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The ‘early medieval period’ in India (or seventh to eleventh centuries) is really an age which has fallen out of favour with the historians, leaving aside a few exceptions. In Indian Universities ... Ancient History deals with the Mauriyas ... with Harsh’s Buddhist Empire of the seventh century pulling the final curtain. Then the lights go out, as it were, and we have to sit through the ‘dark period’ of early medieval India.

”

~Andre Wink

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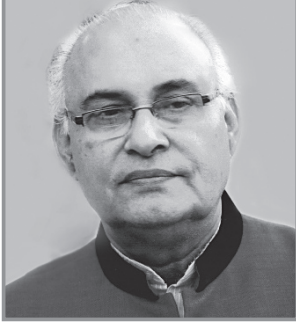
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Dr. Mahesh Chandra Sharma

Editorial

Whenever interface with India arose, right from times immemorial, it was said that the land that straddles the earth from the Himalayas to the south and from the mighty ocean to the north is India. The people who live there are the progeny of India. A *shloka* from the *Vishṇu Purāṇa* is often quoted in this regard:

Uttaram Yatsamudrasya Himādreścaiva Dakṣiṇam|

Varṣam Tadbhāratam Nāma Bhāratī Tatra Santatiḥ||

Both the geography and culture of India are embedded in this *shloka*. India is the most ancient nation in the world. The Western world till now has not been able to establish this concept of the nation in its realm. Its postulate of nationalism halted at the idea of a ‘nation-state’, an idea that accorded primacy to power over the nation. A supranational organisation like the United Nations Organisation has been established; when it grants recognition to any sovereign state, the latter is termed as a ‘nation-state’ in accordance with the accepted definition of today’s times.

It was under this paradigm of a ‘nation-state’ that the British transferred power to the two dominions of India and Pakistan. Had they had their way, all the princely states of India too would have become separate ‘nation-states’. This concept of the ‘nation-state’ first gave the world colonial imperialism, later followed by two world wars and the Cold War and today continues to divide the world into the north and south in the name of globalisation. The nation-state is a reactionary and selfish entity, whose driving force is power. It is also an artificial construct. Every decade therefore, sees the number of nation-states increase or decrease, with their borders too undergoing change.

But India has been a natural entity for millennia, between the land south of the Himalayas and the north of the ocean. The power of its nationhood lies not in political power but in culture. It is this natural entity of a cultural nation that has today been divided into nation-states. The borders of these nation-states have been sealed off by their respective militaries, as a result of which the movement of peoples has been impeded. Cultural vibrancy becomes the casualty of any lack of cross-movements of people, with people too being unable to recognise their own selves adequately. This happens to be the situation of us Indians today; we are unable to recognise ourselves properly.

The Himalayas are a generic name. It is essential for us to know the boundaries of the Himalayas. Ancient India is situated beneath the Himalayan region; at its western end lies the province of Gandhāra, while to the east is

situated Triviṣṭapa (present day Tibet), which stretches till Myanmar (Burma). In the south, India's entity extends till the island of Sinhala or Sri Lanka.

Ancient and medieval era invasions and the colonial imperial invasion of the modern era resulted in India being divided into these so-called nation-states. In this process, we thus became our own enemies. It is imperative that we know about our true identity. We have therefore to free ourselves of the social milieu characterised by victimhood born of aggression and recognise our basic entity.

This quarterly of ours *Manthan* is a platform for the quest of this very entity. In order to know the expanse of the Himalayas, this platform of ours is engaged in the endeavour to know the true identity of Ancient Gandhāra situated at the western frontiers (which today lies divided between Afghanistan and two provinces of Pakistan, Pakhtunistan and Balochistan).

The militarised borders of the present nation-states have halted the movements of people. Earlier, foreign aggressors had made the reality of our past quite bleak. Time is of course indivisible; it is we who divide it into phases for the purpose of our understanding. These divisions however, also have the effect of dividing the whole truth into compartments. The reality is that as people of this land, we are integrated. The template of my integration is this very land, and it is this that has given us a certain cultural aegis.

We have tried in this issue to properly understand the context of Gandhāra, both historical and cultural. Articles by scholars will doubtlessly enhance our wisdom. The current shape we have been saddled with by an imposed present is one that suppresses our truth as well as entity. The endeavour undertaken by *Manthan* can perhaps propel us in the direction of a realisation of the same.

We have been invaluablely assisted in this undertaking by the Department of Persian of the Jawaharlal Nehru University. Prof. Mazhar Asif, Head of the Department, has been available to us as guest editor of this issue. The dedication he has brought in enriching this issue of *Manthan* is indeed laudable and I express my respectful gratitude to him.

Sincerely



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Prof. Mazhar Asif

Guest Editorial

It was the year 1994, when I used to be a student at the Jawaharlal Nehru University. One evening, along with my friend Pushkar Mishra, who now happens to be a well known policy maker in the Uttar Pradesh unit of the BJP, I was sipping tea at the Ganga Dhaba. The topic of our discussion was Deendayal Upadhyaya. In the course of our talk it was decided that we would visit the Deendayal Research Institute the next day. We reached the Deendayal Research Institute at Karol Bagh at 1030 am sharp the following morning. We saw a figure clad in white kurta-pyjama sitting on a chair made of mulberry wood, his face emanating radiance and his mannerisms conveying the fragrance of wisdom. The relationship and companionship that was struck up the chairman of the DRI never loosened, nor has its memory diminished. The individual whom I saw gracing the chair that day was none other than Dr. Mahesh Chandra Sharma.

Meantime, I began looking for a job. Being a Sanghi, I was deemed untouchable for the Persianites. But then God is always there for those who have no one else. Finally, Goddess Kamakhya Herself called me in 1997 and I joined the Guwahati University. I immersed myself in research and teaching to the extent that I had no touch with the outside world. Guruji (Dr. Mahesh Chandra Sharma) did not contact nor did I get in touch with him.

Neither could I come, nor did he call

Of our affection, this was all that remained

However, the prayers of near and dear ones were answered and in November 2017, there was homecoming after nearly 20 years. After joining the Jawaharlal Nehru University, I received a phone call from guruji one day and I was instructed to be present at 28, Meena Bagh. I thus met guruji in the month of February after nearly 20 years. After I had paid my respectful greetings to him, guruji informed me that the Institute published a research magazine *Manthan* and the next issue was a special edition on Gandhāra. He wanted my contribution in this and despite being very busy, I agreed. After returning to the university, I opened educational discussions with two professors who had come from the University of Kabul in Afghanistan, Dr. Abdul Khaliq Rashid and Dr. Rashed Al Khairi. It was decided that the Afghan New Year Navroz should be celebrated and there should be a session on the ancient history of Afghanistan.

This programme was inaugurated in a grand way on March 25 with the rendition of Afghanistan's national song. Ambassador of Uzbekistan His Excellency Farhad R. Zaivo, JNU Vice-Chancellor Jagdish Kumar, Rector Chintamani Mahapatra Dr. Mahesh Chandra Sharma, Isa Habiba Ali, the chairman of the Azerbaijan Academy of Science and the Cultural Counsellor was present as distinguished and chief guest. Apart from these distinguished individuals, members of the Persian and Central Asian language study centres and students were present in large numbers. There was a discussion on the shape of Gandhāra special edition of *Manthan* in the final session.

The second meeting in this regard was held in the office of the Head of the Persian and Central Asian languages study centre, in which Dr. Mahesh Chandra Sharma too was present along with scholars of the Persian and Pashto languages.

This meeting discussed articles for research in this forthcoming edition and also to whom these would be allotted to.

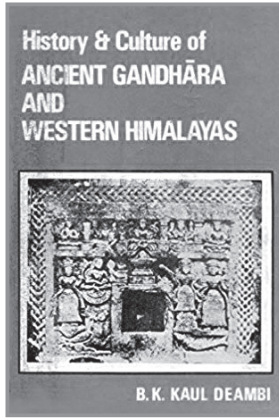
These discussions clearly revealed that since ancient times, entire region of today's Afghanistan, the region till the borders of Sistan in Iran and Balochistan was part of undivided India. This is mentioned not only in the *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata* and Vedic literature, but also in works composed in the Pahlavi language as well in the literature of folk languages like Pashto. Panini, who worked not only in Sanskrit but in grammar and linguistics thoroughly and was the most advanced grammarian and linguist, was originally a Pashto-speaker. This is why relations between Sanskrit and Pashto are very close and both languages have drawn many words from each other. The historical perspective of this linguistic give and take can be gleaned from Prof. A.K. Rashid's research essay *Panini: Great Linguist and True Representative of Indo-Pashto Language*. When talking about Gandhāra, how can one forget Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan? We remember him as the Frontier Gandhi for his contribution to our freedom movement and strident opposition to Partition from the outset. Devesh Khandelwal's essay *A Patriot of the Frontiers: Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan* uncovers hitherto untouched aspects of his life.

Although our borders might have been divided into many quarters politically, the way in which the region of Gandhāra is culturally very much an integral part of greater India is demonstrated by traditions of *gotras* (lineage), edicts and many other elements of folk spirit. These are analysed in the essay of Prof. Dr. Lokesh Chandra, an expert on ancient studies, titled *Classical Afghanistan*. Another of his essays titled *Bamiyan and the Buddhist Art of Colossi* delves into Bamiyan, which was renowned for these giant statues, and their relationship with Vedic culture. This essay of Prof. Lokesh Chandra is preserving for its endeavour.

Gandhāra is an important place not only in Buddhist but in the journey of India's entire artistic world. The article *The Buddha Image, Its Origin and Development* uses the Buddha as metaphor and explains its relations to the world of Indian art, is introduction of a book by Y. Krishna and has been included with due acknowledgement in this issue. Among India's great scholars, Mahapandit Rahul Sankrityayan has always held a unique view in every context. The reason for this is his realisation of practical experience apart from his immense knowledge. Isht Deo Sankrityayan's well researched essay *Gandhāra: Social and Cultural Changes* reveals this perspective. Not only Sanskrit classics, even modern Indian literature too does not neglect Gandhāra and its Puranic characters. Sonali Mishra in her article *Gandhāra in Indian Literature* sheds light on this strand of cultural unity.

It would not do to neglect the political aspect in the historical context while discussing the cultural aspects like literature, art and language. The article *The Political History of Gandhāra* by B.K. Kaul, a scholar of the Sharada script has been included in this issue with acknowledgement. The centre of this very Gandhāra is today known as Kandahar. Renowned Indologist Rajiv Malhotra's researched article *How Gandhāra became Kandahar* traces the entire story of Gandhāra's transition to Kandahar. The wave of devastation that swept from Arabia and easily conquered two major world powers took 350 years to enter the Khyber Valley. The forces that stoutly resisted them for so long were none other than the Hindu rulers of this region. Unfortunately, this part of our glorious history has remained obscured. Historian R.T. Mohan's essay *The Guardians of the Gate: Shahis of Kabul and Gandhāra* is a standout feature of this issue. Of course, there remains much more to be said, but those shall be in the editorial of the next issue.

Mazhar Asif



B.K. Kaul Deambi

Political History of Gandhāra

Gandhāra, one of the world's most effective melting pots, has seen a series of political seesaws in its history. Once upon a time it was one of the *ṣoḍaśa mahājanapadas* of Bharatavarsh. Then it suffered a number of foreign invasions and finally became a separate entity. To the point of view of culture we are still integrated, but it is quite interesting to know the political aspect of its past

It would be worthwhile to trace in outline the early history of this famous kingdom of north-western India which serving as the corridor of India has been one of the world's most effective melting pots.

