

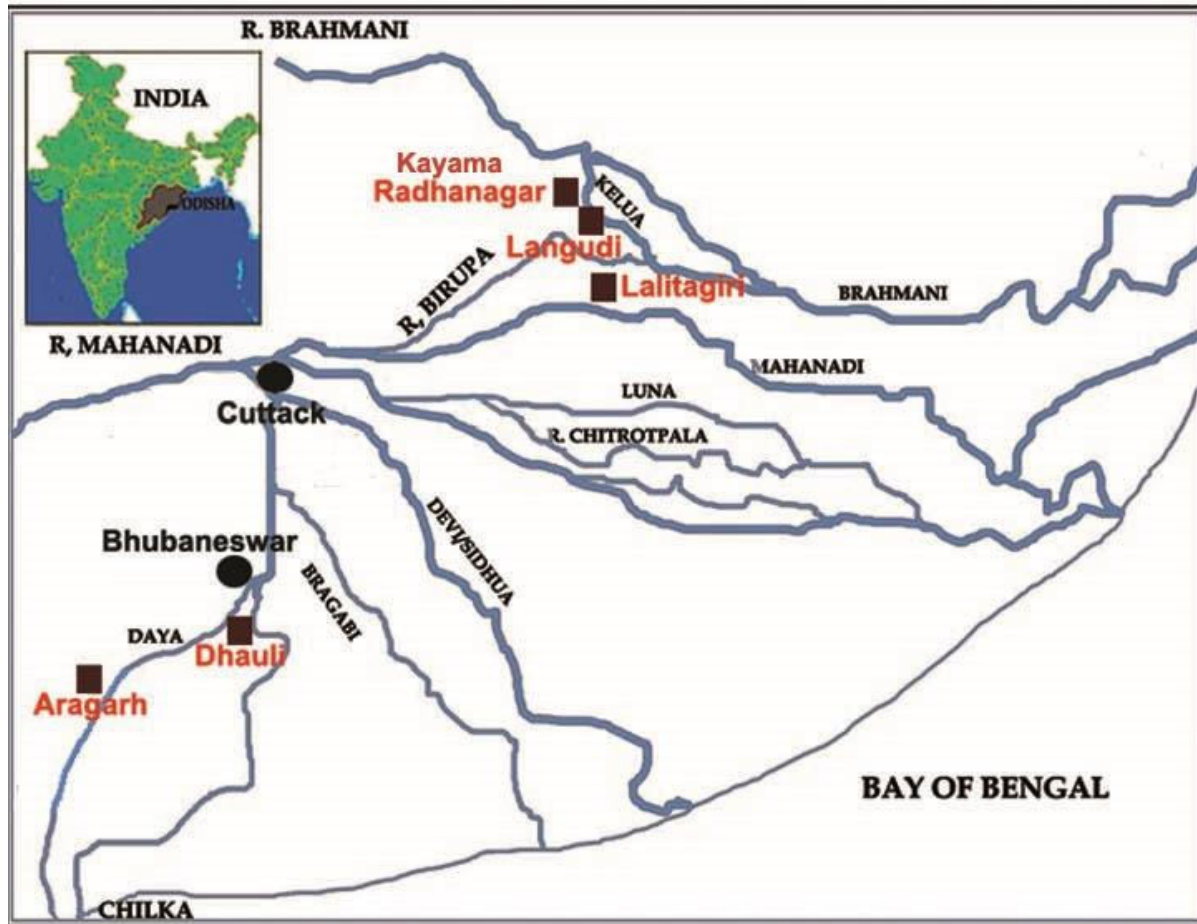
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EARLY BUDDHIST ART OF ODISHA: A FRESH APPRAISAL

