

# Pilgrimage to Gaya - Bodh (Buddha) Gaya

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## Introduction

First let us understand what we really mean by the term “sacred”? Is it something special possessed by a deity? Or dedicated to or reserved for some person or purpose? Or is it something morally and spiritually perfect? Empowered by or devoted to God? One may define sacred as “pure,” “holy,” or “spiritual.” Shall we understand the term “sacred” here to mean something holy, pure, or sanctified, that is conducive to reverence? Any thing or any place that is conducive to purity or inspires one to purify oneself, both physically and mentally, becomes holy and sacred. A journey to a sacred place associated with religious sanction is generally understood as a “pilgrimage.” In Brahmanical Hinduism in India, places of sacred nature are known as *tīrtha*, and the journey to such sacred places is known as *yātra*.

Generally Hindu Brahmins make pilgrimages either to Badrinath, Kedarnath, and Amarnath, or to Varanasi and Gaya in the north, and to Rameswaram or Tirupathi in the south. Many are not able to make it to Badrinath or Kedarnath because of the climatic conditions and geographical positions. However, many people journey to Varanasi and Rameswaram.

The word *tīrtha* (holy place) is not restricted to rivers, mountains, or regions, or even to abstract qualities. It can refer to holy acts, mothers, fathers, meeting with good people, and thinking about the *dharma*. Even the stories of deities and good acts are known as *tīrtha* (*Skandha Purāṇa*. VI.108.11-14).

*Tīrtha* are associated with various deities. Some *tirthas* that have legends or striking beliefs associated with them are noted below. The *Purāṇas* of Indian literature generally designate the important places of Hindu pilgrimages as “*tīrtha*.” Among them, Gaya has been given importance in the *Vāyu Purāṇa*. Just as Gaya is an important sacred place for Hindu Brahmins, Bodh Gaya is revered by the followers of Buddhism.

Before I go into the details of the pilgrimages to Gaya and Bodh Gaya, I would like to examine the geographical position of these two sacred sites from the standpoint of Buddhist literature, as well as from the *Purāṇas*.

### Geographical Position

Gaya is known to Buddhists as both a populous place (*gāma*) and a sanctorum (*tittha*), and as such it corresponds to Gayāpuri (the city of Gaya)<sup>1</sup> of the Gayā-Mahātmya<sup>2</sup> in the *Vāyu-Purāṇa*, that is to say, to the Gayā proper representing antar-Gayā, the innermost zone of Gayākṣetra (the entire region of Gayā). Though in a political sense, Gayā formed an integral part of the kingdom of Magadha, from a religious, and perhaps also from a fiscal point of view, Gayākṣetra and Magadhakṣetra were two distinct regions. The Ganges constituted a natural dividing line between the two kingdoms of Kāsī and Magadha, and Gayā has necessarily been located precisely between the holy city of Banares on the one hand, and Magadha Kṣetra on the other, as in the *Great Epic*<sup>3</sup>. The Gorathagiri (Barābar group of hills), which is now included in the Sadar subdivision of the Gayā district, in the ancient days of the *Mahābhārata* formed the western border of Magadha Kṣetra (the holy region of Magadha).<sup>4</sup> Judging from similar topographical descriptions in Buddhist literature, the Pāsāṅkachetiya (Rocky shrine) appears to have been identical with the Gorathagiri itself<sup>5</sup> or the hill nearby. The entire holy region, which is designated as Gayākṣetra in the later *Gayā mahātmya* and in some of the Brāhmanical works on *Smṛti*, is divided in Buddhist literature into the three tracts of Gayā, Nadī, and Uruvelā (Uruvilvā of the Buddhist Sanskrit texts). Of these, Gayā finds its name and identity in the present-day city of Gayā, while the names of Nadī and Uruvela are currently confined respectively to two small villages: Nadī, situated in the north on the edge of an old channel of the river Son,<sup>6</sup> and Urel in the south, “situated at a distance of about half a mile south of the temple at Bodh Gaya.”<sup>7</sup> The ancient name and identity of Urel is represented by Senānigāma<sup>8</sup> on the bank of the river Nerañjarā or Nerañjana. If the geographical distribution of the three tracts is as described above, Nadī cannot but be the northern,<sup>9</sup> Uruvelā the southern, and Gayā, the central, respectively. Nadī borders an old channel of the Son, Uruvelā the Nīlājan, and Gayā the Phalgu.

Actually, the division of the Gayā region into three tracts is but an inference stemming from the names of three Kassapa brothers: Uruvela-Kassapa, Nādi-Kassapa, and Gayā Kassapa, all famous leaders of the Jatila ascetics. This inference regarding

the three tracts, and subsequently the geographical positions, is amply supported by Buddhaghosha in his commentary on *Anguttara Nikāya*, which states that Uruvela-Kassapa came to be known as such from his turning into an ascetic at Uruvela,<sup>10</sup> that Nādi-Kassapa derived his distinctive designation from turning into an ascetic at a place near the bend of a Mahāgāṅgā or great river,<sup>11</sup> and that Gayā-Kassapa similarly owed his appellation to his turning into an ascetic on the Gayāsīrsa hill.<sup>12</sup> This suggests that at the time of Buddha's enlightenment, Nadi was an important center of Jatila activity.

Concerning Gayā, our first information is that it was a great center of the activities of the Jatilas, led by Gayā Kāsyapa. (The episode concerning the conversion of the Jatilas will be discussed later.) The Gāyasirsha hill formed then, as now, the chief landmark of Gayā proper, and as recorded in some of the Buddhist works, it lent its name to the adjoining locality as well. Pāli Scholiasts have sought to account for the nomenclature of this hill by the resemblance of its top to the shape of an elephant's head.<sup>13</sup>

Pāli commentaries locate the Gayā reservoir (which Buddhaghosha calls 'maṇḍala vāpi')<sup>14</sup> not far from the populous area of Gayā, which is to say, in the vicinity of and near the approach to Gayā proper.<sup>15</sup> From this location, it is evident that the Gaya reservoir of Buddhist literature is none other than the Brahmasara of the *Mahābhārata*.

