

# Major Trends and Perspectives in Studies in the Functional Dimensions of Indian Monastic Buddhism in the Past One Hundred Years: A Historiographical Survey<sup>1</sup>

Birendra Nath Prasad

Department of History, Assam University, Silchar, India  
birendral76@yahoo.com; bp2628@yahoo.com

**ABSTRACT:** Indian Buddhist monasteries, as institutions in dynamic interactions with other societal institutions, have created a vast functional matrix or were parts thereof. In the past hundred years or so, contours of this matrix have been generally reconstructed with a macro perspective. Now we need to go beyond macro generalizations. We need to analyse individual monasteries in their local and supra-local contexts.

Let us begin with a fundamentally important question: Buddhism or Buddhisms? To repeat Donald Lopez (1995, 3), can one speak of ‘The Buddhist Tradition’ or ‘Buddhism’ or are these terms better rendered in the plural, despite surprising parallels among the practices of Buddhist cultures across time and topography? That is, in the context of Indian Buddhism, should we visualize Buddhism – in which monasteries served as its institutional nuclei – as a mid-Gangetic Great Tradition swooping down over other parts of India and imprinting its *Dharma* on a credulous *Tabula Rasa*? To put it differently, to what extent should Buddhist monastic practices in India be regarded solely as derivations of or deviations from the injunctions of the *Vinaya* texts? In a significant section of Buddhological historiography, the preferred approach so far has been to study Buddhism through the prism of its textual tradition. But in this approach, studies in the societal linkages of Buddhism frequently flounder in the perceived disjuncture between Buddhist norms and praxis; between ‘normative’ Buddhism as enshrined in the texts and ‘lived’ Buddhism; between Buddhist ‘Great Tradition’ and its local mutations.<sup>2</sup> This perceived disjuncture between norms and praxis has recently been

- 
1. This is a modified version of the paper presented at the International Symposium on ‘Buddhism Studies in Last One Hundred Years’, Wuhan University, China (October 2006)
  2. In fact, the very title of the first chapter of Spiro’s impressive study (1971), ‘Theravāda Buddhism: An Anthropological Problem’, highlights this disjuncture between normative Buddhism

explained on the basis of 'Buddhist Functionalism': that underneath the apparently 'rigid' doctrines of Buddhism, a degree of inbuilt functional flexibility is discernible which enables Buddhism to present its message across the vast expanse of Asian cultural settings (Scott 1995, 127–49). It has been observed, and rightly so, that Buddhism contains a hierarchy of teachings and roles and co-exists with other systems in a structured hierarchy (Gellner 2003, 51). How did the role of the Indian Buddhist monasteries mutate across the rungs of this hierarchy across time and space, especially on the 'open frontier between Buddhism and Animism' (Ling 1979, 74)? It is with these questions that one may be tempted to begin any historiographical survey of studies in the societal linkages of Indian monastic Buddhism.

Available studies in the societal linkages of Indian monastic Buddhism swing between two extremes. In a significant section of Indian historiography, Buddhism is perceived to be merely the individualistic soteriology of world renouncers and a non-existing phenomenon beyond the monastic walls (N. N. Bhattacharya 1993, 188), hence utterly incapable of having any societal linkage.<sup>3</sup> Another extreme is provided by the ideologues of Navayāna (neo-Buddhism in India). In this schema of things, Buddhist monasteries promote 'capitalism' and are the centres for organizing resistance and rebellion against political tyrannies, whereas the Brahmins and their temples stand for active collaboration with the ruling powers for the oppression of the downtrodden (Omvedt 2003, 173). Should we try to explore any middle way between these two extremes?

Any attempt to survey the societal linkages of Indian monastic Buddhism may not be an easy task, given the fact that almost any book on early Indian history is likely to contain some paragraphs on Buddhism and at least some lines on Buddhist monasteries. This enormous task notwithstanding, there are actually very few studies in the societal linkages of the same. This article, based on a survey of studies in the societal linkages of Indian monastic Buddhism in the past hundred years, attempts to ask certain fundamental questions: what did Buddhist monasteries actually do in Indian socioeconomic history in general, and in the institutional evolution of Indian Buddhism in particular? Can we think of Indian Buddhism without monks and monasteries? In the case of Tantric Buddhism of the Kathmandu Valley at least, this has indeed been propounded to be the case (Allen 1973, 1–14). But can this be generalized for India; even when we concede that the Buddha's first two disciples were traders from Orissa (Vin I 4), the collective body of the monks, the *Saṅgha*, was a later addendum (Rhys Davids 1931); and even when contemporary 'Protestant Buddhism' is gradually rendering

---

and 'lived' Buddhism. He has shown that the five 'core principles' of normative Buddhism, which he rather debatably, in some cases, labels materialism, atheism, nihilism, pessimism and renunciation, are rarely reflected in the lay Buddhist practices (pp. 7–13).

3. In fact, in a recent analysis, the foremost challenge for Buddhism of the twenty-first century is the question: 'can Buddhism overcome what historically appears to be a chronic social anemia?' (Wolf 2007, 30).

monasticism less central to Buddhism than it has earlier been in many Theravāda countries?<sup>4</sup> The contemporary Navayāna movement in India treats monasticism as unnecessary (Omvedt 2003, 4; Zelliott 1992, 187–96, 222–48) and expects the monks to be not on their way to being ‘perfected beings’ but as kinds of social activist.<sup>5</sup> To what extent does it reflect the earlier theory and praxis, if we concede the fact that no vision just descends from the blue but is in some way a continuation of earlier processes?

This scepticism notwithstanding, the core thesis of the present survey would treat the *Saṅgha* as the institutional nucleus of Buddhism, the very prism through which much of the history of Buddhism in India is reflected; but the *Saṅgha* not as an ideal retreat from the world to pursue nirvanic goals only, but an institution in dynamic interactions with other societal institutions, acting and reacting with them, influencing them and getting influenced by them in turn. The present article does not purport to be an all-inclusive, exhaustive and chronological survey of available literature on Indian monastic Buddhism. It would rather endeavour to see how its institutional evolution, as a consequence of its interactions with other societal institutions, has been tracked in historical ‘constructs’. It will also attempt to delineate the evolving functional roles of the *Saṅgha* from around the sixth century BCE to the thirteenth or fourteenth century CE. It will end with a retrospective look at research on the functional dimensions of Indian monastic Buddhism in the past hundred years, and will try to chart some of the prospects for future research.

At the very outset, some clarifications are necessary. The present study will treat Buddhism as just one of the traditions of India, always in close interaction with other traditions, hence will frequently employ insights from studies in institutional evolutions of other religious systems of India. ‘India’ in this article will cover the present geographical areas of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Such a diverse landmass as India consisted of many eco-zones, supporting diverse material and religious cultures and much of its cultural personality has crystallized as result of the encounters between different ecozones (Sontheimer 1993, VII; 1994, 117–64; Chattopadhyaya 1990, Introduction; 2003: 186). I have noted elsewhere that cultural communications involving great cultural transformations are communications of continuums and not communications of ruptures or disjunctures (Prasad 2006a, 27–49). Owing to this it will be difficult for us to visualize Buddhism, with its institutional nucleus in the *Saṅgha*, as a mid-Gangetic Great Tradition imprinting itself across the whole of India. Rather what Lopez (1995, 3–8) has propounded for the process of the spread of Buddhism outside India – not

4. Gombrich (1988, 172–97) has noted the development of a new kind of Buddhism in Sri Lanka in the Colonial Period and aftermath that is indeed closer to Christian Protestantism. It rejects spiritual hierarchy and emphasizes the direct access of the laity to the Scriptures. However, it has been noted that this Buddhism is confined only to the urban middle class and the intelligentsia (p. 197), and Sinhalese peasantry is predominantly inclined towards the monk-dominated traditional Buddhism (p. 197).

5. See Prasad (2006b, 171–5) for a review of Omvedt.

so much a disembodied *Dharma* descending on another culture from above, but rather a more material movement of monks, texts, relics and icons along trade routes and across deserts, mountains and seas – can be applied to the process of the spread of Buddhism within India as well. Any study of this process will have to take into account the tremendous geographical variations within India. Long ago, Arthur Geddes visualized the unfolding of much of Indian history in terms of continuous interactions between its core ‘grain land’, namely, the upper and middle Ganges valley and its ‘grass lands’ and ‘forest lands’; with the latter two in a continuous flux as a result of interactions with the material and religious cultures of the ‘grain lands’ (Geddes 1982, 94). The thing to be stressed is that Buddhism appears to be the first institutional religion of the ‘grain lands’ to penetrate the ‘grass lands’ and ‘forest lands’ in the Indian peninsula, northwestern regions and the swampy forests of eastern India. How did the role of the *Saṅgha* mutate across this variegated space? How did it relate to the existing economic and cultic system as it moved out of its area of origin (the middle-Ganges valley)? Did it offer any economic incentive to induce this integration? In a nutshell, we need to see the roles of the *Saṅgha* beyond the monastic walls, and beyond the norms of the *Vinaya* texts. The present article is a humble attempt in this direction.

Much of the stereotypes we encounter in the perceptions of the nature, functions and evolution of Indian monastic Buddhism have their genesis in the way most of the early Buddhologists of Europe, the representatives of the post-industrial revolution European mind, imbued with ‘Protestant ethics’ and under the heavy intellectual influence of Hegel and Gibbon, have perceived the genesis and decline of Indian Buddhism (Wedemeyer 2001, 224). With the discoveries of textual and archaeological sources of Indian Buddhism, they discovered a dead and spent tradition. Before the Indian encounter, European scholarship had already seen its institutionalized and living presence in Sri Lanka, Southeast Asia and East Asia. The more researches progressed in Indian Buddhism, unravelling its multiple mutations across time and space, the more difficult it became to classify it under the common rubric ‘Buddhism’ (Almond 1988). Yet it was important to reconstruct a coherent history of what they believed to be ‘Buddhism’, with a clear chronological beginning, maturation and decline, and some explanation for these. For the ‘progressive’, triumphant, post-industrial revolution British intellectualism, Hinduism with its ‘decrepit’, ‘superstitious’ paraphernalia, was the proverbial ‘Other’. Buddhism was soon perceived to be something like a ‘Protestant movement’ in India. Soon a schema crystallized in which ‘original’, ‘primitive’ Buddhism constituted of the teachings of the Buddha only, which, as per their perceptions, advocated eremitical mendicancy. But the eternal ‘lethargy’ of India found its way among the monks, leading to the birth of monasticism. This body of monastics, under further influence of existing Indian traditions, succumbed to superstitions and started worshipping the Buddha as a god in the Mahāyāna phase. Subsequent monastic ‘corruption’ and ‘sexual profligacy’ in the garb of Tantricism was a total turnaround, stimulating its assimilation within Hinduism. That is, as per their perceptions, ‘true’ Buddhism was asocial and eremitical,

monasticism was a deviation from the teachings of the Buddha and it ultimately became a factor in the decline of Buddhism in the land of its birth.

This approach is discernible in Spence Hardy ([1860] 1989), although he largely pre-dates British studies on Indian Buddhism. He landed in Sri Lanka in 1825 as a Christian missionary and began to study the texts of Buddhism – ‘a religion I was trying to replace’ (p. vi) – and its institutions. Despite his limited information, he had no doubt about the overall historical character and functions of ‘Eastern Monachism’:

the history of monastic institutions, notwithstanding their claims to our respect and veneration, is a confession of failures and defects. Their avowed aim has been the reformation of manners, for the accomplishment of which each successive order begins in poverty, but, gradually increasing in wealth, becomes alike corrupt, and a relaxation of discipline was the consequence. Each new institution arose from the degeneracy of its predecessor; and was an additional proof, to all who had eyes to see, or minds to understand, that the system had inherent impotency, and was utterly incapable to produce the consequences that were desired. (p. 453)

This ‘inherent impotency’ of the system surfaces time and again in writings on Buddhist monasticism. Max Weber ([1916] 1992), writing around fifty years after Hardy, and attributing Indian failure to undergo the transition to industrial capitalism to structural problems in Indian religions, had at least some words of praise for Hinduism for its ability to build and sustain a social whole, however ‘decrepit’ and ‘rotten’ that might be; and also for Jainism because ‘it was as exclusive, or perhaps more, a merchant religion as was Judaism in the Occident’ (p. 193). He was, though, bitterly hostile to ‘asocial Buddhism, a specifically unpolitical and anti-political status religion, more precisely a “religious technology” of the wandering and intellectually-schooled mendicant monk’ (p. 206). He was perhaps one of the earliest pioneers in relating text to context in the history of religion and, of course, very few primary materials on Buddhism were available in his time. However, one may be surprised to note his reluctance to take into account experiences of the ‘lived’ Buddhism during the period in which he was formulating his arguments, such as its role in the modernization of Japan (Davis 1989, 304–9) or the role of the *Saṅgha* in the anti-colonial struggles or modernizations in Sri Lanka and Thailand (Suksamran 1977). Not surprisingly, his views have been questioned repeatedly in later studies.

#### THE GENESIS AND INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF THE EARLY SAṄGHA: HISTORICAL RECONSTRUCTIONS

One of the earliest exhortations of the Buddha to the monks, as we are told in the Pali Canon, was that ‘not two of you would go in the same way’ (Vin I 21);

and that eremitical ideas were very prominent in the earliest phase of Buddhism, as the followers of the Buddha were just among many *Parivrājaka* communities (Dutt 1984, 12). Gradually monasticism developed within Buddhism and became its defining feature.<sup>6</sup> Generally most of the available writings on the genesis of Buddhist monasticism have stressed the key role of the institution of *Vassa-vāsa* (rainy season retreat for the monks) in the evolution of later sedentarized monasteries. But the practice of rainy season retreat was not confined to Buddhist renunciants only. Why did monasticism not develop among other wandering renunciant communities of that time? Why did monasticism get institutionalized only in the case of Buddhism? Nāgasena, in his long dialogue with Milinda, stresses that monasticism ensures easy availability of the monks for the laity and thus ensures greater chances for merit-making for them, hence the need for sedentary monasticism (Dutt 1984, 98, citing Mil 212). Indeed ‘demands of the laity inducing institutionalization’ has been stressed by many modern scholars as well (Dutt 1984, 99; Gombrich 1988, 115; Gokhale 1994b, 13–24). Was it that simple? If that was the case, how did the interactions of the *Saṅgha* with other societal institutions influence the trajectories of its institutional evolution?

