not told about what had happened to the temple that preceded the one he saw. According to what Xuanzang was told, a small temple had first been built over the Vajirāsana by King Asoka, while the Mahābodhi Temple had been built at a later time by a brahmin. This brahmin, accompanied by his younger brother, had gone to the Himalayas to request a boon from Śiva. The god told him that to have his request granted he had to perform a meritorious act and suggested that he built a temple at the place where the Buddha was enlightened. Consequently the brahmin erected the temple while his brother excavated the nearby tank. Soon after this, the brahmin's wish was fulfilled when he was appointed minister to the king. As unconvincing as this story is, it is the only one we have concerning who built the Mahābodhi Temple.[122]

The most revered object at Bodh Gayā was the statue made to be enshrined in the newly built temple. Placed as it was over the very spot where the Buddha was enlightened and believed to be his exact likeness, it was to gaze upon this statue that was the highlight of the pilgrim's visit to Bodh Gayā. The Mahābodhi Image, as it was called, is continually mentioned in epigraphical and literary sources for more than a millennium. Baladitya's magnificent temple at Nāḷandā had a copy of the Mahābodhi Image in it.[123] The Chinese monk, Yijing, who visited Bodh Gayā in the 7th century wrote:

121. Bricks of several sizes were found in the temple, although the dimensions given by Mitra are obviously wrong; Mitra, 1878:102. Like the original Mūlagandhakuṭi at Sarnath, a structure similar to it, the Mahābodhi Temple may have been built in part from the ruins of its predecessor.

122. Beal, 1884, Vol. II, p.119. Wang Hiuen Ts'e gives the names of the two brothers as Rājasvāmin and Brahmasvāmin; Chatterjee, 1967:21.

123. Beal, Vol.II, 1884:173.

> "Afterwards we came to the Mahābodhi Temple and worshipped the Image of the True Face of the Buddha. I took bolts of thick and fine silk which had been given to me by the monks and laymen of Shantung, made a robe of it the size of the Tathāgata and myself offered it to the Image. Many myriads of small canopies which were entrusted to me by the Vinaya master Huien of Pu', I offered on his behalf. The meditation master teacher An Tao of Ts'ao asked me to worship the Image and I did this in his name. Then I prostrated myself completely on the ground with my mind undivided, sincere and respectful. Firstly I wished that China might experience the four benefits and that those benefits might prevail throughout the whole universe. Then I expressed the desire to be reborn under the nāga tree so that as to meet Maitreya and practice the true Dhamma and realise the knowledge not subject to rebirth."[124]

When Yijing returned to China in 689 he brought with him a picture of this statue and presented it to the Fo-shou-chi Monastery in Chang-an[125]. The Chinese envoy Wang Hiuen Ts'e made four separate trips to India, visiting Bodh Gayā during two of them. He returned from his last trip with a copy of the Mahābodhi Image which he deposited in the Imperial Palace.[126] The great monastery of Vikramaśilā had a life-sized copy of the Image in its central temple.[127] While in Tibet Atiśa had sent a message back to Vikramaśilā in India asking that three paintings be made, including one of the Mahābodhi Image, and sent to him. Powa Tsuklak Trengwa (1504–1566) who records this piece of information says the paintings were still preserved in the Narthang Monastery in his day.[128] A Chinese inscription found to the north of the Temple written by the monk Ko Yun in 1022 says of the Mahābodhi Image: "The great hero Maitreya out of compassion for all beings left them the real likeness... The Image is respected by the heterodox, cherished by the discerning and although 2000 years old its face

124. Takakusu 1896:67. It was believed that Maitreya would be enlightened under a *nāga* tree, i.e. *Mesua ferrea*.
125. Jan Yum Hua, 1955:47.
126. Chatterjee, 1967:16–7.
127. Chattopadhyaya and Chimpa, 1970:275.
128. Chandra, 1961, p 314.

remains new." The inscription also tells us that Ko Yun and his companions draped the Image with a robe made of silk that they had brought with them all the way from China for the purpose. The Tibetan monk Chag dGar-bcom (1153–1216) is said to have made a copy of the Mahābodhi Image, although it is not known in which temple he enshrined it. He first saw the original during a pilgrimage to Bodh Gayā when each day he would buy flowers from the market and strew them on the statue.[129] A Buddha statue of the same dimensions as the Mahābodhi Image was installed in the great Kumbum stūpa at Gyantse in Tibet in 1421. The measurements for the statue had been obtained from Sāriputra, the last abbot of Bodh Gayā, when he was in Gyantse on his way to China in about 1413.[130] Nor was sculpture the only art form influenced by this famous statue. The origin of one ancient Indian style of painting pictures of the Buddha was traced back to an impression made by smearing the Mahābodhi Image with yellow sandalwood paste and pressing a cotton cloth on it.[131]

It is not surprising to find that legends should have grown up around such a revered statue. The story concerning the statue's origins that was current in the 6th century, is as follows. The brahmin who had built the temple wished to enshrine a statue within it but for a long time no suitable sculptor could be found. Eventually a man appeared saying that he could do the job. He asked that a pile of scented earth and a lighted lamp be placed in the temple chamber and the door be locked for six months. This was done but, being impatient, the brahmin opened the door four days before the required time. Inside was found a statue of great beauty, perfect in every detail, except for a small part on the breast which was unfinished. Sometime later, a monk who spent the night in the chamber had a dream in which Maitreya appeared to him and said that it was he who had moulded the statue.[132] A thousand years later

129. Roerich, 1949:1055.

130. Ricca and Lo Bue, 1993:23. The Mahābodhi Image was not the only famous and sought-after statue at Bodh Gayā. During the third decade of the 11th century the Tibetan scholar Lce-btsun Shes-rab 'byung-gnas went to Bodh Gayā where he obtained a statue of Khasarpana which was later installed as the main image in the Temple of Zwha Lu Monastery; see Tucci, 1973:138.

131. Jackson, 1996:386.

132. Beal, 1884, Vol. II, p.120.

miracles were still being attributed to it. In 1300 the Tibetan tantric adept Man-luns-po travelled to Bodh Gayā and made a vow before the Mahābodhi Image to neither eat nor drink until it spoke to him. After waiting 18 days he got his wish when the statue said: "Oh son of noble family! Proceed to Mount Potala and there practice in the manner of bodhisattvas in the presence of Avalokiteśvara." The details of Man-luns-po's subsequent journey suggest that he did actually go to the sacred mountain in Kerala.[133]

According to Xuanzang, the Mahābodhi Image was 3.5 meter high, 2.6 meter wide at the knees, 1.9 meter at the shoulders and its hands were in the *bhūmisparśamudrā*. Apparently a detachable crown and necklace, both magnificently wrought and bejewelled, adorned the statue.[134] The chamber in which it was placed was so dim that, despite torches and lamps burning within, a mirror had to be used to reflect light on the statue so that its details could be seen.[135] The Buddha statue that is now placed in the Mahābodhi Temple was found in the Mahant's compound and moved to its present position by Joseph Beglar in 1880. Dating from the 10th or 11th century, it cannot be the statue seen by Xuanzang or later pilgrims.[136] In 1811, Francis Buchanan Hamilton was told by local people at Bodh Gayā that the original statue in the temple had been made of gold and had been destroyed by the Muslims, probably just a local legend.[137]

The Mahābodhi Temple was the biggest, but by no means the only, temple at Bodh Gayā. Over the centuries, pilgrims and devotees built other temples in the sacred precincts and, when that became cluttered, beyond it. Concerning these other structures Xuanzang wrote: "The kings, princes and great personages throughout all India, who have received the bequeathed teachings as handed down to them, have erected these monuments as memorials."[138] The donor's inscriptions found in the ruins of these subsidiary temples give some idea of what they were like. They are described variously as pavilions

133. Roerich, 1949:341.
134. Ibid., 121. Some inscriptions record the offerings of such ornaments to Buddha statues; see *EI,* XXI, 1931–3:99.
135. Beal, 1884, Vol. II, p.122.
136. *JRAS*, NS. Vol. IV, 1908:105.
137. Buchanan-Hamilton, 1937:157.
138. Beal, 1884, Vol. II, p.115.

(*maṇḍapa*), mansions (*vimāna*) or more usually as temples—literally "fragrant chambers" (*gandhakuṭi*). Some were built to house statues, some to earn merit for the departed and some as sanctuaries for meditation. During the Gupta period, a monk named Bodhisena from Dattagalla built a "most ornamental, excellent and lofty temple" and enshrined a statue within it.[139] The Chhinda Pūrṇabhadra built a shrine big enough to house three Buddha statues.[140] During the reign of Devapāladeva (mid 9th century), a monk named Vīradeva from what is now Afghanistan built a shrine near the great temple. He first went to Bodh Gayā "to worship the Vajrāsana" after which he returned to his homeland. Many years later, after being appointed head of the Saṅgha at Nāḷandā, he revisited Bodh Gayā and built a shrine "lofty enough that the celestial chariots might mistake it for Mount Kailash."[141] In about the 10th century, King Tunga of the Rāṣṭrakūṭas built a temple which was "lofty like a stairway to heaven".[142]

Panegyrics aside, these descriptions give the impression of tall, beautifully decorated structures and fortunately we have more than just written accounts of these now vanished monuments. A model of the Mahābodhi Temple and its surrounding shrines dating from about the 10th century and preserved in Tibet's Narthang Monastery allows us to actually see what they were like. The model shows a veritable cluster of pinnacles and spires of which the Mahābodhi Temple is only the tallest.[143] What a sight Bodh Gayā must have presented to weary pilgrims as they approached it in the distance! The last we hear of Bodh Gayā's subsidiary temples is in about the 15th century when they were all renovated by Cingalarāja.[144] By the 19th century, most had been destroyed—first by the Mahant who demolished them for their bricks and then by the misdirected zeal of the Burmese. Today, other than the so-called Animisa Cetiya,

139. Mitra, 1878:192. This inscription is on the pedestal of a statue of the Buddha now in the Indian Museum, Calcutta. Barua thought Dattagala was somewhere in Sri Lanka but the name also occurs in a Jain inscription on a statue in the State Museum, Lucknow; see *EI,* Vol. X, 1909–10:111.

140. *AI*, Vol. IX, 1880:143.

141. Ibid., 310.

142. Mitra, 1878:196.

143. *JBROS*, Vol. XXIII, 1937:17.

144. Chattopadhyaya and Chimpa, 1970:320.

cemented-over foundations and a few richly carved stone door frames, nothing of them remains.[145]

An inscription dated the year equivalent to 588 is evidence of the continual influx of pilgrims to Bodh Gayā from Sri Lanka. The inscription is one of two by a monk named Mahānāma and was found in the ruins of a small shrine near the north gate of the wall that surrounds the temple. The language of the inscription is Sanskrit and the letters, together with the small picture of a cow and her calf nibbling at a bush that appears at the bottom of the inscription, are beautifully inscribed.[146] In the first part of the inscription, Mahānāma traces his lineage back to the Buddha's disciple Mahā Kaśyapa. We are told that Kassapa's disciples wandered over the "pure land" (India?) until they came to "the feet of Laṅkā's mountains" and "in succession from them were born disciples and disciples of disciples by the hundreds". This pupillary succession passed from Bhava to Rāhula, to Upasena, to Mahānāma, then to another Upasena and finally to Mahānāma, the author of the inscription. This list of names shows that even in the 6th century there were communities of monks in Sri Lanka who could trace their lineage right back to the Buddha's disciples. It also shows that in a particular lineage there was a tradition of naming pupils after their grand-teachers. Pride in one's lineage and one's predecessors created strong bonds of affection between monks of a particular lineage and between a pupil and his teacher. Mahānāma eulogized his teacher Upasena as having "affection of the kind that is felt towards an offspring and which was extended, as one would expect of a kinsman, even to the cruel person who might do him harm (how much more) to any person in distress who might come to him for protection or to any afflicted person whose confidence had been destroyed by the continuous flight of the arrows of adversity." The inscription continues:

> "His disciple, greater still, is he who has the appropriate name Mahānāma, an inhabitant of Amaradvīpa, a very ocean of a mighty family, born on the island of Laṅkā, delighting in the

145. Banerji identifies one such door frame as being now in the Indian Museum; see Banerji 1933, pl. XCII, c. But see also *Artibus Asiae* Vol. XXXII, 1970:106.

146. Fleet, *CII*, Vol. III, p.274. See also Tournier 2014.

> welfare of others, by him this beautiful mansion to the Teacher of mankind, who overcame the power of Māra, dazzling white like the rays of the moon, with an open pavilion on all sides has caused to be made at the exalted Bodhimaṇda."

If indeed Mahānāma did come from a powerful Sri Lankan family, this would explain why he was able to erect his shrine on such a choice site, right next to the gate that led from the Mahābodhi Temple to the Mahābodhi Monastery. Pilgrims from Sri Lanka lodging at the monastery would have to pass the shrine and read the inscription or, more likely, have it read for them, thereby enhancing Mahānāma's and his lineage's renown. The inscription concludes:

> "By means of this appropriate action may humankind, freed from attachment to worldly things, with mental darkness dispelled, and like a torch clinging to nothing, enjoy the great happiness of perfect wisdom. As long as the sun, the dispeller of darkness, shines in all directions with its diffused rays, as long as the ocean is full of waves that are curled like the hoods of cobras and as long as Mount Sumeru, the abode of Indra, has its summit beautiful with various jewelled slabs so as to be full of lustre, so long may this temple of the great Sage be everlasting. The 7th day in the bright fortnight of the month of Chaitra in the year 200 and 60 and 9."

During the second decade of the 7th century, the fanatical Saivite king of Bengal, Śaśāṃka (603–620), conducted a brief but savage persecution of Buddhism. Monks were harassed, temples were looted and the famous stone with the Buddha's footprints on it at Pāṭaliputra was thrown in the Ganges. He also gave orders that the Mahābodhi Image at Bodh Gayā was to be destroyed and replaced with an idol of Maheśvara, i.e. Śiva. According to Xuanzang:

> "The officer having received the order was moved with fear and sighing said, 'If I destroy the figure of the Buddha then during successive *kalpas* I shall reap misfortune; if I disobey the king, he will put me to a cruel death and destroy my family; in either case, whether I obey or disobey, such will be the consequences. What then shall I do?' On this he called to his presence a man of believing heart to help him, and sent him to build up across the chamber and before the figure of the Buddha a wall of brick. The

man, from a feeling of shame at the darkness, placed a burning lamp in with the image, then on the interposing wall he made a figure of Maheśvara."[147]

The Bodhi Tree was less lucky. It was cut down, its roots pulled out and everything was burned. Soon after this desecration Śaśāṃka died which, not surprisingly, pious Buddhists attributed to his evil deeds. On his death the wall that had been built to protect the Mahābodhi Image was removed and the lamp that had been placed inside with it was found to be still burning.

In 629, the most famous of all pilgrims, the Chinese monk Xuanzang, left his homeland for the long journey to India. Almost two years later he arrived in northern India and in 637 visited Bodh Gayā, although he came again some years later in the company of the lay meditation master Jayasena to participate in an eight-day festival.[148] Xuanzang was not just an intrepid traveller and a superb scholar; he also took a deep interest in the world around him, and during his travels made extensive notes on everything he saw. On his return to China in 645 he used these notes to write an account of his travels that remains even today the most important source of information about social, religious and political life in late medieval India. His description of Bodh Gayā is the most detailed that exists from pre-modern times.[149] Xuanzang describes the Mahābodhi Temple as being about 50 meters high and made of brick coated with a layer of plaster. There were niches on the temple, each containing a gilded statue and beautiful plaster-work ornamentation. On the east side of the temple was a three-storied pavilion with gold and silver

147. Beal, 1884, Vol. II, p.121. This may not have been the first persecution of Buddhism. According to the *Abhidharma-mahāvibhāṣa-śāstra*, King Puṣyamitra (187–151 BCE) arrived in Bodh Gayā during a campaign to wipe out Buddhism. The deity of the Bodhi Tree, Satyavāk, transformed herself into a beautiful maiden, lured the king close and killed him and his army; Taishō no. 1545 translated in Lamotte 1988: 387. Puṣyamitra is known to have been a zealous patron of Brahmanism and although some scholars doubt his persecution of Buddhism it is persistently referred to in Buddhist sources. His death at the foot of the Bodhi Tree however can be dismissed as legendary; see Lamotte 1988:386–92.

148. For Xuanzang's itinerary see Watters, 1905: 335.

149. Beal, Vol. II, 1884:117 ff.

ornamental work inlaid with pearls and precious stones. On either side of the temple's entrance were statues of Avalokiteśvara and Maitreya, 3 meters high and made of silver. At the back of the temple, the Bodhi Tree stood within a walled enclosure about 6 meters high which had been built by King Pūrṇavarma of Magadha.

Like all places of pilgrimage, Bodh Gayā had a host of shrines, images and monuments that were believed to mark important events or to have miraculous powers. Apart from shrines marking the Buddha's seven weeks at Bodh Gayā, there were also numerous stūpas including one built by Asoka, one built over Sujāta's house and another where the Kassapa brothers had been converted. Near the Mucalinda Tank was a small shrine containing a statue of Siddhattha Gotama practising austerities. Xuanzang said people believed that scented earth rubbed on this statue would cure sickness. In another shrine he saw a statue of Kassapa Buddha that was believed to sometimes emit light. Near the Bodhi Tree he saw what must have been a very ancient statue of Avalokiteśvara that had sunken up to its breast into the earth. The belief had developed that when the statue finally disappeared so would the Buddha's teachings.

One of these secondary monuments noticed by Xuanzang, which could still be seen in the 19th century, was the stūpa commemorating the Matiposaka Jātaka.[150] According to this beautiful legend, the Bodhisattva was reborn as an elephant. His mother was blind and he used to look after her by bringing lotus roots for her to eat and pure water to drink. Once, a man became lost in the woods, and just as he thought he might perish there, the young elephant appeared and offered to lead him out of the forest. Having done this, he asked the man not to tell anyone where he and his mother lived. The ungrateful man went straight to the king and told him where he could find the young elephant, who was then captured and tied up in the royal stables where he refused to eat. When the king asked the elephant why he would take no food, he told him he was worried about his blind mother. Impressed by such filial piety, the king returned the elephant to his forest and declared that he and his mother should not be disturbed. The stūpa and nearby pillar marking the place where these events happened was demolished by a British officer in Gayā who decided it would be a good source for cheap bricks. While

150. *Jātaka* No, 455.

digging, a large stone box was found that contained many images made of lac. The pillar was moved to Gayā although three fragments, one with parts of an inscription on it, still lay near the stūpa until 1830.[151] The rest of the pillar was moved from Gayā and placed near the tank at Bodh Gayā in 1955.[152]

Xuanzang noticed three main festivals at Bodh Gayā, all of which attracted many thousands of pilgrims. The first was at Vaiśākha and involved the worship of the Bodhi Tree. "On this day the princes of different countries and the religious multitudes from different quarters assemble by thousands and ten thousands unbidden, and bathe the roots with scented water and perfumed milk, whilst they raise the sound of music and scatter flowers and perfumes, and whilst the light of day is continued by burning torches, they offer their religious gifts." People would pluck leaves from the Bodhi Tree and take them home as cherished mementos, much as they still do today.[153] The second of these festivals took place just after Kaṭhina and went for seven days. "Every year, when the monks end their yearly rains retreat, religious persons come from every quarter in thousands and myriads, and during seven days and nights they scatter flowers, burn incense and sound music as they wander through the area and pay their worship and present their offerings."

In about 656 Xuanzang returned to Bodh Gayā with his teacher Jayasena to witness an exhibition of the Buddha's relics, the third great annual festival held there. "They (the relics) are both great and small. The large ones are like a round pearl, bright and glistening and of reddish white colour. There are also flesh relics, long as a bean and

151. Patal, 1963:11.

152. K. M. Srivastava who recently excavated this stūpa believes it marks Sujātā's house; see *JSLRAS*, NS. Vol. XXIV, p.15.