Thus, of the three distinctive features of Gayā described by Buddhaghosha, i.e. the Gayā reservoir, the Gayā river, and the Gayā Śīrsha hill,<sup>16</sup> we have so far dealt with only the first two. Concerning the Gayā Śīrsha hill, I have already pointed out that it formed the chief landmark of and lent its name to the adjoining locality of Gaya. Now, turning to the tract of Uruvelā, I would like to note that the Pāli spelling of the name differs to some extent from Uruvilva, which appears in both the *Lalitavistara* and the *Mahāvastu*, and this divergence in spelling has occasioned different speculations about the true significance of the name. According to Buddhaghosha and Dharmapāla, the name Uruvelā signifies either a great expanse of sandy banks or a sandy mound formed by deposits of sediment due to the flooding of the stream. The legend attests that long before the advent of the Buddha, the tract of mounded sand had already come into being and that people of later ages (Pachchima-janata) had transformed it into a place of worship bounded by an enclosure (Parikkhipitā chetiayathānam akāsi)

Let us now investigate how Uruvelā originally denoted a cluster of hamlets and not any particular rural unit, although Senānigama or Senapatigāma stands out in Buddhist literature as the main hamlet associated with it. Taking the Gaya-Śīrsha hill to mark the southern boundary of Gayā proper, we can say that the tract of Uruvela stretched south of this hill. The distance between the bodhi tree at Uruvela and this hill is said to have been three *gavutas* (about six or seven miles), while the distance between the site of the bodhi tree and Benares covered eighteen *yojanas* (approximately one hundred and fifty English miles).

There is no reason to confuse the Nerañjarā or Nairānjanā with the Gayā or Phalgu rivers, since the Pāli canonical texts treat the two rivers as quite distinct from one another. The Udāna text, for instance, expressly mentions that the Jatilas of Gayā proper would be seen bathing in the Gayā or Phalgu river,<sup>17</sup> whereas the *Vinaya-Mahāvagga* represents the Jatilas of Uruvelā as doing the same, but in a different river—the Nerānjarā.<sup>18</sup> In fact, in a wide spectrum of Buddhist literature, Uruvelā is invariably found associated with the river Nerañjarā or Nirānjanā (modern Nilājan or Lilājan).<sup>19</sup> We may infer from this that the Phalgu and the stream further north were just continuations of the Nerānjarā.<sup>20</sup>

The principal locality in Uruvelā during the Buddha's lifetime was Senānigama, corresponding to the Senāpatigrāma of the Sanskrit Buddhist works.<sup>21</sup> The *Lalitavistara*<sup>22</sup> records that before attaining Buddhahood, the ascetic Siddhārtha was charmed by this locality on his first arrival. His impression is marvelously expressed in the following passage: "This area is pleasantly picturesque. Delightful is the sight of the grassy woodland. The river (Nerañjarā) flows into the clear stream, revealing bathing places with gradual descents of steps, and presents a charming landscape affording glimpses into the neighboring hamlets of easy access. This certainly is a fitting place for the scion of a noble race to rigorously strive for the highest attainments." Soon afterward, Siddhārtha, the eternal glory of the Sakya clan, made up his mind to enter into his epoch-making struggle on this very site.

The significance of the above text has been elucidated substantially in the same manner in later Buddhist works. It is evident from the above description that at the time of Siddhārtha's enlightenment, Uruvelā comprised an expanse of land in which the Senānigāma stood in the center of a group of hamlets within easy reach.

Fortunately, the *Therīgātha* preserves for us the name of one of these encircling hamlets in the local epithet Nāla or Nāla, which is applied to Upāka, the Ājīvika.<sup>22</sup> The *Therīgātha* commentary distinctly says that Nāla or Nālā was a hamlet in the vicinity of the bodhi tree (*Bodhimandassa assana-padase*). Another important reference found in the *Ariya pariyesana-sutta in the Majjhima Nikāya* is that in the time of the Buddha, there was already a high road (*addhane magga*) that connected Uruvela with Gayā proper and extended westwards as far as Benares and its vicinity. Thus the Buddhist canonical texts clearly refer to the high road from the bodhi tree to Gaya proper.

Gayā: According to the Agni Purāṇa (114.4ff), when the whole world was without any place for sacrifices, the gods went to Viṣṇu for help. Viṣṇu asked Brahma to approach the demon named Gayā and to ask for his body to perform sacrifices on. The gods did so accordingly. Gaya offered his body to Brahma and the gods, and the latter performed a sacrifice on his head (IIB.7). Hence the name Gayā, or Gayaśīsas.

In Brahmanical literature, the “Gayā-Mahātmya” in the *Vāyu Purāṇa* is the only detailed legendary account on which the modern historian can rely in writing a sober history of Gayākṣetra. The “Gayāmahātmya”, which forms the concluding section of the *Vāyu Purāṇa*, comprises eight chapters in which the Gayāmahātmya represents a distinct entity. The concluding stanzas of the *Purāṇa* constituting its epilogue state in clear terms that the Gayāmahātmya might otherwise be called Gayākhyāna or Gayopākhyāna, (the bardic narration of the legendary story of Gayā) and Gayāmahimāna (the traditional eulogium of Gayā). The prologue<sup>23</sup> and epilogue clearly bring out the fact that the book was intended to serve this two fold purpose: to extol the antiquity, great sanctity, and special importance of the holy tract of Gayā (Gayākṣetra), and to emphasize its authenticity and value as a pilgrim’s guidebook (*Gayā-yātra*)

