

History of Establishment and Development of Buddhism in Kaushambi

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Abstract: Kosambi (Pali) or Kaushambi (Sanskrit) was an important city in ancient India. It was the capital of the Vatsa kingdom, one of the sixteen mahajanapadas. It was located on the Yamuna River about 56 kilometres (35 mi) southwest of its confluence with the Ganges at Prayaga (modern Prayagraj). Kosambi was one of the greatest cities in India from the late Vedic period until the end of Maurya Empire with occupation continuing until the Gupta Empire. As a small town, it was established in the late Vedic period, by the rulers of Kuru Kingdom as their new capital. The initial Kuru capital Hastinapur was destroyed by floods, and the Kuru King transferred his entire capital with the subjects to a new capital that he built near the Ganga-Jamuna confluence, which was 56 km away from the southernmost part of the Kuru Kingdom now as Prayagraj previously called Allahabad. During the period prior the Maurya Empire, Kosambi was the capital of the independent kingdom of Vatsa, one of the Mahajanapadas. Kosambi was a very prosperous city by the time of Gautama Buddha, where a large number of wealthy merchants resided. It was an important entrepôt of goods and passengers from north-west and south. It figures very prominently in the accounts of the life of Buddha.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the time of the Buddha, its king was Parantapa, and after him reigned his son Udena (Pali. Sanskrit: Udayana). Kosambī was evidently a city of great importance at the time of the Buddha for we find Ananda mentioning it as one of the places suitable for the Buddha's Parinibbāna. It was also the most important halt for traffic coming to Kosala and Magadha from the south and the west.

The city was thirty leagues by river from Benares (modern day Varanasi). (We are told that the fish which swallowed Bakkula travelled thirty leagues through the Yamunā, from Kosambī to Banares. The usual route from Rājagaha to Kosambī was up the river (this was the route taken by Ananda when he went with five hundred others to inflict the higher punishment on Channa, though there seems to have been a land route passing through Anupiya and Kosambī to Rājagaha. In the Sutta Nipāta the whole route is given from Mahissati to Rājagaha, passing through Kosambī, the halting-places mentioned being: Ujjeni, Gonaddha, Vedisa, Vanasavhya, Kosambī, Sāketa, Sravasthi/Sāvattthi, Setavyā, Kapilavasthu/Kapilavatthu, Kusinārā, Pāvā, Bhoganagara and Vesālī.

Near Kosambī, by the river, was Udayana/Udena's park, the Udakavana, where Ananda and Pindola Bharadvaja preached to the women of Udena's palace on two occasions. The Buddha is mentioned as having once stayed in the Simsapāvana in Kosambī. Mahā Kaccāna lived in a woodland near Kosambī after the holding of the First Buddhist Council.

II. BUDDHIST MONASTERIES IN KOSAMBI

Already in the Buddha's time there were four establishments of the Order in Kosambī – the Kukkuṭārāma, the Ghositārāma, the Pāvārika-ambavana (these being given by three of the most eminent citizens of Kosambī, named respectively, Kukkuṭa, Ghosita, and Pāvārika), and the Badarikārāma. The Buddha visited Kosambī on several occasions, stopping at one or other of these residences, and several discourses delivered during these visits are recorded in the books. (Thomas, op. cit., 115, n.2, doubts the authenticity of the stories connected with the Buddha's visits to Kosambī, holding that these stories are of later invention).

The Buddha spent his ninth rainy season at Kosambī, and it was on his way there on this occasion that he made a detour to Kammāssadamma and was offered in marriage Māgandiyā, daughter of the Brahmin Māgandiyā. The circumstances are narrated in connection with the Māgandiyā Sutta. Māgandiyā took the Buddha's refusal as an insult to herself, and, after her marriage to King Udena (of Kosambī), tried in various ways to take revenge on the Buddha, and also on Udena's wife Sāmavati, who had been the Buddha's follower

III. THE SCHISM AT KAUSHAMBI

A great schism once arose among the monks in Kosambī. Some monks charged one of their colleagues with having committed the offence of leaving water in the dipper in the bathroom (which would let mosquitoes breed in it), but he refused to acknowledge the charge and, being himself learned in the Vinaya, argued his case and pleaded that the charge be dismissed. The rules were complicated; on the one hand, the monk had broken a rule and was treated as an offender, but on the other, he should not have been so treated if he could not see that he had done wrong. The monk was eventually excommunicated, and this brought about a great dissension. When the matter was reported to the Buddha, he admonished the partisans of both sides and urged them to give up their differences, but they paid no

heed, and even blows were exchanged. The people of Kosambī, becoming angry at the monks' behaviour, the quarrel grew apace. The Buddha once more counselled concord, relating to the monks the story of King Dīghiti of Kosala, but his efforts at reconciliation were of no avail, one of the monks actually asking him to leave them to settle their differences without his interference. In disgust, the Buddha left Kosambī and, journeying through Bālakalonakāragāma and the Pācīnavamsadaya, retired alone to keep retreat in the Pārileyaka forest. In the meantime the monks of both parties repented, partly owing to the pressure exerted by their lay followers in Kosambī, and, coming to the Buddha at Sāvatti, they asked his pardon and settled their dispute.

IV. BUDDHISM IN THE PRESENT KAUSHAMPI

Currently, there are very few Buddhist followers, only a few temples from countries such as Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Myanmar,... have been built. Here are some relics left from the Buddha's time such as: Ghositārāma, Kukkutārāma,...Cambodia Buddhist temple, kaushampi



V. CONCLUSION

Another city that attracts a lots of Buddhist pilgrims each year, and considered to be the place where Lord Buddha passed his sixth and Ninth year after attaining enlightenment. Thus the place is special, and linked to many sermons that were delivered by Lord Buddha. The city finds distinct place as the centre of Kuru's Dynasty in Mahabharata and later as a wealthy city during Buddha's time.

The city is however in ruins due to the negligence of later rulers who had shifted their attention away from the place. Nevertheless, there are some old forts, stupas and sculptures that attract tourist attention, bearing the sign of an ancient civilized city.

The city also finds important insertion in the travelogues of Fa-Hien, the Chinese traveller. He described this place as one of the best cities of that time which proves that the city

was once the nerve of activities in India. The feel of standing in a city that is linked to a period as ancient as that of Mahabharata, is really fascinating.

VI. REFERENCES

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- [3]. E.g., UdA.248; SNA.300; MA.i.535. Epic tradition ascribes the foundation of Kosambī to a Cedi prince, while the origin of the Vatsa people is traced to a king of Kāsī, see PHAI.83, 84
- [4]. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kosambi>
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