153. Beal, 1911:105. Chinese sources in particular attest to the popularity of Bodhi leaves as gifts and mementos. For example, the monk Kwang-yuen returned from India in 982 and presented the emperor with such a leaf and a letter from the Indian king confirming that while at Bodh Gayā he had prayed for the emperor's long life. In 1009 an Indian monk presented the Chinese emperor with some Bodhi leaves and an impression of the Vajrāsana. Before he returned to India he was given provisions for his journey and a beautiful robe to offer to the Vajrāsana on the emperor's behalf; see Mukherji, 1931:321–23.

shining red in appearance. An innumerable multitude of disciples offered incense and flowers; and after ascribing praise and worship they take the relics back and place them in the stūpa." The Chinese pilgrim had been told that during this festival mysterious lights sometimes appeared and that it sometimes rained flowers and indeed he later claimed to have witnessed one of these wonders. Late at night as the pilgrim and his teacher sat talking, the conversation turned to the relics they had seen that day. Jayasena commented that all the relics he had ever seen or heard about were minute which only seemed logical for things so precious and rare. These relics however, were so large and there were so many of them that he had doubts as to their authenticity. Xuanzang agreed and expressed similar reservations. Suddenly all the lamps flickered and then went out and a supernatural light became manifest. "On looking out they saw the temple bright and effulgent as the sun, whilst from its summit proceeded a lambent flame of five colours, reaching to the sky. Heaven and earth were flooded with light, the moon and stars were no longer seen, and a subtle perfume seemed to breathe through and fill the courts and precincts." Crowds of pilgrims flocked to the temple staring in wonder and offered even more fervent worship. Gradually the miraculous light faded so that "the heavens and earth were again wrapped in darkness and the different stars once more appeared" leaving no one, including the two sceptics, in any uncertainty about the relic's genuineness.[154]

Towards the middle of the first half of the 7th century several diplomatic delegations were sent by the Chinese emperor to Kanauj, then the capital of the late Gupta Empire. The second of these missions included specific religious goals. In 644 a delegation arrived at Kanauj where it was received warmly. Early the next year the delegation proceeded to Rājagaha and from there to Bodh Gayā where it placed an inscription at the foot of the Bodhi Tree. Included in the delegation was an artist named Song Fazhi who made drawings of the architecture and some of the images at Bodh Gayā. A drawing he made of Maitreya placed at the Bodhi Tree was later used as the model of two Maitreya statues enshrined in temples in China. Interestingly, one of the aims of the mission was to acquire the technology required to make sugar. In 658 another official delegation left China for India. The emperor Gaozong (649–683) wanted to offer a

154. Beal, 1911:156–7.

robe to the Mahābodhi Monastery. The mission managed to reach Bodh Gayā, and on the 5th of November 660 a grand reception was held for the Chinese during which the abbot of the Mahābodhi Monastery, Śilanāga, presented the embassy with gifts of ivory pearls, replica of the sacred relics and impressions of the Buddha, which may mean cloth with images on it.[155]

The Mahābodhi Temple must have required constant minor repairs and occasional major renovations. At some period during the 6th or 7th century, such renovations were made by an unknown pilgrim who left a record of the work he did and the endowments he made on the railing around the temple. The first part of the inscription is missing depriving us of the name of this pious and generous donor. It reads:

> "...has been made where the great Vajirāsana Gandhakuṭi is. The temple has been adorned with a new coating of plaster and paint at the cost of two hundred and fifty dinaras. In the temple a lamp of ghee has been provided for Lord Buddha by the gift of a hundred cows, for as long as the sun, the moon and the stars shall endure. Also (from the income) of another hundred cows, in addition to the cost of small, perpetually recurring repairs to the temple, provision has been made for another lamp of ghee to be burned before the statue inside the temple. By the gift (of the income from) yet another hundred cows provision has been made for another lamp of ghee to be burned before the brass image of Lord Buddha in the monastery...a perpetual endowment of a lamp of ghee has been made for the benefit of the monastery. There also...a large water reservoir has been dug for the use of the noble congregation of monks and to the east of it a new field has been laid out. Whatever merit may have been acquired by me from all this, may it be firstly to my parents..."[156]

If we examine exactly what this unknown pilgrim did it becomes clear that his repairs and endowments were the most extensive of any known to have been done at Bodh Gayā since the building of the temple. The 250 *dinaras*, the well-known gold coin of Gupta mintage,

155. Sen, 2003:37–41.

156. *ASI*, 1908–9:153. Barua's transcription of this inscription omits the words *bhikṣusaṃghasya āryasa*; *IHQ*, Vol. VI, 1930:27.

the 300 cows, land for the reservoir and the cost of its excavation plus the fields must have amounted to a very sizeable expenditure. While the produce from the fields could have been consumed by the inmates of the monastery, only a small amount of the ghee could have been used in the lamps and the kitchen. The rest would have had to be sold and the income from it invested, as would the income from the calves born each year. Some of that would go for wages for cowherds and agricultural labourers and some, in keeping with the stipulation of the endowment, would be used from time to time for repairs to the temple. The rest, no doubt a large and growing amount, would have been used at the discretion of the abbot. It seems likely that the monastery referred to in the inscription was the Mahābodhi Monastery, and its opulence, commented upon by Xuanzang, was due in part to the wealth it accumulated over the centuries from endowments like this one.

This inscription highlights an aspect of Buddhist monasticism often overlooked—its economic function—and indicates that some monks at Bodh Gayā were as involved in the management of property as they were in spiritual pursuits. It has been pointed out that the paradox of monasticism is that it creates the very wealth that it originally set out to reject. This observation is as true of Bodh Gayā as it is of Buddhist monastic centres throughout Asia. Little information about Bodh Gayā's economic life has survived, but if what is known is combined with what is known of other monastic centres in north-eastern India we get at least a glimpse of it. The basis of Bodh Gayā's wealth was the donations it received either in cash or in kind. Only the large endowments given by princes and magnates have been recorded, but the few coins that each of the many thousands of humble devotees gave, when added up, would also have been significant. In north-eastern India, evidence of land grants to Buddhist monasteries only becomes available from towards the end of the Gupta period. Typically, kings would grant land or villages or sometimes a whole district to a monastery, usually in trust to the abbot.[157] Yijing mentions that Nāḷandā owned 200 villages.[158] These holdings were not allowed to be entered by royal officers and were exempted from taxes and dues. In some cases, kings would simply

157. *AI*, Vol. XLVIII, 1919:45.
158. Takakusu 1896:65.

transfer all the rights they enjoyed over a village to a monastery, leaving the task of collecting taxes and produce to the monks. One inscription urges tenants on land owned by the Mahābodhi Temple to be submissive and obedient to the monk who administered the land, [159] while another reminds tenants "to bring to the donee at the proper time the due revenue..."[160] Monasteries had an interest in improving the land they owned and the resources to do it. A tank dug at Bodh Gayā in the 10th century at a cost of 3000 *drammas* was probably used for irrigation.[161]

It was normal practice in ancient India for kings to grant the revenue of villages to monks who had achieved academic distinction or those deemed particularly holy.[162] The famous lay meditation master Jayasena, one of Xuanzang's teachers, was assigned 20 large towns by King Pūrṇavarma.[163] Although no records of such grants to Bodh Gayā's numerous scholar monks have survived, it is safe to assume that they were similarly rewarded. Land grants were generally considered to be perpetual or, to use the phrase found in many inscriptions, "for as long as the sun and the moon shall endure." They also usually included dire warnings of what would befall anyone violating the grant.[164] Sometimes, instead of land, money was given to be invested or loaned so that the monks could live off the interest. Donors stipulated how they wanted the money given to be utilised. The repair and maintenance of monastic buildings are often mentioned, as are the provision of the requisites to monks, the copying out of scriptures and the maintenance of almshouses for the poor (*sattrasālā*) that were attached to some monasteries.[165] Just as frequently, donors wanted their money used to provide "incense, lamps, oil and flowers" for *pūjas* done on their behalf or to keep perpetual lamps burning. Atiśa gave a quarter of the gold he received from Tibet for regular *pūjas* to be performed at Bodh Gayā. The monks who performed these and other ritual services for

159. Sircar, 1978:256.
160. *EI,* Vol. XVII, 1923–4:321.
161. *JASB*, NS, Vol. IV, 1908:102.
162. Takakusu 1896:177.
163. Beal, 1911:153.
164. *IA*, Vol. XLVIII, 1919:45.
165. *EI,* Vol. XVII, 1923–4:322.

pilgrims must have received remuneration. There seems to have been an awareness that such monks could sometimes abuse their position and attempts were taken to prevent this from happening. In the 13th century it was decided to build a chapel over the Buddha's footprints at Bodh Gayā. But when senior monks pointed out that the door-keeper/attendant that such a chapel would require might demand money from devotees, the plan was dropped.[166]

Bodh Gayā, like other monastic centres, maintained a large staff of lay servants and workers. As well as cooks and watchers, [167] there would have been accountants, musicians, garland makers, grooms, labourers, etc. Xuanzang mentions that during his stay at Nāḷandā he was given personal servants to wait on him.[168] When there were almsgivings at the homes of lay devotees, monastic servants had to carry the necessary utensils from the monastery to the host's house and back.[169] There were builders and brick makers to construct and repair buildings, stonemasons to carve the stūpas and statues that pilgrims commissioned and scribes to write inscriptions on them. These tradesmen must have been freemen, as they sometimes wrote their names on the bricks they made or included them in the inscriptions they wrote.[170] Apart from these workers, there were also slaves at Bodh Gayā to do menial tasks and to operate the water clocks.[171] Another source of income at Bodh Gayā was the manufacture and sale of souvenirs to pilgrims. Models of the Mahābodhi Temple made at Bodh Gayā have been found in several countries, as have a particular type of clay tablet.[172] During excavations at Bodh Gayā in the 19th century, hundreds of thousands of small clay votive stūpas were found.[173] It seems likely that pilgrims either paid to have these stūpas made or hired the moulds used to

166. Roerich, 1949:72. For some interesting comments on the several pairs of footprints at Bodh Gayā including the one mentioned here, see Debjani, 1985 pp.103–41.
167. *JBBRAS*, Vol. XVI, 1897:360.
168. Beal, 1911:161.
169. Takakusu 1896:36.
170. Cunningham, 1892:77.
171. *EI,* Vol. XI, 1911–12:120; Takakusu 1896:146.
172. John Guy, 1991:356.
173. Cunningham, 1892:46.

make them.[174] Daily *pūjas* at the Mahābodhi Temple and the smaller shrines around it, the regular flow of pilgrims and the annual festivals must have required a large and steady supply of flowers. Being perishable they would have had to be grown nearby and brought each day. The cultivation of these and the provision of large quantities of ghee and rice needed both for Bodh Gayā's inhabitants and the pilgrims who flocked there on special occasions must have been a significant factor in the economy of southern Magadha. Bodh Gayā's wealth allowed it to flourish for centuries as a centre of art, learning and religion, but it also had a negative side. Protecting and maintaining such wealth distracted some monks from their proper vocation and the attacks that Bodh Gayā suffered from kings like Śaśāṃka and later, the Muslims, were probably motivated as much by the desire for easy loot as by anything else.

Another inscription written on the stone railing close to the one discussed above, and in almost identical characters, has been thought by some scholars to be a continuation of it. This inscription, in contrast to the last one, is more indicative of the thousands of pilgrims who visited Bodh Gayā through the centuries. It does not record any lavish gifts but rather tells of one person's devotion to the Buddha and his hopes for himself and the world in which he lived. It reads:

> "The virtuous monk Prakhyakīrti being the descendant of the rulers of the island of Laṅkā is a moon in the filament of his family. This monk, out of devotion, and desiring to attain Buddhahood, caused to be performed acts of worship at the (place of) the Three Jewels for the peace of all humankind. Whatever merit has been acquired by me because of this let it be for the enlightenment of.... Let that auspicious reward be shared by..."[175]

Yet another inscription from around the same period, and again by a pilgrim from Sri Lanka, but this time a layman, has been found on the broken pedestal of a Buddha statue. It records that one

174. On the significance of making clay votive stūpas see *EW*, Vol. XX, No.1–2, 1970:80–4.

175. *IHQ*, Vol.VI, 1930:29. For an alternative dating see *JBROS*, Vol. IV, 1918:405.

Udayaśrī set up a Buddha statue at Bodh Gayā and "worshipped it as he would the Lord himself".[176] Carved on the pedestal is a kneeling figure holding a garland, probably a portrait of Udayaśrī, and a woman with a child. It is possible that Udayaśrī was accompanied on his pilgrimage by his family. At the top of the stairs that leads to the north side of the terrace of the Mahābodhi Temple is a huge Buddha statue flanked by Avalokiteśvara on one side and Maitreya on the other. There are three inscriptions on the statue. The first, around the head, is the usual Dhamma Pariyāya verse used to consecrate statues.[177] The second inscription, near the right shoulder reads: "Om! Since the Lord of the World realized the path of purity, the path to enlightenment shows us the way to liberation." The last inscription is on the base of the statue:

> "A gift of the senior monk Vīryendra, a knower of the Vinaya and an inmate of the great monastery of Somapura, an inhabitant of the Samalata country and a follower of the excellent Mahāyāna school. Whatever merit has been derived from this gift may it be for the enlightenment firstly of my teachers, preceptors and parents and then for all sentient beings."

The characters in these inscriptions are from the 10th century, and we can safely date the statue from this time. Beside the last inscription is a small kneeling male figure with its hands in the gesture of worship, obviously a portrait of the donor. Vīryendra hailed from what is now Bengal and must have been a person of some standing, perhaps a senior administrator monk at Somapura, to be able to commission such a large and fine statue.

In the hundred years after 950 CE, the last wave of Chinese pilgrims visited India, and the numbers known to have come is impressive. In the year 964, 300 monks set out. Two years later, when the emperor asked for volunteers to visit the sacred places in India and worship at them on his behalf, 154 monks responded to the

176. *ASI*, 1908–9:157.

177. A verse spoken by Bhikkhu Assaji which was thought to epitomise the Dhamma: "The Tathāgata has told the cause of those things which proceed from a cause, and [he has told] their cessation—the great recluse has such a doctrine", *ye dharmā hetuprabhavā hetuṃ teṣāṃ tathāgato hy avadat, teṣāṃ ca yo nirodha evaṃvādī mahāśramaṇaḥ*. The Pali version is at Vinaya I 40.

call.[178] All these monks carried letters requesting the Indian king to provide them with guides to the various sacred places.[179] Although Chinese had been coming to Bodh Gayā for centuries, their visits are known only from Chinese sources. However, the pilgrims who came during this twilight era of Sino-Indian intercourse actually left traces of their visits at Bodh Gayā.[180] The earliest Chinese inscription from Bodh Gayā, and indeed from anywhere in India, is found on a piece of carved stone now in the Indian Museum in Kolkata dating from 1000 CE.[181] The stone shows the seven former Buddhas and Maitreya standing in a row and each with his hands in different gestures. The inscription is in three lines along the bottom of the stone. It says that the monk Chi Ye had taken a vow to exhort 300, 000 people to practise conduct that would assure their rebirth in heaven and also to distribute 300, 000 copies of a particular scripture. Then, together with a group of other monks, he had arrived in Magadha to gaze upon the Vajirāsana. Chi Ye and his companions had then worshipped Maitreya and written a record of their devotions. Apparently it was Chi Ye's second visit to Bodh Gayā.

The next inscription, also now in the Indian Museum, is written on a large stele with three arched niches on its upper edge. The middle niche has an image of the Buddha in it, while the smaller flanking niches contain images of the goddess Mārīcī, the Mahāyāna Buddhist personification of the victory of light over darkness. The writer of the inscription, Yun Shu, says he had come to India to see with his own eyes the footprint of the Buddha. Having done this, he collected what money he could spare and raised a monument to the 10, 000 Buddhas some 30 paces north of the Bodhi Tree. Yun Shu proceeds to praise the Trikāya and then ends with a postscript

178. *HCIP*, Vol. IV, 1964:444.

179. *HCIP*, Vol. IV, 1964:445.

180. Wang Hiuen Ts'e set up an inscription at Bodh Gayā on March 14th 645 CE; Chatterjee, 1967:17. Another of his countrymen is known to have done the same thing in the second half of the 7th century; see Lahiri, 1986:17. It is also interesting to note that in 602 CE an Indian monk reported to the Chinese court that an inscription in Chinese had been found in India; see Jan Yun-Hua, 1955:47.

181. *IA*, Vol. X, 1881:1.

> "There went with me to the land of the Buddha the two monks I Ching and I Lan from the Monastery of the Established Doctrine in the High Street of the Eastern Capital who each took with him a gold embroidered robe to be placed in the shrine of Mahābodhi and each set up his own memorial tablet in memory thereof."

By remarkable coincidence, the inscriptions written by the two monks mentioned in this postscript have also been found.[182] The last of this group of inscriptions dates from the year 1033. From it, we learn that a stūpa had been erected under the Bodhi Tree in memory of the Emperor Tai Tsung (976–997). Tai Tsung, the second emperor of the Sung dynasty, was a devout Buddhist, and in ordering a monument to be built for him at Bodh Gayā, his successors were probably following his personal wishes. The inscription reads:

> "This stūpa was erected by the Emperor and Empress of the great Sung dynasty in memory of His Imperial Majesty Tai Tsung. By command of His Imperial Majesty, our divine enlightened, most glorious, most virtuous, most filial sovereign of the great Sung dynasty and Her Imperial Majesty, our most gracious, most virtuous, most compassionate Empress, I, the Buddhist monk Hui Wen, have been commanded to proceed to the country of Magadha and to erect on behalf of His Imperial Majesty Tai Tsung, now deceased, the humane, the orthodox, the deserving, the divinely virtuous, the wise, the supremely filial, this stūpa besides the Bodhimaṇḍa at Vajrāsana."[183]

In 1011, Dīpaṃkara Srijñāna, better known as Atiśa, one of the last great Indian Buddhist masters, was ordained at Bodh Gayā. He studied the Vinaya for two years under Sīlaraksita of the Matavihāra before leaving for Sumatra where he stayed for 12 years.[184] On his return to India, he again went to Bodh Gayā, this time staying at the Mahābodhi Monastery where "he thrice defeated the *tīrthika* heretics in religious controversy and thereby maintained the superiority of Buddhism over all other religions in Magadha". [185] Shortly after this

182. Cunningham, 1892:69–72.
183. *IA*, Vol. X, 1881:339.
184. Chattopadhyaya and Chimpa, 1981:81.
185. Ibid., 96.

he was appointed abbot of Vikramaśilā. Towards the end of his incumbency there war broke out between King Nayapāla of Magadha (1038–1055) and King Karnya, whose realm lay to the west of Magadha. Karnya's troops were involved in several skirmishes, looted some monasteries and killed four monks. When Nayapāla's troops finally got the upper hand, Atiśa counselled him to have mercy on his adversary and helped to negotiate a treaty between the two parties. "Unmindful of his health and even at the risk of his own life Atiśa again and again crossed the river that lay between the two kingdoms and thereby brought peace to all living beings."[186] In 1040, Atiśa set off from Bodh Gayā on his epoch-making journey to Tibet, where he helped in the re-establishment of Buddhism in that land and where he finally died in 1057. His frequent sojourns at Bodh Gayā and the fact that one of his works, the *Caryāgīti*, begins with a salutation to the Vajirāsana, indicate that Atiśa had a special fondness for the place.[187]

It was around the beginning of the 12th century that what was to be a long and close connection between Bodh Gayā and the Buddhists of Burma began. By this time the Mahābodhi Temple was at least 700 years old and once again in need of repairs, which King Kyanzittha of Pagan (1084–1113) undertook to carry out. An inscription found at Shwesandaw Pagoda in Prome and dating from approximately 1100 reads, in part:

> "King Kyanzittha got together jewels of diverse kind and sent them in a ship with intent to build up the holy temple of the glorious Vajirāsana... The great temple built by King Dhammasoka, which had fallen into utter ruin, His Majesty proceeded to build anew, making it finer than even before."[188]

This is the first evidence of repairs being done to the temple by parties from outside India and reflects the gradual decline of Buddhism in the subcontinent and its ascendancy in other parts of Asia. The Shwesandaw Pagoda inscription raises several interesting questions. What prompted Kyanzittha to undertake what must have been an expensive project in a land beyond his own kingdom? It is true that

186. Chattopadhyaya and Chimpa, 1981:97
187. Ibid., 505.
188. Griswold, 1965:174.

Burmese pilgrims returning from Bodh Gayā could have told him about the state of the temple. But could their entreaties alone have been enough to arouse his interest and get him to open his treasury? One is tempted to speculate that the Sri Lankan monks at Bodh Gayā had something to do with it. During this period, Burma was enthusiastically absorbing Sri Lankan Theravada, and monks from the island were held in great esteem in Burma. Likewise, there had been a century of political turmoil in Sri Lanka, and the king of the time, Vijayabāhu I (1055–1110), was preoccupied with trying to rebuild his country. Vijayabāhu himself had sent "costly pearls, precious stones and other jewels to the Bodhi Tree" but he probably was not in the position to do anything more ambitious.[189] This might have compelled the monks at the Mahābodhi Monastery to take advantage of their compatriots' influence in Burma to appeal to Kyanzittha for help.