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It is a well-known fact in Indian History that during the times of Mauryan Emperor Aśoka, Buddhism gained new momentum after the famous Kalinga War of 261 BCE. Aśoka explicitly identifies himself as a Buddhist lay follower in fourteen versions of his Minor Rock Edicts composed in his tenth regnal year and distributed widely throughout the Mauryan empire: Buddhism, turned into a major religion of the world and the kings, emperors, traders and commoners built monuments, kept relics and offered gifts to pay ovation to the Master Teacher. Odisha is fortunate to have received a good deal of monuments and relics throughout history at least up to 15th century CE. Stupas were erected throughout the empire and new Buddhist centres emerged. Over and above, the Buddha was relieved in a symbolic form such as Stupa as depicted in the facades of Lomasa Rishi cave at Barbara hill following direct patronization of Aśoka. An interesting tradition is presented that Mahinda, the monk *per excellence* intended to leave the island (Sri Lanka), because he felt that there is nothing in the island to worship. But the reigning king responds that “Perfect Buddha entered *nirvana*” to which the Monk Mahinda responds in turn: “When the relics are seen [present], the Buddha is seen [or is present]. The king promises to build a *stupa*, the Monk Mahinda appoints another monk to fly to India to procure relics, he succeeds and Mahinda stays. The moral of this tale is that monks would have an object of worship (Schopen, 1997: 93). The Buddhist followers took the initiative in the evolution of image making when the stupa architecture gained the momentum and found wide support throughout the Indian subcontinent, due to the patronization of the great Mauryan Emperor Aśoka. This historical process could also be known from the major excavated early Buddhist sites of ancient Kalinga or modern Odisha like Radhanagar, Langudi, Lalitgiri and Dhauli and Aragarh.

The region of Kalinga (Ancient Odisha), being one of the cradle land of Buddhism also developed its own style of art starting from stupas, stone pillars, yaksha images from Bhubaneswar, rock-cut elephants at Dhauli and Kayama, railings, suchis, terracotta figurines, and images recently discovered from Lalitgiri, Langudi, Radhanagar and Aragarh sites with archaeological spade by the ASI and OIMSEAS in between 1987-2017 (**Plate 12.1**). All these sites date from 3rd century BCE to 5th - 6th century CE in its first phase. The earliest extant historical monuments and sculptural art of Odisha (ancient Kalinga) discovered so far, are of the age of Aśoka and all of them are Buddhist in nature. The latest discovered monumental remains, images, terracotta figurines, ornaments and sculptures are for the first time present a chronology



Map Showing the Early Buddhist Sites of Odisha

Plate 12.1: Radhanagar- Langudi –Lalitgiri-Dhauri-Aragarh.



Plate 12.2: Rock-Cut Elephants, Dhauri & Kayama.



Bell Capital, Odisha State Museum

Plate 12.3: Bell Capital, Bhubaneswar.



Bhaskareswar Temple Linga

Plate 12.4: Aśokan Pillar turned to Lingam, Bhaskaresvara Temple, Bhubaneswar.



Excavated Early Historical Stupa Remains, Aragarh

Plate 12.5: Aragarh Excavated Early Stupa.



Excavated Stupa Remains with Railing pillar, Aragarh

Plate 12.6: Aragarh Stupa with enclosure.



Yaksha and Naga image, Odisha State Museum

Plate 12.7: Stone Yaksha and Nāga images from Bubaneswar.



Triratna, Radhanagar-Kankia



Bodhi Tree, Radhanagar-Kankia



Snake Hoard, Radhanagar-Kankia



Yaksha, Radhanagar-Kankia

Plate 12.8: Terracotta Yaksha, Nāga, Bodhi tree, Triratna from Radhanagar.



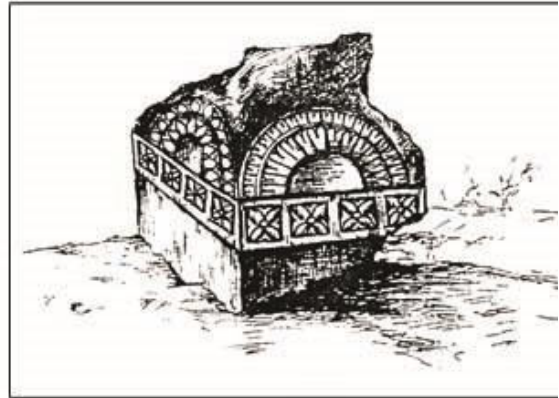
Plate 12.9: Inscribed Pendent from Radhanagar.



Plate 12.10: Two stone images of Yaksha or Royal personage? from Langudi.



Plate 12.11: Buddha head, nāga, lion and elephant from Radhanagar.



Lalitagiri



Plate 12.12: Medallions from Langudi, Lalitagiri and Aragarh.

