



Lion Symbol in Hindu-Buddhist Sociological Art and Architecture of Bangladesh: An Analysis

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Abstract

There is no lion animal in Bangladesh still live but has a lot of sculptors through terracotta art in architecture, which are specially used as decorative as religious aspects through the ages. The lion is the king of the animal world. They live in the plain and grassy hills particularly. Due to these characteristics, the lion has been considered through all ages in the world as a symbol of royalty and protection as well as of wisdom and pride, especially in Hindu-Buddhist religion. In Buddhism, lions are symbolic of the *Bodhisattvas*. In Buddhist architecture, lion symbols are used as protectors of *Dharma* and therefore support the throne of the Buddha's and *Bodhisattvas*. The lion symbol is also used in Hindu temple architecture as Jora Shiva Temple, Akhrapara Mondir of Jashore. In Bangladesh, there are various types of lion symbol used in terracotta plaques of Ananda Vihara, Rupbhan Mura, and Shalban Vihara at Mainamati in Comilla district, Vashu Vihara, Mankalir Kundo at Mahasthangarh in Bogra district and Somapura Mahavihara at Paharpur in Naogaon district. This research has been trying to find out the cultural significance of the lion symbol in Hindu-Buddhist art and architecture of Bangladesh. This symbol is remarked as the development for the sociological archaeology and architecture which are like an empirical style that denotes to aristocracy for the life style. It highlights to rebuild the societal splendid. They think that lion is their power god and goddess. In this regard they design their palace with the symbol of lion. It also falls into deepening social impact.

Keywords: Lion Symbol, Hindu-Buddhist Art, Bangladesh.

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1. Introduction

The lion is the most ferocious beast among wild creatures in the world. From the primitive era, the lion is considered as the symbol of strength and power for worshipping and through all ages in the world as a symbol of royalty and protection as well as of wisdom and pride. In Asia, lions are very familiar as well as have a lot of stories with mythology. Hindu and Buddhist religion have a significant role as a lion. In Buddhism, lions are symbolic of the *Bodhisattvas*.^[1] Lion motifs are used as protectors of *Dharma* and therefore supported for the throne of the Buddha's and Bodhisattvas.^[2] The lion symbols are also used at the entrance of the monasteries and shrines possibly for the same reason. In ancient Bangladesh and present Bangladesh and West Bengal, there are various types of lion motifs as depicted in terracotta plaques of Ananda Vihara, Rupbhan Mura and Shalban Vihara at Mainamati in Comilla district; Vashu Vihara, Mankalir Kundo at Mahasthangarh in Bogra district; Somapura Mahavihara at Paharpur in Naogaon district; Chandraketurgarh, Vikhramshila Vihara in the West Bengal and Shamsundar Tila at Pilak in Tripura and so on as a Buddhist monastery. Here the researchers address the cultural worth of the lion idea in Buddhist architecture of Ancient Bangladesh and especially present Bangladesh portion from 8th century to 12th century and various types of representation to understand its origin and evaluation as well as to analyze as a pattern of interrelated meanings generated by the formation of the lion terracotta art. And then, In Hinduism, lion is used with Durga and Kali Goddesses in the ancient Indian Civilization and Indian Sub-continent. It is as an emblem of many countries flag also at present like Sri Lanka. Besides, the pair lion figurine depicted as stucco in Jora Shiva Temple, Muroli, Akhrapara Temple, both are situated at Jashore district of the South-Western part of Bangladesh. The Shiva is the braver among all Gods and Goddesses in the Hindu religion during the early period and the still now. Thus the researchers see that various Shiva temple builds in the ancient Bengal and present West Bengal and present Bangladesh. This research identifies eighty-three plaques with lion images in three Buddhist sites of Bangladesh which are Paharpur monastery allied Somapura Buddhist Vihara, Shalvan Vihara in Mainamati Lalmai hills, and Mahasthangarh fortified city sites especially from the 8th to the 12th century. Lions, particularly male lions have been an important symbol for thousands of years and appear as a theme in cultures across Europe, Asia, and Africa. The most consistent depiction is in keeping with their images of the king of the jungle or king of the beasts.^[3] They are also found at the entrance of the monasteries and shrines in the Northern area of Nepal, influenced by Tibetan Buddhism and art. The iconographic and anionic or sculpture, representation of the lion originated in Persia.^[4] A lion-faced *Dakini*, a tantric deity described as a female embodiment of enlightened energy appears in Tibetan Buddhism. The Tibetan Buddhist form is known as *Simhamukha* in Sanskrit and *Senge Dongma* in Tibetan.^[5] There is bondage of sociological artistic style which only focuses on their life features where the people think that lions are a great



