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**Kapilvastu**

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## **The Ancient Sakya Kingdom in Nepal**

The site of the ancient capital city of Kapilvastu (lat. 27°34", long. 83°30") is located 25 km west of Lumbini. The present archaeological mound of Tilaurakot (kot=mound, fortified area) is 3 km north of Taulihawa, a district headquarters in the central part of the Nepal Terai. Presently Lumbini and Tilaurakot are connected by an all-weather motorable road.

### **History**

About the 7th/8th century B.C. Kapilvastu was the capital city of a small kingdom situated beneath the Churia or Shiwalik range at the foothills of the Himalayas. It was established in a forest near the hermitage of the saint Kapila by the sons of King Ikshvaku who had been banished from Saketa. At that time, the Sakya country was a semi-republic. Its dwellers were called Sakyas.

The Sakya state was situated north of Pava and Kushinagar. On the west, it extended up to the banks of the Rapti (Acchiravati) river, the lands beyond which were ruled by the Kosalas of Sravasti. The river Rohini divided the two states of the Sakyas and the Koliyas. The Koliyas of Ramagrama were on the east of the Rohini river and the Sakyas of Kapilvastu on the west.

The Buddhist literature mentions that Ikshvaku was the king of Saketa. He had four sons and five daughters by his first wife; after her death, he married a second time. When the second queen gave birth to a son, she desired him to be the next ruler. Thus, the nine children of the first queen were forced to leave Saketa.

The banished children went north and reached the place where the saint Kapila was residing on the bank of the river Bhagirathi, presently known as Banaganga. The hermit gave them permission to settle there and the site gradually developed and was given the name Kapilvastu after the saint.

There is a theory that the community took its name from the sala (*Soria Robusta*) forest, where the saint was residing. Another legend tells that in order to maintain the purity of their blood and race, the four brothers married their four younger sisters, and they declared

the eldest sister their "queen-mother". When their father, King Ikshvaku, came to know of this, he is said to have exclaimed in delight: "*sakya vata bho kumara parama sakya vata bho kumara*" (Aha, smart men indeed! Sakya indeed are the princes. Very smart men!) Thus, an endogamous tribe came to be known as Sakya.

In course of time, Priya, the queen-mother, began to suffer from leprosy. On account of the infectious disease, she left Kapilvastu and resided in a cave in the forest. Coincidentally, the King of Varanasi, Rama, was also a victim of the same disease. He also left his kingdom to his son and retired to the same forest. Fortuitously, he was cured by sitting under a *kolam* (*Nauclea cordifolia*) tree. Later, he cured Priya in the same manner. Then he married her, and together they founded a city and named it Koliyanagara or Koliyapur, after the tree that cured them of the disease. The city was also called Ramagrama after King Rama. The state of Koliya was also known as Devadaha after a big lake. In course of time, the Koliyas of Devadaha established matrimonial relations with the Sakyas.

## **The Birth of the Buddha**

The eldest brother, Ulkamukha, became the first head of Kapilvastu and in course of time Kapilvastu became a prosperous state. Among the successors of Ulkamukha was Jayasena, the great grandfather of Lord Buddha. At that time Aukaka was the king of neighbouring Devadaha. Jayasena had a son, Singhahanu, and a daughter, Jasodhara. Aukaka had a son, Anjana, and a daughter, Kancana, who was married to Singhahanu. Jasodhara was also married to Anjana. Kancana gave birth to Suddhodhana. Anjana had two sons, Suprabuddha and Dandapani, and two daughters, Mayadevi and Prajapati, who were married to Suddhodhana. Gautam Buddha, known as Siddhartha in his childhood, was the son of Suddhodhana and Mayadevi.

While history attests to the birth of the Buddha, it is not free from legends either. The Buddhist literature says that when the Sakyas were celebrating a festival and Mayadevi was observing holy fast, she dreamed that a white elephant entered her womb. Ten months later, she desired to go to Devadaha, her natal home, for delivery. Some scholars suggest that it was in keeping with a tradition among some of the ancient tribes that the first baby had to be delivered in the parents' home, not at the husband's house. Suddhodhana conceded to her request and preparations were made for the journey.

Mayadevi, however, could not reach her parents' place. On the way, in the beautiful flowering grove of Lumbini, the future Buddha was born. Mayadevi returned to Kapilvastu after the birth and she died seven days later. The newly-born prince was brought up by Prajapati, Mayadevi's sister and his step-mother.

## Childhood

Siddhartha's naming ceremony was held in Kapilvastu. Amongst the Brahmins present there on the occasion were also eight astrologers. They predicted that the child would either be a universal monarch or a Buddha. Suddhodhana made all possible arrangements for a luxurious life for his son and to keep him away from all affliction or sorrow. He ordered the construction of three palaces suited to the three seasons of the year. The first palace called Ramnya had nine stories; the second, Suramya, had seven; and the third, Subha had five. Guards were posted up to about seven km from each palace on all sides to ensure that the prince would see no sad or disturbing sight.

In his boyhood Siddhartha was sent to school. He learned the 64 alphabets of Brahmi and Kharosti which were the primary languages of northern and western India in those days. He studied all the Brahmanical literatures, including the Vedas (scriptures), the Negamas (codes), the Puranas (mythology) and the Itihasas (history) as well as the 18 *silpas* (crafts). He was an accomplished athlete and an expert in archery.

## Youth

It is said that once he shot an arrow more than 10 *krosa* away, and where it pierced the earth, a well was created, which came to be as Sarakupa (arrow well) this place is mentioned in the travel accounts of the Chinese traveller Huien-Tsang. In a tournament of the Sakya youths, he is also said to have thrown a dead elephant into a deep hollow three and half km. beyond the seven walls and the city moat. The hollow is known to this day as Hastigarta.

At the age of 16, he was married to Yasodhara (Gopa), the daughter of Suprabuddha of Devadaha. After his marriage he was appointed Yubaraj (sub-king) of Kapilvastu, and governor or chief magistrate of a neighbouring town, Kalishaka, according to a Chinese account. In spite of all his precautions, however, King Suddhodhana was very much afraid that prince Siddhartha would renounce secular life and the chance of attaining universal sovereignty, as the astrologers had indicated, would be gone. As Siddhartha grew older, his distaste for married life and luxury was distinctly shown. He used to retire in the evenings to a stone under a large tree in the garden. In the Chinese records, the garden was called Lutiloka.

In order to prevent him from leaving his royal life, the king built high walls around the palace, dug a broad moat and fitted massive doors at the four main gates of the town, and posted guards there. But the Bodhisattva had already gone outside the city and seen the four scenes of an old man, a sick man, a dead man and a monk. These sights deeply impressed on him the impermanence of worldly life.

## **The Great Renunciation**

The *mahabhiniskramana* or the Great Renunciation took place at midnight on a Monday during the full-moon of Asadha (July/August), when Siddhartha was 29 years old. He left his seven-day old son, Rahula, and his wife in his room. He rode his favourite horse, Kanthaka, and accompanied by his charioteer, Channa, he departed by the east gate of the city called Mangaladwara (lucky gate) beyond which he tarried a short time and looked at the city, where subsequently a stupa was erected and called "Kanthaka's ruterne". He travelled all night and, in the morning he reached a mango grove called Anupiya on the great sandy river Anoma, in the country of the Mallas.

