

**Role of the Archaeologists in the Revival of Indian Buddhism  
During 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> Century**

---

**Avinash Barman**

M.Phil. Buddhist Studies

School of Buddhist Philosophy and School of International Buddhist Studies

Sanchi University of Buddhist-Indic Studies, Raisen, M.P.

Email- avinashbarman225@gmail.com

---

**Abstract:**

This paper is an attempt to study and analyze the basic role of the archaeologists in the revival of Buddhism after its declination. At present, Buddhism is the fourth religion prevailing in the whole world. Buddhism emerged from India and became extinct from India, while far-off countries have preserved it as a state religion. It is important to study the reasons behind this. Was Buddhism revived in truth or was Buddhism prevalent but in limited area and quantity? Archaeologists awakening interest in Buddhism and bypassing their main work and contributing to the revival of Buddhism are also indicators that whatever may have been the cause of the decline of Buddhism but there is a significant contribution of archaeologists behind the re-spread. It was not that foreigners did not have to work hard to rehabilitate Buddhism, because Hinduism or Vedic religion had regained its roots and people had almost forgotten Buddhism. The ethical teachings of Buddhism, *Pancasila* who was instrumental in building a strong society were not seen as long as many years. Foreign archaeologists were not so familiar with Indian values, due to this, the historical monuments had to face a lot of loss in the beginning, but after understanding their importance over time, their conservation work was done well. The 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries were a time of subordination of India. In this situation, the credit of the work of the Indian archaeologists was also passed on to foreigners. Nevertheless, many such Indian archaeologists have contributed to the revival of Buddhism, some of the prominent names were Rajendra Lal Mitra, Bhagavan Lal Indrajai etc. The aim of this paper is to explore and states the possibilities of Buddhism in the period of the early phase of Asiatic society as well as the archaeological

survey of India. How these societies played their important role and their contribution to the restoration of Buddhism in India.

**Keywords:** Archaeologist, Revival, Indian Buddhism, 18<sup>th</sup> Century and 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Asiatic Society, Archaeological Survey of India.

## **Introduction:**

*“The discipline of Buddhist studies should be transformed into a branch of the archaeology of religions. This is more satisfactory not only because archaeological and epigraphical sources can usually be dated with some confidence, but also because they tell us what actually happened as opposed to the fictions invented by the composers of the texts”- Schopen*

India is a country of diversities. These diversities can be seen in every section like state, culture, race, caste, sex, religion, etc. in many religions of India, Buddhism is one of the oldest religions. Buddhism emerged from the teachings of the Gautama Buddha. After getting enlightenment he spent his life preaching and spread his teachings till getting *Mahaparinirvana* at the age of 80. Later his *Mahaparinirvana* Buddhism developed very fast and reached apart from India. But by the 12<sup>th</sup> century, Buddhism became invisible from India. We can take the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries as the centre of the revivalist movement for the Buddhism mainly because at this time the places and relics related to the Buddhism were excavated and discovered by the archaeologists and brought to the whole world. Archaeologists are the people who are part of archaeological investigations and study ancient history, objects, places, etc. through archaeological methods.

Asiatic Society of India and the Archaeological Society of India played an important role in the resurgence of Indian Buddhism. Starting from William Jones and James Prinsep in the 18<sup>th</sup> century this restoration work reached the Indian archaeologists in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As a result of the mixed work of the British and the Indian archaeologists, after so many years, the Indian was again aware of the lost religion of the indigenous land. The time of the Mauryan king Asoka noted as the golden period of Buddhism and during his reign Buddhism

grow very well as well as spread apart from the original land. Asoka engraved many pillars and mentioned Buddhist teachings of the morality on the pillar and rock-cut inscription. According to *Pali* references, Asoka constructed 84000 *Stupas*<sup>1</sup> all over the world. From the 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D. till 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D. number of causes were responsible for the decline of Buddhism. In 18<sup>th</sup> century first time James Prinsep deciphered the Brahmi Script in 1834 also Kharosthi script in 1837<sup>2</sup>. He translated most of the inscription found from the different sites in India. Detection of the important sites most associated with Buddhism by Alexander Cunningham like Sanchi, Satdhara. Works of caves frescoes related to Buddhism from 1871 to 1901 by James Burgess. One of the important works did by the foreigners was the discovery of the relics of the Lord Buddha. Other important works, such as the translation of Pali texts, were again prominent in establishing the Buddhist Sangha. These combined incidents hold an important place in the revival of Buddhism.

