

## The Archaeological Activities in Lumbini

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### Lumbini in the Historical Perspective

Lumbini Devi also spelled as Rummindei or Rupandevi (beautiful lady), was the queen of Anjana, who was the king of Devadaha, which was also the capital city and the administrative headquarter of the Koliya republican state. On the request of his queen, king Anjana made a beautiful garden on the bank of Telar (oil) river. Thus the place had been named after his queen, Lumbini.

Lumbini had been spelt by Fa-Hian as Lun-Min and kings-park<sup>1</sup>. whereas, Huen-Tsang called it 'La-Fa-Ni'<sup>2</sup>. The greatest discoverer of the Buddhist sites in the Indian Peninsula Maj. Gen. Cunningham takes La-Fa-Ni as Lavani of Sanskrit and translates the word meaning 'a beautiful lady'<sup>3</sup>. According to Fo-Kwe-Ki, Lumbini was also been called 'Paradimoksha'<sup>4</sup>. The place had been named as 'Mokta', by Abul Fazal,<sup>5</sup> a muslim historian of India.

Fa-Hian points out the location of Lumbini as 50 li east of Kapilavastu, whereas Huen-Tsang places it 80 or 90 li (16-18 miles) north-

east of Kapilavastu. The Ceylonese chronicle (Mahavamsa), Jatakas and Nidanakatha place it - "between the two cities (Kapilavastu and Devadaha), there was a garden of Sal trees called Lumbini, to which the inhabitants of both the cities were accustomed to resort for recreation. On the south of Lumbini was the oil river<sup>6</sup>. Lumbini has been proclaimed as a village within the Sakya Janapada by Nalaka-Sutta<sup>7</sup>. According to a Jataka story, Lumbini during the life time of Lord Buddha, has been described as a big Sal garden which was jointly owned by the Sakyas of Kapilavastu and the Koliyas of Devadaha<sup>8</sup>. But Papanchasudani and Jataka Atthakatha places it near Devadaha Nigrama<sup>9</sup>. Buddha charita of Asvaghosa describes Lumbini "gay like the garden of caitra ratha with trees of every kind<sup>10</sup>.

Lumbinivana had been sanctified by the birth of Lord Buddha according to the Sthavirvada in 623 or 560 (H. Bech art, Dating of Hist. Buddha, 1991, Part I, forward p.20) B.C., under a Sal or Asoka or Pipal tree<sup>11</sup>. The mother of Buddha Sakyamuni was Mayadevi and his father was King Suddhodana (Digha Nikaya, II, 52, 9 folio, says - 'bhagavatamarisa

Suddhodana raja pita Mayadevi mata Jnetti; same is repeated in the Theragatha - 'Suddhodano nama pita mahesino, Buddhassa mata pana Mayanama. The place which was a famous recreation centre with the facilities of good road and different means of transportation, as it had been connected with the famous 'uttarapath'<sup>12</sup>, linking it with Ramgram, Kapilvastu and other important cities of Buddha period, had been transferred into a famous pilgrimage centre with the popularity of Buddhism. Lord Buddha himself had advised his great number of monks and followers from his death-bed (just before his Mahaparinirwan) at Kushinagar to visit the four places, namely, Lumbini, Bodhagaya, Saranatha and Kushinara<sup>13</sup>.

Mention about the Chatumahathanani (four sacred places) can be found in the Divyavadna, Fa-hian and Huen Tsang. Latter on, four more Buddhist sacred places were added to the list thus called Atthamahathanani. Fa-hian, It - sing (eight chaitya sthalas) life of Dipankar Atish (1025 A.D.), Sarnath inscription (11th A.D.), Astamahasthan-vandana-stava (by Harshadeva of Kashmir), Asta-Mahasthanachaitya stotra by Nagarjuna, and Lama Taranath (Lama Chimpa, Alka Chattopadhyaya, Delhi, 1990, 62,- 'Asoka built the chaityas of the eight holy places) mentions about the eight holy places including Lumbini.

The place had been visited by the famous Buddhist - Emperor Asoka of Magadha in 249 B.C., during his twentieth year of coronation. He was accompanied by his great teacher Upagupta (also called Moggaliputta Tissa). Divyavadana records this event as Upagupta

describing the king in the following words- " At this place, in your Majesty's territory, Lord was born<sup>14</sup>".

This is exactly repeated in the lithic record (the pillar inscription) of Lumbini declaring "Here the Buddha Sakyamuni was born" and "Here Bhagwan was born at the Lumbini village<sup>15</sup>". Ashokavadan also records that Asoka had erected a Shrine near the Nativity tree and donated 100,000 ounces of gold at Lumbini.