A week later he was in Rājgriha, the capital city of Magadha. There he met King Bimbisara. From Rajgriha, Siddhartha went on to meet Alara Kalama and Uddaka Ramaputra, two learned Brahmins. But he was not satisfied with them and he went to Uruvela where he met five hermits - Kaudanya, Vappa, Bhaddiya, Mahanama and Assajit. Together with them, he practised all methods of meditation popular in those days. He continued these austerities for six years but he did not discover the Truth. Instead, he lost his health and became thin and weak. Then he left the hermits and stayed alone under a *bodhi* tree (*Ficus religiosa*). Later he was offered milk rice by a woman called Sujata on the bank of the river Niranjana and he ate it. After that, he was offered some *kusa* grass by a man named Sothhiya.

While seated under the Bodhi tree, Siddhartha resolved firmly not to move from the spot until and unless he achieved enlightenment. He swore, "Although my skin, my nerves and my bones should waste away and my life blood become dry, I will not leave this seat until I have attained Supreme Enlightenment."

Mara, the King of Evil, made vigorous attempts to dissuade him from the course of deliverance. He evoked scenes of terror and calamities before Siddhartha. But Mara failed in all his attempts. Then he tried another trick. He sent his three daughters, Desire, Pleasure and Delight, to distract the Bodhisattva from his goal. The girls danced in all styles of lustful postures to excite sensual fellings in him but they could not dissuade him from the pursuit of enlightenment.

At last, the turning point in the life of Siddhartha had come. He perceived the sequence of all his preceeding births. He knew the sources of suffering in the world, and finally he realized the path which led to the annihilation of suffering. The perfect knowledge he acquired made him the Buddha, the enlightened soul. He experienced the bliss of deliverance from bondage.

## **Return to Kapilvastu**

Six years after his attainment of Bodhi (emancipation) at Buddha Gaya, Gautama Buddha was invited by his father to visit Kapilvastu. He came from Rajgriha via Saranath. In Kapilvastu, he halted in the Nigrodha grove at a short distance from the town. The next day he and his disciples gathered in the street and begged for food from house to house. The king was shocked at this and he took them to the palace and fed them there. On that same day, Nanda, his half-brother and crown prince, became his disciple. His own son, Rahulá, then eight years old, also walked in his father's foot steps. Several citizens led by his relatives, Ananda, Anuruddha and others, became monks.

The king was mortified to see so many members of his family entering the ascetic order and he was left without an heir to the throne. When he pathetically protested against the wholesale conversion, the Buddha stipulated that no Sakya youth would be allowed to enter monastic life without his parent's permission. Then, the Buddha returned to Rajgriha Via Anupiya in the Malla kingdom, where Devadutta and some other Sakyas and the barber Upali entered his Order.

## **Dispute between the Sakyas and Koliyas**

Once during a drought the water of the river Rohini became a source of dispute between the Sakyas and Koliyas. Both kingdoms claimed the water. Hot words passed between the cultivators of the two sides and soldiers and princes gathered there and supported their own parties. A battle was imminent when the Buddha, who was then at Vaisali, was informed of the conflict. The Buddha visited the spot and convinced both parties not to argue and quarrel. He converted 500 people on the occasion.

## **Kapilvastu Revisited**

When the Buddha was at Mahavana monastery near Vaisali, he heard that his father was ill. He instantly went to Kapilvastu and attended upon King Suddhodhana, who was then 97 years old, until his last moment. After the king's death, the body was carried in procession through the principal streets of the city and the Buddha himself cremated it.

## **Establishment of the Order of Nuns**

On three separate occasions, the Buddha's step-mother; Prajapati; his wife, Yasodhara, and 500 other Sakya women asked him permission to enter his Order. Each time he refused. But later, when he was at Vaisali, on behalf of these women, Ananda made the request and

at last the Buddha gave the women permission to enter the Order as nuns. At the same time he made the observation that the admittance of women would not make the institution last long.

### **Third Visit to Kapilvastu**

After Suddhodhana's death, Bhadraka succeeded to the throne. Later, he too became a disciple of the Buddha. Then Mahanama became the king of Kapilvastu. During Mahanama's rule, Buddha visited Kapilvastu and stayed in the Nigrodha monastery. At that time, Suprabuddha, his maternal uncle and father-in-law, became an open enemy while Devadatta, Suprabuddha's son, deserted the Buddha and founded a new sect under the patronage of Ajatasatru, king of Magadha.

### **Enmity between Sravasti and Kapilvastu**

The kingdom of Kapilvastu now appeared to be subordinate to that of Kosala and Kasi. According to some literature, Vasa Bhakhattiya was the daughter of Mahanama's Brahmin steward, whom after her father's death the king had adopted as his own daughter.

One day the king of Kosala, Prasenjit, came on a hunting expedition and he happened to come to Mahanama's garden and saw the girl Vasa Bhakhattiya. He wanted to marry her, so the king of Kapilvastu sent her to him and she was made queen. In course of time, Prasenjit and Vasa Bhakhattiya had a son whom they named Vidudabha.

Once during a visit to Kapilvastu, the Sakyas insulted Vidudabha as of low origin, the young prince vowed vengeance upon the Sakyas. Shortly afterward, he usurped the throne and his father fled to Rajgriha to seek Ajatasatru's help.

### **The Massacre of the Sakyas**

In keeping with his vow, Vidudabha invaded the Sakya country. But the Buddha, then at Sravasti, interceded and the young king returned. But he came a second time with his army and attacked Kapilvastu. The Sakyas fought bravely and repulsed him at first, but at last he prevailed. He entered the town and massacred the inhabitants. The Sakyas fled in different directions. A few years later, Ajatasatru invaded and conquered both Kosala and Kapilvastu.

### **Fourth and Last Visit to Kapilvastu**

After the destruction of Kapilvastu, the Buddha visited the city to see the desolation caused by Vidudabha and he was much distressed to find the city turned into a cemetery with houses and walls wantonly destroyed, while orphans followed him with piteous cries for help.

After gaining enlightenment, Gautama Buddha preached his doctrine from place to place for 45 years. When he was 80 years old, he perceived that his end was near. In anticipation of it, he came to Kusinara (present Kushinagar), and there he attained mahaparinirvana (supreme state of peace) in a *sala* grove.

That Kapilvastu was not altogether destroyed is proved by the fact that after the Buddha had breathed his last, the Sakyas went to Kusinagar with an army to claim a share of his remains. They brought one-eighth of the Buddha's relics and erected a stupa over it.

## **Emperor Asoka's Pilgrimage to Kapilvastu**

Most Buddhist sacred books mention that in his last speech at Kushinagar, the Buddha had said that his followers should visit four sites- his birth place, Lumbini; the place where he was enlightened, Buddha Gaya; the place where he gave his first sermon, Sarnath; and the place where the Mahaparinirvana took place, Kusinagar. In the 20th year of his reign, Emperor Asoka came on a pilgrimage, along with the monk Upagupta, to Lumbini. His visit is recorded in two pillars at Lumbini and Niglihawa. He also erected a pillar at Gotihawa, of which the upper part is now broken and missing.