## Discussion:

After the 12th Century, the way Buddhism gradually declined from India continued until the early 18th Century AD, when Buddhist remains were found during excavation work by the British authorities. From the 18th century onwards, archaeologists have pioneered year-round excavation throughout India and nearer countries of India and at the sight of many places related to Buddhism have been discovered. In these places, mainly *Bodhgaya*, *Kushinagar*, *Sanchi*, *Lumbini*, *Sarnath*, *Nalanda*, *Sankisa*, etc. were found. On the basis of the written evidence of Chinese travellers, Alexander Cunningham discovered the major Buddhist monuments and cities also. Cunningham also established the Archaeological Survey of India, along with these archaeologists also laid the foundation of the Buddhist Association. These incidents have a prominent place in the revival work of Buddhism in India.

- **Reason for Buddhism Emergence:**

---

<sup>1</sup> शास्त्री, स्वामी द्वारकादास, "दीपवंस", अनु., बौद्ध आकर ग्रंथमाला, महात्मा गांधी काशी विद्यापीठ, वाराणसी, 1996, पृ. 102; Allen Charles, "The Buddha and Dr. Fuhrer" Haus Publishing, London, 2011, P. 19

<sup>2</sup> Roy Sourindranath, "The Story of Indian Archaeology 1784-1947" The Director General ASI, New Delhi, 2011, P.26

The Vedic period began after the decline of the Indus Valley Civilization. This period is religiously called the Golden Age because the evidence of currently Hindu texts, the *Vedas* are called this time, but when we look at the time after the *Vedic* period, we find that the life of human beings was filled with great troubles. The reason for all these problems was the growth of religious rituals under the guise of these Vedic rules, such as animal sacrifice, human sacrifice, *Havan*, Caste system and Varna system, etc. When these rituals were over, the human wanted to get rid of all these evils. This was the time for the rise of religions like *Buddhism* and *Jainism*. *Buddhism* and *Jainism* derive from the *Sharman* tradition of India, whose sole goal was to remove the sorrows of human life and spread the spirit of harmony in the society by opposing these rituals.

- **Origin and Decline of Buddhism:**

In the 6th century BCE, a young prince was born in *Shakya* region to the house of King *Shuddhodana* and Queen *Mahamaya* and later called *Gautama Buddha*, after his renunciation, he gave a new dimension to human life to cross this *Bhavsagar* (the cycle of sorrow). Subsequently his enlightenment in Bihar, he gave his first sermon in *Sarnath Varanasi* and rotated the round of religion, better known as *Dhammachakkapavvatana* (Turn the wheel of Dhamma). As it is known from the *Jataka* tales that *Siddhartha* has had 24 *Buddhas* even before *Gautama* and *Gautama Buddha* have 25 *Buddha* in the same order. According to the literary sources, we get known this fact that Buddhism was started through the teachings of *Gautama Buddha*. *Siddhartha Gautama*, the initiator of Buddhism, Known as *Buddha* after getting insight, was born in 563 BCE<sup>3</sup> *Kapilavastu* (present-day in Nepal Tarai Region). But according to P.V. Bapatin 2500 years of *Buddhism*, the birth of *Siddhartha Gautama* takes place on the date of 623 B.C<sup>4</sup>. He got married to the Princess of the *Koliye* Kingdom named *Mahamaya* or *Maya Devi*. Before taking birth on earth, Buddha was in *Tusita* heaven. The *Buddha*'s last prior existence before being born here as Prince *Siddhartha* was a *Bodhisattva* named *Deva Setaketu*<sup>5</sup>. According to prof. K.T.S. Sarao the

---

<sup>3</sup> कौसल्यायन भदंत आनंद, महावंश, बुद्धभूमि प्रकाशन, नागपुर, पृ.9

<sup>4</sup> Bapat P.V., "2500 years of Buddhism", MIB govt. of India, 2012, New Delhi, p.18