protector any epidemic from the nature. The researchers explore that lion is their family and palace relax retainer that is made by their social culture, archaeology and architecture.

1.1 Research Methodology

In this Research paper, the researchers have used Qualitative and Quantitative methodology under the social science survey pattern. And the secondary sources as literature books and articles are used in this research paper as APA style. The authors have worked field survey to temple architectures and archaeological sites themselves and some pictures are taken from the Archaeology Department of Bangladesh. The researchers think that this process leads to a qualitative manner and etiquette through the mixed methodology.

2. Importance of Lion in Buddhist Literature

According to Buddhist Literature and Text, the researchers have found many name of the Buddha used in *Jataka* tale - among them Lion of ten *Jataka* has been represented to Buddha as *Shimhacrostuc jataka*, *Shimhacharma jataka*, *Monaja Jataka*.^[6] In according to *Dighanikaya*, The Lion disappears definitely connecting *Simhaladvipa* i. e. present Sri Lanka with the lion of the *Sakyas*, which means the Buddha by the “Moonstone of Anuradhapura”.^[7] There are many literature in South Asia and South East Asia about Lion and many animals which are also we learn from childhood as well as *Panchatantra*, *Eshops* story, *Kalila-wa-Dimna* and so on. “The lion plays a prominent part in the enumeration of the *Buddhissattva*’s primary physical characteristics, *Mahapurusa Laksana*^[8] as listed in the *Mahapadanasantanta* of the *Dighanikaya*. His upper body and his jaw are like a lion’s: “*Siha Pubhaddha kayo, Sihahanu.*”[*Dighanikaya*, XIV (*Mahapadanasantanta*)]. A.J. Gail says: “Probably the oldest figural representation of the Buddha is a token from Tillie Tepe, North Afghanistan (50 BC - 50 AD) inscribed in Kharosthi.

The obverse side shows a herculean man pushing a wheel, which is called as “*Dharmachakkravarataka*” (he who sets in motion the wheel law). The reverse side shows a striding lion, titled “*Siho Vigatabhaya*”(the lion who chased away fear; see Fussman, 1987, 71f.fig.2).^[9] The letter inscription possibly quotes the “*Lalitavistara*”, a flamboyant biography of the Buddha; “*Atha tasmin samaye bodhisattvah simha iva vigata bhaya bhairavo asamtrastah,*^[10] “English translated by R. L. Mitra as “doubtless and fearless as a Lion”. In similar words the idea of *Shakyamuni* as a fearless lion is expressed in chapter. XV of the *Lalitavistara*: “*Simhobaya Prahinah*”.^[11] On the capital of the Asoka pillar of Saranath in India a set of four animals is depicted: a lion, an elephant, a bull, a horse. This quartet is taken up not in India but in the Buddhist art of Bengal, Sri Lanka, Nepal etc. Individually, these animals provide various symbolical references to the career of the Buddha himself. Moreover, “*Shihe*” word is in the *Charchhyapada* at 33 no. *Pada* and 9 no. line, “where is said that *Shila* (fox) war against *Shihe*

(lion) everyday”.^[12] In according to *Buddha Caritha*, “I (Buddha) am the last lion and my move like lion gait....”^[13] This structure seems that this scenario proves that this style is made up their social and economic struggle where the people look forward seeking peace of symbol and power point symbol. The researchers think that this type of lionic symbol focuses on their sociological archaeology and art and architectural beauty which reminds their fares proancient gorgeous motifs.

