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## Buddhism in Early Medieval North India (6<sup>th</sup> Century CE to 13<sup>th</sup> Century CE)

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The paper explores the presence of Buddhism in north India during the early medieval period (600 CE-1300 CE) which is generally defined as the decline period in mainstream historical analyses.

Present Indian states of Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Bihar formed the zion of early Buddhism. Four great Buddhist pilgrimage centres-Rajgir and Vaiśālī (Bihar) and Sāṅkāśya and Śrāvastī (Uttar Pradesh) lie in this region. Nālanda, uddāṅḍpura and Vikramaśila continued as centres of Buddhist learning during this period. Archaeological evidences assert that Lumbini maintained its existence till at least the 10th century CE. Gahadavala kings (circa 11th century) gave land grants to Buddhist Parivrājakas. Bodh Gaya presents evidence of the intimate relationship between India and Sri Lanka. During Aśoka's reign (269 BCE) a branch of the Bodhi tree at Bodh Gaya was grafted at Anurādhapura, Sri Lanka. The paper explores all these sites and traces the network of Buddhist religious institutions while examining the relations between Buddhist ritual functionaries and royal authorities.

This research will attempt to critically examine various frameworks given by scholars for this period. Feudal model, given by R.S. Sharma, propounds that Buddhist religious institutions decayed during this period. Integrative model given by B.D. Chattopadhyaya says that although ancient institutions decayed during this period, new institutions also emerged during the same time. This research will attempt to infer the factual status of Buddhism during the said period based on the above mentioned models.

*Key Words: Buddhism, North India, early medieval period, Buddhist pilgrimage, Aśoka, Bodhi tree, Anurādhapura, Śramaṇa Prakhyātakārti, stūpa, Sri Lanka.*

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