

**Buddhist Deccan Inscriptions & Their Philosophical Influence:
with Special Reference to the Cetika/Cetiya & Aparsaila/Aparseliya Schools**

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Introduction:

The word Deccan is used to denote the region between River Narmada and River Krishna. Scholars like James Burgess, Percy Brown, R.G. Bhandarkar, V.V. Mirashi, Shobhana Gokhale, Vidya Dahejia, S. Nagraju, Ajaymitra Shastri etc., had worked a lot on various aspects of the different sources. They have contributed a lot in framing the History of Buddhism of this particular region.

Buddhism was introduced in Deccan in the time of Asoka. *Dipavamsa* and *Mahavamsa* state that third Buddhist Council was held in the reign of Asoka. Mogaliputta Tissa was its president. After the Council Mahasthivira Tissa sent monks for preaching Buddhism in different part. *Dipavamsa* states that Mahadharmarakshita was sent to Maharashtra¹.

As Buddhism spread in Deccan and the number of Buddhist monks increased, the need of *Viharas* for their residence, of *Caityas* for their prayers and of *Stupas* for their worship began to be felt, and they were excavated and carved in the hills of Deccan. Gautamiputra Satakarni, Pulumavi, Yajna Satakarni and some other Satavahana kings got caves excavated and donated them to the monks at Nasik, Kanheri, Karle and other places. So did also their feudatories and Zamindars and also commoners patronise Buddhism in the two or three centuries before and after Christ. Still Deccan is very rich in Buddhist monuments. There are number of Buddhist monuments of ancient times spread all over this region like Ajanta, Nagarjunakonda, Karle, Bhaje etc. These were the very important centres in ancient times which had played a very important role in the growth and development of Buddhism and are still playing important role as a source of History of Buddhism.

Contemporary Epigraphical evidences in the different Buddhist Caves show that different sects flourished in different area of Deccan. *Cetika* or *Cetiya* School is mentioned at Amaravati² and also in the Nasik Cave. *Aparasaila* School is mentioned in the Nagarjunakonda³ and Kanheri.

Vinitadeva and the author of the *Bhiksuvarsagraprccha* divided the eighteen sects in to five group thus mentions Schools of *Mahasanghika* comprising *Purvasaila* and *Aparasaila*.⁴ Taranath in his 42nd Chapter has identified the different names of schools in the lists of Bhavya, Vasumitra, Vinitadeva and others and identified *Cetiya* School (*Cetiya – Purvasaila - Schools of Mahadeva*)⁵

Though influence of different schools of Buddhism can be seen in inscriptional evidences it will be difficult to say that particular area had an influence of particular school or particular school influenced the architecture of the cave.

In this paper I intend to study , whether the school of *Cetiya* and *Aparasaila* which are found in inscriptions at Rock-cut caves of Kanheri near Mumbai and Nasik 172 km

¹ *Dipavamsa*, ed. by Ramkumara Tripathi, Varanasi, 1996, pg. 122, 8.8

² *Epigraphica Indica*, X, Luders list pg. 143, 147, also on 148.

³ *Ibid*, XX pg. 17, 21

⁴ Dutt, Nalinaksha, *Buddhist Sects in India*, Motilal Banarsidas, Delhi, 1978, Pg. 49

⁵ *Ibid*.

from Mumbai in the present day Maharashtra state had influenced the Rock-cut architecture.

About Satavahana Dynasty

Among the dynasties, which rose into prominence in Trans-Vindhyan India during the Post-Mauryan period, the Satavahanas, who ruled for nearly three to Four Centuries became very prominent and their contribution to the political and socio-religious history of India was significant. The date of the commencement of the 'Satavahana' rule in the Deccan forms one of the most debated and yet unsettled problems of ancient Indian history, while some historians are inclined to place this event sometimes in the latter half of the third C.B.C. , soon after the Asoka. Others relate it to about the middle or the latter half of the 1st C.B.C. The Capital of the Satavahana Empire was Pratisthan which has been identified with Paithan on the bank of Godavari River in Aurangabad District of Maharashtra. They ruled Deccan until 2nd -3rd Cent. A.D.