Gandhāra is the later form of *Gandhārāī* mentioned in the *R̥gveda* and the *Atharvaveda* as the name of the people in the north-west of India.¹ In the *R̥gveda* the good wool of the sheep of the Gandhārīs is referred to.² In the *Atharvaveda* the Gandhārāīs are mentioned along with the *Mujavantās*, *Angas* and the *Magadhas*.³ In the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* Gandhāra figures as the name of a country ruled by certain Nagnajit.⁴

In the Buddhist text *Āṅguttara Nikāya* Gandhāra is mentioned among the sixteen great kingdoms (*Ṣoḍaśa mahājanapadas*) that existed in northern India in the 6th century B.C.⁵ At the time when the Buddhist canon was formulated, the territory of Gandhāra lay on both sides of the Indus and included the districts of Rawalpindi and Attock to the east of the Indus and those of Peshawar, Bannu and Kohat to its west.

In the middle of the sixth century B.C. Gandhāra was ruled by king Pukkusāti who was contemporary of the king Bimbisara of Magadha.⁶ In the later half of the sixth century B.C. Gandhāra seems to have

passed under the domination of the Achemanian rulers since in the Bahistun inscription of Darius a country or a people named Gandhāra is mentioned among the possessions of that ruler.⁷ Gandhāra those days appears to have been famous for teak wood. For the great palace that Darius built at Susa the teak wood was obtained from Gandhāra.

Gandhāra was known to the Greeks as Gandharites and its celebrated capital Puskalavati as Peukelaotes. At the time of the Macedonian invasion, the eastern part of Gandhāra was ruled by Omphis or Āmbī whereas the western portion with its capital at Puṣkarāvātī or Greek Peukelaotes was ruled by Astes or Aṣṭakarāja.⁸ It was Udabhāṇḍepura modern Ohind or Und, the flourishing city of Gandhāra that the Macedonian conqueror Alexander received the embassy of king Āmbhī in 326 B.C. The invasion of Alexander did not result in any permanent Macedonian occupation of this region but was indirectly responsible for the subsequent establishment of Greek art and culture in Gandhāra.

Within a few years of the departure of the Macedonian conqueror the whole region of Gandhāra was brought by the Maurya king Chandragupta under his sway. The Maurya rule in Gandhāra continued under Ashoka whose inscriptions in

Kharoṣṭhī and Aramaic characters have been found in this region.⁹ From the Buddhist Jātakas and the Greek sources we learn that Takṣaśilā modern Taxila was the capital city of Gandhāra and enjoyed for several centuries a great reputation as a university town famous for the arts and sciences of the day.

The Maurya rule in Gandhāra was supplanted by that of the Indo-Greeks. The greatest among the Indo-Greeks was Menander who is the hero of the famous Buddhist work *Milinda Pañho* which contains a dialogue on several important topics concerning Buddhist between Menānder and the great Buddhist savant Nāgasena. The coins of almost all the Indo-Greek rulers except those of Agathocles and Pantaleon bear legends in the Kharoṣṭhī characters on the reverse besides the Greek on the obverse. On the coins of Agathocles and Pantaleon we have Brāhmī instead of the Kharoṣṭhī.

Shortly before the commencement of the Christian era, Gandhāra was conquered by the Śakas under Maues. The Śakas were supplanted by the Parthians under Gondophernes whose inscription in the Kharoṣṭhī characters has been discovered at Takht-i-Bahi in the Peshawar district.¹⁰

The Śaka and the Parthian rule in Gandhāra was followed by that of the Kuṣāṇas. The greatest king of the dynasty named Kaniṣka ruled with Puruṣapura or Peshawar as his capital. The marvellous 400 feet high relic tower that he built at Puruṣapura was a wonder of the age and evoked high admiration in the minds of Chinese pilgrims

Sun-Yun and Hiuen Tsang who visited India in the sixth and seventh centuries respectively. The Kuṣāṇa age may be regarded as the classical age in the history of Gandhāra, the age marked by unprecedented development in art, science and literature. It was during this period that Buddhism especially its Mahayana sect attained phenomenal popularity and the famous school of art called the Gandhāra art born in the crucible of Gandhāra witnessed spectacular growth. The early imperial Kuṣāṇas employed Greek script on their coins. However, in the inscriptions of their regime Kharoṣṭhī is exclusively used. During the time of the later Kuṣāṇas usually called the Kidara Kuṣāṇas Brāhmī appears on their coinage. We have also a Brāhmī inscription of certain Kadambeśvaradāsa discovered at Abbottabad in the Hazara district.¹¹ It is dated in the year 25 which according to D.C. Sircar refers to the Gupta era and corresponds to A.D.344.¹²

During the weak rule of the later kings of the imperial Kuṣāṇa dynasty Gandhāra appears to have passed for some time into the hands of the Sassanians who had established a big empire in Persia. In the famous Trilingual inscription of Shahpur-I engraved on the outer walls of the fire temple at Naksh-i-Rustam (Iran) we find the large part of Kuṣāṇa territory

in Kabul and Gandhāra under the control of the Sassanids.¹³ A large number of Sasanid coin types have been found in this region. Kuṣāṇas seem to have soon asserted independence under Kidāra a large number of whose coins with the Brāhmī legend Kidāra-Kuṣāṇa-Śāha has been found in Gandhāra.¹⁴

The Kuṣāṇa rule in Gandhāra seems to have continued till the middle of the 5th century A.D. when it was followed by that of the Hūṇas. The Hūṇa power collapsed about the middle of the 6th century A.D. and soon after Gandhāra came under the sway of the Turkish Shahi dynasty which flourished in Kabul and Gandhāra and ruled till the middle of the 9th century A.D.

An account of this dynasty has been given by al-Biruni who describes the rules of this dynasty as of Tibetan origin. "The Hindus" says al-Biruni, "had kings residing in Kabul, Turks who were said to be of Tibetan origin."¹⁵ The first ruler of this dynasty according to al-Biruni was Barhatikin who brought the neighboring countries under his sway and ruled them under the title of a Shahiya of Kabul. Al-Biruni's statement is corroborated by Oukong who visiting Gandhāra in the years 753-754 A.D. found that country under the rule of a family of Turkish origin. At the time of Hieun Tsang's visit the Turkish

Shortly before the commencement of the Christian era, Gandhāra was conquered by the Śakas under Maues. The Śakas were supplanted by the Parthians under Gondophernes whose inscription in the Kharoṣṭhī characters has been discovered at Takht-i-Bahi in the Peshawar district.

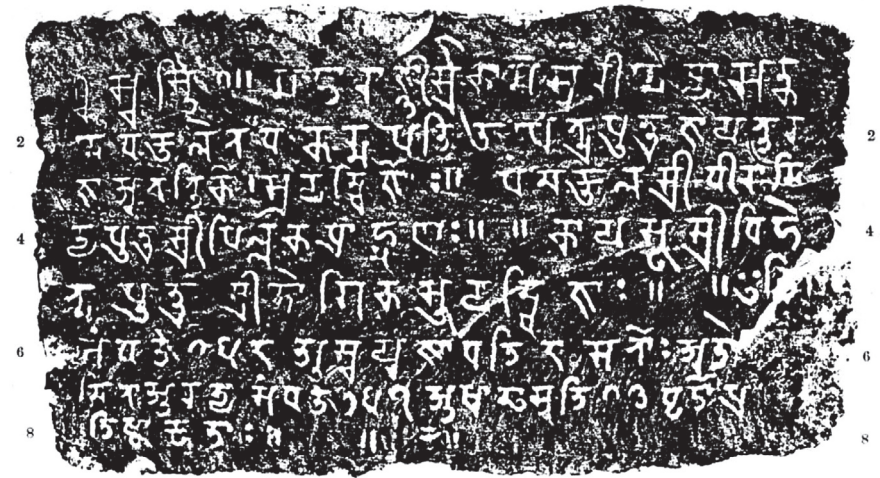
Manthan

Shāhi rulers of Gandhāra were subject to the sway of Kashmir¹⁶ and continued to remain so till the reign of Lalitāditya in whose court some of the Shahi Princes held very high offices.¹⁷ The capital of this dynasty was at Udabhāṇḍepura. Waihind of al-Biruni and identified with modern Und or Hund, a village situated on the right bank of the Indus about fifteen miles above Attock.¹⁸

Kalarapala

The last ruler of this dynasty named Laghutarman was according to al-Biruni, imprisoned by his Brāhmaṇa wazir Kallar who founded an independent dynasty called the Hindu Shāhī dynasty.¹⁹ No other information about Kallar is furnished by al-Biruni. He is, however, mentioned in our earliest Śāradā record from Gandhāra discovered from Dewal near Hazara in the Gandun territory in Pakistan.²⁰ The inscription belongs to the Shāhī king Bhīmadeva who is described in the record as *Śrīkalarā (pā) la vamśodbhava*, i.e. born in the lineage of the illustrious Kalarapāla. So the account of al-Biruni regarding the name of the founder of the Brāhmaṇa Shāhī dynasty is corroborated by epigraphic evidence.

Kalhaṇa in his *Rājataranṅinī* mentions Shāhī king named Lalliya who was contemporary of Śaṅkaravarman of Kashmir (A.D. 883-910) and who ruled with his capital at Udabhandapura.²¹ His kingdom was situated between the Daradas who occupied the territory extending from Citral and Yasin across the Indus regions of Gilgit, Cilas and Bunji to the Kishenganga valley in the



A sarada inscription from Hund

immediate north of Kashmir²² and the Turuṣkas, the Muslim invaders who checked by the Shāhīs were attempting to break their strongholds and advance into the Indian Territory.

This Lalliya Shahi of the *Rājataranṅinī* is identified with Kallar of al-Biruni.²³ The description of Lalliya's power, his capital and the territory over which he ruled make it highly probable that Lalliya Shahi and Kallar denote the same person. But there is apparent difficulty in accepting this identification. The account of the Brāhmaṇa Shāhīs as given by al-Biruni must be fairly reliable as he is the earliest authority on the subject and the period of the Shāhīs he was dealing with was nearer to his own times and if Lalliya was the founder of the Brāhmaṇa Shāhī dynasty al-Biruni would have given the name of the founder, as such, and not Kallar. It has been suggested by Prof. Seybold that the writing Kallar in the single Arabic manuscript of the al-Biruni's *Indica*, as we have it, is a mistake for Lalliya and errors in copying the proper names are not rare in the Arabic manuscripts owing to their paleographic

peculiarities.²⁴ However, in the face of our definite epigraphic evidence cited above it is difficult to presume that the founder of the Brāhmaṇa Shāhī family was Lalliya and not Kallar. The Dewai inscription referred to above would have us believe that the full name of the founder of Brāhmaṇa Shāhī dynasty was Kalarapāla and Kallar might be his short or Arabic name.