Another point of interest in the inscription is its claim that the Mahābodhi Temple was in a state of "utter ruin" and that it was virtually rebuilt. The temple could have been damaged by war or perhaps even by an earthquake, but there is no record of this. Short of such catastrophes there is no reason to believe that the temple needed anything more than a good renovation like that done in the 6th or 7th century. Kyanzittha was a monarch very much given to bombast and self-aggrandizement. Several of his other inscriptions are written in the form of fictitious prophecies in which the Buddha foretells his reign and the supposed golden age it would usher in. Other inscriptions described him as a bodhisattva and praise the numerous grandiose building projects he initiated. All the records we have of Kyanzittha give the impression of a man who would have been loath to admit to merely repairing something originally built by another. That thorough renovations were carried out on the Mahābodhi Temple we need not doubt, but that it needed rebuilding or even major structural repairs is improbable. That need arose and was ably undertaken by another Burmese king two centuries later. Evidence of Kyanzittha's mission from Bodh Gayā itself comes in the form of two sealings found there by Cunningham. The sealings have inscriptions on their backs in Mon script from about 1100 AD that say: "This is the Buddha of Mahādeva."[190]

189. *Cūḷavaṃsa* LX, 23.

190. Luce, 1960–70:22.

Another inscription from towards the end of the 12th century likewise suggests the decline of Buddhism in India but also renewal—at least at Bodh Gayā. The inscription, first discovered by Cunningham, is in Sanskrit in beautifully incised Nāgari characters of the 12th century and resembles the Sarnath inscription of Kumāradevī. As the first words of the chronogram are missing it is not possible to give the inscription's exact date, but it must fall somewhere between 1183 and 1192. When historian Niradbandhu Sanyal translated the inscription in 1929 based on a reproduction of it, he was unable to locate the original and its whereabouts today is unknown.[191] The inscription records the excavation of a cave at Jayapura and the setting up therein of a statue of Siṃhanāda Avalokiteśvara and three statues of Tārā "as fair as the morning clouds". This act of piety was undertaken by a monk named Śrīmitra who, we are told, "was always quick in giving away without attachment even what did not cross the mind of the receiver, so that the wish-fulfilling gem, famous for giving what is desired, became dull with shame". We are further told that Śrīmitra converted to Buddhism many kings including King Jayacchandra of Benares and that he had "restored the discipline and recovered numerous collections of lost scriptures and others of the same kind, belonging to the illustrious Mahābodhi."

Exactly where Śrīmitra excavated his cave is difficult to imagine. The nearest rocky areas to Bodh Gayā are Gayāsīsa to the north and Pragbodhi to the east, neither of which has artificial caves. Is it possible that Śrīmitra's cave was a construction like the caves housing statues of the Virgin that are often seen in the grounds of Catholic churches.[192] Jayapura, the City of Victory, is almost certainly another name for Bodh Gayā. King Jayacchandra (1170–1194) was a Gahadavala, a dynasty usually thought of as being Hindu. However, we know that his grandfather, Govindachandra (1114–1154) patronised the Buddhist monastery at Savatthi and that his grandmother Kumāradevi was a devout Buddhist.[193] That Jayacchandra followed in his grandmother's footsteps indicates that

191. *IHQ*, Vol. V, 1929:21.

192. Such artificial caves have been found at Nāḷandā; see Banerji, 1933, pl. XCVa.

193. *EI,* Vol. XI, 1911–12:20; Vol. XVII, 1922–3:310.

there was a strong and enduring Buddhist influence in the family. The description of Jayacchandra as a king of Benares, a fact confirmed by Muslim sources, is also of interest. Chandradeva, the founder of the Gāhaḍavāla dynasty, made his capital at Kanauj, but most of the grants issued by his successors were issued from Benares. It would seem, therefore, that at an early date the capital was shifted from Kanauj to Benares, and it is almost certain that increasing Muslim pressure from the west necessitated this move. Śrīmitra's mention of restoring destroyed scriptures at Bodh Gayā may be evidence of a brief but destructive raid by Muslims that had recently taken place.

Śrīmitra's inscription is the first epigraphical evidence of the worship of Tārā being practised at Bodh Gayā. As the earliest statue of Tārā found at Bodh Gayā dates from about the 7th century, this is surprising.[194] About 50 years after Śrīmitra built his cave, the Tibetan pilgrim Dharmasvāmin saw a temple at Bodh Gayā called Tārā Vihāra and three celebrated statues of Tārā. The first was called Tārā of the Turned Face. The pilgrim was told that once a śrāvaka had made disparaging comments about the statue, after which it turned its head and spoke to him. The same statue was supposed to have spoken to Atiśa.[195] The second statue was called Laughing Tārā and represented the deity laughing at Māra's attempts to frighten the Buddha. The third statue was called Tārā of the River. According to legend, a śrāvaka had fallen into the river and as the current swept him away he cried out to Tārā in desperation. The deity suddenly appeared to him and said: "When all was well you never gave me a thought. Now when you are in trouble you shout 'Tārā! Tārā!'." The water subsided, and the previously sceptical monk was saved. The deity then changed herself into a stone image which was then installed in a temple.[196]

These stories of Tārā miraculously confounding doubting śrāvakas probably reflect Tantrayānist annoyance at being unable to convince the Theravādins of the reality of Tantric deities. Although Dharmasvāmin does not say that the three statues he saw were all enshrined at the same place, it is difficult not to come to the

194. Leoshko, 1988:48.
195. Roerich, 1956:75.
196. Ibid., 75.

conclusion that they were the same statues raised by Śrīmitra. The florid imagination characteristic of the Tantrayāna could well account for the legends growing up around the statues so soon after their installation. Before the 1880 restoration what is now identified as the Animisa Chaitya was called Tārā Devī Temple, and the image inside it, a statue of Siṃhanāda Avalokiteśvara, was worshipped as a Hindu goddess.[197] It is also interesting to note that the village which borders Bodh Gayā on the southwest is called Mastipur Taradi, a contraction of Tārā Devi.

In the spring of 1234, the Tibetan monk Dharmasvāmin left Svyambhu Stūpa just outside Kathmandu, where he had been studying for five years, and set out for India. His aim was to visit Buddhist sacred sites and to finish his education at Nāḷandā before returning to Tibet. He had picked a particularly bad time to go. Parts of the country were already subdued by the Turks, while in other parts native princes still held out, or even mustered enough strength to win back some territories—at least for a while. Brigands and highwaymen took advantage of the chaos to loot at will. Dharmasvāmin would have already heard about or even met monks and other refugees fleeing the fighting.[198] But despite being fully aware of the very considerable dangers of travelling in India, he nonetheless set out. When he reached Pata in northern Bihar, he was told that Turks had attacked the town earlier in the year but had failed to capture it. However, the townspeople were taking no chances, and the bridges in front of all the town's gates were guarded by archers. He joined up with a group of travellers, 16 of whom like himself were headed for Bodh Gayā. The party arrived in Vesālī to find the panic-stricken population preparing to flee an attack that was expected at any time. Dharmasvāmin stayed in the town overnight, and the next day it was announced that the soldiers had gone. Continuing south, he crossed the Ganges, which was eight stages from Bodh Gayā, a stage being about eight miles, and eventually reached his goal.

"At the time of Dharmasvāmin's arrival at Vajirāsana, the place was deserted and only four monks were found staying there. One of

197. Mitra, 1878, pl. XX, 1, where the statue is wrongly identified as Padmapani.

198. On Indian monks who fled to and settled in Nepal see Cordier, 1909–15.

them said: 'It is not good! All have fled from fear of the Turushka soldiery.' They blocked up the door in front of the Mahābodhi Image with bricks and plastered it. Near it they placed another image as a substitute. They also plastered the outside door of the temple. On its surface they drew the image of Maheśvara in order to protect it from the non-Buddhists. The monk said 'We five do not dare to stay here and shall have to flee.' As the day's stage was long and the heat great, they felt tired and as it became dark, they remained there and fell asleep. Had the Turushkas come they would not have known it."[199] Early the next morning the monks fled north but were able to return 17 days later, and Dharmasvāmin spent the next three months doing his devotions, seeing the sights and, because he could speak Sanskrit, acting as an interpreter for other visitors.

Dharmasvāmin's account of his stay at Bodh Gayā is of great interest, not only because it is so full of details, but also because it is the last eyewitness account we have of the great temple and its institutions before they ceased to exist. Dharmasvāmin described the Mahābodhi Temple as being 35 cubits high, painted white and clearly visible from a distance of two stages. He described it as shaped like a stūpa on the outside but like a monastery on the inside. On the east there were three chambers. According to what he was told, the temple had originally been built by a brahmin and then, about a 180 years after the Buddha's Nirvana, King Asoka had enlarged it and built an enclosure around it. Inside the temple was the famous Mahābodhi Image, some two cubits high. "One is never satiated to behold such an image and has no desire to go and behold another. Dharmasvāmin said that even people with little faith when standing in front of the image felt it impossible not to shed tears."[200] He was told the legend concerning the image's origins. Three brothers fell into an argument as to which religion was best. On being told by the others that Buddhism was inferior, the youngest brother went crying to his mother. She called the three boys together and told them to go to the Himalayas and ask Maheśvara for his opinion. Maheśvara of course confirmed the youngest brother's belief in the superiority of Buddhism, and all three brothers became monks. The eldest brother built a monastery at Veḷuvana in Rājagaha, the middle brother built

199. Roerich, 1959:63–80.
200. Ibid., 63–80.

one at Isipatana and, so as not to be outdone, the youngest decided to make a statue of the Buddha at the Vajirāsana. In a dream he was told to get material consisting of one part precious substances, one part fragrant substances and one part sandalwood paste, place it in the temple and to keep the door closed until a particular time. This was done but he opened the door before the appointed time. Inside he found the statue completed except for the little toe on the right foot. The mother of the three boys, who had known the Buddha when she was a young girl, declared the statue to be exactly like the Buddha except in four respects. Whereas the Buddha's *uṣnīṣa* was invisible, it could be seen on the statue, unlike the Buddha the statue did not move, it did not expound the Dhamma and it did not radiate light.

This legend is reminiscent of the one that Xuanzang was told about the Mahābodhi Image, but differs from it in detail. Obviously the story had evolved in the 600 years between the two men's visits. Dharmasvāmin was also told that formerly the Mahābodhi Image had two beautiful gems in its eyes that emitted light so bright that it was possible to read by it. During a raid by Turks just prior to his visit a soldier had put a ladder against the statue and prised the eyes out. As he was climbing down he slipped and fell, dropping the gems and smashing them after which their light grew dim.[201]

At the back of the Mahābodhi Temple surrounded by a wall was the Bodhi Tree. At the base of the two trunks that the tree apparently had at that time was a trench for offerings. "Devotees worship the tree with curd, milk and perfumes such as sandalwood, camphor and so on, they bring offerings from afar in vessels and pour them into the trench. Thus they worship the Bodhi Tree and keep it continually moist."

The temple itself was surrounded by a stone railing which by this time had come to be attributed to Nāgārjuna. One of the many precious relics preserved at Bodh Gayā during Dharmasvāmin's time

201. According to Tāranātha (Chattopadhyaya and Chimpa, 1970:44) after the brahmin who built the Mahābodhi Temple had also finished the statue within it, he found a self-illuminating gem. When he expressed regret that he had not found the gem earlier holes miraculously appeared in the statues eyes. As he prepared to break the gem into two so that the pieces could be put in the sockets, a second gem miraculously appeared.

was one of the Buddha's teeth, which was occasionally displayed in the temple courtyard:

> "On auspicious occasions the relic casket with the tooth was brought to the courtyard and placed on a large flat stone which had the shape of a lotus leaf. They sprinkled it with sweet water mixed with the three white ones (i.e. milk, curd and butter) honey and sugar. The water which accumulated below the stone was collected below the courtyard into numerous brass vessels and was then used both for bathing and drinking".

At the end of the courtyard, near the stone with the Buddha's footprints, was a large stone gateway which was said to have been erected by Ācārya Hayaghoṣa.

> "People going to fetch water for the washing and anointing of the footprints with medicated perfumes used to touch the gate with their foreheads and thus secure blessings and there was a mark left on the stones".

Just beyond the gateway was a large offering lamp.

> "A flat stone the size of a door was placed on a stone pillar, on top of it was placed a smaller stone, and on top of it another smaller stone, the arrangement being similar to the steps of a stūpa. On top of the pyramid was placed a row of offering lamps. At the head of the row of lamps stood a large offering lamp which used to burn day and night and could not be extinguished even by a strong wind. The sound made by the flickering of the flame could be heard from a distance. This offering lamp, which was in line with the stone footprints, the courtyard, the Mahābodhi Image and the eastern gate, was an object of worship."

The whole temple complex was surrounded by a square wall, at a distance of about an arrowshot from the temple itself, and with its main gate to the east. There were two other gates, one to the north that lead to the Mahābodhi Monastery, and another to the south. No one was allowed to sleep within the compound except the Sri Lankan monks. Dharmasvāmin described their monastery thus:

> "In front of the central north gate is a monastery. In all there are twelve monasteries. In each of the monasteries there are about ten, or about six, or seven, or fifteen monks. Dharmasvāmin said that the monastic cells had from the outside the shape of a stūpa and from the inside that of a dwelling. They are painted in a bright white colour and there are a great many of them".[202]

After his three-month stay at Bodh Gayā, and later, a period of study at Nāḷandā, Dharmasvāmin managed to return to his homeland where he later went on to become a renowned scholar.

Throughout nearly a quarter of the 13th century, Bodh Gayā benefited greatly from the munificence of the kings and princes of what is today the mountainous region of southwest Nepal and Garhwal in India. Evidence for this comes from three inscriptions, two found in Bodh Gayā itself and one from Gayā. A king named Aśokavalla is mentioned in all three inscriptions, once as a donor. He is described as king of Sapādalakṣa (Sivalik Hills), "a follower of the excellent Mahāyāna school and a lay devotee of pious heart". The first of these inscriptions is written in incorrect Sanskrit like that commonly found in Buddhist manuscripts from Nepal and has a picture of two animals in coitus carved below its text. In the year 1230, at the prompting of his preceptor Paṇḍita Muṣala, the teacher from Kashmir called Chaṭṭopadhi, and two other monks, Aśokavalla built a monastery with a Buddha statue at Bodh Gayā. He also arranged for the cook Māmaka and the retainer Harichandra to prepare daily offerings of food, incense and lamps to be offered before the Buddha statue by the Sri Lankan monks.[203]

The second inscription was found by Cunningham cemented into the walls of the Temple of Sun near the Viṣṇupāda Temple in Gayā. The temple is a late construction and has obviously been partly built of masonry from Bodh Gayā.[204] We are told that Puruṣottamasiṃgha, the king of Kamā, built a temple "as graceful as a hall of emancipation and

202. Roerich, 1959:63–80.

203. *JBBRAS*, Vol. XVI, 1881:341 ff.

204. Commenting on Gayā town, Buchanan-Hamilton (1937:102) said: "Numerous pillars, parts of doors, windows, cornices and inscriptions are everywhere built into walls...and of these some are known to have been brought from Buddha Gaya".

bliss" in memory of his daughter's deceased son. To accomplish this, he had to call upon the help of both Aśokavalla and the Chhindas. This would indicate that Puruṣottamasiṃgha's realm was near Aśokavalla's and perhaps under his suzerainty. The Chhindas were a minor dynasty that ruled parts of Bihar and probably originated in Sindh. Puruṣottamasiṃgha may have had to seek their permission and co-operation to move funds through their territories to Bodh Gayā. The construction of the memorial temple was supervised by a monk named Dharmarakṣita, who is described as a royal preceptor of Kamā. The inscription goes on to say that "the religion of the Sage is decaying" (*bhrashṭe muneḥ sāsane*) and that the king had taken steps to reverse this lamentable trend.

There is ample evidence from other sources that Buddhism in India was in decline at this time, and paradoxically enough, Puruṣottamasiṃgha's inscription offers more evidence for this. The king had commanded that three times a day worship was to be offered in his temple, not with the resonant and dignified chanting of monks, but "with music in the fifth and highest pitch together with Rambhā-like *bhāvinis* and *cheṭis* performing wonderful dancing and singing like that offered to Anaṅga." Rambhā was the divine prostitute of Hindu mythology and Anaṅga another name for its god of love. *Bhāvinis* and *cheṭis* are other terms for *devadāsī*, and in Hindu temples such women usually doubled as prostitutes. While we need not assume that the odious practice of temple prostitution had been introduced into Bodh Gayā, the presence of such women does indicate that Mahāyāna Buddhist worship had taken on an increasingly Hindu form.[205]

Puruṣottamasiṃgha's inscription is dated the year 1813 of the Buddha's Nirvana, probably equivalent to 1253, and is one of the few inscriptions found in India using this era. The third and last

205. Females sang in Buddhist temples from the earliest times but as devotees, not as professionals. A 10th century Persian reference to *devadasi* in a temple in Ramiyan (Bamiyan?) may be evidence of temple prostitution infiltrating Buddhism; see V. Minorsky, 1942:52. Chau Ju Kwa, writing in the 12th century, said that in Gujarat there were "4, 000 Buddhist temples in which live 20, 000 dancing girls who sing twice a day while offering food to the Buddha and while offering flowers"; Hirth and Rockhill, 1911:92. See also *EI,* Vol. XXXIII, 1959–60:267.

inscription in this series was found on a fragment of stone near the Mahābodhi Temple in 1835. Later, James Prinsep published a facsimile of it, but where it is today is not known.[206] It records a donation made by Śrī Sahaṇasāna "in conduct firm like a *bodhisattva*, an observer of truth and vows, who is treasurer and dependant of Prince Daśaratha, the younger brother of King Aśokavalla..." This inscription is dated in the year equivalent to 1270.

The last epigraphical evidence of the Sri Lankan monks at Bodh Gayā comes from an inscription found in the village of Janibigha, some eight miles east of Bodh Gayā. The inscription is carved on a pillar of stone and has two pictures on it, one above the inscription and another below. The upper picture is of the Buddha sitting under the Bodhi tree in the *bhūmisparśamudrā* surrounded by a halo and flanked on either side by a sun and a moon. The lower drawing is of two animals in coitus and illustrates the curse mentioned in the inscription. This rather interesting stone is now in the Patna Museum, but not on display. It reads:

> "Om! I hail the illustrious, ancient and traditional city of Mahābodhi at the foot of whose Bodhi tree the Conqueror who walks the path attained enlightenment. The village of Kathata in Satpaghatta, its land and water together with its plough tax is hereby given without reserve, to the illustrious Vajirāsana for as long as the sun and the moon shall endure. The charter is placed in the hands of Maṅgalasvāmin of Sri Lanka, versed in the Tripiṭaka by the king, the son of Buddhasena. Having granted the village, King Jayasena who is truthful and has the title 'Pīṭhīpati' and 'Teacher' spoke thus: 'If any king of my line, good, bad or worthless, violates this grant let his father be a donkey and his mother a sow.' The 15th day of the bright half of Kārttika, Lakshmaṇasena Samrat 83 expired."[207]

206. This inscription was last seen cemented into a wall in Bodh Gayā in 1906; *EI,* Vol. XII, 1913–14:28. The dates of these three inscriptions are controversial, hinging as they do on when the Laksmana Samvat began. The issue in relation to the inscriptions is discussed fully by Sircar in *JAIH*, 1958:39–59; by Luciano Petech in *Serie Orientala Roma* X, 3, 1958:197–8; and by Mallebrein 1991, Pt I, pp.344–57.