Unfortunately, this quest is hardly visible in most of the early writings on Buddhism (Monier Williams 1889; Rhys Davids 1934, 1978, 2005; Thomas 1983; Kern 1989). These scholars did immense service to Buddhological studies in its formative phases in India and elsewhere by providing a general outline of the ‘Three Jewels’ of Buddhism. But they could not see the institutional evolution of the *Saṅgha* as a result of its interactions with other societal institutions, perhaps due to paucity of the database. There had been some occasional highlighting of the fact that the Buddhist *Saṅgha* was modelled on the political pattern of the *Gaṇasaṅgha* states such as the Vajjian republic (DN II 74–5; Jayaswal 1955, 43), and in that sense, it was fully ‘democratic’ (De 1955, 5), but there was hardly any analysis of factors inducing this alleged interface. More recently, the same attitude is visible in an edited compendium to mark the 2500th anniversary of the foundation of Buddhism (Bapat 1972). It was an attempted holistic survey of different aspects of Buddhism across its entire Asian spectrum, with contributions from acknowledged authorities. But it doesn’t have a single chapter on the functional dimensions of monastic Buddhism either in India or in any other country. Bhattacharya’s *History of Researches on Indian Buddhism* (1981) also has the same gap and this shows the (lack of) attention monastic Buddhism enjoys in mainstream historiography.

This lack of interest notwithstanding, there have been some remarkable attempts in this direction. Sukumar Dutt’s *Early Buddhist Monachism* (1984, first published 1924) offers a brave departure, and therefore demands a greater

6. Jayaswal (1967, 42) has noted that the ‘birth of Buddhism was the birth of organized monasticism in the world’. It has been re-asserted recently by Gombrich that ‘in all the *Śramana* traditions of India, ‘it was only the Buddhist who invented monastic life’ (1988, 19). Also see Dutt (1984, 110).

discussion here. What makes his work stand apart from the earlier 'handbooks' is a very sharp understanding of the evolutionary character of the *Saṅgha* and the need to study it in conjunction with the larger societal context in interaction with which it evolved:

the Sangha was not in a perpetual state of arrested progress nor were its laws like 'the laws of the Medes and Persians that altereth not'. The Buddhist Order (the Sangha), on the other hand had a remarkable capacity for growth, development, variations, adjustments and progress.  
(p. 7)

Dutt has also rejected the notion that the text of the entire Pali *Vinaya Piṭaka* was composed in one go (at the Council of Vaiśālī). Its content consists in fact:

of much earlier and much later materials welded together by a theory. When they are arranged in their proper sequence, they will afford us evidences of an evolution of Buddhist Monachism as reflected in the (Pali) *Vinaya Piṭaka*.  
(p. 11)

He has noted the tussle between the earlier prominent eremitical mendicancy and the forest monk tradition, and the emerging monasticism and has asserted that the 'earliest episode of conflict in the Sangha between the two principles is embodied in the story of Devadatta [Vin II 188–203; Vin III 171–2], who seems to have attempted unsuccessfully at a revival of an old (mendicant, eremitical) ideal' (p. 96), but he does not analyse the process or the material factors which allowed the emerging monastic tradition to supersede the earlier forest monk tradition. He has noted the growth of the Buddhist coenobium from *Vassa-vāsa*, the rainy season retreat of an individual monk, to *Āvāsa*, originally a colony staked out for the purpose of the sojournment of the monks during the rain-retreat, to *Vihāra*, originally simply lodging-places or private apartments of the individual monks, later a term used to designate the whole of a building where many monks resided (pp. 99–100). Nevertheless, he again does not offer an analysis of the socio-economic factors entailing this transition. He has also noted the absence of references to Buddhist monasticism in the Greek writings on India dating until the second century CE, and has concluded that for a long time after the Macedonian invasions (fourth century BCE), Buddhist monasteries were neither numerous nor striking enough to attract the notices of foreign writers in India (p. 98). He has not provided any explanation for this, perhaps owing to the fact that very few primary materials on Buddhism were available to him.

A similar approach is visible in the reconstruction of pre-Mahāyāna monasticism in his later and much larger book, *Buddhist Monks and Monasteries in India: Their History and their Contribution to the Indian Culture* (Dutt 1962), although he used a diverse range of sources in reconstructing the same from the Mahāyāna phase onwards. In this monograph, he noted the gradual metamorphosis in the monasteries and their institutional management from the early centuries CE; their spread along trade routes to the Deccan and beyond; the mercantile and royal

patronage they received; shrinkage of Buddhist space across India from the Gupta period (320–500 CE) onwards; and emergence of ‘Monastic Universities’ (Nālandā etc.) in the early medieval period. He has taken the support systems of the monasteries into account, but how that support increased or diminished from time to time and what were its consequences on monastic life, and also on the trajectories of Buddhism in India and its decline, has been only perfunctorily studied. That in no way reduces the importance of this work. As the earliest macro survey of the monastic experience of India, it will remain mandatory reading for any study on the societal linkages of Indian monastic Buddhism.

Reconstruction of the pre-Mahāyāna Buddhist monasticism largely on the basis of taking the injunctions of the Pali *Vinaya* to be narrative, not normative, is visible in Edward Conze (1957), Vishwanath Prasad Varma (1973) and, to some extent, Richard Gombrich. Conze and Varma hardly make any attempt to see the institutional evolution of the *Saṅgha* as a result of its interactions with other societal institutions. They both emphasize the ‘asocial’ nature of Buddhism in which the *Saṅgha* is perceived to have functioned as a retreat from worldly phenomena (Conze 1957, 54; Varma 1973: 379–82). This is, no doubt, the result of a literal reading of the Pali texts and a near total neglect of the context.

Uma Chakravarti, basing her arguments on the analysis of early Pali sources<sup>7</sup> for the reconstruction of social dimensions of early Buddhism, offers much more astute observations on the institutional evolution of the *Saṅgha* against the backdrop of the prevailing socioeconomic milieu during the period of the Buddha. Thus she has noted that the institution of *Vassa-vāsa* came into being when peasants started complaining to the Buddha of the damage done to their newly sown crops due to the incessant movements of the monks during the rainy season (Chakravarti 1996, 82, citing Vin I 137–8). It has also been asserted that despite being deeply related with the early historic urbanization of the subcontinent, agrarian similes and metaphors played an important role in the evolution of the rules of the *Saṅgha* (pp. 18–19). She has also noted the differential nature of patronage in the monarchical and *Gaṇasaṅgha* polities during the period of the Buddha. In the monarchical states based on individual ownership of property, the *Saṅgha* attracted the patronage of a cross-section of society, while in the *Gaṇasaṅgha* states, which were based on the notion of collective ownership of property in the hands of the ruling *Khattiya* clan only, the *Saṅgha* could not receive any mass patronage, hence there were fewer monasteries in these regions compared to in the monarchical states (pp. 90–92). As a whole, her approach is quite refreshing. She has also noted that most of the earliest entrants to the *Saṅgha* were from well-to-do families. The Brahmins formed the single largest group, followed by the *Khattiyas*. Only a few ‘low born’ joined the *Saṅgha* (pp. 122–49). That is to say, in its formative phase, the *Saṅgha* was not an avenue for runaways.

Gombrich may be taken as the continuation of the tradition of near exclusive dependence on Pali texts for the reconstruction of the evolution of the *Saṅgha*.

7. The *Vinaya*, first four *Nikāyas* and the *Sutta-nipāta* (Chakravarti 1996, 4).

In one of his later writings he has noted the congenital heterogeneity of the *Saṅgha*, as the earliest converts to Buddhism came from different background and due to the rudimentary institutional structure of the *Saṅgha*, 'many members of the Sangha must have gone on using some of their former terms and concepts' (2002: 19). In his *Theravāda Buddhism*, he has focused on the missionary impulse of the *Saṅgha* from the very beginning, and its role as the institutional nucleus of Theravāda Buddhism:

the history of Theravāda Buddhism, seen from the point of view of the tradition itself (what anthropologists call the emic view) is the history of the Sangha. The virtual identification of the fortunes of a religion with those of its professionals is alien to most religious traditions, even to some strands within Buddhism itself – not least to many Buddhists today. But in our view it constitutes the very core of Theravāda Buddhism. In this it is very Indian. Our view of early Indian religion and culture is mainly a brahmin view, because it is brahmins who composed and preserved texts. Similarly, Theravāda tradition is the product of texts composed by, and indeed largely for, monks and nuns. (1988, 87)

If that is not enough, he proceeds to assert:

Though one must not push the comparison between Buddhism and brahmanism too far, to look for a lay tradition of Theravāda Buddhism is a misunderstanding of the same kind as looking for a low-caste tradition of brahmanism: were it lay tradition it would not be Theravāda, the 'doctrine of the elders', i.e. of fully trained members of the Sangha. (p. 87)

It is doubtful that any religion can be reduced to its textual tradition by a near total denial of the larger societal contexts, the role of the laity<sup>8</sup> and continuous interaction between the text and context; an interaction leading to continuous metamorphosis of the *Saṅgha*. And of course anthropological studies have proved that in some Theravāda countries 'doctrines of normative Buddhism only rarely constitute the Buddhism of the faithful ... [who] have acquired other additional forms of Buddhism which for them are equally, or nearly equally, normative' (Spiro 1971, 11). Melford Spiro has also noted that 'most Buddhists (being "worldlings") have little to do with nibbanic Buddhism, though they are aware of and genuinely believe that they ought to aspire to it' (p. 13), and he has noted a similar condition in many countries where Theravāda is a living tradition now – Sri Lanka, Thailand, Burma, Cambodia (p. 13). Besides, Buddhism has a much more

---

8. The role of the laity in shaping the trajectories of evolution of the *Saṅgha*, particularly lay demands leading to the deliberation of injunctions of the *Vinaya* has been sharply pointed out by B. G. Gokhale (1994b, 13–24). Recently, the notion of inherent ritual 'superiority' of monks *vis-à-vis* the laity has been questioned (Bluck 2002), forcing us to think of a new paradigm for monastery-laity interaction. Ling has also noted that between the common people and the *Saṅgha*, 'there exist one important relationship, not of reciprocity exactly, but of complementarity' (1973, 133–5). This is the line of argument that will be pursued in this article.

mundane, 'apotropaic' form (pp. 12–13); the only form which survives the institutional liquidation of the *Saṅgha* and later helps in the re-institutionalization of the same.<sup>9</sup> It has also been observed that the more normative and bookish the *Saṅgha* becomes, the more detached are the monasteries from the laity, hence they have greater vulnerability to decay and decline.<sup>10</sup>

Gombrich notes that the ever lamented 'corruption' (by which he seems to mean the accumulation of property by the monks and the *Saṅgha*) began in the lifetime of the Buddha himself (Gombrich 1988, 93), that is, the norms of the Pali *Vinaya* were not followed in letter and spirit in the earliest days itself; and later the 'lay pressure to accept gifts probably accounts for most of Sangha's (recurrent) "corruption"' (p. 115). But why was the *Saṅgha* forced to accept gifts that went beyond its 'basic doctrines' and disciplines? Gombrich does mention that 'the Sangha early had to accommodate to the facts of political power' (p. 115), and also notes the fact that 'the *Saṅgha*, and hence Buddhism, has a particular need of political patronage if it is to flourish' (p. 116). His observation – 'history has shown time and again that without state support – which need not mean *exclusive* state support – the Sangha declines from this very reason' (p. 116) – is corroborated by some other studies. Thus, it has been observed that in many countries political consolidation of the ruling elite results in ecclesiastical centralization and rigid institutionalized hierarchization of the *Saṅgha*; and the more 'galactic' the polity turns, the greater institutional disarray for the *Saṅgha* (Tambiah 1976, 189). Gombrich's and S. J. Tambiah's observations are beginnings in the right direction. We need a greater contextual study of the encounters of the *Saṅgha* rules and injunctions with secular laws and regulations and the resultant mutations at both ends. But can this study be undertaken by treating the, as it appears, normative *Vinaya* as narrative? An undue emphasis on the norms of the *Vinaya* in tracing the evolution of the *Saṅgha* largely blinds us to the multiple mutations that the *Saṅgha* undergoes as a part of its localization strategy across time and space, as

---

9. In a brilliant study of the process of re-emergence of the *Saṅgha* in Cambodia after its virtual institutional elimination by the demolition of large numbers of monasteries and physical elimination of the majority of monks during the Khmer Rogue Era (1975–78), Ian Harris has observed that under the conditions of such extreme persecution, the *Saṅgha* 'reverted to the most basic apotropaic form' (2001, 74). It survived this calamity by the secret performance of magic, traditional rites to comfort the sick, the bereaved and the terrified by the defrocked monks (p. 74) and, after the civil war, the *Saṅgha* rapidly regrouped itself by adjusting to the new regime.