2.1 Lion in Buddhist Architecture

This research paper depends on the bellow Table of Number of Lion figurine used in Buddhist architecture of ancient Bangladesh:

Sl. No.	Name of the Site	Plaques no.
1.	Somapur Vihar, Paharpur	57
2.	Shalban Vihar, Mainamati	13
3.	Ananda Vihar, do	3
4.	Rupban Mura, do	4
5.	Ranir Banglo, do	1
6.	Vashu Vihar, Mahasthangarh	4
7.	Mankalir kundo, do	1
	Total	83
	=	

2.2 Paharpur Mahavihara, Naogaon

In Central Shrine of Paharpur Vihara, identifies fifty seven plaques of lion images. The lion is standing on its back legs almost in similar style (**Plates 1, 2**). In two plaques the front legs are crosswise and in one plaque the lion is lying. Four images of the lioness are similar to the standing images of the lion.^[14] The plaque depicts the four part of an aged lion (**Plates 3, 5**), which is conceived in an arched niche. The two-four legs of the lion are placed one above the other and the eyes and the face of the animal have been treated in abstraction and with schematic arrangements. Another terracotta plaque of lion, the niche has the look of a stylized *Chaitya*



window. This panel reminds a story in *Panchatantra*. The title of the story is lion a talking cave. ^[15] Besides, an angry lion (**Plate 4**) plaque shows in the attitude of seeing something inside a well (water tank/*Kuya*). The projection of the *Kuya* or well over the ground is comparatively smaller than the figure of lion. The lion has long mane and beards and has a long tail. this figure of lion is concerned it is not naturalistically rendered but the sheer anger of a lion and his forceful approach inside the well and its face and eyes have successfully captured the dramatic elements that is narrated in the story of *Panchatantra*. ^[16]

Moreover, There have been found also women lioness is watching her own face in well. A story type terracotta plaque shows a lion is sleeping and a monkey is trying to wake it up by pricking into its ear. Although K. N. Dikshit said that so called monkey image is actually an image of a fox. It seems to us that of the head, tail, and expression of the animal indicate to a monkey. ^[17]

2.3 Mainamati, Comilla

There have been found many lions animal figurine based corner bonding terracotta plaque (**Plates 6, 7, 9**) in Shalban Vihara at Comilla. There have one single head but two body's lions plaque shown separately on both sides of the corner to suit the especial architectural requirement. The mane is shown with a series of falling curls, recalling the coiffure of Gupta sculpture. ^[18] The short curling tail and squat form of the body recall the form of lions in both bronze and stone from this and subsequent centuries. From its middle, two sides of the plaque seem to be mirror images. Similarly the researchers have found this type terracotta plaque in Paharpur central shrine, Vashu Vihar, Vikramshila Mahavihar at Antichak also. Recently excavation in Shalban Vihar has been found various types lion animal figurine decorated such lion attacked to elephant (**Plate 8**), lion with a man, corner bonding terracotta (**Plate 7**), women worship to lion (**Plate 10**) and lion attacked a man. It is very interesting that there have been found many *Krittimukha* terracotta plaques, *Krittimukha* which is a decorative motif showing the grinning face of a lion for example Rupban Mura, ^[19] Ananda Vihar (**plate 11**) and so on. On the other hand, During the Pala period, the plaque shows a stylized *Nara Vyala* in Mainamati. ^[20] It has the body of a stylized lion with a long tail and female head. There is description of sixteen types of *Vyalas* in literature; *Nara Vyala* is being one of them. ^[21]

2.4 Mahasthangarh, Bogra

The plaque of Vashu Vihara displayed in Mahasthangarh Museum has an image of a lion and a rabbit. The background of the plaque is ornamented by half circled design to indicate a cave. Most likely, this plaque is also a representation of the rabbit and lion story of *Panchatantra*. The appearance of the image gives scenes that the rabbit is feeling guilty for being late to become the lion as his meal and the lion is listening to his excuse. Recently excavation there has been found a corner bonding terracotta plaque which is a two lion body and one head type similarly Shalban Vihar. In Mahasthangarh, this has been found another plaque, which is a



detached head of *Nrisimha* image, which is may be Gupta period art. There is a human touch in the treatment of its eyes and a *Krittimukha* figure has been found which is mutilated face of *Krittimukha* has bulging eyes and open mouth.^[22]