207. *IA.* Vol. XLVIII, 1919:233.

The date of this inscription probably corresponds to the year 1262. Two kings are mentioned, Jayasena the donor and his father Buddhasena. Dharmasvāmin met a King Buddhasena at Gayā in 1234, and a king of the same name helped the Burmese mission in 1295. We can conclude from this that Jayasena was succeeded by his son who, like his grandfather, was also named Buddhasena. The first of Jayasena's titles, meaning 'Protector of the Throne' refers to the Buddha's throne, i.e. the Vajirāsana, and indicates that Bodh Gayā was within Jayasena's realm. His second title, 'Teacher' (*ācārya*), is an intriguing one as it is more indicative of a religious rather than a political personage. It is quite possible that the dynasty to which Jayasena belonged had been founded by a senior monk at Bodh Gayā. The decadence and disruption of the 11th and 12th centuries would have been conducive for a powerful prelate to switch roles and while retaining his ecclesiastical title declare himself king, set up his capital at Bodh Gayā, and legitimise his rule by claiming to be 'Protector of the Throne.'

Sometime after Dharmasvāmin's visit the Mahābodhi Temple was once again in need of repairs, but whether this was due to vandalism or just general decay cannot be said. A Burmese inscription cemented into the wall of the Mahant's compound, and found by a delegation sent to Bodh Gayā by the king of Burma in 1833, records major repairs done to the temple between 1295 and 1298. The inscription begins with a potted history of the temple as understood by the Burmese. First built by Asoka, it fell into decay after a long time and was repaired by a great *paṃsakūlika* monk (i.e. a rag-robe wearer). Who this monk was is not known, but the fact that he was remembered by the writers of the inscription points to him being Burmese. After the temple fell into ruin again it was again repaired by "our beloved king" (*satuiw man*). This is obviously a reference to Kyanzittha's mission. The inscription continues:

> "Later still when it fell into disrepair yet again Dhammarāja, the Lord of the White Elephant, sent his teacher Siri Dhammarājaguru (to India) to represent him. The teacher took his pupil Siri Kassapa with him. When the provision made for expenses proved to be insufficient for the work, he invited a forest dwelling monk to receive donations from King Buddhasena who said: 'Let it be done.' So saying, he granted permission to the junior monk and

> the elder monk to proceed (with the repairs). On Friday the 10th day of the waxing moon of Plasuiw, in the year 657 (between December 1295 and January 1296) they commenced the repairs. On Sunday the 8th day of the waxing moon of Tanchonmhum in the year 660 (October–November 1298) the dedication was held and the following offerings were dedicated to the temple. Flags and banners, 1, 000 bowls of rice, 1, 000 lamps, two boys in substitute of the donor's own children, gold and silver flowers, and cloth hung on bamboo framework. So as to provide for the daily offering of rice at the shrine at all times, land, slaves and cattle were purchased and likewise dedicated. May this meritorious deed of mine lead me to Nibbāna! May I meet Metteyya, the future Buddha!"[208]

Exactly which king dispatched this mission has not been determined. It was probably King Klawcwa (1289–1297) although he is not known to have used the title Dhammarāja, Lord of the White Elephant. Alternatively, it could have been his son, crown prince Klawcwa, who is called Dhammarāja in one of his inscriptions dating from 1293. But whoever it was, the size of the mission and the time it spent at Bodh Gayā indicates that major repairs were done to the temple at that time. There has been endless debate about which mission did what to the temple and when. One or the other is usually thought to have built one of a series of buttresses on the west side and to have rebuilt the ground floor and upper chambers on the east side. But as the buttresses were demolished and the two chambers and the porch rebuilt in the 19th century, these questions can never be settled with certainty.

A Tibetan work, the *Mkhas-pa'i dga-ston*, mentions a *yogi* named Ugyen Sangge who, during one of his frequent trips to India, made contact with the king of Sri Lanka and repaired the temple with his help. This is said to have happened around the year 1286. Because this date is only an approximation it is not possible to know which king might have undertaken these repairs. It could have been Bhuvanaikabāhu I who died in 1284 or his successor Parakramabāhu III who came to the throne about two years later. Although both monarchs had to face considerable political difficulties at home, this

208. Griswold, 1965:177.

did not prevent them having overseas contacts. Bhuvanaikabāhu had sent an ambassador to the Sultan of Egypt and Parakramabāhu went in person to the Pandyan court in India to plea for the return of the Tooth Relic which had been taken there as war booty some years earlier. Either king could have thought that the merit earned by repairing the Mahābodhi Temple might make their thrones more secure. The *Mkhas-pa'i dga-ston* adds that while the work was being done, Ugyen Sangge stayed to the north of the temple with 500 other *yogis*. This must be a reference to the Mahābodhi Monastery and its inmates and there can be no doubt that it was they who put Ugyen Sangge into contact with the Sri Lankan king in the first place and that they had a major role in the repairs.

By the end of the 13th century, the Muslims had been in north India for just over a hundred years and were subduing the last pockets of native resistance. The damage that they had inflicted on Buddhism in their hatred for what they perceived to be idolatry was complete. Hardly a single Buddhist temple, shrine or monastery survived their passing. We have only brief notices concerning the fate of Bodh Gayā during this terrible period. The first is the mention by Tāranātha of a fire in the temple. This incident is related in connection with the famous scholar monk Jñānaśrīmitra.

> "He was born in Gauda. Earlier he was a paṇḍita of the śrāvakas and a scholar of their Tripiṭaka. Later on, he had reverence for Nāgārjuna and Asaṅga...He attained unlimited psychic powers. Once, while he was residing at Vikramaśilā, he had told a novice monk 'Start immediately so that you can reach the city of Gayā tomorrow noon. A brahman has invited there all the monks with the priests in charge of the temple of Vajrāsana to a seasonal feast. The tower containing the Mahābodhi will be damaged by fire. Take them along to put the fire out.' He went to Gayā and, as predicted, met the residents of Vajrāsana. He said, 'My teacher has predicted this. So please return [to the temple].' Half of them did not believe him and stayed back. When he reached Vajrāsana with the other half of them the tower of Vajrāsana had already caught fire. Both the interior and exterior were aflame. They extinguished the fire with prayer to the deity and then the temple was saved from further damage. The *ācārya*

> arranged for the restoration of the damaged paintings and the renovation of the wooden structure."[209]

The second notice is Dharmasvāmin's account of the desecration of the Mahābodhi Image which occurred just prior to his visit. The third notice, again from Tāranātha, is a brief account of the damaging of the temple and its repair by a king named Cingalarāja:

> "About a hundred years after the death of Pratitasena, Cingalarāja became very powerful in Bengal. He brought under his control all the Hindus and Turuṣkas up to Delhi. He was originally a devotee of the brahmins but under the influence of his queen he changed his faith and became a devotee of the Buddhists. He made lavish offerings at Vajirāsana, renovated all the temples there and properly rebuilt the upper four stories of the nine-storied great pinnacle which had been destroyed by the Turuṣkas. He established there a centre for the Dharma under paṇḍita Sāriputra."[210]

When did these events take place? The date of the first incident, the fire, can be fixed with relative certainty. As it is said to have occurred while Jñānaśrīmitra was residing at Vikramaśilā, and as the great monastery is known to have been destroyed by the Muslims in about 1201, it must have happened just prior to that date.[211] The second incident, the desecration mentioned by Dharmasvāmin, took place just before 1234 and seems to have happened during a smash and grab raid by a few soldiers that did little other damage. These incidents must have disrupted life at Bodh Gayā, but they were not serious enough to cause its abandonment. There seems little doubt that the great temple and at least some monasteries were still functioning in 1298. This is confirmed by the Burmese inscription of that same year. King Buddhasena was still on the throne and still secure enough to lend the Burmese money to complete its repairs. There must have been someone at Bodh Gayā, perhaps Buddhasena's

209. Chattopadhyaya and Chimpa, 1970:302. Jñānaśrīmitra was the author of the *Apohaprakaraṇa*.

210. Ibid., 320–1.

211. Śākya Śīlabhadra found Vikramaśilā destroyed when he visited it in 1202; see *JASB*, Vol. LXVII, 1898:25.

officials but more likely some monks, to administer the land, cattle and slaves offered by the Burmese.

Dating Cingalarāja's attempts to restore Bodh Gayā is more problematic because of lack of information about this monarch. Writing in 1608, Tāranātha says that Cingalarāja had died 160 years before, that is, in 1448. He also says that he was a very long lived monarch. If Tāranātha is right and if Cingalarāja ruled for, say, 30 years, which would have been quite an achievement for a non-Muslim king at that time, his restoration could have been carried out during the second decade of the 15th century. The destruction which necessitated these repairs could have taken place at that time or even a century or more earlier. The problem is that Cingalarāja is not mentioned in any Indian records. The only king who could correspond to him is the shadowy Rāja Ganesh who seized power from the Muslims and ruled Bengal between about 1406 and 1414, although he is not known to have been a Buddhist or to have been particularly long lived.[212]

However, we do have some fairly certain dates concerning the prelate Tāranātha mentions in connection with Cingalarāja. We have four biographies of this eminent monk, three in Tibetan and one in Chinese. He is also briefly mentioned in inscriptions from Nepal, Tibet and China. Sāriputra was born "three months walk east of Vajrāsana", perhaps somewhere near what is now the borderlands of Bangladesh and Burma, and was ordained by Guṇaratana and Mahāsvāmin. He studies the sūtras, their commentaries and grammar. When he decided to go on pilgrimage to the Buddhist sacred places, his teacher agreed but only with the greatest reluctance, probably because of the possibility of Muslim hostility. When he arrived at Bodh Gayā, he found the place in a state of disrepair and proceeded to rebuilt one shrine, set up a statue within it, adorn it with paintings and consecrate it on Vaiśākha. He then left to visit other holy places, specifically Rājagaha and Nāḷandā. When Cinghalarāja came to the throne, he met and was impressed by Sāriputra and became his patron. He appointed him to supervise repairs to the Mahābodhi Temple and after the passing of the royal preceptor Buddhasvāmin, appointed him in his place. At around this

212. On Rāja Ganesh see Haig, 1958:266.

same time another king, Dāruharidrādeva, is said to have organized a nine day religious debate which Sāriputra participated in.

The next we hear of Sāriputra is in Kathmandu in about 1412 where he was doing repairs to the famous Svyambhū Stūpa. From there he travelled to Gyantze in Tibet where he gave the dimensions of the Mahābodhi Image for the making of a replica which was enshrined in the topmost chamber of the great Kumbum Stūpa. While there he received an invitation from the Ming emperor Yongle (r. 1402–1424) to visit the Chinese court. He arrived in Beijing in 1414 with five golden Buddha images and plans of the Mahābodhi Temple. These plans were used to build the Five Pagoda Temple (Wu Ta Si), sometimes also known as the Diamond Throne Temple, in Beijing which after many delays was finally completed in 1473. When Sāriputra died in 1426 the Chinese emperor had his ashes divided into two and each portion was enshrined in a stūpa, one of which still can still be seen at Wutai Shan.[213]

Why and when did Sāriputra leave Bodh Gayā and then India? Most probably because it was no longer conducive, possibly even dangerous, to stay there. And when did he leave? Certainly some time before about 1412 and probably at either the very end of the 14th century or the first few years of the 15th century. He stands as the last Buddhist monk who resided at Bodh Gayā until the late 19th century. After him we hear almost nothing of Bodh Gayā for the next few centuries. An unbroken history of 2000 years finally came to an end, like a lamp that grows dim as its fuel is spent, then flickers and goes out.

213. McKeown, 2010.

# RELIGHTING THE LAMP

The Muslim conquest of India brought about changes there as dramatic as those brought in Europe by the destruction of Rome by the Huns. The most tragic of these changes was the virtual disappearance of Buddhism. At the end of the 16th century, the Mogul courtier Abul Fazl was able to write that Buddhism could be found nowhere in India, although he says when he went to Kashmir he "met with a few old men of this persuasion but saw none among them learned..."[214] However, contrary to popular belief, Buddhism was not completely dead in India. Tiny scattered pockets of Buddhists continued to cling to their faith or more usually a corrupted version of it.[215] Remarkably, some of these Buddhists even managed to make pilgrimage to Bodh Gayā. Visits by several groups of chiefs and their wives from Sindh during the early 14th century are known from inscriptions they scratched on the paving stones in the chamber of the Mahābodhi Temple.[216] During either the 15th or 16th century a lone pilgrim from what was probably somewhere in the lower Himalayas, came to Bodh Gayā, and after doing his devotions in crumbling and overgrown temple, wrote a short record of his visit on the old stone railing. It reads:

> "Homage to the Buddha. Let the merit which is acquired by Jinadāsa, a learned man who came from the mountainous country Parvata, by means of visiting (this place) to behold the Mahābodhi [Image] reigning in its glory as the supreme Lord, go first of all to his parent. Having done this act of merit it is here written (by the scribe) Sangatta."[217]

The last Indian Buddhist known to have visited Bodh Gayā was the tantric yogi Buddhagupta. Born in South India during the last half of the 16th century, this indefatigable yogi had already visited Afghanistan, Kashmir, Ladakh, Sri Lanka, Java, the Laccadives and

214. Jarret, Vol. III, 1894:212.
215. A copy of a Buddhist scripture now in the University Library, Cambridge, was copied out in 1446; *JRAS*, Part III and IV, 1965:103–111.
216. *ASI*, Vol. I, 1871:9.
217. *IHQ*, Vol.VI, 1930:30.

even East Africa before he made his pilgrimage to Bodh Gayā. He seems to have spent some time at the deserted temple meditating and performing *pūjas* before setting off again on his travels. Next he visited Nepal, Tibet and Burma and was last heard of residing in a place called Devikota.[218]

From around the same period, the second half of the 15th century, comes the last mention until modern times of a Sri Lankan monk making a pilgrimage to Bodh Gayā. A monk named Dharmadivākara came to Bodh Gayā and then decided to go on from there to Wu Tai Shan, the sacred mountain in China. While there he met some Tibetans who invited him to their country where he travelled and taught widely. However, the strain of several long years of travel, the strange food and the cold climate all proved too much for poor Dharmadivākara for we read that on his way back to Sri Lanka he disrobed in Nepal and later died in India.[219]

The desire to visit Bodh Gayā, but the inability of most Buddhists to do so, especially after the advent of Muslim rule, resulted in replicas of the Mahābodhi Temple being built in several Buddhist countries.[220] A very good copy was built in Pagan in the early 13th century. This temple was in all likelihood based on plans brought from India by the mission sent by King Kyanzittha.[221] Although not a temple as such, a stūpa in the form of the Mahābodhi Temple was built in Tibet in 1452 to enshrine the remains of a famous lama.[222] In 1472, King Dhammacetiya of Pegu sent a large contingent of monks, and craftsmen under the leadership of a Sri Lankan merchant to Bodh Gayā to worship at the temple and also to make plans of it:

> "In order that those who live in Haṃsavati might have great happiness, he had monks who were endowed with the burdens of study and meditation embark at Bassein, together with skilled masons, painters and builders, much treasure, royal letters written on gold under the authority of his seal, and ambassadors

218. Ibid., 683.

219. Skilling, 1993:180.

220. Copies had previously been built in India. King Balāditya built a larger version at Nāḷandā; Beal, 1884, Vol. II, p.172–3. For a brief description of this celebrated temple see *EI,* Vol. XX, 1929–30:45.

221. Griswold, 1965:201.

222. Roerich, 1949:551.

> of greater and lesser rank to whom he entrusted many presents, and hence sail with expedition to Bengal to visit the Bodhi Tree at the centre of the world where the Buddha overcame Māra. When all the monks had reached the site of the Bodhi Tree and the presents had been offered, the painters made models of all the sites according to their distances and dimensions and brought them back to the place where the King dwelt."[223]

The outcome of all this was a magnificent temple in Pegu called Shwegugyi. It is difficult today to determine how faithful this temple was to the original as it is now in a ruined state.

In 1473, the Chinese built a copy of the Mahābodhi Temple just outside Bejing based on plans given by Sāriputra and yet another one in 1748.[224] In the 16th century, a Nepalese layman named Abhayarāj went on a pilgrimage to Bodh Gayā and made both plans and a small model of the temple. On his return, he used these to build a replica called the Mahābuddha Vihāra in Patan in the Kathmandu Valley.[225] This beautiful temple with its delicately moulded terracotta bricks was badly damaged during the 1934 earthquake but rebuilt soon afterwards.

Thailand has two copies of the Mahābodhi Temple, one in Chiang Rai built some time between the 16th and 18th centuries, and an earlier one, the Mahābodhārāma, Wat Jet Yot; built by King Tilokarāja (1443–1487). The *Jinakālamālī* says that the king not only built a replica of the Mahābodhi Temple but also tried to recreate all the man-made and natural locations around it:

> "King Tilokarāja, having heard the Sri Lankan monks expound the doctrine relating to Bodhi Trees, desired to plant one, and upon looking for a place for that purpose, discovered the site of the Mahābodhārāma. In 817 of the Little Era, the year of the Boar (1455 AD), he founded a monastery for the Mahāthera Uttamapaññā, northwest of Chiang Mai, on the banks of the Rohini River, on a charming knoll. That same year, he planted a Bodhi Tree, a sapling grown from the tree at the foot of Deva Mountain which had come from a seed gathered in former times

223. Griswold, 1965:187.
224. Swart and Till, 1985:28–39.
225. Wright, 1877:204.

> from the southern branch [of the Bodhi Tree at Anurādhapura in Sri Lanka] by monks who went to Siṃhala (Sri Lanka). The planting of this sapling earned for the new monastery the name Mahābodhārāma. After it was planted, the king had everything around it made in conformity with the surroundings of the Bodhi Tree where Māra was defeated, including the railing and the seven special locations."

Walking around the Mahābodhārāma must have been the closest one could get to the atmosphere and the environment of Bodh Gayā without actually going there.

Sometime between the last half of the 16th and the first half of the 17th centuries, a wandering Saivite ascetic named Gossiain Ghainandi Giri arrived in Bodh Gayā and decided to settle down there.[226] In the following centuries, Ghamandi's hermitage grew into a large monastery (*math*), and his successors the Mahants (abbots) into a powerful and dubious influence in Bodh Gayā. The Giris are one of the orders of the monks established by the great Hindu reformer Śaṅkara in the 9th century. The name of each order suggests the geographical location its members are supposed to reside in. So the Vanas are supposed to live in forests, the Puris in towns and the Giris on hills and mountains. Each of the ten orders are also supposed to be a part of a whole and co-equal but, as one would expect from a Hindu institution, inequalities have emerged. The Giris are looked down upon by the more orthodox orders as being lax and even to some extent impure. Giving his impression of the Giris at Bodh Gayā in the last century, Mitra wrote: "The monks lead an easy, comfortable life, feasting on rich cakes (*malpuya*) and pudding (*mohanbhog*), and freely indulging in the exhilarating beverage of *bhanga*. Few attempt to learn the sacred books, and most of them are grossly ignorant. The present Mahant is an intelligent man, but not particularly well versed in the Śāstras."[227]

A book recently published by a Giri monk lists the 52 major Saivite Maths in India in order of the esteem in which each is held. The Bodh Gayā Math is towards the bottom at number 36.[228] The

226. Griswold, 1965:182.

227. Mitra, 1878:6.

228. Sadananda Giri, 1976:18.

establishment of Ghamandi Giri's monastery was not the beginning of a Hindu presence at Bodh Gayā. An inscription dated 807 mentions the setting up of a stone *lingam* there by the son of a stonecutter named Keśava.[229] Some scholars have suggested that the story told to Xuanzang about the temple being built by a brahmin on the advice of Maheśvara is evidence of early Hinduization at Bodh Gayā. This theory is unconvincing. Buddhist legends and hagiographies are full of stories about brahmins who converted to Buddhism on the advice of Hindu gods. This "skilful means" for demonstrating the superiority of Buddhism goes back to the time of the Buddha himself. Even Keśava's inscription indicates nothing more than that there were Hindus living at Bodh Gayā, possibly employed by its monasteries, who wanted their own shrine to worship in, and that, with typical tolerance, the Buddhists had no objection to this. However it is true that at a late date the Bodhi Tree did become one of the places that Hindu pilgrims to Gayā began to visit, and if pilgrims came there to worship it would only be a matter of time before brahmins would move in to supervise their worship and extract fees from them.