10. It has been brilliantly observed by Richard O'Connor (1993) that as a consequence of the attempts of the Bangkok political elites to promote a strictly textual (strictly Pali Canonical Theravāda), normative Buddhism, 'today the *Wat* (the temple cum monastic complex) is less Thai and more Buddhist' (p. 335), entailing a 'continuous tension between the *Wat* as an agent of village solidarity and the *Wat* as an agent of the National State', thus disrupting its centuries long function of joining the lay and monastic communities (p. 335); a long-term institutional shift rendering it 'peripheral to the society' (p. 336).

a part of its 'translation into local idioms'; a common feature of the localization strategy of any world religion.<sup>11</sup>

Charles Prebish's study (2002) of early Buddhist monasticism, based largely on the work of Sukhumar Dutt, is important for his advocacy of a 'middle way' regarding the significance of the *Vinaya* texts in the institutional evolution of the *Saṅgha*, between the two extremes propounded by Andre Bareau and A. C. Banarjee: the first holding that only doctrinal matters were responsible for the emergence of sects and schools, and the latter holding that there was hardly any difference regarding the interpretation of the *Dharma*, and it was differential interpretation of the *Vinaya* injunctions which led to the emergence of divisions in the *Saṅgha*. While Prebish advocates a middle way, he has a propensity towards accepting a greater significance of the *Vinaya* in the institutional evolution of the *Saṅgha*. He has noted that 'it cannot be mere coincidence that the schools with the most developed *Vinayas* have prospered while the others have dissipated' (2002, 28). But what is the co-relation between different *Vinayas*, and what is the interaction of the text with the context? He has translated the Sanskrit *Vinayas* of the Sarvāstivādins and Mūlasarvāstivādins in the same book, but it could have been immensely more illuminating had he offered their textual and contextual differences or the lack of these, and factors behind these, in comparison with the Pali *Vinaya*.

The interrelationship between different *Vinayas*, their similarities and dissimilarities have invited rigorous research. As early as 1951, Erich Frauwallner, noting the close similarity between the *Vinayas* of different schools, opined that an original 'Proto-text' of the extant *Vinayas* must have existed during the earliest days of the *Saṅgha* (1956, 205–7). Étienne Lamotte has largely corroborated this theory (1988, 179). It has also been observed that similarity is only between the *Vinayas* of the individual schools of the two sects of the first schism (Sthaviravāda and the Mahāsāṅghika) and not across the sects (Clarke 2004, 80, 115): that is the *Vinayas* of the five main schools of the Sthaviravāda sect (Sarvāstivāda, Mūlasarvāstivāda, Theravāda, Dharmaguptaka and Mahīśāsaka) are remarkably similar in the general structure and organization of the material and they treat much the same range of topics. But the *Vinaya* of the Mahāsāṅghika sect is radically different from these, according to Shayne Clarke (p. 78). Largely the same thing has been observed in the rules prescribed for the *Uposatha* ceremony in the *Vinayas* of various schools of the same sect (Gangopadhyaya 1986, 51). While Clarke's construction of 'radical' difference between the Sthaviravāda and the Mahāsāṅghika sects might be misplaced, as Jan Nattier and Prebish have shown that these two 'sects' agree in condemning the 10 'lax practices' discussed at the

11. It has been rightly observed that, 'if external ideas are ever to have any meaning, they must connect in some way with the pre-existing ideas and understandings: only then when they have undergone the process of "translation" in the local idiom, can they begin to have effect' (Oddie 1998, 6). It is high time that we explore differential localization strategies of the *Saṅgha* across time and space.

council of Vaiśālī (1976–7, 237–72), that is not our prime concern here. It can be agreed that at the level of normative Great Tradition, uniformity has been envisaged across schools and, to some extent, maybe also across sects. But how does that translate into practice?

It may be asserted that despite these brilliant studies on the *Vinayas* and the reconstruction of early Buddhist monastic practices in India as per the norms of the *Vinayas*, there is hardly any study of the process by which monasticism emerges among an eremitical monk community. Mention must be made of Robin Coningham's brilliant study of the institutionalization process of the *Saṅgha* in Sri Lanka (1995, 222–42). He has noted that the transition from a cave-dwelling forest monk tradition to an institutionalized, sedentary and 'domesticated' monasticism was closely related with the process of transition from chiefdom polities to that of a loosely centralized polity with a paramount sovereign ruling over the whole of Sri Lanka (p. 221); a process rendering the *Saṅgha* and the state increasingly interdependent. At a later stage, the more centralized the polity became, the greater the temporal assets of the *Saṅgha*, ultimately leading to the development of monastic landlordism (p. 238).<sup>12</sup> A similar process of the monastic tradition supplanting the 'original', forest tradition of the formative phases of Indian Buddhism has indeed been noted by Reginald Ray (1994), but without analysing the factors and the processes behind the gradual establishment of monasticism as the 'authentic' tradition. He begins with a critique of traditional monastery-centric Buddhist historiography in India in which the 'monasteries form the prism through which much of history of Indian Buddhism is cast' (p. vii). This has entailed the construction of a 'two-tiered model' of Indian Buddhism, in which the monastics occupy the upper tier and practise a 'Buddhism of emulation', that is, taking the Buddha as a role model rather than as an object of devotion and veneration; whereas the laity form the lower tier, practising a 'Buddhism of devotion', that is, devotion and reverence to the Buddha and the *Saṅgha* (p. 20). The primary aim of the book is to 'amplify the voice of forest Buddhism by focusing upon the Forest Saint' (p. viii), but in the process he offers certain interesting observations on the nature and functions of monastic Buddhism in India, particularly its interaction with the laity and with the forest monks. For him, the forest monk tradition is the 'original Buddhism', which has been suppressed or at least obscured by settled monasticism. Thus monastic Buddhism was 'institutionalized', 'regulated' and 'ordered' Buddhism (p. 436) and was the seat for the maintenance and contemplations of the textual tradition.<sup>13</sup> Its proximity to and dependence on the social, economic and political establishment often compelled it to accept and reinforce the status quo of the societal context (p. 439). In fact 'by its emphasis on order, regulation and scholasticism, monasticism reflects just as or perhaps even more so a Brahmanization of the earliest Buddhism' (p. 447). Despite these

12. For a similar study of interdependence of the Sri Lankan crown and Sri Lankan *Saṅgha*, see Haladar (2004, 18–30).

13. For a similar argument, see McMohan (1998, 249–74).

castigations, he could not deny the interdependence between monastic Buddhism and forest Buddhism. The forest produced the saints but could not retain them; they had to come back to the settled world of monasticism, and become part of the monastic life (p. 446). Excessive institutionalization and scholasticism on the other hand compelled some of the monastics to the forest (p. 441).

Ray undoubtedly displays remarkable scholarship yet he chooses to overlook certain important things. Despite his denials, a substantial influence of S. J. Tambiah's and Michael Carrithers's study of forest monk traditions of Thailand and Sri Lanka respectively (Tambiah 1984; Carrithers 1983) is quite discernible. Both Tambiah and Carrithers have visualized that the state, the *Grāmvāsina/Nagaravāsina* (village/town) monasteries and the *Āranyavāsina* ('forest dwelling') monasteries together formed a functional matrix, on the models of the 'core-periphery' dialectic; the state and the *Grāmvāsina/Nagaravāsina* monasteries together forming the 'core'. In this schema of things, the forest monk tradition functions as the repository of doctrinal and meditational purity, hence the fountainhead of legitimacy whenever the state faces any grave internal or external crisis. That is to say, the forest monk tradition functions as the institutional balancing factor *vis-à-vis* the 'domesticated' *Grāmvāsina/Nagaravāsina Saṅgha* and, for this reason, receives substantial royal patronage. Should we visualize a similar role for the forest monk tradition in Indian Buddhism as well? Moreover when a *Grāmvāsina/Nagaravāsina* monk chooses to go to the forest, what is the impact of this migration on the forest society? Does he transmit the ideas and praxis of the settled agrarian world or just enter into ever-higher forms of meditation in total aloofness from the surrounding world? Ray does not address these questions; he is content only with the ritual (and spiritual) aspects of this complex matrix.

#### THE INSTITUTIONAL CONSOLIDATION AND SPREAD BEYOND THE MIDDLE GANGES VALLEY: THE 'MONARCHS, MONASTERIES AND TRADE' MATRIX AND DEPARTURES FROM THIS PARADIGM

The linkages between the genesis of early Buddhism and early historic urbanization of the upper and middle Ganges valley are well documented.<sup>14</sup> But the impact of this urbanization on the institutional evolution of the *Saṅgha* has scarcely been analysed in these studies. Nor do they offer much analysis of the process of the spread of monastic Buddhism beyond the middle Ganges valley.

At this juncture, it is important to mention a fundamentally important work, *The Sociology of Early Buddhism*, by Ian Mabbett and Greg Bailey (2003). They have pointed out the significance of a strange coincidence: the emergence of Buddhism as a renunciatory movement in around 500 BCE in an environment of growing urbanization, expanding economic and agricultural networks and political con-

14. Pande (1957, 313–15); Sharma (1983, 122–8); Sarao (1990); Weber (1992, 204); Gokhale (1994a, 43–57); Chakrabarti (1995, 185–202); Rhys Davids (2005, 63–85).

solidation. This book largely explains how and why monks were able to exploit the social and political conditions of the mid-first millennium BCE mid-Ganges valley in such a way as to ensure the growth of Buddhism into a major world religion. For Buddhism, the process of adaptation to this urban milieu involved a process of systemic metamorphosis: an eremitical, mendicant, renunciatory tradition evolving into an institutionalized monastic tradition and becoming part of the contemporary societal matrix. Summarizing Mabbett and Bailey (p. 34):

1. Buddhism in its original conception had distinctive characteristics that were not congruent with the process of urbanization and state formation.
2. Buddhism came to terms with the rise of cities and kingdoms, adapting to the changing society and changing itself in the process of adaptation. At the latter end of any process of adaptation, an institution becomes more or less integrated into, and comes to serve the purpose of, the social structure in which it is lodged.
3. Thus Buddhism acquired characteristics that were wholly congruent with the culture of city-based regional kingdoms.<sup>15</sup>

That is to say, Buddhism was a catalytic factor in the expansion of mercantile networks and consolidation of emerging polities and, later, in the imperial unification of northern India; and it was in this process that it evolved into an institutionalized monastic tradition. Now it is generally accepted that evolution and growth of Buddhist monasticism was deeply embedded with the process of early historic urbanization, state formation and evolution of a centralized empire. No wonder the functional relationship between Buddhist monasteries and the processes of early historic urbanization and crystallization of empire has invited a sustained scholarly research.

George Erdosy's article, 'Early Historical Cities of North India' (1987), is illuminating in this aspect. He has pointed out the dependence of the monasteries on the cities and towns. He has convincingly shown that from the sixth century BCE onwards it was only the largest towns and cities, more often the capital city of emerging polities in the Ganges valley, which were able to support the monasteries (p. 10). He has noted the spatial distribution pattern of the monasteries: (a) on the trade routes connecting these cities and towns; (b) just outside the cities (as was the case with Sāñcī, near Besanagar, and Sārnāth, near Benares); (c) just inside the city (as was the case with Pāṭalīputra and Kauśāmbī); or (d) a rather diffused type, without any obvious concentration but dotting the entire landscape (as was the case with Vaiśālī, Rājagṛha, Mathurā, Ahichhatra and Tilaurakot) (p. 10). That is, as per his analysis, early Buddhism and its monastic sites were totally dependent on the resources of the towns and cities. D. K. Chakrabarti has also

---

15. Ali (1988) also discerns a subtle isomorphism between the Buddhist *Vinaya* discipline and principles of urban and courtly sophistication.

noted a similar pattern in the locational analysis of early monastic sites (1995, 194).

James Heitzman, in 'Early Buddhism, Trade and Empire' (1984), is much more systematic in the analysis of the relationship between the location of the monastic sites, trade and empire and the role played by this triad in the spread of the *Saṅgha* beyond the mid-Ganges valley. He has noted that the foundation of the Mauryan Empire (c. 320-185 BCE) and the resultant political and administrative unification of the larger part of the subcontinent resulted in the flourishing of long distance trade. Thus in an environment of expanding trade linkages and crystallizing state power, Buddhist monasteries, dependent on royal and mercantile patronage, flourished in or around important towns or along the trade routes linking them. Based on the analysis of the locational pattern of the monasteries, he has rejected the earlier model of D. D. Kosambi of direct participation of the monasteries in trade; nonetheless their indirect contribution to trade has been recognized. He has noted that the monasteries provided ideological support to their royal and mercantile patrons, and the three together formed a mutually supportive matrix. Heitzman largely explains the process of the spread of the *Saṅgha* beyond its mid-Gangetic core to the outlying areas: a process in which trade and traders seems to have played no less important a role than the enthusiastic missionary impulse of Aśoka. Indeed in a brilliant article exploring the nature and extent of Aśokan engagements and interventions in the *Saṅgha*, Herman Tieken has observed that in the Schism Edicts (at Kauśāmbī, Sāñcī and Sārnāth), Aśoka is not concerned with the schism in the Buddhist Church (the Universal *Saṅgha* of the Four Quarters) but divisions within local individual *Saṅghas*. This was in line with the contemporary realities, as at that time, the level of organization in Buddhism did not go beyond individual *Saṅghas* (Tieken 2000, 1). But here too, trade had a role in the Aśoka's concerns of preventing the *Saṅghabheda*; 'as a result of the schism many new competing *Saṅghas* could have come into being and a possible source of conflict, which in turn might interrupt the smooth flow of trade' (p. 27).

The role of trade in influencing the location of the monasteries has been documented in the context of early historic Deccan as well, a theme we shall turn to now. In the early 1950s, Kosambi, based on his observations of direct participation of the Chinese Buddhist monasteries in trade, propounded a similar monastic participation in India in general and early historic Deccan in particular. In his approach, monasteries became totally dependent on trade and commerce, and enquiries into their other roles were largely neglected. H. P. Ray has largely built on his model, although with fundamental modifications, in advocating a more dynamic pattern of monastic interactions with the society and economy in early historic Deccan. Her different writings on the functional role of monasteries, over the past twenty years or so, show a remarkable transition: from the earlier emphasis on the dominance of the material factors (trade, agrarian expansion, secondary state formation process in the tribal areas of the Deccan) to the internal dynamics of religion and pilgrimage in determining the fate of monasteries.