It is stated that Gayā was a holy tract in the kingdom of Kīkata or Magadha, which in its western extension included the sacred river Pūnpūn, and in its eastern extension the pleasant woodland of Rājagriha.<sup>24</sup> The Gayākṣetra contains fifty-five villages. Many fine houses were built for the Brahmins, and they were provided with all the necessities of life: milk cows, wishing and pārijāta trees, sacred streams such as the Mahānadī, Ghṛitakulyā, and the Madhukulyā, many large reservoirs, and several holy mountains.<sup>25</sup> The full extension of Gayākṣetra as the holy tract of Gayā stretching as far south as the bodhi tree at Bodhgayā, which is situated six miles to the south of the town of Gayā, and as far north as the Pretasīla hill, which is situated five miles on the northwest of the town of Gayā. In addition, the Gayāśīra, the Muṇḍapriṣṭha, the

Prabhāsa, the Udayanta, the Gitanada, the Bhasmakūta, the Nagakūta, the Gṛdrakūta, the Adipala, the Aravindaka, the Ramasila, and the Preta Sila represent the sacred hills and rocky peaks, ridges, and spurs in Gayā-kṣetra.<sup>26</sup>

The holy rivers and streams are the Phalgu, the Mahānadī, the Dadhikulya, the Ghritakulya, the Madhukulya, the Madhusravā, the Agnidhara, and the Kapila.<sup>27</sup> The principal bathing places are the Phalgotīrtha, the Silātīrtha, the Ramātīrtha, the Gadalolatīrtha, the Vaitaraṇi, the South Mānasa, the Rukṣimī Kuṇḍa, the Preta Kuṇḍa, the Nikshāra-pushkarini, and the Matangavāpi. The sacred sites are the Pañcaloka, the Saptaloka, the Vaikuṇṭha, the Goprachara, and the Dharmāraṇya.<sup>28</sup> The sacred trees are the Akṣayavaṭa, the Gṛdrakūṭavaṭa, the Brahma Prakalpita Āmra, and the Bodhidruma Aśvattha.<sup>29</sup> The various sacred footprints are the Viṣṇupada, the Krauncapada, the Rudrapada, the Brahmopada, the Kasyapada, the Dakṣinagnipada, the Gārhapatyapada, the Sabhyapada, the Avasathyapada, the Sakrapada, the Āgastyapada the Sūryapada, the Kārtikeyapada, and the Ganespada. The sacred stones are the Dharmasīlā and the Kakaśīlā.<sup>31</sup>

The Gayāsira or Gayasīrsha, as found in *Gayā Mahātmya*, is a setting of rocky hills, peaks, and ridges such as the Gayāsira hill proper (Sakshāt Gayāsira). This group of rock formations (Mundapriṣṭha, the Prabhāsa, the Nāgakūta, and the Gridharakūta) which is said to have been co-extensive with the Phalgotīrtha, determined the extension of Gayāpurī, the old city of Gayā and innermost zone of Gayākṣetra.

According to the legend in the *Gayā Mahātmya*, the Gadalolatīrtha represents that sacred lake or pool of water where Viṣṇu in his mace-bearing form (Adigadādhara) washed his mace after smashing the head of the giant Heti,<sup>32</sup> and the Rāmatīrtha represents that part of the of the Mahānadī or the river Mehanā where Rāma bathed together with Sītā, his wife.<sup>33</sup> The Vaitaraṇī standing as a visible symbol of the celestial river of the same name is a holy reservoir at a small distance from the foot of the Bhasmakūṭa hill. The Mātangavāpi is another sacred reservoir located in Dharmāraṇya-a site which may be identified with what Buddhists call the jungle of Uruvela (Bodhgaya).

Among the sacred sites in Gayā-kṣetra is Dharmāraṇya, which as its name implies, is a jungle tract and represents a sanctified boundary within which is enshrined an image of Dharmeśvara or Buddha. It ranks with the bodhi tree Aśvatha of world-

wide fame.<sup>34</sup> The enshrinement of the image of Buddha Dharmesvara and the presence of the famous bodhi tree suffice to indicate that the Dharmarāṇya of the *Gayā Mahātmya* is the Bodh-Gayā temple representing the jungle of Uruvela or Uruvilva in Buddhist literature.

Among the trees mentioned at *Gayā Mahātmya*, the Boddhidruma Aśvattha<sup>35</sup> is undoubtedly the infamous pipal tree at Bodh-Gaya, at the foot of which the Buddha attained Buddhahood. Dharmesvara, or the Lord of Righteousness, is a form of the Buddha worshipped in Dharmarāṇya or the precincts of the Bodh-Gayā temple, presumably an image of the Buddha confronting the bodhi tree Aśvattha.

All these may suffice to prove that at the time of the composition of the *Gayā Mahātmya*, the Śaiva, the Saura, the Gāṇapatya, and the Śākta forms of Puranic Hinduism prevailed in Brahma-Gaya together with the Vedic form of worship, old Brahmanism, and the late phase of Vaishnavism, while the worship of the Buddha was concentrated in Bodh-Gaya.

### **Gaya from a Buddhist Point of View**

The rise of Buddhism marks a new epoch in the history of the holy land of Gayā; without it many interesting details of its development would have been lost. If Lumbini is the birthplace of Siddhārtha, the Deer Park at Isipatana (Sarnath) is symbolic of the Buddha's teaching of the Buddhist dharma, and Kusinara is important for Buddhist art and architecture, for Buddhists Gaya may well claim the proud position of being the birthplace of the Buddha. However, to contemplate the land of Gaya from the Buddhist point of view, one must ascertain the facts of how it served as a place of solitude and retreat for the deep meditations so supremely necessary for the great attainment.

