

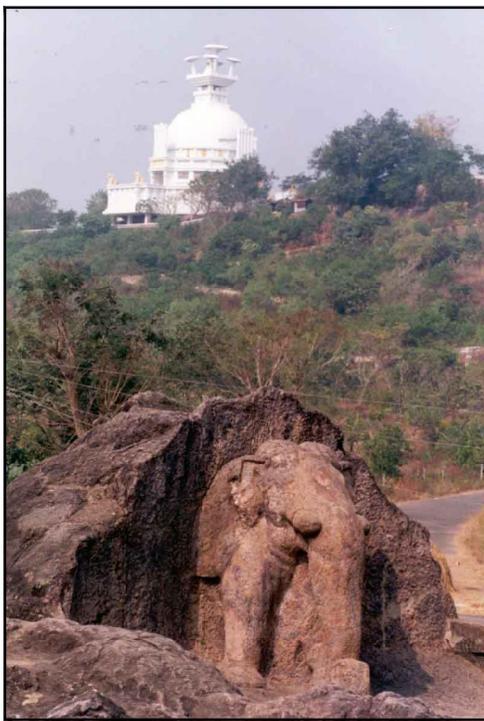
Dhuli : An Early Historic Urban Centre of Orissa

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Dhuli is an important early historic urban centre of Orissa. It is situated in Long. 85° 51' E and Lat. 20° 11' N on the southern bank of the river Daya at a distance of about 7 km from Bhubaneswar, the State capital of Orissa. The archaeological remains found at Dhuli traced back its antiquity to c.3rd century B.C, particularly to the time of Ashoka. Dhuli is of great historical importance as one of the famous Rock Edicts of emperor Ashoka is located here. Besides, the site contains a large number of artifacts which positively suggest to the development of an urban culture in ancient days. Dhuli also witnessed the horror and misery of the devastating Kalinga war of c.261 B.C as well as Ashoka's inculcation of the doctrine that conquest through love (Dharma Vijaya) was greater than conquest by sword (Dig vijaya).

The antiquity of Dhuli though traced back to c.3rd century B.C, scholars have

different opinion regarding its identification. D.C. Sircar,¹ Romila Thaper,² A.K. Rath³ etc. have tried to identify Dhuli with Toshali, the provincial headquarters of Ashokan empire in Kalinga. Romila Thaper who has identified



Dhuli with Toshali to which Ptolemy refers to as a metropolis is of the view that "It (Dhuli) was situated near the sacred pool of Kosala-Ganga and thus developed into a religious centre as well. The identification of Dhuli with Toshali is most convincing and is borne out by the text of the Ist Separate Edict which is addressed to the Mahamatras of Toshali". But on the basis of the text of the Ist Separate Edict which was addressed to the Mahamatras of Toshali, at present it is very difficult to

identify Dhuli with Toshali. Further, after the excavation of Shishupalagarh, a site very near to Bhubaneswar which contains all the required materials to be a full-fledged fortified city, the

identification of Dhauli with Toshali appears to be feeble. Scholars⁴ in contradiction to the above view, on the basis of archaeological findings have identified Toshali with Shishupalgarh which seems to be more plausible and acceptable. Hence, Dhauli and Toshali are not the same place and Dhauli cannot be identified with Toshali. It developed as an independent settlement though its subordinate position to Toshali or Shishupalagarh is beyond doubt. Having come under the peripheral zone of Shishupalagarh, Dhauli could have come under the direct influence of Toshali. Romila Thaper⁵ even agreed that "it seems reasonable that the edicts would be as near the city as possible if not actually within it."