In 1752 the Tibetan yogi Sonam Rabgye went Bodh Gaya and on his return wrote a detailed and accurate account of what he saw and experienced. He mentioned the ten fears that Tibetans travelling in India would encounter. These included the sheer size of the country, uncertainty about which road to take, and numerous road tolls.[230] Khyungpo Neljor (b. 978/990) and Marpa Lotsawa both made a special point of visiting gold mines in Tibet and exchanging their material assets for gold dust before departing in search of Buddhist sites and teachers in India.[231]

By the end of the 18th century, the Muslim rulers of India were starting to give way to a new conqueror, the English. Already entrenched in the sub-continent, some Englishmen were taking time off from military affairs and trade to explore India's many antiquities. It was in 1785 that Bodh Gayā first came to the attention of these early explorers of the Indian past. A translation of what was thought to be an inscription found by Francis Wilmont at Bodh Gayā was made by Sir Charles Wilkins and published in the scholarly journal

229. *JASB*, NS. Vol.1908:102.
230. Huber 2008: 183–87.
231. Ibid., 68.

*Asiatick Researches*.[232] The inscription told of a certain Amaradeva who worshipped the Buddha and built a temple at Bodh Gayā and therein "set up the divine footprint of Vishnoo, for ever purifier of the sins of mankind, the images of Pandoos and of the descendants of Vishnoo and in a manner of Brahma and the rest of the divinities." The date of the inscription was equivalent to the year 949 AD. No later visitors to Bodh Gayā ever saw this inscription and scholars came to the conclusion that it was a forgery. Discussing it in 1878 and speculating on its origins, Mitra wrote:

> "Its date, the era Vikramaditya 1005 = to AC 949, would suggest the idea that the characters used in it were Kutila. If so, it is difficult to conceive how either Mr. Wilmont or Sir Charles Wilkins could read it, as the key to that alphabet had not then been discovered. It is obvious, therefore, that Mr. Wilmont must have seen the inscribed stone, which he requested a pandit of monastery to decipher for him, and that worthy, unable to do the needful, composed a rambling story of his own, in which he not only glorified his own religion, but worked into it references to all the leading remains of the place ... The date he put on it was hit upon at random."[233]

It would not be the last time that the Giris of Bodh Gayā would be guilty of deception.

In 1773, Bhutan's defeat in a short war with the British resulted in Tibet's Panchen Lama writing a letter to the Governor of Bengal, Warren Hastings, offering to mediate a settlement. Hastings decided to take advantage of this first friendly contact between British India and Tibet to explore the possibilities of trade and sent a mission led by George Bogle to visit the Panchen Lama. Bogle's record of his visit sheds some light on Tibetan interest in Bodh Gayā during the 18th century. Just prior to Bogle's visit, the Panchen Lama had sent nine monks and three laymen led by Tung Rampa to Sarnath and Bodh Gayā. The Mahārāja of Benares, Chete Singh Bahadur, welcomed the Tibetans, gave them letters of introduction for their onward journey, palanquins and attendants and they were able to reach Bodh Gayā in a fortnight. When the party, minus three monks who had succumbed

232. *Asiatick Researches*, Vol. I, 1788:284.
233. Mitra, 1878:205.

to the Indian heat, returned to Tibet, the Mahārāja sent an envoy with them to present gifts to the Panchen Lama. Among these presents were a watch, elephant tusks and a model of the Mahābodhi Temple.

The Panchen Lama informed Bogle that he was interested in establishing a temple in India, probably for pilgrims who might now feel it safe to come because of the Pax Britannica. In his report to Hastings, Bogle wrote:

> "About seven or eight hundred years ago, the Tibetan pontiffs had many monasteries in Bengal, and their priest used to travel to that country in order to study the religion and language of the Brahmans, and to visit the holy places in Hindustan. The Mussulmans, upon conquering Bengal, plundered and destroyed their temples, and drove them out of the country. Since that time there has been little intercourse between the two kingdoms. The Lama is sensible that it will throw great lustre on his pontificate, and serve to extend his fame and character, if he can, after so long an interval, obtain a religious establishment in Bengal, and he is very solicitous on this point. He proposes also, to send some of his gylongs (monks), during the cold season, to wait upon you in Calcutta, and afterwards to go on pilgrimage to Gaya and other places ..."[234]

Nothing ever came of the Panchen Lama's desire to build a temple in India despite British readiness to help. Shortly after Bogle's visit, Tibet decided to cut itself off from the outside world and rebuffed all attempts by the British to make further contact. However Bogle's account of his interview with the Panchen Lama shows that the Buddhists of Tibet had by no means forgotten Bodh Gayā, that they still held it in esteem and that they still desired to go there on pilgrimage.

234. Marckham, 1879:134. In 1905 the Panchen Lama's successor was invited to India to meet the Prince and Princess of Wales and while there he took the opportunity to make a pilgrimage to Bodh Gayā. Later, with encouragement from Captain (later Lieutenant-Colonel) W. F. O'Connor, he founded the Buddhist Shrine Restoration Society. Despite having a large committee of Buddhist worthies from different countries, it accomplished nothing.

In the half century after Bogle's journey to Tibet, a whole string of British artists, surveyors, travellers and amateur archaeologists visited Bodh Gayā. The first of these were the famous artists William and Thomas Daniell, who arrived in 1790 as a part of their tour of northern India and made some quick sketches of the niches on the temple.[235] The next visitor was Francis Buchanan, who came during the survey of Bihar and Patna which he was commissioned by the government to do in 1811. With his detailed description of the temple and its surroundings. But what re-emerged was not the magnificent temple attended by monks that Xuanzang and Dharmasvāmin saw, but a crumbling ruin that was slowly being pulled down by people in the area in need of brick and stone for building:

> "The great shine, or mandir, is a slender quadrangular pyramid of great height, much resembling that of Koch, but its summit is broken and a part hangs over in a very singular manner. This spire is, on the three sides surrounded by a terrace about 25 or 30 feet high, and the extreme dimensions of which are 78 feet wide by 98 feet long, and one end of this terrace towards the cast has covered the porch; but that has fallen, and brought down the part of the terrace by which it was covered ... The porch has always been small, and since it fell some persons have cleared among the ruins, and constructed a gate of the fragments, the shine or cavity in the mandir that is on a level with the ground, and the entrance to which was through the porch, is small and covered with a Gothic arch, the plaster work on which has been divided into small compartments, each containing an image of a Buddha. The whole far end of the chamber has been occupied by a throne of stone (singhasan) in a very bad taste and which has been disfigured by a motley row of images taken from the ruins and built on its front so as to hide part of the deity. This is a monstrous misshapen daub of clay ... There is however, current tradition of the original image having been gold, and of its having been removed by the Muhammedans, so that the present image is supposed to have been made after the sect had undergone persecution and could no longer procure workmen capable of making a decent substitute. Above this chamber are

235. Losty, 1991:240.

> two others, one on the level of the old terrace, and the other still higher; but with these the falling of the porch has cut off all communication. Several of the people, however, in the vicinity remember the porch standing, and have frequently been in the chambers, a stair from the terrace leading to the uppermost. The middle chamber has a throne, but the image has been removed, and, if there ever was an image of gold, this was probably its place. The terrace enlarges behind the temple towards the west, and forms an area, on which is growing the Pipal tree ... The tree is in full vigour, and cannot in all probability exceed 100 years in age; but a similar one may have existed in some other place, when the temple was entire."[236]

Visitors to Bodh Gayā during this time who left pictorial records of the temple include James Chichely and James Crockett, both officers in the Bengal army, and the famous artist Sir Charles D'Oyly.[237] In 1847, the first attempt at an archaeological investigation was done at Bodh Gayā, although it was more like curio hunting than what we think of today as archaeology. Captain Markham Kittoe dug around the temple and unearthed parts of the railing and several statues, some of which were left lying there, while others were carried off to museums. He also made an album of drawings of some of the sculptures.[238] Another archaeological investigation was undertaken in 1861 by Major Mead under the direction of Alexander Cunningham.[239] No reports of either this or Kittoe's excavations were ever published, thus depriving us of much valuable information concerning the temple's history.

All the accounts of these and other visitors to Bodh Gayā right up to the 1880 restoration prove beyond doubt that the Giris and their Mahant took no care of, or had any interest in, the temple. The pinnacle was broken, the tower crumbling and the front porch and the second storey chamber above it had collapsed. So much rubble had accumulated around the temple that one had to actually descend into the main chamber and every rainy season it filled with stagnant

236. Buchanan-Hamilton, 1937:153–4.
237. Losty, 1991:240.
238. *JASB*, Vol. XVI, 1847:334.
239. *JASB*, Vol. XXXIII, 1865:176; *ASI*, Vol. III, 1871:87.

water. Buchanan mentioned that the shrines around the temple had been demolished to provide bricks for construction work at the Mahant's monastery. An English civil servant on holiday at Bodh Gayā in 1866 wrote in his note book: "The temple apparently fast falling into ruin. It is a great pity that such a fine, old and picturesque looking building could not be preserved."[240] About a decade later, Sir Richard Temple saw the withered Bodhi Tree and commented that it was "in harmony with the fate which has overtaken the structure."[241] Statues of Buddhas and *bodhisattvas* were scattered over a wide area and were often put to very mundane uses. In 1891, Anagārika Dharmapāla wrote:

> "It was most painful for me to witness the vandalism that was taking place there constantly, unobserved doubtless by those who would shudder at the sight. The most beautiful statues of the teacher of Nirvana and the Law ... are still uncared for and quietly allowed to perish by exposure. Wandering alone in the bamboo groves to the cast of Lilajan I came across statues plastered to the walls of an irrigating well ... Stones carved with Buddha images are to be found used as weights to the levers for drawing water. I have seen *ryots* (farmers) in the villages surrounding the temple using admirably carved stones as steps to their huts. I have seen 3 feet high statues in an excellent state of preservation buried under rubbish, to the east of the Mahant's Baradari."[242]

This neglect was not due to lack of funds on the part of the Mahant. He was amongst the wealthiest landlords in Bihar. Rather, it was due to indifference. There is also ample evidence that the Mahābodhi Temple was not used by the Hindus for religious purposes until the 1890s. In 1811, Buchanan noted that the terrace on the north side of the temple had been repaired and a stairway built up to it so that "the orthodox may pass up without entering the porch, and thus seeing the hateful image of Buddha." During the Burmese restorations begun in 1877, numerous statues were moved from where they had been lying and were cemented into the new wall that

240. Chaudary, 1958:87.
241. Temple, 1880:29.
242. Guruge, 1965:590.

was built around the temple. The small shrine sheltering the Buddha's footprints was demolished and the stone itself moved to the Pañcha Pandu Temple. The Mahant would never have allowed any of this to be done had the statues or the footprints been objects of worship. During Beglar's restorations, the buttress at the back of the temple on which the Bodhi Tree had been growing was demolished and a new sapling was planted in the ground. Again the Mahant had no objections to these major changes. When Edwin Arnold visited the temple in 1886, he asked a Brahmin if he could have a leaf from the Bodhi Tree. The priest replied: "Pluck as many as you like, sahib, it is naught to us."[243] Kittoe, Mead, Beglar, Cunningham, Arnold and numerous others all entered the main chamber of the temple, which would never have been permitted had it been used for Hindu worship. Bodh Gayā's magnificent sculptures were used by local people as doorsteps or grindstones or were carried off by visitors, and this was stopped only when George Grierson, Collector of Gayā, made complaints about it to the Mahant.[244]

From the end of the 18th century, the Burmese began to renew the interest they had in Bodh Gayā before this had been interrupted by Muslim rule. A little before 1795, a delegation from Burma had come to Bodh Gayā to collect water from the tank for the Burmese king to bathe in.[245] Other delegations came in 1811, 1823 and 1833.[246] Buchanan mentioned that just before his visit in 1811, a Burmese pilgrim had succeeded in converting one of the Giris to Buddhism. He also noted that although the new convert "now altogether rejects the doctrine of orthodoxy" he was still "accommodated and supported by the Mahant."[247] Nor were the Burmese the only Buddhists who began returning to Bodh Gayā. Referring to the period just after the Anglo-Nepalese War (1814–1816) one English writer noted: "When the peace

243. Guruge, 1965:206.

244. For some interesting documents on this matter see *MBJ*, Vol. XL, No. 11, pp.518–28.

245. Buchanan-Hamilton, 1937:140.

246. To ingratiate himself to the 1833 mission and get 'gifts' out of them, the then Mahant claimed that he and his disciples were the descendants of the ancient Burmese guardians of the temple; see *Asiatick Researches*, Vol. XXII, 1836:181.

247. Buchanan-Hamilton, 1937:140.

threw open the lower provinces to the Hill states, the people of Nepal, and its hither boundaries, visited Gyah: they exclaimed, on beholding the statues and images, 'Why, you have got our gods among you!' These people are followers of Boodh; yet the statues and images in the temples have all been converted to the particular use of Bramah."[248] The English diplomat Brian Hodgson who was in Kathmandu in the 1830s gave a detailed report of the images at Bodh Gayā, apparently provided to him by a Nepali Buddhist who had been there. It mentioned how the Hindu priests identified the statues of the Buddha and various bodhisattvas with Hindu gods.

> "In Buddh Gayah there is a temple of Maha Buddha in the interior of which is enshrined an image of Sakya Sinha: before the image is a Chaitya of stone, close to which are images of Lokeswaras, *viz*., Hala hala Lokeswara, Hari hari hari vahana Lokeswara, and Amogha pasa Lokeswara. This temple of Maha Buddha, the Brahmans call the temple of Jagat Nath, and the image of Sakya Sinha they denominate Maha Muni of the three Lok Naths, one they call Maha Deva, one Parvati, and the third their son. On the south side of the temple of Maha Buddha is a small stone temple in which there are the images of the seven Buddhas: and near to them on the left three other images, of Hala hala Lokeswara, Maitreya Bodhisatwa, and Dipankara Buddha. The Brahmans call six of the seven Buddhas, the Pandus and their bride, but know not what to make of the seventh Buddha, or of the remaining three images."[249]

In 1874, Burma's greatest modern king, Mindon Min (1853–1878), dispatched an emissary to Calcutta requesting the Government of India to help a delegation to offer gifts on his behalf to the Bodhi Tree. Later, the Burmese Foreign Minister wrote to the government asking permission to renovate the Mahābodhi Temple and to build a monastery nearby to accommodate 20 monks on a permanent basis. When the Mahant was asked for his opinion about this, he replied that the Burmese could do what they liked so long as several Hindu

248. Archer, 1833:63.

249. Hodgson 1874:135. This unnamed Nepali probably visited Bodh Gaya in the 1770s. He wrote an account of the place which focused mainly of the different images there and which Hodgson later translated and published.

idols near the temple were not interfered with. Permission having been received a mission led by four ambassadors arrived the next year in Kolkata from Burma on a British ship. The report later written by the mission and presented to the Burmese king is full of information about Bodh Gayā not available from other sources.

Travelling by train, carriage and elephants the mission arrived on Bodh Gayā in days. The Mahant had been informed of its coming and its importance and he had prepared quarters for the ambassadors and their staff and attendants. Sensing that he was in for a windfall, he welcomed the Burmese in a most solicitous and friendly manner. After chatting with the ambassadors for a while he disappeared and returned shortly after with several tiny golden umbrellas and streamers, which had been offered by an earlier royal Burmese mission. He also showed them an ancient inscription in Burmese, which the ambassadorial secretary carefully copied. After spending the next three days meditating, observing the Precepts and looking at all the temples and ruins, the mission got to work. They arranged with the Mahant to buy some land, measured it out and drew up the legal papers for its proper transfer. Apart from trying to repair the main structure of the Temple they cleared the area around the Bodhi Tree and enclosed it in a protective wall and later they removed a dead and rotten branch from the Bodhi Tree and reverently placed it in one of the small empty shrines. They repaired the particularly ungainly Buddha image out of bricks and plaster on the throne in the sanctum of the Temple. This image was demolished by Beglar in 1880. They also collected all the broken Buddha statues scattered around and put then in the Temple sanctum.

The mission had important religious duties to perform as well. Later, the leader of the mission reported to his king:

> "Every morning we offered food at the Mahābodhi Temple on behalf of Your Majesty and every evening a thousand flowers and a thousand lamps. Each morning and evening we also poured water from as many golden bowls as there are years in Your Majesty's life over the shrine. We then prayed that Your Majesty might be powerful and long lived, that Her Majesty the Queen, Their Highnesses the Prince and Princess and the Royal Relatives might be free from sickness and be happy and glorious; that the ministers, state officials and all Your Majesty's subjects

might be free from sickness. We also prayed for the promotion and progress of the Buddha's teachings."

The mission's report recorded that the village of Bodh Gayā consisted of 200 houses and that it and all the arable land around it belonged to the Mahant who collected a revenue of Rs. 7500 a year from it. The Mahant himself "dressed in a red turban and a muslin coat embroider with gold and silver filigree work like that worn by Hindu Maharājas". There were a 1000 *swamis* in the Mahant's monastery and because they earned a good income from rents and gifts from devotees and yet led modest lives they had amassed vast wealth over the generations. The report also mentions that although local Hindus did not use the Mahābodhi Temple they did come in large numbers every Saturday to worship the Bodhi Tree. Before the ambassadors left Bodh Gayā they gave the Mahant Rs.30 for buying flowers, lamps and incense to be offered twice a day in the Temple and at the Bodhi Tree as well as two slaves to perform these *pūjas*. They then wrote an account of everything the mission had done, inscribed it on a beautifully polished marble slab and set it up in a small Burmese-style pavilion they had built.[250]

While the faith and determination of the Burmese may have been great, their understanding of the importance of preserving the temple's original character was not, and inadvertently they did enormous damage. When this situation came to the notice of the authorities, Sir Stuart Brayley, the Secretary to the Government, wrote to the respected archaeologist Rajendralala Mitra asking him to visit Bodh Gayā and report on what was being done. The letter read in part:

> Beyond giving them such guidance as may prevent any serious damage being done to the temple, of which there seemed at one time some danger from their laying bare a portion of the foundation; and to arrange for such of the antiquities as are worth preserving being properly taken care of. They are at present building them into walls, and sticking foolish heads on to ancient torsos, etc. Mr Eden (Lt. Governor of Bengal) wishes to know if you can make it convenient to pay a visit to Buddha Gayā to inspect the work and the remains collected, and to give advice as to their value and to their disposition, and whether

250. *MBJ*, Vol. XXXIII, No.6, 1925.

there are any that should go to the Asiatic Society; and generally to advise the Government in regard to the manner in which the operations of the Burmese excavations should be controlled."[251]

When Mitra did visit Bodh Gayā, he was horrified by what he saw. The Burmese were, he reported, "perfectly innocent of archaeology and history, and the mischief they have done by their misdirected zeal has been serious. The demolitions and excavations already completed by them have swept away most of the old landmarks, and nothing of ancient times can now be traced on the area they worked upon."[252]

When Anglo-Burmese relations deteriorated after the death of Mindon Min, and the Burmese had to leave India, the government decided to take over the responsibility for repairing the Mahābodhi Temple. J.D. Beglar was appointed to do the job under the guidance of Alexander Cunningham, the first Director-General of the Archaeological Survey. The temple was badly decayed, but enough of the stucco facing on some parts of both the *sikhara* and the terrace remained for Beglar to know how to repair the parts that were missing. But when it came to the front pavilion, which had been completely destroyed, it was almost impossible to know how it had originally appeared. Cunningham's advice was that it should be just cemented over to prevent further decay, but just as this was being done a small ancient model of the temple was discovered.[253] Beglar used this fortuitous and timely discovery to justify his rebuilding of the four corner *sikharas* and the front pavilion as it is today. The discovery of other temple models in later years proved that his restorations were uncannily accurate.