## **Kapilvastu as described by Chinese pilgrims**

The destruction of Kapilvastu is further proved by the descriptions of the Chinese pilgrims, Fa-Hian and Huen-Tsang. Fa-Hian, who visited Kapilvastu in the 5th century A.D., said that the city was located 13 *yojana* (about 100 miles) east of Sravasti. Huen-Tsang came in the 7th century A.D. and placed the city 516 *li* (about 86 miles) to the south-east of Sravasti, and he further said that there were ten deserted cities in that county. Both travellers described the city of Kapilvastu as deserted, in ruins and without people or king. Fa-Hian said that there were only some monks and a few common people living at the time of his visit. Huen-Tsang measured the ruins and found the city to be about 14 to 15 *li* (about 2.5 miles) in extent. The foundation of the wall around the city of Kapilvastu was still standing strong and high. There was no supreme ruler there but each town had its own chief.

Within the royal palace, the bed chamber of Queen Mahamaya was identified. There were also images of the king, the queen and the prince, of Princess Yasodhara and her son. Stupas had been erected at the places where the Bodhisattva mounted on a white elephant entered his mother's womb and where the ascetic Asita read the horoscope of Prince Siddhartha.

Stupas also marked the places in Kapilvastu where Siddhartha's arrow had fallen at a distance of some 30 *li* to the south-east and created a well (Sarakupa) and where he had

thrown and elephant (Hastigarta) by the southern gateway. Outside each of the four gateways were the figures of a sick man, an old man, a dead body and an ascetic. One place was marked by a stupa to indicate where Siddhartha had lingered after he had gone out of the city by the eastern gate. Also by that gate was a temple with a stone image dedicated to Isvaradeva.

There was an Asoka stupa in the grove of Nigarodha trees, three or four li south of Kapilvastu, where the Buddha met his father and preached to him. Next to that was another stupa that marked the spot where the Buddha admitted 500 Sakyas including some princes into the Brotherhood.

Both pilgrims mentioned the Sarakupa (arrow well) but Fa-Hian remained silent about the stupa there. From the well, Huen-Tsang said that La-Fa-Ni- (Lumbini) grove was 80 or 90 li (nearly 22 miles) to the north-east. In the grove he observed a beautiful bathing tank and about 24 paces from it was the old tree under which Siddhartha had been born. To the east of the tree was a stupa and near it, a stone pillar with the figure of a horse on the top set up by Emperor Asoka. Later, the pillar was broken in the middle by a thunderbolt. Near this pillar the pilgrim saw a small stream, called the "oil stream" by the local people, flowing to the south-east.

Fa-Hian said that nearly one *yojana* (about 8 miles) to the south-west of Kapilvastu there was a town called Na-Pei-Kea (present Gotihawa). It was the birthplace of Krakuchanda Buddha. Huen-Tsang put the city of Krakuchanda some 50 li (about 8 1/2 miles) to the south of Kapilvastu. Both pilgrims agreed that there were stupas to the south and south-east to mark the places where the son met his father and where he had attained nirvana. Huen-Tsang mentioned a 30-foot high stone pillar surmounted by a lion near one stupa erected by Emperor Asoka with an inscription describing the circumstances of the nirvana.

The town of Kanakamuni Buddha was also reported by Fa-Hian. It was to the north of Krakuchanda's town at a distance of less than a *yojana*. Huen-Tsang mentioned that about 30 li (6 miles) to the north-east of that city was another "large city" with a stupa. There the past Buddha, Ka-no-ka-mou-ni (Kanakamuni) was born. Near the city to the north-east was the *tope* (stupa) which marked the spot where the Buddha admitted his father into his religion, and to the north of that was another *tope* with the relics of Kanakamuni Buddha. There too was a stone pillar about 20-foot high with a lion on the top and the record of the circumstances of the Buddha's nirvana. That pillar was also erected by Emperor Asoka. Huen-Tsang further noted that to the north-east of the capital city there were several hundred thousand stupas to mark the place where the Sakyas were put to death. The skeletons of the defeated army men were thrown into a nearby lake, to the north-west of Kapilvastu, and it has been identified as the present Sagarhawa.



When we examine the accounts of these pilgrims closely we find that there is a great deal of agreement in their statements. There are a few differences about the directions and the distance of some places, but such discrepancies are very negligible. Both pilgrims have described the same places in a very similar manner.

After the Chinese, many other travellers from abroad visited these places from time to time. But in the absence of good records, very little is known about the condition of the area after Huen-Tsang's visit. One visitor was We-Kung from China who came to Lumbini in the 8th century A.D. And at the beginning of the 14th century, Raja Ripu Malla, a prince of the Naga dynasty, made a pilgrimage to Limbini and Kapilvastu. He engraved his name and the year of his visit on the Asoka pillars at Limbini and Niglihawa (Kapilvastu). After the Naga dynasty, Kapilvastu seems to have remained for some time a part of the independent state of the hill region of Tanahu in central Nepal.

In the 14th-15th century, however, the whole region of Bihar and Tirhut was conquered by Sultan Sikandar Lodi of Delhi. He annexed several neighbouring areas, so it appears probable that the weak rulers of Tanahu were also forced to cede their territory. Sikandar Lodi was motivated by religion. Hence, he probably destroyed the monuments at Lumbini and at kapilvastu either in his attempts to conquer the region or after its occupation. The area thereafter was deserted and lay buried, and the very names Kapilvastu, Lumbini and Devadaha were forgotten. For a long time the whole region existed only as an expanse of wilderness.

## **Kapilvastu - The Archaeological Pursuits**

The Royal Asiatic Society was formed in Calcutta during the British period in India. The major object of this association was to promote the history, antiquities, arts, sciences and literatures of Asia. In 1837, James Prinsep deciphered the Brahmi script which helped archaeology to free itself from antiquarian and literary affiliations. A Conningham organized a country-wide survey of archaeological remains in India. He followed the descriptions of the Chinese pilgrims Fa-Hain and Huen-Tsang and relocated many of the Buddhist places they had visited.

## **Early Explorations**

The identification of the site of Kapilvastu was the main goal of many archaeologists. The first attempt was made in 1858 by Lassen who located Kapilvastu on the bank of the Rohini river to the north-west of Gorakhpur and M.S. Julien accepted this identification. In 1875-76 Carlisle suggested Bhullatal on the bank of Rawai Nadi as a possible site of Kapilvastu, and in 1893, Cunningham put forward Nagar Khasa in Basti district.

In 1893 Jaskaran Singh of Balarampur announced in a newspaper that he had seen an Asoka pillar with inscriptions in the Nepal Terai. In 1895, Fuhrer was deputed to investigate it. He did not discover the said Asoka pillar but found another pillar at Niglhawa. This great discovery gave him a clue to the right location of Kapilvastu and he was again deputed to explore in Nepal. In 1896, with the help of General Khadga Shumsher J.B. Rana, he discovered two more Asoka pillars - one at Gotihawa and another at Lumbini. Thus the discovery of the three Asoka pillars by Fuhrer in 1895-96 confirmed that the Buddha was born in Lumbini and his royal palace was at Tilaurakot near Taulihawa.

