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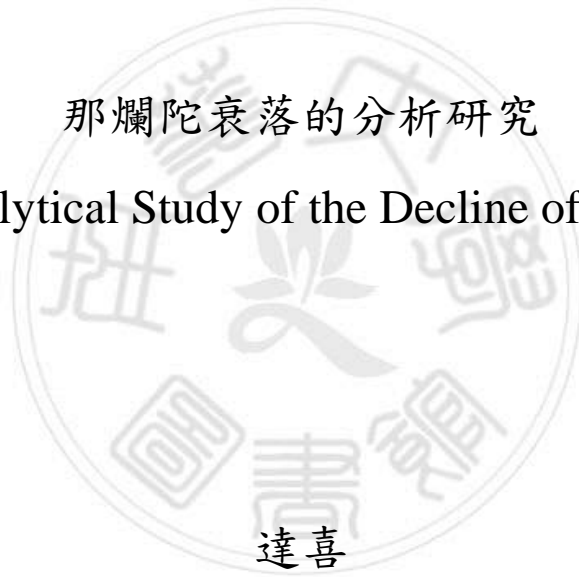
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那爛陀衰落的分析研究

An Analytical Study of the Decline of Nālandā



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## 中文摘要

今天我們可以輕易地看到許多優秀的大學，但是沒有一所大學能像那爛陀那樣享有聲望和榮耀。儘管，那爛陀大學早在 13 世紀初在一夕間成為廢墟般。那爛陀寺將是印度歷史最悠久的大寺院(*Mahāvihāra*)，它不僅在教育領域做出了貢獻，而且發展了自己的文化和傳統，並帶給世界利益。本文的主題是基於「毀壞」和「衰落」這兩個特定的詞彙來探索那爛陀寺(*Nālandā Mahāvihāra*)之傾頹，此是一場突如其來的災難，亦或是一場逐漸衰落。根據學者研究，最普遍的結論，大多指向阿富汗侵略者穆罕默德 (*Muhammad bin Bakhtiyar Khilji*，卒於西元 1206)，是他用大火燒毀的，從最上層火堆上之灰燼和木炭足以證實之。許多證據支持這一假設，但所有可用的證據似乎從未被彙集到一起進行批判性分析。本文旨在對這一假設進行詳細的探討，以揭示那爛陀衰落的原因。

本文之研究範圍限定在七世紀到十三世紀，特別是歷經兩個不同王朝，從戒日及波羅王直到 12 世紀後葉，國王之贊助及保護，均可見到。最主要一手資料來源是，曾於七世紀訪問過那爛陀的中國朝聖者玄奘和義淨的史料紀錄，進行一個批判性研究。

**關鍵字：**那爛陀寺院、戒日王、波羅王朝、玄奘、義淨

## ABSTRACT

Nowadays it became easier to find plenty of good Universities (Mahāvihāra) in the world, but none has got that prestigious and privileged position as much respect as Nālandā did, despite the fact that Nālandā University became aruin in the early 13th century. Nālandā was perhaps the longest-lived of the Mahāvihāra of India and its contribution was not only in the field of education but also it has developed its own culture and tradition, and it benefited to all over the world. My topic of this paper is based on the two specific words –“Destruction” and “Decline” to ponder over the demise of Nālandā Mahāvihāra, either hastened by a sudden catastrophe or a gradual downfall. The most popular conclusion among scholars is the destruction by the Afghan invader, Muhammad bin Bakhtiyar Khilji (died 1206) who burnt it down as evident by the piles of ashes and charcoal on the uppermost stratum by fire. Many proofs have advanced for this hypothesis, but the whole of the available evidence seems never have been brought together for critical analysis. This paper aims to investigate this hypothesis in detail to unearth the reasons for the decline of Nālandā.

The scope of this paper is limited to the seventh to the thirteenth century, especially after two different monarchies, Harsha, and the Pala until a twelfth-century later, some Rajput kings’ patronage or protection can be seen. The most important source of information is a critical study of the historical records of the Chinese pilgrims Xuanzang (玄奘) and I-Tsing (義淨) who visited Nalanda in the 7th century AD.

**Keywords:** *Nālandā Mahāvihāra, Harsha King, Pala Kingdom, Xuanzang, I-Tsing*

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## CHAPTER ONE - PREFACE

Education in ancient India reflected an age of creativity and intellectual freedom. The curiosity to perceive the natural and worldly affairs made this learning system to reach its apogee, which reflected in its organized centers. There were two stages in the development of the early Indian education system, namely the *gurukulas* or the Vedic schools and the *Mahāvihāras* or the monasteries. In the medieval age of Indian History, Many Buddhist monasteries played the leading role in the field of education, *Nālandā* University was one of them.

The emergence of *Nālandā Mahāvihāra* marked the beginning of a new era in early Indian education with its new type of educational practices. It symbolized the height of the ancient Indian educational system. *Nālandā* University came into existence, and there was only one university in the whole world named Takshashila University, India. In Pali literature, we see its name has mentioned with great honored. Jivaka kumarabhrta, who was the personal physician of Lord Buddha, received his education both theoretical and practical at Takshashila University, which at that time was a prestigious center of medical training besides other secular subjects.<sup>1</sup> A. L. Basam<sup>2</sup>, and A. K. Warder<sup>3</sup> refers to *Nālandā Mahāvihāra* as the most famous of the actual universities of the Middle Ages in India due to its size, diversity of studies in higher education, and the nature of its student body. *Nālandā* University had not only been a high seat of learning but also became a great center of culture and civilization. It is a well-known fact that Buddhism was studied here in all its forms. However, the comparative study of Non-Buddhism thoughts and culture too was thoroughly studied here. Thus, it became a center not only for Buddhist culture but also of the Indian culture.

Now in this paper, we will present the Study of the reason behind The Decline of the Great *Nālandā* University. Our period, from the eighth to the twelfth century, encircle the end of an age, and the beginning of a new age in Indian civilization. Apart from the personal

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<sup>1</sup> Rajesh V Chaurpagar, "Contribution of Nalanda University in Higher Education," *International Journal of Current Engineering and Scientific Research*, No. 5 (2018): 54.

<sup>2</sup> A. L. Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1954), 154.

<sup>3</sup> A. K. Warder, *Indian Buddhism*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1970), 463.



suffering wrought by the Muslim invasions, the greatest victim was Buddhism, caught in a critical period of change. From the 8th century AD to 12th century AD the Palas ruled over Eastern India. They played prominent roles in the development of Buddhism in Eastern India. They always referred to themselves as *Parama-Saugata* (devotee of Buddha) and offered prayer to the Buddha at the beginning of their official records which indicates “a new ideology of Buddha and Bodhisattvas in the most developed Mahayana form.”<sup>4</sup> In this thesis, we will principally discuss Pala Emperor although the word Pala means (Protector) but how they fail to protect *Nālandā*? Moreover, what was another pertinent reason for the downfall of *Nālandā*? The Pala Emperors (8th to 12th century) were committed supporters of Buddhism, and they build several critical Buddhist centers like *Vikramaśīla*, *Somapura*, and *Odantapuri*, etcetera, In the Pala period *Nālandā* was continuing flourishing but Some Scholars mark out that rising of similar Buddhist institutions and is also a significant reason for declining *Nālandā*.

From the first to the eighth century A.D., Buddhism had gone through a change and the final period of evolution marked as the rise of Tantrism. The Buddha was always against the introduction of rituals in Buddhism. That is why; rituals did not get a place in early Buddhism. However, over time, they found their way into it. Gradually, Buddhism came very close to Hinduism, and soon, the two religions lost their own identities. “It was because of this; lay people did not find any difference between the worship of Vishnu and Buddha, of Siva and Avalokita and Tara and Parvati.” Many scholars claim that tantric practices and the entry of rituals weakened the religion. In this thesis, we will present the analytic study of the reasons for the decline of *Nālandā*. The thesis is also an effort to determine the effect of tantra on Buddhist institutions during this critical period. In this paper author focus on the *Nālandā* area (Present Bihar), the ancient period Magadha, the original home of Buddhism, which attracted the greatest scholars and radiated the most energetic cultural impulses to the countries beyond India. At once the repository and creative center of Buddhist thought, the University of *Nālandā* deserve special mention.

Magadha was an important center of Buddhism; L.M. Joshi says that in this territory the religion continued to flourish till the last when it was wiped away by the arms of Islam.

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<sup>4</sup> Kanai Lal Hazra, *The Rise and Decline of Buddhism in India*, (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1995), 367.

According to the records *Nālandā* University was destroyed three times by invaders but rebuilt only twice. The first destruction caused by the Huns under Mihirakula during the reign of Skandagupta (455–467 AD). However, Skandagupta's successors rebuilt the library and developed it with an even grand building. In the early 7th century the second destruction infests by the Gaudas. This time, the Buddha devoted king Harshavardhana (606–648 AD) restored the university. The third and most destructive attack came when the ancient *Nālandā* University destroyed by the Muslim army led by the Turkish leader Bakhtiyar Khilji in 1193. When Bakhtiyar Khalji's soldiers attacked and sacked the *Nālandā Mahāvihāra*, there was neither any ruler nor his soldiers came to help to save and to protect the unarmed Buddhist monks and their sacred place from the hands of barbarism. After the Palas, Buddhism, due to wanting of its patron, lost its influence and popularity. Gradually, it disappears and the city of knowledge, which took several centuries to build, took only a few hours to be destroyed. The monks fled to foreign lands, citizens became denizens, and *Nālandā* relegated to memory. It believed that Buddhism, as a dominant religion in India, had a setback for hundreds of years due to the loss of the religious texts during the attack.

## **1.1 Research Motivation and Purpose**

*Nālandā* A Land of artistic cultivation and skill, of a gorgeous and luxuriant style of architecture, of deeply philosophical knowledge, of profound and learned discussions and rapid progress in the path of civilization, *Nālandā* is a name to conjure up within the history of human thought and culture. *Nālandā* is author hometown, so am very much connected to this Place. From my childhood, I always studying and learning about *Nālandā* and me proud as a people of *Nālandā* because of its glory and Contribution to world history.

### **Spirit of Inquiry to explore *Nālandā***

My father has been a short-term Buddhist monk, and my family is Buddhist, so from childhood, I am connected with Buddhist culture and tradition. With a Buddhist heart, I got motivation from my curiosity of exploring and finding the fact of *Nālandā*, especially about its demise. The art of *Nālandā* School could not remain confined to the bounds of the university or the kingdom of Magadha Only. It gradually extended far beyond the frontiers of India to countries like Java, Sumatra, Cambodia, and China in the east and to

Nepal and Tibet in the north which is also confirmed by the statement of Tāranātha. One of the essential features, Mahayana Buddhism, originates from *Nālandā*.<sup>5</sup>

My topic's limitation is from the Eighth to the Twelfth Century. Many scholars pointed out the reasons for the decline of *Nālandā* in their work with different answers, as some scholar said that at no time in their history did the Pala rulers (8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries) make Buddhism the state religion. However, it showed a deep reverence for the Brahmanical gods, the most significant number of gifts recorded in Pala inscriptions donated to Brahmans rather than Buddhists.<sup>6</sup> It was also a vast reason of the downfall; in this paper, we will examine the main factor of relapse. With the reference of prominent scholar's works with connection "decline of *Nālandā*" clear the doubt is the purpose of this paper.

### **Make me eager of some unsolved questions of *Nālandā***

Although Master Xuanzang, Chinese scholar describe *Nālandā* and entire Magadha very clearly, his mention only contains the period before the 7th century, after 7th century we find *Nālandā* with its Eminent Teachers, the rising of Tantra, Expansion of Buddhism to Tibet and some different countries and the patronage of Pala Dynasty. Our period is from eight to the twelfth century still need to work with many points of view, as we can ruminate on these questions, why *Nālandā* weakened their scholarship under the patronage of Pala? Moreover, what was the effect of Opening Similar Universities like *Vikramaśīla Mahāvihāra*, Jagaddala, Somapura *Mahāvihāra*, Odantapuri, etcetera, on *Nālandā*? Why at the time of Muslim Invaders, there was no Patronage to save Buddhist? Was *Nālandā* lost their patronage before twelfth centuries? Was Pala kingdom furnished before Muslim Invaders? As Dhammasvami, a Tibetan Commentator Mentions King Buddhasena as the king of Magadha with his capital at Bodhgaya who fled from the site when the Turks invaded. After their retreat, the King reappeared, with his five hundred soldiers armed with swords, lances, and arrows.<sup>7</sup> So was the vast Magadha empire became so feeble at the end of the twelfth century as Dharmasvami mentioned? Many questions make me eager to choose this topic for research, "The Analytic Study of Decline of *Nālandā*." My Research purpose is to elucidate the causes of the Decline of *Nālandā*.

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<sup>5</sup> E. B. Havell., *The ancient and Medieval Age Architecture of India: A Study of the Indo Aryan Civilization*, (London: J. Murray, 1915), 114.

<sup>6</sup> R.C.Mitra, *The Decline of Buddhism in India* (Santiniketan: Viswa-Bharti, 1954), 53.

<sup>7</sup> Anand Singh, "'Destruction' and 'Decline of Nalanda Mahavihara: Prejudices and Praxis,'" *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Sri Lanka*, No. 1 (2013): 25.

## **Exploration of *Nālandā***

When the author was studying in under graduation, his major was “Ancient Indian and Asian Studies.” So he has a background of study history of ‘Indian and Asian studies.’ Moreover, *Nālandā*, because of his hometown, his connection with this place very close, but sometimes the author feels very ironic because many people of India still do not know about *Nālandā*. Although it selected as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2016, it is still unknowable among many Indians. Many Asian and western Scholars worked and explored it on this prominent Heritage of *Nālandā*, but it still needs to research. Author one of the purpose of this paper is to explore *Nālandā* towards the world. It is his initiative for this field of Study in the future with such a small effort. His motive is to serve *Nālandā* on everyone’s plate with a very fresh perspective.

## **1.2 Methodology**

### **Analytical Study**

An analytic study of the secondary sources from the collected materials which Author divided into two types of the reason behind the decline of *Nālandā*, one is exterior causes Such as Attacks of Outsider Invaders, as a brief, *Nālandā* attacked by three times. Moreover, another one is Interior causes as at the time of Pala reign when some parallel universities (established by Pala kings) it was in a gradual way, *Nālandā* was facing the situation of shortage of scholarship, some critics say that the followers of the Mahayana were worshipers of Bodhisattvas and readers of the Mahayana sutras only. The Mahayana introduced the image-worship, prayers, chanting of Mantras, ceremonies, and rituals, etcetera. Gradually many folk-beliefs found an essential place in it. The Buddha was always against the introduction of rituals in Buddhism. That is why rituals did not get a place in early Buddhism. However, over time, they found their way into it. Gradually, Buddhism came very close to Hinduism, and soon, the two religions lost their own identities. So using these base with the analytic study Author used specific valuable books related to declining of Buddhism in India and History of Buddhist monasticism. This topic covers the time from the seventh century to the twelfth Century so I mainly focused on The History of Pala dynasty these materials I took from “The Boundless Treasure” Library of Nanhua University, and also from different journals and Some Online web sources, using these sources try to get appropriate result with primary reason of decline of *Nālandā*.

### **Critical and Comparative Study**

A Critical study of Buddhist history and especially those linked to *Nālandā*, Study more about internal conflicts of Buddhist in India by the various sources. Chinese Travelers contributed a significant role in lighting the History of India. Such as Fa-Hien in the fifth century, Xuanzang in the middle of the seventh century, I-tsing Chinese Buddhist Monk also traveled to India at the end of the seventh century. Moreover, their travelogues gave useful information about the social, religious, and cultural life of the people of this country special mention of *Nālandā*. A Comparative Study of Religious and nonreligious prospect in correlation with this topic, because we also find some contradistinction between different Buddhist sects and also from different religious groups like Hindus and Jain. In perspective of Royal Patronages of *Nālandā*, it was started flourishing from the Gupta Dynasty to the end of the Pala Dynasty. In this paper, our center of attention is on Pala dynasty (From Seventh to the Twelfth Century), his excellent protection to *Nālandā* until it vanished from the chapter of history, alongside the Political and Economic Condition of Magadha at that time.

### **Field Work by Self with Critical Photos of this *Nālandā* Region**

Once a rejoicing city, glowing with the light of hundreds of jewels, grand with its towering turrets, *vihāras*, and *chaityas* the abode of scholars and priests, *Nālandā* today is but a faint shadow of its past glory and splendor. After demise, it was only mounds but many of which are now explored and stand out as *Samgharāma* which, first, exert the attention of General Cunningham.<sup>8</sup> Its present site located at *Nālandā*, Bihar, about 95 kilometers southeast of Patna (Modern Capital of Bihar) near the city of Bihar Sharif. It is a UNESCO World Heritage now since Jul 2016. Author, himself is a local person of *Nālandā*; it is only 5 minutes far from his home. He grew there and studied there at *Nava Nālandā Mahāvihāra* Buddhist University. Opening a University like Ancient *Nālandā* University is a great innovation taken by Government of India, and it is established in 1951 under Dr. Rajendra Prasad (First President of India) to revive the ancient seat of learning in *Nālandā*. It is very nearby the Ancient *Nālandā* University (Now the Ruins of *Nālandā*). Author little experience and with the guidance of reputed teachers of Nanhua University, Taiwan and *Nava Nālandā Mahāvihāra, Nālandā*.

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<sup>8</sup> Hasmukh D. Sankalia, *The University of Nalanda*, (Madras: B.G. Paul and Co., 1934), 216.