The Dhauli hill otherwise known as Surabha hill consists of three very short rocky ranges of hills running parallel to each other. The three ranges of the hill with several depressions and prominences contain a number of rock-cut monuments. On the north face of the southern range, the rock, which is called Asvathama, has been hewn and polished encompassing a space of 15 feet long and 10 feet high, where the famous rock edicts of Ashoka have been inscribed. Immediately above the inscription is a terrace, on the right side of which is the forepart of an elephant, about 4 feet high, hewn out of the solid rock. The elephant is as old as the inscription and is recognized as the earliest figure of sculpture in Orissa. Originally, designed as an emblem of Gautam Buddha, the elephant has become an object of popular worship. It is said that the elephant has evidently given the hillock its name Asvathama, meaning the famous elephant of the Mahabharata⁶. According to R.P. Mohapatra⁷ "the elephant figure at Dhauli is a remarkable piece of art and although the anatomical

treatment of its limbs is not so pronounced its workmanship is not inferior to that of any other Ashokan animal figure. It breaths a completely indigenous and at the same time, an unconventional spirit of creative art". According to R.Thaper⁸ "it was probably carved by local craftsmen and not by the special craftsmen who were responsible for the animal capitals. The image of the elephant emerging from the rock is a most impressive one, and its purpose was probably to draw attention to the inscription near by".

J.D. Beglar⁹ an eminent archaeologist informs us that there appeared to me the remains of a stupa on the flat terrace of the hill near the elephant, and also one facing it on the opposite ridge, but they had long ago been dug into. A few bricks are to be found scattered about in the vicinity of both and at the foot of the hills". Lieutenant Markham Kittoe,¹⁰ who visited Dhauli in 1838 informs that "there are five caves in a row on the high rock, south of the elephant called by some 'Panch Pandava' or by others 'Pancha Gosain'. Besides these caves (where there are traces of many others) there are numerous small holes like mortars cut in the rock. These were probably used to compound the drugs and medicines by the medical devotees mentioned in the inscription".

In 1949, the Archaeological survey of India carried out some excavations at Dhauli in the site very close to the Ashokan inscription. K.C. Panigrahi¹¹ who was present at the excavations had seen that "a trench laid in the close vicinity of the Ashokan inscription exposed a thick wall, made of rubble and mud mortar, similar to the walls of new Rajagriha at Rajgir. The trench also yielded some terracotta snakes and multispouted vessels of which the prototypes had been recovered from

the excavations at Maniar Math at Rajgir". From this it is evident that the recovered artifacts might have belonged to the Ashokan period.

The most prominent hill range of Dhauri contains the renovated Dhavalesvar temple on its eastern extremity. The present temple was built on the ruins of the earlier temple datable approximately to the Bhaumakara period. J.D. Beglar¹² who furnishes a graphic description of the ruins of the Dhavalesvar temple assigns its construction to c.5th century A.D. But from architectural features, sculptural art and iconography of cult icons, the temple can safely be placed in the Bhaumakara period.¹³ K.C.Panigrahi¹⁴ on the basis of the surviving evidences on the body of the temple is of the opinion that 'it was a contemporary of the Lingaraja and Brahmesvara group".

The much renovated Bahirangesvar Siva temple and the dilapidated Ganesh shrine are two other important features located at the foot of Dhauri hill (western side). The Orissa State Archaeology had undertaken the reconstruction of the main shrine and renovated it in rekha order on the ruins of the earlier structure. The ground plan of the temple which was originally in square shape is still visible. Several pillars in dilapidated condition are lying in the temple premises. From the ruined sculptures and architectural fragments it can safely be presumed that the original temple belongs to the Bhaumakara period.¹⁵

A small modern temple by the side of the Bahirangesvar temple now houses a beautiful image of Ganesh as its presiding deity. This deity is strikingly similar to the image of Ganesh to be found in the southern niche of the Lingaraj temple of Bhubaneswar as its parsvadevata.¹⁶ The sarpopavita on the chest,

Jatamukuta on the head and the personal ornaments attached to various parts of the body of the Ganesh image are remarkably executed representing artistic tradition of the Somavamsi period. From this it is evident that Somavamsi construction activities were not only confined to Bhubaneswar but also extended to the township of Dhauri.

In the East of the hills is a large tank named Kausalyaganga. The tank is said to have been originally a Kos (4.02 km) long on each side though a great part of it is now silted up.¹⁷

An inscription¹⁸ in one of the caves of the Dhauri hill in front of the Ashokan edict belonging to the reign of the Bhumakara king Santikaradeva (c.829 A.D.) records the construction of a Buddhist monastery named Arghyaka Varati by Bhimata and his son Loyamaka of Viraja (Jajpur). This refers to the building activities at Dhauri during the Bhaumakara period. The Shanti Stupa or the Peace Pagoda constructed by Japan Buddhist Sangha with the collaboration of the Govt. of Orissa in 1971-72 has further enhanced the importance of Dhauri hill from tourist point of view.