L. Schmithansen, (The dating of Historical Buddha, Edit by H. Bechert, Gottingen, 1992, II, 144) thinks that - both the Mahaparinirvana-sutra and Asoka seem to presuppose the existence of an established pattern of pilgrimage to the birth place of the Buddha. R.K. Mukherji (the Age of Imp. unity, Bombay, 1968, 78) says that - 'a group of pillar Edicts seems to have been meant to mark stages in the pilgrims progress towards the holy places of Buddhism by their location at Lauriya-Areraja, Rampurva, Lauriya Nandangadha and Nigalihava leading up to Lumbini'. Asoka's inscription from Shahabazgarhi also indicates that King Asoka had rejected the pleasure trips made by Kings (Viharayatam) and started the pilgrimage to the holy places (sambodhi tenasa dhmma-yata). The Asokavadana (g.s. strong, 1983, 220-221) discloses his wish which he had expressed his adviser Yasa that he wanted to erect 84,000 dharmarajikas on the same day. After the completion he had celebrated the quinquennial festival (pancha varsika).

In the beginning of the 5th cent. A.D. Lumbini had been visited by the Chinese traveller Fa-Hian. He noticed the Sakya Bathing

tank at the place and pinpoints Buddha's birth place as twenty five paces north-east of the tank. Between the 3rd-4th cent. A.D. a Yueh-Chih monk named Seng-Tsai had visited Lumbini. He is the only Chinese pilgrim who describes about the Lapislazuli statue of queen in the act of grasping the Asoka tree and giving birth to the prince. The branches of the tree were giving shelter to the stone. Statue, built by king Asoka. Who had also enclosed the seven foot-prints of Siddhartha with stone slabs. Another Chinese traveller Huen-Tsang visited Lumbini in the middle of the seventh century A.D. He describes about the Sakya Bathing tank, the broken Asoka pillar with horse capital, a well and several stupas which existed at Lumbini. In 764 A.D. one more Chinese pilgrim named Wukunga came to Lumbini (watters, on Yuan-Chwangs Travels in India, Delhi, 1973, II, p.17). In 1024 A.D. Atisa Dipankar had visited Lumbini before proceeding towards Nepal and Tibet. King Ripu Malla and Sangrama Malla were the last important visitors of Lumbini and the stupa of Konakamuni's parinirwan stupa around 1312 A.D.

Lumbini had been first discovered jointly in 1896, by Gen. Khadga-Shumsher and Dr. A. Fuhrer. The inscription of the pillar was first read by Dr. Buhler and the Nativity sculptural piece had been described in detail by Dr. Fuhrer and Dr. Hoey. In 1898 P.C. Mukherjee had excavated the Mayadevi temple, some stupas on the south and south-west of the temple. According to Dr. Fuhrer the new temple had been built by a Hindu Sanyasi in 1890, who lived there. The site was again excavated between 1933-39 under the direction of Gen.

Kaiser Sumsher. Instead of preserving the site his works proved more destructive. He removed at least three archaeological strata's from all over the religious site (site No-1) at Lumbini, and made two big earthen stupas on the south and North of Mayadevi temple, out of those excavated earth. Destroying many stupas and part of some Buddhist viharas, he enlarged, and shifted the Sakya bathing tank sixteen feet on the east and made its embankment with modern bricks. But keeping two layers of bricks (one layer in flat and other laid in brick on edge) he had protected the sunga (1st - 2nd B.C.) and Gupta period structures (3rd - 4th A.D.) of Mayadevi temple. Gen. Kaisher Sumsher did not publish any report or note on his works carried out at Lumbini. But some of the photographs of his excavations are preserved in the Kaisher Library and in the National Museum (at Chhawani).

### **The Excavation and Conservation Works done in the years 1984 and 1985 at Lumbini**

At Lumbini there are two archaeological mounds, one around the Mayadevi temple, which can be named as LMB-1 and the other on the south and south-east of the temple, it can be named as LMB-2. The area around the Mayadevi temple has monuments like - Asokan pillar, temples, stupas, viharas and wells. They are all built with kiln burnt bricks. But the other site (LMB-2) is an area where we can expect the ruins of ancient Lumbini village (Lumbinigram of the pillar inscription). There we can expect the rural picture of an ancient village with hut, shops, wells, roads and lanes etc. Here we can

expect villages belonging to N.B.P., Sunga, and Kushan periods (as it was clear from some earlier trial trenching at the area done by Dr. N.R. Banerji and B.K. Rijal in 1971).