The question is with which portion of the Gayā region does the historian establish the vital connection with Buddhism? We can boldly maintain that in spite of certain historical associations of the Buddha and Buddhism with Gaya proper, the sacred parts of Buddhism were really all concentrated in the tract of Uruvela. So far as the city of Gaya or Gaya proper is concerned, the Pāli records never mention it, even when describing the first journey of Siddhārtha, the ascetic, from Rājagraha to Uruvela,<sup>35</sup> and the first journey of the Buddha to the same tract from Benares for the conversion of the Jatilas.<sup>36</sup> Gaya proper is rightly mentioned in this connection in

*Lalitavistara*<sup>37</sup> and *Mahāvastu*.<sup>38</sup> That the route of Uruvela, either from Rājagriha, the capital of Magadha, or from Benares, lay through the city of Gayā, can be easily gathered from the Pāli description of the journey of the Buddha from Uruvela to Sarnath via Gayā and Benares by a high road then in existence,<sup>39</sup> and of the journey of Devadatta, Sāriputta and Moggallana from Rājagriha to the Gayaśirsha hill.<sup>40</sup> Buddhist Sanskrit texts<sup>41</sup> make no secret of the fact that in order to reach Uruvila from Rājagriha, the ascetic Siddhārtha had to walk down<sup>42</sup> from the Gayaśirsha hill which he used as a resting place while at Gaya city.<sup>43</sup> All the records agree in stating that it was upon this hill that the Buddha delivered the famous Fire-Sermon (*Aditta-pariyaya-Sutta*) addressing the Jatilas of the Gaya region newly converted to his faith.<sup>44</sup> As the Pāli records attest, this is the very hill where Devadatta lived with his five hundred associates immediately after breaking away from their united Buddhist order and causing a schism,<sup>45</sup> and it was also the location of a marvelous feat performed by Sāriputta and Moggallana, two chief disciples of the Buddha. An account of the last sojourn of the Buddha at Gaya proper also appears in the Pāli texts and commentaries, recording the Buddha's feat of taming the demon Suchiloma, the dweller of the antique tower Tamkita-mancha on the bank of the Gaya reservoir, situated at the entrance to the city.<sup>46</sup>

King Aśoka in R.E. (Regnal Era) alludes to his pilgrimage to the site of the bodhi tree (Sambodhi) undertaken in the tenth or eleventh year of his reign. He made a second pilgrimage to Bodh-Gaya in the twenty-first and twenty-second regnal year. According to Hsüan Tsang, "In the old days the Buddha delivered the Ratnamegha and other such sutras on Mount Gayas." Here I will not go into the controversy of the reference to the 'Stūpa' on Mount Gaya mentioned by Hsüan Tsang, but wish to state with certainty that the sandy tract of Uruvela of the *Lalitavistara*, *Senanigama*, and its immediate neighborhood are recognized in all early Buddhist records up to the time of Fa-hian as a sacred area irrevocably associated with the great event of Buddhahood and the history of Buddhism. In other words, Uruvela derived its high sanctity in the eyes of Buddhists from its connection with the arduous endeavors of Siddhārtha, the ascetic, and his glorious accomplishment in attaining Buddhahood. The primary connection of *Senanigama* is with the endeavors and that of its location near the accomplishment. The accounts in Pali Buddhist literature and such Sanskrit Buddhist works as the *Lalitavistara* and *Mahāvastu* clearly state that after his arrival at Uruvela, Siddhārtha spent several years observing austere penances, accompanied by five Brahmin ascetics and associates, who deserted him in disgust but then became his first



devoted disciples. Again it was here that the princely ascetic partook of the palatable plate of porridge so sweetly served by Sujāta under the banyan tree, believed to have been the abode of the presiding deity of the locality. It is easy to gather from these accounts that Sujāta's residence was near the banks of Nerañjanā river, which Siddhārtha crossed in order to reach the actual spot of the holy pipal tree destined to be eternally associated with the event of the Great Enlightenment. He crossed over the Nerañjarā river carefully, avoiding the danger of a great whirlpool in midstream which was dreaded by people as the infernal dwelling of a dragon King Kala or Kalika. The accounts, both in Pāli and Sanskrit, speak of a safe space existing between the bank of the Nerañjarā and the bodhi tree, linked by a spacious causeway.<sup>47</sup>

From all the above descriptions found in Buddhist literature (both Pāli and Sanskrit texts), it is evident that Uruvela and all the tracts of Uruvela were associated with Siddhārtha's enlightenment and his early activities as the Buddha, including the hermitage of the Jatilas, and thus became befitting places for votive erections, installations, and offerings by Buddhists. Here mention should be made of Professor Barua's remark that the Buddhist predominance is restricted to the reign of Uruvela and never touched Gaya proper. I would like to comment on this statement after analyzing the Hindu (Brahmin's) point of view.

### **Gaya from the Hindu Point of View**

Applying a historical process of reduction, one can peep into that remote period of time when the holy region of Gaya was inhabited by aborigines and the religion consisted of demonolatry-the worship of Nāgas, the tutelary deities of the river bank, and Yakṣas, the tutelary deities of rocky regions. These aborigines probably comprised two distinct groups of primitive settlers, one worshipping the Nāgas and the other the Yakṣas. From the alternate selling of the abodes or old-fashioned temples of the two classes of demi-gods in the *Mahāvastu*, at places where the Buddha rested on his way from Gaya to Benares, it may be surmised that the land of Gaya was once dotted with alternate settlements of their respective devotees. It seems certain that the primitive settlers of the land of Gaya were partly represented by an ancient tribe of hunters (mīgaluddakas), who were the ancestors of the Santals, Orans, and Mundas. It is easily conceivable that the Brahmanical (Hindu) colonisers of Gayākṣetra occupied the land by wresting it from the hands of these primitive settlers, who were driven off to the hills in the southeast and west. Buddhaghosha's commentary on the name of

Senanigama indicates that a regular military outpost or cantonment had to be maintained in the southern tract of Uruvela to repel the attacks of such savages. It is evident from the Suchiloma sūtra included in two ancient and authoritative Pāli texts—the *Samyukta Nikāya* and the *Sutta-Nipāta*—that as early as the time of the Buddha, an antique abode or the temple of Yakṣa Suchiloma could be seen on the bank of the Gayā reservoir, which was a rude structure of stone standing high like a tam or the bamboo watch-tower of the village farmers. The inside of this tower was known as the abode of Sucihiloma, the needle-haired demon, and the outside that of another demon called Khara or “rough skinned.” As evidenced by a representation of the former demon and the identifying label inscribed on a pillar of the Barhut stone-railing,<sup>48</sup> the legend of Suchiloma dates back at least to the second century B.C., if not earlier.

