

## **Pilgrimage - Amalgamating Humanity with Divinity**

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### **Abstract**

This paper is an attempt to understand how the Buddhist pilgrimage centres in India came into existence, who started the trail, what motivated devotees to undertake such travels, the route charting and its spread from the Ganges Basin. The early ideas of Buddhist pilgrimage trace to a mechanism of people already engaged in a cycle of pilgrimage near Hindu centres. Pilgrimage is a Force - A guiding spirit that amalgamates humanity with Divinity in search for Wholeness. This Entirety is in the totality of the landscape that creates a faithscape weaving together the sacred place, time, sacred meanings/ rituals. Sites thus become sacred when a pilgrimage tradition develops. The artistry on Stupas, toranas, architraves give an insight into pilgrim centres. Also the paper will throw light into the early pilgrimage practices. Bharhut and Sanci that were not connected with Buddha, suggest through 750 donative inscriptions on the stupa vedhikas the existence of an established pilgrimage network. The paper will also outline how some centres in the Deccan of 1BC-CE like Junnar, Nasik, Karla or Ajanta that show trace of a pilgrimage tradition catering much to the needs of the itinerant traders. But around 5-7 CE show considerable regional pilgrimage. Finally the paper will look into the factors contributing to international pilgrimage.

**Key Words:** *Pilgrimage, Totality, Landscape, Faithscape, Itinerant*

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