The first approach is visible in her *Monastery and Guild* (1986), in which she has emphasized the catalytic role of the monasteries in facilitating the transition from tribal chiefdoms to institutional state in the Deccan. She has noted the location of the monasteries in the fertile upper Godavari and Bhima river valleys and their role in both agriculture and trade (p. 207), as well as the chronological evolution of the functional role of the Sātavāhana period (c. 230 BCE–220 CE) monasteries. Thus in their earliest phase in the Deccan (around the first century BCE), they probably acted as ‘pioneers and as centers providing information on cropping patterns, distant markets, organization of village settlement and trade’ (p. 207) as well as agents for the integrations of the frontier areas for the emerging polities by assisting in the ‘establishment of channels of communications in the newly colonized regions and these channels could be then used by the state to enforce its authority’ (p. 207),<sup>16</sup> and also by ‘providing anchorage in an environment characterized by changing alignment of social ties’ (p. 207). She has also noted that with increasing trade and commerce, the monasteries could have got involved directly in trade and could have accumulated wealth (p. 208). Changes in the rock cut architecture in western Deccan and the shift to exclusive royal patronage in the Gupta–Vākāṭaka period (c.250–510 CE) has also been noted and she has stressed the need to see these changes against the background of socio-economic mutations and a probable realignment in the balance of power between the state, the monasteries and laity (p. 210). Her approach of rejecting any unilinear and *a priori* fixed role of the monasteries is indeed a laudable effort, as well as her approach of seeing the continuous mutations in their roles as result of their interactions with the other societal institutions.

Largely similar arguments have been rearticulated in some of her later writings. Her analysis of functional dimensions of the monastic complexes at Sāñcī and Bhārhut follows her earlier model of ‘frontier integration offered by the monasteries’ and their close linkages with the trade routes. She has argued that the Mauryan line of control of minerally rich Deccan passed through these regions. Attempts of the Mauryan state to get the cooperation of the tribal communities of the Deccan perhaps led to the evolution of a triangular relationship between

---

16. For the similar integrative role of the Thai *Saṅgha* in the tribal northwestern frontier regions of Thailand, see Prasert (1988). This article is immensely important for our purpose. It analyses the three-pronged strategy of the state sponsored Dhammacarika Bhikkhus’ Programme (DBP) in the traditionally shifting cultivation, tribal areas. As part of their integrative strategies, at the individual and household level, monks provide primary healthcare and help villagers and hill tribes to deal with local administration in matters such as taxes, registration for birth and deaths and so on (p. 129). At the community level, their main task is to impart new agrarian technologies, particularly that of wet rice agriculture (p. 129). Besides, they encourage the pilgrimage to local and national Buddhist pilgrimage centres by these hill tribes (p. 129). It has been noted that among those tribals who have been taught at DBP schools, around 85% have already adopted wet rice agriculture (p. 130). In India, the role of Brahmanical temples in the integration of the turbulent frontier regions is well documented (Appadurai 1977, 47–73). Buddhist monasteries, apparently, had similar roles in different parts of India and that should also be explored.

the state, these tribal communities and the monasteries which represented the most institutionally developed form of religion that time (H. P. Ray 1987, 627). She indeed has provided some hints regarding the evolving autonomy of the monasteries *vis-à-vis* trade and towns. It has been noted that initially the monasteries had to be located in either rich agricultural areas or along trade routes where surplus was available to support the monks. Later there was a considerable change: the simple redistributive and reciprocal relationship between the monasteries and the hinterlands altered with the monasteries constantly acquiring greater wealth and evolving into independent socioeconomic institution; a parallel order in society (p. 621).<sup>17</sup> This helps us understand why some monasteries survived and prospered even after the decline of trade and towns, by becoming deeply embedded in the agrarian structure of a given region.

In her *Winds of Change*, Ray has attempted some bold sub-continental generalizations regarding the functional role of the monasteries, although the focus is of course on the peninsula. She has noted the support provided by the monasteries, at different levels, in the phenomenal expansion of trade and commerce in the early historical period (c. BCE 600–CE 400). At the ideological level, she argues, Buddhism exhorted the accumulation and re-investment of wealth in trade and commerce; at the societal level, Buddhist monasteries provided status to the traders and other occupational groups; while at the economic level, the monasteries were repositories of information and necessary skills such as writing and medicine (1994a, 122).<sup>18</sup> She has noted the role played by the monasteries in agrarian expansion in the Sātavāhana Deccan where, except for one land grant to the Brahmins, all other land grants are in favour of the monasteries. In her sub-continental analysis of the location of the monastic centres, she has noted their concentration along the trade routes or near important towns; although she has assigned the absence of the structural remains of monasteries or *stūpas* in areas such as Bengal, Tamilnadu and Kerala to the problems in generating agrarian surplus capable of supporting resident population of monks (p. 143). In a nutshell, she has been largely successful in reconstructing the multiple roles of the monasteries and their diverse linkages with the wider societal processes.

A fundamental paradigm shift is visible in her study of the monastic complex of Kanheri (1994b), located near a suburb of modern Bombay. In contrast to other monastic sites of western Deccan, Kanheri shows a continuous occupation from the first century CE to the tenth century CE. She has probed two fundamental questions in this article: the position of Kanheri within the monasteries of Western Deccan, and factors behind the continued occupation of Kanheri when

17. For a similar analysis of functional autonomy of the Sāñcī monastic complex *vis-à-vis* the nearby urban centres, see Singh (1996).

18. For an impressive analysis of the key role played by Buddhism in the advancement of Indian medicine through its institutionalization in the Buddhist monastery and its role in entailing the transition in Indian medicine from 'magico-religious system' of the Vedic ages to the subsequent 'empirico-rational system' of the later ages, see Zysk (1991).

other sites in the same region show signs of decline after the fifth century CE (p. 37). Based on a study of the votive inscriptions, copper plates and votive *stūpas* built by the pilgrims, she has pointed out that a combination of two fortuitous factors were responsible for the continued prosperity of Kanheri in contrast to other monastic sites of western Deccan: (a) the location of important port towns in the close vicinity of Kanheri (Chaul, Sopora, Kalyan etc), which made possible the continuous flow of mercantile patronage, and (b) its widespread pilgrimage networks, attracting pilgrims from such far off places as Sindh and Bengal (p. 39). Thus maritime trade was important for the fortunes of the site but the role of pilgrimage was not less important.

The autonomy of the monastic centres, *vis-à-vis* trade and towns has been reaffirmed in her recent writings. It has been observed that in the coastal Andhra where most of the early historic monastic sites have been found, only a few urban centres have been identified in archaeological records, and here pilgrimage provided an alternative strategy of mobilization of resources for the monasteries (2003, 264). She has also attempted to construct a hierarchy within the peninsular monasteries on the basis of their size and longevity, but she has largely ignored their spatial linkages with the landscape (p. 260). That notwithstanding, it is a brave departure. Such hierarchizations have been attempted in the study of Buddhist monasteries outside India (Miller 1959, 11–23; Gellner 2003), and even in the case of Brahmanical temples within India (Preston 1992), but this has been a rarity in studies of Indian monastic Buddhism. Hopefully her attempt would inspire further researches in this area as well as in the reconstruction of the pilgrimage geography of major and minor monasteries.

Let us come back to the lower Krishna Godavari delta and examine an important study by H. Sarakar (1987) on the emergence and growth of Buddhist monasteries in the same and their linkages with the process of urbanization. The article begins with a fundamentally important observation that the Buddhist monasteries and *stūpas* formed part of a larger social and economic matrix and should not be studied in isolation (p. 632). He could visualize diverse subsistence bases of the monasteries and their differential strategies in different landscapes in the micro region of Krishna Godavari delta. Thus some monasteries were located near 'agrarian cities' such as Bhattiporulu (p. 635) and depended more on agrarian resources; some were located near port towns and depended more on mercantile patronage; some, such as Nāgārjunakoṇḍa, were located near royal centres, and were built and patronized by the ruling strata; and significantly at such centres Buddhist monasteries shared sacred space with the Brahmanical temples and the monasteries were just one of the institutions from which the ruling strata derived its legitimacy (p. 639). The core conclusion is: even within a micro region, the monasteries had differential roles across time and space.

As noted earlier, we have a flood of literature on the monastic art and architecture, but hardly any study on their societal implications. S. Nagaraju's (1996) study of monastic art and architecture in western Deccan offers a brilliant contrast. He has analysed the phases of monastic architecture in the region and their

societal implications. In the earliest phase, monastic architecture consisted of some isolated cells, with hardly any water storage structure. As these monasteries were located in the drier regions of western Deccan, they had to store water for the use of monks in the non-rainy seasons of the years. Absence of water storage structures has been perceived to represent the phase of *Vassa-vāsa* (p. 302). In the second phase, from around the second century BCE to the third/fourth century CE, both architecture and water cisterns were more developed, being made with lay patronage. With this increased availability of water for the resident monks, greater sedentarization developed. In this period, monasteries attracted the patronage of a cross-section of the society – traders, farmers, artisans as well as royal patrons – and this wide base of patronage was reflected in architectural vibrancy (pp. 304–5). In the next phase (fourth to seventh centuries CE), a gradual narrowing down of the patronage base and exclusive dependence on royal patronage has been noted. Based on the study of cell architecture within the monasteries, emergence of hierarchy within the monk community as well as the functioning of some of the monasteries as educational centres has been postulated (p. 306). In the fourth phase, from the seventh century CE onwards, the pattern was fundamentally different: total dependence on royal patronage; emergence of monasteries as owners of big landed property; further increase in their role as education centres; and, within the monastic complex, further differentiation within the monks, with some of them getting deified and sharing the same precinct with the Buddha (p. 307). His concluding observations are very remarkable:

with land, money, spiritual leadership of the monks and emergence of monasteries as centres for learning we come to a phase in which the Buddhist monasteries began to act as a competitor for power with other sections of the society. We wonder whether this ambition to exercise power without the necessary backing of the social and ideological equipments was responsible for the gradual decline of Buddhism in western India, nay India in general. With the loss of royal patronage as a result of competition in the power game and the consequent depletion of number of clergy, Buddhism simply disappeared from the scene and the laity gradually assimilated themselves in other religious denominations.

(p. 308)

This is fundamentally important for us in perceiving a more pro-active role of the monasteries: not merely a recipient of social patronage but also a source or centre for the interplay of social hegemonies, with monasteries as an institution themselves exercising hegemony, however rudimentary that may be, rather than merely bestowing it to their patrons.

But why was it that only some monasteries could attract royal patronage while others failed to do so? Richard Cohen's (1998) study of the Ajantā complex is important in this context, although the article appears to be primarily concerned with a much larger issue: the localization strategy of the *Saṅgha* when it is try-

ing to establish itself a new area; a process by which the ‘Buddha becomes “of the place” by resolving uniquely local problems’ (p. 362). At Ajantā, the *Saṅgha* worked at two levels simultaneously. The Ajantā monastic complex acted as a stabilizing factor on the troubled frontier region of the Vākāṭaka regime (c. 250–510 CE) hence received a substantial Vākāṭaka patronage (p. 362).<sup>19</sup> At the cultic level, it offered an avenue for the Buddhist cultic integration of the animistic *Nāga* cult (pp. 366–8); another example of what has been earlier referred to as the ‘open frontier between Buddhism and animism’, a phenomenon that has started being documented in studies of Indian Buddhism (Singh 2003).

In the context of early historic India, societal networks and interactions of Buddhist monasteries have been studied mostly in terms of the patronage they attracted and the return which they provided to their patrons; a return which is supposed to be legitimacy and social status. A changing patronage base has also been noted as well as its impact on the fortune of the *Saṅgha*. Thus both Romila Thapar (1992) and Vidya Dehejia (1992) have noted that in the early historic period, the main support base of North Indian monasteries came from the individual traders, merchants, artisans, farmers, monks and nuns, and (in the context of *Sāñci*) collective patronage from some villages. Royal patronage was of course not absent, but was not so significant. Both have noted a dissipating social base of patronage by the beginning of the Gupta period, and both have attributed the decline of Buddhism to this factor (Thapar 1992, 30; Dehejia 1992, 44–5).

Xinriu Liu has brilliantly depicted the dynamic relationship between the monasteries and the laity in the Kuṣāṇa period (c. 30–225 CE) in North and North West India in her *Ancient India and Ancient China* (1988). Two chapters of the book, ‘The Monasteries and the Laity in Kuṣāṇa India’ and ‘Further Changes in the Indian Buddhist Monasteries’ are greatly helpful in illuminating the diverse engagements of monasteries with society and economy, as well as the role of these linkages in doctrinal evolution and institutional innovations in Buddhism. Thus it has been noted that due to thriving trade and commerce and resultant increase in the practice of donation to the *Saṅgha*, the *Saṅgha* got involved in the social economy (p. 104), leading to many innovations. Thus monks owned property and offered donations to the *Saṅgha* (p. 105) and, like individual monks, monasteries too accumulated and owned property: not from the land grants by the ruling dynasty (as was the case in Sātavāhana Deccan) but probably through the patronage of the mercantile community or even through direct participation in trade (p. 107), although she has provided no direct evidence for that. As the value of donations to the *Saṅgha* by the laity increased, donors came to expect more in return, leading to the emergence of the concept of transfer of merit, and ultimately to the evolution of Mahāyāna (p. 108). She has also noted the transition to exclusive royal patronage to the *Saṅgha* in the Gupta period, lessening monastic interactions with the laity compared to the earlier period, and the monastic attempt to

19. For a different perspective, that is, total dependence of the Ajantā complex on the Vākāṭaka patronage for its very survival, see Spink (1992).

maintain the relationship with the laity by the organization of rituals, ceremonies and their public performances and lay participation in the same (p. 133). In her writings a core argument of near total dependence of the *Saṅgha* on trade and commerce is discernible.<sup>20</sup> But what about their role in the agrarian sector? For Sātavāhana Deccan, monastic involvement with both trade and agriculture has already been discussed. It may not be improper to look for a similar role the monasteries in some other parts of India.

