

## A SURVEY OF BUDDHIST ARCHEOLOGICAL PLACE – TĀRĀPUR

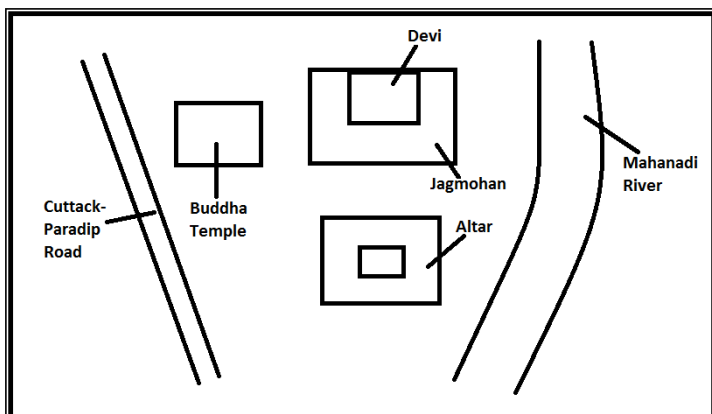
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In this paper, a humble attempt has been made to discuss the stratigraphy and settlement pattern of Buddhist site that is traced within the geographical boundary of modern Odisha. Tārāpur village (Lat 20.3501 Long 86.22 3) is located in Bānki Tehsil of Cuttack district in Odisha, India. It is at a distance of 61 kms from Bhubaneswar, capital city of Odisha. Jagatsinghpur is the nearest district to Tārāpur village. Beside on the Cuttack - Paradeep road. The village has a population of 10,000 which mainly comprises people from the lower cast.



The main occupation of the people living here is agriculture. Local people recovered a series of Buddhist sculptures from a place located between the Taladandā canal and the Mahānadi which flows nearby Cuttack district. The Tara temple is locally called “Nārāyanī Temple”. Goddess Tara is worshipped everyday in the temple with special offerings being made on the day of saṅkranti of every month. Sacrifices are made once in every 12 years at the altar which is situated on the northern side of the temple. Excavation was conducted by the Archeological Survey of India at 1981. The sculptures include figures of **Pra ṅapāramitā**, **Mārici**, **Buddha**, **Avalokitsvara** and **Tārā**. The Buddha and **Avalokitsvara** represent characteristics of 8<sup>th</sup> Century C.E. and the images of **Mārici** and **Praṅapāramitā** can be placed in the 11<sup>th</sup> Century C.E.<sup>1</sup>

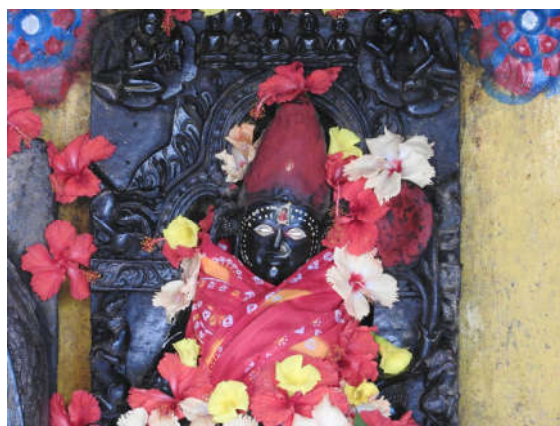


*Site plan of Tārāpur Temple*



**Tārā:** -

The adoration of female principal was introduced in Buddhism in the form of goddesses Tara. At the outset of 7<sup>th</sup> Century C.E, she took two distinct forms – Sveta Tara (white) and Neela Tara (blue). In the succeeding century, her forms increased



making in all 21 Taras. The “**Sadhanamala**” and “**Nispannayogavali**” contain full details about multiple form of Tara. Goddess Tara owes her origin to **Dhyanibuddha**

**Amoghasiddhi (Boddhisattva – Visvapani, symbol – Visvavhara, Shaktī Tārā).** ‘Tārā’ is derived from the root ‘Tār’ (to cross). Tārā helps to cross the ocean of existence. Tibetans Tārā means “**saviouress**”. The Tārādhārinis are popular in Tibet. Tara is now conceived as a mother Goddess. The “**Lalitapakhayana**” of “**Brahmandapurana**” refers to goddess Tārā as a Terāmba which means mother. She is also referred to as “**Tārā Namoh Mahāshakti**”. It is interesting to note that in the Hindu literature she is referred to as sea goddess.

Innumerable number of Tārāimages is reported from several places of Odisha, which speaks of the popularity of Tara during the Vajrayāna period. The Tara images are found in varieties like **Khādirvani Tārā, Kurukullā, Durgottāriṇi Tārā, Astamāhabhaya Tārā, Mahattāri Tārāand Vajratārā.**<sup>2</sup>

### **Prañāpāramitā: -**

The Goddess **Prañāpāramitā** holds a very exalted position in the Buddhist pantheon in medieval Odisha. She is believed to be the personification of transcendental knowledge embodied in the “**Prañāparamitasāstra**”. The term ‘**Prañāpāramitā**’ is indicative of highest possible point of the development of wisdom. The “**Sādhanamālā**” and “**Nispannayogāvali**”, “**Dharmakosa samgraha**” deal with the texture description of the Goddess.