The mound LMB-1, being a very important pilgrimage centre, there must have been built innumerable religious monuments at different periods. As very few monuments had been earlier excavated in this area, it was thus decided to expose most of the monuments of this area and the work was started from the south of Mayadevi temple.

On the excavation of this area, mound LMB-1, six layers have been discovered. They exhibit that the area before the arrival of Asoka had been occupied by a village, and on the basis of the NBP wares discovered, can be tentatively dated to 400 B.C. (Pre-Asokan). Asoka who visited the site in 249 B.C. can be credited as the first person to decorate the site with varieties of monuments such as, chunar sand stone inscribed pillar, Mayadevi brick temple, rectangular, and square stupas, viharas, wells or something else, yet to be discovered, during further excavations. The site was continuously occupied upto the Gupta period (4-5 A.D.), as we find that there were viharas, and the Mayadevi temple belonging to 3rd B.C., 2nd-1st B.C., 1st - 2nd A.D., 4th A.D. and 8th century A.D. periods. They made their monuments with their own bricks of different shapes, sizes, and firing qualities. During the Kushan period it was noticed that the height of the plinth of the structures were raised, it was most probably, the area had been victimized by floods. No systematic or important monuments in the area had been erected after the Late

Gupta period, except large numbers of small votive circular stupas, which were made by the pilgrims robbing the bricks of earlier monuments during 10th-17th cent, A.D.

### **The stratigraphic position at LMB-1 have been found as follows**

- Layer (1) Khasiya Malla period (9th-13th A.D.).
- Layer (2) Gupta & Late Gupta periods (3rd-9th A.D.)
- Layer (3) Kushan period (1st-2nd A.D.)
- Layer (4) Sunga or Mitra period (2nd - 1st B.C.)
- Layer (5) Asoka period (3rd B.C.)
- Layer (6) N.B.P. - Pre Asoka period (4th B.C.)

The Brick sizes - It would be interesting here to give a short notes and sizes of the bricks which are available from the site. The size of the Mauryan bricks are very much interesting. In this period the bricks are thicker, lot of paddy husks are used along with fine clay and the firing quality is very good. The colour of the bricks are red. The sunga period bricks are also well backed, but the colour is yellowish. The size in the Kushan period is reduced both in length and breath, the firing quality is inferior and the colour in the interior section looks ashy. The size of the Gupta brick is slightly reduced but there is lot of improvement in the firing quality and they look smother and red in colour.

## Some of the sizes of the Bricks are given here

### Pre-Asokan Bricks

- (1) 17" x 18" x 5"
- (2) 17.5" x 11.25" x 3.25"

### Asokan Bricks

From the temple -	From the vihar
(1) 14.5" x 0" x 2.75"	(1) 15" x 10" x 3"
(2) 14" x 0" x 3.5"	(2) 15.5" x 10.5" x 2.75
(3) 0" x 10" x 3.25"	(3) 14.5" x 0" x 3"
(4) 15" x 0" x 2.75	(4) 0" x 9.5" x 3"

### Sung a Bricks -

From the temple-	Kushan Brick -
(1) 14" x 0" x 2"	(1) 12.5" x 8" x 2.25"
(2) 14" x 0" x 2.25"	
(3) 0" x 0" x 2.25"	
(4) 14" x 0" x 2.5"	
(5) 13.75" x 0" x 2.25"	

### Gupta Bricks

- (1) 12" x 8" x 2"
- (2) 12.5" x 8.5" x 2"

## The Structures Discovered from the Excavations

On the south of Mayadevi temple and the bathing pond four viharas (monuments where the monks and nuns lived) were found. They were in a row and erected in the east-west direction. On the north of those viharas were found nineteen small and big stupas of different shapes and periods. Basement of two Gupta temples were also discovered.

From the picture which has been made available from the excavations on the south of

Mayadevi temple, it is clear that the central monument of this site (LMB-1) is the Mayadevi temple and around it stupas of different size and shapes, also the Asokan pillar and other temples were made. These were finally encircled by Buddhist viharas, erected in a line, most probably on all the four directions.

Let us now summarise here the structures encountered during the excavations conducted here within two seasons.