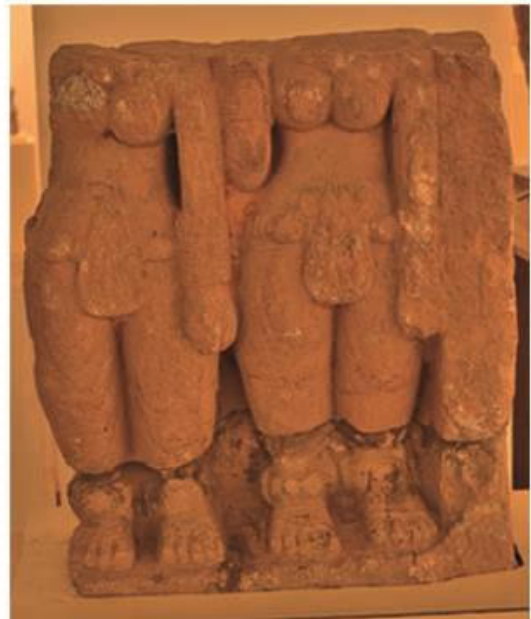


Plate 12.13: Lion coping and female figure from Langudi.



Plate 12.14: Rock-cut Stupas with Panchadhyani Buddha images, Langudi.



Terracotta Objects, Langudi

Plate 12.15: Terracotta Buddha image from Langudi.



Plate 12.16: Stone Votive Early images of Buddha. Langudi.

of early Buddhist art at par with the Gandhara, Mathura and Amaravati School of Art. A number of earlier scholars like R.K. Mookarjee, R.L. Mitra, J.D. Begler, R.D. Banarjee, K.C. Panigrahi, N.K. Sahu, K.S. Behera, T. E. Donaldson, D. Mitra, G.C. Chauley, and others have done bona fide field survey, studied and published pioneer works on Buddhist remains. However, several clusters of early Buddhist sites are discernible in the coastal Odisha and north of Andhra Pradesh which are mostly in the precinct of ancient Kalinga. These clusters are Kayama-Radhanagar-Langudi, Lalitgiri-Ratnagiri-Udayagiri, Sisupalgarh-Dhauli-Aragarh, Kalingapatna-Salihundam-Dantapura etc. All these excavated sites contributed immensely to the study of Buddhist art which were documented by the author under aegis of OIMSEAS during the year 2014-17. A brief discussion is made here on the new findings of 3rd century BCE to 5th-6th century CE for further critical assertion on the art objects and Buddhist art in particular.



BUDDHA IN
DHARMACHAKRA MUDRA, LALITGIRI 5th-6th c. CE



JATAKA STORY, BUDDHA DESCENDS FROM
TUSHITA HEAVEN, LALITGIRI c.4th-5th CE



Plate 12.17: Early Buddha images from Lalitgiri.

Art in India includes architecture. It is so because most of the works of art are the architectural members of some temple or shrine, only a portion of which is carved, the remaining part is used to build the inside of the architecture. The independent images are many but not as many as sculptural pieces. It applies to rock-cut temples and shrines as well, which were, strictly speaking, not architecture but sculpture carved with great care and devotion besides great technical skill and huge labor in giving it the form of a built structure (Gupta & Asthana 2007: 27).

The great Mauryan Emperor Aśoka brought a revolutionary change in the augmentation of stone monuments in India. The use of stone as the medium of sculptural expression from the time of Aśoka laid the foundation of plastic art in his empire. Establishment of several cities, numerous stupas, monasteries, pillars and sculptures are seen from Mauryan period (Thapar 2012:298). At the earliest phase, Emperor Aśoka undertook erecting Aśokan Pillars or *Dhamma Stambha* and gradually Chaityas, Stupas and Monasteries were constructed throughout the empire. It was perhaps the precedence at these earliest phases that usually a Chaitya was established by the side of an Aśokan pillar. A good example could be seen at Saranath where a pillar was raised and an apsidal shrine was subsequently built in its vicinity. After wards, the successive Buddhist Councils held at Rajgriha and Vaisali had crystallized the Buddhist rituals. Consequently, the monasteries to accommodate monks outnumbered the *Chaityagrahas*, the place to offer prayer (Mani & Saran 2006: 251). The *Chaityagrhas* along with monasteries used to be located at a reasonable distance from any town or village community, undisturbed in their day-to-day spiritual activities which are very well distinct in the sites like Lalitgiri, Udayagiri (Odisha), Salihundam and Thatalkonda (AP). Many sites in India marked by pillars or rock-edicts later developed into flourishing monastic sites. Aśoka set up 20 pillars, including those inscribed with his edicts (Ray 2018: 24).

