

[Pioneer . of 18-5-56]

## THE ANNIHILATION OF LORD BUDDHA'S FAMILY

IT is a strange phenomena in history that the families or clans of all great preachers in the world were annihilated either in their own life-time or within a few years of their exit from this world. In our own country, the destruction of the yadu clan of Shri Krishna is known to all of us. But it was an immense surprise to me to find that during the life-time of Lord Buddha his family and clan of Sakyas was given such a terrific blood-bath that hardly a few escaped extinction. I came face to face with the story when I visited Lumbini, the birth-place of Lord Buddha, last summer.

I was among a group of visitors who undertook this pilgrimage. We stopped at the residence of Mr. Peppy, at the head-quarters of his Howard Lehra Estate. After the abolition of the Zemindari, Mr. Peppy's beautiful bungalow has been sold to the U.P. Government but the household has not been transferred so far and in that nicely furnished place, over a sumptuous breakfast table, I learnt of the old documents and relics which the owner possessed regarding the history, ancient monuments and historical finds of immense importance of that locality. The discovery may have been new to me, and to my shame, although I was a student of ancient history in my college days, I had little knowledge of the great things in store for us. The most ancient and yet to be deciphered relic in possession of historians in India is the inscription on a sandstone dating back to 482 B.C. It was found in the excavations of 'Piperahwa Stoop,' excavated by the father perhaps the grandfather of Mr. Peppy. It reveals something unknown or undiscovered in the great history of the life of Lord Buddha. We shall describe about the find. Let us first deal with the history of the place.

---

## Gorakhpur Terai

The oldest and perhaps most authenticated book on Gorakhpur Terai—the area called Nepal Terai—was written by Mr. W. Gibbons nearly 60 years ago. It was published in Buckingham, England, and contains valuable information. In Nepal, the area leading from the Trivem Ghat on Narayani river to the district of Arrah in Bihar, i.e., a distance of 60 miles, is called Gorakhpur Terai. In 1801, the East India Company purchased this plot of land from Nawab Wazir of Avadh on payment of Rs.1,33,47,135|12|9. The whole region was covered with rich Sal forests and was famous in Buddhist history.

In the year 1846-47, the Company earned Rs.2,11,68,175 from this forest. During the same year the total income from land Revenue to the East India Company from Gorakhpur district was Rs.23,86,990 while from Kanpur district its income was Rs.23,34,700. Due to dense forests, the Board of East India Company decides that it would not be possible for them to have any administrative or business control over the area and therefore, the land was given to some Englishmen on long leases. One of such leases gave a big and prosperous estate to Mr. Peppy. While managing the land, cutting the jungles and levelling the ground, the Peppy family discovered Piperahwa Stoop. Pipraerhwa is 10 miles from Naugarh railway station in Basti District on the North-Eastern Railway, in the property of Mr. W.C. Peppy in his Howard Lehra estate. It is east of 'Kapil-Watthuh' (now called Kapil Vastu), the capital of Shuddodhan, father of Buddha. Lumbini forest is north-east of this place. In the south is the Birdpur Estate of another Englishman. Piperahwa is 19.75 miles on Nepal-Uska Road, half a mile from the 45<sup>th</sup> pillar on Indo-Nepal border. The excavated stoop is 16 feet in length. 10 feet in breadth and 2 feet in height. Its discovery created such a commotion among the historians that the famous scholar, Mr. Vincent Smith, visited this place in October, 1898.

After digging 10 feet in the mound, a broken sandstone vase was found which contained nothing but earth, a few stone beads, some beautiful gold ornaments— ornaments for the nose called ‘laung’ a necklace and a gold baton one foot in length. After further excavation, 12 feet below, a sandstone box was discovered which was 4 feet in length, 2 feet in breadth and 2 1/4 feet in depth. It was 4 inches in thickness. It contained another sandstone box which had a gold pot, ornaments, valuable stones and jewels and bone relics, i.e., ashes. The inscription on the vase was in Pali which could not be deciphered in our country. It was sent to the famous Professor of Oriental languages at Vienna University, Dr. Boehler. he deciphered it thus:--

IYAM SALILA NIDHANE BUDDHAS BHAGWATE  
SAKAYANAM SUKITI BHATINAM SA SABHAGINIKANAM  
SA PUTTA DALANAM.

## The Story

In January, 1906, the Royal Asiatic journal published a very learned article by Mr. J.F. Fleet, I.C.S., on this stoop and it was then that the world came to know of the great event which we shall narrate now. With the growth in eminence and importance of Lord Buddha and the spreading of his religion, it became a question of honour and prestige to the ruling families to give alms to the Bhikkus i.e. the mendicants, when they came to the town with their begging bowls for food. It is interesting that although the Bhikkus were not allowed to live in the towns, they had their monasteries quite near to the town to facilitate begging. It was thus that the Srawasti (Sahet in Bahraich

District), Sarnath (Banaras) and Sanchi (Bhhopal District), etc., grew to be important Buddhist centres. The kingdom of Sakyas (i.e., Shuddhodhan of Kapil-vastu) was subordinated to the kingdom of Srawasti where king Pasenedi ruled. While Sakyas claimed to belong to purest Kshatriya blood, the ruling family at

Sawasti was considered to be of lower rank and, therefore, Sakya Bhikkus did not receive alms from the family of Pasendi. This was an inherent weakness in the Buddhists and it is a surprise that even Lord Buddha did not condemn it in unequivocal terms because when King Pasenedi asked Lord Buddha who were the people from whom Bhikkus should receive alms, the Lord replied that the giver must be neither of their own family or should possess the confidence of the Bhikkus.