3. Lion in Hindu Temple Architecture

The pair lion is used as a stucco including pilaster, here its main materials are that pilaster in Shiva Temple façade at Muroli (Kasba) under Jashore district (**Plate 12**). Here its main materials are plastered and then curved very low space. This stucco is made by usually white lime and grey red color. The researchers found then they understand it is a real lion and its mane, tail, and paws are showing as a running position. And another place the researchers have to notice that some temple has lion motif mixed with horse, though some scholar gives a name of this type i. e. horse shape lion. There is found six or seven Shiva Temple in Bengal where is used as this motif. However, it's used in the main façade and over the main entrance of the temple, i. e. the name of the temple and place as follow: Jora Shiva Mondir (**plate 12**), Muroli, Jashore; Shila Roy Mondir, Birampur, Jashore; Chanchra Shiva Temple, Chanchra, Jashore; Putiya Shiva Temple (**plate 14**), Rajshahi; and Chandina Shiva Temple, Cumilla.

3.1 Jorbangla Shiva Temple, Muroli, Jashore

The stucco panel (**Plate 12**), is installed in the upper portion on the main entrance gate of the Jorbangla Shiva Temple, and is an exceptional one: Two lions are formed by running position and on the lower back side in a *Makara*.

3.2 Akhrapara Mondir, Muroli, Jashore

Akhrapara Mondir (**plate 13**) content is found in same illustration. At present it is very fragile. The temple's survival is threatened by the newly established school nearby and the lack of conservation efforts. The Bhubaneshwar Shiva Temple, the largest Shiva Temple in Bangladesh are also contents same. Built in 1823 by Rani Bhubonmoyee Devi, the widow of Raja Jagat Narayan Roy, it overlooks the Shiva Sagar Lake. In the sanctuary, lies very large black basalt Shiva *Linga*, the largest in the country. The temple is now a protected monument. Another significant Shiva Temple is Shiva Temple, 18th -19th cent. Pekha, Surpur, Birbhum; Chandranath Shiva Temple, 1847, is built by Raja Krishna Chandra; Nava-ratna, Hatempur, Birbhum; Four Shiva Temple, Charbangle group 18thcent. These are Baranagar, Murshidabad; Mahadea Temple, 1733 A.D., Panch-ratna, Naldanga, Jashore; Shiva Temple, 18th cent. Naldonga, Jashore; and Shiva Temple, Chanchra, are built by Monohoor Deva, 1696 AD, Jashore.

This is Hinduism ritual also in Bengal from ancient time. The women worship to Shiva and the researchers and all know that Shiva is a husband of Durga, as if women visited to Shiva Temple for this reason many temples system has that, in this reason may be *Uma's Bahan* , lion as a symbol is including at the main entrance of temple on tympanum area. Basically, it's got



during the 18th and 19th century and it is very modern and British period. This is why, the researchers can say, they patronize or *Karigor* who are used as to the pair lion motif as a stucco decoration of temple main entrance because of they want to pleasure of British governor and the researchers and all know well Muslim people, who are not taking any helping minded with British or for British. The pair lion motif is the symbol of British from Victorian age as well as it has a good meaning. Again the researchers have noticed that lion has used Asoka pillar, which uses more than earlier of British.