A large number of silver and copper coins with humped bull and *Trisūla* of Śiva on the obverse has been found which contain the Śāradā legend Syāpati or Sapalapatideva.²⁵ The Spalpati of the coins has been identified by Thomas with our Shāhī king Kallar.²⁶ Although there is absolutely no similarity between the names Syalpati and Kallar. Thomas considers them as one and the same on the assumption that the Arabic copyists commit great mistakes while transcribing Sanskrit name into Arabic. He also points out that keeping in view the mistakes of the Arabic copyists we should instead of endeavoring to identify Hindu names through the names of the Arabic manuscripts correct the Arabic from the unquestionable

record of the coins themselves and instead of applying coins to the kings we should apply kings to their own coins. However, this view of Edward Thomas is not accepted by scholars like Eliot who says: "This is carrying speculation to an extreme and there is no warrant whatever for the presumed identification."²⁷ According to Cunningham Spalapati corresponding to Sanskrit Smarapati war-lord or commander-in-chief, was the actual title of the war minister in Iran, Parthia, Hyrkania and Armenia. He proposes to take Kallar as the personal name of the king and Spalapati the designation by which he was actually known.²⁸ Pratipal Bhatia attributes the first issue of bull and horseman type coins with the legend Spalapati, resembling according to her the Huma coinage to Barhatkin.²⁹ The latest issue of the same series bearing the letter 'ka' on the reverse is attributed by her to Kallar on the contention that the letter ka represents the abbreviation of the name Kallar.³⁰

No more information is available about Kalarapāla either from our records or from the numismatic sources. He is, however, credited with the foundation of a temple called after his own name Kallar or Sassida Kallar and situated about three miles due south of the village of Shah Muhammad Wali in the Attock district.³¹

Sāmantadeva

Covered so far, he is however, indentified with king Sāmantadeva of copper coins having a couchant bull with the legend Sāmantadeva along the margin above and the lanced horseman on the reverse.³² The coins with the Śāradā legend Sāmantadeva have been found in very large numbers and the same type was continued for a very long time not only by the Shāhīs but also by the Tomaras and the Cāhamanas and after them by the Muslim conquerors. Sāmantadeva thus appears to have been a very powerful king and it is not unlikely that the king Samand of al-Biruni is the same as Sāmantadeva of the copper coins.³³

Kamalu

According to al-Biruni, Sāmānd was succeeded by Kamalu.³⁴ Al-Biruni does not as usual furnish any information about the king. Kamalu is, however, identified with Kamalova described as Rai of Hindustan by Muhammad Afi in his Jawami'ul Hikayat and a contemporary of the Saffarid prince Aur ibn Layth (A.D. 879-900) against whom he is started to have fought a battle at Śakavand situated at a distance of nine kms. From the town of Baraki-Barak in Afghanistan.³⁵

According to Kalhana, Prabhākaradeva, the superintendent of the treasury (*koṣādhyakṣa*) of king Gopālavarman (A.D. 902-904)

vanquished the Shāhī kingdom at Udabhāṇḍapura and bestowed the kingdom of the rebellious Shahi upon Toramana, Lalliya's son, and gave him the (new) Kamaluka.³⁶ Kamalu of al-Biruni and Jawami'ul-Hikāyāt is identified with Kamaluka of the *Rājatarangiṇī*.³⁷

While it is possible to agree that Kamalu of al-Biruni and Kamloa of Muhammad Afi are identical it is difficult to place reliance on Kalhana's account. He, for reasons unknown, does not give the name of the rebellious Shahi. Again Gopālavarman's date as given by Kalhaṇa³⁸ does not fit in the chronological sequence as given by Afi³⁹ according to which Kamalu ascended the throne much before Gopālavarman. Again it is highly doubtful if the campaign of Gopālavarman's officer against the Shāhīs is based on fact. From what is recorded in the *Rājatarangiṇī* about Śaṅkaravarman (A.D. 883-902) one of the most powerful rulers of Kashmir and predecessor of Gopālavarman it is clear that he could not make much headway against the Shāhīs.⁴⁰ It is doubtful if Gopālavarman who has no conquest to his credit and who ruled only for two years could have launched a campaign against the more powerful Shāhīs.

No epigraphic record of Kamalu has come to light so far.

Bhīmadeva

The next ruler according to al-Biruni was Bhīma who is no doubt the same ruler known to us from the Dewai inscription of his reign referred to above, from the Hund slab inscription of the time of his successor Jayapāladeva⁴¹

While it is possible to agree that Kamalu of al-Biruni and Kamloa of Muhammad Afi are identical it is difficult to place reliance on Kalhana's account. He, for reasons unknown, does not give the name of the rebellious Shahi

and from the *Rājatarangiṇī*⁴² The Dewai inscription describes Bhīma as Shāhī and with sovereign titles of *Paramabhṭṭāraka Mahārājādhirāja Parameśvara*. He is also described as *gada-hasta* which may indicate his Vaiṣṇavite leanings. He is also described, as born in the lineage of Kalarapāla. In the Hund inscription he is described as the ex-ruler of Udabhāṇḍapura, the chief among the kings (*bhūbhṛtam-mukhyo*) and of terrific valour (*Bhīmaparākramah*) who vanquished his enemies and thus saved his kingdom from their depredations. Though Bhīma's enemy is not specifically named in the record but according to Abdur Rahman the reference here is to Abu Ishāq Ibrāhim, the son of Alaptigin who was evicted from Ghazna by Abu' Ali Lawik with the help of the Shāhī forces.⁴³

In the *Rājatarangiṇī* Bhīmadeva is mentioned as the Shāhī king of Udabhāṇḍapura who was the maternal grandfather of queen Diddā, daughter of kings Simharāja of Lohara and wife of king Kṣemagupta of Kashmir (A.D. 950-958). He is also credited with the foundation of Viṣṇu shrine of Bhīmakeśava in Kashmir.

Thus Bhīmadeva true to his name appears to have been a very powerful ruler of the Shāhī dynasty who not only wielded considerable power in his own kingdom but also in the adoptive country of his granddaughter. Both the Dewai inscription and the *Rājatarangiṇī* testify to his Vaiṣṇavite leanings. Coins with the usual recumbent humped bull and the lanced horseman and the legend Śrī Bhīmadeva attributed to him.⁴⁴

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Jayapāladeva

That Bhīmadeva was succeeded by Jayapāladeva is testified by both al-Biruni's account and the Hund inscription noted above. Jayapāla also figures prominently in the Muslim chronicles as the opponent of the Yamini kings of Ghazni. Besides the Hund inscription Jayapāla is also known to us from another inscription of his reign found on a hill north of Barikot in upper Swat.⁴⁵ The inscription which is now nearly obliterated mentions Jayapāla with the sovereign titles of *Paramabhṭṭāraka* and *Mahārājādhirāja* and records that some person founded something at Vajīrasthāna (modern Vaziristan). The record gives no details about Jayapāla but points to the extension of his dominions upto the Swat valley. The Hund slab inscription of the year 146 mentions Jayapālas as the ruling king when a temple dedicated to god, Śankara was consecrated by certain Caṅgulavarman, son of Paṅgula. The record does not furnish any historical information about Jayapāla, the brief description of Jayapāla that it contains being purely conventional. He is thus described as the 'sole hero whose very pure fame having left heaven has attained the eternal above of Brahmā'.⁴⁶

Jayapāla's whole life appears to have been spent in a long drawn struggle against the onslaughts of

the Yamini rulers of Ghazna. The detailed account of his heroic struggle against the Yamini rulers Subaktigin and Mahmud has been given by Utbi in his *Tārikh-i-Yāminī*, by Firishta in his *Tārikh-i-Firishṭā* and by Nizam-u-din in the *Tabaqāti Akbarī*. According to these sources Jayapāla met reverses more than once in the battlefield and unable to bear the humiliation causes by the successive defeats resigned the crown to his son Ānandapāla and burnt himself alive on a funeral pyre.

The date of Jayapāla

The Hund slab inscription of the time of Jayapāla referred to above is dated in the year 146, on the fifth lunar day of the bright half of Mādhava or Vaiśākha.⁴⁷ It is not known to which era the year 146 refers. The end of Jayapāla's reign as per the Muslim sources referred to above is placed in the year 1002 A.D. i.e. a year after he suffered defeat at the hands of Mahmud on 8 Muharram 392 corresponding to 27th November 1001.⁴⁸ Jayapāla according to the Hund slab inscription succeeded Bhīmadeva who was the maternal grand-father of queen Diddā who was de facto ruler of Kashmir from A.D. 958 to 1003. He endowed a temple of Bhīma Keśava during the reign of Kṣemagupta which lasted from 950 to 958. Bhīmadeva as seen above also appears to have

taken part in Abu' Ali Lawik's campaign against Abu Ishāq Ibrāhīm, the son of Alaptigin which took place in A.D. 963⁴⁹ which is the last known date of Bhīmadeva and probably the last important event of his reign. Presuming that Bhīmadeva died soon after we may place his death and the accession of Jayapāla in the year 965, thus Jayapāla appears to have ruled from 965 to 1002 A.D.

The question arises as to which era the year 146 our record refers. It has been suggested by Abdur Rahman⁵⁰ and Prof. Jagannath Agarwal⁵¹ that the era in question is the Shāhī era which started with the accession of Kallar or Kalarapāla in 850 A.D. according to Editor,⁵² and in 843 A.D. according to Abdur Rahman.⁵³ The year 146 would as such correspond to either 996 or 986 both of which fall well within the reign of Jayapāla.

Almost all of our records from Kashmir, Chamba and Kangra are dated in the *Laukika* or the *Saptarṣi* era also called the *Śāstra* era. That this era was also in use in Gandhāra is indicated by the Gaggi (Swat) rock inscription of Masud dated *Śāstra* year 9 or A.D. 1133⁵⁴ and the Peshawar Museum inscription of Vaṇhaḍaka dated *Laukika* year 538 or 1461 to 970-71 A.D.⁵⁵ The year 146 if referred to *Laukika* era corresponds to 970-71 A.D. which also falls within the reign of Jayapāla.

Anantadeva and Queen Kāmeśvarī devī

Our other two records from Gandhāra also hail from Hund, ancient Udabhāṇḍapura. The first engraved on a rectangular slab white stone records the construction of a temple (devakula) by Māhārājñī

Śrī Kāmeśvarīdevī and its consecration between Samvat 154 and 157⁵⁶ and the second incised on white marble stone and preserved only in part mentions a king named Anantadeva and alludes to his struggle with the Turuṣkas.⁵⁷ The second is contemporaneous with the first since the three individuals mentioned in connection with the construction of the temple are also mentioned in the record of Anantadeva.

Anantadeva mentioned in our record as king *nṛpati* is not known from any other source. He is described as one dexterous in the task of incessantly striking down the growing and formidable might of the *Turuṣkas*. The *Turuṣkas* would denote the Arab or more particularly the Yamini forces. The description would indicate that Anantadeva was engaged in a long down struggle with the Yamini invaders in his attempt to thwart their aggressive and expansionist designs.

The date of Anantadeva is not far removed from the dates mentioned in the Kāmeśvarīdevī's inscription, viz, the years 154 and 157. The years if referred

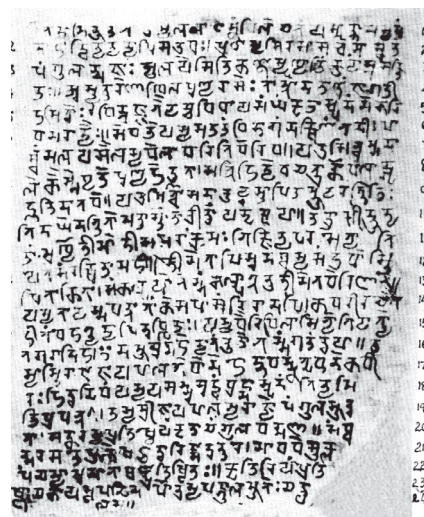
to the so called Shāhī era would correspond to A.D. 997 and 1000 or 1004 and 1007 A.D. and if referred to the Laukika era the resulting dates would correspond to A.D. 978-79 and 981-82 A.D. This was the period when Hund or *Udabhāṇḍapura* as seen above was ruled by Jayapāla. Since the two rulers could not rule over the same place at the same time it may be suggested that Anantadeva was a subordinate chief ruling under his sovereign Jayapāladeva but the epithet *nṛpati* of Anantadeva mentioned in the record however, does not indicate his subordinate status.