Although Beglar's main intention was to repair and restore the temple, he also did some exploratory digging in and around it. The most important discovery which resulted from this was made in the temple chamber. As the granite pavement within it was uneven it was decided to take it up and relay it. So that this could be done the stone slabs of the altar built over the Vajirāsana, which dated from

251. Mitra, 1878: iii.

252. Government of India, Foreign Department, Political Branch, February 1878, Pt. A, No.129–51, sited by Trevithick, 1988.

253. Cunningham, 1892: iv.

the early Pāla period, were dismantled and inside was found a second earlier shrine. The plaster facing on this second altar, when examined, was found to contain tiny fragments of coral, pearl, precious and semi-precious stones. At its base was also found a clay ball encasing a collection of gold and silver objects together with emeralds, rubies, sapphires, crystal and coral. Also found was a piece of gold foil with the impression of a coin from the reign of King Huviṣka (approx. 2nd century CE) on it, indicating that this second shrine could have been erected at about this time. All this treasure was later deposited in the British Museum where it is still on display.

The dismantling of the second altar revealed a third shrine, much damaged, and made from polished sandstone strongly reminiscent of Mauryan stonework. On the front of this shrine were four pilasters exactly the same as those on the Vajirāsana depicted in the Bharhut relief. Cunningham believed that the remains of Asoka's temple had been discovered, and it would be hard to dispute his conclusion.[254] The three altars built one over the other are also strong evidence that there had been at least two predecessors to the Mahābodhi Temple. When Beglar finished all this work he had an inscription was cemented into the wall above the entrance to the inner chamber of the temple. It read:

> "This ancient temple of Mahābodhi, erected on the holy spot where the Prince Sakya Sinha became a Buddha, was repaired by the British Government under the order of Sir Ashley Eden, Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal; Archaeological advisor to the Government, Major-General A. Cunningham; Architect, Joseph Daviditch Beglar. AD 1880."

Now that the physical structure of the temple had been repaired, the right of Buddhists to administer it and worship in it had to be secured. In 1886, Sir Edwin Arnold, recently retired editor of the London *Daily Telegraph* and ardent Theosophist with strong Buddhist sympathies, visited Bodh Gayā. As he stood in the temple chamber, he was inspired to think that here the Buddha had attained enlightenment but at the same time saddened by the lifelessness of the place. Later, when he went to Sri Lanka, he discussed with the island's leading Buddhists the possibilities of reviving the temple as a living

254. Ibid., 5–7.

centre of Buddhism. "I think there never was an idea that took root and spread so far and fast as that thrown out thus in the sunny temple-court in Panadure, amid the waving taliputs. Like those tropical plants that can be almost seen to grow, the suggestion quickly became a universal aspiration, first in Ceylon and next in other Buddhist countries."[255] In reality, this response existed more in Arnold's imagination than in fact. As later events demonstrated, Buddhism had long since lost its universalist outlook, and most Asian Buddhists knew little of and cared even less about anything beyond their own country and culture. They were certainly interested in going on pilgrimage to Bodh Gayā, but nothing more than that. Arnold wrote to various influential figures in the home and colonial administration, and while the idea was generally well received, everyone said the initiative would have to come from the Buddhists themselves.

On January 22, 1891, a cart carrying a young Sri Lankan, Anagārika Dharmapāla, and his friend the Japanese monk, Kozen Gunaratana, rumbled along the road that led from Gayā to Bodh Gayā. For much of the distance the two men saw "lying scattered here and there broken statues of our Blessed Lord". On arriving at Bodh Gayā, they walked to the back of the temple where the young Bodhi Tree planted by Cunningham was growing. As Dharmapāla worshipped at the outer Vajirāsana he had a sudden inspiration. He described what happened in his diary: "As soon as I touched with my forehead the Vajirāsana a sudden impulse came to my mind to stop here and take care of this sacred spot, so sacred that nothing in the world is equal to this place where Prince Sakya Sinha attained enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree."[256] It never occurred to Dharmapāla that the temple might belong to anyone, and indeed, exactly who did own it was by no means clear. The government had spent a huge amount on its restoration and employed a superintendent to look after its grounds, which would not have been done had it been privately owned. On the other hand, the Mahant's men cadged money from Hindu pilgrims and sightseers as if they owned it. In actual fact, the temple belonged to no one. Like an abandoned ship, it stood there waiting for someone to formally lay claim to it.

255. Guruge, 1965:608.
256. Ibid., 600.

Three parties were about to do just that—Dharmapāla on behalf of Buddhists, the Mahant and a little later, the British Indian government. Dharmapāla had vowed that by Vaiśākha, four months hence, the Mahābodhi Temple would once again be a properly functioning Buddhist temple. He moved into the rest house that had been built by the Burmese king and fired off letters pleading for help to Colonel Olcott, the kings of Bhutan and Thailand, the Governor of Ceylon, Sir Edwin Arnold, senior monks in Burma and Sri Lanka, the Lt. Governor of Bengal, and numerous others. The response was disappointing, and when it became apparent that Vaiśākha would pass without him achieving his goal, he reluctantly decided to return to Sri Lanka and try to muster support there. The next four years were ones of ceaseless activity for Dharmapāla. He founded the Maha Bodhi Society with the aim of recovering the temple and began publishing a magazine to inform members of the Society's progress. He visited Burma, Sri Lanka and China in order to raise both funds and support. But Dharmapāla found it very difficult to impart his enthusiasm to his fellow Buddhists. Thailand's King Chulalongkorn failed to keep his promise of financial support, and although the *Maha Bodhi Journal* was sent free to all Thailand's English-speaking princes for more than 20 years, they never donated more than a few rupees. The Dalai Lama, who had access to vast resources, allowed himself to be made chief patron of the Maha Bodhi Society but never made a single donation to it. The funds Dharmapāla collected during a lecture tour of Burma were later misappropriated by a member of that country's branch of the Maha Bodhi Society. On being told that the leading temples in Japan were collecting funds for his work, Dharmapāla stopped there on his way back from America, only to find that the final sum amounted to a mere pittance.

Even in Sri Lanka, where he received more support than anywhere else, raising funds and finding monks willing to stay in Bodh Gayā proved to be an uphill task. Meanwhile the Mahant, alarmed by the sudden Buddhist activities at the Mahābodhi Temple and aware of the legal ambiguities concerning its ownership, began claiming that it belonged to him. When the government expressed some hesitation over the temple's legal status the Mahant's claim suddenly became an emphatic assertion. When the Lt. Governor of Bengal, Sir Charles Elliott, visited Bodh Gayā in August 1891 to find out first hand what was going on, the Collector of Gayā, George

Grierson, advised him that with potential international interest in the temple it was important not to let it fall into private hands and recommended that it be acquired as a national monument. The Mahant, on the other hand, made it clear to Elliott that he had no intentions of relinquishing his grip on the temple.[257] Being unsure of what to do and anxious to avoid possible "religious complications" with Hindus, the government procrastinated.

On his way back from the Parliament of Religions in 1893, Dharmapāla had stopped in Japan where his friend Kozen Gunaratna had given him a beautiful 700 year old statue of the Buddha to install in the Mahābodhi Temple. For the next two years, the statue sat in the Mahābodhi Rest House at Gayā while Dharmapāla awaited permission to put it in the temple. Finally, early in the morning of February 25th, 1895, he awoke and after a period of meditation, resolved that come what may he would put the statue in the temple and worship it there. He and his helpers arrived in Bodh Gayā just before sunrise and immediately took the statue to the upstairs chamber of the temple and placed it on the empty shrine. He was just about to offer lamps and flowers when the Mahant's men armed with staffs and clubs burst in. Angrily shouting, they knocked the lamps from one of the monks' hands and pushed Dharmapāla. Refusing to either retaliate or be intimidated, Dharmapāla sat down cross-legged in front of the shrine. Soon some Giris came, grabbed the statue, took it downstairs and dumped it under the verandah of the Pañcha Pandu Temple. Dharmapāla decided to take legal action against the Giri. All his friends advised against it, knowing it would only harden the already intransigent Mahant. They were also aware that while the moral right of Buddhists to worship in the Mahābodhi Temple was unimpeachable, their legal right to do so was far less certain.

On March 30th 1895, the Viceroy Lord Elgin arrived in Gayā. He assured the municipal authorities and local Indian dignitaries who assembled to welcome him that his visit had nothing to do with the recent disturbances at the Mahābodhi Temple and shortly afterwards left for Bodh Gayā.[258] Accompanied by a small group of English officers and the solicitous Mahant, the Viceroy entered the main

257. *The Lansdowne Collection, Correspondence with Persons in India*, Vol. 121, #2616, 6th November, 1891; see Trevithick.
258. Ibid., Vol. 66, #194.

chamber of the temple, but when he emerged "Lo and behold! the Japanese image had disappeared". Mr. Forbes, the Commissioner of Patna, spoke "very distinctly" to the Mahant, who in turn spoke to one of his men, and by the time the Viceroy finished circumambulating the temple the statue had miraculously reappeared. The incident created a very bad impression and must have made the Mahant even more anxious about where the government's sympathies would lie during the coming court case.

The Bodh Gayā Temple Case opened on April 8th 1895. Three Giri monks and two others were charged under Sections 295, 296 and 297 of the Indian Penal Code, which makes it a criminal offence to desecrate a place or object of worship, to disrupt a lawful act of worship and to trespass in a place of worship. All five were also charged under Section 143, which covers unlawful assembly to commit any of the above offences, and one was also charged under Section 352 for using criminal force against Dharmapāla. The case for the prosecution was summarised in the court transcript thus:

> "The question of who is the proprietor of the Temple is ... quite irrelevant to this case, but the prosecution must incidentally challenge the assertion of the defence that the Mahanth is sole and absolute proprietor, and looking to all the facts connected with its repair and guardianship by Government, Dharmapala had good reason for considering Government to be the proprietor, and Government, in taking over the Guardianship, undoubtedly continued freedom of worship to the Buddhists. Assuming, however, for the sake of argument, that the Mahanth was in some sort of possession, and was allowed to enjoy a certain usufruct in taking offerings, such possession was nevertheless subject to the long-standing right of every Buddhist to worship and perform any ceremony in accordance with the tenets of his religion in the temple, and neither Government nor Mahanth is entitled to prevent the full exercise of that right."[259]

The trial was long and involved; however several points that emerged from it are worth highlighting. Witnesses testified that they never entered the Mahābodhi Temple because, as Hindus, they would

259. *MBJ*, Vol. IV, No.6, 1895.

be defiled if they did. A Hindu pandit from the Government Zillah School testified that although he had visited Bodh Gayā several times, he had never gone inside the temple because "it is a Buddhist temple and Hindus are forbidden to enter such". One Bepin Behari testified that he had heard: "Brahmin priests, accompanying Hindu pilgrims to a pipal tree in the compound, forbid them entering the temple because of it being "a Jain one". The court also established that the Hindu worship conducted by the Mahant in the temple was spurious and was done only "on the pretext of interfering with the dealings of the Buddhists in the Temple and strengthening whatever prescriptive rights he may possess to the usufruct of the offerings made at the Temple".[260] At the end of the trial, two of the accused were acquitted, while the three Giris were found guilty under Section 296 and sentenced to a month's imprisonment and a fine of Rs.100. Although technically a victory, the judgment was a blow for Dharmapala. The trial had cost the Maha Bodhi Society Rs.22.500, [261] without getting any closer to controlling the temple, and had turned the Mahant into an implacable enemy of the Buddhists. But worse was to come. The Mahant eventually appealed to the Calcutta High Court, which set aside the convictions. It also found that because Dharmapāla had at one time offered to buy the temple from the Mahant, he had thereby sufficiently established, at least for the purposes of the case, that the Mahant did own the temple. The only positive point to emerge from the whole affair was that, after an exhaustive examination of all the evidence, the Court noted that "the question of what the exact nature and extent of the Mahant's control over the temple is, the evidence addressed in the case does not enable us to determine".[262]

In 1898, Lord Curzon, British India's greatest administrator, became Viceroy. Curzon had a highly developed sense of history and of his place in it. As a successor to Asoka, Harsha, Akbar and Hastings, he believed he should do everything in his power to preserve, protect and enhance India's greatness, including its ancient monuments. During a visit to Mandalay in November 1901, he had been presented with a petition by a group of Buddhists from the Kuthodaw Pagoda

260. Ibid., No.10, 1896.

261. Dharmapāla's Diary, entry for 26th July, 1895.

262. *Indian Law Report,* Calcutta Series, Vol. XXVI, 1896:75–6.

expressing concern over the whereabouts of the gifts that the former king of Burma had offered to the Bodhi Tree in 1875. The gifts had consisted of votive offerings, statues, flowers and bowls all made out of pure gold and valued at Rs.60, 000.[263] Curzon promised to investigate the matter.[264] On his return to Calcutta, he asked the Acting Lt. Governor of Bengal to give him a full report on the matter and thus became acquainted with the situation at Bodh Gayā for the first time. After studying the whole affair with his typical thoroughness, Curzon privately made it quite clear whose side he was on. Like many of the English upper class with an interest in the Orient, Curzon saw the Buddha as a rational reformer, who had an opinion of brahmin humbug and priest craft similar to his own. The beautiful temple built on the spot where India's greatest son became enlightened had, he believed, to be rescued from the greedy, superstitious Brahmins and made a national monument for the greater glory of the British Indian Empire.

In January 1903, Lord Curzon decided to visit Bodh Gayā both to see the temple and also to quiz the Mahant. When the two men met, Curzon asked why the Mahant, a Hindu, worshipped the Buddha. The Mahant replied that he looked upon the Buddha as an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu. When Curzon pointed out that the Mahant was a devotee of Śiva, not Viṣṇu, all the latter could say was that he was simply following "ancient custom". Curzon left Bodh Gayā confident that the previously intransigent Mahant might now prove to be more "malleable".[265] Not wanting to appear to be personally involved, the Viceroy now got James Bourdillon, the Acting Lt. Governor of Bengal, and Charles Olden, the Collector of Gayā, to put pressure on the Mahant. Olden called the Mahant for a meeting and reminded him that several court cases had by no means established his ownership of the temple and that if the government was forced to the remedy of "special legislation", it could go bad for him. Moving from veiled threats to hints of rewards, Olden then suggested that should the

263. According to the inscription the Burmese mission set up at Bodh Gayā, they also offered 511 diamonds, 311 emeralds, 3966 rubies and 623 pearls. See Appendix II.

264. *Curzon Collection, Indian Archaeology*, Pt. IV, 21 November, 1901, see Trevithick.

265. Ibid., Vol. 622, 16th January 1903, see Trevithick 1988.

Mahant be cooperative, the government might consider granting him some mark of esteem. He then proposed five terms; (1) that the Mahābodhi Temple be considered a purely Buddhist one, (2) that it be handed over to the government in trust, (3) that the Bodhi Tree be reserved exclusively for Buddhist worship, (4) that the other pipal tree in the northern part of the sacred precincts be reserved for Hindu worship and (5) that the Mahant be considered grounds landlord, and as such, that he continue to receive customary gifts and fees from Hindu visitors to Bodh Gayā. Pointing out that there just happened to be a lawyer in the next room Olden then suggested that an agreement be drafted and signed straight away. The Mahant must have been feeling more than a little intimidated. However, it was an eminently fair agreement, and he promised to give it careful thought.[266] Olden wrote to the Viceroy's private secretary: "In the end he appeared to agree, and even went so far as to promise that he would do what I might suggest." But during the two men's next meeting the Mahant began to haggle, and it soon became clear that he would sign no agreement. Exasperated, Bourdillon decided to try another approach.

A commission was established to examine how and by whom the temple should be administered. Care was taken to select commissioners who had impeccable Hindu credentials so as to placate Hindu opinion but who were at the same time known to be in favour of Buddhist control of the Mahābodhi Temple.[267] The commission was chaired by Hariprasad Shastri, the respected Sanskrit scholar and principal of the Sanskrit College in Kolkata. After meeting for some time and interviewing numerous witnesses, the commission handed down its recommendations. It found that despite the obvious Buddhist origins of the temple and despite the spurious Hindu worship being offered in it, the temple had been abandoned centuries ago and the Mahant had the right to claim it. It recommended that the management of the temple be vested in a board of five Hindus from which Buddhists be excluded. This was not the finding Curzon wanted, and he was extremely annoyed. He was also at the end of his patience, and soon more pressing concerns

266. *Curzon Collection, Indian Correspondence, Original Letters*, Vol. I, No. 42, 2nd January 1903, see Trevithick 1988.
267. Ibid., Vol. I, No. 76, 9 March 1903.

caught his attention. A genuine effort by Lord Curzon to wrest the Mahābodhi Temple from the Mahant and make it accessible to all had failed. He also failed to ever find out what happened to the gifts Mindon Min had offered at the Bodhi Tree, but few doubted that they had ended up in the Mahant's coffers.

Dharmapāla's failure to win control of the temple through negotiation and legal action now compelled him to try other means. He began a campaign to win sympathy from liberal Hindus and the newly emerging leaders of the Indian National Congress. Except for Mahatma Gandhi and a few others, most men in the Congress hierarchy were secular in outlook and more favourably disposed to Buddhism than Hinduism. In 1922, at the Gayā Conference of the INC, the first substantial steps were taken to get Indian political leaders involved in the issue. The Maha Bodhi Society had prepared its strategy well. Copies of a booklet giving the temple's history and arguing for its control by Buddhists were distributed to every delegate. The Burmese delegate (Burma was administered as a part of India at that time) raised the issue and proposed that a committee be set up to investigate the temple's status. Rajendra Prashad, the respected Bihari lawyer, was appointed to head the committee. It was a fortuitous choice. Prashad developed a personal interest in the Mahābodhi Temple issue, and in his role as a leading Congressman and later as independent India's first president, he did much to further the Buddhist cause.[268] One of the other people on the committee was Swami Ramodar Dass, who later converted to Buddhism, ordained as a monk and became famous under the name Rahul Sankrityayan. By the time the INC's Belgaum Conference convened, in 1924, Prashad's committee had still not met. However, a delegation of Buddhists from Sri Lanka, Burma and Nepal attended the conference and lobbied its leaders. They met with Gandhi, who was reluctant to have the matter discussed before the Congress, but after long and detailed arguments from the Buddhists, he finally agreed. At first Gandhi's views on the temple's ownership were quite unambiguous: "There is no doubt that the possession of the Temple should vest in the Buddhists. There may be legal difficulties. They

268. See letters from 5th December 1937; 17th December 1937; 11th August 1939; 4th January 1948; 4th November 1951; 27 July 1952; 10th August 1952; 5th January 1953; 3rd May 1953; 5th June 1953; 26th June 1955; Prasad, 1992.

must be overcome." Several years later, however, he was far less certain that the legal difficulties could be overcome and, sadly, history proved that his doubts were justified.