About the Cetika/Cetiya School and Aparsaila School:

*Dipavamsa*⁶ and *Mahavamsa*⁷ mention these sects of Buddhism. Xuan Xang the Chinese traveller who visited India during 7th C.A.D. also recorded in his account a convent called *Aparasaila* near Dhenukakata in Andhra Pradesh.⁸ The First Epoch-Sinhalese traditions in the *Dipavamsa* (4th Cent. A.D.) Buddhaghosa in his introduction to the commentary on the Kathavatthu added six sects to the list of *Dipavamsa*, viz. *Rajagrikas*, *Siddhatthikas*, *Pubbaseliyas*, *Aparaseliyas*, *Haimavata* and *Vajiriya*, grouping the first four under the *Andhakas*.⁹

Taranath in his 42nd Chapter furnishes us with very important identifications of the different names of the schools appearing in the lists of Bhavya, Vasumitra, Vinitadeva and others. After reproducing the several lists, he gives the following identifications¹⁰:

1. *Kasyapiya-Suvarsha*
2. *Samkrantivadin- Uttariya- Tamrasatiya*.
3. *Cetiya-Purvasaila- Schools of Mahadeva*.
4. *Lokottaravada-Kakkutika*.
5. *Ekavyavaharika* is a general name of the *Mahasanghikas*

School called *Cetiya* or *Cetiya*, is a subdivision of the *Mahasanghika*. It is said that the sect is so named because of a *Caitya* situated on a mountain where its founder Mahadeva lived, and secondly due to its emphasis on the erection, decoration and

⁶ Dipavamsa, Bauddha Aakar Granthamala pushpa - 6, Mahatma Gandhi Kashi Vidyapeeth, Varanasi, 1996., Pg.70.

चेतिया च पुनवादी महसङ्गितिभेदका

पञ्च वादा इमे सब्बे महासङ्गितिमूलका

⁷ Mahavamsa, Bauddha Aakar Granthamala pushpa - 7, Mahatma Gandhi Kashi Vidyapeeth, Varanasi, 1996., Pg.56. 5.5 गोकुलिकेहि पण्णत्तिवादा बाहुलिका पि च

चेतियwadawawawaदा तेस्वे व समहासङ्घिका छ ते

5.12 हेमवता राजगिरिया तथा सिद्धत्थका पिच

पुब्बसेलियभिक्खू च तथा अपरसेलिया

⁸ Watters Thomas, On Yuan Chwang's travels in India, II, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1996, Pg.217.

⁹ Dutt Nalinaksha, Op.cit., Pg.48.

¹⁰ Ibid, Pg.49.

worship of the *Caityas*¹¹. It is also said that the *Cetiya*s and *Lokottaravadins* are identical, Vasumitra and Bhavya agree with Kathavatthu as far as the three sub-divisions are concerned if the name *Cetiya* be regarded as alternative to *Lokottaravada*.¹² In Mahavastu which is an avowed text of *Lokottaravada*, a branch of the *Mahasanghikas*, worship of *Caityas* is given prominence.¹³ The *Mahasanghikas*, *Ekavyavaharikas* and *Cetiya*s (or *Lokottaravadins*) had generally common doctrines with minor differences, which have not been minutely distinguished by Vasumitra. *Lokottaravadins* developed leanings towards Mahayanist, and in fact prepared the ground for the advent of the Mahayana school.¹⁴ The *Lokottara* conception appears only in the introductory portion of the Mahavastu, and so it is evident that the text was originally [*Theravadic*] and that, in course of time, the introductory chapters were added by the *Lokottaravadins*.¹⁵

According to *Lokottaravada* all worldly (*laukika*) dharmas are unreal; the real dharmas are supra-mundane. *Mahasanghikas* like *Theravadins* or *Sarvastivadins* did not conceive Buddha as a human being who attained perfection (Buddhahood) and became omniscient at Bodhgaya.¹⁶ They attributed to Gautama Buddha not only supra-mundane existence but also all perfections and omniscience from his so-called birth in the womb of Queen Maya and not from his attainment of Bodhi at Bodh Gaya. And they regarded Buddha transcendental.¹⁷