Moreover, the help of local people he will do his fieldwork (Visit the sites of *Nālandā*) with some critical photos of Ancient *Nālandā* University and the local region of *Nālandā* which define Buddhist arts and culture of its glorious history of this place. Such as a nearby Sarichak (Saricaka)<sup>9</sup> Village which is mentioned by H. Sastri as a birth and nirvana place of the one of best disciple of Buddha, *Sāriputta*. There is also a useful museum of *Nālandā* with full of all precious stone images and sculptures, bronzes, stuccos, terracottas, inscription, iron objects, ivory & bone objects, and potteries, etcetera (See Figure 1). All antiquities were kept here after excavated from *Nālandā*.

**Source: Author takes all Photos during Fieldwork**



**Figure 1 Marichi Basalt Stone (9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> Century A.D.)**

Stone Images at *Nālandā* Archaeological Museum

### **1.3 Overview of Previous Research**

Thoroughly writing

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<sup>9</sup> Chandra Shekhar Prasad, “Nalanda Vis-à-vis the Birthplace of *Sāriputra*.” *East and West* 38, no. 1/4 (1988): 175-88. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/29756860> .(Accessed June 20, 2019).

The author has Collected a bundle of research materials and split it into two parts for the Analytic study, first is the works of before 2000 and second, the works of after 2000. The nearly all academic research on the history of *Nālandā mahāvihāra* has done for the past one hundred years primarily undertaken by Indian and European historians and archaeologists but the topic which I handpicked “An Analytical Study of the Decline of *Nālandā*,” there is still no specific work done on it.

Since 1962 when *Nālandā* first became known to the modern scholars through the prosperous work of a British General A. Cunningham (1962), who has taken Xuanzang’s Travelogue as the first guide at the time of excavation, and also in addition to Takakusu’s (1896) Translated version of I-Tsing’s India Travelogue. Moreover, If we see in some supra work of Majumdar (1926)<sup>10</sup> in the. It expostulated the circumstances of the monasteries at *Nālandā* in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. After that, Sankalia has done (1934) thorough research on *Nālandā* is unsurpassed. Much else has also written on the set-up of this *Mahāvihāra*. Hiranand Shastri has extensively surveyed the epigraphic material from *Nālandā* (vol. 66- Calcutta 1942). The General information of the remains of *Nālandā*, the sculpture, inscriptions which unearthed from *Nālandā* site given by Gosh (1965) and murals of the Pala period have been similarly dealt with by Birendra Nath (1983) (*Nālandā* Murals, Delhi). however, after some of the work, there is no one work has done, especially on this subject, “the decline of *Nālandā*.”

Despite these, in 20th century H. Heras (1928), A. Waley (1932), R. D. Mookerji (1944), F. M. Asher (1970), S. Darian (1971), Prasad (1988), their few articles have also appeared in various journals on History of monasteries in Ancient India, Buddhism in Medieval India with New perspective, The Cultural life at *Nālandā*, Geography of *Nālandā*, the patrons of *Nālandā*, and so on in different topics correlated with this dissertation, which can undoubtedly make a significant contribution to this topic. For instance, Heras (1928), in his article ‘The royal patrons of the University of *Nālandā*’ his article makes a thorough report on the patrons of *Nālandā*, who helped *Nālandā* University in flourishing in its life of almost one thousand years.

Moreover, there are also some books published in The objective of this dissertation is to track how these scholars have been narrating the history of this educational institution from

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<sup>10</sup> Majumdar, Nani Gopal. *Nālandā Copper-plate of Devapāladeva*. No. 1. Varendra Research Society, 1926.

its beginnings until its destruction. A. L. Basam (1954), A. K. Warder (1970), S. Dutt (1988), Thakur (1995), they refer *Nālandā Mahāvihāra* as the most famous of the real universities of the Middle Ages in India due to its size, diversity of studies in higher education, and the nature of its student body. Whether *Nālandā Mahāvihāra* could be treated as a ‘University’ or not, is a complicated and intensely debated topic in ancient Indian educational history, which needs a thorough investigation and a separate dealing. However, we see the term ‘University’ is, first of all, used by Sankaliya in his book “The University of *Nālandā*.” Here, we will not go into this discussion, and *Nālandā Mahāvihāra* will accept as a Buddhist monastic learning institution.

In a general sense, *Nālandā mahāvihāra* known as an Indian Buddhist monastic center of education whose seeds planted during the time of the Buddha and whose tree has grown up to the present moment, configuring around 2600 years of history - emerging from around the 4th century CE as the “head office”, repository, and the official center of *Mahāyāna* and *Vajrayāna*. It was a place of passage and transcultural encounters where students and scholars used to come from and go to places such as China, Korea, Tibet, and Sumatra (Largest Island in Indonesia) to study and disseminate the philosophical, scientific, and religious legacies of *Nālandā*.

On the Other hand, after 2000, we see, R. Panth (2000), has published many edited volumes. In “Heritage of *Nālandā* and its continuity” the papers contain articles highlighting the cultural, religious, philosophical, literary, archaeological contribution of Ancient *Nālandā* University to the world correlated with the topic and one article inside this written by C. N. Mishra ‘Fresh Light on the Eclipse of *Nālandā*’ stands with a clear perspective of the causes of the decline of *Nālandā*. Moreover, Babasaheb Ambedkar writings and speeches have some comments on the invasion of Indian Buddhism with some facts of happening, which will make a comparative effort in my thesis. As well as, J. Elverskog’s (2010) “Buddhism and Islam on the Silk Road.” In which his comprehensive study of Islam and Buddhism is also useful for this topic.

Furthermore, Articles of Ranasinghe (2008), explains the life of Chinese pilgrims Xuanzang and I-Tsing at *Nālandā*, primarily focus on the 7<sup>th</sup> Century. P. Kumar (2010-11) and Rajiv Mandal (2017), Significantly, explain the cultural life at *Nālandā* from 8<sup>th</sup> to the 12 century, where R. V. Chaurpagar (2018), decoded the Contribution of *Nālandā* in the world. Moreover, S. Nayan & A. Ranjan (2014), and Rajani (2014&2016) decipher the



*Nālandā* archaeological site and around it by findings of numerous significant places. As, from the South of *Nālandā* - Jethian, Rajgir to the North of *Nālandā* - Rukhigarh, Chandi.

Comparatively writing

A full of comparative writing we see in Hodgson (1974) book, he mentioned Islam as a critical work, invasions done by Islam was so devastating, somehow he also seems as a supporter of Islam, to give an illustration, Marshal Hodgson wrote in his book –

There is no evidence that Muslims killed off all the Buddhists or even all the Buddhist monks.<sup>11</sup>

So by this example, if we make a comparison with *Nālandā mahāvihāra* situation. Through Hodgson, he was trying to prove that if there is some fault in the clearance of destruction date of *Nālandā* because we see some references from Elliot and Dowson's (2006)<sup>12</sup> writings the account of *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*. This account makes readers aware that Bakhtiyar Khilji first went to Sultan Kutbuddin as a mark of respects after the conquest of Bihar, and he explained in detail in this book about the dating of the last destruction of *Nālandā*, so through this report, we get an ambiguous details of Muslim Invaders by their date of destruction. There was somehow the University administration of *Nālandā* was weekend A. Singh (2013) in his article “‘Destruction’ and ‘decline’ of *Nālandā*,” he decoded these terms and started a comparative perspective for the authors those have the presupposition of that *Nālandā* destructed in one time, and that caused because of only the Muslim invader, Bakhtiyar Khilji. However, A. Truschke (2018) said in his work very clearly that Muslim invaders made *Nālandā* Weakened, Although I also supposed to that it was a significant loss for *Nālandā Mahāvihāra*, the question arises that as we know *Nālandā* had already suffered from this situation but then again got revival, but this time why no one came for help? Was *Nālandā* Lost their patron before the attack? Was Pala era already finished before the invasion? Alternatively, was *Nālandā* running in the last stage before the attack? These questions are making this paper condimental.

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<sup>11</sup> Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, vol. 2: *The Expansion of Islam in the Middle Periods* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 557.

<sup>12</sup> H.M.Elliot and John Dowson trs., *Tabkat-I-Nasiri* (Lahore: Sang-e-meel pub., 2006).

## 1.4 Expected Results

*Nālandā* has a long history, from the lifetime of the Buddha up to the present time, it passes through the different ages, different kingdoms. In the field of Contribution, it has given wisdom to all, not only the light of logic and philosophy, religion and literature emanate from here but also the message of peace, amity, non-violence, Sympathy, compassion, joy, and equanimity spread from here which went a long way in ennobling the mankind of a significant part of the world. The message that spread from here lighted many a dark heart and filled it with the milk of Loving Kindness. The time of *Nālandā* in history, we roughly divided into three types as follows: -

- i. The Period of Rising of *Nālandā* 320 B.C. to 320 A.D.
- ii. The Period of Eminence of *Nālandā* 320 A.D. to 750 A.D.
- iii. The Period of the Decline of *Nālandā* 750 A.D. to 1250 A.D.

In this Paper, I will go through the “Period of Decline” and make an effort to obtain excellent outcomes to make readers a clear concept for the reasons behind the declining of *Nālandā*.

## 1.5 Structure of The Thesis

To increase the reader-friendliness of this thesis, the overall structure of the thesis outlined. This Paper consists of five parts: Preface, *Nālandā*: Historical Review, Studies of the *Nālandā Mahāvihāra*, Studies of the *Nālandā Mahāvihāra*, a decline of *Nālandā*, Conclusion.

### Chapter 1 Preface

Chapter one, which is also the introduction of the thesis, starts with the description of research motivation and purpose, especially the motivation of the study considered from both Buddhist theoretical study and the perspective. The objectives of the study are also defined. Also, the delimitation of the study set so that readers will understand the main focus of this study.

### Chapter 2 *Nālandā*: Historical review

In Chapter two have Reviewed of *Nālandā Mahāvihāra* from the Importance of *Nālandā*. In this chapter, My focus is on the factors which make *Nālandā Mahāvihāra* as a crucial

Buddhist Institute in the world, and who were the patrons of *Nālandā* Mahāvihāra from date to date, it flourished nearly one thousand years in between who was the supporter of Buddhism and who were only pretend as a supporter.

In this chapter, there is a geographical study of *Nālandā* from different time aspect, for instance, *Nālandā* in Ancient time, *Nālandā* in Modern time, with the explored explanation of presently Ruins of *Nālandā*.

### **Chapter 3 Studies of the *Nālandā* Mahāvihāra**

In Chapter Three, My works are on studies of *Nālandā* Mahāvihāra, on those days when *Nālandā* was flourishing, what type of curriculum they offer for students. How was the life of students at *Nālandā* campus, and one more important thing is how people take admission there? *Nālandā* has the discussion pattern of study, so in between study, there were free to ask any questions to their teachers. Moreover, International students from all over the world were making *Nālandā* University as an international seat of learning.

In this particular chapter mention of International students and their travelogue, especially from Students from China, namely, Xuanzang and I-Tsing.

### **Chapter 4 Decline of *Nālandā***

This chapter is the heart of this thesis; Although in starting, I have given just information, after that, I provided a substantial critical and analytic study. With the subchapters, I mention about patronage and their era and works in details, and the causes of discontinuity of patrons and why they failed in protecting *Nālandā* from Muslims Invaders. Between this conversation, lastly, I will go for further study on the specification of the date of the last destruction by Islam.

### **Chapter 5 Conclusion**

*Nālandā* was a monastery cum University with an extensive system of administration. However, later it has declined, and for a long time, it disappeared from the earth. The important thing is that students used to come to study *Nālandā* from a different place of the world but why after 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> century they did not come to *Nālandā*, only one source we find as an account of Dhammaswami. As he mentions that when he travels to *Nālandā* One Monk was still living there at *Nālandā* with their 70 disciples, so, it proves that *Nālandā* was not demise.

The Mahāvihāra was not continued flourishing because of a lack of scholarship, lack of support as they used to have it. In conclusion, with the discussion and seeing the research

volumes of scholar I can say that, with the consideration of scholars' reason and research work and due to the lack of enough source, I agreed with the worthy scholars, and it seems to be the most persuasive argument for this topic.



## CHAPTER TWO - *NĀLANDĀ*: HISTORICAL REVIEW

### History of *Nālandā*

Many Buddhist monasteries undoubtedly flourished in India, about which we know practically nothing. Sanchi, Kanheri, Ajanta, Ellora, Saranath, and a hundred more only known through their archaeological remains and a few inscriptions found on their walls or pillars. The most exciting information we possess about the Buddhist centers of learning in Northern India comes through the Chinese pilgrims. Because of topic limitation, I will not go for further discussion about all Chinese Pilgrims Fa-Hein, Xuanzang, and I-Tsing who traveled India in the starting of the fifth, middle of Seventh and about the beginning of the eighth century respectively. However, we cannot ignore these pilgrims; Author has taken one Chinese pilgrim I-Tsing as a guide in the study of the history of One of those Buddhist Institutions of Learning, Perhaps the greatest we know, the so-called University of *Nālandā*.

In Between fifth-fourth century BC *Nālandā* come into the light of history. A trade route from north-west to south-east, between upper India and the kingdom of Magadha, it seems to have existed in the age of (fifth-fourth century BC) when Buddhism and Jainism took shape. It situated within a few miles from Magadha Capital, Rajgir, though the location of *Nālandā* on the trade-route not expressly mentioned, it may be inferred. It seems to have been a distributing center. From its importance as a trade center, it grew from a village to a township in this era.<sup>13</sup> One of *Nālandā*'s villagers named Lepa has been described as prosperous, famous, rich in high and large houses, beds, seats, vehicles, and chariots, abounding in riches, gold and silver, possessed of useful and necessary things, owning many male and female slaves, cows, buffaloes, and sheep. With these examples, we can conjecture that how rich was *Nālandā*. The Town was not without its beauty-spots: the legends give us glimpses of two - a park called Hastiyama and a mango-grove owned by a wealthy citizen *Pāvārika* which was Buddha's Favorite resort on his visits to *Nālandā*.

*Nālandā* begins to mentioned after the time of Kanishka I as an essential center of learning. The early Madhyamaka Teachers and especially Nagarjuna, are supposed to have worked there. Dignaga taught his new doctrine there, after which *Nālandā* remained the main

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<sup>13</sup> Sukumar Dutt, *Buddhist Monks and Monasteries of India* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1988), 328.

center of the study of the theory of knowledge. It endowed by some Gupta emperors and attained its maximum size under the patronage of the Pala emperors who ruled Magadha and Northeastern India from the eight to the twelfth centuries A.D.

Some detailed descriptions of its daily life have been left us by Chinese visitors and their statements, such as that several thousand monks and students resided there, that there were about a hundred lectures every day and a regular system of admission and registration of students, bear out the Impression of High organization given by the present majestic ruins. The Indian and Tibetan tradition records that its library occupied three many-storied buildings.

## **2.1 The Significance of *Nālandā*: Culture and Education**

Although the Chinese and archaeological sources may provide scholars a glimpse of the material grandeur of *Nālandā Mahāvihāra* up to the 8th century CE, these were not enough for the reconstruction of a version of the intellectual history of the institution. When we turn our attention to the history of Buddhism in Tibet, it is possible to notice that the process of penetration, appropriation, and dissemination of Buddhism in that country was always in a straight relationship with the intellectual context of the *Nālandā mahāvihāra*.

### **Historical Importance of *Nālandā***

The monastic revolution started by Gautama Buddha in the sixth century before the Christian era developed into such an extraordinary institution that, even after its division into the two large branches of Mahayana and Hinayana, it produced extraordinary results in knowledge and civilization. During a period that lasts roughly twelve centuries, all the wisdom of Northern India centered on the Buddhist *vihāras* and *Samgharāmas* (See Figure 2). One of Buddhist *Samgharāma* “*Nālandā*” Established in 5<sup>th</sup> Century by Sakraditya, King of Gupta Dynasty (415–455A.D.)<sup>14</sup>.

The very name of *Nālandā* conjures up before our mind’s eye all that is best and most excellent in education. In other words, it has become synonymous with the best kind of education that humanity can be proud of the History of the ancient *Nālandā* University is

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<sup>14</sup> Basham, A. L. “Sudhakar Chattopadhyaya: Early History of North India from the Fall of the Mauryas to the Death of Harṣa, C.200 B.C. - A.D. 650. Calcutta: Progressive Publishers, 1958.” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 24, no. 1 (1961): 154-155.

very prolonged. It commences from the age of Buddha and goes to the early medieval period of India. It originated as a small *vihāra*, and then expanded as *Mahāvihāra*, which later transformed into the temple of learning. *Nālandā* was an enormous educational platform for all; many scholars from different parts of the world learned wisdom here when it was flourishing under various Royal patronages until twelfth Century.



**Figure 2 The Excavated remains of Nālandā**

Even for a lay Indian, *Nālandā* was known as an important for higher education, which nonetheless ranks equal in all respects with Takshashila. If Takshashila reckoned for training in higher arts and crafts, *Nālandā* was considered a place for an earnest seeking of Knowledge. Such Highest reckoning all over the Country of India could not have been possible without a gradual development over some time.