4. Lion in Hinduism

Shiva is the second most important male deity of Bengal. Besides the usual Shiva *-lingas* which are mainly worshipped in the temples and under trees or in an open space, hundreds of Shaiva images are made during the Pala rule. Pre-Pala rule stone figures of Shiva are rare. At least three Pala rulers are adherents to Shaivism. ^[23] But before the Palas and the Gauda ruler Shashanka (7th century) is a devout Shaiva; his coins bear the emblem of a bull, the vehicle or *Bahan* of Shiva. Shaiva images from Bengal the special forms of Shiva are those of Uma-Maheshvara and Sadashiva. A special feature of Shiva from Bengal is that the deity is accompanied by his two consorts, Ganga and Gauri and by two male attendants, Nandi or Nandin and Mahakala. Shiva is shown mostly *Urdhvalinga* or phallus *Erectum*. The *Mahisasurmardini* motif is common on many of the late medieval brick temple of Bengal, where Durga riding her vehicle, lion is mostly accompanied by her daughters and sons. Several books in Sanskrit and Bangla have been written about Shiva. Among them *Shivapurana* and *Lingapurana* are more noted. ^[24]

In the Bangla *Mangalkavya*, the story of Shiva is an essential component of the canto about gods. Shiva is worshipped on a number of occasions, such as *Shivaratri* in *Magh*. Fairs are often held on this occasion and offerings made to his symbol of the *lingam*. Shiva is also worshipped in *Chaitra*, on the occasion of Shiver *Gajan*. Shiver *Gajan* is still observed today in many parts of the country in Bangladesh.

5. DISCUSSION

Firstly, the actual reality of lion symbol has been experienced directly in meditation by those highly realized beings like *Sakyamuni Buddha*. ^[25] The real nature of the symbol through their pure vision and understanding even ordinary beings can recognize to some extent the real nature of symbol. Another important thing is that, the terracotta art of Bengal, including that of Paharpur definitely betrays some different traits, local color; at the same time it is a part as an all Eastern India art traditions. Hence some art motifs are seen, elsewhere are also present in Bangladesh art-comprising that of Paharpur, Mainamati and Mahasthangarh lion motif which is one of these common motifs. All these plaques are socioreligious in character and are valuable



materials for the study symbolic socioreligious life of Buddhist traditional shape in Bangladesh. Lion appears in various roles, which are engaged in different activities, forming a fine gallery of anionic. ^[26]

The clay artists of Ancient Bangladesh have successfully utilized various art figurative creating lyrical and textual scenes and lion motif is a one of such alluring figures. Lion is as emblem of royalty, symbol of Muryan art, reference to *Sakya* clan of *Sakyamuni* Buddha, Roar of lion as metaphor for Buddhist teachings. ^[27] It is mentionable that Mainamati Museum displays a plaque found at Shalban Vihara which is the artist that has presented a decorated lion which is in contrast with reality. In the plaque the mane of the lion is like petals around its face and its eyes and eye-brows are slightly engraved. The researchers would like to say that, there would have not so sure find out any lion motif decorated in any terracotta or any figure beside bull in the Indus valley civilization, where the researchers have found a certainly a lion stuck with inscription of Buddha in Afghanistan during 1st century B.C. Obviously, early ancient lion symbol used in Mycenae at Persia. Now is the question is that how is it symbolized in ancient Buddhist architecture through literal and textual context with general and rituals under Buddhism. The researchers think that Ancient Bengal has a highest glorification in the field of architecture. They intend to be a great like other civilization. Ancient Bengal is also a part of the world famous civilization as Sind Civilization. Here the people desire to lead their life as a royal administration where they mind that they have a long history and heritage that means a world documentary heritage where the researchers, studiers and scholars will get an impressive thinktank of Ancient Bengal.

On the above mentioned discussion after, we can classify of those lion figurine typologically in five types as follow in the table:

Sl.No.	Type/Style	Characteristics	Sites/places
1.	Realistic	Natural Lion	Ananda Vihar, comilla
2.	Mythical/ Tantric	Naravyal, Nrishimha, Kirtimukha	Mahasthangarh, Rupban mura, Ranir banglow,
3.	Textual/Liter al (Jataka)	Lion with women, lion with well, lion with rabbit, Lion in talking cave, cross legs, Aged Lion/ older	Somapura vihar, Naogaon
4.	Ferocious	Lion attacked to elephant, Lion attacked to man	Shalban vihar, Comilla