Thus in the present state of our knowledge we are not in a position to state what relationship did Anantadeva have with Jayapāladeva and what was the position of queen Kamesvaridevi vis-à-vis the two rulers.

Jayapāla was followed by Ānandapāla and the latter by Trilocanapāla but no epigraphic record of the last two rulers has come down to us.

The rule of the Hindu Shāhī dynasty in Gandhāra come to an end in A.D. 1021 when Trilocanapāla was killed by Mahmud of Ghazni.

Mahmud, besides the Muslim chronicles is also known to us from a type of his coins which contain a translation of the Muhammadan Kalimah in Sanskrit and in Śāradā characters. The coins bear the legend Ab(v) *yaktam eka, Muhammad Avatāra, Nṛpati Mahmud*, the one eternal, Mohammad the messenger, Mahmud the king. The circular legend on the same coins reads Ayam Tankam Mahmud-Pure ghaṭite Hijriyena Samvat 418, the tanka was struck at Mahmud-Pura in the Hijri year 418 or A.D.



An inscription of the period of Raja Jayapaladeva of Udabhandapura (Hund)

1027.⁵⁸

Mahmud was followed by his son Masud of whose reign a rock inscription in Śāradā characters has been discovered from Ghaggai, north-west of Burdwan in Sawat.⁵⁹ The inscription is dated in the Śāstra (Saptarṣi)

year 9 which corresponds to A.D. 1033. The name of the ruler given in the record is Hammīra which is the Sanskritised form of Persian Amir a title borne by the rulers of Ghazni. Since Mahmud died in A.D. 1030 it is evident that the Muslim ruler mentioned in

the record with the title Hammira is Mahmud's son and successor Masud who ascended the throne of Ghazni in A.D. 1031. ■

Courtesy: History & Culture of Ancient Gandhāra and Western Himalayas (Book)

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Prof. Dr. Lokesh Chandra

Classical Afghanistan

Not only Gandhāra, even we find mentions of today's entire Afghanistan in one or the other form in Indian literature since the Vedic Period. It is a different matter that our Afghan brethren had had to suffer excruciation of severing from their roots, but actually, they are the people who feel proud of their origin. An effort of searching those very roots through cultural evidence

The present configuration of Afghanistan was determined in the 19th century through negotiations between the Russian and British empires. Till then regions constituting the country were named after the tribes inhabiting them. The northern parts were known as Turkistan and Kantagan (a major Uzbek clan) till the 1960s. The central region is still known as Hazarajat after the Hazaras. From the 14th century till the founding of the present state in 1747 the same Afghanistan represented the area occupied by the Pakhtuns. The royal title of King Habibullah (1901-1919) was "Ruler of the God-granted Kingdom of Afghanistan, Turkistan and Their Dependencies". Finally, King Amanullah (1919-1929) officially fixed the term Afghanistan for the whole country. The Afghans have been proud of their ancestry and called the country Ariana 'The Aryan Land', and the national aircraft carrier is still the Ariana Airlines. A thousand years ago, the Afghans lost their roots which had been firm and strong for several millenia. Gandhāra area of Afghanistan is the only region which figures in the seven notes of Indian music: *sa re ga ma pa dha ni sa*. The third note *ga* is *gāndhāra*. It is symbolic of the vigour that flows in the blood of time: it eternalises the youth of Gandhāra in dedication

to the goddess of rhythm. The classical Sanskrit treatise on music, the *Saṅgīta-ratnākara* says that the note *ga* is of divine descent (*ayam tu devakula-sambhūtaḥ*).

Gandhāra is from *gandha* 'perfume'. It is a land of the perfume of culture, that enshrines in its vast and pervasive ruins the provocative layering of references to different moments in time. My gotra is *mangal* which I share with Afghan brothers. During the communist regime in Afghanistan, the Deputy Prime Minister was Mr. Sarwar Mangal. Several family names in the Panjab recall the original Afghan homes of their bearers, who had to leave their land from the eleventh century onwards. Bami (there are 47 Bamis in the telephone directory of Delhi) are from Bami-yan, Kakkars are from Kakrak (which has a colossal statue of the Buddha), Sikris are from Sikri in the Loriyan Tangai Valley which was once a city of numerous spires of *śikhara* (hence *śikhari* 'having spires'). The Lahore Museum has over 2500 stone sculptures and decorated architectural elements from from Sikri. The Bahls and Bhallas migrated from Bāhlika or Bactria, now Balkh, once resplendent with Buddhist sculptures in the monasteries.

Afghanistan is dominated by place names derived from Sanskrit. Ṛgveda

Manthan

5.53.9 prays to the four rivers of Afghanistan to give all the bliss. They are Rasā, Anitābhā, Kubhā and Krumu. Kubhā is the Kabul river, Krumu is the Kurram, Rasā is Rangha or Rai. Another hymn to rivers in the Ṛgveda 10.75.6 refers to Rasā, Kubhā, Krumu, Gomatī and other rivers as gleaming in their mightiness, moving along in volumes through the realms, rich in chariots, robes, and ample in wealth. The Gomatī is Gomal, and certain names remain unidentified. There are four important stream-systems in Afghanistan, Kabul, Hari Rud, Argandab-Helmand, and the Oxus which forms the northern boundary. The people along the Valley of Kabul River are known as Kubhakas in the *Māraṅḍeya-purāṇa*. The River Panjkora joins it from the north. Its ancient name was Gauri corresponding to the *Gouraios* or *Guræus* of the Greeks. The rivers Kurram and Gomal flowing from west to east have already been cited from the *Ṛgveda* as Krumu and Gomati. Gomati means the river with ample flow of water (go). The Hari Rud flows from east to west with Herat on its right bank. Herat was known in ancient times as Sarayu and in Avesta it is Harayu from which the modern name Herat is derived. It corresponds to Greek 'Arius', from which the Herat province was named 'Aria' by the Greeks. The Arghandab is ultimately derived from Sarasvati

through several phonetic changes. It became Harahvaiti in Avesta and Arachauti in Greek and gave the name Arachosia to the region through which it flows:

Sa ra sva tī (Sanskrit)
Ha ra hvai ti (Avesta)
'A ra chao ti (Greek)
'A ra cho si-a (Greek)
(-ia as in
Ind-ia)

Helmand is Haetumant in Avesta and Setumant in Sanskrit. Setumant means 'with a bridge'. The Murgab River originates on the western slopes of the Hindukush and flows through Turkmenistan with Merv on its left bank. It is the Sanskrit *Mṛga*, Avesta Mouru, Old Persian Margu and Greek Margiana and region through which it flows. The Mṛgas are mentioned as one of the four Śaka tribes in the *Mahābhārata*. Sanskrit manuscripts were found in Merv. Margiana formed a satrapy in the empire of Darius. Hindukush is the dominant geographical feature of the land, and the great alpine chain. According to the Arabian traveller writer Ibn Batutah (1304-1368) it became known as Hindu-kush (meaning 'Hindu-killer') because of the number of Hindu slaves who perished in passing (EBr. 11.514). The Wakhan Corridor is an important zone of the Hindukush mountain system. It is mentioned in the astronomical work of Varāhamihira entitled *Bṛhat-*

samhitā and in the Buddhist text of Divyāvadāna as Vokkāṇa.

The Pakhtuns are the dominant group inhabiting Afghanistan. They appear four times in the Ṛgveda: in the Battle of Ten Kings (Dāśarājña), a Paktha is the protégé of the Aśvins, as allies of the king of the Pūrū tribe, and Turvāyaṇa as an opponent of Cyavana. They are the *Paktues* mentioned in the northwest of India by Herodotus.

The Mohmands are the Madhumant people in the great grammar of Pāṇini. He mentions the country Madhumant in the region of Gandhāra. The Mahābhārata also mentions them as a people of the northwest. They occupy the territory to the north of the Kabul River, and their homeland Dir-Bajaur covers an area of 1200 square miles. Their close neighbours are the Afridi-Tirah, who are also mentioned by Pāṇini as Āprīta. Both the Mohmands and Afridi were powerful tribes. Their homelands Dir and Tirah are preserved in Patañjali who refers to them as pair names *Dvirāvatīko deśaḥ*, *Trirāvatīko deśaḥ* or the country between two rivers and the country between three rivers. The former is Dir the land between the two rivers Kunar and Panjkora. Tirah refers to the three rivers Kabul, Bara and Indus (Kubhā-Varā-Sindhu). The river Varā flowing through Peshawar is given in a list of rivers in the Bhīṣma-parva of the *Mahābhārata*. Pāṇini mentions reputed wine *Kāpiśāyana* from Kāpiśī or Begram. Excellent quality of raisin was grown at Kāpiśī and widely exported. In the third century BC, Bindusāra has sent for raisin wines. Kāpiśī is the home of the grape even

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today. Kauṭalya states that wines were brought for the kings at Pāṭaliputra. He names two varieties of wine, namely *Kāpiśāyana* and *hārahūraka*. *Kāpiśāyana* was produced in the north of Afghanistan and *hārahūraka* in the south of the valley of Harahvaiti from black grapes, which are still called *harahūrā*.

A number of tribes of Afghanistan are mentioned by Paṇini. The Pawinda tribe is Pavindāyana, the Karshbun tribe is the war-like Kārṣapaṇa, the Bugti tribe is Bhagavitti in the Kāśikā commentary on Paṇini, and the Afridi tribe (who pronounce their name as Apridi) are mentioned as Āprīta. They correspond to Aparytai of Herodotus. Patañjali in his great commentary on Paṇini's grammar refers to Naiṣa Janapada which is Nishapur to the west of Afghanistan and today within the frontiers of Iran.

The ancient name of the Pamir region to the northeast of Afghanistan was Kamboja. Its capital was Dvārakā according to Pali literature. It can be identified with modern Darwaz. It thus marked the true gateway of India when Afghanistan was part of the Indic cultural and political system. It is a significant geographical conception.

The *Mahābhārata* also refers to the tribes of Afghanistan. Gāndhāri the queen of Dhṛtarāṣṭra came from this region. The people of Lamghan are called Lampākas (modern family name is Lamba), the Ghor tribe is referred to as Ghoraka in the *Mahābhārata* and as Ghora in the *Mārkaṇḍeya-purana*, the Pore tribe is mentioned as the Paurakas in the *Sabhāparva*, the people of the Kunduz region are Kundamanas

Oxus was the dividing line between Afghanistan and Turkistan in the north. It is ancient Vakṣu of the *Mahābhārata* and *Purāṇas*. The *Mahābhārata* refers to the war-like tribal people who were brave, dwelt in caves, and lived under their tribal leaders

in the *Sabhāparva*, the Kanawari tribe is the Karṇa-pravarāṇa in the *Mahābhārata*, and the Hunza people are the Hamsakāyana in the *sabhāparva*.

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On the death of Alexander, Seleucus Nikator his heir in Asia, attempted to incorporate the territories in the NW of India. He was faced by the unified state of Candragupta Maurya who had placed it on solid foundations. By a treaty signed by them, Candragupta got his rights over Paropamisadae, Aria, Arachos in Afghanistan and Gedrosia (Baluchistan) in exchange for marriage rights and 500 elephants. Aśoka securely held Paropamisadae. A bilingual inscription of Aśoka in Greek and Aramaic was found at Kandahar during digging in April 1957. The Greek text was meant for the Greeks living within the borders of the empire and the Aramaic text was intended for the Kambojas or Iranians. Afghanistan was within the imperium of the Mauryas.