As far as the reconstructions of functional relations of the monasteries with the wider societal processes and institutions are concerned, some fundamental paradigm shifts are discernible in recent years. Mention may be made of the works of Gregory Schopen, Julia Shaw and Lars Fogelin. Each of them has unsettled many sacred cows in many ways. While Schopen has formulated his generalizations on the basis of a combined use of archaeological, epigraphical and textual data from Sanskrit *Vinaya* literature, with a greater propensity towards the use of votive inscriptions, Shaw and Fogelin are primarily interested in the archaeological landscape of monasteries to formulate certain micro generalizations regarding the functional relationship between the monastery and the countryside.

Mention must be made of Schopen's (1991) forceful criticism of scholarly obsession with the Pali *Vinaya* and a near total exclusion of all other sources in the study of monastic Buddhism in India. Scholarly preferences for textual sources, he tries to show, is influenced by the 'Protestant presupposition' that 'true religion is to be found only in the Scriptures'. If archaeological and epigraphical data show a contrary picture, they are to be regarded as 'perversion', 'decadence' or 'exception' (p. 4). In the context of early Buddhological scholarly discourse, he has tried to prove this with specific examples of sustained continuation of certain perceptions based on textual sources even when well-known archaeological findings have proved them to be wrong. Textual sources will lead us to expect that monks were to observe strict poverty (a perception propagated by Rhys Davids *et al.*). Schopen, through an in-depth analysis of votive inscriptions, coin and coin mould finds from monasteries, has tried to show that the monks not only inherited their ancestral property (1995a, 108) – a theme he amplifies in another article (1995b) – but were also themselves one of the biggest donors to the *Saṅgha*. Basing his article on a combined use of archaeological and textual data, he attempts to show that:

all of the *Vinayas* as we have them fall squarely in the middle period of Indian Buddhism, between the beginnings of the Common Era and the Year 500 AD. They can not, and do not, tell us what monastic Buddhism 'originally' was, but they do provide almost an overwhelming amount of detail about what it had become by that time. (1995b, 476)

Of course, hardly anybody will have any problem in accepting the notion that two to three centuries might have elapsed between the preaching of the Buddha

20. This approach has been further expanded in Liu (1996). See particularly pp. 49–72.

and final codification of the Pali *Vinaya*, but it is difficult to agree with his assertion that all *Vinayas* fall squarely to the middle period of Indian Buddhism. In another article (1994), he adds a new formulation: it is the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya* which is likely to be the mainstream Indian *Vinaya* as it is the *Vinaya* which shows a greater interaction with Brahmanical, larger Indian concerns. By an analysis of votive inscriptions, he has shown that, contrary to the canonical injunctions (in some *Vinayas*), it was mainly the monks and nuns, and not the laity, who sponsored the production of cultic images. Thus 'from the very appearance in the inscriptions, Mahāyāna was a monk-dominated movement' (1997, 32), and 'not only was the image cult an overwhelmingly a monastic concern, it was also, on the basis of available sources, a monastically initiated cult' (p. 32). If his formulations are corroborated by future researches, we can think of a more diversified world of monastic activities: direct participation in trade; lending of the monastic money on interest and preparing written contracts for the same; greater complexities in the management of monasteries, arising out of the interface between the ecclesiastical laws and the secular laws; and the problems of management of landed estates of monasteries, which Schopen has shown to have begun rather earlier than the generally accepted early medieval phase (c. sixth century CE), and so on. In that case, early medieval mutations in Indian monastic Buddhism will not appear as 'feudal decadence' but as natural evolution of an enduring continuum.

Application of landscape archaeology in understanding the localization strategies of the *Saṅgha* in a particular area has brought certain refreshing paradigm shifts regarding the functional role of the monasteries. Here, mention must be made of the works of Shaw and Fogelin. Around the monastic complex of Sāñcī, John Marshall and Alexander Cunningham have earlier noted a network of dams, but these dams have not been studied in relation to the monastic sites. In her earlier articles (Shaw & Sutcliffe 2000; 2001), based on her archaeological survey in the twenty kilometre radius of the monastic complex, Shaw has analysed the relative positioning of the monasteries, dams and contemporary settlements and cult spots, to gauge the degree of interaction of the monastic sites with the countryside, particularly their role in irrigation and wet rice agriculture. It has been postulated that the introduction of wet rice agriculture was a concomitant result of the introduction of Buddhism in the Sāñcī area, and the monasteries might have taken the pioneering role in making this possible by their active involvement in the construction of the irrigation devices, from the third/second century BCE onwards. In her next article (2003), Shaw has offered some ambitious generalizations for the process of religious change for the whole of South Asia. Based on a comparative study of the active role of monasteries in hydraulic management at Sāñcī, the Junāgarh complex in Gujarat and dry zones of Sri Lanka, it has been asserted that 'the control of water harvesting and irrigational facilities was not only a means of political legitimacy for local rulers, but also formed a central component of the Buddhist Saṅgha's propagation strategies' (Shaw & Sutcliffe 2003, 75). This can be largely corroborated for the dry Trans-Vindhyān regions.

In the context of the Ganges valley, her theory can be accepted only in the sense of a more active role of the *Śaṅgha* on agrarian frontiers.

Fogelin, in his survey of archaeological landscape of the Thotlākoṇḍā monastery (2004), has noted that a single monastery performed multiple roles: functioning as a place for retreats for the monks, and offering economic engagements with the mercantile community and religious engagements with the laity. Such religious engagement was not in terms of the Buddhist doctrines but in the practice and conduct of daily, mundane ritual (p. 377). Needless to repeat, Shaw and Fogelin largely provide the models for future studies on Indian monastic Buddhism. Our focus should not be on grand generalizations but on the localization strategy of individual monasteries, or a group of monasteries, in a select sub-region.

#### EARLY MEDIEVAL MUTATIONS: RECONSTRUCTIONS OF THE HISTORY OF A FADING TRADITION

It is rather amazing to see the turnaround in Indian Buddhism in the early medieval period (c. sixth to early thirteenth centuries CE). For Indian Buddhism, it was a period of contradictory developments: a period when *mahāvihāras* such as Nālandā, Somapura, Vikramaśīlā and Ratnāgiri emerged and attained monumentality, while the same period was marked by a general retraction of Buddhist space across India. It was a period when Indian missionaries largely conquered China, Tibet and parts of Southeast Asia, yet also when, as we are informed by Hsüantsang, Indian Buddhist communities were convinced of the impending disappearance of the faith from India and were anxiously expecting the impending doom of Buddhism: a phenomenon which led to the emergence of 'central Buddhist realms' in many Asian countries which hardly required any spiritual legitimacy from great Buddhist centres of India (Sen 2004, 56). For Indian Buddhism, it was also the period of the emergence of Tantric Buddhism. At the end of this period, we see the disappearance of Buddhism from a significant part of India. This disappearance was so complete that even the name of the Buddha was forgotten by an overwhelming section of Indian population. This has naturally invited sustained scholarly enquiry.

As we have noted in the preceding pages, Buddhist monasteries had diverse linkages with society and the economy in the early historic period, and they not only consumed social surplus but also directly or indirectly contributed to it; and it was owing to these diverse linkages that they survived and thrived. If we observe a crisis of bare survival in Indian Buddhism in the early medieval period, causative factors should not only be attributed to external factors such as Islamic invasions or Brahmanical hostility.<sup>21</sup> We see the re-appearance and prospering of Buddhist monasteries in Central Asia as late as the thirteenth century (Bhatia

21. Ahir (2005) explains the decline of Indian Buddhism in terms of 'Brahmanical propaganda of hatred' and Islamic iconoclasm. This view needs reconsideration.

2002, 179); the lingering of Buddhism in Sindh until the fifteenth century (p. 181); and its continued survival as a living religion in Bengal (Sastri 1897; Chaudhury 1982; Ahmed 1984; Khan 1999),<sup>22</sup> the seat of the biggest Islamization east of the Sutlej. So our focus should shift from external factors to the possible faultiness in the monastic linkages with society and economy. The 'disappearance' of Buddhism cannot be attributed merely to the destruction of the monasteries and the elimination of monks. This is not to deny their role as the institutional nucleus of Buddhism. We have already noted that in the Pol Pot era in Cambodia, amidst a sustained attempt of the communist regime for the physical elimination of the monks and monasteries, Buddhism assumed an extreme apotropaic form, and after the regime changed it quickly reorganized and regrouped itself (Harris 2001). Similar was the case with Jaina temples and monasteries in medieval Gujarat (Jaini 2001, 142). Why could Indian Buddhist monasteries not regroup themselves after the initial shock and holocaust of Islamic attacks? We hear of monks educated at Nālandā going to China and Korea in the late thirteenth to early fourteenth century and offering diverse services to the state.<sup>23</sup> Why could they not do the same thing at home? It has also been suggested that one of the fundamental factors in the decline and disappearance of Buddhism in India was its 'social failure': that it became confined to the monasteries and offered insufficient cultivation of the laity. It has been indeed pointed out by P. S. Jaini (2001, 142–3) that unlike the Jainas, the Buddhists in India hardly devised any code of conduct for its lay adherents.<sup>24</sup> One of the explanations for this apparent monastic apathy towards the laity has been found in the 'fact' that 'Buddhism has nothing to do with lay people and it was never a social movement' (N. N. Bhattacharya 1993, 238). As we have seen in the previous pages, this generalization is not tenable.

22. It has been noted that contemporary Bangladesh has a Buddhist population of around half a million with the main concentration in Chittagong, Comilla and Dhaka districts, that is, basically in the Samatata area (Ahmed 1984, 45). Of these, only the Chittagong area borders Burma. Rather than Samatata's Buddhism coming from Burma, it is more likely that Buddhism went to Burma from Samatata.

23. Waley (1931–32, 372). This remarkable article is based on the translation of a 'political inscription' (1378 CE) on a *stūpa* in a Korean temple, in memory of an Indian monk Dhyānabhadra. The inscription definitely suggests that Buddhism was a living force in fourteenth-century Bengal, Kanchipuram (Tamilnadu), in the Chola kingdom, Jalandhara (the Punjab), at Dvaravatipura (the capital of the Hoyasalas of Karnataka) and probably in Gujarat as well (p. 355). Dhyānabhadra was not a Tantric master but a Mahāyānist. Despite these early and significant writings on the survival of Buddhism after the Turkic destruction of great monastic centres, the theory of the apocalyptic collapse of Buddhism has been internalized in mainstream Indian historiography, owing to some strange reasons, giving us a lopsided impression that Buddhism did not exist outside the monastery.

24. It has been pointed out that in contrast to the Jaina clerics who have written many 'codes of conduct' for the laity, the Buddhists of India could manage only one such detailed 'code', *Upāsakajanālakāra*, and that too not until the eleventh century. Worse, it was not the work of any Indian monk, but was written by a Sinhalese monk in South India, in the Pali language (Jaini 2001, 144).

With reference to the integrative role of the Brahmanical temples in early medieval India, it has been rightly asserted that the rapid growth in the number and network of temples in this period was closely linked, as were the Brahmin dominated *Brahmadeyas* and *agrahāras*, with the formation of sub-regional and regional kingdoms and their legitimization, consolidation of their resource base and forging of linkages across communities for social integration (Chattopadhyaya 1993, 44). As we have seen for the early historic phase, Buddhist monasteries were pioneers in this 'forging of linkages across communities for social integration' in a major part of India. Why did they fail to retain their lead in the early medieval period? Marxist wisdom would attribute this to their failure on the agrarian frontiers and in the detribalization process (Kosambi 1986, 66).

Early medieval 'parasitical monasteries consuming agrarian resources without providing anything in return', have invited the attraction of another Marxist scholar (Sharma 1987, 131). Andre Wink has added the dimensions of long distance overland and maritime trade as well in explaining this phenomenon: that by the eleventh century CE, Islam replaced Buddhism as the 'greatest trading religion of Asia' while the agrarian world within India was gradually lost to the Brahmins by the Buddhists. This simultaneous loss of agrarian and mercantile space precipitated a systemic crisis within Indian Buddhism (Wink 1999, 349–50). 'Agrarian failure' of Buddhism in early medieval India may sound surprising as, in the very same centuries, Buddhist monasteries, by virtue of their institutional management and control over irrigation systems and new agrarian technologies, controlled a significant part of the agrarian sector in Sri Lanka (Gunawardana 1979) and Burma (Hall 1992, 240–45), and emerged as the biggest land owners in these two regions. In early medieval China too, it controlled a significant part of the agrarian sector (Gernet 1995). The claims of Kosambi, Sharma and Wink, therefore, should be carefully assessed.

At the time of the Arab invasion (early eighth century) Buddhism did assume a distinct agrarian colour in Sindh (Bhatia 2002, 164). In Maitraka Gujarat, the old matrix of Buddhism and maritime trade continued at Vallabhī and these monasteries had a very close involvement with the agrarian sector (Sinha 2001, 158). In Tamilnadu, although the agrarian world was gradually lost to the Brahmins and Brahmanical temples, Buddhist monastic associations with port towns and maritime trade continued (Champakalakshmi 1998, 81–2). In Orissa, monasteries kept on attracting lay patronage and pilgrimage, rendering Ratnāgiri 'second only to Bodhgaya as a pilgrimage centre' (Mitra 1983, 31), and there Buddhist monasteries had a 'subterranean survival', surfacing again in the nineteenth century Mahimā Dharma movement (Vasu 1981, 174–5). In the case of early medieval Bengal, a very complex matrix of Buddhism, maritime trade and agrarian expansion developed.<sup>25</sup> At this juncture, it is sufficient to assert that it may be ahistori-

25. For an analysis of this process see Mukharjee (2004, 49–58). She has noted the continued survival of Buddhist maritime network in the northern Bay of Bengal until at least the twelfth century (p. 56). Also see Mukharjee (2006, 25). For a similar analysis of this matrix, with particular

cal to homogenize the functional dimensions of Indian monastic Buddhism for the early medieval period, indeed, for any period. We need micro studies, with a regional perspective, to have a better footing to understand the differential localization and socialization pattern of monasteries across the diverse landscapes.