By the time of the rise of Buddhism, the region of Gaya was an integral part of the Magadhan kingdom. It had also acquired distinction as a place of Hindu pilgrimages, as well as a place sanctified by the residence and religious rites of the matted hair jatilas who represented old vedic ascetics. As a matter of fact, in the whole range of Brahmanical literature dating up to the Śunga era, all the information that may be gathered refers to Gayā as a Vedic Rishi,<sup>49</sup> to Viṣṇupada and Gayāsīrṣa as two stations of the Sun in its daily course,<sup>50</sup> and to the phrase “Gayā-sādhana Gayasphana- Gayasphayane” signifying the promotion of domestic wealth.<sup>51</sup> Each of the three items of information had a particular influence on the later development in Hindu legends concerning Gayā. Firstly, the Rishi Gayā came to figure in the *Epic* and *Purāṇa* versions of the Gaya eulogium as a *rāja-rishi* or royal stage, lending his name to the city of Gayā. Secondly, the earlier astronomical notions of Viṣṇupada and Gayāsira developed into names for the principal shrine and hill of Gaya town. The earlier significance of the word Gayā as domestic wealth or prosperity served as a stimulus to the later conception of Gayā as a land of happiness and plenty, where once flowed the streams of Gritakulya, Dadhikulya, and Madhukulya.

When the Chinese pilgrim Fa-hian visited eastern India in the first quarter of the fifth century A.D., he found the city of Gayā desolate and deserted, though the causes that brought about such a deplorable state are not yet clear. Even when Hsüan Tsang passed through this city two and half a centuries later, it had but few inhabitants, its population consisting only of a thousand families of Brahmins. It seemed to be the holy land of Hindu Brahmins noted for the sacred water of its famous reservoir to the

extreme north and the special sanctity of its rocky hill to the southwest. Both Chinese pilgrims recorded nothing else of importance concerning the region of Gaya from a Hindu viewpoint, but noted that the portion lying to the south of Gaya proper had come wholly under the sway of Buddhism. It is interesting to observe that the hermitage of Mātanga of the Hindu epic acquired a new tradition at the hands of the Buddhists as the sacred haunt of the white elephant (mātanga) of the *Matiposaka-Jātaka*, and the same Jātaka legend was foisted upon Mātanga-Vāpi, the reservoir commemorating the name of the famous sage Mātanga. In other words, the two tracts of Gaya and Uruvela became distinguished as two separate sacred areas—the former representing the dominion of Akṣayaṇa or undying banyan tree of Hindu fame, and the latter that of the bodhi tree Aśvattha of Buddhist fame. The former remained in a decadent condition and the latter shone forth in the rising glory of its art and architecture.

From all the above accounts, it has become clear that Gaya city as such is different from Bodh-Gaya (Uruvela),<sup>52</sup> which acquired special sanctity in the eyes of Buddhists because of associations with the movements and achievements of the Buddha, both before and after the Great Enlightenment. This spot was nestled in calm retreat within a few paces of the banks of the Nerañjarā river, with crystal waters and a sparkling beach fronted by a luxuriant *sāl*-grove. The selection of this spot in preference to the Prāgbodhi hill and its fearful surroundings was no mere accident; it was a deliberate choice, for the place had a special appeal to the Buddha's imagination and proved particularly congenial to his temperament.

Obviously the city of Gaya, through which he passed, held no attraction for him. Likewise, crowded urban areas, like the cities of Rājagriha, Benares, Vaisālī, Kapilavastu, and Kausambī had no fascination for him, clearly borne out by the history of Buddhism. In all these instances we find that the sites selected for planting the centers of the new religion have always been pleasant woodlands and picturesque gardens, with open prospects and delightful surroundings as offered by the famous Deer Park at Ṛsipattana in the vicinity of Benares, the bamboo grove of King Bimbisara, the mango grove of Jivaka in the vicinity of Rājagṛha, the magnificent woodland Mahāvana near Vaisālī, the somber banyan grove adjoining Kapilavastu, and the Bhasakavana within the vicinity of Kausambī. All of these places appealed to the Buddha's temperament.<sup>53</sup>

### **Gaya as the Meeting Place of Hinduism (Brahmanism) and Buddhism.**

The Hindu holy land of Gaya, as defined in the *Gaya-Mahātmya* includes in it Bodh-Gaya, the sacred site of the Buddha image Dharmesvara and the bodhi tree Aśvattha. The legend enjoins each Hindu who undertakes the pilgrimage to Gaya to visit this holy site and to worship the Buddha image and the bodhi tree for the release of the departed spirits of his forefathers. From the prescribed formula of the prayer, it appears that the bodhi tree was viewed as a special object of worship to Hindus, it being regarded as a living manifestation of the divinity of the Hindu Triad.<sup>54</sup>

Moreover, in popular estimation the *vaṭa* (banyan) excels all other trees in the coolness and magnitude of its shade (*chhhāya śreṣṭha vat*), while the Aśvattha (pipal) excels all the other trees in the high sanctity of its being (*taru śreṣṭha Aśvattha*). The Bhagavadgītā, too, accords the highest place to the Aśvattha among all the trees for its divine sanctity.<sup>55</sup> Both *vaṭa* or *nyagrodha*, and Aśvattha or pipal, are considered to be very sacred, the former as a living form of Viṣṇu.<sup>56</sup>

The two domains, one of the undying banyan and the other of the bodhi tree Aśvattha, met to complete the Hindu holy land, the sacred region of Gaya, just in the same way that the two hill-streams, the Nilanjan of Buddhist fame and the Mohana of Brahmin fame, joined together as the Phalgu and enjoy sanctity greater than that of the Ganges. The main difference between the two domains can be understood as follows : in the one, natural features, namely, the somber hills with their evocative appearance and the Phalgu with its wide expanse predominate over human workmanship, and in the other the work of art, i.e. the Bodh-Gaya temple with its towering height, gives its stamp to the whole of its natural surroundings. Brahmanical Hinduism resolves itself into pure nature worship and is lavish in the praise of the divine in nature external, whereas Buddhism resolves itself into pure mind worship and is lavish in the praise of the divine in nature internal.