### ***Nālandā* “University”?**

In order to Know the question if *Nālandā Mahāvihāra* was an “International University,” an idea propagated by the contemporary scholars: in my opinion, we should avoid making such a connection. The problem of the association of *Nālandā mahāvihāra* with a “university” is that the scholars who worked for the academic legitimation of this perspective based their hypothesis on weak and superficial bibliography which nowadays

would result in an outdated perception of what a “university” is or could be.<sup>15</sup> In this sense, for a strong association of *Nālandā* with the concept of “university,” a new endeavor would have to be taken which would explore more precise terms of what the contemporary understanding of this category is. Then, most probably, forcing the connection, one would be able to see if the concept of “university” would fit into the parameters of what the Buddhist religious educational institution of *Nālandā Mahāvihāra* was. In my perception, scholars should not employ concepts for periods before their appearance. The idea of “university” appeared with the emergence of the “University of Bologna,” in 1158.<sup>16</sup> Any application of this concept for the period before its emergence would be an anachronistic corruption of the category. Then, I tend to disagree with the retrospective association of *Nālandā* with the contemporary and Western concept of “university,” and would encourage the use of terms employed by the actors who lived during the historical period in question. In this case, *Nālandā* was a *mahāvihāra*.

#### ***Nālandā* as an International Seat of Learning**

Fergusson compared *Nālandā* with Monte casino, one of the most excellent interprovincial Universities of Mediaeval Europe.<sup>17</sup> From the evidence that is at hand, we think, we can assign it a still loftier position, viz., of an international University.

Streams of pilgrim-students wended their way to *Nālandā* in search of knowledge from China, Tibet, and Korea.<sup>18</sup> In India itself, the princes of Magadha in Central India, of Kashmere and sons of many lords and nobles came to study at *Nālandā* from such distant provinces as Kanchipuram (modern Conjeeveram) in the South, Purusapura<sup>19</sup> (modern Peshawar) in the North and Samatata in the East. Moreover, it was at *Nālandā* that King Harsa, the overlord of Northern and Central India and the King of Yavadvipa (Java) and Suvarnavdipa (Sumatra), Maharaja Balaputradeva,<sup>20</sup> built *Vihāras* for students to prosecute their studies.

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<sup>15</sup> Sankalia, *Nalanda University*, 1.

<sup>16</sup> Frederick M. Asher, *Nalanda: Situating the Great Monastery*, (Mumbai: Marg Foundation, 2015), 16.

<sup>17</sup> James Fergusson, *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture* (London: John Murray, 1910), 136.

<sup>18</sup> Beal, S. “Art. XXIII. —Two Chinese-Buddhist Inscriptions Found at Buddha Gaya.” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 13, no. 4 (1881): 552–572.

<sup>19</sup> Asanga and Vasubandhu, see Takakusu, *J. R.A. S.*, 1905, 35.

<sup>20</sup> H.Sastri, 17, *Epigraphia Indica*, (Calcutta: Government of India Central publication, 1923-24), 327.



Beal says in “Buddhist Records of the Western world” (1906) *Nālandā*, being a seat of higher learning, had a system of specialization. There were ‘schools of study.’ They significantly described as ‘schools of discussion,’ implying that, besides formal instructions given by teachers, it was the regular practice to throw open the subject taught for discussion and investigations from different angles and standpoints. Xuanzang, describes the discussions as ‘hard,’ i.e., making high demand for intellectual ability and acquired learning. Those who passed the preliminary test and joined a ‘school,’ says Xuanzang, ‘are sure to be humbled and to forfeit their renown,’ if they are moderate talent, ‘when they come to discuss in turn in the assembly.’<sup>21</sup>

### **Famous Library of *Nālandā***

Most of what we know of the *Nālandā* during the 6th and the 7th centuries A.D. is due to the travelogue accounts left by Xuanzang, who lived in the institution for three years in the first half of the 7th century, and I-Tsing who also stayed there for ten years towards the latter part of the same century. Information on the *Nālandā* University Library also found in the Tibetan accounts, from which we understand that the library situated in a specialized area known by the poetical name the Dharmaganja, (Piety Mart). Which comprised three massive buildings, called the Ratnasagara, the Ratnodadhi and the Ratnaranjaka of which the Ratnasagara was a nine-storied building and housed the collection of manuscripts and rare sacred works like Prajnaparamita Sutra, etc.<sup>22</sup> The library at *Nālandā* had a luxurious stock of manuscripts on philosophy and religion and contained texts relating to grammar, logic, literature, the Vedas, the Vedanta, and the Samkhya philosophy, the Dharmasastras, the Puranas, Astronomy, Astrology, and Medicine.<sup>23</sup> These things were exceedingly helpful in the dissemination of knowledge because we find numerous mentions of scholars from abroad copying out manuscripts in hundreds from these libraries and taking them to their countries. I-Tsing is said to have got copied from *Nālandā*, 400 Sanskrit works amounting to 5,00,000 verses.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> S. Beal, 2, *Buddhist Records of the Western world* (London: Kegan Paul, 1906), 171.

<sup>22</sup> Bhatt, R. K. “Academic libraries in India: A historical study.” In *International Conference on Academic Libraries organized by Delhi University Library System from 5th–8th October, 2009 at University of Delhi, Delhi*. 2009. 56.

<sup>23</sup> A. K. Mukherjee, *Librarianship: Its Philosophy and History* (Delhi: Asia Publishing House, 1966), 84.

<sup>24</sup> D. G. Apte, *Universities in Ancient India* (Baroda: Sadhana Press), 36-37.

## 2.2 The Royal Patron of *Nālandā*

### Establishment of *Nālandā* and the Gupta Age (415-550 A.D.)

The System of study at *Nālandā* University was very Unique in the history of Education system in India; it starts from the age of the Gupta Dynasty. The dignified *Nālandā* University, the story of the foundation of the *Mahāvihāra (Nālandā)* is told by Xuanzang.<sup>25</sup> It reproduces no doubt the local tradition about it: repeated by a Korean monk Prajnavarman also, who visited *Nālandā* about four decades after Xuanzang. The Royal Founder of *Nālandā* is given as Sakraditya by both Xuanzang and Prajnavarman. It occurs in a seal discovered at *Nālandā*.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, the first four kings mentioned by Xuanzang are the following - Sakraditya, Buddha Gupta-rajā, Tathagata Gupta-rajā, and Baladitya-rajā.

The fourth of these kings seems to be the same Baladitya-rajā spoken of by the Chinese pilgrim in connection with the Huna King Mihirakula. He is said there to have “profoundly honored the law of Buddha,” while in the history of *Nālandā* he is supposed to have entered the *Saṅgha* as we shall see later on, Now Baladitya-rajā, the defeater of Mihirakula, has already been identified with Narasimha Gupta, one of the later imperial Guptas, whose coins bear the title of Baladitya. Hence one of the royal patrons of *Nālandā* is undoubtedly Narasimha Gupta.

The foundation of the University of *Nālandā* undoubtedly took place in a period of glory for the civil power that undertook such an enterprise. Now the reigns of Chandra Gupta II and Kumara Gupta-I (if we prescient of the last years of the latter) mark the climax of the Gupta power. The country well and peacefully administered, as Fa-Hein informs us; literature and art were passing through an epoch of uncontroverted renaissance; Kumara Gupta-I himself had defeated his enemies, according to the Gadhwa and Bilsa inscriptions, and even had performed the Ashvamedha sacrifice.<sup>27</sup>

Sakraditya (Kumar Gupta I) “A former king of this country respected and esteemed the (system of the) one Vehicle, and the three treasures very highly honored. Having selected

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<sup>25</sup> Beal, *Buddhist Records*, 168-170.

<sup>26</sup> H. Sastri, *Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India*, 66 (Delhi: The manager of Publications, 1942), 38.

<sup>27</sup> Heras, H. “The Royal Patrons of the University of Nalanda.” *Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society Part I* Vol. 14, (1928): 1-23.

by augury a lucky spot, he built this *Samgharāma*.” The Chinese pilgrim does not say that Kumara Gupta was a Buddhist but says only that he “respected and esteemed” the law of Buddha and “honored very highly” the Buddha, the dharma and the *Saṅgha*. He seems to have been a Vaishnava.<sup>28</sup> However, such respect and esteem for Buddhism are not a strange thing in a Hindu monarch. One of his inscriptions commemorates the erection of a seated image of Buddha by the Bhikṣu Buddhāmitra.<sup>29</sup>

Xuanzang says later king “Buddhagupta-*raja* (Skanda Gupta) continued to labor at the great undertaking of his father. To the south of this, he built another *Samgharāma*.” Accordingly, Skanda Gupta continued the policy of his father towards the university. His patronage especially shown in the fact that he built another *Samgharāma* to the south of that erected by his father. Such enlargement of the university was most likely carried out by Skanda Gupta after his triumphant return from the west where he had crushed the power of the Hunas, then for the first time invading the plains of Aryavarta.<sup>30</sup>

Next, King Pura Gupta is said by Xuanzang to have “vigorously practiced the former rules (of his ancestors), and he built east from this another *Samgharāma*.” These words of the Chinese pilgrim point out two facts: first, the building of another college east of the one built by his brother; second, a more vigorous patronage policy in favor of the university, probably by granting privileges and endowments to the institution.

At the Time of Narasimha Gupta, Mihirakula (Huns ruler) because of his hatred of Buddhism, he attacks *Nālandā*, The buildings of *Nālandā* were then probably destroyed for the first time, and its priests and students dispersed and perhaps killed.<sup>31</sup> Xuanzang tells us that he built another *Samgharāma* on the northeast side of the one built by his father.<sup>32</sup> This *Samgharāma* was still called “the college of Baladitya-*raja*” in the time of Xuanzang.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, he constructed a great *vihāra* 300 feet high. “Concerning its magnificence,” says Xuanzang, “its dimensions, and the statue of Buddha placed in it, it resembles the

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<sup>28</sup> Vincent A. Smith and A. V. Williams Jackson, *History of India, in Nine Volumes: Vol. II - From the Sixth Century B.C. to the Mohammedan Conquest, Including the Invasion of Alexander the Great* (New York: Cosimo, 2008), 408.

<sup>29</sup> Shaman Hwui Li, *The Life of Huiyen-Tsiang* (London: Kegan Paul, 1914), 109.

<sup>30</sup> Smith and Jackson, *History of India, in Nine Volumes*, 408.

<sup>31</sup> Heras, *A Note on the Excavations at Nalanda and its History*, *J.B.B.R.A.S.*, II, N. S., p. 215-216.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* 168.

<sup>33</sup> Hwui Li, *Huiyen-Tsiang*, 109.

great *vihāra* built under the Bodhi tree.”<sup>34</sup> However, besides the building of the *Samgharāma* and the *vihāra Nālandā* undoubtedly owed to Narasimha Gupta the restoration of the whole university after the destruction of the Huna King.

After this work of restoration was done and after the new *Samgharāma* and *vihāra* finished, Narasimha Gupta decided to commemorate the event with a great assembly. Xuanzang says that he “invited common folk and men of religion without distinction.” The meeting of this assembly was a great success; 10,000 priests flocked to *Nālandā* from every corner of India, and even two monks came from far-off China.<sup>35</sup>

### **The Age of Harshavardhana (Reign, 606-647 A.D.)<sup>36</sup>**

Subsequently Gupta kings, except for Kumar Gupta II there is no other mentioned in history, I will not go for discussing why Guptas’ relapse. Kumara Gupta II seems to be the last king of the Gupta family mentioned by Xuanzang in connection with the University of *Nālandā*.

Moreover, not even other kings of the same kingdom of Magadha, but belonging to other dynasties, are referred to by the Chinese pilgrim. However, he adds the name of a king of another kingdom to this list of patrons of the University of *Nālandā*. This king of Central India that appears after the extinction of the Gupta family before the arrival of Xuanzang in India cannot be other than Harsa-varhdhana of Kanauj. The same Xuanzang refer clearly that this monarch had definite and openly declared leanings towards Buddhism is clear from other passages of Xuanzang's travels. When we read for instance Xuanzang's account of the assembly of Kanauj convoked by Harsa for propagating the doctrines of Mahayana, we cannot doubt that the great emperor had accepted in his heart the faith of Buddha.

Harsa’s patronage also shown by the numerous endowments granted to the university. Hwui Li (慧立) says, “The king of the country,” “respects and honors the priests, and has remitted the revenues of about 100 villages for the endowment of the convent. Two hundred householders in these villages, day by day, contribute several picks of ordinary rice, several hundred cities in weight of butter and milk.” “Hence, the students here, being so abundantly supplied, do not require asking for the four requisites (clothing, food,

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<sup>34</sup> Beal, *Buddhist Records*, 173-174.

<sup>35</sup> Beal, *Buddhist Records II*, 169.

<sup>36</sup> A. P. Varghese, *India History, Religion, Vision and Contribution to the World* (New delhi: Atlantic, 2008), 26.

bedding, and medicine). These are the sources of the perfection of their studies, to which they have arrived.”<sup>37</sup>

### ***Nālandā* in the Pala Age (8<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> Century)<sup>38</sup>**

After the patronage of King Harsha, we usually find the Pala Dynasty in the middle of the Eighth Century. The *Mahāvihāra* of *Nālandā* came to the Palas as a cultural legacy of the past, which they being Mahayana Buddhists were bound to cherish. Now it developed as a citadel of the Tantric cult. The first Pala kings: Gopala and then Dharmapala each had added a monastery here. Devapala identifies himself with the cause of *Nālandā*, and it was during his time that *Nālandā* acclaimed international fame. *Nālandā* became a center of Buddhist art and culture and actively transmitted the same to different parts of the continent, particularly Tibet and South East Asia.

Bu-Ston states that Gopala built the *Nālandā* Mahāvihāra.<sup>39</sup> This last assertion is inaccurate. Since *Nālandā* was flourishing in the first half of the seventh century A.D. When the Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang visited it, but perhaps Bu-Ston's statement may be interpreted to mean that Gopala built an addition to the *Nālandā* Monastic Complex.<sup>40</sup>

The maintenance of such a vast establishment was indeed expensive, but it was arranged to meet the expenditure from the revenues of a hundred villages granted for the University. From ninth to the thirteen century - An era during which the tantric Buddhism became most pronounced in eastern India under the Palas and laid their killing influence on *Nālandā* Culture. The Pala establishment must have drawn away from several learned monks from *Nālandā* when all of them, including *Nālandā* itself, came under the ages of the Palas. There is evidence in the Tibetan legends that there used to be a migration of scholars from one to another. These adventitious circumstances must have largely impaired *Nālandā's* pride of place. Also, from the eighth century on, Buddhism was shrinking in northern India: it was only in the eastern areas over which the Buddhist Pala kings sought to consolidate it by the establishment of new monastic centers.<sup>41</sup> (Odantapura, *Vikramaśīla*,

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<sup>37</sup> Hwui Li, *Huien-Tsiang*, 112-113.

<sup>38</sup> R. C. Majumdar *Ancient India* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1977), 268.

<sup>39</sup> Obermiller Eugene, trans. *History of Buddhism by Bu-ston II.* (Heidelberg: Suzuki Research Foundation, 1931-32), 156.

<sup>40</sup> Buchanan, Susan L. “*A study of Pala patronage.*” PhD diss., The Ohio State University, 1975.

<sup>41</sup> R.C. Majumdar, vol. 1, *History of ancient Bengal* (Dacca: Dacca University, 1943), 417.

Somapura, etc.) R.C. Majumdar (1971)<sup>42</sup> and A. M. Chowdhary (1967)<sup>43</sup> claim that palas were until 1162, but D.C. Sircar (1975-76)<sup>44</sup> and D.K. Ganguly(1994)<sup>45</sup> says that last pala ruler ‘Palapala’ ruled Magadha until 1200 AD.



**Figure 3 The Evidence of Pala Stone images**

## **2.3 The Geographical Study of *Nālandā***

### **Origin of the Name**

Various explanations are showing the significance of the name given to the place. According to one theory, *Nālandā* was the name of a Naga (cobra) who lived in a tank near the mango-tree to the south of a Sangharama.<sup>46</sup> A second account says that the name was the result of the constant charity given by Bodhisattva who was living at this place. The third explanation based on an etymological analysis of the word, which means that endowments incessantly flowed to the institution, but donors had not had the satisfaction of

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<sup>42</sup> Majumdar, *History of Bengal*, 161-162.

<sup>43</sup> A. M. Chowdhary, *Dynastic History of Bengal c. 750-1200 A.D* (Kolkata: Asiatic Society of Pakistan, 1967), 272-273.

<sup>44</sup> Dineshchandra Sircar. “Indological Notes - R.C. Majumdar's Chronology of the Pala Kings”. *Journal of Indian History*. IX (1975–76): 209–10.

<sup>45</sup> Dilip Kumar Ganguly, *Ancient India, History and Archaeology* (Kolkata: Abhinav Publications, 1994), 33-41.

<sup>46</sup> Apte, D. G. *Universities in ancient India*. No. 11. Faculty of Education and Psychology, Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, 1971. 23.

having given sufficiently. Its prosperity, as described later, shows that the third explanation is more acceptable than the remaining two.

Xuanzang, the renowned Chinese traveler of the seventh century, says that according to tradition, the place owed its name to a Naga of the same name who resided in a local tank. However, he thinks it more probable that Buddha, in one of his previous births as a bodhisattva, became a king with his capital at this place, and that his liberality won for him and his capital the name *Nālandā* or “Charity without Intermission.”<sup>47</sup>

At present, In the north of *Nālandā* is Bargaon (Surajpur). Bargaon has been a stronghold of religious faith, spiritual religion, and cultural consciousness for centuries. Sun worship, especially for the ‘Shastri Vrat (Chhath Puja),’ organized on the occasion of the date of Kartik and Chaitra month (Months of Hindu Calendar), this place is mentioned in Bhavishya Purana and Samba Purana.