<sup>5</sup> *Samantapasadika* 1, p. 161; *Papancasudani (MajjhimaNikaya commentary vol. 1, p.103)*

date of Buddha “On the basis of the Asoka consecration information, the year of the death of the Buddha may be calculated to c.483 (265+218) BCE as per the Long Chronology and c.365 (265+100) BCE or c.375 (265+110) BCE as per the Short Chronology”<sup>6</sup> as we know the differences between the birth and *Mahaparinirvana* of the Buddha was around 80 years. Hence we can calculate the birth time of the Buddha with the help of the article of Prof. Sarao on “The year in which the Buddha Died” (483+80=563) BCE as per the long Chronology and (365+80=445) or (375+80=455) BCE and by his conclusion portion he mentioned the Buddha died in 397 BCE and taking the difference between birth and *Mahaparinirvana* 80 years the birth date will be 477 BCE. T.W. Rhys Davids state that “426 BCE, or maybe a few years later as the date of the *Mahāparinibbāna* of the Buddha. So on this basis, we can say that Buddha was born around 506 BCE according to Rays Davids. Married to Princess Yashodhara of Koliya State at the age of 16. According to Pali Literature, seeing the four instruments ended the fascination with the world and decided to leave the house. But according to Dr Ambedkar, these four reasons cannot be due to someone's home sacrifice. In his book *Buddha and His Dhamma*, he has explained in detail the other major reasons. Seeing the four physical world conditions like sick, old, dead and a quiet innocent monk, he took this vow, but Ambedkar believed that the dispute between the Shakya Republic and the Koliya Republic over the water of the Rohini River was the main reason for home renunciation. He was of the opinion that how a person can remain ignorant of the initial three conditions till the age of 29 years<sup>7</sup>. After leaving the house, he learned and mastered the *Samkhya Yoga* from the first Guru *AlaraKalam* and *Ramputta Uddaka*, but due to lack of complete realization, he took his own path. He reached Gaya and in the age of 35 years got enlightened under the Bodhi tree and became Buddha by *Siddhartha*, an ordinary prince. Two merchant brothers *Tapassu and Bhalika* were his first disciples but in history, his first disciples noted as *Panchvargiya Sadhus*. Buddha gave his first sermon in Deer Park, Sarnath, Varanasi Uttar Pradesh.

---

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/315859350\\_Date\\_of\\_the\\_Buddha](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/315859350_Date_of_the_Buddha)

<sup>7</sup> Ambedkar B.R., “*The Buddha and his Dhamma*”, Buddha Bhoomi Publication, Nagpur, p.28

The *Dhammachakkapavattanasutta*<sup>8</sup> profounded by him in this park as his first sermon for the five ascetics. He turned the wheel of dhamma and explain the reality what he realized like four noble truth, noble eightfold path, *Partityasamutpada*, the law of causality.

According to *MajjhimNikaya*-

“He who sees the *Paṭiccasamuppāda* sees the *Dhamma*;

He who sees the *Dhamma* sees the *Paṭiccasamuppāda*.”<sup>9</sup>

Buddhism spread in all over India after the first sermon by the efforts of monks and patronage kings. The famous king those who played the most prominent role in the spread of Buddhism was king Asoka, Kanishka, Gotmiputra Satakarni and other supported kingdoms like pala, etc.

As above mentioned The Buddha got *Mahaparinirvana* at the age of 80 in 483 BCE and from there the bad phase of Buddhism started. Due to some internal reasons of the sangha as well as the external reason Buddhism became extinct from the land of India. About the disappearance of Buddhism in India, dr. Ambedkar said, “*Buddhism in its material form disappeared I agree. But as a spiritual force, it still exists.*”<sup>10</sup> According to prof. K.T.S. Sarao “As a consequence, one may be tempted to suggest that in different parts of India different factors may have acted differently at different periods of time to cause the decline of Buddhism.”<sup>11</sup> the decline of urbanization can also be the reason for the decline of Buddhism. While another scholar U. Mishra believed that as “*both the rise and decline of Buddhism began almost simultaneously.*”<sup>12</sup>

Chinese travellers mentioned in his account about the decline of Buddhism in the different parts of the Indian subcontinent. Scholars believed that The Worshiping of the *Buddha* or image worship, Discord in Buddhist *Sangha*, Use of *Sanskrit* Language behalf of *Pali*,

---

<sup>8</sup> Rahula Walpole, "What the Buddha's Taught?", 1962, P. 47

<sup>9</sup> Williams, David M. "The Translation and Interpretation of the Twelve Terms in the *Patīccasamuppāda*". *Numen Brill Academic*. 21 (1): 35–63,1974