## The Viharas

- (a) Below the eastern most vihar (No - 1), earlier phase belonging to the Kushan period (1st - 2nd A.D.) has been discovered. In this phase there were living rooms for the monks on the three sides, east, North and South as well as a meeting hall on the north. There are two brick stupas (one square and the other circular) and a brick (wedge shaped brick built) well in the courtyard (angan or prangan) of the vihar. During the Gupta period it was again erected in Tri-Salā pattern.
- (b) Another vihar (No - 2) has been found west of vihar no-1 and there was a gap of 4' between the two viharas. It has been originally made during the Maurya period (3rd B.C.) and re-erected again in the Kushan period, the Maurya period vihar is 53'.2" (east-west) long and in breadth 48'.5" (north-south). It has living rooms on the four directions (called chatushala). There is a meeting hall (sabbath-sabhagriha or upasthanasala<sup>16</sup>, called in the Buddhist - literatures) in the centre measuring 13'.10" x 13'.9". During the Kushan period there are fourteen living rooms on the west,

north and south directions. On the western side, there is a barranda towards the courtyard, on the east. The entry to this vihar is from the south-east corner.

- (c) West of Vihar no. 2 another vihar no. 3 has been found. This vihar has been built in three periods, during 2nd-1st B.C., 1st-2nd A.D. and 3rd-4th A.D. No details on earlier periods have been found except earlier outer walls, because they had been badly damaged by latter period of construction. During the Gupta period there are all together eleven rooms on the three sides, east, north and south (Trisala). The vihar measured 44'.6" (east-west) in length and 43' (north-south) in breadth. There is also an aposthagarasala in the centre of the vihar which measured 13' x 10'. A long drain starting from a room on the east runs through the centre across the hall and turns towards south for disposal, making roughly L shape. It is altogether 44' in length. The drain had been made in the Kushan as well as in the Gupta periods and there are provision of covering it with bricks in both the periods. In the south-east room of this vihar, there are two small water storage tanks. The bigger being 3' x 2'.8" x 4' (depth) and the smaller measured 2'.5" x 1'.3" x 4' (depth). The rooms might have been used as kitchen rooms. The size of the rooms are 7'.2" x 5'.10", 8'.2" x 6'.8" and 10'.3" x 8'.7". In some rooms on the east and south-east the entrance passages, to the rooms were also discovered which measured 2'.8", 2'.10" and 2'.11" outside the western main wall of the vihar three buttress walls at the interval of 12'.7" were

found. The first (on the south) measured 7'.7" (length) and 2'.4" (thickness of the wall). The second in the middle measured 8'.4" (length) x 2'.5" (thickness). The third, on the north measured 3'.2" (length) x 2'.4" (thickness).

- (d) On the east of vihar No 3 a small portion of another vihar (No - 4) has been discovered. Only three rooms of this vihar has been partly exposed. The vihar is extending towards east, outside the barbed wiring are a (near the brick road).

## The Stupas

Stupas were made before the rise of Buddhism, which is proved from the Nigalisagar Pillar inscription of Asoka. This mentions about the relic stupa of Konagamuni (who was earlier than Sakyamuni Buddha), where we find the word 'Thupam' which had been repaired and enlarged in double, the original size by Asoka during his visit to that place<sup>17</sup>. At Gotihawa, nearly four miles west of Taulihawa, (a district headquarter of western Nepal), another brick stupa most probably, constructed on the relics of Kakuchhanda Buddha (earlier than Sakyamuni), had also several periods of constructions and repairs. According to Kalinga Bodhi Jataka<sup>18</sup>, Buddha himself had disclosed to Ananda about the three varieties of cetiyas (chaityas). They were, a cetiyas for relic of the body (Siririka), a relic of use or wear (P'aribhogika) and a relic of memorial (uddesika).

At Lumbini there is not a single bigger stupa like Kushinagar, Sarnath or other important Buddhist places. The cause of this was, during the life time of Lord Buddha it was

not a famous Buddhist centre, and no relics of Buddha or his nearest disciples had been deposited at this place. After the destruction of Kapilavastu and merger of the Sakya as well as the Koliya country in the Magadha Kingdom by Ajatsatru, all the important places of this area like, Kapilavastu, Lumbini and devadaha were isolated. This was also due to the neglect of maintenance on this part of Uttarapath (the highway) and use of direct Sravasti, Kushinagar, Pataliputra road, which has also been hinted by Fa-Hian and Huen-Tsang in their travel notes.