After Fuhrer, P.C. Mukharji was sent to explore the archaeological potentiality of Nepal Terai in 1899. His extensive exploration work identified Tilaurakot as the ancient city of Kapilvastu. He excavated a 16-sided stupa inside the *kot*, traced the defence walls in the north-east corner and located the eastern gateway.

While Mukharji's work was in progress, Waddle excavated the stupa at Gotihawa and another stupa near the eastern gate of Tilaurakot. Accounts of these discoveries with full drawings and photographs have been published by Mukharji.

### **Dispute about the Location of Kapilvastu**

There are three different views among scholars about the location of this ancient city.

1. The first group of scholars believed that there were two cities with the name of Kapilvastu. The first and older one was situated on the bank of the Bhagirathi river. But another, they believed, was established after the attack on the ancient city by King Vidudabha of Sravasti. This group noted that Fa-Hian visited the ruins at Piprahawa and that Huen-Tsang's descriptions fit well with Tilaurakot.
2. The second theory was proposed by Mrs. Devala Mitra and supported by K.M. Srivastava. They argued that the sites of Piprahawa and Ganawaria represent the old city of Kapilvastu. Srivastava claimed that the monastery found at Piprahawa and Ganawaria was the royal palace of Sudhodhana, king of Kapilvastu. The claim was based on seals, sealings and inscriptions over the lid of a pot that were found during the excavation of the so-called palace at Piprahawa. The inscriptions read, *Om devaputra vihare kapilvastu bhikshu mahasanghasa* and *Om devaputra vihare kapilvastu bhikshu sanghasa*. They date from the 2nd century A.D. The title *devaputra* refers to Kaniska, a great patron of Buddhism who built the biggest vihara at Piprahawa and renovated the main stupa there.

These inscriptions clearly indicate that the monasteries belonged to the great community of monks at Kapilvastu. But a monastery site cannot represent a palace. Then, Srivastava shifted his work to Ganawaria to discover the palace of Suddhodhana, which only brought out the remains of a vihara and some temples. No trace of the civic settlement with a defense wall was found during the excavation at Ganawaria.

3. The third group of scholars have accepted Tilaurakot as the ancient capital city of Kapilvastu. Most of these scholars either visited the site or have seriously studied all of these complexes. The first scholar to suggest the area of Tilaurakot as Kapilvastu was Fuhrer. After him, P.C. Mukharji excavated some of the important monuments of the palace and studied the complexes at Sagarahawa, Araurakot, Nigilisagar and gotihawa in great detail. Hoey and W. Vost wrote that the Chinese pilgrims knew only one city of Kapilvastu which corresponds to Tilaurakot. Among modern scholars, B.C. Law and N.R. Banerji accepted the view that most probably the ruins at Tilaurakot in the Nepal Terai represent Kapilvastu.

One very interesting point in the Chinese pilgrims' accounts is that they mentioned the nirvana stupas of Kanakamuni and Krakuchanda Buddhas and the stupa of Sakyamuni Buddha at Ramagrama but they did not describe the nirvana stupa of Shakyamuni Buddha at or near the city of Kapilvastu.

### **Identification of Tilaurakot as Kapilvastu**

Tarananda Mishra, Senior Archaeologist of the Department of Archaeology, HMG/ Nepal, gives the following points by which Tilaurakot can safely be identified as Kapilvastu.

1. *Kapilavastu on the bank of the river Bhagirathi and near the sala forest*- We know from different Buddhist literatures that kapilvastu was situated near a sala forest on the bank of the river Bhagirathi. The present site of Tilaurakot is located on the bank of the river Banaganga (Ganges/river flowing through the forest), one of the biggest and most sacred rivers of this region. This river, Banaganga, was known as Bhagirathi in Buddhist literature.
2. *Mountains near Kapilvastu* - Mountains are frequently mentioned in the Buddhist literature as being located near the city. From the ruins of Tilaurakot, the mountains to the north are hardly eight to ten miles away. The blue mountains look very close and even the snow peaks of the Himalayas, especially Dhaulagiri, can be seen from Tilaurakot in clear weather.

3. *Size of the ruined site of Kapilvastu* - The extensive ruins of Tilaurakot fit the reported size of Kapilvastu city. The site extends over an area of two and half miles, as narrated by Huen-Tsang. The fortified area of the site is 1,700 feet running north-south and 1,300 feet from east to west. On the basis of archaeological findings, the outer city of the common citizens extends to Dhamnihawa to the north, Derwa village to the south, the eastern stupa on the east and to Ramaghat to the west.
4. *The Walls of the City* - Both the Buddhist literature (Mahavastu) and Huen-Tsang have mentioned the existence of high walls at Kapilvastu. Huen-Tsang said that the walls were still high around the city and the foundation was strong. The walls around Tilaurakot on the east, west and north sides were excavated by Mukharji, Mrs. Mitra and Mishra. Apart from those walls, two of the four gateways referred to in the literature have been excavated.
5. *Asita stupa* - Mukharji found a 16-sided stupa with an attached square portico or hall in his excavation on the north eastern area inside the ruined city of Tilaurakot. This stupa exactly fits Huen-Tsang's description of the Asita stupa at Kapilvastu.
6. *Archaeological findings during the excavation at Tilaurakot* - The defense wall of the city goes back to circa 7th century B.C. The city was burnt by the army of King Vidudabha during the lifetime of the Buddha in circa 6th century B.C. The three periods of habitational deposition at Tilaurakot begin from the 8th-7th centuries B.C. and come to an end in the 2nd century A.D. This has been clearly supported by Fa-Hian and Huen-Tsang. They have clearly mentioned that Kapilvastu city looked deserted when they visited it during the 5th and 7th centuries A.D. respectively. The stupas on the east of the city excavated by Waddel, the twin stupas on the north excavated by Mishra, and the stupa on the south in Derwa village correspond to the Chinese travellers' descriptions of Kapilvastu. They mentioned that it also had many stupas in and around the city.
7. *Antiquities from Tilaurakot* - The antiquities discovered during the excavations at Tilaurakot excel in quality and quantity when compared to other Buddhist period sites like Vaisali, Pataliputra, Rajgriha, Sravasti, etc. If an extensive excavaton is carried out at the site, it might produce great hoards of Mauryan and Sunga terracotta as well as different varieties of early coins.
8. *Hastigarta and the stupa* - The Hastigarta mentioned in Buddhist literature and visited by the Chinese pilgrims can be identified with an old pond and a stupa located to the south of Derwa village.