The Kushan empire attained its height under Kujula Kadphises in the first century AD, and

under Kaniṣka whose summer capital was at Surkh Kotal in Afghanistan. He convened the Fourth Buddhist Council which adopted authorised résumés of the Buddhist Canon. Eminent Buddhist authors like Aśvaghōṣa and Vasumitra enjoyed his patronage. A Bactrian inscription of Kaniṣka was discovered at a site in the Afghan province of Baghlan on a hill known as Kafir's Castle in the region of Rabatak. Sim-Williams and Cribb point out that the lion and lotus motifs found along with the inscription are of Indian style. The summer capital of the Kushans was Kāpiśī (mod. Begram). Begram panels represent two yakṣīs standing under a gateway like the famous portals of Sanchi. The enticing feminine figures are related to the Mathura school. The Begram ivory panels that originally decorated a piece of wooden furniture recall the yakṣīs of Sanchi and the earlier figures on the Bharhut railings. Begram is 40 miles of Kabul and is famous in the Travels of Hsüan-tsang who says that there were 100 convents, and 6000 monks of the Mahayana school. The stupas were of imposing height and could be seen on every side shining in their grandeur. An image discovered at Begram represents in the centre of a group of foreigners the tribals of Afghanistan with their characteristic broad trousers. They seem to be some Afghans of today dwelling in the

neighbourhood.

Within a few miles of Begram are the sites of Paitava and Shotorak which was the dwelling place of Chinese hostages captured by Kaniṣka. The plan of the monastery corresponds closely to that of Taxila. Reliefs of Dīpaṅkara Buddha, of Maitreya and worshippers, and of Buddha worshipped by the three Kāśyapa brothers portray the piety of the Kushans.

Hadda and nagarahara with their thousand stupas beckoned Chinese pilgrims of the stature of Fa-hsien and Hsüan-tsang to worship their sacred relics. Hadda was flourishing in the seventh century with its golden mirage of spires. It sank into oblivion with the invasions of Islam. The spiritual and physical tumult and agony has left its marks on the heads of monks and nobles. The family name Handa pertains to the once upon a time citizens of Hadda (pronounced *Hāṇḍa* = *Bhāṇḍa* 'Warehouse') who migrated eastwards. The beautiful stucco of a goddess holding the Triratna (Buddha, Dharma, Sangha), a head of Buddha, a youthful pilgrim holding a pilgrim's staff and alms bowl are characterized by refinement and abiding faith. Over a thousand separate objects have been found from the stupa at Tapa Kalan.

Nagarahara was a major trade and religious centre in the Buddhist period. Its flourishing monasteries have been described by Hsüan-tsang. French excavations have brought to light rich treasures of art, objects of daily use, and the civil strife of our times has brought out very early manuscripts going back to the first of second century AD. This region was a part of

Hadda and nagarahara with their thousand stupas beckoned Chinese pilgrims of the stature of Fa-hsien and Hsüan-tsang to worship their sacred relics. Hadda was flourishing in the seventh century with its golden mirage of spires

the kingdom of the Hindushahis before being conquered by Sebuktigin and his son Mahmud of Ghazna. In 1570 it was rebuilt by Akbar, and its name was Islamized as Jalalabad, after his name Jalaluddin Akbar. In 1964 Laghman and Kunar provinces were carved out of it, and its name was revived as Nangrahar or Ningrahar province.

The honeycomb of rock cut sanctuaries under the snow covered peaks of the Hindukush and the colossal images of the Buddhas Maitreya and Rocana at Bamiyan were the glory of classical Afghanistan. They represented sanctified imperium, splendour shared by the ruler and his people, stabilisation and prosperity of the kingdom in a common cultural syndrome with neighbouring kingdoms, in the awesome majesty of the colossi. The two colossi, showering inexhaustible blessings, were saviours against all attacks. Hsüan-tsang says: "Its golden hues sparkle on every side and its precious ornaments dazzle the eyes by its brightness". The 120 feet image is a gigantic magnification of the Gandhāra idiom, a *virāṭ puruṣa*, with a gigantic painting of the Sun-God on his chariot in the soffit of the niche. The 175 feet statue of Rocana Buddha is an enlarged version of a statue of the Gupta period of Mathura style. The fragments of wall-paintings which cling to the sides of the niche

are a version of Ajanta. Hsüan-tsang found it a great centre of Buddhism with ten monasteries and over a thousand monks. The inhabitants were remarkable in their love of Buddha Dharma. They were lokottaravādins. The French Archaeological Delegation has counted about two thousand caves. Many of the caves are painted with beautiful figures. Some leaves of Sanskrit manuscripts on birchbark (*bhūrjapatra*) were discovered in a cave. They are written in different scripts that belong from the 3rd to the 8th century. They are fragments of several texts on Abhidharma, Vinaya, etc. There are short inscriptions in ink in a cave near the smaller colossus. The headgear of a king and queen in a painting of the interior of the niche of this colossus is purely Sassanian. Hsüan-tsang visited Bamiyan in AD 642. The Korean pilgrim Hecho found the monasteries flourishing in 728. A Sher 'king' (from *kṣatriya*) of Bamiyan was appointed governor of Yaman in 844. There was still a large Buddhist temple with images in the 9th century. This temple was destroyed by the Saffarid Yaqub and the images were taken to Baghdad in 871. In the 17th century Aurangzeb bombarded the Great Buddha with his artillery.

The 32nd book of the Avatamsaka-sūtras, now available only in their Chinese and Tibetan translations, says: "In Afghanistan

there is a dwelling place called 'Producing Compassion' where enlightening beings have lived since ancient times". (Cleary's translation 2.219). The last sutra of the Avatamsaka was translated into Chinese by Āryasthira in 388-407 under the title Ramyaka-sutra. Ramyaka is the original Sanskrit name of Lamqan or Lamghan. *Ramya* means 'beautiful', and it is no wonder that Babar expatiates on the beauty of its forested hillsides. The two colossi of Bamiyan represent the 7th and the 1000th of the Thousand Buddhas, namely, from Maitreya to Rocana. The *Pei-shih* refers to Fan-yang, which Pelliot considers to be a transliteration of Bamiyan. It is possible that the colossi at Yün-kang were inspired by those at Bamiyan. The colossi of Bamiyan were an inspiration for the imperial dynasties of China, Korea and Japan.

The civil war in Afghanistan has brought an outflow of Sanskrit manuscripts. The Kharosthi birch-bark scrolls in the British Library were found in the ruins near Hadda in five clay pots. They are Buddhist texts in Gandhari Prakrit and total 29 scrolls. They belong to the first century AD and are among the oldest Buddhist manuscripts. The names of the sects were inscribed on the pots. They were in the news in the TV Program of the Japan Broadcasting Corporation (NHK).

Mr. Martin Schoyen who lives in an out of the way hill town Spikkestad in Norway has purchased all the leaves and fragments of Buddhist texts from Afghanistan. The manuscripts range from the second to the eighth century, and are ten thousand leaves and fragments.

They are written on palm-leaves, birch bark, and vellum, but none on paper. Some of them come from a cave in Bamiyan. For the first time 200 Kharosthi palm-leaf fragments have been found. Scholars from Japan, USA, UK, Norway and Germany are studying them. Mr. Schoyen purchased a pot, inscribed in Kharosthi, in which there were several manuscripts charred like chocolate. Vandalism destroyed the great culture of Afghanistan.

Three miles southeast of Bamiyan is Kakrak with a series of cave temples around a rock cut colossus that is over 40 feet high. A perfect painting from Kakrak illustrates the Twelve Light Buddhas in a circular maṇḍala.

In the hills overlooking the Ghorband Valley, the French Archaeological Mission discovered the monastery of Fondukistan. A board of coins issued by Hephthalite rulers and of Khusrau II of Iran (590-628) date the foundation of the monastery in the 7th century. The little niches surrounding the courtyards were filled with clay images which gaily painted backgrounds. The illusionistic combination of painting and sculpture was the beginning of a new technique that spread throughout Central Asia and China. It is found in the Thousand Buddha Caves at Tunhuang. The murals of Fondukistan reflect the Sassanian and Indian styles. Tārās and Bodhisattvas parallel similar forms in the murals of Ajanta. The exquisite mudrās of the hands, the delicate beauty of the swaying bodies in tribhaṅga, the faces lost in sensuous inner reverie, and the separately modelled necklaces and diadems heighten their grace and hauteur

in the sensuous and other-worldly. Fondukistan represents the delicate flowering of Buddhist art in Afghanistan.

Sung-yun, the Chinese ambassador to the King of Gandhāra in AD 520, mentions the violent disposition of the Hun king Mihiragula. He was a powerful king who ruled over Gandhāra, and was a devotee of Sthāṇu or Śiva, as stated in an inscription of Yaśodharman.

In the days of its supremacy Kabul was the centre of a number of Buddhist monasteries. It was the capital of the later Kushan kings for centuries. The Kushan kings are termed Kabūlshāh in the Sassanian inscriptions. The ruined stupa on the rocky spur of the Sher Ddarwaza Mountain to the south of Kabul, yielded stucco heads of delicate workmanship. A monastery of the Tapa-i-Maranjan hill and a large stupa could be seen from the whole valley of Kabul. Images of extraordinary beauty have been recovered from the interior of the stupa, besides 112 Sassanian silver and 12 gold coins. The enormous feet of a colossal Buddha remain. In the mountains of Khurd Kabul are the walls of a monastery and an imposing stupa made of slate. Several stupas can be seen in the neighbourhood of Kabul which were explored by Honigberger and Masson early in the 19th century. Fifteen miles from Kabul is the village of Budkhaq 'the land of Buddha'. Minar-i-Chakri on the Khurd Kabul Mountain dominates the skyline with its height of 158 feet. Another Minar-i-surkh, the Red Minar, showed pilgrims the way to climb to the summit of the mountain. The two pillars are the architectural wonder of

Afghanistan.

Kabul was a great academic centre of Buddhist philosophy and sutras. Eminent masters were invited to China to translate Buddhist works from Sanskrit into Chinese. The first teacher was Gautama Saṅghadeva who arrived at Ch'ang-an in AD 383 and rendered Agama and Abhidharma works. Vimalākṣa was a great teacher in Vinaya and Kumārajīva was one of his disciples. He arrived in China in AD 406. His translation of a Sarvāstivāda-vinaya survives in the Chinese Canon. Saṅghabhūti translated a Vibhāṣā and Buddhacarita between AD 381-385. Kumārajīva as a young novice of nine years came to Kabul with his mother Princess Jivā of Kucha, now become a nun, to study under Bandhudatta, a cousin of the King of Kabul. He got instructions in Vinaya from Vimalākṣa at Kabul. Kumārajīva translated fifty Sanskrit works into Chinese. They are masterpieces of Chinese diction and thought. His translation of the Lotus Sutra, Saddharma puṇḍarīka in Sanskrit, is the most widely revered scripture in Japan today. It is the vade-mecum of the most powerful social and political organisation the Soka Gakkai. Puṇyatārā arrived from Kabul to China in AD 399 and he translated the Sarvāstivāda-vinaya in AD 404 together with Kumārajīva. In AD 403-413 Buddhayaśas of Kabul translated Sanskrit texts into Chinese, including the Vinaya of the Dharmagupta school. Dharmayaśas travelled to China and rendered Buddhist works in AD 407-415. In AD 423 Buddhajīva arrived in China and translated, *inter alia*, the Vinaya of the Mahīśāsaka denomination.