Nearly nineteen big and small stupas had been excavated and repaired within this period. The stupas were of different types and belonged to different periods. There were two rectangular stupas, one 35 feet north of Mayadevi and other inside a big square stupa belonging to the Maurya (3rd B.C.) period. Those stupas were plain and the basement had two steppings. Sunga period (2nd B.C.) of construction among those stupas was found only inside the big square stupa. Many stupas both circular and square in shape, had been found constructed during the Kushan period. During the Gupta period (3rd - 8th A.D.) also many stupas were built. The Gupta period stupas found in this area were of two shapes, square stupas with nitch projections on all the four sides. The other type was a stepped fashioned rectangular stupa, which was flat on the tops. Some of the Gupta period square stupas had a line of tapered and 4" projected bricks separating the lower area with the dome. In one stupa there were a pair of flowers made on all the four corners, with incised chiselling. From a Gupta period square stupa nineteen

seals with inscriptions in Gupta characters were found.

### **The Big Square Stupa on the South-East of Mayadevi Temple**

It was originally built in the time of Asoka (3rd century B.C.) in the rectangular shape. (No other details or casket etc. has been found from this period except two layers of projected steppings in the basement. During the 2nd cent. B.C. after a gap of 24" a line of 25" thick wall (laid in one header and another in stretcher) had been added to it, probably on all the sides, encasing (achchhadaya) the whole earlier Asokan stupa and giving a new outer face<sup>19</sup>. After a gap of 5 feet from the interior face of the stupa belonging to 2nd cent. B.C., a 25" thick wall had been added on all the sides and thus filling the inside area with soil, a processional path (pradakshinapath)<sup>20</sup> had been made. During the Kushan period (1st - 2nd A.D.), it was again reconstructed on the top. But except few layers of bricks all other portions (dome and the finial) were missing. The Gupta period also added 4' wall on all the four sides in the square basement. During the mediaeval period many circular votive stupas had been made on the top of it, among them nine stupas were surviving. The diametre of those votive stupas were, five feet, four feet three inches and three feet five inches respectively. After collecting all the technical informations, the stupa had been repaired.

Two bases of Buddhist brick temples and a forty feet long wall (most probably a compound wall, running east-west) had also

been found from south side of the Mayadevi temple, and were repaired.

## **The Excavation of the Nativity Temple**

The Japan Buddhist Federation proposed to repair Nativity temple at Lumbini which was accepted by the government of Nepal. Before the repair works, the temple-site was proposed to be fully excavated so that the complete history of the site could be made available. For this excavation work a team of archaeologists, Mr. Kosh Prasad Acharya, Mr. Babu Krishna Rijal and the Japan Buddhist Federation were involved. The picture which has evolved from three years (1993 - 1995) of excavation can be summarised in the following way. Temples of Asokan period (300 B.C.), Sunga period (200-100 B.C.) and Late Gupta period (7th century A.D.), made with carved bricks in Sikhara and Sapta Ratha style as well as the modern period (from 1993 onwards) were found. The plan which is available from the Mauryan period shows that a huge series of burnt-brick temple was built over cross-walls forming fifteen irregular chambers. The shape of this plinth level is rectangular which measures 20.4 m (East - West) x 15.6m (North-South). There is a Pradakshina path, (circumbulatory path) which is paved with bricks on all the sides of the temple. At some later stage, another wall was erected on all the sides of the temple and small cross-revetment walls (4 to 5 members in each side), were made either to meet the raised surround surface or to strengthen the base of the huge Asokan temple (having 7 courses of bricks in elevation at the bottom).

It is to be noted that the early temple at Jetvan, Rajgriha, Kausambi and at Bhediari (near Biratnagar had been built over similar cross-structures which were 5 feet to 7 feet raised from the ground level, over which the basement of the temples were built. The total height of the cuttings at the Nativity temple of Lumbini beginning from the Mauryan level upto the modern temple platform was five meters (16'3"). The temple during the Maurya and the medieval periods was encircled with brick-wall on all the directions.

## **Garbha-Griha of the Gandhakuti (Temple of Buddha)**

As the garbha-griha (sanctum-sanctorium) of the huge temple complex had been placed from the Asokan period up to the twentieth century, at the same spot, is an interesting achievement to note from this temple excavation. Below the modern temple garbha-griha, where the Nativity sculpture depicting the birth of prince Siddhartha from Mother Mahamaya was placed, a rectangular brick platform (1.5 x 4.5 x 1.3 m) had been made from the old bricks collected from the ruins. Below this spot during the Sunga period (200-100 B.C.) grid-walls with five chambers were constructed. The central chamber was having a corbelled niche on its eastern wall, from where two pieces of chunar-sand-stone were found. On the west of the niche, conglomerated boulder stone was placed internally to indicate the central sanctum, probably to mark the sacred place of Lord Buddha's birth. Thus this location of the temple might indicate the



place where the Nativity tree was originally standing. There are some pre-Mauryan elements below the Asokan temple structure and outside, which need further studies.

