

A Survey of Construction of Buddhist Monastery Concerning

Śayanāsanavastu and Senāsanakkhandhakapāḷi.

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I. Introduction

Having attained enlightenment, the Buddha went everywhere to prograde his dharma; his teachings attracted many people who wanted to enter into religious life. As soon as the Order of the monks formed, they lived here and there as wanders and did not have any permanent place because the Buddha did not allow them to reside in a location for so long. Therefore, at the beginning of the saṅgha 's life, the monks lived only in temporary locations such as in the forest, under a tree, on a hillside, in a narrow valley, in a mountain, in a cave, in a cemetery, in a forest glade, on an open plain, on a heap of straw, and so on. They went to those places in the evening, and left those places in the morning. As soon as the Buddha took rain retreat, they were allowed to live in a place for three or four months. Having completed the rain retreat, they had to approach another place to preach Dhamma and do missionary work.

When the saṅgha became crowded, a dwelling place was also necessary for practice, recitation of Pātimokkha, teaching the dharma, and holding the uposatha services. Hence, some monasteries (vihāras) have been risen and donated by devotees, i.e., King Bimbisāra and householder Anāthapiṇḍada. Having asked the Buddha's permission to build settlements for him and the Order of monks. The Buddha allowed making five kinds of settlements:¹ *vihāra* (a dwelling place), *aḍḍhayoga* (a curved house), *hammiya* (storied dwelling), *pāsāda* (attics), and *guha* (a cave).

Then the first dwelling place was established in parks (*ārāmas*), named Veḷuvana vihāra, which was donated by King Bimbisāra. Individual huts were also erected in these parks for the residents of the monastics, who lived individually. Since these early monastics acquired all their food, already cooked, from the local village that supported them, their lifestyle and needs were effortless.

¹ T. W. Rhys Davids, and Hermann Oldenberg. Trans. *Vinaya Texts*: part III, The Kullavagga, IV–XII, 158.

II. Main Body

1. The Early Buddhist Monastery: *āvāsa* and *ārāma*

a. Temporary Residence āvāsa

The *āvāsa* was a temporary place constructed by monks. It was not a monastery but a colony of monks. *āvāsa* should be fixed with the boundaries (*sīma*) and confirmed by the saṅgha. They coincided with natural boundaries such as mountains, rocks, trees, or bodies of water. They could not extend beyond three yojanas. Each *āvāsa* has a monk living inside are called cells (*pariveṇā*). The standard monk 's cell was a small, rectangular room with a flat, shallow roof. The rooms generally had a window, seat (*śayanāsana*), a little wooden bed (*alpaśayanaphalaka*), and a spittoon (*kheṭamallaka*). There are no remains of these first settlements; they have been ruined. Some evidence suggests that the plans used for the *āvāsas* can be found in stone sculptures of ancient stūpas, such as those at Bharhut and Sanchi, depicting scenes of everyday life or historical moments take place during this time in villages and *āvāsas*; however, in scenes where several huts are depicted, it is difficult to determine what type of plan may have been used for these communities due to the techniques the sculptors used to establish the spatial relationship between the huts.²

b. Permanent Residence ārāma.

Another dwelling place is regarded as *ārāma*, which was built by lay devotees to the Buddha and the order of monks to stay during the rains retreats. The name *ārāma* means a pleasure ground, usually the property within a town or city or in the flower

² J. Legge. *A Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1886: In Chapter. XXX, Fā-hien wrote that he found the remains of the Kalaṅḍavēṇuvana vihāra, which surely must have been a later construction since a vihāra containing 60 dwellings or monks cells would not have been constructed in one day, nor would the thatch huts have lasted for so many centuries. Hiuen-tsang also wrote that he found a brick vihāra on the one day, nor would the thatch huts have lasted for so many centuries.

garden.³ Late on, it was named a *saṅghārāma* to shed its implication of donated pleasure ground, which meant simply a campus, and a large monastery dwelt by Order of monks.⁴

The first of those “*ārāmas*” was the *Veḷuvanārāma* in *Rājagaha*, donated by king *Biṃbisāra*. Others included *Jetavanārāma*, donated by *Anāthapiṇḍada*, the chief benefactor of the Buddha, and the *Pubbārāma* donated by *Visakha*, the chief benefactress of the Buddha. Further, in the legends, *saṅghārāma* was mentioned by several names as follows:⁵

1. *Jīvakārāma* was donated by the physician *Jīvaka*, established outside of *Rājagaha* in *Nalanda* district in the Indian state of *Bihar*.