<sup>10</sup> B. R. Ambedkar, "The decline and fall of Buddhism, Dr BabasahebAmbedkar: Writings and Speeches", Vol. III, Government of Maharashtra. 1987, p. 233-235

<sup>11</sup> Sarao, K.T.S., *The decline of Buddhism in India: A Fresh Perspective*, MunshiramManoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 2012, P.2

<sup>12</sup> U. Mishra, *Influence of The Teachings of The Buddha And Causes of The Decline Of Buddhism In India*, journal of G.N. Jha research institute, IX, pt.I, 1951:P.111-112

Buddhist Sects and their interpretation of Buddhist teachings, Immoral Behaviour in Buddhist order can be the internal reason while the Arab, Turks and Muslim Invasion, Huna Invasion, Role of other religious Preachers, The Absence of Sponsorship Kings, Reform in *Hinduism*, Differences with Brahmanas, etc. Can be considered as external factor those who were responsible for the decline of Buddhism.

This decline, which took place from the 5<sup>th</sup> century, lasted until about the 12<sup>th</sup> century, and the Buddhist religion disappeared from India and the surrounding region. For the first time in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, foreigners came to India and their arrival was also a coincidence of restoration for Buddhism.

- **Role of Archaeologists in Revival of Buddhism in India:**

If seen, the revival of Buddhism in India can be considered in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. As such, the revival of Buddhism took place through many fields such as socially, literary, and archaeological. The main objective of my research paper is to observe the revival of Buddhism in India from an archaeological point of view as well as to study the contribution of archaeologists. Archaeologists have called hard to make archaeological discoveries. But before that, also know what the archaeology is? Archaeology is the study of the ancient past and contemporary human past through substantial remains. The term *Archaeology*<sup>13</sup> is a compound of two Greek words, (*archaios* means ancient or old and *logia* mean learning or study). In other word, a systematic and descriptive study of antiquities is known as archaeology. Through this paper, it will be presented how foreign and Indian archaeologists contributed to the rehabilitation of Buddhism as well as which archaeological societies were important. From the 12<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> century Buddhism was imperceptible in India. During the 16<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> century, a lot of travellers came to India and mentioned about the heritage sites and monuments in their accounts. At the same time, some intellectual people also started coming to India from other countries. Some of them were people who showed great interest in Indian archaeology, art, culture and antiquarianism. The credit for reviving Indian history

---

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.etymonline.com/word/archaeology>

goes to these people. In the 1616 CE<sup>14</sup>, first time An English traveller Thomas Coryat noticed Ashokan pillar in the ruins of old Delhi while “William Finch (1608-11) who had the distinction of being the first European to notice the Asoka pillar at Delhi and Allahabad.”<sup>15</sup>

In 1687-88, ‘*Descriptions Du Royaume De Siam*’, published by *Simon de la loubere* (a European missionary). It contained a word which he translated “*balie or baly*” known as *Pali*. This was the translation work of the Buddhist text. We will mainly read here about William Jones, James Prinsep, Alexander Cunningham, John Burgess, E. hultzsch and Dr A. Führer and discuss their contribution to the revival of Buddhism. In 1750<sup>16</sup> Delhi-Meerut pillar and Kausambi pillar at Allahabad discovered by Padre and Delhi Topra pillar at Firozshah Kotla discovered by Poiler. William Jones founded “The Asiatic Society” in 1784<sup>17</sup> at Calcutta. In 1784 and 1785 another two important inscriptions found at *Radhia* pillar and *Barbar* rock cave<sup>18</sup>. After two decades in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century first time, this inscription script read and deciphered. A Norwegian scholar Christian Lassen first time did a successful attempt to decipher this script. But this script was fully deciphered by James Prinsep. He saw two latter (*Da Na*) in Brahmi script on every votive inscription he got from all over the India and nearer territory. The second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was the golden age of Indology. New inscriptions, coins, and architectural remains were being regularly discovered. Joseph Tieffenthaler, “who travelled extensively in India from 1743 and 1785 and left behind him a magnificent collection of plans and drawings he mad cities, forts, temples, idols’ and ‘other remarkable objects’ in the vast sub-continent.”<sup>19</sup> While in 1780, at Buddal in Bihar Wilkins seen a “decapitated monumental pillar, a broken column bearing an inscription engraved in

---

<sup>14</sup> Allen Charles, “*The Buddha and The Sahibs*” John Murray publishers, London, 2003,P.66