Coming to Odishan region, we come across the earliest specimen of sculptural art at Dhauli which is the colossal figure of the forepart of an elephant carved at the top of a boulder containing Ashoka's rock edict along with a settlement site of the same period at Sisupalgarh belonging to 3rd century BCE in Bhubaneswar itself. Crowning the inscription, the famous elephant sculpture is of about 4 feet in height; the forepart of an elephant, cut out of the natural rock could be seen. This sculpture could be regarded as one of the earliest specimens of Indian sculptural art in stone. This forepart elephant sculpture is contemporary with the inscription (edicts) as has been found at Kalsi (near Dheradun). The elephant being a Buddhist symbol is often associated with Aśokan inscriptions and monuments. The elephant figures at Kalsi and Dhauli seem to represent distinctive spirit of Aśoka. The elephant figure at Kalsi walk triumphantly ahead, symbolising the temporal authority of the Mauryan monarch while at Dhauli with its calm dignity and sobriety, manifests the subdued spirit of Aśoka, an aftermath of the Kalinga war, perhaps symbolizing Lord Buddha. K.C. Panigrahi opines that it was not unusual at that time to represent an elephant, the sacred symbol of Buddhists along with the

edicts of Aśoka. Similar type of a monolithic elephant (1.2 m. height × 1.80 m length) at Kayama hill slope, one of the early Buddhist site near the excavated early Buddhist settlement Radhanagar in Jajpur district of Odisha, supplements the earlier evidence. The monolith Kayama sculpture may also belong to same period as the posture and sublime of the sculpture akin to Dhauli elephant. Although both of these lack lustrous polish as found normally in Mauryan sculptures. However, naturalism as evident in the anatomical treatment of the figures corresponds to that noticed in other animal capitals of Aśokan pillars. It appears to be the work of local artist who were upholders of the indigenous tradition (Panigrahi 198:182) (**Plate 12.2**). It may be mentioned that the regional forms may share general features with contemporaneous developments elsewhere while bearing distinctive features that unmistakably link them to the site of their production. This is even true of what have been called ‘pan-Indic’ phases, such as Maurya and Gupta periods remarks the great art historian Huntington (Huntington 2014: xxv).

Another important finding of this period is the Bell capital, now housed in the State Museum discovered long back from Aśoka Jhara in Bhubaneswar which might have represented the remnant of pillar set up in the neighborhood (**Plate 12.3**). It is an accepted fact that the colossal lingam of Bhaskaresvara temple is nothing but the part of an Aśokan pillar (**Plate 12.4**). This Bell Capital has been discussed by many scholars and is accepted as the remains of the Mauryan period. Below the Bell of this Capital there is a frieze of sculptures resembling the pointed ends of leaves occurring between the petals of so called bell which is in reality a full-blown inverted lotus. The decorative figures of the frieze of this capital although differ from those to be found in other Aśokan capitals but very interesting from art point of view. The remains show that left to right (a) a goose, (b) a full-blown lotus, (c) a goose, (d) a full-blown lotus, (e) a winged elephant, (f) a full-blown lotus with a bud, (g) a winged tiger, (h) a lotus bud with a stem and (i) a galloping winged horse. It is noticed here that the lotus and the geese which are common Aśokan motifs, other figures are entirely novel. D. Mitra suggests the unique appearance also found in the capital of the Basarh Bakhira Pillar (Panigrahi 1981:182). Some parts of another Bell capital is reported from Jhadiamba, a place near Talcher in Angul District, which was taken for a trial excavation by Excavation Branch IV, ASI in the year 2017-18. The fragments were noticed in a Śiva temple of the said village by the author in the year 2016 and reported.

In Buddhist Art, ornamental Rails (*Suchaka*) were mostly employed as the enclosures of Stupas or to surround a terrace on which stood a sacred tree. Most of these are ornamented with reliefs on the upright shafts and transoms (*Suchi*) or cross-bars also found in the Buddhist monuments. Here, mention may be made that the holy space around the Stupa-1 at Sanchi bounded by the stone railings (*vedika*) whose base structure consists of plinth (*alambana*), pillars (*stambhas*), cross-bars (*suchis*) and copings (*usnisa*). These are not confined to Buddhist edifices alone but from part of Indian architecture as a whole. In the case of Buddhist railings, they were decorated with many kinds of designs in the form of medallions and half medallions, as well known in the Buddhist Bharhut *vedika* and on the *stambhas* around Stupa-2 at Sanchi.

Above all, the Bharhut *vedika* is enriched with the panels depicting Buddhist legends as well as the medallions of lotus flowers (Tanaka 2014:13).