In spite of describing Gaya/Buddha-Gaya as the meeting place of both Brahmanical Hinduism and Buddhism, one cannot overlook the fact that Gaya is the place for Brahmanical Hindu pilgrims, who according to *Gayamahātmya*, wash away their sins by bathing in the Phalgu which is associated with the *śrāddha* ceremony. Sita of the *Rāmayaṇa* offered a rice cake (*piṇḍa*) made of sand (due to the non-

availability of rice) to the spirit of Daśaratha, the father of the hero of *Rāmāyaṇa*, i.e. Rāma. Here the pilgrim begins his round by a *sankalpa*, i.e. a vow to perform all the rites duly, and this is followed by *tarpaṇa*, or homage offered to the spirits of the departed, with water, *kuśa* grass, and sesame seeds. Then comes the full *śrāddha* with sandalwood, betel leaves, etc., and small lighted lamps. The rituals of bathing, *tarpaṇa* and *piṇḍa* are repeated, one or more of them, at all the vedis subsequently visited ..... at the end of his pilgrimage he (is to offer) *piṇḍas* to the spirits of his ancestors and gifts to the Gayawal, before whom he (is to prostrate) himself in worship. The Gayawal is to touch him on the head and bless him by pronouncing the word “*suphal*,” assuring him thereby that his worship has been fruitful, i.e. that he has secured salvation for his ancestors and blessings for himself.

Even at the time of the Buddha, the high sanctity of Gayā consisted in its being preeminently a place for ceremonial bathing and fire sacrifices. In connection with the periodical bathing in the holy waters of the Gaya reservoir and river, in the early period of its existence the whole of the Gaya region was equally a place for the performance of funeral rites and rituals. Originally noted for ceremonial bathing and fire sacrifices, Gaya eventually became famous as the main place for the performance of funeral obsequies, the appeasement of spirits, and the offering of the cakes of rice to the departed forefathers as means of securing for them release from the pitiable condition of spirit-life and the eternal bliss of heavenly life.

Here it should be mentioned that the aforesaid impressions and findings are based on the bulk of early Buddhist criticism exposing the futility of ceremonial bathing in the holy waters of Gaya and setting forth the superior efficacy of moral practices as a means of purifying oneself. Such criticism can be seen in the *Vathupama Sutta of the Majjihima-Nikāya*, the *Jatila-Sutta of the Udāna*,<sup>57</sup> and also in the *Vinaya Mahāvagga*.<sup>58</sup>

Above I attempted to show how Gaya rose into prominence as a place of pilgrimage by reason of popular belief in the high purificatory efficacy of bathing in the waters of its river and reservoir. According to Buddhist literature, there was another momentous phenomenon which served to heighten the glory not only of Gaya proper, but also of the entire region of Gaya. This was the plantation of colonies in all the three tracts of Gaya, Nadi, and Uruvela by an older order of ascetics, the Purāṇa Jatilas, with the three renowned Kassapa brothers as their heads and leaders. The *Vinaya*

*Mahāvagga*, which is our oldest canonical authority on the subject, enlightens us as to the numerical strength of the followers of each of the three accredited leaders.

The Jatilas represented an order of *tāpasas* outwardly distinguished by their matted hair.<sup>59</sup> They were groups of ascetics like the *parivrājakas* and lived in a hermitage. They counted Śakra (Indra) and Brahmā amongst the supreme deities and were great believers in miracles and supernatural powers. They also practiced mystical yoga. The Jatilas held unquestioned sway over the region of Uruvela.<sup>60</sup> Performing as they did the sacrificial rites, daily ablutions, and other duties, they spent their time in perfect peace and contentment without brooking any cause of fear. The princely ascetic Siddhārtha had the freedom to walk around this place, could enter their hermitage, and could stay with them as distinguished guest. One need not be astonished to see the conversion of the Jatilas by the Buddha known as the *Jatila-damana* or infliction of defeat on the matted hair Jatilas of Gaya. He made them realize that mere performance of fire sacrifices or mere offering of fire rituals would not lead them to the higher enlightenment, but a pious, ethical, and moral life alone would enable them to attain ethical enlightenment. The *Udāna* text clearly points out to the Jatilas that “Purification cometh not by water, though the people bathe ever so long; in whom truth and religion abide—that man is pure by his actions.”

Another interesting point to be noted is that Brahma, according to Buddhist tradition, is the supreme Brāhmanical deity who also prevailed upon the Buddha to proclaim the new faith to the world for the good of mankind. It is again the vedic, or earlier Brahmanical deities Śakra and Brahmā, who at every important step looked after the comforts of the enlightened one preaching his new gospel. Over time the tradition changes its complexion: Śakra retires into the background and Brahmā is in the mood to retire, yielding his place to Lord Śiva under the iconic form of Maheśvara, on whom devolves the benign work of acting as the guardian angel to Dharmeśa and Dharmeśvara, the Buddha transformed.

### **Conclusion : Gaya / Buddha Gaya in the Present**

The city of Gaya is still sandwiched between the Phalgu and a small set of hills containing some twenty-five hill tops with the Gayāsira in the southwest and the Preta-Śilā and Brahma Silū in the northeast. The hills of Gaya are replete with small temples

dedicated to Brahmanical deities, mostly built during the reign of the later Pāla kings of Bengal (9<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century A.D.). The left bank of the Phalgu, too, is lined with such shrines, the most important of which is devoted to the worship of a footprint of Viṣṇu; The narrow passage of the mother's womb still remains to put the Hindu pilgrims eager to escape from rebirth to the hardest trial. The ancient reservoir of Gaya, known by the name of Brahmasara or Brahmakuṇḍa and noted for its hot spring waters, can still be seen at the foot of the Pretasilā hill and still serves as a bathing place for the thousands of pilgrims who visit Gayā throughout the year. Hundreds of Hindu pilgrims come every year from all parts of India to pay their solemn debts to their deceased forefathers. It is for the solitary purpose of performing ablutions in the holy waters of the reservoir and the river that the people at large, be they ascetics or householders, throng there annually from all quarters.