5.	Architectural component	Two body one head lion	Shalban vihar, Somapura Vihar, Vashu Vihar
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The researchers have not been getting surely or original text about this as contemporary literature form or any inscriptional evidence. Thus it is used to identify that this illustration including temple architecture was three reasons as: Firstly, this type is come as a pleasuring of British and British painting. So it may be its come by local influenced and ritual stylized form by artists. Secondly, if it comes from Nepal or china, where lion is the most significant for China and also Nepal, then it's used generally in their houses easily, Nepal's people are used in their houses for removing them from Satan/devil. Thirdly, lion is not *Bahan* of Shiva, Shiva's *Bahan* is *Garur* cart, but *Uma*, who is called Durga and in here the authors known by the myth and *Purana* say to them that *Uma's Bahan* is lion. Thus they use lion in Shiva temple. Lion is a brave symbol and fertile also. The researchers think the Hindu women believe Shiva *lingam* is a symbol of fertile and thus they go to Shiva temple to worship it before of pregnancy for getting not only good position of fertile but also getting good kids.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the researchers may say possibly that lion symbol is issued in Hindu-Buddhist Art and Architecture under religious aspect like formation of Buddha, Vehicle of *Manjubara*, mythical as well as gradually it is developed in influence by Hindu deity *Durga's Vahan* or Chariot in Ancient Bengal and West Bengal or present Bangladesh. This paper examines about the sociological archaeological formation where ancient Indian civilization and ancient Bengal civilization. It has been designed for their life caravan. The social stratification has built their lion symbolical administered power where the people think that it is an empirical power symbol. The researchers, scholars, studiers, students and criticizers need further study about this matter for the better understanding.

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<p>Plate 1: Lion Standing on two legs, terracotta plaque, Paharpur, courtesy: Abdul Khalek (DoA)</p>	<p>Plate 2: Standing on two legs, Lion terracotta plaque, Paharpur, Naogaon, Bangladesh</p>
	
<p>Plate 3: Lion face with cross legs (symbol of aged), Paharpur.</p>	<p>Plate 4: Lion with well/<i>kuya</i>, Paharpur, courtesy: Department of Archaeology of Bangladesh.</p>



Plate 5: Lion face with cross legs, Paharpur, (after K.N.Dikshit).



Plate 6: Corner bond terracotta, Shalban Vihar, Mainamati, Comilla



Plate 7: Corner bonding terracotta, Shalban Vihar,

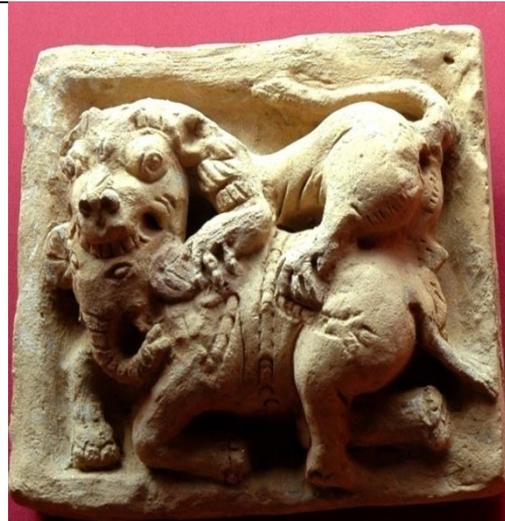


Plate 8: Lion attacked to elephant, Shalban Vihar, Comilla



Plate 9: Corner bonding plaque, tail like petal, Shalban Vihar, Mainamati



Plate 10: Women worship to lion, Shalban Vihar, Mainamoti, Comilla, Bangladesh.



Plate 11: *kirtimukha*, Ananda Vihar, Comilla



Plate 12: Lion Stucco in main entrance, Jorbangla Shiva Temple, Muroli, Jessore.



Plate 13: Lion in Akhrapara Mondir,
Muroli, Jessore.



Plate 14: Lion, Terracotta, Pancharatna Temple,
Puthia, Rajshahi.