Dharmamitra was a monk of Kabul who came to China in AD 424 and worked till AD 441 on the translation of *dhāraṇīs*, meditation on *Ākāśagarbha* and other works. The Chinese monk Shih Chi-yen of Liang-cheu came to Kabul to obtain Sanskrit texts. He was a companion of Fahsien on his journey to India. He translated 14 works and returned to Kabul where he died at the age of seventy-eight. Guṇavarman, the younger son of the King of Kabul, arrived in Nanking in AD 431 and translated ten works. Buddhatrāta of Kabul translated a sutra in early seventh century. Buddhapāla of Kabul came to China in AD 676 and translated the Uṣṇīṣavijayā-dhāraṇī which is used in imperial rites. Prājña of Kabul translated four works in AD 785-810 including the Gaṇḍavyūha. Its Sanskrit manuscript was sent to the Chinese Emperor by the King of Uḍa in South India in AD 795.

The cult of the Twelve Light Buddhas is known from a Chinese translation of the Dvādaśa-buddhaka-sūtra done by Jñānagupta in AD 587. He was a Kṣatriya born in Gandhāra, arrived at Ch'ang-an in 560 and came to Loyang in 581 where he translated 36 texts into Chinese. The exquisite clay painting from the dome of one of the many chapels of Kakrak represents the Twelve Light Buddhas. Its reds, browns, ochres and blues are the antecedents of Nepalese and Tibetan styles. Kabul contributed to the dissemination of Buddhist scriptures to East Asia from the fourth to the early ninth century. There must have been several other Buddhist masters from Kabul whose work has not been documented.

In AD 850 Kallar founded the Hindu-shahi dynasty. They ruled parts of Afghanistan for 166 years (850 to 1026), Mahmud of Ghazna defeated king Jayapāla in 1001 and captured him. In 1022 king Trilocanapāla was assassinated. The last King Bhīma ruled from 1022 to 1026. Marble statues have come to light from Tagao and Gardex, which must have been cult images in a Śaiva temple, when large parts of Afghanistan were under the rule of Hindu Shahis. A relief of Durgā slaying Mahīśāsura has also been found, and another relief of the same is in the National Museum of Oriental Art in Rome. An image of Sūrya in his chariot, with his attendants Daṇḍa and Piṅgala, is dressed in Sassanian costume. It was found at Kotal Khair Khaneh, a little eminence in the pass that separates Kabul from the Kāpiśī valley. It could date from the period after the Sassanian conquest of 241 and could have been the cult statue of a royal sanctuary. The Afghans celebrate the festival of the beginning of spring (*vasanta-pañcamī*) on this very hill to the present day.

The Kabul Museum enshrined the fragmented beauties of thousands of years of Afghan history. For millenia, India has been the southern neighbour of Afghanistan. Its mountains and ground present a vision of awesome splendour and the silent desolation of the 'Landscape with Ruins', the skeletons of monasteries and stupas silhouetted against the sky, like the Minar on the Chakri Hills over Kabul. They are the vanished glory and greatness of the dharmacakra of great Afghan minds. The stumps of Buddhist pillars stand as the

shattered sublime. The rivers and tribes of Afghanistan are sung in the hymns of the *Rgveda*, in the *Mahābharāta*, in Pāṇini and Purāṇas, in astronomical and musical works. It was enriched in breathtaking sublimity of the Buddha by the Kushan Emperors, whose National Shrine of Surkh Kotal is a mute witness to their formidable contributions to making Asia a Buddha-kṣetra.

The northern part of the province of Nangrahar (ancient Nagarahara, with its vast monastic complexes) in eastern Afghanistan was called Kafiristan. Kafiristan means "land of the infidels". It came under Afghanistan in 1893 by the Kabul Agreement between Sir Durand and the Afghan Amir. It was isolated and politically independent till then. It was left outside the British Indian Territory. The Amir led an expedition in 1895-96. Its people were forcibly converted to Islam and it was named anew as Nuristan 'the land of enlightenment'. Today it is within the provinces of Laghman and Kunar. The people speak various Kafir or Dardic languages which are of very old origin. Marked by strong isolation, ancient traditions prevailed until 1896. The Ghaznavid historian Bayhaki mentions Kator/Katwar district of Kafiristan. Mahmud of Ghazna had led an expedition in 1020-21 against the lion-worshipping infidels of the Nur and Kirat valleys in south-eastern Kafiristan. Lion-worshipping can refer to the goddess Maṣiṣāsura-mardinī. In 1398 Timur led an expedition into western Kafiristan to punish the Kators and Siyahpush Kafirs who were fighting the Muslims of Andarab. His troops were ambushed and

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he had to retreat. Babar describes southern Kafiristan with emphasis on its fruits and excellent wine produced by the Kafirs. In 1582 Akbar sent an expedition from Jalalabad against the infidels of Katwar. Kazi Muhammad who accompanied this expedition as a preacher of the Muslim troops has given sixteen epic narratives. The expedition was led by Muhammad Hakim, the younger brother of Akbar and governor of Kabul, and a strong adherent of the missionary Nakshbandi Sufi order. The Muslim forces could not defeat the Kafirs but established some strongholds. There is total silence until the 19th century when the British started taking interest in Kafiristan as an independent buffer zone between British India and Afghanistan. Col. Biddulph received deputations of Kafir in Chitral in 1878. He described the Kalash of southern Chitral, pagan till a few decades ago, and gave specimens of the Bashgali (i.e. Kati) language. Both the names are related to the Vedic period. Bāṣkala is a lost recension of the *Rgveda*, and Kati was a Vedic sage whose descendants were Kātyāyana.

The *Kātyāyana-śrauta-sūtra* has come down to us. The Sifat-nama-of Kazi Muhammad Salim mentions three gods whom the Kafirs invoked against the Muslims. Status was measured by wealth symbolized by the giving of feasts, and 'by prowess

in warfare, especially when the killing of Muslims was involved" (C.E. Bosworth).

The Kafir languages have developed their own phonetic peculiarities. They use almost unaltered words found in Vedic Sanskrit. While there is no archaeological data except the remains of a Hindu temple near Chaga Sarai, erected around the 7th to 9th centuries, Jettmar has discovered 1500 inscriptions and 10,000 carvings, forming a sequence over several millenia and fading out in the late Muslim period. The twilight of the Kafir gods has been admirably described by Buddruss in his commentary on folktales and songs. The Kati settlers fled from forced conversion to areas under British rule. Prof. Morgenstierne of Norway could get his materials in 1929 from a recitation priest who had a sizeable stock of traditional knowledge and was one of the twenty Katis who were self declared Kafirs. Prof. Buddruss, who was a member of the German Hindukush Expedition 1955/56, collected an astonishing number of mythical texts from a few old men who kept alive the hope that the old times and their gods would return. A Prasun village bears the name Diogrom (Sanskrit: Devagrāma). Mon, Moni, Mandi, Mande is Mahādeva. There were many shrines of Mon in the laud of the Katis. The two glaciers on different sides of the valley were his footprints.

He rules over streaming water, which is to be compared to the Holy river Ganga flowing from his locks. Esperegra who plays an important role in his story is Īśvaraka. Varāhamihira mentions in his *Brhatsamhitā* (6th century) that a special relationship existed between Ketu and the peoples of the NW, namely Pahlava (Parthians), White Huns, Avagāṇa (Afghans) and Cīna. This is the first mention of the Afghans in a text. Indra was worshipped especially in Waigal and Prasm. The terms for rainbow (*indr'o*) and for earthquake (*indr'ist*) are connected to Indra. A tale says: when it thunders, Indr is playing polo. There are place names like Indr-Zyul in the Kati area. He is 'active in wine': stems from soma drunk for cultic purposes. Kati settlers in Brumotul told Prof. Morgenstierne that Indra was beaten in a fight with Gish, and had to offer him a tribute of wine. Gish is worshipped by the Kati. He is known in Prasm as Giwish. He is the Kati god of war, worshipped before a martial raid. His name is the Ṛgvedic *gaviṣa* (*gaviṣti* 'battle' RV). Hymns dedicated to him have been recorded. Gish killed the god Sanu, the father of goddess Sanju and played polo with his head. Sanu had tried to convert the Kafirs to Islam. Gish has an intimate relationship with Sanju. Women took part in his worship during the military campaigns. They prayed to Disani to bring back their husbands and sons unharmed and with rich booty. Disani (Prasm: Disni) is the Ṛgvedic goddess *dhiṣaṇā*. The greek word *theos* for god is derived from *thesos* which originates in *dhiṣnyah* 'pious, devoted' (RV). There was at

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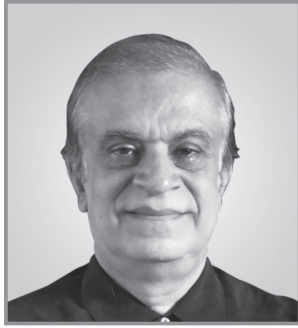
least one shrine to Gish in every village of the Bashgal area. Disani is sometimes referred to as the highest deity. She is also the deity of the social order and she made a golden fort with four corners and seven gates. It evokes a ground plan with roads radiating from the centre. She is praised in a song as 'keeper of the temple, giver of milk to human beings, etc.' The goddess responsible for child-bearing and birth is Nirmali (Sanskrit Nirmalikā). Disani's son is Bagisht, god of the waters, protector of the herds, and helps people to gain power and wealth. He is Bhagiṣṭha 'the most prosperous one'. Sudrem or Sujam is responsible for rain as the weather god. He lives in rivers and lakes, and the sacred lake Sudrem Sur is named after him. He is Sudharmā in Sanskrit. At the apex of the priestly hierarchy stood *uta* or *urta*, the high priest, with considerable political power. Uta is derived from *hotṛka* of the Vedic tradition. A three-day feast called *ishtri-chal-nut* 'dance of eloping women' was held in the villages of Brumotul and Kunisht. Solar observations for calendrical purposes were carried out in a temple specially constructed so that on a certain day a beam of sunlight would pass through an opening in the wall and illuminate the statue of a deity. These solar observations of the Afghan scientists have been lost in the destruction of temples. The Ashkuns worshipped

Blama-de (Brahma-deva). The essential components of the Kafir pantheon remind of the early Indian gods. Heine-Geldern (1957:281): "Today we know that the Kafirs were basically an early offshoot of the Vedic Aryans". The Waigali word *kashau* for a 'wooden image' is Sanskrit *kāśyapa*, a sage.

In the 1940s and 1950s the Afghans prided on being Aryans, their country Ariana was a land of Aryans, and they had an Aryan language. They realized that just as Greek and Latin are the mother languages of European countries, so Sanskrit is the mother language of Pashto and Persian. The students should learn Sanskrit to know their roots. Sanskrit was taught for four years at the University of Kabul and Avesta for two years. Three periods a week were allotted to Sanskrit. The young Afghans were interested in the comparative study of the Gītā and Quran. The students of the Kabul University published a monthly journal Aryana.

The scorched and razed land of Afghanistan continues its unfortunate destiny. It can attain its historic role only by resurrecting its landscape of ruins and skeletons of sacred structures by recovering its heritage from the earth and enframing it in her consciousness. The golden accents have to be redeemed. ■

Courtesy: Buddhism Art and Values (Book)



Rajiv Malhotra

Gandhāra region is well described in our ancient texts. Many of our scriptures give some account of its being an integral part of Bharatavarsha. Though now it is no more a part of political India, way back it was one of the 16 *mahājanapadas* of this land and its cultural oneness can still be traced easily. One of the cities of this land is now known as Kandahar. An insight to the historical journey

How 'Gandhāra' Became 'Kandahar'

Afghanistan's epic history starts when it was an important region of ancient India called 'Gandhāra'. One of its most frequently mentioned cities in the world today is 'Kandahar', made infamous by the Taliban. The earlier name of the city was 'Quandhar', derived from the name of the region of Gandhāra. Erstwhile home to Al-Qaeda today, it was always a strategic site, being on main Persian routes to Central Asia and India. Hence, it has a long history of conquests. Kandahar was taken by Alexander in 329 B.C.E., was surrendered by the Greek to Chandragupta in 305 B.C.E., and is dignified by a rock inscription of Aśoka. It fell under Arab rule in the 7th century C.E., and under the Ghaznavids in the 10th. Kandahar was destroyed by Genghis Khan and again by the Turkic conqueror Timur, after which it was held by the Mughals. Mughal Emperor Babur built 40 giant steps up a hill, cut out of the solid limestone, leading to inscriptions recording details of his proud conquests. In 1747 it became the first capital of a unified Afghanistan.