2. *Ambapālivana* was donated by *Ambapālī* in *Vesāli*.

3. *Udambarikārāma* is located near *Rājagaha*. This is not a special Buddhist *saṅghārāma*, but for general use as *paribbājaka*, located on the bank of a stream named *Sappini*.

4. *Kukkutārāma*, *Ghositārāma* and *Pāvārikāmbavana* were located at *Kosambī*.

5. *Badarikārāma* was located at some distance from *Ghositārāma*.

6. *Nigrodhārāma* was located at *Kapilavatthu*.

According to the *Cullavagga Pāli*, other buildings inside *saṅghārāma* also begin to appear, strewn over the grounds of the settlement:⁶

1. Storeroom

2. Kitchen

3. Waterhouse

4. Privy

5. The place for walking about

6. Hall in the place for walking about

7. Bathroom hall in the bathroom

8. Temporary shed for special or festive occasions

³ The first donation of an *ārāma* to the *saṅgha* is said in *Māhavagga*, I. 22,18 to have been of a garden (*uyyāna*) in *Rājagaha*, named *Veluvana*, given the Buddha and his *saṅgha* by king *Bimbisāra*.

⁴ *Sukumar Dutt, Buddhist Monks and Monasteries of India*, p.59.

⁵ *Ibid*, P. 60-61.

⁶ *Davids, T. W. Rhys and Hermann Oldenberg. Trans. Vinaya Texts: part III, The Kullavagga, IV–XII, p.176-177*

āvāsa and *ārāma* now take a new collective named “*vihāra*,” which does not mean a single hut but a complete monastery. The *vihāra* gave away to a new kind of collective term for monastic dwellings, referred to in the Pāli legends as a *leṇa*⁷ (of which there are five kinds of the *vihāra* simply being one, Sukumar Dutt describes the *leṇa* in the following way:

“*A leṇa was not a monks' colony open to all comers; it was a compact unitary establishment for a settled body of monks, enabling it to function without disturbance as a corporate body-as, a Sangha by itself.*”⁸

Of the five types of *leṇa* which seem to have originally existed, the term later comes to be specifically identified with “cave” monasteries, cut into the hills by man rather than being natural structures.⁹ The cave monasteries, coupled with monasteries growing up around famed *stūpas* or reliquary mounds, such as that at *Amaravati*, seem to dominate Buddhist monasticism well into the Christian era when large Buddhist universities began to grow up around large monastic centers.

2. The Purpose of Establishing Monastery (*Vihāra*)

a. Rain Retreat (*varṣāvāsa*)

When devotees saw the monks come out from the caves, rocks, the root of the tree, and mountains, they wanted to donate the dwelling place to the Buddha and the Saṅgha. However, the *Bhikkhus* denied the offer because the Buddha had not permitted them to accept any such dwellings. As soon as the rain retreat period (*varṣāvāsa*) came, a permanent place was necessary for monks to assemble to teach the Dharma, recite *patimokkha*, and hold the *uposatha* service and other facilities of saṅgha.

However, there are some rules for rain retreat residences; that is, dwelling places should be made near villages or cities where can get alms food easily, so they were usually

⁷ *Leṇa* has the meaning “to hide, a cave, or a mountain cave, used by *bhikkhus* as a hermitage or place of shelter, a rock cell. It is given as the collective name for five kinds of the monastery, viz. *vihāra*, *aḍḍhayoga*, *pāsāda*, *hammiya*, and *guhā*.

⁸ Sukumar Dutt, *Buddhist Monks and Monasteries of India*, p.93.