Unfortunately, this approach is hardly visible in the available macro studies on early medieval Indian Buddhism. Thus Kanai Lal Hazra (1983), in his reconstruction of Buddhism as depicted in the writings of Chinese pilgrims, is more interested in seeing the sectarian affiliations of the monasteries, their arts and doctrines they pursued, but has hardly any concern to see the transition taking place between the periods of Fa-hsien (in India 399–413) and Hsüan-tsang (630–44) and beyond. Lal Mani Joshi begins promisingly and attempts to study certain new themes such as: evidences of royal control over ecclesiastical hierarchy of the *Saṅgha* (2002, 74–5); management of their landed estates by the monasteries; and inter-monastic hierarchy, basically by drawing inferences from one monk controlling many monasteries (p. 75). Long before him, Sukumar Dutt had already proposed that early medieval monastic universities of Bihar and Bengal together formed a hierarchic network (1962, 353); but neither Joshi nor Dutt had delineated a functional basis, and chronological evolution, of the same. Moreover, Joshi, by his assertion that the pattern of endowments to the monasteries as mentioned by Fa-hsien, ‘could be applied in toto’ in understanding the same in the seventh and eighth centuries (2002, 66), largely refuses to recognize the institutional transitions in the *Saṅgha* as per its interactions with geographical and chronological variables.

Ronald Davidson provides a brilliant contrast. He has tried to trace the genesis and trajectory of Tantric Buddhism against the backdrop of the early medieval feudalization of Indian society.<sup>26</sup> In the volatile early medieval period, Davidson argues, Buddhism underwent a great distress due to diverse factors: evaporating mercantile patronage due to decline in the long distance trade and Arab domination of the high seas, rendering it increasingly dependent on royal, feudal patronage (2004, 77–83); lessening participation of women in Buddhism, and ultimately the disappearance of the order of the nuns within the *Saṅgha* (pp. 91–8); militant Śaiva competition; and a serious dent in the ‘previous Buddhist monopoly of dealing with the barbarians, outcastes, tribals, and foreigners’ by the Brahmins who were now willing to travel great distances in search of land and patronage (p. 85). All this resulted in a gradual spatial shrinkage of Buddhism, and its contraction to select areas of strength. Coupled with it was a larger intellectual crisis: Buddhist intellectuals of this age developed an agenda of scepticism, and the epistemology which followed brought it dangerously close to Brahmanism (pp. 95–105). Thus there was a creeping realization within the Indian Buddhist community that their faith was a ‘tradition in duress’ (pp.

---

reference to Southeast Bengal, see Prasad (2007). For an analysis of the continued presence of Buddhist maritime networks in the Bay of Bengal until the twelfth century CE, see Mishra (2005).

26. For a review of Davidson, see Prasad (2006c).

111–12) and the evolution of esoteric Buddhism was the result of adaptations by a ‘tradition in duress’ to feudalism for its very survival. As a result of this adaptation, Buddhism was forced to feudalize itself, leading to the genesis of esoteric, Tantric Buddhism. Davidson then proceeds to examine the differential but inter-related functions of ‘institutional esoterism’, developing within the monasteries (p. 114), and ‘non-institutional esoterism’ of the *Siddhas*. In the centres of institutional esoteric Buddhism, there was a concerted attempt to forge a closer alliance with royalty so as to have greater royal patronage, and owing to this there was great internalization of feudal values and ethos, not only in the management of their landed estates but also in their very rituals and dogmas. The author has noted that there was a close resemblance between the monastic management of their landed estates, control and administration of ‘branch monasteries’ by the ‘mega-monasteries’ like Nālandā and feudal rulers’ management of their landed estates and subordinate *sāmanta-maṇḍala*, that is, network of feudatories (p. 106). The other spectrum of Buddhist esoterism was the ‘non-institutional esoterism’ of the *Siddhas*, the non-conformists. The *Siddhas* gradually made their way to the monasteries and developed a symbiotic relationship with the monks. Within a remarkably short period (mid-seventh to mid-eleventh centuries), esoteric Buddhism produced a voluminous literature, and spread rapidly to Tibet, China and the rest of East Asia. Thus esoteric Buddhism was ‘a tenacious success’ (p. 339) which ‘stemmed the Śaiva tide sweeping up from the South India’, influencing Buddhist traditions beyond India. However, it is difficult to concur with Davidson’s conclusion that Tantric Buddhism, developing within the monasteries, was a ‘tenacious’ success. Not long after the evolution and growth of esoteric Buddhism, Buddhism did disappear from the larger parts of India, and this disappearance can not be solely blamed on ‘Islamic iconoclasm’. We cannot rule out the possibility that some fundamental fault lines might have crept into the esoteric Buddhist pattern of socialization and regional adaptations. Indeed it was in the regions dominated by Tantric Buddhism in the early medieval period – East Bengal and the Swat valley – where medieval Islamization was most spectacular. It will be definitely a promising area for future research to analyse the possible fault lines in the Tantric Buddhist patterns of socialization and localization within a regional framework.

Two regions to be studied carefully to understand the early medieval monastic localization and socialization patterns are Bihar and Bengal, more especially, Bengal. Large parts of Bengal seem to have been hardly touched by Buddhism in the early historic phase and the boundaries of the Buddhist ‘middle country’ (*Madhyadeśa*) ended near Rājamaḥal during the period immediately after the Buddha (Dutt 1962, 103). Buddhism seems to be the first institutional religion to penetrate its swampy jungles, with the monasteries forming a very complex matrix with maritime trade and agrarian expansion in the early medieval period and even earlier; yet the Delta offered the most fertile ground for Islamization in the subsequent medieval period: a period when it becomes an ‘expanding agrarian civilization whose cultural counterpart was the growth of the cult of Allah’;

in which rural mosques made of thatch and wood, 'linked politically to the state and economically to the hinterland' were functioning as a 'nucleus of integration' (Eaton 2001, 35) for integrating various 'tribal' communities to the Islamic Great Tradition. In the vast landmass of South and Southeast Asia, from the Satluj to the Mekong, eastern Bengal is the only land irreversibly lost by the Indic world (Eaton 1994). To what extent, if any, were Buddhist monasteries responsible for leaving this kind of socioeconomic and cultural vacuum, which was later used by Islam? Yet, to our surprise, why in the whole of India, of course barring the Himalayan zone where Buddhism apparently had a different socialization strategy, has Buddhism a continued survival as a living religion only in (southeastern) Bengal? Unfortunately, most available studies, of the sort 'Buddhism in Ancient Bengal' or 'Religion in Ancient Bengal' (N. R. Ray 1994; Chatterji 1985; Niyogi 1967, 50–80; Tripathi 1987, 186–208; Patra 1998), hardly show even an awareness of this enigma.<sup>27</sup> Nearly all of them are concerned with monastic art and architecture and identifications of their locations. Pushpa Niyogi has also offered an analysis of land grants to the monasteries but she has not looked in to the spatial variations in the same. Hardly any of them offer any analysis of the functional role of the monasteries in the society and economy.

B. M. Morrison stands as a brilliant exception. Based on his analysis of Bengal inscriptions (c. fourth to thirteenth centuries CE), he proposes that there were four sub-regions within the Bengal Delta. Central, western and northern sectors of the Delta showed evidences of developed property relations and stratified society; in fact they 'were the heartlands of Brahmanical culture in the Delta' (1980, 38). But in the fourth sub-region, Sylhet-Komilla-Chittagong sector (roughly the region referred to as Samatata in inscriptions), the pattern was fundamentally different. It was more or less a 'frontier' society with relatively sparse population and large uncultivated or forested landscape, a society that has just made the transition to state level polity. Here huge tracts of lands were granted to the Buddhist monasteries or hundreds of Brahmins (p. 35). Here Buddhist monasteries were acting as nuclei of integration, aiding and abetting the transition towards a more complex society. We may add here that his study forces us to leave aside macro generalizations regarding the functional role of Buddhist monasteries in the Bengal Delta, say for example between Somapura *Mahāvihāra* and the Mainamati monastic complex, as they were functioning in different locales

---

27. Some might wonder if the nearness of the above areas to Buddhist Burma is a relevant factor. However, Buddhism has not survived in Assam, which borders Burma, which was a Buddhist country from at least the eighth century CE. Besides, Assam also borders two regions under heavy Vajryāna influence: Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh. Yet Assam does not have living Buddhism. Buddhism survived in Nepal but not in the Mithila area of Bihar that borders Nepal. We should not, therefore, overemphasize the issue of geographical proximity. Had proximity to Burma been such an important factor, then trans-Meghana portions of Bengal would not have seen a rather phenomenal Islamization in the medieval period. In any case, Buddhism had a 'subterranean survival' in Orissa, with no bordering Buddhist land, where it resurfaced in the nineteenth century in the form of the Mahimā Dharma movement.

and interacting with different socioeconomic variables. In his monograph on the Mainamati complex (1974), he has offered an in-depth analysis of the functional role of the same within the Samatata region. He has noted the absence of any settlement site in the immediate neighbourhood of the complex or in the countryside and, in their absence, he has done a hinterland analysis of the complex on the basis of inscriptional evidences to situate it within the Samatata region. He proposes that it was the very hub, the very nucleus of the region. To situate it within the larger spatial context, that is, in the Bengal Delta, he has compared the Mainamati sites with other excavated sites of pre-Muslim Bengal. One may not fully agree with his method that the size of hinterland of a monastery can be estimated by dividing the distance between any two contemporary monastic centres (1974, 129), but his approach, as a whole, is quite refreshing.

The Mainamati monastic complex demands greater research. No doubt it was the political, economic and spiritual nucleus of the early medieval Samatata region. In the same region, as indicated by vase inscriptions of the eighth century CE, we see continued endowments to the monasteries by the newly Sanskritized tribal rulers (G. Bhattacharya 1993; 1996), that is, the monasteries were having some role in the tribal state formations and their legitimizations. In the same centuries, the maritime focus of the Bengal Delta shifts towards the east, towards the Chittagong coast (Chakravarti 2002, 153). And Samatata, unlike most other parts of South Asia, shows a continued tradition of silver coinage. What is the role of the monasteries in this complex matrix? In fact, much more intricate linkages between the early medieval Bengal monasteries and maritime connections are discernible than what we generally perceive. We see one Mahānāvika ('The Great Mariner') Buddhagupta of Raktamṛtikā monastery (Das 1967, 57–8) going to Java; monasteries at the port town of Tāmralipti decline with the decline of the port;<sup>28</sup> whereas they crop up at an emerging inland riverine port-cum-warehousing settlement, Vaṅgasāgara-sambhāṇḍāgārika;<sup>29</sup> and Devaparavata (located somewhere near the Mainamati complex, but yet to be identified in the ground) itself functioned as a port (Chakravarti 2002, 20). But here is a big dilemma for us. When Samatata monasteries were active on the agrarian and maritime frontiers, and were acting as stabilizing factors for the emerging polities, why do we witness the biggest Islamization within Bengal (Eaton 2001, 43) in this sub-region only? More importantly, why within Bengal could Buddhism survive as a living tradition in

28. From the sixth to seventh centuries CE, the port of Tamralipti started declining, and there is no evidence to prove that seafaring merchants used it for maritime adventures from the eighth century CE onwards (Bhattacharya 1998, 164). This is reflected in the decreasing number of monasteries. Fa-hsien saw twenty-two monasteries but Hsüan-tsang could see only ten monasteries (Patra 1998, 203), and later records are silent about the presence of monasteries at Tamralipti.

29. Chakravarti (2002, 145). He has convincingly identified Vaṅgasāgara-sambhāṇḍāgārika, a riverine port with warehousing facilities with Sabhar, twenty-four kilometres northwest of Dhaka, and this place contains *stūpa*- and monastery-like structures.

the medieval period and beyond in Samatata only? Hopefully future researches will unveil some aspects of this vexed problem.

Available studies on early medieval monasteries of Bihar (Prasad 1987; Kumar 1987; Mishra 1998) do not leave any other impression except being compendiums of available information. This is most regretful in the context of B. N. Mishra and Brajmohan Kumar. Mishra in his monumental work has devoted two and a half volumes to the study of such themes as art and architecture, and iconography (one whole volume); reminding us once again the prophetic words of D. K. Chakrabarti:

one should not entertain the idea that nothing more needs to be done at Nālandā. No attempt has been done to study Nālandā as an ancient settlement of which the famous monastery was only a part. (1998, 97)

Hopefully this type of study will provide some insights into the functional relationship between the monastic complex of Nālandā and its immediate neighbourhood.<sup>30</sup> R. K. Chaudhury (1975) has indeed offered some interesting details about the role of the monks of Vikramaśīlā *Mahāvihāra* in the conversion of Tibet to Buddhism, but he has not analysed the support system of the monastery or its interactions with the wider socioeconomic processes.

This contrasts sharply with Thakur's study of Tabo monastery (2001). This monastery had its beginnings in the ninth to tenth centuries and it is continuing as a living institution in the high altitude Lahaul and Spiti region of Himachal Pradesh. He has brilliantly analysed the alignment of trans-Himalayan trade routes and the monastic involvement with the trade passing through them; the pattern of land grants to the monastery and its participation in the peasant economy; and the role played by the monastery in the cultic integration of the pre-Buddhist Bon religion. He has been largely successful in tracing the variegated functions performed by the monastery, a multiplicity which ensures its continued survival. We need more studies of individual monasteries in other parts of India.