Besides early reference in the Vedas, Ramayana and Mahabharata, Gandhāra was the locus of ancient Indian-Persian interaction, a centre of world trade and culture. It was a

major Buddhist intellectual hub for centuries. The giant Buddhist statues recently destroyed by the Taliban were in Bamiyan, one of the important Buddhist cities of ancient times. Thousands of statues and stupas once dominated its landscape.

Ancient Gandhāra

Gandharvas are first described in the Vedas as cosmic beings. Later literature describes them as a *jāti* (community), and the later *Nāṭyaśāstra* refers to their system of music as *gandharva*. Gupt explains¹:

"*Gandharvas*, as spoken of in *Samhitās* and later literature, had derived their name from a geographical people, the *Gandhāras*... Most likely they belonged to Afghanistan (which still has a township called Kandahara)... It was perhaps at this time that the *Gandhāras* raised the art of music to a great height. This region of the subcontinent at the time had become the locus of a great confluence of the musical traditions of the East and the Mediterranean. The very art, thus, came to be known by the name of the region and was so called by it even in the heartland of India. This name, *gandharva*, continued to be used for music for centuries to come. In the *Vāyu Purāṇa* one of the nine divisions of *Bhāratavarṣa* is called *Gandharva*."

During the Mahabharata period, the Gandhāra region was very much culturally and politically a part of India. King Śakuni, brother of Gāndhārī, fought with Pandavas in the famous epic Mahabharata. The battle was fought in Kurukshetra, in the heartland of India. Gāndhārī was married to King Dhṛtrastra. Exchanges between Gandhāra and Hastināpur (Delhi) were well established and intense.

Mehrgarh, located in this region and part of the Indus Valley civilisation, is the oldest town excavated by archaeologists (8000B.C.E) in the world.

Gandhāra was the trade crossroad and cultural meeting place between India, Central Asia, and the Middle East. Buddhist writings mention Gandhāra (which included Peshawar, Swat and Kabul Valleys) as one of the 16 major states of northern India at the time. It was a province of the Persian king Darius I in the fifth century B.C.E. After conquering it in the 4th century B.C.E., Alexander encountered the vast army of the Nandas in the Punjab, and his soldiers mutinied causing him to leave India.

Thereafter, Gandhāra was ruled by the Maurya dynasty of India, and during the reign of the Indian emperor Ashoka (3rd century B.C.E.), Buddhism spread and became the world's first religion across Eurasia, influencing early Christianity and East Asian civilisations. Padmasambhava, the spiritual and intellectual founder of the Indo-Tibetan Buddhism, was from Gandhāra. Greek historian Pliny wrote that the Mauryans had a massive army; and yet, like all other Indian kingdoms, they made no attempt at overseas

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conquest.

Gandhāra and Sind were considered parts of India since ancient times, as historian Andre Wink explains:

“From ancient times both Makran and Sind had been regarded as belonging to India... It definitely did extend beyond the present province of Sind and Makran; the whole of Baluchistan was included, a part of the Panjab, and the North-West Frontier Province.”²

“The Arab geographers, in effect, commonly speak of ‘that king of *al-Hind*...’”³

“...Sind was predominantly Indian rather than Persian, and in duration the periods that it had been politically attached to, or incorporated in, an Indian polity far outweigh Persian domination. The Maurya empire was extended to the Indus valley by Candragupta, laying the foundation of a great Buddhist urban-based civilisation. Numerous Buddhist monasteries were founded in the area, and Takshashila became an important centre of Buddhist learning, especially in Ashoka's time. Under the Kushanas, in the late first century A.D... international trade and urbanisation reached unprecedented levels in the Indus valley and *Purushapara* (Peshawar) became the capital of a far-flung empire and Gandhāra the second home of Buddhism, producing the well-known Gandhāra-Buddhist art.

In *Purushapara*, Kanishka is supposed to have convened the fourth Buddhist council and to have built the Kanishka Vihara, which remained a Buddhist pilgrimage centre for centuries to come as well as a centre for the dissemination of the religion to Central Asia and China... in conjunction with Hinduism, Buddhism survived in Sind until well into the tenth century.”⁴

“Hiuen Tsang... was especially impressed by the thousand Buddhist monks who lived in the caves of Bamiyan, and the colossal stone Buddha, with a height of 53.5 m, then still decorated with gold. There is also evidence of *devi* cults in the same areas.”⁵

Shaivism was also an important ancient religion in this region, with wide influence. Wink writes:

“...Qandahar [modern Kandahar]... was the religious centre of the kingdom where the cult of the Shaivite god Zun was performed on a hilltop...”⁶

“...the god *Zun* or *Zhun*... shrine lay in Zamindawar before the arrival of Islam, set on a sacred mountain, and still existing in the later ninth century [The region was]... famous as a pilgrimage centre devoted to Zun. In China the god's temple became known as the temple of *Su-na*. ...[T]he worship of Zun might be related to that of the old shrine of the sun-god Aditya at Multan. In any case, the cult of

Zun was primarily Hindu, not Buddhist or Zoroastrian.”⁷

“[A] connection of Gandhāra with the polymorphic male god Shiva and the Durga Devi is now well-established. The pre-eminent character of Zun or Sun was that of a mountain god. And a connection with mountains also predominates in the composite religious configuration of Shiva, the lord of the mountain, the cosmic pivot and the ruler of time... Gandhāra and the neighbouring countries in fact represent a prominent background to classical Shaivism.”⁸

From 1st century C.E., emperor Kaniska I and his Kushan successors were acknowledged as one of the four great Eurasian powers of their time (the others being China, Rome, and Parthia). The Kushans further spread Buddhism to Central Asia and China, and developed Mahayana Buddhism and the Gandhāra and Mathura schools of art. The Kushans became affluent through trade, particularly with exports to Rome. Their coins and art are witness to the tolerance and syncretism in religion and art that prevailed in the region. The Gandhāra school incorporated many motifs from classical Roman art, but the basic iconography remained Indian.⁹

Ancient Taxila and Peshawar

Gandhāra's capital was the famous city of Takshashila. According to the Ramayana, the city was founded by Bharata, and named after his son, Taksha, its first ruler. Greek writers later shortened it to Taxila. The Mahabharata is said to have been first recited at this place. Buddhist literature, especially the *jataka*

stories, mentions it as the capital of the Gandhāra kingdom and as a great centre of learning. Its ruins may be visited today in an hour's taxi ride from Rawalpindi (Pakistan).

Taxila was strategically located at the 3-way junction of the great trade routes from eastern India (described by Megasthenes, as the “Royal Highway”), from western Asia, Kashmir and Central Asia. Greek historians accompanying Alexander described Taxila as “wealthy, prosperous, and well governed”. Soon after Alexander, Taxila was absorbed into the Maurya Empire as a provincial capital, lasting for three generations.

The sage Apollonius of Tyana visited Taxila in the 1st century C.E., and his biographer described it as a fortified city with a symmetrical architecture, comparable in size to the most populous city of the ancient Assyrian Empire. Even a thousand years after Buddha, Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Faxian described it as a thriving centre of Buddhism. But by the time Hsuan-tsang visited from China in the 7th century C.E., Taxila had been destroyed by the Huns. Taxila was renowned as a centre of learning.

During other times, the capital of Gandhāra was Puruṣapura (abode of Puruṣa, the Hindu name for the Supreme Being), whose name was changed by Akbar to Peshawar. Near Peshawar are ruins of the largest Buddhist stupa

in the subcontinent (2nd century C.E.), attesting to the enduring presence of Buddhism in the region. Puruṣapura is mentioned in early Sanskrit literature, in the writings of the classical historians Strabo and Arrian, and the geographer Ptolemy. Kanishka made Puruṣapura the capital of his Kushan empire (1st century C.E.). It was captured by the Muslims in C.E. 988.

Genocide Part 1: The Conquest of Sind

All this glorious past, and Asia's civilisation, changed forever with the bloody plunder of Sind by the Arabs starting in the 7th century:

“In 653-4, ...a force of 6000 Arabs penetrated... To the shrine of Zun. The general broke off a hand from the idol and plucked out the rubies which were its eyes... The Arabs were now able to mount frequent plunder and slave expeditions as far as Ghazna, Kabul and Bamiyan... Arab raiding continued and was aimed at exacting tribute, plunder and slaves ...Slaves and beasts remained the principal booty of the raids, and these were sent to the caliphate court in a steady stream.”¹⁰

Andre Wink describes that this aspiration to conquer India had existed since the time of the Prophet, as is evidenced by the sacred texts:

“... in the *hadith* collections the prophet Muhammad himself is credited with the aspiration of conquering India. Participants

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in the holy war against *al-Hind* [the Hindus] are promised to be saved from hell-fire... Thus also an eschatological work which is called the *Kitab al-Fitan* ('Book of Trials') credits Muhammad with saying that God will forgive the sins of the members of the Muslim army which will attack *al-Hind*, and give them victory."¹¹

The plunder was also achieved by an ingenious system of leaving the prosperous population alone, so that they would continue to bring donations to the temples, and then the Muslims would loot these temples. In order to save their temple from destruction, many Hindu warriors refused to fight:

"An even greater part of the revenue of these rulers was derived from the gifts donated by pilgrims who came from all over Sind and Hind to the great idol (*sanam*) of the sun-temple at Multan... When Muhammad al-Qasim conquered Multan, he quickly discovered that it was this temple which was one of the main reasons for the great wealth of the town. He 'made captives of the custodians of the *budd*, numbering 6000' and confiscated its wealth, but not the idol itself – which was made of wood, covered with red leather and two red rubies for its eyes and wearing a crown of gold inlaid with gems –, 'thinking it best to leave the idol where it was, but hanging a piece of cow's flesh on its neck by way of mockery'. Al-Qasim built his mosque in the same place, in the most crowded bazaar in the centre of the town. The possession of the sun-temple — rather than the mosque — is what in later times the geographers see as the reason why the local

The Mohammedan Conquest of India is probably the bloodiest in history. It is a discouraging tale, for its evident moral is that civilisation is a precarious thing, whose delicate complex of order and liberty, culture and peace may at any time be overthrown by barbarians invading from without or multiplying within

governors or rulers could hold out against the neighbouring Hindu powers. Whenever an 'infidel king' marched against Multan and the Muslims found it difficult to offer adequate resistance, they threatened to break the idol or mutilate it, and this, allegedly, made the enemy withdraw. In the late tenth century however the Ismailis who occupied Multan broke the idol into pieces and killed its priests. A new mosque was then erected on its site..."¹²

Genocide Part 2: Mahmud of Ghazni

The founder of the Ghaznavid dynasty was a former Turkish slave, recognised by the Iranian Muslims as governor of Ghazni (a town near Kandahar). His son Mahmud (ruled in 998-1030) expanded the empire further into India. A devout Muslim, Mahmud converted the Ghaznavids into Islam, thus bringing Islam into the sub-continent's local population. In the 11th century, he made Ghazni the capital of the vast empire of the Ghaznavids, Afghanistan's first Muslim dynasty. The atrocities by Mahmud of Ghazni makes the Taliban look benign by comparison. Will Durant explains:¹³

"The Mohammedan Conquest of India is probably the bloodiest in history. It is a discouraging tale, for its evident moral is that civilisation is a precarious thing,

whose delicate complex of order and liberty, culture and peace may at any time be overthrown by barbarians invading from without or multiplying within... for four hundred years (600-1000 A.D.) India invited conquest; and at last it came."