<sup>15</sup> Roy Sourindranath, “*The Story of Indian Archaeology 1784-1947*” The Director General ASI, New Delhi, 2011, P.7

<sup>16</sup> Ramteke D.L., “*Revival of Buddhism in Modern India*” Deep and Deep Publication, New Delhi, 1983, P.43

<sup>17</sup> Markham (1878); Chakrabarti D. K, “*A History of Indian Archaeology from the beginning to 1947*” MunshiramManoharlal publishers pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 2018, P.1

<sup>18</sup> Ramteke D.L., “*Revival of Buddhism in Modern India*” Deep and Deep Publication, New Delhi, 1983, P.43

<sup>19</sup> Roy Sourindranath, “*The Story of Indian Archaeology 1784-1947*” The Director General ASI, New Delhi, 2011, P.8

the stone. Using printer's ink and a roller, he made two reversed impressions of the inscription.”<sup>20</sup> Another inscription came to view of Charles Wilkins in 1785 when Mr. Wilmot gave him. This inscription brings into being by Wilmot in the vicinity of the pilgrimage town of Gaya in Bihar, at a site, he named as ‘*Bood-dha-Gaya*.’<sup>21</sup> Wilkins immediately recognized the script of this new inscription as he had earlier seen the same type of script on the Buddal Bihar inscription. In this sequence, the inscription of Ellora revealed by Francis Wilford and first time been fetched to the western world’s notice by the Frenchman Thevenot in 1793<sup>22</sup>. D.K. Chakraborty said that Thevenot was the first who visited Ellora caves in 1666 and exposed Ellora shrine of Hindu, Jaina and Buddhist sects. In Ellora, there are 12 Buddhist caves from cave no. 1 to 12. Eleven out of the twelve Buddhist caves consist of *Viharas* or monasteries with prayer halls. The discovery made by synchronism between *Chandragupta Maurya* and *Alexander the Great* gave Indian archaeology its first positive date. He is also credited with deciding the location of the classical *Palibothara*.<sup>23</sup> According to Chakrabarti, it was Rennell who identified ancient Pataliputra with modern Patna, while D’Anville put ancient *Palibothara* at Modern Allahabad. With the reference of the Chinese traveller's record, modern-day Patna is identified as ancient *Palibothara*. *in classical history this Chandragupta Maurya known as the ‘Sandrokottos.’* Same time The second field report came from the Sarnath, Varanasi where Jonathan Duncan excavated a temple called *Sarnauth*. And in the excavation of the Dhamek Stupa of Sarnath, an earthen vessel was found which contained somebody relics. As well as a statue of Buddha. Hence Duncan reached this conclusion that these relics belong to the Buddha. Asiatic society played his crucial role in the field of Indian antiquarian and archaeology during the time of William Jones but after his death, these responsibilities came in hand of James Prinsep. James Prinsep was the key scholar in the Buddhist revival movement because of his important contribution to the

---

<sup>20</sup> Allen Charles, “*The Buddha and The Sahibs*” John Murray publishers, London, 2003, P.48

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, P.60

<sup>22</sup> Roy Sourindranath, “*The Story of Indian Archaeology 1784-1947*” The Director General ASI, New Delhi, 2011, P.7

<sup>23</sup> Chakrabarti D. K, “*A History of Indian Archaeology from the beginning to 1947*” Munshiram Manoharlal publishers’ pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 2018, P.16

decipherment of the scripts Brahmi and Kharosthi. He played a key role in the decipherment of the two ancient Indian scripts *Brahmi* and *kharosthi* in 1834 and 1837.<sup>24</sup> According to D.K. Chakrabarti “in the third volume of the *Bombay Transactions (1823)*, Erskine wrote a paper entitled *Observations on the remains of the Buddhists in India.*”<sup>25</sup> This paper was important Buddhist remains known till the date: *Balkh-Bamiyan, Manikiyala, Sarnath, Bodhgaya, Ajanta, some Ellora and Aurangabad caves, Nasik, Juner, Karle* “the ruins of Buddha temples” in Guntur, Bagh etc. Some of the other most important Buddhist monuments that were revealed in less than a century from Mackenzie’s Amravati. The subsequent important discovery made by General Ventura in 1830 who opened the *Manikyala Stupa* at Taxila in the town of Rawalpindi (in what is now northern Pakistan). According to D.K. Chakrabarti “in the third volume of the *Bombay Transactions (1823)*, Erskine wrote a paper entitled *Observations on the remains of the Buddhists in India*”<sup>26</sup> This paper was important Buddhist remains known till the date: *Balkh-Bamiyan, Manikiyala, Sarnath, Bodhgaya, Ajanta, some Ellora and Aurangabad caves, Nasik, Juner, Karle* “the ruins of Buddha temples” in Guntur, Bagh etc. In less than a century, some other important Buddhist monuments have emerged from the Amravati stupa discovered by Mackenzie and the surrounding area. The subsequent important discovery made by General Ventura in 1830 who opened the *Manikyala Stupa* at Taxila in the town of Rawalpindi (in what is now northern Pakistan).