Although, some upright shafts and cross-bars were reported from Bhubaneswar, Lalitagiri and also from Langudi Hill, the dating of these art motifs are of 2nd-1st century BCE (Patnaik 2012). A good number (around 300) of plain rails (*Suchaka*) and upright shafts or cross-bars are discovered from Aragarh excavations recently in 2014-16 (Patnaik, 2016: 223-232). As the Aragarh is a terraced Stupa that belong to 3rd - 2nd century BCE, the plain railings were encircled which are the earliest remnants of Buddhist monuments of the State. Most of the railings are detached from its original place but few are still found in-situ. We have brought back some of the railings and *suchis* to its original place. Since the stratigraphy of the Stupa remains date back to its earlier phase belong to 3rd - 2nd century BCE, the railings are all plain and symbols of lotus medallion and *swastik* are noticed on the approach step in its eastern side which helps us to date the site besides stratigraphy and other antiquities (**Plate 12.5**). However, like all other Stupa sites of India, the railings and *suchis* purposefully made to encircle the stupa dates to 2nd-1st century BCE (**Plate 12.6**).

In South-Eastern Indian context, the best examples the earliest Buddhist monuments are known from the sites like Salihundam, Thatalkonda, Kottur, Guntupali near Vijayawada in Andhra Pradesh, even the monumental remains of Sannati in Karnataka and the first phase monumental remains of Lalitgiri, Langudi, Dhauli and Aragarh of Odisha, are all of the same period which even continued during Śungas, Kushanas and Satavahanas.

Again, three Yaksha images discovered long back from Bhubaneswar, now housed in the Odisha State Museum are having striking similarity in their manner of standing, dress and ornaments to that of the Yakshas carved in the western gate of the Sanchi Stupa. K.C. Panigrahi opines that these Yaksha images and those of Sanchi clearly bear out their affinities and represent the two as belonging to the same artistic evolution. Other interesting remains are the two huge stone slabs depicting a Yaksha figure and a Nāga datable to the early CE found in the Panchgaon village near Bhubaneswar. The Nāga figure has been depicted in relief on a huge piece of sand stone. It has a canopy of seven hoods. The Yaksha image is worshipped locally a Gopaluni is carved of a massive sand stone block in standing position with both the hands raised up. It bears an under garment, a portion of which runs up to the knee, two square sized ear studs and a bejeweled necklace all quite in conformity to its massive appearance. The huge mass of rock overhead has a socket in the middle. All these images are dated to 2nd -1st century BCE. However, the context is not known but their association with Buddhist Monuments that developed around Bhubaneswar is ascertained (**Plate 12.7**). According to the generally accepted view that the life-size images of Yaksha and Yakshi (early deities) appeared from the last quarter of the 3rd century BCE (Rowland 1953: 74; Saraswati 1957: 55-56).

Some of the terracotta yaksha figures including some nāga hoods and number terracotta tablets having *Bodhibriksha* are reported from Radhanagar excavation. These are small but beautiful and number of serpent (nāga) hood, outnumbered all the terracotta objects that was recovered from the site (**Plate 12.8**). The three basic elements of worship in forms of tree Nāga and Yaksha surfaced corresponding to nature, fear and wealth and prosperity respectively. So far as the carving and worship of Nāga is concerned, one of the earliest carving has been found at Manihar Math at Rajgir. The depiction of trees sometimes associated with female figures and as symbols become a regular feature in early Buddhist Art from 1st century BCE. Here, mention may be made that a rectangular small (1.9 × 0.9 cm.) lid pendent inscribed with *Sadabhu Tissa* in early Brahmi characters was found from this excavation which helps to date the site (**Plate 12.9**) belong to 3rd-2nd century BCE. In Indian context the name of Mogalliputta Tissa has been discovered in the superscription of a relic-casket from Stupa -2 at Sanchi along with the name of nine teachers. Mogaliputta Tissa –the teacher of Aśoka and the leader of Third Buddhist Council at Pataliputra. Here, the pendant mentioning the name of Tissa with epithet *Sadabhu* has some significance in the context Radhanagar and ancient Kalinga.

From this level at Langudi two stone image panels are also reported, now housed in Odisha State Museum. On its close examination of the art depiction shows its contemporary findings reported from Kanaganahalli excavation. The narratives depicted in the different slabs of the Kanaganahalli stupa are having themes and art style belong the early period of 1st century CE. (Zin Monika 2011: 14). These two images of Langudi are found in the right side entrance of the stupa. There are two images one is individual and the other image is flanked by queens/attendants. The first image having the bust along with the right leg was discovered near the stupa area which measures 34 × 20 × 14 cm. This is seen up to bust portion without crown or *mukuta* or head gear with stretched hairs. The *karna kundalas* or ear rings, the *galahāra* or necklace are distinctly carved which clearly proves that it is the portrait of a yaksha or a royal personage?