### **The important antiquities found from the temple**

From the excavations conducted within the temple square, some important antiquities have been discovered. Among them the remarkable biochrome NBP is most important. The pottery has black shade intersected by two ochre-coloured lines. It is to be noted that NBP having red on black paints have also been found from Rajghat and other sites in north India. (21) There are also Northern Black polished potsherds (a deluxe ware of the SAARC continent dated between 500 B.C. - 300 B.C.) of silver and black colours. A terracotta figure of Kushan school have been found depicting prince Siddhartha with Yasodhara sleeping on the royal bed and Siddhartha preparing to leave the bed for Mahabhiniskramana. Some silver punch marked coins, early copper cast coins (having four spokes within a wheel), Kushan coins including a coin of Wima Kadphises with Shiva and Nandi, a conglomerative stone (70 x 40 x 10 cms), many pieces of chunar sand stone with and without Asokan polish, and some of the pieces of the Asokan pillar-capital were also discovered. This proves that the Asokan pillar was broken and its pieces were kept within the Sunga, and the Gupta Sanctums, at least from 200-100 B.C. Which further indicates that only within hundred years of its erection (in 249 B.C.) by Emperor Asoka, the pillar had been destroyed, possibly by thunderbolt and lightnings (as reported by Yuan-Chwang).

From the above mentioned points, it clearly shows that the present excavations within the nativity temple has produced very important results.

It is to note here that from the earlier cuttings around the temple by the present writer, the existence of Maurya, Sunga, early Gupta, Late Gupta and modern temples were already proved. The present large scale excavation has given a full picture and details of the Nativity temple.

### **Conservation of Mayadevi Sculptural Panel**

The Mayadevi sculpture which depicts the birth scene of Lord Buddha was suffering from some sort of chemical reactions since long time. It was for the first time noticed by P.C. Mukherjee in 1898. Some four years back while trying to fix some boards on the walls of the temple by Lumbini Dharmodaya Samiti, a portion of the mammalian gland of Prajapati Gautami and some parts of the body of Brahma had flaked away. There was a great hue and cry about the happening and the problem had been carefully studied by the writer and other officers of the Department of Archaeology. But before taking any measures for the conservation of the piece it was decided to seek advice from some international expert. As a result Dr. O.P. Agrawal, who had long and practical experience of treating similar objects from Mathura museum and who was the Director of chemical laboratory associated with Unesco, at Lucknow, had been invited to Lumbini to study the piece and give his report on the subject. Thus the physical as well as the chemical treatment of the piece had been carried out for

the first time in Nepal, by a team of experts of the Department of Archaeology including the writer and some technicians of the central chemical laboratory, Patan. The work was followed upon the report and several discussion with Dr. Agrawal.

After the careful examination of the piece it was found out that it had been made of Mathura red Sandstone and sedimentary rock of several bands. There were two types of chemical problem with the sculpture. The first problem was that it was being attacked by salt action, as a result, the outer layer used to disintegrate like sand. The other problem was the cementing elements between the different layers within the stone had become weaker. As a result, sometimes the thick layers from the sculpture used to flake away vertically. Moreover, the glass showcase which had been made four years back, in front of the sculpture, had further added to the salt-action problem. Therefore, first of all, the glass showcase was removed. To facilitate the treatment of the whole body, as well as, to take waterproofing measures in the basement, the sculptural piece had been removed from its place. The greasy substance from all over the body had been cleaned. It was treated with 5% ammonia and thoroughly cleaned with distilled water. The salt of the body was treated with paper pulp applied over the body until it was completely removed. Then vinayal acetate dissolved in Touline had been painted all over the body.

During the removal of the sculptural piece it was found that the lower portion including the legs were missing. But fortunately one smaller piece measuring 13" in length 5.5" in breath and 7" in height was recovered from the

8" gap between the piece and the modern temple wall, on the west. This piece had a pair of Brahma's foot.