Moreover, in the temple premises, the statues of many ages are found in the presence of Hindu culture. The main image of the temple is Kalapa Aditya. In this statue, the charioteer Arun with the seven horses of the Sun family, “Usha” and “Pratyusha,” the wives of the sun shoo dark by the arrow and Sun’s assistant punishments and pedal engraved in a black stone block. In addition to the magnificent idol of Lord Sun, Ganesh, Shiva Parvathi, Kalyanasundaram, Vishnu, Sarasvati, Lakshmi and Katyayani, and Avokaleshwar Aparajita and Tara, etc. all are the Pala dynasty’s statues. The pond is about one kilometer northwest of the temple complex where the Chhath vow given to Lord Bhaskar (Sun). Thus, the Sun Temple symbolizes the Hindu culture and is the basis of religious tourism, and on this occasion, the importance of Sun worship in Hindu culture can make understandable here.

*Nālandā* is also associated with Jainism after receiving knowledge and ammunition. The twenty-fourth Tirthankara had spent fourteen rainy seasons here.

### **Geography of Ancient *Nālandā***

*Nālandā* district lies in the northern part of Bihar and stretches from 24<sup>0</sup> 57’ 38” to 25<sup>0</sup> 27’ 35” north latitude and 85<sup>0</sup> 9’ 24” to 85<sup>0</sup> 55’ 36” east longitude. *Nālandā*, as a small town of ancient Magadha<sup>48</sup>, existed at the time of *Mahāvira* (599 – 527 BCE)<sup>49</sup> and Buddha (563

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<sup>47</sup> Apte, Universities in Ancient India, 1971, 23.

<sup>48</sup> Pintu Kumar, “The Ancient Nalanda Mahavihara: The Beginning of Institutional Education,” *Journal of the World Universities Forum* Vol 4, Issue No. 1. (2011): 66.

– 483 BCE)<sup>50</sup>, covered the area between the new district of Patna and *Gayā*. *Nālandā* situated between the two capitals of the Magadhan Empire - *Rājgriha* and *Pāṭliputra*, which were a little away from very density places. The site of *Nālandā Mahāvihāra* situated in the district of *Nālandā*, located in the Indian state of Bihar at present day. Airways also connect it with two nearest Gaya International Airport and Patna Airport. *Rājgriha* (modern Rajgir), the ancient capital of Magadha *Mahājanpada* and ancient *Nālandā* University situated in this region. This region occupies an essential position in the political and religious history of India. The areas around *Nālandā* were fertile and produced more than the need for the large number of monks living at *Nālandā*. Moreover, so the fertile plain and Panchane and Paimar rivers (tributaries of the Ganga) provided the necessary stimulus for agriculture right from the Chalcolithic and even earlier times. Peasants populated most of the surrounding regions of *Nālandā* and supplied new entrants to the center continuously for this Buddhist order. About the climate of *Nālandā*, we know from I-Tsing that it was hot here<sup>51</sup> and the one advantage of it was that the Bhikkhus did not require many garments. *Nālandā* and its neighborhoods during this period was a center of the local market (hatta).<sup>52</sup>

References to Buddhist Texts *Nālandā* mentioned in *Dīghanikāya* [Vol. I, p. 1, II. 81, 83, 211-12 etcetera; *Majjhima nikāya*, I. 371-72, 377 f; *Saṃyutta nikāya*, Part II, 110; Part IV, 110, 311f, 322f, V. 159].<sup>53</sup> These mention the Buddha sojourning (*Vihārati*) in the mango-grove (amba-vana) called *Pāvārika* at *Nālandā*, which was at a distance of only one yojana from *Rājagriha*.

### **Geography of Modern *Nālandā***

*Nālandā*'s excavated remains provide evidence for the development of architecture and evolution of artistic traditions of South Asia. While *Nālandā*'s site plan shows a linear

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<sup>49</sup> Bechert, Heinz. "A Remark on the Problems of the Date of Mahavira." *Indologica Taurinensia* 11 (1983): 287-290.

<sup>50</sup> Brewster, Earl Henry, *The life of Gotama the Buddha*. K. Paul, (London: Trench Trubner & Company, 1926).

<sup>51</sup> J. Takakusu (trans.), *A Record of Buddhist Religion as Practiced in India and the Malay Archipelago by I-Tsing*, 1st edition, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1896), Reprinted at (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1966), 70.

<sup>52</sup> Rabindra Panth, *Nalanda Buddhism and the World*, Vol.VII (Nalanda: Nava Nalanda Mahavihara, 2001), 38-48.

<sup>53</sup> Radha Kumud Mookerji, "The University of Nalanda," *The Journal of the Bihar Research Society*, Vol. XXX, 328 (1944): 135.



planned organization of campus, its Site no. 03 show a five-fold temple form both of which were borrowed by later *Mahāvihāra*. The temple-like form of Site no. 03 (See Figure 4 & Figure 5) and sculptural art contribute to the development of Buddhism and Buddhist art and architecture in large parts of Asia. This temple is popularly known as the *Śariputra Stupa/Caitya* is the very location of the room in which he was born, and, where also he entered *Parinirvāṇa*.

In Order to Understand when *Nālandā* comes in the light of History after its demise, we need to see some excavation works as well as scholars' opinions and writings after unearthed *Nālandā*. In the Modern Age, *Nālandā* uncovered by one British archeologist, namely, A. Cunningham (1871).<sup>54</sup> Through Cunningham himself did not undertake any large scale excavations at the site, he refers to Captain Marshal who had done some at one of the mounds. He was followed by A.M. Broadly (1871) who started digging the central mound with the aid of one thousand laborers, till, "Within ten days he laid bare the eastern, western and southern facades of the ruins of the great temple or stupa concealed unearthed."<sup>55</sup> Exploration in district-*Nālandā* was conducted to understand the pattern of ancient human habitation in the region. The scenario of archaeological findings of district *Nālandā* has been rapidly changed in the last decade 2000 - 2010. During this time period various sites with archaeological potentiality like Rajgir (1999 - 2000), Chandimau (2000 - 2001), Juafardih (2006 - 2007), Begampur (2007 - 2008), Daman - Khanda (2007 - 2008) and Ghorakatora (2007 - 2009) have been subjected to excavations by the Archaeological Survey of India.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Alexander Cunningham, *The Ancient Geography of India*, (London: Trubner and Co., 1871), 468-469.

<sup>55</sup> Upendra Thakur, *Buddhist Cities in Early India* (Delhi: Sundeep Prakashan, 1995), 78.

<sup>56</sup> Archaeological Explorations Research Papers - Academia.edu, [http://www.academia.edu/Documents/in/Archaeological\\_Explorations](http://www.academia.edu/Documents/in/Archaeological_Explorations) (accessed May 22, 2019).



**Figure 4 Temple No. 3 - Sariputta Stupa - Frontside**



**Figure 5 Temple No. 3 - Sariputta Stupa - Backside**

In Modern history the region of *Nālandā*, in starting we usually find the name “Baragaon” behalf of *Nālandā* more because after the decline of *Nālandā* it has not only lost popularity but also lost the existence from the map of the world. A. Cunningham discovered this place the first time in Modern history. As Cunningham (Report of 1861-62) has mentioned:

The village of Baragaon is, due North from Rajgir and 7 miles’ distant lies, which was surrounded by ancient tanks and mounds, and which possesses more delicate and more numerous specimens of sculpture. The ruins of Baragaon were so immense so that many scholars have different assumptions about it. Firstly, Dr. Buchanan assured it must have been the King’s residence, and he knew through a Jain priest at Bihar, that it was the residence of Raja Srenika and his ancestors. Secondly, the Brahmans assume these ruins are said to be the remains of Kundalpur, a city renowned as the Birthplace of Rukmini, One of the Wives of Lord Krishna. However, what is more, is that A. Cunningham said beyond all doubt that the remains of Baragaon are the ruins of *Nālandā* through the information he got from Xuanzang Travelogue, the most celebrated seat of Buddhist learning in India.<sup>57</sup>

As well as A. M. Broadly also support this in his Journal (1872) by his sayings:

By the position of Baragaon, by the comparison of distances, and by the aid of inscriptions, Baragaon has been identified, beyond the possibility of a doubt, with that *Vihāra*-gram on the outskirts of which, more than a thousand years ago, flourished the great *Nālandā* monastery.<sup>58</sup>

He also described *Nālandā* and said when the caves and temples of Rajagriha abandoned to the ravages of decay, and when the followers of Tathagata forsook the mountain dwellings of their great teacher, the monastery of *Nālandā* arose in all its splendor on the banks of the lakes of Baragaon. Here the lakes of Successive monarchs vied in its embellishment; lofty pagodas were raised in all directions; halls of disputation and schools of instruction built between them. Shrines, temples, and topes were constructed on the side of every tank and encircled the base of every tower; and around the whole mass of religious edifices were grouped the “four-storied” dwellings of the preachers and teachers of Buddhism.

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<sup>57</sup> Cunningham, *The Ancient Geography of India*, (1871), 468-469.

<sup>58</sup> A. M. Brooadley, “The Buddhistic Remains of Bihar,” *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* vol. XLI, No. 1-4 (1872): 299-300.

In light of the evidence from the Chinese pilgrimage resources, we see I-Tsing said that the hamlet Nalo (*Nālandā*) is placed at 1 Yojana, or 7 miles, from the hills of the Isolated rock, that is from Giriya, and also the same distance from the modern day Rajgir.

Similarly, Xuanzang describes *Nālandā* as being 7 Yojanas, or 49 miles, distant from the holy pipal-tree at present Bodhgaya, which was correct after measured. He also describes it as being about 30 li, or 5 miles, to the north of Modern Rajgir. Significantly, this distance and direction also correspond with the position of Baragaon, if the distance measured from the most northerly point of the old ramparts. Lastly, In Actual name ‘*Nālandā*’ is Notably mentioned on the inscriptions which were discovered by A. Cunningham from *Nālandā*.

Fa-Hain refers to *Nālandā* as the birthplace of *Sāriputta*, but it becomes not so correct when we see the account of Xuanzang as he mentions Kalapinaka, as the birthplace of *Sāriputta*.<sup>59</sup> Moreover, it is in actual 4 miles to the south-east of the former place. *Nālandā* has called the birthplace of Maha Mogalana, one of the top two disciples of Buddha, but it will again entirely have proved wrong with the reference of Xuanzang, he mentioned the village Kulika (near present-day Jagdispur) as the birthplace of Maha Mogalana instead of *Nālandā*, which is 8 or 9 li (less than 1.5 mile) to the south-west of *Nālandā*.

The remains of Baragaon consist of Numerous masses of brick ruins, amongst which the most conspicuous is a row of lofty conical mounds running north and south. These high mounds are the remains of gigantic temples attached to the famous monastery of *Nālandā*. The great monastery itself can be readily traced by the square patches of cultivation, amongst a large mass of brick ruins, 1600 feet by 400 feet. These open spaces show the positions of the courtyards of the six smaller monasteries which are described by Xuanzang as being situated within one enclosure forming eight courts altogether. Five of the six monasteries built by five consecutive princes of the same family, and the sixth by their successor.

To the south of the monastery, there was a tank in which the dragon or Naga, *Nālandā*, was said to dwell, and the place was accordingly named after him, *Nālandā*. There still exists to the south of the ruined monastery a small tank called Kargidya Pokhara (Pond), that answers precisely to the position of the *Nālandā* Tank, and which is, therefore, in all probability, the same pool of the Naga.

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<sup>59</sup> Cunningham, *Geography of India*, 469.

I cannot close this account of the Ancient *Nālandā* without mentioning the noble tanks which surrounded the ruins on all sides. To the north-east are the Gidi Pokhara and the Pansokar Pokhara, each nearly one mile in length; while to the south, there is the Indra Pokhara, which is nearly half a mile in length. The remaining tanks are much smaller in size and do not require any special notice.

### **The economic condition and present day of *Nālandā***

*Nālandā* was initially a prosperous village by a major trade route that ran through the nearby city of Rajagriha (modern Rajgir) which was then the capital of Magadha. It said that the Jain Tirthankara, Mahavira, spent 14 rainy seasons at *Nālandā*. Gautama Buddha too is said to have delivered lectures in a nearby mango grove named *Pāvārika* and one of his two chief disciples, *Sāriputta*, was born in the area and later attained *nirvāṇa* there. This traditional association with Mahavira and Buddha tenuously dates the existence of the village to at least the 5th–6th century BCE.<sup>60</sup>

The ruins of the ancient Buddhist establishments of *Nālandā* lie close to the village of Baragaon, 90 kilometers south-east of Patna and 11 kilometers north of Rajgir, the ancient Rajagriha. It situated at a distance of about 2 kilometers from the *Nālandā* station on the Eastern Railway. It is also easily accessible through road from Patna; whence there is a regular bus-service to Rajgir via *Nālandā*. The excavated remains are daily open to visitors from 9 A.M. to 5.30 P.M. The local Archaeological Museum, wherein are displayed the objects excavated at *Nālandā* and Rajgir, it is open at 9 A.M. and closes at 5 P.M. every day. Admission to the remains and the Museum governed by rules, which include the imposition of nominal fees. There are also rules available with the local officers, for the taking of photographs. A large number of photographs are available for sale with the Director General of Archaeology in India, New Delhi, and the Superintendent, Archaeological Survey of India.

The approach road to the excavated site leads through an old passage between the side-walls (See Figure 6) of Monastery Site 1 on the left and Monastery Sites 4 (See Figure 7) and five on the right. On entering through the eastern gate of this passage, the visitor will proceed westward till he finds the open space between the row of temples on the west and

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<sup>60</sup> Hartmut Scharfe, *Education in Ancient India*. (Netherland: Brill, 2002), Handbook of Oriental Studies 16. Brill. ISBN 9789004125568.

that of the monasteries on the east. Since the Main Temple standing at the southern extremity of the row of temples is at once the most massive and most imposing structure, we shall begin our description with this monument.

This temple is a massive solid structure standing in the middle of a court surrounded by several small votive stupas, (See Figure 9) many of which were twice or even three times built one over the other on the same spot. In the course of excavations, it found that the tiny original structure enlarged by later temples built over and around the ruins of the earlier ones, the present mound being the result of seven successive accumulations.

The first three of these structures were found buried deep in the interior of the mound. They were all under 3.50 m. Square; and owing to the shattered condition of the later remains over them, it was found necessary to cover them up again. The four later integuments which can examine on the spot were much more extensive structures. The three different staircases that can see to the north belong to the fifth, sixth, and seventh periods respectively, the last two initially covering up the earlier one.



**Figure 6 The Veranda of Nālandā ruins**



**Figure 7 Monastery No. 4**

The fifth of these successively-built temples is the most interesting and the best preserved. It had four corner-towers, of which three have exposed, and decorated with rows of niches containing well-modeled stucco figures of Buddha and the Bodhisattvas on these towers as well as on the sides of the staircase. The votive stupas sometimes contain in their core bricks inscribed with sacred Buddhist texts. The inscriptions belong to the sixth century A.D. so that it is possible to describe the fifth temple to that period the same period indicated by the stucco figures, which are fine specimens of Gupta art. Considering the significant accumulations over which the fifth temple built, it seems that the foundation of the original structure must have laid at least two centuries earlier.

This follows the Pancharatna concept of planning consisting of a central shrine and four subsidiary ones in the corner. This was destined to be of the Buddhist architecture in India. The rows of magnificent Stupas placed side by side, forming a central monumental axis. Parallel to and on both sides of this axis were monasteries along with the establishment, functioned both as units of accommodation as well as learning for monks. The monasteries were imposed in a rectangular building and planned around a central open court. The lower story contained the refectory, areas of instructions and communal worship, while the upper floor built in timber was quadrangle of cells for resident students. Each subsequent higher

story was stepped back from the previous one to create open-air terraces for the cells. These were used by more preserving students who had graduated to an advanced stage of learning. Several such monasteries were built close to each other like many colleges in a university campus. Till now, eleven monasteries have unearthed; nine in a row, facing west and two adjoining them at right angles on the Southern side. All the monasteries bear indications of having being rebuilt again and again, without any material deviation from an original plan. Around the second century of its establishment, Suvishnu built one hundred and eight temples at *Nālandā* to prevent the decline of the Hinayana and Mahayana schools of Buddhism. The excavations conducted by Archaeological Survey of India during 1915-37 and 1974-82.<sup>61</sup>

The structure of whole *Nālandā Mahāvihāra* was well planned and arranged in such a way that students and teachers can perform meditation and veneration with their study every time and at every place. The act of worship deeply embedded in the learning process because of its religious orientation. On the reverse, we can also say that the act of studying was rooted in the process of adoration. Both were intermingled together as it was difficult to recognize the two; even gaining knowledge of Buddhist scriptures was also a sacred work, which is supposed to be the way to reach salvation.

In Ancient India mainly *Nālandā* was highly specialized as an International educational center - it Set up importance because of *Nālandā* University, but before this place was as prestigious Integrated Cultural Center of Hindu, Jain and Buddhist people. The old place of Sun worshiper and the birthplace of many Jain and Buddhist great teachers or gurus, nowadays it converted into a favorite tourist place of the world. The ruins of *Nālandā* selected as UNESCO World Heritage in the year 2014.<sup>62</sup>

As a tourist center (See Figure 8), tourists are satisfied with the archaeological evidence of this place and take away the university's forgotten shadow. The truth is that the unveiling of the cover of this place covered by cultural dignity could not be done as otherwise, the tourists may also know the living form of memories in the past.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Sayed Ahmad, "An Imagination of Bikrampur Buddhist Vihara from the foot print of Atish Dipankar's Travel," *American Journal of Engineering Research* Vol.-02, No. 12(2013): 284-285.