The second image is also made of khandolite stone measuring 52 × 50 × 12 cm. The male figure is sitting in the *rajalilasana* in the middle of the sculpture, along with two female figurines on either side of the image. The lady on the left is found broken. The image wears turban or crown, *kundalas* or ear pendants, the *chhanavira-patta-uttariya* from neck through shoulder to chest and back, the *katibandhas* and the *valayas* are typical and unique. On the basis of art evidence and architectural features of these two images dates back to pre-Common Era (**Plate 12.10**). Huntington remarks that the materialism of human society was incorporated into religious symbology. Jewelry is worn by nearly all figures depicted in the art which also signifies spiritual achievement. In Buddhism, transcendent knowledge is described as a gem; five classes of ornaments (crown, garget, anklet, bracelet, and girdle) frequently represent the five highest meditational attainments (Huntington, 2014: xxvii). This has been seen clearly in the later Buddhist images evolved from 4th-5th century onwards.

The Buddhist followers by the 1st century BCE evolved a method in carving various popular symbols of the Buddha in the gateways of already sacred stupas at Bharhut and Sanchi and the railings at Bodhgaya in 1st century BCE. The bass-relief in these sites continued the ancient tradition of *charana-chitras* (portable picture galleries) on a hard background (Ray, 1965). According to tradition, various stories were told to the general people moving from one place to another. It was a method evolved then to communicate directly with the people. The narrative art of the Śunga period could be viewed the advanced form of this age old tradition.

So far, human representations in early Buddhist art is concerned, they are represented with delicate and supple joined limbs, miserable calves and feeble muscles, light built slippery, eel-like, as that of to-day with an agreeable childlike naturalism. The other representation is a long head with full round face, large eyes and thick lips which can be seen in the Buddhist panels. The terracotta figurines found from Radhanagar excavation presents a benchmark in the study of Buddhist Art (Patnaik 2015).

The Buddha head, Lion figure and other terracotta figurines of 1st-2nd century CE provides certain clue to study the early art tradition of Odisha. The terracotta Buddha (8.4 × 4.6 cm.) head which presents unique feature, the thick hair that covers the head is designed on the crown of the hat into a knot which could be the earliest pre-runner of the later day Ushnisha, the carnival protuberance. The facial expression is suggestive of alien influence. The eyes are slightly protruding and wide open having fleshy and thick upper and lower eyelids. The nose is straight and the face has charming cut lips depicting very subtle smile. Similar example is found in the outside of the reliquary found from Bimaran near Jalalabad in Afghanistan (now in British Museum, London). A terracotta mould of a Buddha figure was also retrieved from this site. Similarly, the squatty seated lion figure with perforated holes on the long elongated ear and open mouth and half closed eye is another master piece from Radhanagar site of this period. An interesting terracotta round plaque with three elephant heads carved is another important art object from the site. Of the three elephants, the middle one is just like Dhauli Elephant as coming out of womb and the two others are depicted on either side. The art depiction certainly points to the depiction of life of Buddha (**Plate 12.11**).

An important form is the lotus-flower (*padma*) which is employed decoratively and with great taste in the arrangement in the Buddhist Art. The broad disc of the blown flower is employed in all positions as a decoration. A medallion of such type was found from the Apsidal Temple site at Lalitagiri which is datable to Śunga-Kushana period. So also, such medallions are still found in the Stupa rock-cut panel of Langudi. A small lotus petal is seen carved in the entrance of eastern side gate of Aragarh Stupa (**Plate 12.12**).

There are several railings with lion copings and beautiful ornamented lady figurines of stone with typical style of long hand having anklet, ornamental waist band, and bulging breast also reported from Langudi belonging to 1st century BCE /CE which are slender depicts typical

art of the said period (**Plate 12.13**). Mention may be made about the art of Udayagiri caves of Bhubanesvar that contains number of three-ratna symbols, Bodhi tree, yaksha images, railings, winged animals, marlins particularly in Ranigumpha together with an Apsidal Chaitya some way points to its Buddhist origin of 2nd -1st century BCE/CE and little later, it is evident that become the abode of Jinas under Mahameghavahana Kharavela in 1st century BCE along with Hatigumpha inscription. The art of ancient Odisha of this period thus well represented like that of Sanchi or Bharhut and its continuation is also seen in the later monuments. However, the Buddhist art is the precedence in the early beginning.