## CONCLUSION

Needless to say, what has been attempted in the previous pages is indeed a bird's eye overview of studies, in the past hundred years, in the societal linkages of Indian monastic Buddhism. It may not be a good idea to offer any grand generalization on the basis of this. However, some suggestions can of course be proffered. It is time to acknowledge that Buddhist monastic practices in India cannot be reduced to the injunctions of different *Vinaya* texts. To analyse the trajectories of the complex functional matrix that monasteries created or were

---

30. For an analysis of relationship of Nālandā *Mahāvihāra* with its immediate landscape, see Prasad (2008). I have undertaken a village-to-village archaeological survey in the ten kilometre radius of the *Mahāvihāra* to situate it in its immediate neighbourhood.

a part thereof, a better approach may be to see the interaction between text and context. Buddhism was one of the earliest world religions, yet it has developed remarkable local colours across the vast landmass of Asia. This 'localization' process, what has been earlier referred to as 'translation in the local idiom', has been well documented in the case of many Asian countries, but it has barely begun for India. Future researches on the functional dimensions of Indian monastic Buddhism will have to negotiate one core issue: how does the *Saṅgha* localize at a particular place, yet retain its supra-local character? To analyse the twists and turns of this supralocal-local dialectic, shifting the focus away from the *Ārya-caturdiśa-bhikṣu-saṅgha*, ('Universal) Noble *Saṅgha* of the Four Quarters' to the individual monastery in its spatial context may not be a bad idea. This will entail a greater use of archaeological data and archaeological fieldwork. Archaeology provides an important method for investigating the broader societal context of monastic Buddhism. But the trick is, as earlier pointed out by Lars Fogelin (2004, 377), to study the monasteries by looking beyond them by examining the smaller, non-monastic archaeological sites that surround the monastery; and seeing the monastic interactions and engagements with them. This may be combined with an analysis of important inscriptional and textual records associated with that particular monastery. That will provide a clue to the immediate local context of a single monastery as well as its place in the wider Buddhist world. That will enable us to have a micro understanding of the process by which the Buddhist monastic tradition localizes at any particular place; the monastic pattern of resource mobilization and other survival strategies; and also of factors behind the decay and disappearance of monastic tradition from that place.

#### ABBREVIATIONS

DN.	<i>Dīgha Nikāya</i> , Pali Text Society
Mil.	<i>Milindapañha</i> , Pali Text Society
Vin.	<i>Pali Vinaya</i> , Pali Text Society

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ahir, D.C. 2005. *Buddhism Declined in India: How and Why*. Delhi: BR Publishers.
- Ahmed, N. 1984. *Discover the Monuments of Bangladesh*. Dhaka: University Press Limited.
- Ali, Daud. 1988. 'Technologies of the Self: Courtly Artifice and Monastic Discipline in Early India'. *Journal of Economic and Social History of Orient* 41: 159–84. doi:10.1163/1568520982601322
- Allen, M. R. 1973. 'Buddhism without Monks: The Vajrayana Religion of the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley'. *South Asia* 2: 1–14.
- Almond, Philip. 1988. *The British Discovery of Buddhism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Appadurai, Arjun. 1977. 'Kings, Sects and Temples in South India, 1350–1700 AD'. *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 14(1): 47–73. doi:10.1177/001946467701400103
- Bapat, P.V. 1972. *2500 Years of Buddhism*. Delhi: Publications Division, Govt. of India.
- Bhatia, M.L. 2002. 'Identifying Buddhism in Early Islamic Sources of Sindh'. *Buddhist Studies Review* 19(2): 143–63.

- Bhattacharya, A. 1998. 'Trade Routes of Ancient Bengal'. In *History and Archaeology of Eastern India*, ed. A. Dutta, 200-212. Delhi: Books and Books.
- Bhattacharya, G. 1993. 'An Inscribed Metal Vase, Most Probably from Chittagong'. In *South Asian Archaeology 1991: Proceedings of the Eleventh International Conference of the Association of South Asian Archaeologists in Western Europe held in Berlin 1-5 July 1991*, eds A. J. Gail & G. J. R. Mevissen, 323-38. Stuttgart: G. J. R. Verlag.
- Bhattacharya, G. 1996. 'A Preliminary Note on the inscribed Metal Vase from the National Museum of Bangladesh'. In *Explorations in the Art and Archaeology of South Asia: Essays Dedicated to N. G. Majumdar*, ed. D. Mitra, 237-46. Calcutta: Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, Govt. of West Bengal.
- Bhattacharya, N. N. 1981. *History of Researches on Indian Buddhism*. Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal.
- Bhattacharya, N. N. 1993. *Buddhism in the History of India Ideas*. Delhi: Manohar.
- Bluck, Robert 2002. 'The Path of the Householder: Buddhist lay Disciple in the Pali Canon'. *Buddhist Studies Review* 19(1): 1-18.
- Carrithers, Michael. 1983. *The Forest Monks of Sri Lanka: An Anthropological and Historical Study*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Chakrabarti, D. K. 1995. 'Location of Buddhist Sites as Influenced by Political and Economic Factors'. *World Archaeology* 27(2): 185-502.
- Chakrabarti, D. K. 1998. *The Issues in East Indian Archaeology*. Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal.
- Chakravarti, Ranabir. 2002. 'Vaṅgasāgara-sambhāṇḍāgārika: A Riverine Trade Centre in Early Medieval Bengal'. In his *Trade and Traders in Early Indian Society*, 142-69. Delhi: Manohar.
- Chakravarti, Uma. 1996. *The Social Dimensions of Early Buddhism*. Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal.
- Champakalakshmi, R. 1998. 'Buddhism in Tamilnadu: Patterns of Patronage'. In her *Buddhism in Tamilnadu, Collected Papers*, 69-96. Chennai: Institute of Asian Studies.
- Chatterji, Rama. 1985. *Religion in Bengal during Pala and Sena Time*. Calcutta: Punthi Pustaka.
- Chattopadhyaya, B. D. 1990. *Aspects of Rural Settlements and Rural Society in Early Medieval India*. Calcutta: KP Bagchee.
- Chattopadhyaya, B. D. 1993. 'Historiography, History and Religious Centers: Early Medieval North India, circa AD 700-1200'. In *Gods, Guardians and Lovers: Temple Sculptures from North India, AD 700-1200*, eds Visakha N. Desai & D. Mason, 33-47. Ahmedabad: Mapin Publishing Company.
- Chattopadhyaya, B. D. 2003. 'Reappearance of the Goddess or Brahmanical Mode of Appropriation: Some Early Epigraphical Data Bearing on Goddess Cult'. In his *Studying Early India*, 172-190. Delhi: Permanent Black.
- Chaudhury, R. K. 1975. *The University of Vikramasila*. Patna: Bihar Puravid Parishad.
- Chaudhury, Sukomal. 1982. *Contemporary Buddhism in Bangladesh*. Calcutta: Atisha Memorial Publishing Society.
- Clarke, Shayne. 2004. 'Vinaya Mātrkā: Mother of All Monastic Codes or Just another Set of Lists? A Response to Frauwallner's Handling of the Mahāsāṅghika Vinaya'. *Indo-Iranian Journal* 47: 77-120. doi:10.1023/B:INDO.0000044607.76272.3d
- Cohen, Richard S. 1998. 'Naga, Yakshini, the Buddha: Local Deities and Local Buddhism at Ajanta'. *History of Religion* 37(4): 360-400. doi:10.1086/463514
- Coningham, Robin A. E. 1995. 'Monks, Caves and Kings: A Reassessment of the Nature of Early Buddhism in Sri Lanka'. *World Archaeology* 27(2): 222-42.
- Conze, Edward. [1951] 1957. *Buddhism: Its Essence and Development*. Oxford: Bruno Cassirer.
- Das, S. R. 1967. *An Interim Report on Excavations at Rājībāḍīdāṅgā and Terracotta Seals and Sealings*. Calcutta: Asiatic Society.
- Davidson, Ronald M. 2004. *Indian Esoteric Buddhism: A Social History of the Tantric Movement*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Davis, Winston. 1989. 'Buddhism and the Modernization of Japan'. *History of Religion* 28(4): 304-39. doi:10.1086/463163
- De, Gokuldas. 1955. *Democracy in the Buddhist Sangha*. Calcutta: University of Calcutta Publication.
- Dehejia, Vidya. 1992. 'The Collective and Popular Basis of Early Buddhist Patronage: Sacred Monuments, BC 100-AD 250'. In *The Powers of Art: Patronage in Indian Culture*, ed. Barbara S. Miller, 35-50. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

- Dutt, S. 1962. *Buddhist Monks and Monasteries in India: Their History and their Contribution to the Indian Culture*. London: George Allen & Unwin.
- Dutt, S. [1924] 1984. *Early Buddhist Monachism*, Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal.
- Eaton, Richard M. 1994. *The Rise of Islam and Bengal Frontier*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Eaton, Richard M. 2001. 'Who are the Bengal Muslims? Conversions and Islamisation in Bengal'. In *Understanding Bengal Muslims*, ed. R. Ahmed, 26–51. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Erdosy, G. 1987. 'Early Historical Cities of North India'. *South Asian Studies* 3: 1–23.
- Fogelin, Lars. 2004. 'Sacred Architecture, Sacred Landscape: Early Buddhism in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh'. In *Archaeology as History in Early South Asia*, ed. H. P. Ray & Carla M. Sinopaly, 376–91. New Delhi: Aryan Book International.
- Frauwallner, E. 1956. *The Earliest Vinaya and the Beginnings of the Vinaya Literature*. Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente.
- Gangopadhyaya, Jayeeta. 1986. *Upostha Ceremony: The Earliest Traditions and Later Developments, Mainly from the Vinaya Traditions Preserved in Chinese*. Varanasi and Delhi: Bharatiya Vidya Prakashana.
- Geddes, Arthur. 1982. 'Some Geographical Factors in Indian History'. In *Man and Land in South Asia*, ed. A. T. A. Learmonth et al., 91–112. Delhi: Concept Publishing Company and Indian Council for Social Science Research.
- Gellner, David N. 2003. 'The Newar Buddhist Monastery: an Anthropological and Historical Typology'. In his *The Anthropology of Buddhism and Hinduism*, 134–8. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Gellner, David N. 2003. 'What Is Anthropology of Buddhism About'. In his *The Anthropology of Buddhism and Hinduism, Weberian Themes*, 45–60. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Gernet, Jacques. 1995. *Buddhism in Chinese Society: An Economic History from the 5th to 10th Centuries AD*. English translation by Franciscus Verrelen. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Gokhale, B. G. 1994a. 'Early Buddhism and Urban Revolution'. In his *New Light on Early Buddhism*, 43–57. Bombay: Popular Prakashana.
- Gokhale, B. G. 1994b. 'The Sangha and the Laity'. In his *New Light on Early Buddhism*, Bombay, 13–24. Bombay: Popular Prakashana.
- Gombrich, Richard. 1988. *Theravada Buddhism. A Social History from Ancient Benaras to Modern Colombo*. London: Routledge.
- Gombrich, Richard. 2002. *How Buddhism Began: The Conditioned Genesis of Early Teachings*, 2nd edn. Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal.
- Gunawardana, R. A. L. H. 1979. *Robe and Plough: Monasticism and Economic Interest in Early Medieval Sri Lanka*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.
- Haladar, S. M. 2004. 'The Robe and the Throne: An Analysis of the Symbiotic Relationship between Buddhism and the State in Ancient Sri Lanka'. *Indian Historical Review* 31(1–2): 18–30.
- Hall, Kenneth R. 1992. 'Buddhism as an Economic Force in Pagan Burma'. In *The Cambridge History of South East Asia*, vol. I., ed. Nicholas Tarling, 240–45. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hardy, R. Spence. [1860] 1989. *Eastern Monachism: An Account of the Origin, Laws, Discipline, Sacred Writings, Mysterious Rites, Religious Ceremonies and Present Circumstances of the Order of Mendicants Founded by the Buddha*. Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications.
- Harris, Ian. 2001. 'Buddhist Sangha Groupings in Cambodia'. *Buddhist Studies Review* 18(1): 73–106.
- Hazra, K. L. 1983. *Buddhism in India as Described by Chinese Pilgrims, AD 399–689*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal.
- Heitzman, J. 1984. 'Early Buddhism, Trade and Empire'. In *Studies in Archaeology and Palaeoanthropology of South Asia*, eds G. L. Possal & K. Kennedy, 121–32. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Jaini, P. S. 2001. 'The Disappearance of Buddhism and the Survival of Jainism in India: A Study in Contrast'. In his *Collected Papers on Buddhist Studies*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass. Originally published in *Studies in History of Buddhism*, ed. A. K. Narain, 81–91 (Delhi: B. R. Publisher, 1980).
- Jayaswal, K. P. 1967. *Hindu Polity*, 4th edn. Bangalore: Bangalore Print & Publishing Company.
- Joshi, L. M. [1967] 2002. *Studies in the Buddhist Culture of India during the Seventh and Eight Centuries AD*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Khan, A. M. 1999. *The Maghs: A Buddhist Community in Bangladesh*. Dhaka: University Press Limited.
- Kern, J. H. C. [1896] 1989. *Manual of Indian Buddhism*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