Another bigger piece measuring 2'.2.5" in length, 6.5" to 5.5" in breath and 8.5" in height was discovered from outside the temple, among many neglected broken stone pieces, accumulated on the south-east of the temple platform. On the face of the piece there was a .5" deep cut horizontal line which divided this piece into two divisions. The upper portion bearing the pair of Mayadevi's pair of foot with heavy thick ornaments (called kallī in Nepali) and the lower part of baby Siddhartha's body (most probably his legs supported by a full blown lotus flower). The lower portion of the discovered piece was plain and meant for fixing it inside the ground.

Before fixing the lower pieces, a cement platform (cement mixed with waterproofing chemicals) was made. This platform had been painted with bitumen and two layers of bitumen painted fiber glass (each layer of fiber glass had two sheets of fiber glass fixed in bitumen in opposite directions). Thus the bitumen coated fiber glass sheets had been fixed on the back and side walls upto the last edge of the arch. Over it polythene sheet had also been used on all the three sides. To fix the fiber glass and polythene sheets on the walls, the masonry of one course of modern bricks (in four and half inches thickness) was erected on all the three sides and finally plastered with cement mixed with water proofing chemicals.

All the four pieces (two pedestal pieces, head of Mayadevi, and the central piece) had been joined by a paste made of red chunar sand stone powder mixed in araldite.

## **The Date of Mayadevi Sculptural Piece**

From the fresh pieces, found from behind and the buried portion, it was quite clear that the raw material of the sculpture was Mathura red sand stone with creamish spots spread all over the body. The Indian style of the faces, the curly hairs of Prajapati-Gautami and the relative evidence of Gupta brick temple, it is no doubt that the piece is the product of Gupta Art School, manufactured at Mathura and transported to Lumbini. The sculptural piece can be dated to 3rd-4th A.D.

## **The Asoka Pillar And Bell-Capital**

There was a vertical spilt on the whole body of the Asoka Pillar which had been already noticed by the Chinese Pilgrim Huen-Tsang, who explains that it had been caused by a thunderbolt. The cracks and holes had been thoroughly cleaned and filled with the paste made of chunar sand stone powder mixed in araldite.

The two halves of the bell capital which had been laying on the Mayadevi temple platform on the northern side, had also been fixed over a 9" high brick base inside the railing encircling the Asoka pillar.

## **Important Antiquities Discovered from the Excavations**

The LMB-1, is primarily a religious site, a place for worship as well as living area for the monks, It is but natural that the number of antiquities found from the area was very small,

still over hundred antiquities were found. The only important antiquities were as following-

- 1) On, Mitra copper, circular coin (found from the north area of vihar No. 3)
- 2) One Kushan, copper circular coin (found from the southern area of vihar No. 3).
- 3) Stone and T.C. beads.
- 4) A stone Buddha image in Bhumi-Sparsa Mudra, Gupta period.
- 5) Nineteen T.C. seals with inscriptions in Gupta Characters (found from a Gupta period Stupa).
- 6) Metal objects like iron nails, copper utensils, iron arrows etc.
- 7) N.B.P. ware pieces with black and reddish colours.
- 8) Nine Kushan period T.C. full pots. They were jars, vase, water-vessels and miniature pots for different household uses.

## **Conservation of the Excavated Monuments at Lumbini**

The brick robbing at Lumbini was started from the 6th-9th cent. A.D. to make circular votive stupas. The people who made small circular votive stupas never baked their own bricks. As a result not a single full brick can be found in those stupas. In the recent times after the excavations of P.C. Mookherjee, between 1898 and 1960, the adjoining villagers robbed away huge amount of bricks for their household purposes. Again to make temporary ovan for the religious function called 'Karahi-

Charhana' (offering of bread to the goddess) most of the bricks of the exposed monuments were robbed and damaged. As a result all the dome portions of the stupas at Lumbini are missing. Bricks from many walls of the vihars have been robbed to the last course. Therefore, to repair those monuments the clay, mortar had to be changed. It was still necessitated for the strength of the old bricks, which were so fragile that they could not be saved with clay mortar. Thus the new mortar which had been used at Lumbini during the repairs of the monuments, were one part cement, one part lime, 4 part sand and 4 part surkhi (brick powder).

### Foot Note:

1. Beals, Fa-Hian, XXII, 87.
2. Thomas watters, on Yuan Chawang's Travels In India, II, 1973 p.14.
3. A cunningham, the Ancient Geography of India, p.35.  
Two miles west of Lumbini there is still a village named Lavani, which reminds us about the different ancient names of Lumbini and the truth in the writings of the Chinese Travellers.
4. Fo-Kwe-Ki, c.XXII, note 17 by Klaproth. It is however, interesting to note that close to the site of Lumbini there is a village named Padariya, a name which might have derived from the word 'Paradimoksha'.
5. Ayine-Akbari, II, 503, A cunningham the Ancient Geography of India Varanasi 1963, p.
6. Hardy, Manual of Buddhism, p.307.
7. Nalaka-Sutta of Sutta Nipat "Sakyanam Janapade Game Lampuneyye".