> "I can only give you my assurance that everything that was humanly possible for me to do to advance your claim I did and I shall still do. I can only tell you however, that the Congress does not possess the influence that I would like it to possess. There are several difficulties raised in connection with proprietary rights. There are technical, legal difficulties also in the way ... However, I can tell you that all my personal sympathies are absolutely with you and, if the rendering of its possession to you was in my giving, you can have it today."[269]

The liberal and pro-Buddhist Swami Viswānanda suggested to the Buddhists that if they promised to support a ban on cow slaughter and beef eating in their own countries, one of Gandhi's pet causes, they would win much goodwill from the Congress delegates. The Buddhists jumped at the suggestion. The Sri Lankan representative, Dr Cassius A. Perera, later to ordain as Bhikkhu Kassapa, said that beef eating had been introduced into his country by the British. The Nepalese representative told everyone that in his country the penalty for slaughtering a cow was death. He conveniently forgot to mention that this bizarre law had been passed by Nepal's Hindu king and that the idea of executing a human being for any reason, let alone for killing an animal, would be abhorrent to a Buddhist. No matter, Gandhi and the other Hindu Congressmen were impressed, and the motion to discuss the Mahābodhi Temple issue was passed unanimously. It was decided that Rajendra Prashad's hitherto inactive committee should be extended to become a joint effort of the INC and the All India Hindu Mahasabha, an influential but conservative Hindu body. When the Mahasabha convened in 1925, its 4, 000 delegates representing all shades of Hindu opinion were addressed by Dharmapāla. As a result, a resolution was adopted calling for Buddhists to have the right to worship in the temple and to have a say in its management. Unfortunately, the general goodwill of the Hindu public was not matched by the Mahant, who refused to have anything to do with the committee sent to negotiate with him.

269. Public address in Kandy, Sri Lanka, 15 November, 1927.

In 1928 the Burmese MLA, U Tok Kyi, tried to introduce a bill that would provide for a management board to be elected by Buddhists from India, Burma and Sri Lanka, with the Mahant as chairman and protecting Hindu rights to worship at the temple so long as blood sacrifices were not offered. The bill was not debated. By this time Anagārika Dharmapāla was old and in increasingly poor health. He gradually bowed out of the struggle, leaving the work to his deputy Devapiya Valisinha. Dharmapāla died in 1933 without seeing his life's mission fulfilled.

The skill and success that the Buddhists had in cultivating friendly relationships with most Hindus was well illustrated by what happened at the All India Hindu Mahasabha Conference at Kanpur in 1935. The well-known Burmese Buddhist monk, U Ottama, was elected conference chairman and a large delegation of Buddhists from India, Japan and Burma attended. The Conference expressed its support for the bill before the Legislative Assembly and formed as a second committee to work hand in hand with Prashad's. Not everyone was happy that an orthodox Hindu organisation should be so generous to Buddhists. While the resolution was being discussed, several *swamis* rushed at the dais to try to prevent it being passed. The joint committee found it had its work cut out for it. It received a flood of letters from Hindu organisations in Sri Lanka claiming that the Hindu temple at Kataragama had been taken over by Buddhists and requesting that the Mahābodhi Temple should not be returned to Buddhists until the Kataragama temple was returned to Hindus.[270] Prashad was exasperated by how complex the whole issue was becoming and how little cooperation he was getting from the Mahant.

Later, his committee travelled to Bodh Gayā to negotiate with the Mahant. It had been decided not to discuss his existing legal rights but to arrange an amicable settlement but, as stubborn as ever, he refused even to discuss the matter. In desperation and on his own initiative, Prashad offered to "buy him out" but even this would not move him.[271] As this course of action was obviously not going to achieve anything, Devapiya Valisinha urged the Burmese MLA, Thein

270. Prasad, 1957: 234.

271. Letter from Prasad of 31th July 1937 in the Bodh Gaya Temple file of the Hindu Mahasabha, quoted by Trevithick, 1988:284.

Maung, to introduce a bill, substantially the same as the one that was rejected in 1928, to the Legislative Assembly. As Burma was soon to be separated from India, after which Burmese would no longer sit in the Assembly, Thein Maung moved quickly. Although the bill was introduced, it was never debated. After years of delay, Rajendra Prasad finally placed his report on the Mahābodhi Temple before the All-India Congress at Delhi on 6th March 1937, and made it clear that its recommendations would be taken up by the appropriate minister as soon as Congress took office under the new Constitution. But just as it looked like a bill legislating joint control of the temple would be introduced, all Congress ministers in the Legislative and State Assemblies resigned in block in 1942 in protest against the British.

As soon as the war ended the Maha Bodhi Society recommenced its campaign by sponsoring a joint Buddhist-Hindu conference in Patna. Jajaratnarayan Lal, President of the Bihar Provincial Hindu Mahasabha, said that he accepted that Buddhists should have some say in managing the Mahābodhi Temple. Rajendra Prashad, chairman of the conference and by then President of the Constituent Assembly, went even further. He publicly urged the Mahant to accept the principle of joint control.[272] A year later, at the Inter Asia Conference in Delhi, delegates from China, Tibet, Nepal, Burma and Sri Lanka urged Nehru, the new prime minister of independent India, to bring a quick and satisfactory resolution to the problem. He promised to offer "all support for the restoration of Bodh Gayā to Buddhists".[273] Apart from his personal leaning towards Buddhism, Nehru was anxious that newly independent Asian countries, including his immediate neighbours Tibet, Bhutan, Sikkim, Sri Lanka and Burma, should look to India as a friend. In a letter to his principal private secretary, Nehru expressed his desire that Bodh Gayā should have a "certain international character" and that it would be "a graceful gesture to the Buddhist world" to appoint an advisory committee made up of non-Indian Buddhists to help manage the temple.[274]

Large numbers of pilgrims had been coming to Bodh Gayā since the beginning of the century, and yet nothing was done to provide

272. *MBJ*, Vol. LIV, No. 3–4, 1946:40–1.

273. Ibid., Vol. LV, No. 5–6, 1947.

274. Note to Principle Private Secretary, 15 February 1947, File No 2 (271)/48–PMS; *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru—Second Series*, 1990.

for their needs or to improve the temple. A Hindu visitor in 1930 had written that "so much dirt had gathered on the floor that the stone flooring had become quite unusable. So great was the dirt that the stench emanating from it was a little hard to endure." When she sought the Mahant's permission to clean the temple, he refused to give it. This devout Hindu also noticed that the Mahant tried to discourage Hindus from offering *sadhanas* at the Bodhi Tree by telling them that it was inhabited by flesh-eating ghosts.[275] Early in 1946, a branch had fallen off the Bodhi Tree, and the Maha Bodhi Society took the opportunity to once again draw attention to the temple's mismanagement. The situation was becoming an embarrassment to a newly independent India conscious of its image and it was clear that something had to be done.

Finally in 1948, after years of lobbying from the Maha Bodhi Society and, since independence, behind-the-scene pleading and arm-twisting by people like Nehru and Prashad, the draft Bodh Gayā Temple Act was circulated for public comment. The Act would provide for a committee of four Buddhists and four Hindus, with the District Magistrate of Gayā as ex-officio chairman. It was a profound disappointment for Buddhists because, as the chairman would inevitably be a Hindu, it meant that the management committee would always have a Hindu majority. The Maha Bodhi Society organised public meetings amongst India's tiny Buddhist communities where the Act was condemned as "highly inadequate". But it was clear that the Act was as good as the Buddhists were going to get, and when it finally passed on June 19, 1949, the Maha Bodhi Society put on a brave face and welcomed it as a "victory". Less willing to accept a compromise, the Mahant tried to obtain an interim injunction restraining the government from enforcing the Act, although he later gave up such efforts.

On Vaisākha Day, 28th May 1953, the ceremonial transfer of control of the Mahābodhi Temple from the Mahant to the new management committee took place. A large crowd turned up to see the historic ceremony, and the President and Prime Minister of India, together with leaders of all Buddhist countries, sent messages of congratulations. As the historic moment approached a procession of monks preceded by an orchestra of lamas led the participants to the

275. Taleyakhan, *Sages, Saints and Arunachala Ramana*, 1970:35–7.

dais. The Mahant chanted Sanskrit hymns, Dr. H. Saddhātissa chanted Pāli *gāthas*, everyone stood in silence and then, at exactly 5.30 pm, the deed of control was handed over. Almost immediately, the new management committee began making improvements and long overdue repairs. The state government laid on electricity and water, and plans were made to build a museum and a rest house for pilgrims. Many of these improvements were in preparation for the Buddha Jayanti in 1956, which the government of India planned to celebrate in full and during which hundreds of thousands of people were expected to visit Bodh Gayā and other sacred places.

Despite being an avowedly secular state, India celebrated the Buddha Jayanti with as much enthusiasm as many Buddhist countries, mainly due to the personal interest of Nehru. It sponsored an international conference of Buddhist scholars, a special travelling exhibition of Buddhist art, published two books, produced a film and issued a stamp to commemorate the event. Indian Railways offered generous concessions for pilgrims, and the Bihar State Government commenced publishing the Pāli Tipitika in Devanagari script. At Bodh Gayā itself, the highlight of the year's celebrations took place between the 23rd and the 25th of May, when thousands of Buddhists from all over the world participated in a special *puja* while an aeroplane sprinkled flowers over the temple. Later in the year, on the 25th, of December, the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama arrived in India to a tumultuous welcome. Three days later, carefully watched by their Chinese minders, the two prelates delivered sermons and conducted *pūjas* under the Bodhi Tree.

In 1966, a Draft Master Plan for the development of Bodh Gayā was published which envisaged acquiring 300 acres around the temple for parks and the undertaking of complete archaeological excavation of the area, all at a cost of Rs.1, 700, 000. It was a bold and imaginative plan which would have preserved a peaceful rural atmosphere around Bodh Gayā and guaranteed rational urban development. But years passed with nothing being done, by which time the changing situation required a revised plan which, decades later, looks like it will never be implemented.[276]

276. For a good overview of activities at Bodh Gayā since 1949 see Ahir, 1994 pp. 135–43.

During the 1980s, resurgent Hindu fundamentalism began to change the face of Indian politics which in turn indirectly precipitated a series of unfortunate events at Bodh Gayā. In 1991, the Janatha Dal candidate, Laloo Yadav, became Chief Minister of Bihar, the state in which Bodh Gayā is situated. Yadav was a member of the scheduled caste community and had never disguised his hostility to orthodox Hinduism. Early in 1992, he circulated a draft copy of a bill whose purpose was to replace the 1949 Bodh Gaya Temple Act with a new Bodh Gaya Mahavihar Act which would hand management of the Mahābodhi Temple to Buddhists. The bill also proposed to ban Hindu weddings being solemnised in the temple and the immersion of Hindu idols in the tank, both recent practices. The first proposal was welcomed by Buddhists although the other two were not; Buddhists have never advocated limiting Hindu worship in the temple. While many believed that the proposed bill was meant to be a slap in the face of orthodox Hinduism and a way for Yadav to win votes from the newly politically aware low caste communities, it nonetheless highlighted unresolved Buddhist grievances about Bodh Gayā. For years there had been persistent allegations of theft of both funds and antiquities from the temple, and Buddhists on the management committee had long complained that their suggestions for improvements to the temple were routinely voted down by the Hindu majority. When the Mahant became aware of the bill, he vowed to oppose it by "all means at my disposal." He was supported by the Bharatiya Janata Party, the party that drew support from Hindu fundamentalists, and suddenly Bodh Gayā became drawn into the volatile world of Indian party politics.

On 16th May, Vaiśākha Day, arguments and threats escalated into violence. There are conflicting accounts of what happened but reliable sources say that events unfolded thus.[277] A group of between 150 and 200 former untouchables who had converted to Buddhism through the influence of Dr. Ambedkar arrived in Bodh Gayā to celebrate the Buddha's enlightenment. They were accosted by the Brahmin in the Pañcha Pandu Temple, who routinely demands money from visitors. They refused and he insulted them. That such

277. Based on interviews with witnesses to the incident and a report by Sri Lanka's ambassador to New Delhi that was leaked to the press and published in Delhi's *Sunday Times,* 28 June, 1992.

people are still subject to Brahmin contempt when they visit the most sacred shrine of the religion they have adopted in order to escape that very type of treatment, must have been particularly galling. They returned the Brahmin's insults and a brief scuffle broke out. The Ambedkarites then entered the Pañcha Pandu Temple, tore off the Hindu vestments that were draped on the Buddha statues and then marched to the Mahābodhi Temple itself and tried to break the Siva *lingam* placed on the floor. Fears that the trouble at Bodh Gayā might trigger serious riots, like those caused by the recent dispute over the Babri Mosque at Ayodhya, were quite out of proportion, but police and troops were posted around the temple just in case.

The problem and its solution were well summed up by the editorial in *The Hindustan Times* on 2nd June 1992:

> "The Bodh Gayā Temple, whose antiquarian past is shrouded in mystery, is associated with Lord Buddha's message of harmony and peace, and as such holds a pride of place among Buddhist shrines all over the world. Yet it was an irony that the Buddhists did not have any say in the temple management, which remained in the hands of the Mahant of the area, whose strong-arm methods against agricultural labourers spawned a powerful popular movement in the seventies and the eighties and who, incidentally, owns vast tracts of land, far in excess of the ceiling fixed under the law. It required the persuasive skills of national leaders like Dr. Rajendra Prasad and enactment of the Bodh Gayā Temple Act, 1949, to get the temple freed from the Mahant's clutches and involve the Buddhists in its management. Even under the Act, the temple management remained, in effect, in the hands of the Hindus, much against the wishes of the Buddhists. Some of the Janata Dal leaders whose antipathy towards the upper castes is scarcely concealed, found in the temple issue an opportunity to consolidate their position among the backward classes, more so the neo-Buddhists, both within and without the State. Thus was brought in the draft of a Bill seeking to hand over the management almost entirely to the Buddhists and banning Hindu sacraments in its premises. With certain Hindu organisations jumping into the fray, the once peaceful temple is heading towards trouble. It is a reflection of the changing times that the Hindus and Buddhists, who have for

> centuries worshipped shoulder to shoulder at the temple, are being pitted as adversaries. And that too in the name of a temple from where the message of universal love and peace emanated. It would be a travesty of justice if the Buddhists were not to enjoy a pre-eminent position in the management of the temple. But even they would not deny the right of worship to those Hindus, who regard the temple as sacred. The dispute can be resolved without much difficulty through talks between the leaders of the two communities in a give-and-take manner."

How things will unfold at Bodh Gayā remains to be seen, but it is unlikely that a dispute which has already dragged on for more than 125 years can be settled "without much difficulty". Either way, Bodh Gayā's power to fascinate and move visitors and its importance as a focal point for Buddhist devotion will remain unchanged. May it be so for ever.

# Appendix I

## Where is the Animisa Cetiya?

According to the introduction to the Jātaka, after the Buddha's enlightenment he spent seven weeks at Bodh Gayā. During the second week he sat gazing at the Bodhi Tree without blinking. In time a shrine called the Animisa Cetiya or Anirmeṣa Caitya, the Unblinking Shrine, came to be built on this site and became one of the seven sacred locations (*sattamahātthāna*) at Bodh Gayā. With the almost complete disappearance of Buddhism after the 13th century Bodh Gayā was abandoned, it's temples and shrines fell into ruin and the very location of most were forgotten. In 1877 a mission from the king of Burma came to restore the Mahābodhi Temple and in the process they destroyed many of the smaller shrines around it, often leaving no more than their foundations. After Joseph Beglar excavated the whole area in 1880, the only structures that were more than just foundations were the Mahābodhi Temple, the small temple that shelters the footprints stone, what is now identified, probably incorrectly, as the Ratnaghara Caitya, and a small single-spire temple which a large sign now identifies as the Animisa Cetiya. I will call this building Temple A. How did this temple get to be identified as the Animisa Cetiya?

Towards the end of the 19th century when pilgrims began returning to Bodh Gayā they wanted to see all the places where the Buddha had stayed during his seven weeks there. Being mostly simple folk with no knowledge of history or archaeology it is only natural that they would identify any existing structures with the ones they wanted to see. Having worshipped the Bodhi Tree, their next concern was to see the place where the Buddha had sat for seven days gazing at it. Other than the Mahābodhi Temple itself the most noticeable structure was Temple A and so it gradually came to be identified with the Animisa Cetiya. What had been just uninformed popular opinion gradually became accepted fact when in the 1980's the Temple Management Committee decided to put up signs identifying the various sacred sites around Bodh Gayā after consultation with the leading monks. The abbot of the Burmese Vihara produced a book called the *Jinatthapakāsanī* written by Kyithe

Laythat Sayadaw in 1920 which identified Temple A as the Animisa Chaitya. In this book the author says he had used the Tipitaka and the commentaries to try to locate all the seven sacred sites "to the best of my ability". While the Sayadaw no doubt had strong faith, this is not very helpful in settling questions pertaining to history or archaeology and at best his conclusions were uninformed guesses. Nevertheless, the Temple Management accepted his conclusions and Temple A officially became the Animisa Cetiya.

There are two reasons why Temple A cannot be the Animisa Cetiya. It will be noticed that it sits on the top of a very high hillock, in fact, it is nearly the highest ground around Bodh Gayā. This is not a natural hill but a part of the large artificial mound built up by centuries of habitation. The fact that Temple A sits on the top of this mound proves that it was built at a very late date. We have no record of what the Animisa Cetiya looked like, however, as it was built to mark the place where the Buddha sat for seven days gazing at the Bodhi Tree we can safely conjecture that it would have had a Buddha statue in it positioned to face towards the Bodhi Tree. Temple A faces towards the river, not the Bodhi Tree. These facts are sufficient to prove that Temple A cannot be the Animisa Cetiya.

So if Temple A is not the Animisa Cetiya what is it? In the 19th century Alexander Cunningham discovered an inscription at Bodh Gayā which might throw some light on this temple's real identity. Unfortunately, Cunningham did not say exactly where he found this inscription. It recorded the building of a shrine at Bodh Gayā by a monk named Śrīmitra sometime between the years 1183 and 1192. The inscription also mentions that a statue of Avalokiteśvara Siṃhanāda and three statues of Tāra were placed in this temple. When Rajendralal Mitra was at Bodh Gayā he noticed that Temple A had a statue of Avalokiteśvara Siṃhanāda in it and he also noted that local people referred to this temple as Tārā Vihāra. The statue of Avalokiteśvara Siṃhanāda is still enshrined in Temple A and dates from the 11th or 12th century. Dharmasvāmin mentioned a Tārā Vihāra as one of the prominent sights at Bodh Gayā. He also mentioned that one of the statues enshrined in this temple was called Tārā of the River and that it faced the river. These are good reason for thinking that Temple A is the one built by Śrīmitra.

So where is or was the real Animisa Cetiya? There are three facts that can help in answering this question. As it was built to mark the

place where the Buddha sat gazing at the Bodhi Tree it must have been within view of the Tree and almost certainly facing it. It has to be clearly understood that the Bodhi Tree does not grow now in its original place. The Bodhi Tree originally grew just behind the Vajirāsana, the exact spot where the Buddha was sitting when he attained enlightenment, and the altar inside the Mahābodhi Temple is built over the Vajirāsana. The introduction to the Jātaka give us precise information about the location of the Animisa Cetiya, saying that it was directly north of the Bodhi Tree (Jātaka I, 77). This is confirmed by Xuanzang who also says that the Animisa was north of Mahābodhi Temple. Bcom Idan rig pa'i rel gri (1250–1311) in his recently rediscovered *Extended Guide to the Diamond Throne* does not mention any structure that could be Temple A. He does mention the Animisa Cetiya but locates it to the south of the Mahābodhi temple. However, it should be kept in mind that he was writing centuries after the Jātaka commentary and Xuanzang's travelogue which represent much earlier traditions.

If we look directly north of the Temple we see the foundations of a large rectangular structure of what was no doubt once a large temple. This structure, which I will call Temple B, is much the same as it was when it was excavated by Beglar in 1880 and is marked on Cunningham's map of Bodh Gayā as U. It will be noticed that the entrance of Temple B faces to where the Bodhi Tree originally grew, right behind to the altar now inside the Mahābodhi Temple, i.e., at the Vajirāsana, although tilted just slightly to the east. This is very strong evidence that the foundations of Temple B are the remains of the original Animisa Cetiya.

