

Patronage in Art in Ancient India

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The term 'Patron' is subject to peculiar paradoxes, in Ancient Rome it denoted someone high status in society, who provided security to less powerful perhaps in exchange of services. In Medieval Europe, the term was related with various duties of Church. By 16thC the term began to be adjoined with various artistic activities.

Romila Thapar in *Cultural Transaction and Early India* defines patronage "as wealth given by a person of superior status to an artist to enable him/her to produce art". Patronage is often referred to as an exchange, this can be in the form of tangible and intangible (status & legitimacy) goods.

Ashok is prominent when it comes to donating, constructing various stupas, he is said to have built 84000 stupas, *ashokavadana* talks about it also **Hsuan-tsang** refers to Ashok constructing various buddhist stupas and monasteries.

The reason behind ruler donating perhaps was Legitimacy. **Heesterman** in *Inner Conflicts of tradition*, talks about the divergence in Indian Tradition in terms of authority and power, in which Brahmins acquire authority and power by King, it was Brahman who had sole authority to provide Legitimacy to rulers through rituals and sacrifices.

Chandragupta 2nd mentioned at sanchi inscription [833] for investment of 25 dinars. **Stella Kramrisch** in *Artists, Patron and Public in India* gives e.g. of Mahendrarvarman, referring himself as great among the painters, who made pallava seaport, Mamallapuram, great centre of art.

Apart from royal donations **Romila Thapar's Patronage and Community** talks about community patronage, she sheds light on the fact *Dana* associated with community patronage in early times, people donating may have similar religious identity or having a social role in donating also she talks about donations focused on the social statements such as high status, personal salvation and material benefits. **Heitzman** in *Early Buddhism, Trade and Empire* talks about the non royal patrons, he marks the act of donating was somewhat related as marker of status.

Buddhist art 2nd C BC onwards, mentions of gifts / donations made at Karle, Sanchi, Mathura etc refers to various evidence of collective and popular patronage. **Vidya Dehejia** in *The collective & popular basis of early buddhist Patronage* talks about donations, at sanchi mentioning 631 donative inscriptions, including donations by royal scribes, artisans, at the south gate of sanchi, the top beam is inscribed as the donation by Ananda the supervisor of king Satkarni. **Stella Kramrisch** says that Ananda was a popular court artist and he was entrusted for making high quality art but she contradicts this and points out the average quality of relics inside and outside the beam. The Vinaya text mentions

Anath-pindika who constructed various ponds, wall sheds at Sarnath.

Artists making donations, which perhaps refers to social evolution in their status. Donations by them show that artists had considerable economic resources & enough surplus at their disposal to support the Religious activity in terms of Art & Architecture.

At South gate of sanchi from 1stC, a stone panel was donated by ivory carvers of Vidisha, In Mauryan times evidences of artist cheating on Patron is of *Agisala* who supplied a bronze relic instead of gold. Kaman stone inscription 786-906 A.D mentions donations made by artists, part iv mentions guild of gardeners supplied around 60 garlands at Chamunda and Vishnu temple.

Personal identification of craftsmen in Indian Context is seen minimal like artist, *Chapada* engraver of Ashokan edicts (brahmagiri, jatinga) mentioned on the minor edicts. *Gugga*, maker of Sakti Devi & Laksana Devi images (**Rudra & Saumya Aspects of the Goddess**)

Donations by bhikhu and bhikkunis - Bhikkuni, *Bodhisiri* who donated a tank is mentioned on Nagarjunakonda inscription of c. 3rd C A.D. for well being of whole sangha and her family, *Damila* who donated a cistern is mentioned in Kanheri Inscription of 200 A.D., Bala (buddhist monk) is prominent who made donations at Sarnath also Sankish.

Gregory Schopen raises a question on how the monks and nuns were able to make such donations, he talks about the possibility whether they had some economic resources or had control over their private property?

Women patrons, donations made by them at Sanchi , Kankali tila, etc mostly at buddhist places perhaps due to the fact that women were allowed to be part of sangha. **Kunkum Roy** talks about donations at Sanchi , about 327 donations made by women ,she also talks about the women donating to only certain places but men are seen donating to far off places as well.

E.G. of women donating is of *Buddha* who donated a railing pillar, also womens named *bura* , *buddhapalita* who made donations on the similar area , name is inscribed on south gate .The striking difference between donations made by laymen and laywomen , laymen identified themselves according to their profession, place of origin or sreni, whereas laywomen identified through her family.The earliest attempt to focus on gender analysis is done by **Dehejia** in *Representing the body* ,she focuses on aspect of agency in context of females. At Baraut, *Buddharakshta* who donated a railing pillar, 3rdC A.D.inscription of Lavanika at Kanheri , who donated a cave and tank for bath. Evidences of even dancers(natika) donating like an inscription from *Sannati* of 2ndC A.D. mentions dancer named *Govidasi* who constructed a *Prakara*.

A brahmin woman gifted a chaitya hall at sarnath, this marks that anyone not only buddhist followers could donate at buddhist centre and gain merit.

Queen donations Karuvaki in Allahabad Inscription(queen pillar edict) , at nasik donations made by *Gautami balasari* (Satvahana queen).At sanchi *Vakalaye Devi* a royal woman who donated.

In conclusion we establish that donations focused on personal prestige and source of legitimacy & With the coming of Guptas we see royal patronage increasing towards puranic deities also community patronage facing setback , reason behind is considered as decline in trade also the decline of buddhism in India but it is contradictory as community donations mentioned in Mandsaur in 436 AD. By 7thc Onwards with fragmentation of the empire , the rulers tried to patronize big temples , in order to achieve Legitimacy.