9. *Gotihawa* - The nirvana stupa and an Asoka pillar found at Gotihawa village may be identified with the nirvana stupa of Krakuchanda Buddha. Pipri, a site nearly one mile north-west of Gotihawa, may represent "Na-Pei-kea", the native town of Krakuchanda Buddha. This place is approximately seven miles south-west of Tilaurakot and fits well with the direction and distance as narrated by the Chinese travellers.
10. *Kanakamuni Pillar* - The Kanakamuni Buddha pillar, a mile east of Tilaurakot, also indicates the existence of the site in that vicinity. The extensive site of Araurakot and the surrounding areas should be thoroughly checked to locate the original place of the pillar. It is notable that both Chinese pilgrims have clearly mentioned that the town of Kanakamuni was located six to eight miles north of Krakuchanda's town. The old ruined city of Araurakot, close to Niglisagar on the east, probably represent the township of Kanakamuni Buddha.
11. *Sagarahawa* represents the site of old mahavana and memorials of the war heroes - This site likely represents the famous mahavana which is to the north of Kapilvastu city. The big vihara excavated by Fuhrer and drawn by Mukharji may be identified as the old Mahavana vihara. Later on, the local people must have chosen the same place to build stupas in commemoration of their war heroes killed by the army of Vidudabha. Fuhrer found 17 stupas bearing caskets and bricks engraved with the designs of ancient arms, an indication of death in armed struggle.

This site is still surrounded by a forest and lies to the north of Tilaurakot at a distance of one and half miles, as described in the old literature. The distance of the site as well as the direction is identical to the record provided by Huen-Tsang. This site is situated on the eastern bank of the Banaganga river and there is also a big tank, locally called Sagarahawa.

Dhamma Digital

12. *Nigrodharama vihar* - Anandabagh, the northern area of Taulihawa township, which is less than a mile to the south of Tilaurakot, may well represent the ancient Nigrodharama vihar area. There is a stupa below the modern Sarasvati temple and large areas of habitational deposits can still be seen. It will be remembered that Huen-Tsang had noted that Nigrodharama, where a vihara and a stupa existed, was three to four li south of Kapilvastu.
13. *Kapilvastu situated to the west of Lumbini* - Tilaurakot's proximity to Lumbini also supports its claim to be the ancient location of Kapilvastu. Huen-Tsang had said that Kapilvastu lay about 22 miles west of Lumbini. Tilaurakot is situated nearly 20 miles west of Lumbini today.

14. *Sarakupa* - Both Fa-Hian and Huen-Tsang had said that Sarakupa was located 30 li south-east of Kapilvastu. Exactly 30 li (nearly six miles) south-east of Tilaurakot is a village that the local people call Dharama-paniya (sacred water). The village is located on the Taulihawa-Lumbini road, a furlong east of Dohani village. There are sites with springs to the north and south of the road in which the water never dry up even in the summer season. This place seems to represent the old Sarakupa described by the Chinese pilgrims.

The above-mentioned facts should convince scholars that no other site in that region except Tilaurakot is the ancient city of Kapilvastu. In fact, this is the largest site within a radius of 20 miles. It is centrally located between the different places mentioned by the Chinese travellers and fits with the geographical and literary evidences relating to the site of Kapilvastu.

### **Archaeological Remains at Tilaurakot**

*The Western Gateway Complex* - The western gateway is flanked by two brick bastions. A road, 19-feet wide and paved with bricks, leads from the gateway into the citadel. Inside the gate there are brick platforms on both sides of the road. Some copper coins, an iron spade, an iron chisel and other metal objects have been found near the gate. Within the gateway complex there are the remains of a defense wall, a watchman's room, roads, brick platforms and a blacksmith's workshop, pottery and numerous antiquities.

The excavation of the western gateway complex was conducted in the years 1967-77 which brought to light three cultural periods and nine layers of deposition. The last occupied period was the Kushan period (circa 100-200 A.D.). Terracotta figurines, coins of different kinds and pottery belonging to the Kushan period have been found. The next deposition belonged to the Sunga period (100-200 B.C.). From this period Sunga moulded terracottas, early cast coins, Mitra coins (some bearing the name Agnimitra), heads of terracotta, semi-precious stones, etc. have been found. The lowest deposition is "Northern Black Polished" (N.B.P.) were (circa 700 B.C. - 300 B.C.).

- a. *The Defence Walls* - There are three phases of defence walls. The wall first was made of mud and can be dated to the 7th-6th century B.C. on the basis of the N.B.P., P.G. and associated Painted Red (P.R.) ware pottery. The second phase of the defence wall was also built of yellowish clay in the 2nd century B.C. A burnt brick wall was constructed on the outer edge of this wall to protect the mud rampart from the water of the moat. A large number of P.G., N.B.P. and Sunga potteries were collected from this phase. The third wall was erected on the top of the basement of mud ramparts. This wall was made of burnt bricks and brickbats in 150 B.C.

- b. **The Western Gateway** - This gateway had rammed floors with pot holes at the lowest level. In the second phase brick-arms were constructed to support the wooden doors (the remains are charred wood with a large number of flat iron pieces and long iron nails). The first two phases of construction can be assigned to the 2nd-1st century B.C. and the third phase belongs to the 1st-2nd century A.D., on either side of the gateway there were brick bastions. On the southern side there was a provision for climbing up to the first floor. The northern and southern floors were connected to the first floor.
- c. **Watchman's Room** - The north side of the entrance was the room for the watchmen of Kushan period which can be assigned to 1st-2nd century A.D.
- d. **Roads** - During excavations, roads of different periods from the 7th-6th century B.C. to the 2nd century A.D. were uncovered near the gateway. The road of the 2nd century B.C. was 19 feet wide and was provided with edge-stones on both sides. It had the solling of iron lags (wastage of iron) and the top was paved with bricks and brickbats. Ancient wheel-track marks were also found in that road that tally with that of the modern bullock-cart.
- e. **Brick Platforms** - Two Brick platforms were found on the northern side of the road belonging to the Sunga period. They were built of single course of bricks in the plan. The central portion of the platform was filled with mud and plastered with cow dung mixed with husk and straw. It was probably used as an open shop.
- f. **Blacksmith's Workshop** - On the southern side of the gateway, a big clay oven was found. Near this workshop two big water jars, fragments of two sall copper pots, 12 early copper cast coins, two iron belts, two iron spades, one iron chisel and one iron frying pan were found. Probably this workshop was used to produce war weapons, agricultural tools and coins as well as other household utensils.
- g. **Pottery**- From the lowest level, P.G., N.B.P. and Black on Red ware potteries were found. The clay of these potteries is very fine and well levigated. The firing quality is so fine that they produce a metallic sound.

The distinctive feature of P.G. ware was the superior quality of the paste formed of well-levigated clay and well-burnt fabric. The types represented are straight-sided bowls, cups, and dishes with incurved rims. P.G. ware from Tilaurokot are thicker in section and have horizontal or vertical bands, criss-crosses and irregular dots over grey surface. The N.B.P. pots are made of good quality clay, are well baked and have black and silver shading. The surfaces are

well-polished but on some of the pieces the polish has been rubbed off and they are now pale red. The shapes of the ware are very simple: dishes, bowls, lids, etc. The N.B.P. ware may be regarded as the deluxe ware of the period. The Red ware and the Black on Red ware are plain or have painted horizontal bands done with brown or black pigments. The main type of the pots are dishes, basins, bowls, different kinds of vases, water jars, a large variety of miniature vases, etc. Red ware pottery of coarse fabric mixed with silt and mica have been found in the top phase. Mostly bowls, dishes, water jars, and water drinking spouts are encountered there.