- Kosambi, D. D. 1986. 'The Decline of Buddhism in India'. In his *Exasperating Essays: Exercises in the Dialectical Method*. Pune: Peoples' Book House.
- Kumar, B. M. 1987. *Archaeology of Pataliputra and Nalanda*. Delhi: Ramanand Vidyabhavan.
- Lamotte, E. 1988. *History of Indian Buddhism: From the Origins to the Saka Era*, S. Webb Boin (trans.). Louvain-la-neuve: Publications De L'institut Orientaliste De Louvain.
- Ling, Trevor O. 1973. *The Buddha: Buddhist Civilisation in India and Ceylon*. London: Temple Smith.
- Ling, Trevor O. 1979. *Buddha, Marx and God: Some Aspects of Religion in the Modern World*, 2nd edn. London: Macmillan.
- Liu Xinriu. 1988. *Ancient India and Ancient China: Trade and Religious Exchange, AD 1-600*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Liu Xinriu. 1996. *Silk and Religion: an Exploration in to the Material Life and Thought of the People, AD 600-1200*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Lopez, Donald S., ed. 1995. *Buddhism in Practice*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Mabbett, Ian & Greg Bailey. 2003. *The Sociology of Early Buddhism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- McMohan, David. 1998. 'Orality, Writing and Authority in South Asian Buddhism: Visionary Literature and the Struggle for Legitimacy in Mahayana'. *History of Religion* 37(3): 249-74. doi:10.1086/463504
- Miller, Robert James. 1959. *Monasteries and Cultural Change in Inner Mongolia*. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz Press.
- Mishra, B. N. 1998. *Nalanda*, vols I-III. Delhi: DK Printworld.
- Mishra, Umakant. 2005. *Buddhism and Maritime Networks in Early Medieval Orissa*. Unpublished PhD thesis, Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.
- Mitra, Debala. 1983. *Ratnagiri (1958-1961): Memoir of Archaeological Survey of India*, no. 80, vol. 2. New Delhi: Director General of Archaeology, Archaeological Survey of India.
- Monier-Williams, Monier. 1889. *Buddhism, in its Connections with Hinduism and in Its Context with Christianity*. New York: Macmillan.
- Morrison B. M. 1974. *Lālmāi: A Cultural Centre in Early Bengal*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press.
- Morrison, B. M. [1970] 1980. *Political Centre and Cultural Regions in Early Bengal*. Jaipur: Vikash Publishers (Indian edition).
- Mukharjee, Rila. 2004. 'Rice Culture of Divine Right in a Celestially Ordered Zone: A Case Study of South Asian and South-East Asian Ideologies and Hegemonies from c. 2000 BC to c. 1800 AD with Specific Reference to Bengal'. *Revista Lusofona de Ciências Sociais* 1: 49-58.
- Mukharjee, Rila. 2006. *Strange Riches: Bengal in the Mercantile Map of South Asia*. Delhi: Foundation Books.
- Nagaraju, S. 1996. 'From Spirituality to Power: A Millennium of Buddhist Monastic Architecture as A Mirror of Social History'. In *Buddhism in India and Abroad: An Integrated influence in Vedic and Post Vedic Perspective*, ed. K. Sankaranasayan et al., 301-14. Mumbai & New Delhi: Sommaiya Publishers.
- Nattier, J. J. & C. S. Prebish. 1976-7. 'Mahāsaṅghika Origins'. *History of Religions* 16: 237-72.
- Niyogi, Pushpa. 1967. *Buddhism in Ancient Bengal*. Calcutta: Jijnasa.
- O'Connor, Richard A. 1993. 'Interpreting the Thai Religious Change: Temples, Sangha Reform and Social Change'. *Journal of South East Asian Studies* 24(2): 330-39.
- Oddie, Geoffry A. 1998. *Religious Transformations in South Asia; Interactions and Change*. Surrey: Curzon Press.
- Omvedt, Gail. 2003. *Buddhism in India: Challenging Brahmanism and Caste*. Delhi: Sage.
- Pande, G. C. 1957. *Studies in the Origins of Buddhism*. Allahabad: University of Allahabad.
- Patra, Chitaranjan. 1998. 'Spread of Buddhism in Bengal'. In *History and Archaeology of Eastern India*, ed. A. Dutta, 200-212. Delhi: Books and Books.
- Prasad, R. C. 1987. *The Archaeology of Champa and Vikramashila*. Delhi: Ramananda Vidyabhavan Publisher.
- Prasad, Birendra Nath. 2006a. 'Cultural Communications in Early Medieval India: Some Preliminary Observations'. *Prajna Bharati*, Journal of K. P. Jayaswal Research Institute, Patna 12: 27-49.
- Prasad, Birendra Nath. 2006b. 'Dilemmas of Revival of Buddhism in India'. *Indian International Journal of Buddhist Studies* (Varanasi) 7: 171-5.

- Prasad, Birendra Nath. 2006c. 'Tantric Buddhism as Sacralised *Samanta* Feudalism in Early Medieval India', a review of Ronald M. Davidson's *Indian Esoteric Buddhism: A Social History of the Tantric Movement*. *Social Science Probings* 18(2): 147–9.
- Prasad, Birendra Nath. 2007. 'Monarchs, Monasteries and Trade on an "Agrarian Frontier": Early Medieval Samatata-Harikela Region, Bangladesh'. Paper presented at an international conference jointly organized by South and South East Asian Association for the Study of Religion, Delhi, and Institute of Language and Culture, Mahidol University, 24–7 May 2007, Bangkok.
- Prasad, Birendra Nath. 2008. 'Nalanda and its Archaeological Landscape'. Paper presented at an international seminar on 'Changing Methodologies and Perspectives in South Asian Archaeology', 5–8 April, KP Jayaswal Research Institute, Patna.
- Prasert, Sanit Wongs. 1988. 'Impact of the Dhammacarika Bhikku's Programme on the Hill Tribes of Thailand'. In *Ethnic Conflict in the Buddhist Societies: Sri Lanka, Burma and Thailand*, ed. K. M. Desilva et al., 126–37. London: Pinter Publications.
- Prebish, Charles S. [1975] 2002. *Buddhist Monastic Discipline*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Preston, James J. 1992. 'Sacred Centres and Symbolic Networks in India'. In *The Realm of the Sacred*, ed. S. Mahapatra, 79–112. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Ray, H. P. 1986. *Monastery and Guild: Commerce under the Satavahanas*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Ray, H. P. 1987. 'Bharahut and Sanchi: Nodal Points in Commercial Exchange'. In *Archaeology and History, Essays in Honour of A. Ghosh*, eds B. M. Pande & B. D. Chattopadhyaya, 621–9. Delhi: Agam Kala Prakashana.
- Ray, H. P. 1994a. *The Winds of Change: Buddhism and the Maritime Links of Early South Asia*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Ray, H. P. 1994b. 'Kanheri: The Archaeology of an Early Buddhist Pilgrimage Site in Western India'. *World Archaeology* 26(1): 35–46.
- Ray, H. P. 2003. *The Archaeology of Sea Faring in Ancient South Asia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ray, N. R. 1994. *History of the Bengali People*, J. W. Hood (trans.). Calcutta: Orient Longman.
- Ray, Reginald A. 1994. *Buddhist Saints in India: A Study in Buddhist Values and Orientations*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Rhys Davids, C. A. F. 1931. *Sakya or Buddhist Origins*. London: Kegan Paul.
- Rhys Davids, T. W. 1934. *Outlines of Buddhism: A Historical Sketch*. London: Methuen & Company.
- Rhys Davids, T. W. [1932] 1978. *Manual of Buddhism*. Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal.
- Rhys Davids, T. W. [1903] 2005. *Buddhist India*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Sarakar, H. 1987. 'Emergence and Growth of Urban Centers in Early Historic Andhradeśa'. In *Archaeology and History, Essays in Honour of A. Ghosh*, eds B. M. Pande & B. D. Chattopadhyaya, 631–41. Delhi: Agam Kala Prakashana.
- Sarao, K. T. S. 1990. *Urban Centres and Urbanisation as Reflected in Pali Vinaya and Sutta Piṭakas*. Delhi: Vidyanidhi Publishers.
- Sastri, Hara Prasad. 1897. *Discovery of Living Buddhism in Bengal*. Calcutta: Sanskrit Press Depository.
- Schopen, Gregory. 1991. 'Archaeology and Protestant Presuppositions in the Study of Indian Buddhism'. *History of Religion* 31(1): 1–23. doi:10.1086/463253
- Schopen, Gregory. 1994. 'Doing Business for the Lord: Lending on Interest and Written Loan Contracts in the Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya'. *Journal of American Oriental Society* 114(4): 527–54. doi:10.2307/606161
- Schopen, Gregory. 1995a. 'Monastic Law Meets the Real World: A Monk's Continuous Right to Inherit Family Property in Classical India'. *History of Religion* 35(2): 101–23. doi:10.1086/463416
- Schopen, Gregory. 1995b. 'Deaths, Funerals and Division of Property in a Monastic Code'. In *Buddhism in Practice*, ed. Donald S. Lopez, 473–502. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Schopen, Gregory. 1997. *Bones, Stones and Tools: Collected Papers on the Archaeology, Epigraphy and Text of Monastic Buddhism in India*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press.
- Scott, David. 1995. 'Buddhist Functionalism: Instrumentality Reaffirmed'. *Asian Philosophy* 5(2): 127–49.
- Sen, Tanasen. 2004. *Buddhism, Diplomacy and Trade; Realignment of Sino-Indian Relations, 600–1400*. Delhi: Manohar.

- Sharma, R. S. 1983. *Material Culture and Social Formation in Ancient India*. Delhi: Macmillan.
- Sharma, R. S. 1987. *Urban Decay*. Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal.
- Shaw, Julia & J. Sutcliffe. 2000. 'Sanchi and its Archaeological Landscape: Buddhist Monasteries, Settlements and Irrigation Work in Central India'. *Antiquity* 74: 775–96.
- Shaw, Julia & J. Sutcliffe. 2001. 'Ancient Irrigation Works in the Sanchi Area: An Archaeological and Hydrological Investigation'. *South Asian Studies* 17: 55–75.
- Shaw, Julia & J. Sutcliffe. 2003. 'Water Management, Patronage Networks and Religious Change: New Evidence from the Sanchi Dam Complex and Counterparts in Gujarat and Sri Lanka'. *South Asian Studies* 19: 73–104.
- Singh, Upinder. 1996. 'Sanchi : The History of Patronage of an Ancient Buddhist Establishment'. *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 33(1): 1–35. doi:10.1177/001946469603300101
- Singh, Yogendra. 2003. 'Influence of Naga Worship in Buddhist Art'. In *Interactions between Buddhist and Brahmanical Art*, ed. R. C. Sharma, 30–35. New Delhi: D. K. Printworld.
- Sinha, Nandini. 2001. 'Early Maitrakas, Landgrant Charters and Regional State Formation in Early Medieval Gujarat'. *Studies in History* n.s. 17(2): 151–63.
- Sontheimer, G. D. 1993. *Pastoral Deities in Western India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Sontheimer, G. D. 1994. 'The Vana and the Kshetra: The Tribal Background of some Famous Cults'. In *Religion and Society in Eastern India*, ed. G. C. Tripathy & H. Kulke, 117–64. Delhi: Manohar Publishers.
- Spink, Walter M. 1992. 'Before the Fall: Pride and Pity at Ajanta'. In *The Powers of Art: Patronage in Indian Culture*, ed. Barbara S. Miller, 65–77. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Spiro, Melford E. 1971. *Buddhism and Society: A Great Tradition and its Burmese Vicissitudes*. London: George Allen & Unwin.
- Suksamran, S. 1977. *Political Buddhism in South East Asia: The Role of the Sangha in the Modernization of Thailand*, ed. with intro. Trevor O. Ling. London: C. Hurst.
- Tambiah, S. J. 1976. *The World Conqueror and the World Renouncer: A Study of Buddhism and Polity in Thailand against a Historical Background*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tambiah, S. J. 1984. *Buddhist Saints of Forests and the Cult of Amulets*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Thakur, Laxman S. 2001. *Buddhism in the Western Himalaya: A Study of Tabo Monastery*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Thapar, Romila. 1992. 'Patronage and Community'. In *The Powers of Art: Patronage in Indian Culture*, ed. Barbara S. Miller, 19–34. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Thomas, E. J. [1927] 1983. *Life of the Buddha as Legend and History*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Tieken, Herman. 2000. 'Asoka and the Buddhist Sangha: A Study of Asoka's Schism Edicts and Minor Rock Edicts'. *Bulletin of School of Oriental and African Studies* 63(1): 1–30.
- Tripathi, R. K. 1987. *Social and Religious Aspects of Bengal Inscriptions*. Calcutta: Firma KLM.
- Varma, V. P. 1973. *Early Buddhism and its Origins*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal.
- Vasu, N. N. [1911] 1981. *Archaeological Survey of Mayurbhanja*. Delhi: Rare Reprints Publications.
- Waley, Arthur. 1931–32. 'New Light on Buddhism in Medieval India'. *Melanges Chinols et bouddhiques*. <http://ccbs.ntu.edu.tw/FULLTEXT/JR-MEL/waley1.htm> (accessed Apr. 2008).
- Weber, Max. [1916] 1992. *The Religion of India: The Sociology of Hinduism and Buddhism*, ed. and trans. H. H. Gerth & D. Martindale. Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal.
- Wedemeyer, Christian K. 2001. 'Tropes, Typologies and Turnarounds: A Brief Genealogy of Tantric Buddhism'. *History of Religion* 41: 223–59. doi:10.1086/463634
- Wink, Andre. 1999. *Al-Hind: The Making of the Indo-Islamic World*, vol. II. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Wolf, Thom. 2007. 'Buddhism in the 21st Century: Three Challenges'. In *Buddhism and the Contemporary World: An Ambedkarian Perspective*, eds B. Mungekar & A. S. Rathore, 29–48. Delhi: Bookwell Publishers.
- Zelliot, E. 1992. *From Untouchable to Dalit: Essays on the Ambedkar Movement*. Delhi: Manohar.
- Zysk, G. 1991. *Asceticism and Healing in Ancient India: Medicine in the Buddhist Monastery*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.