⁹ *Ibid*, p.97

settled near towns or villages because the monks usually beg for the alms every day. The requisites for a rain retreat settlement are clearly outlined in the Mahāvagga thus:

“ Now, where could the Lord stay that would be neither too far from a village nor too near, suitable for coming and going, accessible for people whenever they want, not crowded by day, having a little noise at night, little sound, without folk’ s breath, haunts of privacy, suitable for seclusion. ”¹⁰

The rain retreat lasts three months, starting from the full moon day of July and ending on the full moon day of October. During rain retreats, monks were expected to stay in one residence. They can go for alms-food and attend the invitation of devotees, but they cannot stay out overnight. If they need to stay out for a specific reason that is allowed, then they have to return within seven days. Otherwise, they would break the continuity of residence. If a monk were engaged in some important matters of teaching, he could postpone his retreat so that those receiving teachings would not be inconvenienced.¹¹

b. Saṅgha Activities (saṅghakarma)

Establishing *varśvāvāsa* and requiring monks to gather to recite the Dharma and *Pātimokkha*, and holding the *uposatha* ceremony required the monks to have a place to go and created the logistical problems involved in gathering a very large number of people for a period of several days without any facilities to contain them; such facilities were considered by the Buddha. This is the reason that the Buddha allowed extending various facilities to perform the activities of saṅgha.

The period of rain retreat (*vaśrāvāsa*) ended with two ceremonies, *pāvaraṇa* and *kathina*. *Pavarana* is organized at the end of the three months of the rain retreat; the monks who spent the retreat at the same residence are expected to meet each other to perform the “ *pavarana* ” ceremony to mark the end of the rain retreat. At this ceremony, which is attended only by the monks who observed the rains retreat with no participation of the lay devotees, they invite each other, irrespective of their seniority, to point out any lapses in their behaviour that may have led to breaking any of the disciplinary rules during the retreat period. If any monk has seen, heard, or suspected an error in the behaviour of

¹⁰ B.Horner, *The book of the Discipline (Vinaya-Pitaka)*, Vol. IV (Mahavagga). Lancaster: Pali Text Society, 2007. p.51.

¹¹ Ibid, 2.2.

another monk, it needs to be pointed out, discussed, and appropriate measures suggested to rectify it.

Kathina begins following the invitation ceremony on the last day of the three-month-long rain retreat, which is the full moon day in October and lasts until the next full moon day. The monks and the devotees arranged a suitable date during this period to offer what is known as the “kathina robe” to the group of monks who observed the rain retreat at a particular temple or monastery.

3. The Construction of a Vihāra According to Śayanāsanavastu

a. The Construction of Perfum Chamber

According to *śayanasanavastu*, when the Blessed One had trained the first five monks, they lived in the forest; a thought occurred to the Buddha where have the disciples of past Buddhas made their home? Then he saw that it was in a vihāra. At that time, a household, Kalyāṇabhadra living in Vārāṇasī, wanted to build a vihāra for the disciples of the Buddha. Then he came to the Buddha and asked his permission for the establishment of vihāra. The Blessed One accepted his request. However, housholder Kalyāṇabhadra didn't know what kind of vihāra should be built. Then the Buddha gave an introduction that If there are three cells, the perfumed chamber should be built in the middle, and two other cells should be on each side. Likewise, three chambers have nine cells. On the four sides, the Perfume Chamber should be the entrance room in the middle, and two other cells should be on each side of that entrance room.¹²

According to *Cullavaggapāli*, the Buddha allowed making three kinds of inner chambers: 1. Chambers in shape like a palankeen, 2. chambers in shape like a quarter measure, and 3. chambers on an upper story. In addition, the Buddha also allowed making the inner chambers at one side of small vihāras and in the middle of large ones.¹³

b. The Construction of a Vihāra for Monks and Nuns

Moreover, housholder Kalyāṇabhadra did not know how many cells should be built. A vihāra for monks must be built with five storeies, a Perfume Chamber with seven storeies, and a summer room over the entrance with seven storeies. But for nuns, a vihāra

¹² Gregory Schepen. *Hierarchy and Housing in a Buddhist Monastic Code*, 109.

¹³ Davids, T. W. Rhys and Hermann Oldenberg. Trans. *Vinaya Texts: part III, The Kullavagga, IV–XII*, p. 173-174.

should be built with three storeies, a Perfume Chamber with five, and a summer room over the entrance with five storeies.

4. The Construction of A Vihāra According to *Senāsanakkhandhapāli*

In chapter six of the *Cullavaggapāli* mentioned that in the Buddha's time, the dwelling places for monks were not allowed by the Blessed one; they had to dwell here and there. They sometimes lived at the roots of trees, on the hillsides, in grottoes, in mountain caves, etc. When the householder of Rājagaha saw those monks coming from this place and that place, he came to the monks and asked them to establish the dwelling place. Then the monks replied that “Dwellings have not been allowed by the Blessed One.”¹⁴ The monks reported the wish of Rājagaha's householder about a dwelling place for monks to the Buddha. After that, the Blessed One allowed abodes for monks with an announcement that:

“I allow you, O Bhikkhus, abodes of five kinds: Vihāras, Addhayogas, storied dwellings, attics, and caves.”¹⁵

Having been accepting of the Buddha, the householder of Rājagaha made sixty dwelling places in one day for the saṅgha in the four directions. These settlements were the first dwelling places of monks.