<sup>62</sup> Kulshreshtha, Salila. "Removable heritage: Nalanda beyond the Mahavihara." In *Decolonizing Heritage in South Asia*, pp. 129-155. Routledge India, 2018.

<sup>63</sup> Manoj, Kumar. "Population Growth and Its Impact On Land Use Pattern: A Case Study Of Nalanda District." *Geographical Perspective* 9 (1995): 27.





**Figure 8 The ruins of Nālandā**

President of Nanhua University Lin- Tsong Ming and Prof. Shi-Chueming at ruins of *Nālandā*.

*Nālandā* has preserved its original cultural heritage in the presence of Jainism, Buddhism and Hindu religion and other related evidence in the background of the university's remains in the backdrop of historically. The knowledgeable world is aware of the history of *Nālandā*, so its iteration is not required. However, in the cultural background, this region is associated with various religions.

Another place near Rajagriha was Nala, which mentioned in the *Mahā Sudassana-Jātaka* as the birthplace of the Elder *Sāriputta*, a chief disciple of Buddha.<sup>64</sup> In other texts, the same place, under the name of Nalaka or Nalakagrama, appears as a center of *Sāriputta*'s activities. However, the Mahavastu, a Sanskrit Buddhist text, gives *Nālandā*-gramaka, half a yojana distant from Rajagriha, as the place of birth of *Sāriputta* and finds support in some Tibetan texts, including Taranath's History of Buddhism a seventeenth-century Tibetan work. It is, therefore, reasonable to hold that Nala, Nalaka, Nalakagrama, and *Nālandā* are all the variants of the same place name.

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<sup>64</sup> Appleton, Naomi. "The Buddha as storyteller: The dialogical setting of Jātaka stories." *In Dialogue in Early South Asian Religions*, (Routledge, 2016): 111-124.

## CHAPTER THREE - STUDIES OF THE *NĀLANDĀ* MAHĀVIHĀRA

### 3.1 The Contribution of *Nālandā*

The greatness of this university lies in training many other scholars, Chinese, Tibetan, and Indian whose contribution in the field of translation work is very significant. It is crucial to observe that *Nālandā*'s way of studying, teaching, and writing made early Indian education more scientific and systematic. It sufficiently developed the science of logic at *Nālandā*, which readily transformed the studies of *Nālandā* into scientific and proof based. The science of logic developed to separate the genuine in the realm of existence from the fake one. Entities whose existence could not be proved by the laws of logic were ruthlessly repudiated. The science of logic developed in the course of refuting the opponents and proving one's points of view, which was the essential part of the academic activities of *Nālandā*.<sup>65</sup>

#### **Contribution of *Nālandā* in Science**

In this Subchapter, Author intends to provide a brief sketch as to how the energies that existed at *Nālandā* University many centuries ago could be brought back and modified in order to provide a guiding light for future development in knowledge production and technological innovation in Asia. This attempt perhaps looks, at first sight, a strange one, because *Nālandā* was after all a religious institution. Those who studied all Buddhist monks were aiming at achieving the ultimate salvation, a tradition which is still alive in Tibetan monasteries all over the world. How could such a religious institution provide an impetus for scientific and technological development? What I will try to show, however, is that such an impetus is indeed possible given that *Nālandā* was not only a center for studies and practices of Buddhism, was a “university” in the real sense of the word, i.e., a place where knowledge produced and transmitted to the younger generations.

It increasingly recognized that the teachings of Mahayana Buddhism, which were the core of *Nālandā*, can provide insights which lead to many further developments in science and

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<sup>65</sup> Pintu Kumar, “Cultural Life at Nalanda University,” The Icfai University Journal of History and Culture Vol. IV, 1&2 (2010): 107-108.

also in technology. More specifically, the teaching on “Emptiness” (Śūnyatā) could be adapted and interpreted to create breakthroughs in how science conducted. However, in this subchapter, Author aim instead at pointing out ways in which the dynamism existed at *Nālandā* as well as the primary teaching on Emptiness could be brought to bear on science and technology for economic and social developments. As Author has said, this looks a little strange because Buddhism seems to many to be a world-renouncing religion and hence appears to have little to do with economic development. *Nālandā*'s position as a religious institution is also significant in that it can provide us with insights as to how science and technology should be conducted. As the world is now plunging toward reliance on science and technology in every aspect of life, and as science and technology have become so powerful as to change to nature of life itself and to make environment sufficiently pliable to our desires, the need for the ethical dimension is more excellent than before. These are perhaps *Nālandā*'s most significant contribution.

In an article on “Renewing the *Nālandā* Legacy: Science, Religion and Objectivity in Buddhism and the West,”<sup>66</sup> Joseph Loizzo points out some of how Buddhism could contribute to breakthroughs in science. Going against the probably mainstream view among Buddhist circles that Buddhism is a “scientific” religion which fits well with the findings and theories of modern science, Loizzo first acknowledges that Buddhism rejects the divine origin of nature, arguing instead that the natural world arises out of causes and conditions which lead far back in time indefinitely. Source of knowledge is one's own perception and understanding, rather than scriptural revelation.<sup>67</sup> However, the “empirical” method used in Buddhism is broader than what is used in the West, since Buddhism allows for one's insights through meditation as a source, while modern science rejects this as being unverifiable. It points to what Loizzo recognizes as a distinction between Buddhism and modern science whereas the models of perfect knowledge for the West are mathematics and physics, whose standard of rigors provides a methodological foundation of what is to be considered a science and thus real knowledge. Loizzo indicates that in Buddhism the standard or model of knowledge is to be found instead in the contemplative method, consisting in regulation and focusing of one's own body and mind in order for one

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<sup>66</sup> Joseph Loizzo, “Renewing the Nalanda Legacy: Science, Religion and Objectivity in Buddhism and the West,” *Religion East and West* 6(2006): 101-120.

<sup>67</sup> Loizzo, “Renewing the Nalanda Legacy” 102.

to be able to perceive things directly and more distinctly than possible when the mind is not as focused.<sup>68</sup> Recent attempts to measure the functions of the brain while the subject is meditating, such as ones done by Richard Davidson,<sup>69</sup> is seen by Loizzo as only an attempt to reinforce the notion that only the methodology of modern science - experimentation, observation, and quantification - is reliable an indicator of knowledge. It seems to obscure the role of contemplative and meditative methods as reliable methodology.

### **Contribution of *Nālandā* in Establishment of Buddhism in China**

The primary doctrine of Buddhism which was taught and practiced at *Nālandā* and find out how to use to as a guide toward blazing new trails in science. Many scholars and scientists are already exploring it. However, retrieving the energies of *Nālandā* University does involve more than reinterpreting fundamental doctrines; it also involves finding out how the institutional dynamism existed at *Nālandā* could be used as a basis on which epistemic and cultural dynamism could further be enhanced in Asia. In order to begin this discussion, let us look at what Amartya Sen has to say about the University. In his *The Argumentative Indian*,<sup>70</sup> Sen mentions the Chinese monk Xuanzang, who attended *Nālandā* and stayed in India for many years in the early seventh century. During his time at *Nālandā*, Xuanzang so distinguished himself that when he was about to leave for China, his colleagues tried to persuade him to remain there. Sen has the following quotations:

The monks of *Nālandā*, when they heard of it (Xuanzang plan to return to China), begged him to remain, saying ‘India is the land of Buddha’s birth, and though he left the world, there are many traces of him. ... Why then do you wish to leave having come so far?’

Moreover, China is the land of mlecchas, of unimportant barbarians, who despise the religious and the Faith. That is why the Buddha was not born there. The mind of the people

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<sup>68</sup> Loizzo, “Renewing the Nalanda Legacy,” 103.

<sup>69</sup> See, for example, Zara Houshmand, Anne Harrington, Clifford Saron and Richard J. Davidson, “Training the Mind: First Steps in a Cross-Cultural Collaboration in Neuroscientific Research,” in *Visions of Compassion: Western Scientists and Tibetan Buddhists Examine Human Nature*, Richard J. Davidson and Anne Harrington, eds. (Oxford University Press, 2002), 3-17.

<sup>70</sup> Amartya Sen, *The Argumentative Indian: Writings on Indian History, Culture and Identity* (London: Allen Lane, 2005).

is narrow, and their coarseness profound, hence neither saints nor sages to there. The climate is cold and the country rugged – you must think again.<sup>71</sup>

Xuanzang, however, replied by emphasizing the universalism inherent in Buddhism. The Buddha, he said, would not want his teachings to be limited only to one place or one people. He also praised his native land, mentioning a number of its great and worthy aspects. Then he asks how one can say that the Buddha did not go to his country.<sup>72</sup> By the work of Xuanzang, Buddhism became very famous in China afterward. So the Contribution of *Nālandā* is reputed.

Nonetheless, after he had returned to China, Xuanzang still maintained ties with *Nālandā*. Once he received a letter from his old friend, Prajnadeva, who was at *Nālandā*, together with some small gifts. Prajnadeva also asked Xuanzang to send a list of books or manuscripts that he wanted from *Nālandā*. Xuanzang replied by expressing his sadness that his teacher, Silabhadra, had died; he thanked Prajnadeva for offering to copy the books and sent a list of the books and manuscripts that were lost when he was on his way back to China.<sup>73</sup> Thus it is interesting to know that in an age when international traveling was stressful and hazardous, there was this kind of dialogue and exchange between Xuanzang and his colleague back in India.<sup>74</sup> The kind of exchange we find here is very similar to what we find nowadays among colleagues who collaborate internationally daily.

While today's communication is almost instantaneous, in Xuanzang time, it was fraught with dangers. Nonetheless, we can see the intellectual vigor and dynamism that was present at *Nālandā* during Xuanzang time. Books and treatises consistently were written; their content expounded to a learned audience who evaluated their content as to their quality. There were numerous debates and discussions. Monks and scholars were genuinely interested in learning, as we can see from Xuanzang request of books that had been lost during his journey back to China. At *Nālandā* we can imagine classrooms where student-

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<sup>71</sup> Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilization in China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), vol. 1, pp. 209-210. Quoted in Amartya Sen, *The Argumentative Indian*, p. 174.

<sup>72</sup> Amartya Sen, *The Argumentative Indian*, p. 174.

<sup>73</sup> Amartya Sen, *The Argumentative Indian*, p. 175.

<sup>74</sup> The exchanges and dialogs did not take place only across geographical or cultural boundaries. According to Radhakrishnan, the exchanges also happened across creeds and belief systems, and it is this mixing of different ideas made possible institutionally by Nalanda that constitutes a cornerstone of democracy (Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, *Report on University Education* (Delhi: Managers of Publication, 1950), pp. 300-302. Quoted in Shiv Visvanathan, "Democracy, Plurality and Indian University," *Economic and Political Weekly* 35.40(Sep. 30 - Oct. 6, 2000): 3597-3606, p. 3599.).

monks studied with their masters, timetables of lectures, students deliberating on which classes to attend, which professors' lectures they should attend. Undoubtedly there were many, many books housed in libraries where the students and faculty could make use of, so it is clear that *Nālandā* was not only a place where knowledge was transmitted but also one where new knowledge produced continuously.

What is exciting for us is how similar *Nālandā* is to top institutions of higher learning today. Universities in our times usually hold regular seminars where guests from far away are invited to give a talk, or members of the department share what they have been working on in order to get feedback. The subject matter being researched on and discussed was cutting edge. One cannot listen to the likes of Śāntideva anywhere in the world in the eighth century except at *Nālandā*. Śāntideva and his colleagues were at the forefront of Buddhist scholarly and literary activities anywhere in the world. These represent the core of our problem, which is how universities nowadays could bring back this friendly atmosphere that existed centuries ago. Centuries of colonialism and the West's rapid rise in science and technology have resulted in our universities lagging in all aspects of intellectual life.

Nonetheless, that is only a historical phenomenon resulting from several causes and factors dating back for centuries. Perhaps what is most interesting from the *Nālandā* experience is that all the monks and scholars there were free to explore any research topics that interested them and to push forward new frontiers of understanding and knowledge without fear of reprisal due to conflict with previous thoughts or with established, traditional systems.

I think a case can be made to explain why *Nālandā* eventually became an important center of tantric Buddhism beginning around the eighth century right up until the end of the university in the twelfth century. For those who stepped in the traditional form of Buddhism, tantric Buddhism is very shocking indeed. On the surface, tantric Buddhism is a complete reversal and rejection of everything that the Buddha taught and required his disciples to follow. For example, one of the precepts for the monks is that monks need to refrain from drinking alcohol ("I undertake the training precept - to abstain from

intoxicants causing heedlessness”).<sup>75</sup> However, in many forms of tantric Buddhism alcohol is not only allowed but also encouraged as a means by which one could transform one’s mental continuum in such a way that one gets closer to becoming liberated. Thus, however, does not mean that anybody who takes alcohol and suddenly becomes an arahant or vanquisher of all defilements. However, according to tantric Buddhism, partaking of alcohol is only a ‘skillful means’ (*upāya*) which the effect of the alcohol transformed into the very means by which liberation achieved. It cannot be accomplished by a layperson who has not undertaken severe practice and study, for that would mean that the layperson becomes addicted to alcohol itself with no chance of liberation. On the other hand, those who know how to make use of the tantric principle would be able to transform alcohol into the nectar of liberation.

To be a student of *Nālandā* was the highest academic distinction of the day. As per the description pen down by Xuanzang in his narrative Learned men from different cities countries who desire to renown in discussions come here in multitudes to settle their doubts, and the streams of their wisdom spread far and wide. Xuanzang a keen student of Mahayana, himself had spent five years here of his stay of sixteen years (629-645)<sup>76</sup> in India. While I-Tsing, a keen student of Hinayana for a full decade (675- 685)<sup>77</sup> And both had a solid grounding of scholarship before they joined there. The style of the academic life of the university that it gave itself up to lively discussions among students for their doctrines and practices. They also made their contribution to its harmony and discipline in all fields. Almost all affairs of the university left as their own against the fraternity and brotherhood and expulsion of recalcitrant. The dictatorship was applied in the sphere of teaching and democracy in the matter of day today physical needs.

### **3.2 System of Admission and Curriculum of Study at *Nālandā***

The *Nālandā mahāvihāra* educated both monks and laymen, employing the educational curriculum of the five sciences. *Nālandā* is considered to be the first Mahayana Buddhist

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<sup>75</sup> Bhikkhu Ariyesako, “The Bhikkhus’ Rules: A Guide for Laypeople,” compiled and explained by. *Access to Insight* (BCBS Edition), 17 December 2013, <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/ariyesako/layguide.html> . (Accessed June 20, 2019).

<sup>76</sup> Sankalia, Hasmukh D. *University of Nalanda*. BG Paul and Company, Madras, 1934. 191-94.

<sup>77</sup> Sankalia, *Nalanda University*, 1934, 191-94.

institution of higher learning ever established in India. Moreover, Buddhists came from many other parts of Asia to study at *Nālandā* until the thirteenth century, C.E. The course of instruction at *Nālandā* was unique for its time and location, representing a departure from the Buddhist monastery's usual concern with principally religious training. Some scholars have referred to the studies at *Nālandā* as "liberal education" because non-Buddhist subjects included in the curriculum and laymen educated at the institution. This designation is misleading, however, as it gives the impression that *Nālandā*'s educational approach highly secularized. Some scholars have even suggested *Nālandā* was "libertine," which was not the case.

*Nālandā* remained throughout its history a monastery where Mahayana Buddhist religious training was the primary concern. It was not a "co-educational" institution, and it was renowned for its strict moral probity, as well as for its high academic standards. While it was not necessary to become a monk to attend *Nālandā*, "non-cleric" students of *Nālandā Mahāvihāra* were at least vow-observing laymen. This suggests that *Nālandā*'s educational endeavors, though innovative, were nonetheless cast in a conservative, rather than liberal, mold.

Much of the information regarding *Nālandā*'s systems of tutelage sourced from the writings of Chinese and Tibetan scholars who flocked to *Nālandā* since the 6<sup>th</sup> century CE and the scores of compilations, manuscripts, and thesis whose content has shaped the disciplines of Indian Philosophy and Logic. The descriptions of I Tsing, Xuanzang, Hui Li on the life educational framework and internal management system testify the process showing the efficient working of the *Mahāvihāra* at the zenith of its fame.

The Gates of *Nālandā* was guarded by *Dwara Pandita* (dean of admissions) who were distinguished scholars themselves, entrusted with the responsibility of identifying a deserving scholar through a vigorous selection system. According to Xuanzang, one who sought admission was required to have full command over the Vedas, Sutras, Sastras apart from Buddhist texts and proficiency in Sanskrit. This thorough process of sifting real scholars ensured admittance to persons with the highest intellectual and moral capability



which reflected in the harmonious and productive coexistence of persons belonging to different schools of thought and sectoral affiliation (Mookerji, 1944).<sup>78</sup>

Xuanzang noted that only a minuscule percentage of aspirants were able to demonstrate a sound understanding of the existing forms of knowledge and those that did gain admittance admired by people of the subcontinent. It is also interesting to note that unlike other similar establishments of its kind, *Nālandā* assumed a secular position where knowledge was concerned. Irrespective of religious affiliations, a scholar's admittance depended only on their intellectual capacity and command over all familiar sources of knowledge.