From the time of the Śungas, the tradition of representing Buddha in his various symbolic forms developed with a very strong direction. Before carving Buddha in his human form, attempts were made to represent him through various symbols such as stupa (earliest symbolic form), *dharmachakra*, *Bodhivriksha*, *Buddhasana* (empty throne), *Buddhapada*, *Chhatra* (parasol) and *agniskanda* (flaming pillar). All these are seen at Barhut, Sanchi and Bodhgaya to some extent at Langudi, Aragarh, Thatalkonda and Guntupalli. Even while the bas reliefs exhibits various symbolic representation of the Buddha and the Buddha becoming the sole object of attention and attraction, the believers as well as patronisers developed the idea of carving the *Bodhivrikshas* associated with those of at least six other Buddhas (Stupa No.1, Gateways at Sanchi).

The development of Mahayana Buddhism, gave a clear and definite direction to the tradition of image making and its worship. The transition form is very well attested to from the depiction of lotus and lily on the both sides of a rock-cut stupa depicted on a panel of series of stupas at Langudi. Even the concept of evolving of Buddha in seating pose is marked quite distinctly on the background. The panel is dated to 1st-2nd century CE as per the stratigraphy and associated materials found from the site. This is definitely a contribution the early Buddhist art in eastern India. Not only that like relief – scenes of Bharhut and Sanchi depicting gods beating the drums, whistling and playing on musical instruments, here also it is depicted in the stupa panel and the date which we have mentioned is absolutely befitting to the Langudi scene. Hence the image of Buddha could be placed around 2nd century CE as that of other Early Buddhist sites of Gandhara or Mathura (Patnaik 2019).

The *Mahayana* Buddhism seeks salvation of all beings by practicing certain meritorious acts. By these acts one would qualify for the attainment of Buddhahood. In the process of Mahayana Buddhism evolved the idea of a number of Buddhas and Boddhisatvas. A Boddhisatva is capable of preaching enlightenment but delays the process to help others to enter into the state of Buddhahood. They also advocated to worship various gods and goddesses sacred to the system. Before this development the early Buddhist followers carved the image of Buddha, albeit in miniature form which dates back to the last quarter of 1st century BCE. By this time the *mahapurusalakshanas* characterized by 32 auspicious signs and taken as the idea of human beauty (Rhysdavids 1921: 137-139) and part and parcel of Buddha figures did not

evolve fully. Afterwards the monolithic Buddha images of Langudi 2nd-3rd century CE followed by Buddha and Bodhisattva images of 4th-5th and 6th century CE of Lalitgiri emerged. The terracotta objects / images of Langudi Hill un-earthed from the excavation comprise of Buddha images, votive Stupa, feminine images, tablets etc. A Buddha image varies in size from miniature to 1/2 feet height. These images are mostly found from main stupa and rock-cut votive stupa locale. These two structural area at least dates back to 1st - 2nd century CE. Miniature Buddha images are found in the Stupa area where as big size terracotta Buddha image and votive Stupas are unearthed from rock-cut votive stupa vicinity (**Plate 12.14**). Big size votive Stupa bases measuring about 2 ft including circular terracotta *chhatravali* has been unearthed from excavation. Lower portion of a terracotta Buddha image found from the Stupa spot is depicted with deer images (**Plate 12.15**). Two broken lady figurines also were found in the stupa quarter. Near about seven terracotta tablets with Buddhist Dharini has been found in the Stupa neighborhood. These terracotta objects except tablets may belong to the early phase of Mahayana Buddhism. Though so many terracotta objects are found from excavation but there is no trace of manufacturing centre of these objects. It may be presumed that these objects were imported from some other nearby sites (Patnaik 2017: 90-91). At this time in Odisha, evidences of the monolithic Buddha images of Langudi 2nd-3rd century CE. (**Plate 12.16**) followed by Buddha and Bodhisattva images of 4th-5th and 6th century CE of Lalitgiri are found. The early images reported from Lalitgiri dated to 5th century onwards made Buddhist art of Odisha at par with other important places like Saranath. There are several images reported from Lalitgiri datable to 5th century CE. One example may be given here that one khondalite image (Reg. No. 63) of standing Buddha in *abhayamudra* is 0.55 m. in width and 0.25 m. in thickness, the maximum extant height being 0.90 m., found from debris of *chaityagriha* area. The face is damaged badly. The upper portion of the oblong back-slab is missing. Draped in a long diaphanous *antarvasa* and *uttarasanga* which covers his body unto the ankles, Buddha is standing in the *samapada* posture on a moulded pedestal. His left hand holds the hem of his *uttarasanga* while the right hand displays *abhayamudra*. On either side of the moulded pedestal, a kneeling devotee with incense burner to the right and a female devotee to the left holding a flower are depicted. The body proportions of the image are squat and heavy. The crude workmanship of the image indicated that it could be the work of an apprentice rather than a master carver. Stylistically, the image can be ascribed to circa early fifth century CE (Patnaik, 2016. MASI 112, Pl. CV). Several other Buddha images of this period are reported from this place of this place belonging to 5th-6th century CE (**Plate 12.17**). This tradition can very well be understood from Udayagiri and Ratnagiri sites towards 7th -8th century.