Uruvela, too, appears even now as the same sandy tract with its flat surface and open spaces. The same Nirañjanā still flows down with its remarkable sunny beaches and crystal waters. The Mahābodhi is still the same holy site lorded over by the great bodhi tree Aśvattha. The site itself is still surrounded by an enclosure and contains many great shrines. The sacred area of the Bodhi maṇḍa is still connected by the same high road that extends along the western bank of Nairānjana. Though the Jatilas lost their foothold long ago, their present-day descendants-the Saiva ascetics-are still the masters of the site. The ancient three divisions of Gaya, Nadi, and Uruvela have formed at present two well defined sacred areas, Brahma-Gaya and Buddha-Gaya, the former dominated by shrines of Hindu worship and the latter by those of Buddhist worship. The former represents the external domain of the Akṣayavaṭa and the latter that of the bodhi tree Aśvattha.

Offering *piṇḍa* or rice cakes for the departed spirits of the forefathers and wishing to reap the fruits of their acts of merit at Gaya, devotees must do away with lust, anger, and greed, remain chaste in life, speak the truth, be charitable, and be intent on doing good to all living beings. Thus rather than destroying these Brahmanical beliefs, Buddhism gave them a new twist. It fully utilized them as a means of diverting the course of sorrow over the death of near and dear ones by instructing people to do the very best thing they can to benefit not only departed spirits. The function of offering gifts served as a cordial social expression to kinsmen who are alive and a source of strength to the religious institution.

No formal invocation is necessary, because the departed spirits either dwell there waiting for the arrival of their descendants or accompany them when they proceed to Gayā. The quarters are not to be guarded by incantations for departed souls, nor is there any fear of an evil eye. The wise undertake pilgrimages to Gayā and perform funeral rites with a humble spirit. The sacred bodhi tree stands prominently as a symbol of Buddhahood and is the special object of worship, heightening the glory of Bodh Gaya as the Buddhist holy land. Also embellishing the sacred site are numberless votive offerings, all serving as spontaneous and tangible expressions of the Buddhist faith. Presently the bodhi tree at Bodh-Gayā stands as a living symbol, expanding the vista of friendship and compassion begun during the period of King Asoka when it served as a symbol of friendship between Bharat and Śrī Lanka. The Buddhist temples of Śrī Lanka, Burma, Thailand, and Japan erected in the environs of Mahābodhi stand as testimonies to the expressions of friendship and compassion among people of the Buddhist faith. Since Buddhism has become a world religion, Mahābodhi is visited by pilgrims from all over the world as much as Brahmanical temples attract Hindu pilgrims to visit Gaya.

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#### NOTES

- 1 Pj vol. II p.301 Cf. *UdaAna commentary*, Siamese edition p.94, Buddhaghoṣa in his *Sarattha pakasini*, Siamese edition part I p.353 takes Gaya to mean just the 'Gayagama'
- 2 Pd p.225; Lv p.309
- 3 <title>, *Journal Bihar and Orissa Research Society* vol. I part II, 1934 p.162
- 4 MBh vol. II 19.30 The point is discussed in Barua (1934) p.224ff
- 5 Pj vol. II p.583 The point is discussed in Barua (1934) pp.227-228
- 6 Grierson(1934) p.9
- 7 MN vol. I p.106 Cf. Mv p.21
- 8 Hsuan Tsang (7th century A.D.) locates the tract of Nadi to the South of Gaya, and the same location is suggested also in the Mv.
- 9 Cf. Mv p.1 See passim for other references.
- 10 *Manorathapūrāni*, Siamese edition part I, 1958 p.324
- 11 Ibid. But Dharmapāla in his *Theragāthā commentary* says that Nadi kassapa entered on a hermit's life on the banks of river Neranjarā.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 See for details *Saratthappakasini* (Siamese edition part III, 1958) p.7
- 14 *Vathapama Sutta*, MN vol. I
- 15 Ibid., *Vathupama Sutta* Cf. Therag V 287,345
- 16 Spk part III, p.7



- 17 *Udāna*, op.cit., p.6
- 18 Mv p.31
- 19 Mv p.1, *Udāna* p.10, Lv p.311
- 20 It is interesting to observe that the Nairanjana has been described in the *Lalitavistara* and the *Mahāvastu* as a river graced occasionally by the bathing beauties of the Nāgas. Cf. Lv p.336; Mv vol II p.264
- 21 Lv p.311; Mv II p.123
- 22 Therīg
- 23 VP 105.3, 112.1-67
- 24 Ibid. 108.73
- 25 Ibid. 106.72-75
- 26 Ibid. 108.12-13, 108.61,68; 109.14-15ff.
- 27 Ibid. 105.44; 106.74-75; 108.10
- 28 Ibid. 109.16; 111.23; 111.35
- 29 Ibid. 105.45; 111.26-27
- 30 Ibid. 109.18-19, 111.44-56
- 31 Ibid. 107.43; 108.15, 108.23
- 32 Mv p.24, Ibid.vol. I p.82
- 33 Lv p.311, Ibid. 109.9-12; 111.75-76
- 34 Ibid. 111.43 This was excavated in the 11th century A.D.
- 35 Ibid.111.23-29
- 36 MN part I p.166; J vol. I pp.66-67
- 37 *Gayasirsha-parvate*
- 38 Mv vol. III p.324
- 39 MN part I p.170
- 40 Mv p.84; J vol. I p.82
- 41 Lv and Mv
- 42 MN part I p.170; Mv p.8 Cf. also the account in the Mv p.34 the journey of the Buddha from Uvela to Rājagṛha via Gaya city.
- 43 Cv pp.199-200
- 44 Mv p.84
- 45 Cv p.199
- 46 See *Suchiloma Sutta* in the *Samyutta Nikāya* and the *Sutta Nipāta* and as well as their Commentaries.
- 47 J vol. I p.70
- 48 Cunniam(19 ) plate. X X II .2
- 49 RV X .63.17, 64.16; *Aitreya Brāhmaṇa* V .2.12; AV I .14.4; RV V .92.10
- 50 Here the reference is to Arunanabha's interpretation of the Vedic allegory of Viṣṇu's three strides.
- 51 RV X I .104.2; RV I .91.12 and 19; VII .54.2; AV X IX.15.3; PAnini VI.1.66
- 52 The other term Buddha-Gaya which occurs for the first time in the apocryphal inscription of Amaradeva (Asiatic Researchers, vol. I p.84) has gained currency in modern literature, particularly due to its adoption.
- 53 For details, see 'Hsuan Tsang's description of these places' Beal's Buddhist records, volII pp.114-115
- 54 VP 100.7-29
- 55 *Bhagavatgītā* "Ahaṃ sarva vṛkṣaṇam Asvatthaḥ"
- 56 *Padmapurāṇa*, uttarakhanda chapter.CLX
- 57 *Udāna* p.6
- 58 Mv p.31
- 59 Ibid.p.33
- 60 Ibid. I IX