The *Cetiya*vadins are known to have been flourishing in Andhradesa contemporaneously. In the *Kathavatthu*, the views discussed are mostly of the *Mahasanghikas* who migrated to the south, settled down in the Andhra Pradesh around Amravati and Dhanyakataka¹⁸. These were the *Pubbaseliyas* or *Uttaraseliyas*, *Aparaseliyas*, *Siddhatthikas*, *Rajagirikas* and *Cetiya*s, collectively designated as the *Andhakas* by Buddhaghosa in the introduction to this commentary on the *Kathavatthu*.¹⁹

Aparaseliya is one of the sects well-known from the contemporary inscriptions of the Krishna valley. In the Pali tradition the Pubba and Apara Seliyas are mentioned as two subdivisions of the *Mahasanghika* School. *Aparaseliya* is also considered to be one of the four sects of the *Andhaka* branch²⁰.

List Of Inscriptions

Dr. Nalinaksha Dutt in his book *Buddhist Sects of India* has furnished the tabular statement of the geographical distribution of the several schools on the basis of inscription²¹:

1. ***Aparaseliya* (Luders, 1020) - Kanheri Cave Inscription:** M.G. Dixit was the first to point out the occurrence of the name of this sect in a Kanheri inscription of the 3rd Cent. A.D.²². This inscription mentions a cave and water cistern the gift of the nun Sapa the daughter of the lay-worshipper Kulapiya Dhamanak the inhabitant of

¹¹ Nagaraju S., *Buddhist Architecture of Western India*, Agama Kala Prakashan, Delhi, 1981, Pg.34.

¹² Dutt, Nalinaksha, op.cit, Pg.57

¹³ Ibid, Pg.57.

¹⁴ Ibid., Pg.64.

¹⁵ Ibid, Pg.76

¹⁶ Ibid, Pg.72.

¹⁷ Ibid, Pg.73

¹⁸ Ibid, Pg.65

¹⁹ Ibid, Pg.65

²⁰ Nagaraju S., Op.cit., Pg.34

²¹ Dutt, Nalinaksha, op.cit, Pg.52.

²² Dixit M.G. *Indian Historical Quarterly*, XVIII, 1942,Pg.60

Dhenukakata, the female pupil of the Thera Bhadanta Bodhika, together with her sister Ratnika and other relatives, to the congregation of monks of the four quarters.²³

2. **Cetika (Luders, 1130) - Nasik Cave Inscription:** Gift of a cave by Mugudasa of the lay community of *Cetikas* and of a field in western (aparili) Kanhahini to this cave for providing clothes to the ascetic by Dhamanamdin son of the lay worshipper Bodhigupta.²⁴

Architecture of Nasik Cave 9 and Kanheri Cave 65:

Caitya: an ancient Sanskrit term meaning "shrine." In early Buddhism, *Caitya* and *Stupa* were often used as synonyms in inscriptions and literature etymologically. *Caitya* derives from the root 'cit' meaning 'to collect' in Sanskrit. It can be understood as the place of meeting of disciples for prayers. The term '*Stupa*' is used to signify funerary monuments whereas *Caitya* conveys a sense very akin to that of shrine.²⁵ According to Coomarswamy "The general meaning of word *Caitya*: ci is something built or piled up, the related derivative citta referring to the altar or fire altar. The term '*Vihara*' derives from the root 'vi + har' meaning 'to stay'= abode, place of stay.

Cave 9²⁶ (Nasik):

Close to Cave 8 is this *lena* or *Vihara* with a peculiar plan. Originally this was a simple *lena* with two cells, one behind the other, and a veranda. Later however the left wall in the veranda was cut further and a cell in the side-wall and another in the back-wall were added in the extended portion. All the cells have recess-benches. The doorways of the cells are narrow simple rectangular openings with notched corners for the wooden frame. The front portion of the original veranda has two pillars in antis. The pillars are octagonal shafts without base, but have pot-capitals and inverted stepped hour-glass decoration. The architrave above these is heavy and in its front face above each of the pillars and pilasters there is the carving of a sculpture with addorsed animals carrying riders. These, however appear not to be part of the original design; there are no sculptures on the inner side of the architrave.