As per I-Tsing, once admitted the names of scholars were listed in a register and studied there for as many as ten years in the discipline of their choice (Bapat, Prof. P.V.) Students of two age groups were admitted to *Nālandā*, first a younger group, Bramhacharis, and Manavakas, who were below the age of 20 and studied the Panchavidya (the five basic subjects). They were responsible for arranging for essential resources in support of their studentship. Those above 20 or having had mastered the primary texts, undertook the rigorous test to be admitted in one of *Nālandā*'s schools of higher learning equivalent to post-graduate degrees and above (Mookerji, 1974). Once admitted, scholars would choose a *karmācārya* (preceptor) and a professor to master *pratimokṣa* and *vinayapiṭaka* and thereon the *sūtras* and *śāstras*. Following this, he would become a Sahara (a junior member of the faculty) equivalent to or assistant professor for ten years to be eligible to serve as an *upādhyāya* (professor) or a *karmācārya* (preceptor).

The functioning of academia officiated through a democratic process. Here, junior and senior *parisad* (faculty) elected *karmadāna* (dean of affairs), *vihārapāla* (dean of college), *dvarapaṇḍita* (dean of admissions) and the *kulapāti* (chancellor). They also voted on all academic, practical, and disciplinary matters including the admission of new students and faculty.

Scholars earned degrees at masters and doctoral level at *Nālandā* where a student could specialize in fields such as *Cikitsāvidyā* (medicine), *Śilpasthānavidyā* (physical science and technology) or fine arts among others. Upon graduation, those admitted to a Master's degree course earned the title of a *Pandita* while a doctoral scholar became an Acharya

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<sup>78</sup> Mookerji, "The University of Nalanda," 135.

(Sankalia, 1934) (Loizzo, 2001).<sup>79</sup> *Nālandā* was a kind of university where monks came from each corner of the country and abroad as well, and they do feel a sense of pride and prestige to have the opportunity to study here at *Nālandā*. In the Ancient university of *Nālandā*, the admission was so tricky that the rest selected only two or three out of ten were rejected by the learned *dwarpandit* (Doorkeeper) some of them who were rejected around *Nālandā* and equipped themselves so that they could not reject next time.

From the record of I-Tsing in 673A.D. a detailed picture of the subject studied in *Nālandā*. His work not only records the minute details about the kind of life he led in *Nālandā* but also talked about the curriculum which besides the Buddhist scriptures included logic, metaphysics and a pervasive study of Sanskrit grammar. The subjects taught and produced at *Nālandā* were not limited to Buddhist ones, but also - grammar, logic, medicine, etcetera- were available here.<sup>80</sup> Xuanzang also refers to the five branches of traditional subjects such as *sabda vidya* (grammar and philosophy), *Cikitsavidya* (medicine), *Hetuvedya* (logic), *Silpoasthanavidya* (fine arts), and *Adhyatmavidya* (metaphysics) when Xuanzang was a student the curriculum contains the great vehicle (Mahayana) the works belonging to the eighteen sects of the Vedas the works on magic (*Atharvaveda*) and the *Sankhya* system of philosophy.

### 3.3 Prominent Teachers: Dissemination of Buddhism

*Nālandā Mahāvihāra* remained a Centre for higher Buddhists education for centuries we have got top well-known names of scholars of *Nālandā* who had seen credited with the composition of texts on Buddhist logic, epistemology, drama, and on such other topics the most shining names include Dharmakirti, Dignaga, Asvaghosa, Prabhakaran Mitra, Dharmadeva, Santarakshita, padmasana Amoghavajra, and Rahulsribhadra.

Learned men from *Nālandā* were famous all over the country. They defeated many Panditas belonging to other faiths and converted them to Buddhism. Among the list we may also include the Chinese traveler Xuanzang who acquired in this university the knowledge of the doctrines of Bhutas, Nirgranthas, Kapalikas, Jatakas, Sankhyas, and

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<sup>79</sup> Loizzo, Joseph John. "Candrakirti and the moon-flower of Nalanda: objectivity and self-correction in India's central therapeutic philosophy of language." (2001).

<sup>80</sup> Academy - Wikipedia, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Academia> (accessed May 20, 2019).

Vaiseshikas over and above those of Buddhism, the fact that a distinguished king like Sri Harsha sent for Panditas from *Nālandā* bears ample testimony to the depth of their learning. The Panditas of this place were accepted as authorities even on Hinayana doctrines of Buddhism although the university championed the cause of the Mahayana doctrine. It said that one thousand Panditas from *Nālandā* University were present at the assembly held at Kanyakubja (Kanoj ) by Sri Harsha to investigate the treatise of Xuanzang.

The names of Nagarjuna, Vasubandhu, Dinnaga, Padmasambhava, Shantarakshita, Aryadeva, Rahulabhadra, Asanga, Jayadeva, Chandrakirti, Dharmapala, Gunamati, Sthiramati, Prabhamitra, and Jinamitra are traditionally associated with this famous university. I have collected detailed information only about some of them. (a reference to Universities in Ancient India)<sup>81</sup>

**Nagarjuna:** He was a colleague of Aryadeva. Both of them discovered a deeper meaning in Buddha's preaching and founded and popularised a new form of Buddhism called Mahayana and gave it a philosophy named Madhyamika. This occurred in the latter half of the second and the earlier part of the third century.

**Aryadeva:** He was one of the scholars of *Nālandā* who lived in the 4th century A.D. He was the author of three works; all of these translated into Tibetan. His last work known as Madhyamika-bhramaghatanama was written at the request of the king of Jariibudwipa and was translated into Tibetan by Upadhyaya Dipankara Sri Jnana. He was the follower of Nagarjuna and assailed the Sankhyas, Vaiseshikas and twenty other doctrines.

**Vasubandhu:** Anecdotes point out that Vasubandhu composed the Paramarthasaptati to oppose the doctrine of Sankhyas contained in the Sankhya-saptati and reconverted king Baladitya (Narasinhagupta ) from Sankhya to Buddhism. He commented upon several works on Mahayana. He flourished between the years 420 and 500 A.D.

**Asanga:** He ultimately evolved the doctrine of Yogachara. It is he who grafted on the Mahayana the practices of Yoga, the union of the individual, and the universal spirit and mystical and other methods of abstract meditation. He wrote three works on Mahayana.

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<sup>81</sup> Apte, D. G. *Universities in ancient India*. No. 11. Faculty of Education and Psychology, Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, 1971. 23-43.

**Shilabhadra:** He became the head Pandita of *Nālandā* after Dharmapala. He was the son of a king in East India and a Brahmana by caste. In pursuit of newer realms of knowledge, he renounced his regal honor and comfort as well as his rank. In the course of his wanderings, he came to *Nālandā*, which was not far off from his place where he was initiated into the principles of Buddhism by Dharmapala. At the early age of thirty, he defeated a reputed heretic of South India by his profound and subtle arguments. Much against his will he had to accept the donation of a village from the. From out of the proceeds of this gift, he built a magnificent monastery. As the head of *Nālandā*, he received Xuanzang and appointed Jayasena to teach Yogasastra to the Chinese visitor. It was at his insistence that Xuanzang visited Kamarupa (Assam) for converting Kumararaja and his family to Buddhism. Only one work is assigned to him viz., Arya buddhabhumi-vyakhyana although he must have written many books.

**Santideva:** He lived between the years 695-743 A. D, He was the son of King Manjuvarman. His mother advised him to go to the country of Bodhisattvas. He entered the *Nālandā* University where, as a result of his sobriety and solemnity he was given the name Santideva. He studied three Pitakas (religious books of Buddhists) at that place.

**Padmasambhava:** Se was the son of Indrabodhi, the king of Udayatia. He was a prominent expounder of the Yogachara school and went to Tibet at the invitation of the king. It was from *Nālandā* that Ven. Padmasambhava had carried Buddhism to Tibet during the eighth century. He founded Laitiaism in Tibet arid is revered and worshipped as like Buddha himself. He spread tantrism that deals with magic and sorcery in Tibet known as the roof of the world.

### **3.4 International Students: Xuanzang and I-Tsing**

The first fact to know about *Nālandā* is that it was not a University in the modern sense of the term. It was a University confined to post Graduate study, as the center of research, like Institute of Science at Bangalore.<sup>82</sup> As such, it attracted foreign scholars hailing from distant countries. Its reputation as a seat of highest learning then available in Asia led them to seek it against all the odds, the hardships, the difficulties, and the risks attending

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<sup>82</sup> Radhakumud Mookerji, "The University of Nalanda," *The Journal of The Bihar Research Society* 30, 328 (1944): 126.

journeys in those days along the land-routes to India, and also sea-routes. Scholars came to *Nālandā* from countries like China, Japan, Korea<sup>83</sup>, Mongolia, Tukhara (Bactria),<sup>84</sup> Tibet, and Ceylon.

According to the findings of a modern Chinese historian, as many as, out of the number of Chinese pilgrims who went out to India during the 5th, 6th, seventh and 8th centuries, can be traced from Chinese sources of information. The 'Western records' (Su Yu Ki in Chinese) of only three of them have been explored and translated by Sinologists - those of Fa Hien, Xuanzang and I-Tsing, covering the periods 405-411 A.D., 629-646 A.D. and 671-695 A.D. respectively.<sup>85</sup>

It is a matter of singular good fortune that written, and two learned Chinese scholars give reliable details of the working of the *Nālandā* University based on direct experience and inside knowledge gained by them as students in residence at university for sufficiently long periods. The first of these scholars was Xuanzang who had been a resident student of The University for five years (635-640 AD.)<sup>86</sup> and was followed by I-Tsing who stayed at *Nālandā* as a student for as many as ten years from 675 A.D.

### **Xuanzang**

During the period of his stay in India, Xuanzang, who was a learned Mahayanist monk, studied Indian philosophy, both Buddhist and Brahmanical, at several monasteries, singly or under Indian teachers of contemporary renown. He makes special mention of two educational establishments that were pre-eminent in India, *Nālandā*, and Valabhi, in eastern and western India respectively. The latter, which was a center of Hinayana Buddhism, does not seem to have attracted Mahayanist scholars much, but of *Nālandā*, he has left a detailed description which is supplemented with further details by his disciple and biographer, Hwui-Li. At *Nālandā*, Xuanzang studied the Yoga philosophy under the head of that institution, Silabhadra, for five years or more.<sup>87</sup> With its full complement of schools of studies, lecture halls, libraries, regulations for admission and attendance at

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<sup>83</sup> S. Beal, "Art. XXIII. Two Chinese-Buddhist Inscriptions Found at Buddha Gaya." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 13, no. 4 (1881): 556.

<sup>84</sup> Beal, "Art. XXIII Two Chinese-Buddhist Inscriptions Found at Buddha Gaya," 556.

<sup>85</sup> Purushottam Vishvanath Bapat, *2500 years of Buddhism* (New Delhi: Division Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, 1959) 185.

<sup>86</sup> Sen, Tansen. "The travel records of Chinese pilgrims Fa-Xian, Xuanzang, and Yi-Jing." *Education About Asia* 11, no. 3 (2006): 24-33.

<sup>87</sup> Bapat, *2500 years of Buddhism*, 185-186.

lectures, conduct and discipline (with prescribed penalties for a breach of these), and a complete system of academic administration, it was a full-fledged monastic university of immense size. Its magnitude can be judged from Xuanzang's report that the number of teachers was 1,500 and of learners 10,000.<sup>88</sup>

One of the attractions of *Nālandā* as well as of other schools of India to foreign scholars was its collection of sacred works and relics. Xuanzang brought home from India as many as 657 the most significant amount of data together with "Images of the Buddha and his saints in gold and silver, and crystal, and sandalwood,<sup>89</sup> many curious pictures, 150 true relics of the Buddha," which had to be "borne of 20 horses." I-Tsing's acquisition comprised some 400 Sanskrit texts containing 500,000 *ślokas*, and also 300 relics.

### **I-Tsing**

I-Tsing, who traveled through India towards the close of the seventh century, informs us: There were eight auditoriums and three hundred chambers in this monastery, and the figure of students seems to have come down in comparison with Xuanzang's time, in I-Tsing's time, it becomes to a little over 3,000 only.

As regards I-tsing himself, he first stayed for a year at *Nālandā* studying Sabdavidya and Mahayana and later came back, and lived for ten years at *Nālandā*, exploring the lives of the saints.

Some of the realistic and refreshing details of education at *Nālandā* may briefly mention. Two students from Korea achieved high distinction by their study at *Nālandā*. The first was named Aryavarma who came to *Nālandā* in A. D. 630 and died here at 70. The second Korean scholar is named Hwui-Yieh, who also died at *Nālandā* at the age of 60. I-tsing found the following line was written on a Chinese MS. at *Nālandā*: "The Korean priest Hwui-Yieh wrote this record." We know these names because I-tsing happened to note them. Many were the foreign scholars at *Nālandā* whose names not thus noted. I-tsing states that in the interval of about 40 years, before and after Xuanzang, as many as 56 scholars visited India from such foreign countries as China, Japan and Korea, most of

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Thomas Watters, "on Yuan Chwang's Travels in India, 629-645 A.D.," MSN, 1904, [http://www.archive.org/stream/cu31924071132769/cu31924071132769\\_djvu.txt](http://www.archive.org/stream/cu31924071132769/cu31924071132769_djvu.txt) (accessed June 01, 2019).

whom came to *Nālandā* for study by travelling by land via Khotan, Tibet, and Nepal, while some came by way of the sea via Tsmralipti.<sup>90</sup>

He also mentions some names of students from Korea who were his contemporary at *Nālandā*. They were Sramana Hiuen-Tchao (*Prakāśamati*) in 660 AD for three years, Tao-hi (*śrideva*) for two years at *Nālandā*, Tao-cheng (Chandradeva) in 649 A.D., Ta-Cheng-Teng (*Mahāyāna - pradīpa*) who first learned Sanskrit by 12 years at *Tāmralipti* and then came at *Nālandā* in the company of I-Tsing, Moreover, Tao-lin (*Śilaprabha*) who domiciled at *Nālandā* for an extended period. It can prove that *Nālandā* had full of Indian as well as foreigner students, and it also describes the fame of *Nālandā*.

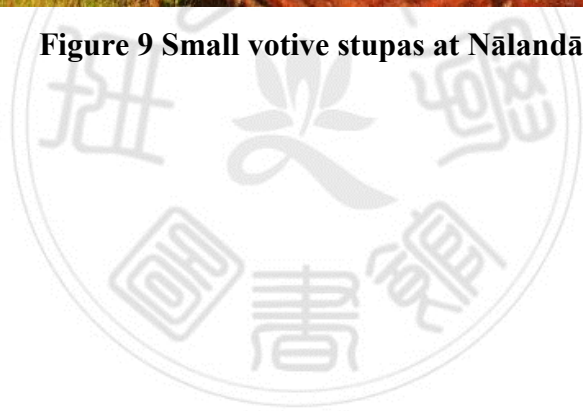
Some archaeological remains and inscriptions can assist in reconstructing a sketch of the life and studies at *Nālandā Mahāvihāra*, but the most useful information found in the accounts of foreign scholars who visited *Nālandā* in the course of its history. *Nālandā* became famous throughout Asia as a center for Buddhist studies and attracted many so-called “pilgrim travelers” from China, Tibet, and other lands. These visitors’ names are not evident in Indian records and inscriptions, and only a scant few of those whose names appear in the religious histories of China and Tibet left accounts that can be used by historians interested in Indian Buddhism and *Nālandā Mahāvihāra*.

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<sup>90</sup> Mookerji, “The University of Nalanda,” 127.



**Figure 9 Small votive stupas at Nālandā**





## CHAPTER FOUR - THE DECLINE OF *NĀLANDĀ*

### 4.1 Loss of Royal Patronage and Scholarship

#### The Changing model of Patronage

In Medieval India, *Nālandā* Mahāvihāra was teaching all over the world, and it was a success in keeping Buddhism alive there. It was famous for the Buddhist Research Institute as well as representing Indian Buddhism from lead. Due to these reasons, it can assume the situation of medieval India; we can say that *Nālandā* was the main center of Buddhism and the Decline of *Nālandā* can be noted as the decline of Buddhism in India.

Buddhism has always patronized by the monarchies, republics, nobles, and wealthy business persons. When such patronage declined, institutional decay started in the Buddhist monastic system, and *Nālandā* was no exception to this. From the age of Buddha, *Nālandā* can be traced as the origins of the *saṅgha*. Xuanzang informs that *Nālandā* purchased by 500 merchants for ten kotis (ten million) of gold pieces, and gifted to the Buddha who delivered sermons at *Pāvārikāmbavana* (mango grove of *Pāvārikā*) for three months.<sup>91</sup> Secondly, we notice during the Mauryan age, Buddhist architectural activities traced to the discovery of a *stūpa* of *Aśoka*. The early patronage was related to the *ārama* tradition were kings or wealthy merchants built stupas and vihāras for the *saṅgha*. The donors of *āramas* continued to patronize the resident *saṅgha*. For this purpose, the donors employed specialized staff (*ārāmika*) and superintendents (*ārāmikapeśaka*).<sup>92</sup>

In the age of *Kuśāna* (1<sup>st</sup> -3<sup>rd</sup> Century CE), the first significant shift like donation of the status of the Buddha at Mathura, Sravasti, and Sarnath suggesting that ‘statue worship’ was well established due to the emergence of Mahayana.<sup>93</sup> However, such donations were still not in practice in *Nālandā*, probably because of its lesser importance than at other institutions, yet soon in the Gupta period, many such types of donations were recorded in plenty.

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<sup>91</sup> Hiranand, Sastri. *Nalanda and its epigraphic material*. Indian Book Centre, 1986.

<sup>92</sup> Anand, Singh, “Wandering Almsmen and Their” Samgha” In Early Buddhism.” In *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, vol. 67, pp. 98-105. Indian History Congress, 2006.