- h. *Antiquities from Tilaurakot* - The quality as well as the quantity of the antiquities from Tilaurakot are very rich. These include terracotta human and animal figurines, beads, coins, stone and metal objects, seals, sealings and miscellaneous objects.
- i. *Terracottas* - The objects found so far at Tilurakot identify it as one of the prolific centers of terracotta art of the early historic period. Terracotta formed the most popular medium of artistic expression at that time and it was also used for personal ornaments (beads, bangles and rings), documentations (sealings), children's toys, and objects of domestic and ritualistic needs. Terracotta not only gives an idea of the artistic attainments but also of the life, culture, fashions of the times in respect of dress, coiffure and jewellery.
- j.a. *Human Figurines* - The three different art traditions found at Tilaurakot attest to the trends, fashions and features of the artistic movement. The representative schools are called Mauryan, Sunga and Kushan respectively. More female figures than male have been found at the Mauryan site.

*Mauryan Figurines* - In this period the figurines are mostly hand-modelled. The decorations were done with clay bands which were prepared separately and then added to the body. Sometimes wooden pins were also used to beautify the figurines which have few ornaments, big eyes, prominent nose and impressive face. The female figurines are decorated with circular discoid head ornaments, heavy ear ornaments and necklaces. Some figurines found at the site have hairpins over the forehead, some wear turbans, and others wear bands of beaded waist ornaments.

*Sunga Figurines* - This art school produced the molded relief plaques. They have the peculiar dress belonging to the Sunga idiom. The treatment of the drapery is varied. Some figurines stand stiff while others are lively with animated,



graceful movements. The figurines are heavily ornamented and sport large varieties of hair dressing and hair coiffures. Some of the female figurines have a parrot on the left hand.

**Kushan Figurines** - In this period, stone sculptures were being produced at Mathura and Gandhara which resulted in a decrease in the number of terracottas being produced and there was a great deterioration in the terracotta art. All the figurines are hand-made and the clay is mixed with husks and ill-fired. The figurines of this period are mostly fan-like with head gears of knot of hair tied over the head. Wooden or bamboo pins are used to make the eyes, mouth and nose. The female figurines have heavy ornaments in the ears. These figurines are very crude and there is no delicacy or expression in the face like the Mauryan or Sunga terracottas.

**J.b. Animal Figurines** - The yeild of terracotta animal figurines from the site is fairly rich. Many of these are portions of the body like legs, trunks, tusks and horns. The figurines are hand-modelled of fine-gained clay and are usually well-fired. Ears, horns and tusks were generally separately fashioned and affixed later on. Most figurines have transverse holes through the snout, nose and trunk, which suggest that they ran on wheels. The animals represented include elephants, horses, rams, deer, bulls, cows and tigers. Some of the figurines are decorated with incised dotted holes, stamped wheels, or varieties of leaf designs.

**J.c. Beads** - The excavation has yielded beads of terracotta, glass, bone, agate, rock, crystal, cornelian, chalcedony, garnet, amethyst, jasper, topaz, aventurine, citrine, garnet, ferreous micaschist, gneiss, silver, copper, shell and paste. Some of the beads are unbornd which indicate that bead manufacture was a local industry. The bead-makers also exhibited a keen sense of decoration and great skill in the manufacture of etched beads of chalcedony, agate and cornelion, cemented eye beads of chalcedony and agate, glass beads with spirals, and grooved beads of bone and silver. The perforation in the mineral beads is usually fine, the drilling being done from both ends in many cases. The bone beads are quite abundant. The commonest shape is spherical with two ends slightly flattened. Other ordinary shapes are spherical, short oblate circular, and long barrel circular. The terracotta beads are either red or black and are generally vase shaped. The fabric is usually fine though there are some of a medium quality. Most of them were originally treated with a red slip, the colour varying from bright red to blackish red. A few have the black slip. The main shapes are long barrel circular, disc circular, arecashed etc.

**J.d. Bangles** - The material most commonly used for bangles was terracotta,

but glass, copper and shell bangles were also found in the excavation. The terracotta bangles are made of fine clay and are well-fired. The decoration consists of a series of oblique incisions on two sides of the outer face. Some pieces are painted with black pigment with circular or oblique lines.

There are fewer glass, copper and shell bangles. These are plain, band-like and oblong in section.

- k. *Metal objects* - The metal objects found at the site were made of gold, silver, copper, bronze and iron.
- i. Gold - Gold objects are very few. A small gold leaf and two very thin pieces were found which were most probably used for covering the other objects.
  - ii. Silver - One hollow, spherical silver bead with a ribbed horizontal groove was found at this site.
  - iii. Copper- Copper objects outnumber gold and silver artifacts. The main types of objects found are rings, pots, antimony rods, and wheels, etc. The rings are fairly well-preserved. Antimony rods are thick at both ends. There are ten pieces of bangles which are irregularly-curved broad flat bands, oblong in section.
  - iv. Bronze- There are very few bronze objects. One is a vase, of which the splayed out featureless rim and a portion of the neck are extant. Along with this several flat pieces were found.
  - v. Lead - So far the only lead objects found during the excavation are nails and rings.
  - vi. Iron- The iron objects discovered consist of nails, hooks, spear-heads chisels, long heavy bars with ring-like ends, chains, one fragment of a hollow tubular object and several fragments of nails. The large number of nails indicate copious wooden constructions. Some of the nails are bent, caused by hammering when they were driven into the wood. The hooks are small and circular with one end flattened. The chisel is a round bar, tapering gradually from the top downwards to a flattened and splayed single-slope cutting edge. Some are oblong and reach maximum thickness near the middle. Spear-heads have leaf-shaped heads. The arrow-heads are also leaf-shaped with a double tang. The bottom end of the tang and the point are broken. One arrow-head is triangular with a flattened tang.

- l. **Seals and Sealings** - The materials used for seals and sealings are either terracotta or chalkstone. A chalkstone seal in the Brahmi script reading "DABILASA" (dabilasya) is decorated with a cylindrical handle. This is probably the personal name of the trader. A terracotta sealing has the letter reading "NEGAME" in Brahmi script. There are other sealings that have not been read so far.
- m. **Stone objects** - Stone objects include balls, decorated plates of soft stone, decorated pot pieces with lids of chalk stone, querns, mullars, etc. Except querns and mullars there are scarcely any domestic article of daily use. The querns are mostly fine-grained sandstone; some of them are highly polished from rubbing. The mullars are all in small fragments. They are oblong or squarish in cross-section. A stone ball made of an unidentified rock was also discovered in the excavation. The fragments of flat discs display a remarkably high finish and polish.
- n. **Coins** - Coins collected from the excavation include silver and copper punch-marked coins, silver plated copper coins, early cast coins, die-struck coins with straight or oblique cross, Mitra coins bearing the name of Agnimitra and Kushan coins of Wima Kadphises, Kanishka and Huvishka. Most copper coins are in an extremely poor state of preservation. The main symbol in the copper coins is a four-spoked wheel. It may be presumed that these coins were local issues of Tilaurakot. The reverse sides are black, a few having pitted surface due to corrosion. Some copper coins are oblong and squarish. These were produced from copper sheets as the slanting cut of the edges of some thick coins demonstrate. Some circular die-struck coins with the wheel symbol are well preserved. The silver punch-marked coins were cut out from sheets. Their obverse symbols are (i) part of the sun, (ii) half of a six armed symbol alternating with three arrow heads, (iii) half of a three-arched symbol, and (iv) caduceus symbol. The reverse symbol is the caduceus and it is smaller than that of the obverse. Some of the coins have the swastika symbol as well as the Nandipada. Mitra coins bear the issuer's name Agnimitra on the obverse, Kushan coins Belonging to Wima Kadphises, Kanishka and Huvishka are the most important coin-findings of the excavation. Extensive circulation of coins indicates a systematized trade strategy in Tilaurakot.
- o. **Bone and Ivory objects** - Most of the bone and ivory objects are in fragments and are very difficult to correctly identify. Of the bone materials, arrow-heads, cop-like sockets with a circular section, fragments of antimony-rods, and tabular blocks are the only things that can be clearly distinguished. The ivory objects also appear to have been the fragments of carved items, like the tusk of an elephant and arrow-heads.
- p. **Miscellaneous objects** - Miscellaneous objects culled from the excavation include terracotta discs balls, stoppers, cylinders, ear-studs, a casket lid, flesh-rubbers, tiles, etc. The discs are mostly made from broken pots and some pieces are decorated with