Kanheri Cave 65²⁷

This is also a *Vihara* and cell hall type cave with an additional cell hall complex in the courtyard. There are two water cisterns in recesses in the open courtyard both are along right wall. Along the left wall, in open court, we have a simple bench adjacent to the entrance of the cell hall complex. In the rectangular veranda, on the either end of the opening, we have two octagonal pillars and two square pilasters with the hourglass motif. The veranda has bench in the left end.

Conclusion:

In the Age of Satavahanas the *Theravada* Buddhism had spread in South India. So the object of worship in the caves of the time was the *Stupa*, not the image of the Buddha. Later, the Mahayana came into limelight, which led to the worship of images.

²³ Epigraphica Indica, Vol X, ASI, Delhi, pg. 107.

²⁴ Ibid., Vol X, ASI, Delhi, pg. 125.

²⁵ Sarcar H., Studies in Early Buddhist Architecture, 1966. Pg.5

²⁶ Nagraju S., Op. cit., Pg.265.

²⁷ Pandit Suraj: Religious Development of Buddhism as Understood through the Art of Kanheri. Ph.D. Thesis submitted to University of Mumbai in the year 2004.

Though both *Cetiyaka* and *Aparasaila* did not receive much attention from the Buddhist writers the inscriptions show that the sect won a great popularity in Deccan. Or otherwise the cave-temples could not have been donated. Its richness and existence prove that there was a series of donors during Satavahana period anxious to express their religious zeal and devotion to these schools in the best way that their resources could provide.

Contemporary epigraphical evidences in the different Buddhist Caves show that different sects flourished in different area of Deccan like *Bhadrayaniya*, *Dharmottariya* etc. *Cetika* or *Cetiya* school is mentioned at Amaravati.²⁸ *Aparasaila* school is mentioned in the Nagarjunakonda.²⁹ *Mahasanghika* was also popular during this period. There was another center of the school at Karle, near Mumbai, famous for the largest and finest cave temple there are two inscriptions, one recording the gift of the village Karajaka by Gautamiputra Satakarni to the monks of the Valuraka caves for the support of the monks of *Mahasanghika* sect.³⁰

We can find at the same place in Nasik Cave 3 inscription dated 2nd C.A.D. cave donated to *Bhadrayaniya* sect.³¹ Same way at the Kanheri also in Cave 3 we can see the cave donated to *Bhadrayaniya* sect.³² *Bhadrayaniya* school belongs to the Sthaviravada. Then why at the same place the caves were donated to different schools.

If we study the architecture we can see that both the caves which we have studied in this paper are Viharas. *Cetiyakas* worshipped *Caitya*. But inscriptions are found at Nasik and Kanheri are in Vihara. The Amravati and Nagarjunakonda where other inscriptions of *Cetika* and *Aparaseliya* schools are found during the same period belongs to Structural architecture. Whereas in Nasik and Kanheri they are Rock-cut caves. So we can't say that particular school had impact on the Buddhist Architecture of the same period.

Contemporary epigraphical evidence shows that different sects flourished like *Mahasanghikas*, *Dharmottariyas*, *Cetikiyas* and *Purvasailas* etc., during this period. This period was considered as a transitional phase. So far many stalwarts have studied the different aspects such as chronology, architecture and epigraphy. Still it is difficult to say that philosophy of these schools had influenced the architecture. Hypothetically I can say that though these cave at Nasik donated to *Cetiyaka* and cave of Kanheri to *Aparasaila* Sect of Buddhism but its philosophy had not influenced the architecture of the cave. But the inscriptions mention that these caves were donated to this sect. Then why it was donated? My humble opinion is that these donations must have made particularly for congregation of the monks or for their vassavasa. Therefore, we find the names of the different schools mentioned at the same place. This shows definitely the trend of unification of different schools in Deccan in this particular period.

²⁸ Epigraphica Indica, X, Luders list pg. 143, 147, also on 148.

²⁹ Ibid., XX pg.17, 21

³⁰ Ibid., VII, pg.64.

³¹ Mirashi V.V., Op. cit., Pg.41; also Luders List 1123.

³² Epigraphica Indica, X, Luders list pg.102 &107.

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