<sup>93</sup> The Director General, Archaeological Survey of India, Janpath, *Epigraphia Indica Vol – 8*, 1905-06, New Delhi: 1981, 173.

The Gupta Period transformed the monastic character of *Nālandā* University. The first known inscription of this dynasty at *Nālandā* is the copper plate inscription of Samudragupta (350-375 CE). The inscription issued in the 5<sup>th</sup> regnal year of Samudragupta, mentions the donation of a village Pushkaraka.<sup>94</sup> It is likely that this village was donated to one of the *Samgharāmas* of *Nālandā*, indicating perhaps the beginning of the “feudalization” of the management of *Nālandā*. The majority view is that the proper establishment of the university began to take shape in the age of Kumar Gupta I (415-455CE). Xuanzang (7<sup>th</sup> century) mentions that Kumar Gupta I built a *Samgharāmas* near the large central stupa and Skandagupta (455- 467 CE), Purugupta (5<sup>th</sup> century), and Narsinhagupta Baladitya (5<sup>th</sup> century) also built famous temples and *Samgharāmas* in honor of the Buddha.<sup>95</sup> Fa Hsien (4-5<sup>th</sup> century) mentions that the kings of many and the heads of guild organizations built *vihāras* for the monks and endowed them with agricultural land, residence, garth, and orchards, along with the habitat community and their cattle.<sup>96</sup>

Taking a sharp survey of the causes first, though the taking reference of Sankalia, we find that Buddhism which had become a demos religion in the *Asokan* era, had, quietly, in the centenary that followed, lost the royal patronage. *Asoka's* son and successor were a dedicated Jain,<sup>97</sup> and Pushyamitra, the exterminator of the Mauryas, turned out to be the first persecutor of Gotama's faith, In Kaniska's hands, the religion once again became a state religion. However, he never ultimately identified himself with a different reverence. The Imperial Guptas, though they showed much sapidity, compassion, and durability to Buddhism, never adopt it. They, contrariwise, felt proud to show themselves as “Parma Bhagavatas,” devotees of Vasudeva (Vishnu). After receiving a stringent set back at the hands of Mihirakula, Buddhism seems to have attained its former glory in the reign of Harsha.

Nevertheless, Harsha's patronage was analogous to that of Kaniska. The Buddhists never acquired its monopoly. Moreover, this patronage enjoyed, whatever be its extent, for a short period only. During the interregnum that followed Harsha's disappearance from the

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<sup>94</sup> Bahadurchand, Chhabra, and G. S. Gai, *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, Vol.III, New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 1981, Vol. 111:254.

<sup>95</sup> Waiters, Thomas. “Yuan Chwang's Travels in India, 2 vols.” *London* 2 (1905): 164.

<sup>96</sup> Fa-Xian, and James Legge. *The Travels of Fa-Hien: A Record of Buddhist Kingdoms*. Master, 1886.

political horizon and the rise of the Palas in Bengal, we do not know what course the religion followed precisely. However, when with the emergence of the Palas from the political lawlessness in Bengal as her elected kings, the ritual seemed to have found new champions, its internal degeneration has already set in, to which a coup de grace was given, by the mighty, barbarous hand of Islam.

Buddhism had found competition in Islam for converts among low-caste Hindus. Even Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was firmly convinced about the view that Islam dealt with Buddhism a death blow. B. R. Ambedkar pointed out through the reference of “Babasaheb Ambedkar writings and speeches,” on the decline of Buddhism in India which has somehow demonstrated the situation of Buddhist monks with the lack of royal support, he mentions -

Brahmanism beaten and battered by the Islam invaders could look to the monarchs for support and sustenance and get it. Buddhism abused and victimized by the Islam invaders had no such hope. It was not looked after appropriately for the orphan, and it withered in the storm of the native protectors and was consumed in the fire lit up by the vanquisher.<sup>97</sup>

In the Rajput period (10-12<sup>th</sup> Century)<sup>98</sup>, donations to significant monasteries were diverted towards Brahmanical establishments, though scattered references of grants to the Buddhist monasteries are found. Since earlier grants were supposed to be in perpetuity, these monasteries did not face immediate financial crisis. The Gahadwalas was supposed to be one of the last patrons of *Nālandā* and other Buddhist monasteries. The patronage of Gahadwala Queen Kumardevi of Sarnath and her efforts to revive *Nālandā*'s glory are of significance.<sup>99</sup> Jaichandra (1170-1192 A.D.) was a disciple of a Buddhist monk, but he was known as a worshipper of Krishna.<sup>100</sup> The majority of Gahadwala Kings adopted the title of ‘Paramesvara,’ and the seal attached to their copper plate inscriptions have a representation of Garuda and a conch shell. An examination of the Gahadwala grants shows that the majority of such grants are Brahmanical, not Buddhist. The grants which

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<sup>97</sup> Vasant Moon and Hari Narake, eds. *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches* (New Delhi: Dr. Ambedkar Foundation, 1987), 232-234.

<sup>98</sup> Anand, Singh, “‘Destruction’ and ‘Decline’ of Nālandā Mahāvihāra: Prejudices and Praxis.” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Sri Lanka*, New Series, 58, no. 1 (2013): 23-49.

<sup>99</sup> Hultzsche, E. *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. IX (1907-08), (New delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 1981): 320-321.

<sup>100</sup> R. L., Mitra, “A Buddhist Inscription from Bodhgaya of the Reign of Jayachandradeva,” *Proceedings of Asiatic Society of Bengal* 10, No. 124, (1880): 78-80.

were earlier received by Buddhist institutions were now seen appropriated by the Brahmanical religious institutions. These general trends in the shift of patronage should naturally have affected a large establishment like *Nālandā*.

### **Loss of Scholarship**

Through the sources, we find that during the age of Harsha (606-647 CE),<sup>101</sup> all taxes from the villages donated to *Saṅgharāmas*. Harsha besides building monasteries and temples in *Nālandā* granted village revenues to the monks, and also remitted the revenue of 100 villages for the endow of a nunnery. Two Hundred Villagers of these villages contributed rice, butter, and milk to the *Saṅgha* which returned provided the students free clothing, food, bedding, and medicine, etcetera. With this in mind that in *Nālandā Mahāvihāra* during study students, no need to pay any fee, it can easily presume that for the management of such an enormous Mahāvihāra need proper support from Government continuously.

Patil states that around the eleventh-century CE, while *Nālandā* was struggling for survival, Odantapuri “had a rival institution functioning under the royal patronage of Palas and, being a capital town, it must have inevitably snatched away the fortunes of *Nālandā*.”<sup>102</sup> Taranatha wrote that, during the time of the four Sena kings (twelfth century A.D.), the number of foreigners, including Muslims, increased in the region and “To protect Odantapuri and Vikramasila, the king even converted these partially into fortresses and stationed some soldiers there.”<sup>103</sup> Although most of the Pala rulers were great patrons of the *Nālandā Mahāvihāra*, some of them had divided loyalty as is reflected in foundations of other monasteries. As Vikramasila (Presently, Antichak near Kahalgaon in Bhagalpur district in Bihar), Somapura (Paharpura in East Bengal, Now in Bangladesh), Odantapuri (Biharsharif 12 km. from the ruins of *Nālandā*), on the model of the *Nālandā Mahāvihāra* by Dharmapala.<sup>104</sup> Moreover, his successor, Devapala II. This is no doubt proved a

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<sup>101</sup> Filliozat, Jean. “D. Devahuti: Harsha. A political study.” *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient* 58, no. 1 (1971): 313-314.

<sup>102</sup> Devendrakumar Rajaram Patil, “The antiquarian remains in Bihar,” Kashi Prasad Jayaswal Research Institute, No. 4 (1963).

<sup>103</sup> Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya, ed. *Taranatha's History of Buddhism in India*. (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publ., 1990), 318.

<sup>104</sup> Sankaliya, *Nalanad University*, 71.

significant setback to the prosperity of *Nālandā*. However, despite it, *Nālandā* Maintained its reputation as a high seat of learning even during this period.

The university worked with great vigor to 1100 A.D.<sup>105</sup> when its greatness began to be eclipsed by Vikramasila Mahāvihāra which began to receive a more significant share of royal patronage of Magadha.<sup>106</sup> The university received the final tragic blow at the hands of the Muslim invaders under Bakhtiyar Khilji at the end of the twelfth century, and not one of the monks remained to narrate the sad tale of its destruction. The priceless library of the university was also wantonly set on fire and destroyed.

Right from its inception, Buddhism monasteries favored among royalty, businesspeople and bureaucrats, householders, etc. As the Mauryan Empire faded, the immense contribution that had made to the spread of Buddhism started fading. Lack of support from the subsequent Brahmanical kings and royals led to its decline. Under the Kushanas' and the Guptas, both Buddhism and Brahmanism received royal patronage; however, as Vaishnavism and Shaivism spread, the kingdoms supporting it became dominant, and Buddhism started losing the royal patronage. The Pala dynasty was supportive of Buddhism; however, when the Senas came into power, Saivism promulgated, and Buddhism was pushed out. Though Buddhism had already entered the decline phase during Hsuan Tsang's visit in the reign of Harsha of Kanauj in the 7th century, the arrival of Muslim invaders dealt a severe blow to Buddhism. In the 12th century, Muhammad Bin Bakhtiar Khilji destroyed many viharas and famed universities like *Nālandā*.

Refer to Tibetan monk, Dharmasvamin (who went to *Nālandā* during its last days in A.D. 1235-36);<sup>107</sup> The University was not destroyed nor entirely deserted by the pundits and students as per the pieces of evidence found. Dharmasvamin visited to Bodhgaya and at *Nālandā*. He noticed that though some buildings were damaged, others had escaped destruction. Moreover, in these lived the Maha Pandita Rahulasribhadra, four other pandits and about 70 other monks. Dharmasvamin also mentions that He was in the last stage of

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<sup>105</sup> D. G. Apte, *Universities in ancient India*. No. 11. Faculty of Education and Psychology, Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, 1971.

<sup>106</sup> Magadha: In Ancient India India was divided into 16 *Māhajanpada*, Magadha was the Biggest *Mahājanpada*. See the reference Neelis, Jason. "Greater Magadha: Studies in the Culture of Early India. By Johannes Bronkhorst (Handbook of Oriental Studies, Section Two, India, Vol. 19). pp. xx, 420, Leiden and Boston, Brill, 2007." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 18, no. 3 (2008): 381-383.

<sup>107</sup> Thakur, *Buddhist Cities in Early India*, 81.

poverty and decrepitude. He lived on a small allowance for food given by Brahmana lay disciple named Jayadeva who lived at Odantapura. After some time he also stopped supporting due to not enough financial support.<sup>108</sup>

Taking this as an example, all these Considered as a most probable reason for the decline of the *Nālandā* Mahāvihāra.

## 4.2 The Invasions on Nālandā

*Nālandā* was not attacked just by one but by three different dynasties. First, Huns from the Mihirkula dynasty destroyed parts of *Nālandā* under the rule of Skandagupta. However, the library restored with bigger and better buildings and faculties under the successors of Skandagupta. Second, the destruction led by Gaudas, but again it was repaired by the Buddhist king Harshavardhana. The final blow given by Bhatiyar Khilji of the Mamluk Dynasty, a Turkish leader who intended to uproot Buddhism entirely, destructed the most in 1193. After this, the site abandoned until the 19th century, when the Archaeological Survey of India discovered and excavated the site.

The medieval chronicle *Tabakat-i-Nasiri* mentions that in 1197 troops led by Ikhtiyar-Ud-Din Muhammad destroyed what they believed was a fort and killed all the inmates, only later realizing that the place was not a fort but a vihara.<sup>109</sup> It thought that this vihara was Odantapuri.<sup>110</sup>

The most prevalent verdict among scholars is the destruction by the Afghan invader, Ikhtiyaruddin Muhammad Bakhtiyar Khilji (died 1206) who burnt it down as evident by the heaps of ashes and charcoal on the uppermost strata of excavation, suggesting substantial damage to the structure by fire. (See Figure 10 & Figure 11)

The most favorable presumption of The decline of the *Nālandā* is because of the last Invasion by Muslim military commander Bakhtiyar Khilji in round 1198 A.D. According to A. K. Warder (2000)<sup>111</sup>, when confronted with the new wave of devastation by the

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<sup>108</sup> Dutt, *Monasteries of India*, 348.

<sup>109</sup> Henry George Raverty, *The Tabakat-i-Nasiri: A General History of the Muhammadan Dynasties of Asia, including Hindustan, from 810 A.D. to A.D. 1260 A.D., and the Eruption of the Infidel Mughals into Islam*, trans. No. 78 Vol 2. (London: Printed by Gilbert & Rivington, 1881), 552.

<sup>110</sup> Patil, "The antiquarian remains in Bihar."

<sup>111</sup> A.K. Warder, *Indian Buddhism* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2000), 484.

fanatical Turks of Afghanistan, the Buddhist countries of Central Asia and Northern India could not find enough good soldiers, enough military spirit to defend themselves.



**Figure 10 Evidence of setting on fire at Nālandā Mahāvihāra**



**Figure 11 Evidence of setting on fire at Nālandā Mahāvihāra**

From my perspective, Buddha's teaching of nonviolence must surely have had some effect. Formerly Buddhism had spread among the barbarian peoples themselves (notably the

Kushans under Kanishka and Bactrians under Milinda) thus defying the forces of militarism and destruction by civilizing the people who had practiced them.

At the time of the Last Invasion, the new invaders were different. They were not open to the idea of the people they had conquered for they already had their religion and fanaticism. The Kushans saw in Buddhism a means to consolidate a vast empire by promoting the harmony of its people. The Turks did not concern themselves with consolidation (until much later under the Mughal Emperor Akbar) but only with expansion and more plunder and more slaves. They chose the way of violence and took all India with them destroying her civilization.

Although Many Historians stated as Buddhism's disappearance from South-Asia and Islam's role therein is very simplistic. For instance, Marshal Hodgson wrote in 1997 – There is no evidence that Muslims killed off all the Buddhists or even all the Buddhist monks.<sup>112</sup>

Moreover, the distinctively dressed monks, all concentrated in large monasteries, were an easily identifiable target for Muslim zealotry. There is no doubt that the Muslim persecuted Buddhists, massacred monks, and destroyed Buddhist monasteries, Universities, and libraries.<sup>113</sup>

The creation of new generation scholars for the destruction of *Nālandā mahāvihāra* motivated by the interest of depicting the foreign invaders as enemies and destructors of the ancient legacies of India, the Indian nationalist scholars came up with the claim that the Muslim military commander Bakhtiyar Khilji invaded the Magadha region.

However, The cause which precipitated *Nālandā* decline was, of course, the Islam invasions.<sup>114</sup> The Muslim Chronicler tells us that the onslaught of Bakhtiyar Khilji was so severe and thorough that the monks (Brahmanas with shaven heads) were killed one and all so much so that none was left to explain the contents of books that the victor found at the place.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam* vol. 2, 557.

<sup>113</sup> Noble Ross Reat, *Buddhism: A History* (California: Asian Humanities Press, 1994), 76.

<sup>114</sup> Edward Conze, *A short History of Buddhism* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1993), 107.

<sup>115</sup> H.M. Elliot, *The History of India: As Told by its Own Historians. The Muhammadan Period Vol. 2* (New York: Cornell University Library, 1867-77), 306.



There is a possibility to raise a question related to this after that invasion is there any effort of revival done by anyone like before happened at the time of Huns and Mihirkulas?

However, the answer will not suffice we know from Tibetan source, Pag-sam-jonzang that the temples and *Vihāras* were repaired once again by a sage, named Mudita Bhadra.<sup>116</sup> Furthermore, we see “after this one Kukkukuttasiddha, a minister of some king of Magadha, constructed a temple.” Thus, there is evidence of the outer regeneration of the monastic order. It was short-lived, for, according to another dogma, the buildings were razed to the ground by a senseless act of two almsmen. Ridiculed by the immature monks, they are said to have satisfied the sun of twelve years, performed a sacrifice believed to have thrown living embers on the formal structures which reduced them to ashes. How far the tradition is correct, we shall examine afterward, along with the question of *Nālandā*'s date of destruction by the hands of the Muslims (which I will discuss in next subchapter). However, the problem, viz. why the University not rebuilt, monks reinstated, and the whole institution given a new lease of life remains unsolved.

### **4.3 New Light on the Date of the Destruction of *Nālandā Mahāvihāra***

The description of the Muslim Invasion given in the Tibetan records fully corroborates with the account given by the Persian historian Minhaz, in his book *Tabaquat-i-Nasiri*.<sup>117</sup>

The account of *Tabaquat-i-Nasiri*, makes the readers aware that Bakhtiyar Khilji first went to Sultan Kutbuddin as a mark of respects after the conquest of Bihar.

Moreover, Kutbuddin was made a Sultan after the death of Sultan Ghiyasuddin. Moreover, after becoming a Sultan, in 1205 A.D., he departs to Lahore while Bakhtiyar seems to have visited him after Kutbuddin well-ordered as a Sultan on the governance of the capital of central India, Delhi. Secondly, we learned that Kutbuddin died in 607H. i.e., 1210 A.D.<sup>118</sup> and the chronicler further tells us that he wore the crown for more than four years, that is, from about A.D. 1205. Which accurately synchronizes with his march upon Lahore in 1205 A.D. as Sultan Kutbuddin thus seems to have had the kingdom in or about 1205 A.D. As

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<sup>116</sup> S. C. Vidyabhusana, *History of The Mediaeval school of Indian Logic* (Calcutta: The Calcutta University, 1909), 149.