oblique incised lines along the edges. Most of them are red with a red slip and a few are of grey with a black slip. The flat part was selected for this purpose. It can be imagine that they were used for gaming-counters and hopscotch-discs. The small terracotta balls may have been used in children's games.

The stoppers are noteworthy findings. One of these is in the form of a sunflower with ten fairly large petals in two layers. Terracotta ear-studs are decorated with floral designs and vertical bands. The casket lid is circular, brilliantly polished, well fired and made of good fabric. This may have been a toilet-casket. The dabbers are of different sizes. The most notable is decorated with incised dots and crescents, alternately arranged all around below the neck. These are two types of flesh-rubber, a flat one with sharp pointed dots and a round cylindrical type with sharp vertical lines.

*The eastern Gateway Complex* - The excavation at the eastern gateway complex was carried out between 1980 and 1982. The main aim of the 1982 work was to conserve those structures which were found in the 1981 excavation. The structures repaired were the gateway pillars, walls, and the defence wall. Both bastions and doorways on both sides of the road were conserved.

This gate was first excavated by P.C. Mukharji in 1899 A.D., then susequently covered with mud and shrubs and completely hidden. Even Mrs. Devala Mitra was unable to trace it in 1962. The gate has religious as well as archaeological importance since Lord Buddha left his wordly home through it. Later it was called the "Mahabhinskramana Dwar". The number of antiquities found here was less than at the western gate complex. Among the artifacts found are terracotta human and animal figurines, coins, beads, bangles, cart wheels, P.G. and N.B.P. ware pieces.

The most important finding is a seal and a sealing, both having inscriptions. The seal is nearly circular in shape and has a Buddha Chakra (wheel, also called Dharmachakra) over a three legged pedestal with the inscription "NEGAME". The letters are in the Brahmi script and it meant a guild (possibility a city business organization). The other inscribed sealing has the standing figure of a king or a God with the inscription below the standing figure arranged in horizontal lines. The inscription has not yet been deciphered.

The structural remains found during the excavation are 19 feet of road, pillars of three pairs of wooden gates, one doorway for pedestrians, a ten feet broad city wall, bastions on both sides of the gate, and a house with three rooms. The excavation further located the moat outside the wall.

*The Central Structural Complex* - The Japanese archaeologists Z. Nakamura, T. Kube, and H. Sakazume from Rissho University, Japan, excavated roughly in the center of the citadel. The exposed a structural complex which has been interpreted by B.K. Rijal as Suddhodhana's palace complex. Rijal says that the twin stupas to the north of Tilaurakot were

built in the memory of the blessed parents of Gautama Siddhartha. But the **Dating of the Historical Buddha**, Part I, (1991, Heinz Bechert, ed., Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprech, p. 72) judges that:

"This communication inspires very little confidence in one's mind because it contains conclusions which are not tenable in this form. An oft. (sic) evidence fact can adjust the picture; nowhere in northern India were found building structures made of burnt bricks which are older than the second century B.C. The twin stupas of Dhamnihawa cannot likewise be dated before this time although their mud-core can possibly point to an earlier origin. It is an unprovable speculation to declare them as memorial stupas for the parents of Gautama only because of their doubleness. The foundation of the building exposed by the Japanese archaeologists dates back to the 2nd - 1st century B.C. according to the sizes of their bricks. The determination of the function of this structure is difficult. In no case should it be said that they represent 'a network of the part of Suddhodhana's palace complex'. It would be an irresponsible statement."

Anyway this complex has four blocks with rows of rooms. The size of the rooms are quite small and the blocks have corridors facing south and north. Sometimes the partition walls are built of a single course of bricks. Inside the complex only one courtyard can be seen. This complex comprises a well for water and a good system of drainage. There are a few blocks of platforms inside the complex that may have been used as kitchens or bathrooms. The detailed report of this excavation has not yet been published.

Now questions may arise about the location of the palace and the materials used for its construction. The Tilaurakot mound has a wide moat encircled by a thick burnt brick wall covering an area of 1700 feet north-south and 1300 feet east-west. The mound is roughly a pentagon with four gates in four directions. So, the palace should be somewhere in the center of the mound. The present central structure looks like the monastery. The Chinese traveller Huien-Tsang had seen monasteries and monks during his visit in the 7th century A.D. He wrote that "there were remains of over 1000 Buddhist monasteries and near the 'Palace City' was a monastery with more than 30 inmates who were adherents of the Sammatiya school." This description also reveals that the ideal of the monastic life had continued up to the time of his visit. Even the contour map of the site shows the three prominent mounds in the centre area.

One of these mounds may represent the remains of the palace under the soil. So far as the construction material is concerned, possibly the palace was built of wood. Most Buddhist literatures mention the Mahavana of Kapilvastu. The Ambatha Sutta and the Sumangalavilasini refer to Sakavana wood which is interpreted as Salavana, a natural product of the Nepal Terai. Even the Sakya word is derived from *sala* according to Asvoghosa in the Buddha Carita. The Milindapanha also suggests that houses of the eastern country were built of wooden materials. A large number of iron nails, hooks and chains from the excavation also suggests that they were used for wooden construction. Rhys Davids also opines

that the palace in Kapilvastu might have been built of wood. Since wood is a perishable material it is difficult to find the remains.

Buddhist literatures also frequently mention that Kapilvastu was destroyed by Prasenjit's son and successor Vidudabha of Kosala. He killed the citizens and burned the whole city. Excavation at the western gateway complex layer. No. 6 produced burned earth with pottery and charcoal. Likewise, the excavation conducted by Mrs. Devala Mitra reports that section drawing layer No. 6 (same as the west gate) contains burned earth, ash, brickbats and brick grits. This shows that the fortified area was once exposed to a fire.

Given the conflicting evidence, the excavation should be conducted very carefully. There must be indications of pot-holes and other related materials which will throw light on the materials used in the construction of the palace.

