Amaravati: A Buddhist Heritage City of Andhra Pradesh
A Presentation by

The Cultural Centre of Vijayawada
Welcome to Amaravati-Dhanyakataka
Where Buddhism flourished more than 1700 years...
Buddhism and the Andhra Region

Buddhism reached the Andhra Region during the lifetime of the Buddha.

Dhamma spread fast after the 3rd century BC in the Andhra region when it was part of the *Mauryan* empire.
Amaravati’s leading role in the evolution of three phases of Buddhism is well-known from 3rd Century BC to 8th Century AD

Theravada

Acharya Buddhaghosha (4th – 5th centuries AD) - the great systematizer hailed from Amaravati region
Mahayana Phase

Acharya Nagarjuna, the great systematiser of Mahayana tradition, lived and enlarged the Mahastupa at Dhanyakataka.

In the Mahayana countries, he is considered a later day Buddha.

Vajrayana Phase

According to the Tibetan tradition, Buddha Sakyamuni manifested in the form of Kalachakra or Wheel of Time and gave teachings on this Tantra to an assembly of innumerable Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, gods, nagas, yakshas etc., at the stupa of Dhanyakataka.

A good no. of Vajrayana Sculptures like Maitreya, Heruka, Tara and Vajra Tara (10th Century AD) were recovered from the excavations at Amaravati.
Spread of Buddhism

Buddhism spread rapidly in the Andhra region owing to the patronage of Ashoka Maurya.
Amaravati-Dhanyakataka Maha Stupa

Remains of Mahachaitya originally 200 feet in diameter & 100 feet in height (Deepala Dinne) and site museum which contains Buddha’s relic are worth visit.
Dhanyakataka – Amaravati Re-Discovery

• Dhanyakataka – Amaravati, a world famous Buddhist site is situated on the right bank of the river Krishna, about 35 kms from the Guntur and 40 kms from Vijayawada.

• Amaravati was named to a newly built township around Amareswara Temple by Raja Vasi Reddy Venktadri Naidu, the local Zamindar in 1798 A.D.
• Colonel Colin Mackenzie was the first to visit the site during the year 1797-98 who prepared the general plan of the Maha chaitya.

• Sir Walter Elliot (1845), Robert Sewell (1877), James Burgess (1881) and Alexander Rea (1888) had excavated the mound partly and recovered a number of limestone Buddhist sculptural panels, some of which were sent to the Government Museum, Chennai and the British Museum, London.
Conjectural View of The Stupa
A Stupa Model (3rd century BC)
Conjectural View of The Stupa
Votive Stupa
Panels After the Excavations
Relics of the Buddha

The holy relics of the Buddha have been recovered from Amaravti Excavations
Stupa Panel
Stupa Panel
Bodhivriksha
Railing
Railing
Upright Pillar of the Railing
Dome Pannel
Cross Bar
Sculptural Panel
Siddhartha Before the great departure
The Great Departure
Jataka Tale
Coping Stone
Sculptural Panels
Series of Buddhas
Nalagiri Damana
The Amaravati School of art is one of the three schools of Buddhist art, the other two being, the Gandhara and Madhura Schools.

The Amaravati School is known for its visual narratives and depiction of not only the life and legends of the Buddha but also the contemporaneous social life.
Remains of the largest Stupa with sculptures portraying scenes from the life of Siddhartha Gautama and Jataka Tales

A site museum here preserves a part of the heritage
Amaravati School of Art is a distinct contribution of Andhra artists.
Amaravathi School of Art - Some more Panels

A Narrative Panel

Worship of Dharmachakra
• The Stupa at Amaravati was enlarged during the Satavahana and renovated during the Ikshavahu period (3rd century A.D.)
• Dhanyakataka also served as seat of power to the early Pallavas.

• It continued to be a Buddhhist site during the Eastern Chalukyan period AND SERVED AS A SEAT OF Buddhist learning upto the 14th century AD.
• Hieun Tsang, the Chinese Buddhist monk (traveler) is said to have visited this place around 640 A.D. and learnt Abhidhamma here.
Vajrayana Sculpture
A pillar inscription dated to circa 1100 A.D. records the visit of the Pallava King Simhavarman to Paramabuddha kshetra of Dhanyakataka.

Another pillar epigraph from Amareshwara temple dated to 1182, A.D. of Kota Keta II, describes the architectural grandeur and sculptural embellishment of the Mahachaitya as Chaityam atyunnatam yatra nana chitra-Suchitritam in the city of Sri Dhanyakataka which is superior to the city of Gods.

Another record issued by Bayyamamba his wife dated to 1234 A.D. refers to the offering of a perpetual lamp to the God Buddha at Sridhanyaghati.
• It is very interesting to note that an inscription at Gadalaadeniya in Kandy district, Srilanka, dated 1344 A.D. mentions that the renovation works were carried out under the supervision of Dharmakirti, a sthavira of Srilanka, to a two storeyed image house at Dhanyakataka.

• Thus it is established that the city of Dhanyakataka-Amaravati flourished till the 14th Century A.D.
‘Kalachakra’ ceremony was held at Amaravati in January 2006, which attracted 2 million devotees.
Kalachakra Museum

• APTDC has built a Museum and Interpretation Centre at Amaravati in 1.2 acres of land. The Museum houses rare Buddhist sculptures and antiquities collected from 14 Buddhist sites of Andhra Pradesh.

• The other components of the Museum include a restaurant and parking lot with civic amenities.

• Visitors can also see the sapling of Bodhi Tree brought from Buddhagaya and planted by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, during the Kalachakra Maha Sammelan 2006 in the Museum premises.
The District collector has allotted land of 4.00 acres in extent besides the Mandal Revenue Officer Office, Amaravati for constructing the Dhyana Buddha project.

This novel project consists of underground Museum cum Buddha Statue in Dhyana Mudhra position build on the right bank of the river Krishna and very near to the Maha Stupa. The total height of the Statue is 125 Feet.
Undavalli Caves
the legacy continues....
Thank you