<sup>117</sup> H.M.Elliot and John Dowson trs., *Tabkat-I-Nasiri* (Lahore: Sang-e-meel pub., 2006).

<sup>118</sup> Chandra Bhushan, Misra “Fresh Light on the Eclipse of Nalanda.” *Heritage of Nalanda and Its Continuity* 6 (Nalanda: Nava Nalanda Mahavihara, 2000): 163.

Bakhtiyar Khilji cherished by Kutbuddin as a Sultan, the Invasion, therefore, of Bihar approximately took place in or about 1205 to 1206 A.D.

History witnesses the annihilation of *Nālandā* in or about 1205 A.D. by the Muslims. The tradition cited from the *Pag-sam-jonzang (1908)*<sup>119</sup> about the final destruction of *Nālandā* by fire may be true, for, while excavating the *Nālandā*-site, heaps of ashes and charcoals unearthed, even on the top levels after the removal of coats of earth covering up various sites.<sup>120</sup>

#### 4.4 Other Reasons for the Decline

From the personal presumption, there are many reasons which made the administration of *Nālandā* weekend and especially those I already pointed out those are only outsider causes, but on the other hand, we see the intrinsic factors for the declining of *Nālandā*. To illustrate the fall of *Nālandā*, we must observe as the downfall and decline of Buddhism in India.

##### **The decline of Buddhism in the Magadha region**

Although Buddhism had been the potent religion in much of the Gangetic plains (especially in Magadha region) in the early time of the Christian era, the Chinese traveler, Master Xuanzang, during his visit to India in the early years of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, had witnessed a recession. The testimony of Ven. Xuanzang had demonstrated the gradual decline of Buddhism in India. In Prayag or present Allahabad, he had encountered many non-Buddhists. It was not surprising considering the importance of Prayag as a pilgrimage site for Brahmins, But in the Sravasti, the capital city of the Lichhavis, a north Indian clan that came to power around 200 AD and established their capital in Pashupatinath.<sup>121</sup> In a prolonged and stunning period of reign extending through the early part of the ninth century, they had endowed a large number of both Hindu and Buddhist monuments and

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<sup>119</sup> Sumpa Khan-po Yeçe Pal Jor, and Sarat Chandra Das. *Pag sam jon zang* (Calcutta: Presidency Jail Press, 1908).

<sup>120</sup> Misra, *Heritage of Nalanda and Its Continuity*, 163.

<sup>121</sup> Lal, V. *Buddhism's Disappearance from India* (serial online). (cited 2009 August 26); (2 screens). Available from: URL: <http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/southasia/Religions/paths/BuddhismDisappear.doc>. (Accessed June 20, 2019).

monasteries. However, during his visit, Master Xuanzang witnessed a much higher number of Saivites and Jains than Buddhists.<sup>122</sup>

Kushinagar, where the Buddha had gone into *Mahāparinibbāna* (Buddha attains nirvana, liberated from karmic rebirth), was in a ramshackle state and Master Xuanzang found only a few Buddhists. Though in Varanasi, Xuanzang found around 3000 Bhikkus or Buddhist monks, they were out shadowed by more than 10,000 non-Buddhists. Hence, we can conclude that Master Xuanzang had arrived in India at a time when Buddhism was entering into a state of steep decline. However, even as Buddhism went into decline, it is remarkable that *Nālandā*, the high seat of Buddhist learning, continued to flourish by retaining its importance until the Muslim invasions of the second millennium.

Hence, the narrative of Buddhism in India cannot unambiguously be written in a single register of decline as the entire process of decline was gradual and spread over a long period.

So through these assertions, we only can assume that though the Decline of Buddhism in India started in later 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D., it was not affected in Magadha those days, afterward although we see Pala was the supporter of *Nālandā* and they also patronize *Nālandā*, but later we recognize that they weakened the religion by inviting Tantra cult in Buddhism.

Beginning from the clear teaching of the Buddha as embodied in the Theravada Pali Canon, Buddhism in the later phase, i.e., the Mahayanist phase became a highly complex system of metaphysics. The *Acharyās* of *Nālandā*, which was the acknowledged center of the Mahayana Buddhism, were great expositors of the different systems of the Mahayana philosophy.<sup>123</sup>

During the age of Pala, Mahayanism branched off into esoteric cults like Vajrayana and later on into Tantrayana. Vajrayana emerged out of some doctrines of the Mahayanist, and its supporters were called the 'Siddhas.' However, its emphasis on the mantra, spells, magical rites and the worship of the numerous gods and goddesses, who were supposed to confer on the worshipper's supernatural powers, soon paved the way to degeneration. The mystic or esoteric schools of Buddhism advocate certain spiritual practices which in the hands of real masters might have led the aspirant to the desired goal, but in the hands of a

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<sup>122</sup> Jaini, Padmanabh S. "The disappearance of Buddhism and the survival of Jainism: a study in contrast." *Studies in the History of Buddhism* (1980): 81-91.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

charlatan, these tended to produce more depravities of a revolving nature. The evidence unearthed from *Nālandā* carries many stone images, sculptures, and bronzes, stuccos, terracottas, inscription, iron objects, ivory & bone objects, and potteries, etcetera. From it, there are most of the stone images from the duration of 8th to the 11th century, which comes under pala age, which prove the palas introduced the worship of stone images in the later period. (See

Figure 3)

### **The dispute over Wealth and Leaderships in Buddhist Monasteries**

The Buddhist monasteries were described as repositories of great wealth, which was accumulated through generous donations from the royal families and wealthy devotees in the community. As food and money were always available in the monastery, the majority of the monks had adopted a rather easy-going and even indolent lifestyle. There were also disputes over money matters and leadership which led to a great divide among many groups of Buddhist monks.

The unity and harmony of many major monasteries were affected by these disputes. The sectarian splits between various Buddhists sects in subsequent years had finally weakened the foundation and administrative infrastructure of Buddhism in India. This was a consequence of a major deviation from the Buddha's insistence on *aparigraha*, or non-possession. As the monks had ignored the instruction of the Buddha and became greedy for power and wealth, the monasteries got entrapped in controversies and the communities lost their faith in them.

### **Moral and ethical degeneracy of Buddhist monks**

Moral and ethical degeneracy of Buddhist monks is one of the reasons for decline in Buddhism in India. Even some earlier Buddhist texts point out to this attitude of the monks. Some renowned monasteries issued their own seals and coins.<sup>124</sup> Monasteries even started owning land, village, pasture, and cattle, etc. for the maintenance of their residential monks. (P. Niyogi, 1973:535) Chinese travelers Fa-Hain, I-Tsing and Xuanzang talk about the feudal character of religious institutions which had considerable real property and

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<sup>124</sup> Puspa Niyogi, "Organization of Buddhist Monasteries in Ancient Bengal and Bihar," *Journal of Indian History* 51 (1973): 531-538.

assets.<sup>125</sup> Significant monasteries with their property of various kinds were able not only to attain self-sufficiency but were also in a position to extend their power and influence in their respective localities.<sup>126</sup> There are references of Buddhist monks visiting sex-workers, consuming alcoholic drinks, indulging in theft, robbery and also working as matchmakers.<sup>127</sup>

As wealth was abundant in their monasteries, the majority of the Buddhist monks and clergy had often concentrated mainly on their salvation and rarely visited the community to reduce the suffering of the general population. Here, the Buddhist monks and clergy had missed out an important message by the Buddha. When the Buddha had advised his disciples to visit the community every day and not to stay in the same place for more than three days, it was with a vision that had a far more impact in the society than mere begging for food.

### **The weakness of Buddhism and the Revival of Hinduism**

Many historical accounts of Buddhism's decline and eventual disappearance from the land of its faith had focused on Buddhism's relations with Hinduism or Brahmanism. Some scholars believe that Buddhism never got wiped off from Indian society. On the contrary, it merely changed form and was later absorbed into Hindu practices. They believe that Buddhism disappeared, not on account of persecution by Hindus, but because of the ascendancy of reformed Hinduism. However, the final blow of the Brahmins to wipe out Buddhism was to propound and propagate the myth that the Buddha was merely another incarnation (avatar) of the Hindu god Vishnu.

The schism was another reason for the disputes within the Sangha, and it peaked to the extent that by the end of the 7th century, Buddhism had become a house divided. The Buddha had visualized schism as one of the five deadly sins. Various sects of Buddhists fought amongst themselves. As Charles Eliot says, "it was to the corruptions of the Mahayana rather than that of Hinayana that the decay of Buddhism in India was due."

The Mahayana emphasized image worship, prayers, pompous ceremonies, and rituals so much so that it created an approach to Hinduism. The laymen found no difference between

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<sup>125</sup> Legge, *The Travels of Fa-Hien*, 43; Takakusu (tr.), *A Record of the Buddhist Regions*, 193; Beal, *Life of Hieun-Tsang*, 112-13.

<sup>126</sup> P. Niyogi, "Endowments in Favor of Early Buddhist Monasteries in Bengal and Bihar," *Journal of Ancient Indian History*, Vol. □, Parts 1-2, 1972-73, Calcutta, 1973: 164.

<sup>127</sup> Joshi, Lal Mani. *Brahmanism, Buddhism, and Hinduism*. Critical Quest, 2007.

Buddha and Vishnu, Siva and Avalokiteshwara or Tara and Parvati. The acceptance of Buddha as an incarnation of Vishnu by Brahmanism dealt a blow to Buddhism.

So that some scholars hold the Tantra practices of the Mahayana tradition responsible for the decline, the Vajrayana, mainly, is blamed for abetting moral anarchy. It also noted that many monks often used to visit their teachers with their female partners. All the 84 Siddhas of Tantrika Buddhism were either married or had yoginis as their partners. Scholars like L.M.Joshi and E.Lamotte consider Mahayana responsible for qualitative decay.

Indian Buddhist monks have received, during the sixth century, had deviated from their good target and stopped visiting the community. As the community visit was rare by the monks, the general lay Buddhists felt neglected and isolated from the Buddhist monastery. This sense of insecurity made them suffer discrimination from the higher class of the Brahmin society, and they gradually lost faith in Buddhism.

The Buddhist monks did not visit the houses of the lower caste and the untouchables, and as a result, they too did not get the opportunity to adopt Buddhism and gain status in the society. The selfish nature of the Buddhist monks during that time had generated a sense of hatred and insecurity in the general population, which had contributed significantly towards their loss of faith in Buddhism at a later date.

## CHAPTER FIVE - CONCLUSION

More than one hundred years from the beginning of scholars writing on the history of *Nālandā mahāvihāra*, the most important primary sources taken from these: (1) the literary accounts of the Chinese travelers Fa-Hein, Xuanzang, and I-Tsing; (2) the Tibetan and Persian traditional accounts of *Tāranātha* and Minhaj; and (3) the archaeological remains from *Nālandā* ruins - coins, statues, copper plates; etc. The fact about these sources is that we have only limited data about various periods. There is no evidence which could attest to a continuity in the history of *Nālandā*, from the beginning till the end. Then, the primary sources available to us bring only fragments of what was the *mahāvihāra*, and not its picture as a whole. These sources, like any source, are not able to transmit the past with 100% certainty, and they are, in most of the cases, remarkably restrained. Among the almost four hundred pages of Xuanzang's account, for example, only ten are intended to depict the *mahāvihāra*.<sup>128</sup>

More than half of these pages describe how the supposed Gupta Kings built the institution. The remaining pages give just a few substantial information that could elucidate aspects of the curriculum, social, cultural or spiritual daily lives of monks, administrative organization of *Nālandā*, etc. Although through his account, we did not get, any source that means *Nālandā* was a decline in his time, possibly a time when Xuanzang visited *Nālandā* there was no any face of declining *Nālandā* Mahāvihāra, but as we see he mentions in his account that Buddhism in India was started declining. For *Nālandā Mahāvihāra*, he always praises for keeping Buddhism alive among secular people of Magadha in eastern India. Other Chinese sources as well are minimal and seldom give substantial information that would allow us to retrace the history of *Nālandā* as a whole. Not only these sources provide limited information, but the approach of scholars to them is also problematic from the very beginning. For over a century, almost every scholar has relied on Samuel Beal's English translation of Xuanzang, without paying attention to the accuracy of the text and treating it very much as sources for legitimizing their convenient assumptions about the

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<sup>128</sup>Samuel, Beal, *Si-yu-ki: Buddhist Records of the Western World* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Triibner & Co., 1906), 167-75.

history of *Nālandā* without the necessary historical contextualization of space and time.<sup>129</sup> However, these accounts focus on *Nālandā*'s Cultural Life; Moreover, for the date of destruction and in between understanding of destruction and decline, we get some clear evidence from the Account of Dharmaswamin.

My intention during this dissertation was not to completely refute the theories created by these scholars of the past. The history of *Nālandā*'s decline may have, at least in parts, happened according to what they suggested. The problem here was that they wrote this history from a tendentious reading of the primary sources lacking the fundamental commitment with a neutral point, primary requirement for serious academic research. As a result of the misuse of sources, they composed a standard narrative of *Nālandā*'s history based on weak arguments (*viz.* Sankalia's explanation of why *Nālandā* can be considered a University), random associations (*viz.* Heras conclusion that Xuanzang accounted kings were the Guptas), and to reaffirm political interests (*viz.* Mookerji *et al.* reaffirmation that Khilji burned *Nālandā* down). However, Hodgson said:

There is no evidence that Muslims killed off all the Buddhists or even all the Buddhist monks.<sup>130</sup>

Moreover, through Dhammaswami account, we get light on *Nālandā* Mahāvihāra in 13<sup>th</sup> Century. As he mentions:

*Nālandā* was not destroyed nor entirely deserted by the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. *Nālandā* was still in existence but was the mere ghost of its past glory. Although, he acclaimed some buildings were damaged by the Muslims, and there was none to look after them or to make offerings, but he also mentions it had still seven temples and 14 big and 84 small monasteries.

The account of Dharmaswamin gives evidence that the partial survival of *Nālandā* was due to the superstitious fears of the Muslims. During their depredations, the Muslims had destroyed the temple of Jnananatha within the precincts of *Nālandā* and carried away its stones probably to Odantapuri for building mosques there. They desecrated the image by throwing filth at it. One of the soldiers, who participated in the desecration, died the same

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<sup>129</sup> Asher, *Nalanda: Situating the Great Monastery*, 32.

<sup>130</sup> Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, (1974), 557.



evening of colic pain on reaching Odantapuri. For some time, after this, even the Muslim soldiers were afraid to attack *Nālandā*.

To summarise all evidence from scholars' writings and primary sources we see the royal patronage from Gupta to Harsha, *Nālandā* was on the peak because of the full support of its patron, and also when hunas and Gaudas attacks there was someone who cared *Nālandā*, but in the last attack there were no supports with the lack of evidence. We can through the highlights of Sankalia we know that *Nālandā* was repaired after destruction first two times.

The most heartening fact he tells us is that the higher and more in-depth study of grammar still pursued. However, the threats of sudden attack from "Turuskas" were always there. It looks clear that Invaders did not suddenly destruct *Nālandā*. It was still alive after the attack, but at this crucial time, it deprived of any substantial political support. The *Nālandā* University, which for centuries was a bright star in the cultural firmament of India, began to dwindle and diminish. Under these conditions, no institutions can continue to survive for long. The death of Pandita Rahulasribhadra probably cleared the deck for the few monks who had continued their study of grammar to leave this place.<sup>131</sup>

The decline of *Nālandā* resulted from majorly two reasons. One was internal - the lethargy and degeneration of the monks (in the emergence of Vajrayana new cults of Mahayana) and second were external -the political-social scenario that systematically planned the devastating end of *Nālandā*. The laziness of the monks ensured that Buddhism was accessible going the way of life and digressed the primary purpose of Buddhism – to spread (preach) the "truth," practice it and lead the fellowmen to enlightenment.

The second reason was quite influential in the declining growth of Buddhism in India. The rulers who had more Brahmanic attitude and bend, non-cooperated, and thus, *Nālandā* lost its vital support. Paganism entered by way of Mahayanist and the ever- so-adaptable Buddhism corrupted. Its philosophy amalgamated with Hinduism and there was less difference between the two. Buddhism lost its essentials. The Muslim invaders plundered Buddhist institution and whatever remained after various onslaughts were finally razed to the ground by the Muslims. Buddhist monks had no other way but to run amok to save their lives.

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 347-48.

As can be seen that although *Nālandā* was affected by the opening of some similar Mahāvihāra, it never lost its own privileged status, but we see the main reason of declining *Nālandā* as Buddhism decadence by Mahayana (generated the mixed culture, resulting it lost their religion) and Loss of support made a big difference. My aim in so doing was to bring new questions and dilemmas to the field, to challenge the normative uses of the sources, and to move the academic field of *Nālandā mahāvihāra* from the comfort zone where it remained for at least the past forty years, forward.

I finish this work with a strong belief that the next generation of scholars taking upon the charge of writing the history of *Nālandā mahāvihāra's decline* should be the students, professors, and researchers from all over the world. Together with the wishes of the revival of the old *Nālandā*, scholars of this era should make justice to the history of the *mahāvihāra* and undertake an extensive work of reviewing the primary literary and archaeological sources, leaving aside the political agendas and motivations of the historians of the past. Inspired by this belief, I invite scholars from all area of the world to create groups of study, publications, field works at *Nālandā* ruins, etc. *Nālandā* is not anymore an institution residing merely in the history of India. This University is alive in the 21st century, and as a local person of the *Nālandā* understanding its own identity, a final version of the history of *Nālandā mahāvihāra* is undoubtedly needed.

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