The main works of James Prinsep started towards Buddhism in 1830-38. He compared all letter with every inscription and got aware that every inscription has two common letters known as (*Da-Na*).<sup>27</sup> By 1835–36, it was generally seen that some inscriptions were received in a strange language, which was first found in Firozshah Pillar Delhi, which had Pseudo-Greek letters. But these types of inscriptions also found at four

---

<sup>24</sup> Roy Sourindranath, “*The Story of Indian Archaeology 1784-1947*” The Director General ASI, New Delhi, 2011, P.26

<sup>25</sup> Chakrabarti D. K., “*A History of Indian Archaeology from the Beginning to 1947*” Munshiram Manoharlal publishers’ pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 2018, P.25

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, P.25

<sup>27</sup> Allen Charles, “*The Buddha and The Sahibs*” John Murray publishers, London, 2003, P.180

other places. Two Pillars which were similar like to Firozshah Pilar found in North Bihar. The first of these two pillars that received from *Mathiah* or *Lauriya Nandgarh*.<sup>28</sup> An inscription also found on this pillar. The second column had no inscription but a stone lion was found from *Basrah* village in *Tirhut* district of Patna. In 1798 the same lines were also found on the inscription got in the excavation of Sarnath. The same lines were obtained from Dr Buchanan's on the inscription of *Bodh Gaya*. These lines were first obtained from the *Sarnath* and *Bakhra* Pillar inscriptions. When the inscription accounts of *Dhauili*, *Girnar* and *Dehli* combined, the first line was almost identical about a king *Priyadarshi*. On the other hand, the *Mahavansa* translation of the Turnors revealed the history of Ceylon, as well as that a king of *Jambudeep*, known as *Dharmashok*, ruled in *Jambudeep* around 307 BCE and after the Kalinga conquest, who accepted Buddhism. The same king sent a monk named *Thera Mahindra* and a nun named *Sanghmitra* to Ceylon for the promotion of Buddhist religion during the reign of Ceylon King *Devnamapiya Tissa*<sup>29</sup>. Thus the translation of the inscriptions helped to convey the Indian ancient king Asoka and his deep reverence for Buddhism. This was the first phase when archaeologists discovered ancient Indian history and helped restore a lost religion. The Gujjarra inscription of Datia and the record of Maski reflect the full name of Asoka, due to which it could be identified in the Mahavamsa. After Asoka's inscriptions, who has contributed immensely in the rehabilitation was the written evidence of Chinese travellers who wrote about the position of Buddhism during their visit to India. After Prinsep, Alexander Cunningham and Markham Kitto carried on his work. Alexander Cunningham came to India in 1833. Cunningham seeks some key places in Buddhist history as in 1842 the site of *Sankissa* discovered, in 1851 the site of *Sanchi* he exposed. Cunningham unbarred the great '*Dhamek Stupa* at *Sarnath* at great outlay by himself, and during 1839, 1846 and 1847 he prepared the outlines of the geography of Kashmir and Ladakh. According to kalhan's *Rajatarangini*, Kashmir was the centre of Buddhism during the first century AD. In Indian sub-continent Hodgson, Turnour, Csoma, Remusat, Burnouf and Lassen with equally significant role played to make aware of the ancient history of India. In 1848 to the Asiatic Society of Bengal, the publication of all the existing ruins of the Buddhism their architecture,

---

<sup>28</sup> पाण्डेय, डॉ राजबली, अशोक के अभिलेख , ज्ञानमंडल लिमिटेड, वाराणसी, संवत् 2022, पृ. 164