In the Buddhist pantheon, Tara is the supreme female principle (Sakti) and of the numerous manifestations of the concept. **Prañāpāramitā** is one and perhaps the most important one. She is regarded as the female energy of **Boddissattva Mañjusri**. It is also interested to note that **Prañāpāramitā** was regarded as the female energy of **Lokesvara**, a form of **Avalokitesvara**, in many parts of Indo-China. She could not be assigned to any of the **Dhyani Buddhas**.

In the ‘**Sadhanmālā**’, there are as many as nine **Sadhanas** (Nos. 151-159) devoted with the iconographic description of the goddess **Prañāpāramitā**. Sādhan no. 156, describes the four handed form of the goddess. The remaining eight speak of her two handed form. In addition to the descriptions of ‘**Sadhanmālā**’, four other description of the four handed form of the goddess are known to us. One form the ‘**Nispannayogāvali**’ and the other three from the **Dharmakosa Saṅgraha**.

There are many **Prañāpāramitā** images reported from Odisha but all are two armed. They are retaining youthful vigor and the sacred book is present with a lotus. The Tārāpur image is seated in **Paryanikasana** attitude on a **Visvapadma**, displayed the Dharma Chakra Mudra with two palms. She is adorned with beaded **Valayas** (one around each wrist), beaded amulets, a beaded upvita, a beaded hara with pendent. She wears a high ornate kirita-mukuta.

The deity is in dhyana on the lotus throne and holds in the left hand the stalk of lotus, on which is seen the **Prañāparamita** book. She is richly ornamented, crowned with Jatāmukuta. The image displays youthful vigor with developed breasts and proportionate. Stylistically, this sculpture is datable to 10<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> Century C.E.<sup>3</sup>

### **Mārici: -**

**Mārici** was a popular female deity in the tantric Buddhism in Odisha. According to “*Sādhanamālā*”, Goddess **Mārici** is an emanation of **Dhyanibuddha Virocana**. She is invoked by the Lamas of Tibet early in the morning, which is indicative of her connections with sun. For this reason, she is also regarded as the Sakti of Amitābha, the Buddhist boundless light. She has a chariot like the Hindu Sun God, but it is



drawn by seven pigs, while the chariot of Sun is drawn by seven horses. The charioteer of Sun is Aruna, while the charioteer of **Mārici** is a Goddess with no legs, only a head without a body. So it appears that this concept originated out of an ideology of syncretism between the cults of Saktas and Sauras. The “*Sādhanamālā*” describes six distinct forms of **Mārici**. She is generally represented with one, three, five or six faces and eight, ten, twelve arms. She is easily recognized by the sow face and seven pigs that run the chariot.

At Tārāpur image stands in **Pratyalindha** pose and has three heads with the left face being that of a sow. She is eight armed and wields the Vajra in her raised major right hand which is placed in front of the chest in tarjanipāsa with none visible next to her sow face .Her, lower

set of hands at the right in ardhachandra, holds the needle and thread. The third set of hands holds the arrows and stringed bow while the lowered fourth set carry the ankusa and a□oka bough.

The sculptures of **Mārici** of other places in Odisha are too fragile and weatherworn. Hence their descriptions are beyond recognition. All the **Mārici** sculptures of Odisha belong to the **Saṅkhipta Mārici** group (three faces and eight arms). The **Pañcha Varāhi** in Kendrapara district is also a **Mārici** sculpture (five faces, ten arms and four legs).<sup>4</sup>

### **Buddha:-**

This image seated in Dhyāna Mudrā. He seated under the Bodhi tree, half close serenity in the face along with curly hair with a knot. The stone is grey khandolite stone.<sup>5</sup>



### **Avalokitesvara:-**

The Bodhisattva **Avalokitesvara** is said to be ruled during the period between the disappearances of the mortal Buddha, Sakyasimha and the advent of the future Buddha maitreya. This form of Bodhisattva can be traced back from the time to Ashoka. In “*Mahāvastu Avadāna*”, reference has been made to Bhagaban **Avalokitesvara** who looks around in order to make free the devotees



from suffering. The **Avalokitesvara** happened to be appeared around 2<sup>nd</sup> Century C.E. The cult of **Avalokitesvara** was quite popular in 4<sup>th</sup> Century C.E.

The “*Kāraṇḍavyuha*” describes him “a lamp for the blind, a sunshade for those who are dying of thirst. He points out the way to nirvana to those who have descended into hell.” He

is invoked with uttering of “*Om Manipadme hum*”, the knowledge of six syllables i.e. the protecting and benedictory prayer. Now, in the monasteries of Himalayan region, we can see, the uttering and worship of **Avalokitesvara** with great rejoicing.

The ‘*Sāadhanamālā*’ gives altogether thirty eight Sadhanas which describe fifteen forms of **Avalokitesvara**. These fifteen forms by no. means exhaust, the forms of **Avalokitesvara** since there is a evidence that these forms even numbered on hundred eight, each of them being distinct names.

The images of **Avalokitesvara** were found in several parts of Odisha. According to Tarapur we are also found the image of **Avalokitesvara** beside the left hand side of main goddess Tara. It’s also made of Khandolite Stone.

The discovery of this hoard of Buddhist sculptures no doubt indicate a Buddhist monument in the locality of the early medieval period. However, ruins of brick structures are still visible on the embankment of the Taldandā canal. This is again a site dating to the early medieval period and was influenced by the Vajrayāna (7<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> Century C.E.) from Buddhism.

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