The treatment of drapery, in the earlier Buddhist art is very successful and transparent. The upper part of the body is always bare with exception to some standing Buddha images. The carving for the upper part of the body a long shawl like cloth is used which is thrown about the shoulders in various ways.

The representations of *jali* (perforated) work panels, alternating with *ghatas* and dancing figures and *bharavahakas*, dotted arches and the decorative details like rosettes, lotus petals, *purnaghatas*, scrolls, dots, gourde bands, gelbai and undulating figuration of half lotus - are all found in the Buddhist monuments of Langudi, Lalitgiri, Ratnagiri and Udayagiri. These are art motifs of later development of post 6th century CE and more attractive details depicted on the temple walls. Thus, the formative phase of art traditions is reflected in the Buddhist Art of Odisha.

Besides the above, when the independent Buddha and Bodhisattva images emerged and seen at Lalitgiri and Udayagiri towards 5th-6th century CE, the lotus thrones of the Buddha images are decorated heavily. The designs are like *pipal tree*, *dharma chakra* (wheel) being worshipped by devotees, the *nāga bandhan* on the halo of the throne, display of stupa, fire and in some cases animal decorations are also representations of the plastic art of Odisha of Buddhist period.

As in other parts of India, stone is the metal par excellence for sculptures in Odisha. The sculptors used khondalite and hard chlorite in some cases in which an almost metallic finish has been given. The large hoard of 98 bronze images discovered at Achyutrajpur out of which 78 are Buddhist images, indicate the height of excellence reached in metal sculpture (Mitra 1978). Similarly, 73 bronze images found from Ratnagiri and few are also reported from Boud and Udayagiri for which a separate discussion is needed but all are dated post 7th century CE.

The early Buddhist art of Odisha is well defined with the recently excavated sites as discussed. It presents a chronology from 3rd-2nd century BCE to 5th -6th century CE in its earlier phase as that of other parts of India. It can be surmised that Odisha was one of the early art centre and the flow of art tradition travelled linking central epicenters Gandhara, Sanchi, Mathura and Southern epicenters, Guntupalli, Amravati and Nagarjunakonda and other centers. The art motifs clearly represent northern as well as southern styles which makes us understand that the Buddhist centers of Odisha at its earliest phase was included in the Buddhist pilgrimage network of India. Here, as discussed we come across depiction of symbols as found at Bharhut, Sanchi, Sanghole and like Gandhara art, Buddha and Bodhisattva images appear in human form at the same timeline which are reported from Langudi. The gradual transformation of *Hinayana* to *Mahayana* Buddhism is well marked in the above sites like that of Sannati in Karnataka. Sannati and Langudi are contemporary sites. However, we got depiction of animal figures from the above sites which are rare in Gandhara art. But depiction of Jātaka stories found very rare at Odishan sites, of course, we found few examples of the Buddha descends from Tusita-heaven, particularly, from Lalitgiri at its earlier phase. Scholars opine that the transmission of artistic styles might have affected by pilgrims and merchants travelling along the well-established routes to different parts of the Subcontinent. The early Buddhist art is clear and distinct in the soil of Odisha which not only helps us drawing an insight on settlement pattern, construction of different monuments and the growth of civilization in this South-eastern part of India but also facilitates to bring forth the ideas and intellectual level that was reflected in the art objects of the period. D. K. Chakrabarti remarks that although the issue of patronage is clear in the context of the distribution of Buddhist sites in

the subcontinent, it has to be admitted that our understanding is still on a general level. Details can emerge only when enough micro-studies are undertaken. One of the primary necessities is to try to understand these religious establishments and archaeological sites in their proper geographical and settlement contexts (Chakrabarti Oct. 1995: 185-202). The conclusion drawn here may supplement the perception. Thus, the early Buddhist art of Odisha is at par with any other early sites of Indian subcontinent and opened a new area of research in the field of early historical archaeology of South East India and South Asia.

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