<sup>29</sup> कौसल्यायन भदंत आनंद, "महावंश", हिन्दी साहित्य सम्मेलन, प्रयाग, 1942, पृ. 70

sculpture, coins and inscriptions were significant for the illustration of the history of India. The work of translation and publication of the details of Fa-Hien's account of his travels in India by Cunningham opened up new avenues of discovery in the future. This translation work of these travellers record was moreover far superior as a guide to the history and archaeology of India. As a result of which Cunningham succeeded in his work, '*The Bhilsa Topes*' in an attempt to sketch it at a more precise level very reliable material regarding Buddhism was now available to scholars. Cunningham was very worried about the heritage of India that's why he wrote a letter to the governor. He wanted to protection and conservation of these all sites. In 1861<sup>30</sup>, Alexander Cunningham founded the Archaeological Survey of India, Who also became its first Director-General In 1871. And a journal *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum* founded in 1877 by Alexander Cunningham<sup>31</sup>. In it, the inscriptions discovered during the survey by archaeologists were published in seven volumes. The last revised volume was published in 1925 by E. Hultzsch. R.L. Mitra was the contemporary of Alexander Cunningham. Mahabodhi temple (one of the holiest and devote place for Buddhist people), was excavated and the work of restoration done by both Archaeologists<sup>32</sup>. His work published in 1882, *Buddhist Sanskrit literature of Nepal*, actually left a distinct indelible mark in the field of Buddhism along with Nepalese history. Apart from editing, translation and cataloguing, two of his important works, *The Antiquities of Orissa* (1875, 1880) and *Buddha Gaya, the Hermitage of Sakya Muni* (1878) were prominent. Cunningham's primary objective was to identify and locate the holy sites associated with the life of the Buddha. For example, the location of Shravasti, the site of Jetavana Vihar where the Buddha is believed to have long resided. The distances given by Cunningham based on descriptions of Chinese pilgrims correspond to the location of the ruined city of Saheth-Maheth on the southern side of the Rapti. Cunningham visited the site and identified the famous monastery of Jetavana purchased by Sudatta, the minister of Prasenjit, close to the southern gate of the city, as noted in Sri Lanka's History, Mahavansa. This identification was further substantiated by the

---

<sup>30</sup> <http://asi.nic.in/about-us/history/>

<sup>31</sup> <http://asi.nic.in/about-us/history/>

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.thehindu.com/features/metroplus/in-the-land-of-the-buddha/article3432504.ece>

discovery of a huge statue of Buddha with an inscription bearing the name of Sravasti himself. This image was given by the sarvastivadin teachers of Kosamba Hall. After Cunningham, James Burges took charge of the task. James Burges launched the *Epigraphica Indica* publication in 1882. Apart from this, the main work that Burgess did in the field of Buddhism was *The rock temples of Elephanta*. (1871). *Notes on Ajanta paintings*. (1879). *The cave temples of India*. (1880). *Buddhist stupas of Amaravati, etc.* (1887). *The Gandhara sculptures*. (1899 and 1900). *Buddhist art in India*. (1901)<sup>33</sup>.

## **Objectives:**

1. To find out the condition of Buddhism in India during the phase of eighteenth and nineteenth-century
2. To find out the contribution of foreigners and foreign archaeologists in the revival of the Buddhism
3. The work of Indian archaeologists also ignited due to which Indian Buddhism was rehabilitated.

## **Review of Literature:**

In Literature Review, Prior works such as the article published by James Prinsep over the script, Alexander Cunningham's work on Sanchi and the surrounding area known as in his book *The Bhilsa Topes* and the work of James Burgess on the frescos of Caves like Ajanta, Ellora providing important accounts. 2500 years of Buddhism, Decline of Indian Buddhism, and Inscription of King Asoka are also one kind of important work in this field.

---

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.revolvy.com/page/James-Burgess-%28archaeologist%29>

## **Research Methodology:**

The research methodology is an arrangement of an important part of the research. The study uses the text analysis method to complete the research effort. It also serves as a critical analyst as an important tool for the evaluation of literary texts and archaeological sources. The proposed work follows the following points of the methodology.