The king was disappointed with this reply, in order to attain higher rank in Kshatriya clan, he decided to marry in the family of Shuddhodan. Therefore, a message was sent to Shuddhodan, asking for the hand of a daughter of the family. It was hard for Shuddhodhan to refuse his King, yet he did not wish to give a daughter of his family married to one of lower rank.

The maternal uncle of Buddha, named 'Mahanam' advised him to cheat the king by marrying a slave girl to him and declaring her to be born in the Sakyas family. Thus, the marriage took place. For full 20 years the fact remained unknown to the Srawasti family and the mother of the Prince Virudhak did not allow this fact to reach the ears of either her husband or son. When Virudhak came to the throne, he decided to pay a visit to the family of his maternal grandfather. Naturally the mother got anxious as she did not wish her child to know the real story of his birth and, therefore, she sent a confidential message to Kapil-Vastu, requesting the then living members to conceal the fact as best they could.

According to ancient custom all youngsters must bow to their elders and therefore, at the official reception of king of Srawasti at the palace hall, in order to avert the ignominy of bowing to one of lower rank, the elders decided to ask every youngman in the capital to go to the forest to hunt and remain absent on the official occasion. Thus when Virudhak was being entertained and received, he witnessed that everybody around him was elder in age and, therefore, it was only he who was bowing. He asked the elders

about those younger to him in age and was given some flimsy excuse, which he sincerely accepted to be correct.

After four days of entertainment and reception in the town, when the king left and had gone hardly a few miles, it was discovered by one of his soldiers that some weapons were left in the capital and he hurriedly returned to pick them up. He discovered in the palace that a slave girl was cleaning a stool and was murmuring to her mate that because a child born of a Shudra woman sat on it, therefore, the stool had to be cleansed thoroughly.

Having overheard this, the soldier returned to his master who, immediately on arrival at Srawasti, questioned his mother at length and got the truth from her. Thus, he took a vow to avenge the insult to himself and invaded Kapil-vastu after a few years.

During the first two attacks, Lord Buddha reached the scene and persuaded him to return but on the third attack, Buddha was not present and invasion took place. The king was determined that he would not spare anyone born of the Sakya family. It was decided by the elders to avert this calamity, that whenever anyone was questioned whether he was a Sakya or not, he would reply:--“NO SAKO TRINAM OR SAKO NALO”

While replying thus, the Sakya should keep a straw in his mouth. Both these sentences have got two meanings. The one means that “I am not eating grass” while actually it will mean that “I am not a Sakya”. Those who spoke this line, on the same way as the famous episode of Mahabharat when Yudhishtir spoke a lie, the life of that Sakya was spared but it is said that so much blood was shed in this invasion that a huge tank of blood was formed there and the ruins of this tank still remain there.

After a couple of years, the bones and ashes of those destroyed were safely preserved and stoopas were erected and the ashes along with the ornaments etc. of those killed were deposited. The

inscription on the Stoop when translated means:

“Here lie the ashes of the members of the family, sisters and children and brethren of the famous lord Buddha.”

While returning from this annihilation, the army of Virudhak had to cross the river Achirawati. At this time such a huge storm struck that nearly everyone in the army was drowned. Virudhak was thrown in the jungle without any arms and was devoured by the beasts of the forest. Thus the Sakya and Srawasti ruling families and their army perished at the same time.

## Sources Of The Story

It is rather surprising that very little reference has been made in ancient history to this incident. It is true that the topography and geography of the place has changed immensely within these thousands of years. The river Achirawati is nowhere to be found. The Lumbini forest possesses but only one tree. The place which Ashok visited in the 21<sup>st</sup> year of his reign—called Lumbini near Padaria village, 100 miles from Kapil-Vastu the birth-place of Lord Buddha was also lying in ruins for years. The inscriptions of Ashok range from 249 to 252 B.C. All of his stoops are nearly 23 feet in height but the Piprahwa stoop and its inscription, which is at least 200 years older than Ashok inscriptions, remains almost unknown even today to the lovers of Indian history. It appears that Buddhists themselves tried to conceal this tragedy. When Huin-Tsang came to India, he discovered the story and according to him 9,99,000,000 Sakyas were either killed or imprisoned by the king Virudhak. He made the first international reference to that great tragedy. But in the famous Maha-Pari-Nirwan- Sutta, there is no reference to this, incident.

Buddhaghosh in this famous commentary of ‘Dhammapad’ and in this “Buddh- Sal-Ja<>ka” has referred to this incident. The finds from the boxes are extremely interesting to look at. Many of these

have gone to the British Museum, some are in the Calcutta Museum and some are with Mr. Peppy. I have requested Mr. Peppy to hand them over to our Lucknow Museum. The ornaments are strangely like our present decorations. The Bindi on the forehead has changed from gold to plastic in modern times, otherwise the design remains the same. The Piperahwa stoop has opened a new chapter in the history of our ancient land and it is a pity that we have little notice of it. I would like our Government to comb the whole area of Piperahwa and find out what strange history lies buried underground—maybe a river-bed, maybe the bed of a huge tank, maybe more inscriptions and relics waiting for us to decipher.

By Paripurnanand Verma, MLA