# Appendix II

## The Bodh Gayā Burmese inscription of 1875

"King Mindon Min who founded the city of Mandalay, was the foremost among the kings and monarchs and was the possessor of immense wealth, elephants and horses. He ruled the people with righteousness giving them just laws following the example of King Dhammasoka and other powerful kings, and this was descendant of the rulers of the world...He made arrangements to send monks on mission to the Middle Land to spread the Buddha's religion, to make offerings at the Mahābodhi Temple, the most sacred place on the surface of the earth, where Lord Buddha had attained omniscience and became enlightened. He also desired to send out missions to other countries. Then in the month of Tasoungmon in the year 1236 of the Burmese era, in the 2417th year of the Buddha's religion, the king sent Minister Siri Maha Sayathu, Secretary Mindin Sithu and Corresponding Secretary Mindin Kyaw together with followers on a pilgrimage to Mahābodhi to make offerings of 511 diamonds, 311 emeralds, 3966 rubies and 623 pearls together with many ornaments from the royal relatives, ministers and the populace. With these offerings, the pilgrims started on their journey on board the steamer Sakkya Yinmoon. King Mindon Min then prayed that by virtue of these meritorious deeds he might attain arahatship and then declared that he shared his merit with all the people of the world and with all living beings. Thus this is a record on stone of all deeds done by King Mindon Min."

# Appendix III

## A partial copy of the Mahābodhi Temple in Colombo

In the Colombo suburb of Kotahena is a temple called Dipaduttamārāma which was founded in 1806 and is said to be the oldest temple in the city. In the grounds of this temple is a most unusual stūpa, the lower part of which is a very good copy of the terrace of the Mahābodhi Temple in India, complete with niches and four corner spires. However, instead of the square inward sloping central spire of the original, the Kotahena stūpa has a slender rounded spire covered with niches. The story behind this stūpa is interesting in that it throws light on the continuing influence that pilgrimage to Bodh Gayā has on the architecture of different Buddhist lands.

The Kotahena stūpa was built between 1908 and 1910 by a monk who was a member of the Thai royal family. Prince Prisdang Chumsai was born in 1851 and was a grandson of King Rāma III. He was educated in London, became Thailand's ambassador to several European countries and was later appointed Director General of the Department of Post and Telegraph. In 1890 he fell foul of political intrigue and in fear and disillusionment left the country, went to Malaya, and eventually ended up in Sri Lanka. In 1896 he ordained under the famous scholar monk Venerable Waskaḍuwe Śrī Subhūti and then went on a 12–month pilgrimage to India during which he visited Bodh Gayā, Sarnath, Kusinārā and Lumbinī. By extraordinary coincidence, the prince, now named Ven. Jinavaravaṃsa, happened to be in Lumbinī just as the Englishman W. C. Peppé opened the stūpa at Piprahwa, now identified with Kapilavatthu. Jinavaravaṃsa was invited to have a look at the contents of the relic casket and was actually given a few semi-precious gems from it

On his return to Sri Lanka he was invited to become abbot of the Dipaduttamārāma temple, the former incumbent having died without leaving a successor. Straight away he decided to build a stūpa grand enough to enshrine the gems he had been given. A few months later he met a Thai-Chinese woman named Mrs. Cheak from Penang who had come on pilgrimage to Sri Lanka and he offered to accompany her on her journey. While travelling together Jinavaravaṃsa told Mrs

Cheak of his plans for the stūpa and she promised him the money for the project. Jinavaravaṃsa gave very careful thought to the design of his stūpa. In the detailed account of its building which he later wrote he said: "I thought the best thing to do would be to build a model of the Great Temple of Buddha Gaya, with all its historical significance, at the base of the Dagaba, thereby increasing its height considerably, and at the same time enabling those who are unable to visit India to have an idea of what the noble and beautiful Temple of Buddha Gayā ...is like." When completed the stūpa was 14 meters high and cost a total of 5000 Rupees. It attracted a lot of attention in Colombo and many people can came to see it.

In 1910 King Rāma V died and thinking it safe to return to his country, Jinavaravaṃsa left Sri Lanka. It turned out to be a mistake. On his arrival he was arrested, forced to disrobe and refused permission to either re-ordain or even leave the country. He died poor and forgotten in 1935.

In the years since its building many members of the Thai royal family travelling to or from Europe have stopped in Colombo to pay homage at the stūpa. These have include King Mahidol (Rāma VIII), the present king Bhumibol, once as a prince in 1939 and again as king together with Queen Sirikit in 1950, the late Queen Mother, and just recently Prince Chulabhorn. In 1956 Prince Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia visited the stūpa also.

# Appendix IV

## Art from Bodh Gayā in Berlin

The first modern account of Bodh Gayā was written by Francis Buchanan-Hamilton after he visited the place during the extensive survey he did of southern Bihar in 1811. Buchanan noticed a large number of sculptures amongst the ruins and had drawing made of some of them. However, his account remained unknown until Montgomery Martin published it under his own name in 1838. After that a steady trickle of people began coming to Bodh Gayā to see the impressive ruins of the great Temple. By the 1860's and 70's the English public was beginning to appreciate Indian art and visitors to Bodh Gayā; civil servants, antiquarians and tourists, started removing the sculptures that were scattered all around the area. George Grierson, then collector of Gayā, was concerned about the fate of these sculptures and tried to do something to protect them, not always successfully. He wrote on one occasion that "it was with the greatest difficulty" he was able to stop a German count from carrying some away. When Sir Richard Temple entered the royal palace in Mandalay after the capture of the Burmese king in 1880 he reported seeing many Buddha statues which had been bought back from Bodh Gayā by the mission of King Mindon some years earlier.[278] In about 1895 many of the more impressive sculptures around Bodh Gayā were housed in a tin shed near the western entrance to the sacred compound. This shed was demolished in 1956 by which time most of its contents had disappeared. VIP visitors, mainly British but also some Europeans and Indians, saw it as their prerogative to insist that the watchers at Bodh Gayā provide them with any sculptures that took their fancy and which they wanted as souvenirs. The watchers were often all too happy to oblige for a small remuneration and one by one even quite large sculptures disappeared.

When Thailand's King Chulalongkorn toured India in 1872 he did not go to Bodh Gayā but the government arranged for him to be gifted with several artefacts from there. All the things he was given,

278. For the unexpected places sculpture from Bodh Gayā can turn up see Dhammika, 1995.

Buddha statues, stūpas and several clay votive tablets, are now on display in the Bangkok National Museum. Meanwhile clay votive tablets and small clay votive stūpas of which literally thousands had been uncovered during Beglar's excavations in 1880 were removed by visitors so that today not one of these types of objects is still to be seen at Bodh Gayā. In one sense it is hard to condemn this casual looting of Bodh Gayā's art treasures. Other than a few statues that were being worshipped by local Hindus, most just lay around neglected and unnoticed except by devote Buddhists visitors like Anagārika Dharmapāla. After his visit in 1891 he wrote; "It was most painful for me to witness the vandalism that is taking place there constantly... The most beautiful statues of the teacher of Nirvana and the Law... are still uncared for and quietly allowed to perish by exposure."

But by the 20th century and certainly after Indian independence, the importance of preserving artefacts on site was fully understood and the fact that the theft of antiquities has continued since then and indeed has actually increased of late, is an indictment to the indifference of the authorities concerned. While the Indian government insists on the return of artefacts from British and American museums it fails to protect many of the antiquities it does have jurisdiction over.

The Indian Museum in Kolkata, the British Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, and the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford all have significant collections of art from Bodh Gayā but the largest such collection anywhere in the world is housed in the Museum für Asiatische Kunst (Museum of Asian Art) in Berlin in Germany. This collection was originally acquired by the old Royal Museum towards the end of the 19th century. The collection includes stone and terracotta sculptures, votive stūpas and tablets, inscriptions, statues and architectural fragments. There are 114 items altogether, all of them Buddhist except for two Hindu sculptures. Another dozen or so other items in the Museum whose provenance is uncertain may also have come from Bodh Gayā. How did such an outstanding collection of Buddhist art get all the way from the then small dusty village of Bodh Gayā to the German capital?

The first contributor to the Museum's collection was the famous Indian archaeologist Rajendralala Mitra (1822–1891). Mitra had visited Bodh Gayā on several occasions and in 1877 spent about two

weeks there at the request of the Indian Government who had asked him to report on what the mission of King Mindon was doing there. During his stay he gathered information for his famous book on Bodh Gayā, the first scientific survey of the place, but he also collected many artefacts. Some of these ended up at the Asiatic Society of which Mitra was the vice-president from where they later passed into the collection of the Indian Museum in Kolkata. Others found their way to Berlin. Andreas Jagor of the Royal Museum had received permission from the Indian Government to collect artefacts in India and the government had designated Mitra as its intermediary. Mitra selected some pieces from his own and the Asiatic Society's collection, including some from Bodh Gayā that had been deposited there by Alexander Cunningham, and they arrived in Berlin in 1879. The most important of these are three sections of the upper balustrade from the ancient stone railing around the Mahabodhi Temple. The railing dates from about the 1st century BCE and first came to light when Major Mead dug around the Temple in 1863. The pieces seem to have been carefully chosen as representative of this type of architecture. One piece has a procession of winged horses and buffaloes on one side and a floral design on the other. Below these animals is also an inscription. The three pieces may have already been fragmentary but judging by their similar lengths it looks suspiciously like they were broken in order to be taken away. Other important pieces from Bodh Gayā obtained from Mitra are two large round stones with a symbolic Buddha's footprints on them. Each stone has a single footprint on it and each footprint has a Dhammacakkha in its centre and a *gandharva*, a mythological half human half bird, engraved on it. The stones may date from about the 9th to12th centuries.

Another important contributor to the Berlin collection was Lawrence Austine Waddell (1854–1938). Waddell was a medical officer in the Indian Army and later professor at the Calcutta Medical College. He was also a keen though highly critical student of Buddhism and after going to Lhasa with the 1903–4 Younghusband Expedition wrote a pioneering book on Tibetan Buddhism. During his travels through India Waddell visited ancient sites and gradually built up an impressive collection of Buddhist sculptures. Although he had a genuine interest in art he was also aware of the potential monetary value of the things he collected. In 1905 his collection of

over 700 sculptures was exhibited at the Crystal Palace in London and later that year he wrote to the Royal Museum offering them the whole collection. He also mentioned that acquiring the collection had cost him £2000 but that if the Museum accepted his offer immediately he would let them have it at what he called "the sacrificial price" of £400. F.W.K. Muller came to London to see the collection, recommended its purchase and soon receiver permission to buy 650 pieces. Not everything the Museum purchased was from India. Many pieces in Waddell's collection had been acquired, or more correctly looted, while he was in Tibet. The most interesting piece from Bodh Gayā is a fine statue of Mārīcī, the Tantric Buddhist personification of light.

In 1907 the Museum bought another large collection of Indian art including 67 artefacts originating in Bodh Gayā from the Oriental Institute at Woking, in England. The founder of the Institute, Gottlieb Wilhelm Lehner, had collected all these pieces when in India in the 1860s as principle of Government College in Lahore. The majority of Leitner's collection from Bodh Gayā consists of fragments of statues, small votive stūpas and parts of stūpas with calving on them, usually rows of tiny Buddhas. Like many visitors to Bodh Gayā before and after, Lehner must have simply wandered around picking up calved fragments which he later took home with him. But he was particularly thorough and seems to have a taken every piece of calved stone he could find. The most significant piece purchased from the Lehner collection is an inscribed stone. B. B. Vidyavinode and N. G. Majumdar both attempted to read the inscription on this stone without much success, and D. C. Sircar has given a rough outline of its contents without translating it. This inscription is extremely important to the chronology and later history of Bodh Gayā as it mentions King Buddhasena who is referred to in two other inscriptions and who the Tibetan pilgrim Dharmasvamin met in Bodh Gayā in 1234. The fact that this inscription has been known for over a 100 years and yet has still not been properly deciphered indicates how much remains to be done in the study of Bodh Gayā's history.

Two other people who collected artefacts from Bodh Gayā which ended up in Berlin were Adolf Bastian and J. P. Rawlins. Bastian was head of the ethnographic department of the Royal Museum and had gone to India in 1879 where he had acquired artefacts from Rajendralala Mitra and others. Rawlings, a British army officer, had

toured the North-West Frontier and collected a large number of Gandhara sculptures which he sold to the Museum in 1904. Apparently pleased with this purchase and hoping for more, the Museum asked Rawlings to act as an intermediary between itself and various people in England who had antiquities they wanted to sell. Of the things he managed to get, eight had originated in Bodh Gayā. The finest of these is a bust of the Buddha probably dating from the 9th century. On the halo behind the Buddha's head the Dhamma Pariyāya is engraved and leaves of the Bodhi Tree overlap its top and there are stūpas on its left and right. The Buddha's face has a particularly beautiful smile.

At the start of the Second World War started the contents of many of Berlin's museums including all the art from Bodh Gayā in the Royal Museum were stored in the flak tower at the Berlin Zoo and when the Soviets entered the city in 1945 much of it disappeared. One of the sections of the Bodh Gayā railing was kept in Leningrad and transferred to the Volkerkundemuseum in East Germany in 1985 from where it finally joined the Museum für Indische Kunst (now called Museum für Asiatische Kunst ) when the Berlin wall fell in 1990. Other pieces are probably still somewhere in Russia and may come to light again sometime in the future.

After the war all the Indian art in the old Royal Museum became part of the newly reorganized Museum für Volkerkunde and when the new Museum für Indische Kunst was established in 1963 it was moved there and selected pieces from Bodh Gayā finally went on display on the 7th of October 1971. Hopefully someday someone will make an inventory of all the art work from Bodh Gayā now disperses in museums and private collections throughout the world.

# Appendix V

## The Buddha in the Mahabodhi Temple Sanctum

For about 700 years a Buddha statue sat on the altar in the sanctum of the Mahābodhi Temple at Bodh Gayā. Known as the Mahābodhi Image or the Image of the True Face, it was believed to be an actual portrait of the Buddha and was the most revered of all the many statue to be seen at Bodh Gayā. There is no record of when this statue disappeared, possibly at some time during the Islamic conquest of Bihar or in the subsequent decades. On the other hand, in circa 1413 Śāriputra, the last abbot of Bodh Gayā, gave the dimensions of the statue in the temple to the Tibetans and if these were from the original, not a copy, them the Mahābodhi Image must have still existed at least up until that time. When Francis Buchanan visited Bodh Gayā in December 1811 there was a statue in the temple which he described as made of brick and plaster and "so vastly crude in comparison with all the other images" scattered around Bodh Gayā that he correctly deduced that it was from a very different period.

Who made this statue and when is unclear but it was probably either the Burmese mission mentioned by Buchanan that came some time before 1795 or the one sent by King Bodawpaya which came just prior to Buchanan's visit. As a drawing of it shows, it was a squat, rather ungainly statue and clearly of Burmese workmanship. King Mindon Min's mission gilded this statue as a part of their efforts to repair and renovate the Mahābodhi temple.

Another object within the temple sanctum was a four-sided stone pillar with a shallow arched niche on each side containing a standing image of the Buddha. The top of the pillar gives the appearance of being a stupa dome and a hole in its top probably once contained the stupa's pinnacle. This pillar stood in the middle of the sanctum and was worshipped by local Hindus as a Siva lingam while the Buddha image was worshipped as Bharion (i.e. Bhairava, i.e. Siva). The pillar is now displayed in the museum at Bodh Gayā.

The statue in the sanctum of the Mahābodhi Temple today and which appears on the frontispiece of this book, dates from the 10$^{th}$ or 11$^{th}$ century. Carved out of black chlorite stone it is a particularly fine

example of Pāla period sculpture, capable of evoking admiration in the tourist and devotion in the Buddhist pilgrim. It depicts the Buddha in the earth-touching gesture and rather than the usual double-lotus throne he sits on a patterned cushion similar to those found on several other Buddha images from Nāḷandā and Hasra Kol. On the plinth below this cushion are five niches divided from each other by small pillars. The two outer niches contain lions and the next two contain elephants. In the central niche Paṭhavī, the Earth Goddess, is shown rising from the ground, holding a vase of jewels and witnessing the Buddha's victory over ignorance. All these figures and the pillars are in high relief.

Directly below the niches is a partly damaged inscription in two lines providing some information about the statue. The first line is the usual Dhamma Pariyāya used to consecrate images. The second part says the statue was donated by one Śrī Pūrṇabhadra, son of Samanta and grandson of Dharma of the Chhinda family. It seems he had constructed a temple and installed three statues in it, no doubt including the one now under discussion, with the assistance of Āchārya Jayasena. The Chhindas were feudatories who ruled the area around Gayā in about the $10^{th}$ and $11^{th}$ centuries. Jayasena is mentioned in the Janibigha inscription as having donated land to the Sri Lankan monks at Bodh Gayā. There is no way of knowing exactly where at Bodh Gayā Śrī Pūrṇabhadra built his temple.

Joseph Beglar visited Bodh Gayā three times; during the cold season of 1872-73 when he stayed for about a week, in early 1880 on the instructions of Alexander Cunningham to assess what would be needed for the conservation of the temple, and some months later to supervise the conservation. It was during this last visit that he first saw the statue now in the temple sanctum.

When the time came for Beglar to repair the temple sanctum he realized that to do this thoroughly would require removing the four-sided Buddha pillar in the centre of the sanctum and the masonry Buddha image on the altar. Concerned that this might offend the religious feelings of the locals who worshipped the pillar and the image, he asked the Mahant for his permission to make these changes. The Mahant agreed to the removal of the pillar but asked that the image be relocated. When Beglar explained that this would not be possible the Mahant agreed to have it dismantled. Thus the brick and plaster Buddha statue constructed by the Burmese was

destroyed. Why the Mahant did not require the Buddha pillar be put back in the sanctum we are not told.

After this had been done and the repairs completed it became clear that the now empty sanctum needed a statue to grace the altar. Accompanied by the Mahant Beglar examined statues around Bodh Gaya but most were either damaged, too small or of bodhisattvas rather than of the Buddha, but eventually a suitable one was found. Beglar is unclear about where this statue was but Mitra saw it in 1875 and described it as being "in a small temple in the [Mahant's] monastery, where there are two other figures of different kinds." The Mahant was reluctant for it to be relocated to the temple although he finally consented on condition that the vermillion *tilak* on its forehead remain untouched. The image was disfigured by whitewash and lime plaster which required a great deal of effort to scrape off. With the cleaning completed the majesty of the statue became apparent; its surface smooth and shiny and its countenance serene. The *tilak* mark was accidently washed off during the cleaning although Beglar does not record what the Mahant had to say about this.

Beglar gave no details concerning how the statue was moved to the temple but it must have required a great deal of manpower and considerable care; it is a large sculpture, over three meters high and may weigh a ton or more. It was finally maneuvered into the temple, winched up above the alter and suspended exactly over the position where it was to be placed. Beglar then invited the Mahant to ceremonially supervise the lowering of the statue into position and to consecrate it with the appropriate rituals.

Today Śrī Pūrṇabhadra Buddha is covered with gold paint and its facial features painted in Tibetan style. While this obscures the statue's original character it does not detract from its majesty.

# Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| AB | *Art Bulletin* |
| ASI | *Archaeological Survey of India* |
| BM | *Burlington Magazine* |
| CII | *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum* |
| CJS | *Ceylon Journal of Science* |
| EI | *Epigraphica Indicarum* |
| EW | *East and West* |
| EZ | *Epigraphica Zeylanica* |
| HCIP | *History and Culture of the Indian People* |
| HOR | *History of Religion* |
| IA | *Indian Antiquary* |
| IC | *Indian Culture* |
| IIJ | *Indo-Iranian Journal* |
| IHQ | *Indian Historical Quarterly* |
| JAIH | *Journal of Ancient Indian History* |
| JASB | *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* |
| JBBRAS | *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* |
| JBORS | *Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society* |
| JISOA | *Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art* |
| JPTS | *Journal of the Pali Text Society* |
| JRAS | *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* |
| JRASCB | *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Ceylon Branch* |
| JSLBRAS | *Journal of the Sri Lanka Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* |
| MASI | *Memories of the Archaeological Survey of India* |
| MBJ | *Maha Bodhi Journal* |
| OR | *Orientations* |
| TB | *The Buddhist* |

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