8. Jataka, I, Hindi Trans, p.68.
9. Four Kilometres east of Lumbini, on the Lumbini-Bhairahawa metal road, there is a small river named "Koilihawa", which reminds us that the region was under the Koliya state.
10. E.H. Johnston, Buddha-Carita, 1972, p.2 ; some other literatures also (MHV V. I, 149; Jataka, I,52) describe it in the similar way - 'Cittalata Vanasadisam', of Lord Indra.
11. According to Sarvatvinaya, it was an Asoka tree. Asoka had also seen an Asoka tree during his visit to the place. Fa-Hian and Huen-Tsang record that there was an Asoka tree. Whereas, Lalitavistara describes it a peepal tree, this is also supported by the Ceylonese chronicles. But Hardy Bigandet and the Nidanakatha call it a Sal tree. A Chinese, Fo-Shuo-Pu-Yao-Chin simply calls it a "Lin-Pin" Lumbini tree. The yueh chih monk seng-tsai (265-420 A.D.) writes - 'the marvelous tree which the excellent queen grasped when the Buddha came to life, it was called hsu-ko (Asoka).' where as the Nidanakatha says that Maya gave birth to Lord Buddha in standing position holding the branches of a Sala tree (sala sakham gahetva).
12. In Buddha period Uttarapath (Northern highway) was running through important cities like Sravasti, Kapilvastu, Ramagrama, Kushinara, Vaisali, and Rajgriha. Prince Siddhartha used to travel on the chariot drawn by the horses from Sindha which used to be brought through this road (see, Jataka, I,p.77, Hindi trans). Uttarapath is also mentioned in Apadana, I, p. 51, & II, p. 243.

13. Mahaparinirvana sutta of Digha Nikaya, (see Rhys Davids, Mahaparinibhan Sutta, SBE, XI, 95FF); Digha Nikaya, Bombay edit, II, 116-117; it refers to 'Samvejanianiyani and Darshani thanani'.
14. "Asmin Maharaja Pradesa Bhagvan Jatah".
15. "Hida Buddha Jate Sakya-Muniti" and "Hida Bhagvam Jateti Lumbini-Game". Here Buddha has been categorically mentioned as Buddha Sakyamuni, to distinguish him from other Budha's, like Kakuchhanda and Kongamuni, who were born in the same region and whose Pillar inscriptions are still standing at Gotihawa and at Nigalisagar.
16. Buddha once asked Ananda to go to the Capali cetiya and call all the Bhikkhus in the assembly room (Upasthanasala) of the monastery - Divyavadana p.207; The Anguttara Nikaya, III, P. 167, calls it Sabbatha-hall or Posthagara (a place for weekly assembly of the monks).
17. Nigli Pillar Inscription - 'Thupam Dutiya Badhitam', the method of repair to the ancient stupas was to erect new ring of faces on the outside, keeping the earlier structure without any interference. The stupa at Dhamnahawa at Tilaurakot had also a new ring erected outside the earlier face.
18. B.C. Law, Geography of Early Buddhism, 1979, p. 77.
19. This encasing or enveloping of earlier phase with Asokan bricks had also been found in the Dhamnahawa stupa, outside Tilaurakot in 1979 by the writer. Similar process of enlarging stupas were followed at Sanchi, Sarnath and Mankyala (Percy Brown, India Architecture (Buddhist and Hindu periods), 1959, p.14.
20. The Sammohavinodani prescribes all the visitors to a cetiya to go thrice around it and worship it. Mahavamsa also refers to a visit of Asoka to the Kantaka cetiya where he circumbulated around it. (B.C. Law, Geog. of Early Buddhism, p. 78)
21. D.H. Gordon, the Prehistoric Background of Indian Culture, Bombay. 1960, p-165, Mr. Gordon equates the NBP ware with the glossy Attic black ware having red figures. He has reported about a number of sherds recovered from places in the middle Ganga Valley, notably at Rajghat, having a red on black decoration produced by a process similar to Attic red figure ware. He also rejects to call NBP a polished ware and prefers to call it rather, a gloss ware. He has fixed the earliest date of this pottery as 400 B.C.