*The Stupas* - About 300 meters north of Tilaurakot lie the twin stupas at the place called Dhamnihawa. The larger stupa measures 52 feet in diameter and stands 7 1/2 feet from the ground. The stupa seems to have been built in the 3rd century B.C. and again renovated in the 2nd - 1st century B.C.

The small stupa measures 26 feet in diameter. These stupas are possibly votive stupas erected by some religious people. They were mentioned as standing before the four city gates by Huen-Tsang. The four stupas may represent the memory of the four events (the sights of the old man, the sick man, the dead body and the sage) which led Prince Siddhartha to desert worldly life.

## **Archaeological Museum**

About 300 metres south-west of Tilaurakot is the Archaeological Museum. The Museum houses all the representative antiquities found during the excavation of Tilaurakot. There are beautiful fragments of sculptures found in and around Tilaurakot.

## **How to reach Tilaurakot**

There is an all-weather road from Lumbini to Tilaurakot. By private vehicle it is a 45-minute drive from Lumbini and there is a regular bus service from Bhairawa to Taulihawa, from where Tilaurakot is 3 km away and can be reached by rickshaw.

## **Important Buddhist Places In Kapilvastu**

In the vicinity of Tilaurakot there are several sites of Buddhist and archaeological significance. These sites consist of mounds or pits which are very important from the point of view of history and archaeological remains. These places belonged to the kingdom of

Suddhodhana and were of great importance in the Buddhist period. Extensive excavations remain to be carried out. Some of these sites are described here.

1. **Niglihawa** - Niglihawa village is situated nearly 3 km to the north-east of Tilurakot and it is identified with the ancient town of Shobhawati, the birth place of Kanakamuni Buddha. Emperor Asoka visited it in the 3rd century B.C. during his pilgrimage. He built a stupa and set up a pillar. Now the pillar is broken into two pieces. The upper portion of the pillar is 15 feet long and bears an inscription from the 14th century attributed to Raja Ripu Malla of the Naga dynasty of western Nepal. The inscription reads "Om mani padme hum. Sri Ripu Malla Schiram Jayatu, 1234". The first portion of the inscription is a Mahayana Buddhist prayer and the later means "May Prince Ripu Mall be victorious for long 1234". The year 1234 in the Sakya era corresponds to 1312 A.D. Nearly 5 feet of the lower portion of the pillar stands above ground, a little tilted. The Asoka inscription it bears may be interpreted as: (1) "King Priyadarsi in the 14th year of his reign enlarged for the second time the stupa of the Buddha Kanakmuni, and in the 20th year of his reign having come in person did reverence and set up a stone pillar." (V Smith) (2) "King Priyadarsi after he had been consecrated king for fourteen years, increased the stupa of Buddha Kanakamuni to double its original size and having consecrated twenty years earlier came himself and worshipped it." (Thomas) Both Chinese travellers Fa-Hien and Huen-Tsang visited this place. Fa-Hien is silent about the Asoka pillar in the birth place of Kanakamuni while Huen-Tsang mentioned it and said that it has the head of a lion's head.

There are remains of ancient stupas, monasteries and habitations near Niglihawa that are yet to be excavated. However, the broken pieces of Asoka pillar at Niglihawa are the most reliable proof that this was the birth place of Kanakamuni Buddha.

2. **Gotihawa**- This place lies about 7km south-west of Tilaurakot. It is identified with the ancient city of Kshemavati, the town of Krakuchanda Buddha. The whole area contains the ruins of ancient habitations, stupas, monasteries, etc. Among them the most conspicuous is the Asoka Pillar. Emperor Asoka visited this place in the course of his pilgrimage in the 3rd century B.C. He built a stupa and installed a pillar with an account of his visit. The pillar is broken now and only the lower portion (about 10 feet in height) still stands *in situ*. Unfortunately, the upper part of the pillar is missing. This pillar had the story of the salvation of Krakuchanda Buddha; now that inscription is almost faint. In 1954, the Rev. Dhammaloka, President of Dharmodaya Sabha, excavated it and built a brick railing around the pillar.

To the south of the pillar is a tank with a mysterious cell at the bottom covered with logs of wood. A little further south of the tank there are ruins which are probably the remains of some ancient stupas. To the north of the pillar there are the ruins of a big stupa, which at present is being used by the villagers. In 1898 Waddell and Mukharji excavated the structural ruins of a stupa at Gotihawa and it was suggested to have been the one built by Emperor Asoka in memory of Krakuchanda Buddha.

3. *Kudan* - About 4.5 km south of Tilaurakot lies a village called Kudan or Lori Kudan. It is situated on the left side of the Taulihawa-Soratgarh road. In the vicinity of the village there are huge structural ruins with a cluster of mounds and a tank nearby. They appear to be the wreckage of stupas and monasteries. These remains were suggested by P.C. Mukharji as those of Nigrodharama, where King Suddhodhana met Lord Buddha. The remains may also be the site of the "Kasaya" stupa where a *kasaya*, or yellow robe, was presented to Lord Buddha, but this has not been confirmed. Some scholars believe that Kudan is Kshemavati, the birth-place of Krakuchanda Buddha. But on the basis of Fa-Hien and Huen-Tsang's writings Mukharji prefers Pipri, a site about a 1.5 km north of Gotihawa.
4. *Sagarahawa* - Nearly 3.5 km to the north of Tilaurakot is a forest area in which there is a big rectangular tank locally known as "Lambu Sagar" or Long Tank.

After the great discovery of the Niglihawa pillar this spot was explored and part of it was excavated by Fuhrer. The excavation traced as many as 17 stupas and large monuments. The bricks were well-burnt. Some of them were imprinted with the full-blossomed lotus design or figures of ancient weapons such as bows, arrows, axes, hatches, clubs, tridents, etc. Some scholars believe that the bearers of these designs were killed by Vidudabha, the king of Kosala. The most important findings are a casket and other rare antiquities from under the brick basement of stupas. A clay casket recovered from one of the stupas contained relic bones, snakes made of gold, pieces of gold and silver, precious stones and jewels, grains of rice, etc. The bone relics are supposed to have belonged to the Sakya warriors massacred by Vidudabha. They were dedicative stupas built in order to enshrine their relics. Unfortunately, these 17 stupas were destroyed down to the foundation by further excavation and they have disappeared for ever.

5. *Araurakot* - Araurakot is located nearly 9 km north-east of Tilaurakot. It is a rectangular fortified area that contains heaps of ancient ruins, traces of an ancient moat and a brick fortification. The remains of brick fortification walls on the north and south are of a strong defensive nature. Remains of two gates and a raised pathway leading to a temple were also uncovered. P.D. Mukharji identified araurakot with the town of Kankamuni Buddha.
6. *Chatradel* - The temple of Chatradel is situated on the right bank of the Banaganga river about 4.5 km north-west of Tilaurakot. To the west of the temple are some mounds which are triangular in shape. The area of these mounds is covered with a thick forest. The mound have not yet been excavated, but they contain the ruins of some ancient stupas. They seem to have been encircled and some parts in the west and in the north are visible. Mukharji reported that the whole Chatradel area was fortified.

(To be continued)