Then, there are many supplementary allowances added to this original one. At first, these dwelling places did not have doors (to keep out dangerous creatures etc), so the Buddha allowed a door...a hole in the wall to tie it...a door post and lintel...and supplementary allowances to help the door swing and be shut easily...a lock and key for the door. Then different types of roof coverings (like grass) were made allowable...windows...window railings...window drapery...window shutters were made allowable as well.

¹⁴ T. W. Rhys Davids and Hermann Oldenberg. Trans. *Vinaya Texts*: part III, The Kullavagga, IV–XII, Chapter 6, 158.

¹⁵ Ibid, 158.

A comparison of two versions

	<i>Śayanāsanavastu</i>	<i>Senāsanakkhandhapāli</i>
Place	The Blessed One had trained the first five monks in the forest.	The Blessed One was staying at Rājagaha.
Donor	householder Kalyāṇabhadra	householder of Rājagaha
Event	householder Kalyāṇabhadra himself arose thought he wants to make a vihāra for monks, and asked the Buddha how to make a vihāra.	The householder of Rājagaha saw monks who live here and there, and asked the Buddhas' permission to build dwelling places for monks.
Allowment	The Buddha gave instructions to kalyāṇabhadra.	The Buddha accepted the request of monks.
The construction of perfume chamber	The perfumed chamber should be built in the middle, and two other cells or three other cells, or nine other cells should be on each side.	Inner chambervihmade in the middle of small vihāra with three kinds: 1. chambers in shape like a palankeen. 2. chambers in shape like a quarter measure. 3. chambers on an upper story.
The construction of a vihāra for monks and nuns	For monks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A vihāra with five storeies. • A Perfume Chamber with seven levels 	The Buddha just supplied necessary disciplines for the dwelling places such as doors, lock and key, windows, couches,

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A summer room with seven levels. <p>For nuns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A vihāra with three storeies. • A Perfume Chamber with five storeies. • A summer room with five storeies. 	<p>chairs, beds, fencings, etc.</p> <p>In the <i>Senāsanakkhandhapāli</i>, the Buddha didn't mention the abode for nuns.</p>
Amount	Didn't not mention	Sixty dwelling places

III. Conclusion

Through the two Vinaya texts above, we come to know that the *śayanāsanavastu* of *Mūlasarvāstivāda* didn't point out much detailed information about the construction of a vihāra as *senāsanakkhandhapāli*. It showed only how the perfumed chamber should be built among the monk's cells. However, in the *vinayavastu*, we can find the patterns of a vihāra for monks and nuns that could not find in the *senāsanakkhandhapāli*. Besides, the Buddha didn't mention the kinds of furniture that could be used for monks and nuns. There, we saw only a very short story about the establishment of the perfumed chamber and how many storeies of a vihāra should be made for monks and nuns. Further, the reason for the establishment of a vihāra didn't mention; we see a vihāra built by the wish of the householder Kalyāṇabhadra.

However, in the *senāsanakkhandhapāli*, we can see that sixty monasteries were formed because the monks didn't have their own places; they had to dwell here and there from the top of mountains, under the root of trees, in the caves, etc., because of this, the householder of Rājagaha asked permission from the Buddha and allowed by him. This reason is indicated very precisely. In addition, three kinds of perfumed chambers were stated and established in the middle of a small vihāra. This is also the same as the

śayanāsanavastu version, but it didn't point out how many cells of monks put on each side. Further, which furniture was allowed to be used and decorated in the cells of monks, and which furniture was not allowed by the Buddha? This shows us more detailed information about the monk's life in ancient period.

In brief, although two Vinaya texts gave us different information about the construction of vihāra, they pointed out useful information for us. This difference may be due to various versions; the *śayanāsanavastu* is of *Mūlasarvāstivāda* that has the complete version, which is preserved only in the Tibetan translation. At the same time, the *senāsanakkhandhapāli* has the complete version, which is preserved in the Vinaya Pitaka.

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