## REFERENCES

- AV Atharva veda  
BST Buddhist Sanskrit Texts, Darbhanga  
Cv Vin *Chullavagga*  
MBh Mahābhārata, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona, 1954  
MN Majjima Nikāya, PTS, 1958  
Mv Mahāvagga, Senart ed. SBE, 1956  
Lv Lalitavistara, P.L. Vaidya ed., BST X VII, 1958  
Pd Paramatthadīpāni (commentary on Therīgāthā), Nalanda Edition vol. II, 1958  
Pj ParamatthajoTikā (commentary on Suttanipāta), PTS, 1913  
PTS Pāli Text Society, London  
RV Rg veda  
SBE Sacred Books of the East, London  
Spk Saratthappakasini (commentary on the Samyutta Nikāya).  
Therag Theragāthā, PTS, 1913  
TherIg Theragāthā, PTS, 1913  
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Grierson(1934) Notes on the District of Gaya, 1934

## 【要旨】

## ガヤ／ボードガヤ（ブッダガヤ）巡礼

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聖地ガヤの歴史の中で、仏教の興隆は新しい時代を特徴づける。しかし、その成長期の多くの興味深い詳細はすでに失われている。また仏教徒にとって、ルンビニーが釈迦シッダールタの誕生の地であり、サールナートのイシパタナ(鹿野苑)が仏教の誕生の地であり、クシナガラが彼の芸術と建築の誕生の地であるならば、ガヤは「目覚めた人」であるブッダ誕生の地となる誇らしい地位を主張することができよう。

ブッダがガヤシールシャの丘の上で、新たに自らの信仰を改宗したガヤ地方のジャティラへの演説たる、有名な火の説法(アディッタ・パリヤーヤ・スッタ)をしたことを説く、仏教の著作『ラリタヴィスタラ』と『マハーヴァスツ』がある。パーリ語の記録が証明するところによれば、仏教の歴史の初期段階に、ブッダの二大弟子であるサーリプッタ(舍利弗)とモッガラーナ(目連)が奇跡を起こした直後、デーヴァダッタ(提婆)が自らの500名の仲間とともに住んだ場所として、この丘は重要である。

菩提樹とシッダールタの成道(じょうどう)とジャティラの精舎(しょうじゃ)を含めて、ブッダの初期の活動を結びつける、このような多くの興味深く、また重要な事件とかかわるブッダガヤであり、中国の有名な求法僧である法顕と玄奘もそこに言及しているにも関わらず、ガヤはバラモン教の聖地であり、バラモン教の強い影響力のもと栄えていたのである。

バラモンの文学に関する限りでは、ヴァーユ・プラーナにおけるガヤ・マハートミヤは、ガヤ・クシェートラの精緻な伝説上の記事に他ならない。このガヤ・クシェートラに対する敬虔な賛辞は、ヴァイシュナヴァがガヤ旧市街とその郊外でのヒンドゥー寺院を管理した時代の文学作品であり、そして毎年、パーラタ(=インド)の他の地域からおびただしい数の巡礼者を引き寄せるための迫力ある宣伝を続けている。図像集であるガヤ・マハートミヤは、ブラフマ・ガヤもしくは厳密な意味でのガヤで崇拜された主要な神格であるブラフマン、ヴィシュヌ、シヴァを讃えるものであることは疑いの余地がない。人間の幸福のためには、人々が居り、沐浴して水の寄進を捧げ、葬儀の菓子のある地面の聖なる溜め池すべては、彼ら自身の高い功德へ達し、彼らの祖先へと移り、ブラフマ・ガヤ地方への望ましいものであり救済であるものすべてを祝福するだろう。このように、その功德を行為の結果として受けることを望むバラモンの巡礼者たちの偉大な中心地となったガヤでは、欲望や怒り、貪欲を捨て去らねばならず、生活では清らかなままでなくてはならず、真実を語らねばならず、自己の清浄を保って、生きとし生けるものの為に善行に努めねばならず、死者の魂(祖先)のために「ピンダ」か米の団子を供えなければならない。だから、バラモンが彼らの祖先の救済と自らの祝福を保証することが信じられたのである。

ガヤ・マハートミヤに限れば、バラモンの物語と初期の教徒であるガヤワール・バラモンにおいて、例えていうなら真理をさとられたブッダである、ダルマもしくはダルメーシュヴァラに捧げられたものとして概して言及されたものの一部の間隠れる、ダルマランヤもしくはボード・ガヤを含む聖地ガヤなのである。

それ故にこの論文は、バラモンの視点のみならず、仏教の視点からもガヤ／ボード・ガヤへの聖なる巡礼の重要性を論じるものである。