But the most important of the remains at Dhauri are the edicts of Ashoka. Discovered by Lieut. M.Kittoe it was first deciphered by James Prinsep in 1838. The Dhauri edicts are written in the Prakrit language using Brahmi script. It is here that Ashoka enunciated his famous doctrine of paternalism i.e. "All men are my children" and addressed his officers posted at Toshali to exert for the welfare and happiness of the people of Kalinga. The Dhauri edict is in fact the earliest epigraphic evidence of the antiquity of Toshali as a metropolis.¹⁹

The Major Rock inscriptions of Ashoka contain a series of fourteen Edicts. But here

we do not get the full set of 14 edicts. In the Dhauri version, Edict No. XI, XII and XIII are missing and two special edicts known as Separate Rock Edict I and II or Special Kalinga Edict I and II²⁰ have been added to it. The entire inscription has been arranged in three distinct columns. The left hand column in twenty six lines is Separate Rock Edict I; the middle column in thirty three lines contains General Edicts I to VI; the right hand column has two parts, the upper in nineteen lines containing General Edicts VII to X and XIV, and the lower, in eleven lines within a frame, Separate Rock Edict II. A duplicate version of these Edicts is also noticed on the surface of a low rock at Jaugada now represented by a ruined fort about 30 km from Berhampur town in the Ganjam district on the left bank of the river Rushikulya.)

The question naturally arises as to why Edicts XI, XII and XIII have been excluded from the Dhauri and Jaugada versions. Scholars have different opinions in this regard. An explanation, however, is to be found in the statement in Edict XIV, that "This set of dhamma edicts has been written by command of the king Piyadasi, beloved of the gods, in a form some times condensed, sometimes of medium length, sometimes expanded, for everything is not suitable in every place, and my dominions are extensive". The Edict XIII refers to the conquest of Kalinga, the terrible massacre in that war, the king's remorse, his desire for true conquest (dharmavijaya) - the conquest by means of dhamma and not by force of arms-and his efforts for ensuring that end. Such an edict may not have been considered suitable for the conquered territory of Kalinga. As regards the other two edicts, Edict XI defines dhamma, and Edict XII declares the king's reverence for all sects, defines toleration, and speaks of the appointment of censors. But the

appointment of these censors had already been notified in Edict V, and the King's toleration in Edict VII, while dhamma had been defined in Edict III. It is probable, therefore, that the edicts were omitted partly for condensation and partly because they were not applicable to the conquered tract.²¹ It can also be interpreted from a different angle that Ashoka who gave up his sword after the Kalinga war and who became a pacifist did not want to further hurt the grief-stricken sentiment of the people of Kalinga by engraving the Rock Edict XIII.

The edicts were meant for the general public as well for the king's officers and Mahamatras and therefore, must have been inscribed close to a big town on or near the public highway. From this it is evident that Dhauri either was a town or an extension settlement of the capital city Toshali. The second view is more plausible because the Separate Dhauri Edicts addressed to the Kumaramatya and Mahamatras of Toshali which was the provincial capital city.

To conclude we can say that urban settlements developed in and around Dhauri from the time of Ashoka and continued with ups and downs atleast till the period of the Somavamsis. Traces of ancient habitation which are noticed in stretch of land around the Dhauri hill still awaits archaeological excavation. A concrete view about the habitation can be given after the extensive archaeological explorations and excavations. Dhauri has a special significance, having been the site of the Kalinga war of c.261 BC which is considered the sheet anchor of the Orissan history. The dated history of ancient Orissa or Kalinga, thus can be traced back to the Kalinga war of Ashoka and naturally to the historic battle field of Dhauri. It is true that Dhauri

developed as an urban centre only after the Kalinga war and owing to its varied importance find its place in the tourist map of the world. The tourists coming from far and wide to Orissa are definitely filled with enthusiasm while visiting this historic place Dhauli. The Ashokan Edicts alongwith the fore part of an emerging elephant, presence of some old temples, and the Peace Pagoda have tremendously enhanced the importance of Dhauli as a captivating place of tourism.

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