- I. Reading of primary sources.
- II. Analysis and interpretation.
- III. Reading critical reviews.
- IV. Direct visual observation method (Survey method)
- V. Historical Method

## **Conclusion:**

The story of Buddhism in Indian subcontinent extends from the sixth century B.C. to the present day. It is more or less an account of two thousand and six hundred (2600) years. The history of Buddhism took a new turn approximately 500-700 years after the Buddha's *Mahaparinirvana* and its decline takes place in malevolence of the fact. The period of the disappearance of Buddhism from the land of Indian sub-continent is supposed to have lasted very long and maybe to the extent of seven hundred years, for during the latter half of the seventeenth century C.E. European scholars started taking interest in the study of Indian religions, philosophies and traditions. Archaeologists, epigraphists and historians begin to excavate religious significance and pilgrimage sites and thus explore the vast corpus based on archaeological findings, which throw light on the historical development of the past period.

To wind up one must consider contemporary accounts of Buddhism in modern India and its revival. It should also be noted that the most important factor which played a key role in the revival of Buddhism is the modernization of religion. Modernization is naturally a type of change and undoubtedly a positive change. In a way, it is a social change and social change is based on changes in social height, which are largely influenced by religious beliefs and practices. The role of the architects of the revival of Buddhism in India had been to activate this process and they did it fully well. Now it is the role of the followers, in general, to carry forward this process to its logical end. When we talk about revival, then we should pay attention to every important factor even if its contribution is less. The things that helped archaeologists most in the rehabilitation of Buddhism decipherment of Ashoka's inscriptions, translating the travelogues of Chinese travelers, searching and excavation all the major Buddhist sites on the basis of the translation, obtaining the remains of the Bhagwan Buddha and his major disciples from the Buddhist sites, as well as the promotion of major Buddhist texts and translating the texts into different languages. All these are jointly contributed to the revival of Buddhism in Indian sub-continent. But all this was possible only after the arrival of foreigners and later Indians become prominent in this movement.

## **Bibliography:**

1. Allen Charles, "*The Buddha and Dr Fuhrer*" Haus Publishing, London, 2011
2. Allen Charles, "*The Buddha and The Sahibs*" John Murray publishers, London, 2003
3. Ambedkar B.R, "*The Buddha and his Dhamma*" Buddha Bhoomi Publication, Nagpur

4. Ambedkar, B. R. "*The decline and fall of Buddhism, Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches*", Vol. III, Government of Maharashtra. 1987
5. Bapat P.V., "*2500 years of Buddhism*", MIB govt. of India, 2012, New Delhi
6. Chakrabarti D. K., "*A History of Indian Archaeology from the beginning to 1947*" Munshiram Manoharlal publishers' Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 2018
7. Cunningham Alexander, "*Archaeological Survey of India, Reports 1872-73*" Vol 5, Calcutta, 1875
8. <http://asi.nic.in/about-us/history/>
9. <https://www.etymonline.com/word/archaeology>
10. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/315859350> Date of the Buddha
11. <https://www.revolvy.com/page/James-Burgess-%28archaeologist%29>
12. <https://www.thehindu.com/features/metroplus/in-the-land-of-the-buddha/article3432504.ece>
13. Markham (1878)
14. Rahula Walpole, "*What the Buddha's Taught?*", Grove Press, New York, 1974
15. Ramteke D.L., "*Revival of Buddhism in Modern India*" Deep and Deep Publication, New Delhi, 1983
16. Roy Sourindranath, "*The Story of Indian Archaeology 1784-1947*" The Director-General ASI, New Delhi, 2011
17. *Samantapasadika* 1, p. 161; *Papancasudani (MajjhimaNikaya commentary vol. 1*
18. Sarao, K.T.S., *The decline of Buddhism in India: A Fresh Perspective*, MunshiramManoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 2012
19. U. Mishra, *Influence of The Teachings of The Buddha And Causes of The Decline Of Buddhism In India*, journal of G.N. Jha research institute, IX, pt.I, 1951
20. Williams, David M. "*The Translation and Interpretation of the Twelve Terms in the Paticcasamuppada*". *Numen Brill Academic. 21 (1): 35-63,1974*
21. कौसल्यायन भदंत आनंद, "महावंश", बुद्धभूमि प्रकाशन, नागपुर
22. कौसल्यायन भदंत आनंद, "महावंश", हिन्दी साहित्य सम्मेलन, प्रयाग, 1942
23. पाण्डेय, डॉ राजबली, अशोक के अभिलेख , जानमंडल लिमिटेड, वाराणसी, संवत् 2022
24. शास्त्री, स्वामी द्वारकादास, "दीपवंस", अनु., बौद्ध आकर ग्रंथमाला, महात्मा गांधी काशी विध्यापीठ, वाराणसी, 1996