"In the year 997 a Turkish chieftain by the name of Mahmud became sultan of the little state of Ghazni, in eastern Afghanistan. Mahmud knew that his throne was young and poor, and saw that India, across the border, was old and rich; the conclusion was obvious. Pretending a holy zeal for destroying Hindu idolatry across the frontier with a force inspired by a pious aspiration for booty, he met the unprepared Hindus at Bhimnagar, slaughtered them, pillaged their cities, destroyed their temples, and carried away the accumulated treasures of centuries. Returning to Ghazni he astonished the ambassadors of foreign powers by displaying "jewels and un-bored pearls and rubies shining like sparks, or like wine congealed with ice, and emeralds like fresh sprigs of myrtle, and diamonds in size and weight like pomegranates."

"Each winter Mahmud descended into India, filled his treasure chest with spoils, and amused his men with full freedom to pillage and kill; each spring he returned to his capital richer than before. At Mathura (on the Jumna) he took from the temple

its statues of gold encrusted with precious stones, and emptied its coffers of a vast quantity of gold, silver and jewellery; he expressed his admiration for the architecture of the great shrine, judged that its duplication would cost one hundred million *dinars* and the labour of two hundred years, and then ordered it to be soaked with naphtha and burnt to the ground. Six years later he sacked another opulent city of northern India, Somnath, killed all its fifty thousand inhabitants, and dragged its wealth to Ghazni. In the end he became, perhaps, the richest king that history has ever known.”

“Sometimes he spared the population of the ravaged cities, and took them home to be sold as slaves; but so great was the number of such captives that after some years no one could be found to offer more than a few schillings for a slave. Before every important engagement Mahmud knelt in prayer, and asked the blessing of God upon his arms. He reigned for a third of a century; and when he died, full of years and honors, Moslem historians ranked him greatest monarch of his time, and one of the greatest sovereigns of any age.”

Genocide Part 3: Post-Ghazni Invaders.

Mahmud of Ghazni set the stage for other Muslim invaders in their orgy of plunder and brutality, as Will Durant explains:¹⁴

“In 1186 the Ghuri, a Turkish tribe of Afghanistan invaded India, captured the city of Delhi destroyed its temples, confiscated its wealth, and settled down in its palaces to establish the Sultanate of Delhi — an alien despotism

fastened upon northern India for three centuries, and checked only by assassination and revolt. The first of these bloody sultans, Kutb-d Din Aibak, was a normal specimen of his kind — fanatical, ferocious and merciless. His gifts as the Mohammedan historian tells us, “were bestowed by hundreds of thousands and his slaughters likewise were by hundreds of thousands.” In one victory of this warrior (who had been purchased as a slave), “fifty thousand men came under the collar of slavery, and the plain became black as pitch with Hindus.”

“Another sultan, Balban, punished rebels and brigands by casting them under the feet of elephants, or removing their skins, stuffing these with straw, and hanging them from the gates of Delhi.”

“When some Mongol inhabitants who had settled in Delhi, and had been converted to Islam, attempted a rising, Sultan Alau-d-din (the conqueror of Chittor) had all the males — from fifteen to thirty thousand of them — slaughtered in one day.”

“Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlak acquired the throne by murdering his father, became a great scholar and an elegant writer, dabbled in mathematics, physics and Greek philosophy, surpassed his predecessors in bloodshed and brutality, fed the flesh of a rebel nephew to the rebel’s wife and children, ruined the country

with reckless inflation, and laid it waste with pillage and murder till the inhabitants fled to the jungle. He killed so many Hindus that, in the words of a Moslem historian, “there was constantly in front of his royal pavilion and his Civil Court a mound of dead bodies and a heap of corpses, while the sweepers and executioners were weaned out by their work of dragging” the victims “and putting them to death in crowds.” In order to found a new capital at Daulatabad he drove every inhabitant from Delhi and left it a desert....”

“Firoz Shah invaded Bengal, offered a reward for every Hindu head, paid for 180,000 of them, raided Hindu villages for slaves, and died at the ripe age of eighty. Sultan Ahmad Shah feasted for three days whenever the number of defenseless Hindus slain in his territories in one day reached twenty thousand.”

“These rulers... were armed with a religion militaristic in operation... [and made] the public exercise of the Hindu religions illegal, and thereby driving them more deeply into the Hindu soul. Some of these thirsty despots had culture as well as ability; they patronised the arts, and engaged artists and artisans — usually of Hindu origin — to build for them magnificent mosques and tombs: some of them were scholars, and delighted in converse historians, poets and scientists.”

“The Sultans drew from the

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people every rupee of tribute that could be exacted by the ancient art of taxation, as well as by straight-forward robbery...”

“The usual policy of the Sultans was clearly sketched by Alau-d-din, who required his advisers to draw up “rules and regulations for grinding down the Hindus, and for depriving them of that wealth and property which fosters disaffection and rebellion.” Half of the gross produce of the soil was collected by the government; native rulers had taken one-sixth. “No Hindu,” says a Moslem historian, “could hold up his head, and in their houses no sign of gold or silver... or of any superfluity was to be seen... Blows, confinement in the stocks, imprisonment and chains, were all employed to enforce payment.””

“...Timur-i-lang — a Turk who had accepted Islam as an admirable weapon... feeling the need of more gold, it dawned upon him that India was still full of infidels... Mullahs learned in the Koran decided the matter by quoting an inspiring verse: “Oh Prophet, make war upon infidels and unbelievers, and treat them with severity.” Thereupon, Timur crossed the Indus in 1398, massacred or enslaved such of the inhabitants as could not flee from him, defeated the forces of Sultan Mahmud Tughlak, occupied Delhi, slew a hundred thousand prisoners in cold blood, plundered the city of all the wealth that the Afghan dynasty had gathered there, and carried it off to Samarkand with multitude of women and slaves, leaving anarchy, famine and pestilence in his wake,”

“This is the secret of the political history of modern

During these genocides for centuries, a certain portion of the fleeing Hindus reached Europe. Today’s Roma people of Europe (popularly called the ‘gypsies’, a term that they regard as a pejorative) are of Indian origin and have lived as wanderers in Europe for nearly a thousand years

India. Weakened by division, it succumbed to invaders; impoverished by invaders, it lost all power of resistance, and took refuge in supernatural consolations... The bitter lesson that may be drawn from this tragedy is that eternal vigilance is the price of civilisation. A nation must love peace, but keep its powder dry.”

During these genocides for centuries, a certain portion of the fleeing Hindus reached Europe. Today’s Roma people of Europe (popularly called the ‘gypsies’, a term that they regard as a pejorative) are of Indian origin and have lived as wanderers in Europe for nearly a thousand years. It is believed that they originated in Northwest India, in a region including Gandhāra, Punjab, and Rajasthan. In Europe, they survived by being musicians and performers, because European society did not assimilate them even after a thousand years. They have accepted their plight as street people without a ‘home’ as such. Their history in Europe is filled with attempts to eradicate them in various ways.¹⁵ (There is much justified criticism of India’s caste system as a way by which diverse ethnicities dealt with each other. However, I have yet to see a comparison with the fact that Europeans dealt with non-European ethnicities using genocide (as in America), or by attempted genocide as in the case of the Roma.)

Islamic Scholarship on India

The Arabic, Turkish, and Persian invaders brought their historians to document their conquests of India as great achievements. Many of these historians ended up loving India and wrote excellent accounts of life in India, including about the Gandhāra and Sindh regions. Their translations of Indian texts were later retranslated into European languages and hence many of the European Renaissance inputs from Islam were actually Indian contributions traveling via Islam.

Many Muslim scholars showed great respect for Indian society. For instance:

“The Arabic literature identifies numerous ministers, revenue officers, accountants, et cetera, in seventh and eighth-century Sind as ‘brahmans’ and these were generally confirmed in their posts by the conquerors. Where these brahmans came from we do not know, but their presence was regarded as beneficial. Many cities had been founded by them and Sind had become ‘prosperous and populous’ under their guidance.”¹⁶

“Of caste divisions very little mention is made. The stereotype social division is in professional classes rather than a ritualised caste-hierarchy: ‘priests, warriors, agriculturists, artisans, merchants’.”¹⁷

Of all these Muslim scholars, Alberuni left the most detailed

accounts of India's civilisation. In the introduction to his translation of Alberuni's famous book, *Indica*, the Arabic scholar Edward Sachau summarises how India was the source of considerable Arabic culture:¹⁸

"The foundations of Arabic literature were laid between AD 750 and 850. It is only the tradition relating to their religion and prophet and poetry that is peculiar to the Arabs; everything else is of foreign descent... Greece, Persia, and India were taxed to help the sterility of the Arab mind... What India has contributed reached Baghdad by two different roads. Part has come directly in translations from the Sanskrit, part has travelled through Eran, having originally been translated from Sanskrit (Pali? Prakrit?) into Persian, and farther from Persian into Arabic. In this way, e.g. the fables of Kalila and Dimna have been communicated to the Arabs, and book on medicine, probably the famous *Caraka*."

"As Sindh was under the actual rule of Khalif Mansur (AD 753 – 774), there came embassies from that part of India to Baghdad, and among them scholars, who brought along with them two books, the *Brahamsiddhanta* to Brahamgupta (Sirhind), and his *Khandakhadyaka* (Arkanda). With the help of these pandits, Alfazari, perhaps also Yakub ibn Tarik, translated them. Both works have been largely used, and have

exercised a great influence. It was on this occasion that the Arabs first became acquainted with a scientific system of astronomy. They learned from Brahamgupta earlier than from Ptolemy."

"Another influx of Hindu learning took place under Harun, AD 786 – 808. The ministerial family Barmak, then at the zenith of their power, had come with the ruling dynasty from Balkh, where an ancestor of theirs had been an official in the Buddhistic temple Naubehar, i.e. *nava vihara* = the new temple (or monastery). The name Barmak is said to be of Indian descent, meaning *paramaka* i.e. the superior (abbot of the *vihara*)."

"Induced by family traditions, they sent scholars to India, there to study medicine and pharmacology. Besides, they engaged Hindu scholars to come to Baghdad, made them the chief physicians of their hospitals, and ordered them to translate from Sanskrit into Arabic books on medicine, pharmacology, toxicology, philosophy, astrology, and other subjects. Still in later centuries Muslim scholars sometimes travelled for the same purposes as the emissaries of the Barmak, e.g. Almuwakkuf not long before Alberuni's time..."

"Many Arab authors took up the subjects communicated to them by the Hindus and worked them out in original compositions, commentaries and extracts. A favourite subject of

theirs was Indian mathematics, the knowledge of which became far spread by the publications of Alkindi and many others."

Alberuni leaves no doubt as to the origin of the so-called Arabic system of numbers:

"The numerical signs which we use are derived from the finest forms of the Hindu signs... The Arabs, too, stop with the thousand, which is certainly the most correct and the most natural thing to do... Those, however, who go beyond the thousand in their numeral system are the Hindus, at least in their arithmetical technical terms, which have been either freely invented or derived according to certain etymologies, whilst in others both methods are blended together. They extend the names of the orders of numbers until the 18th order for religious reasons, the mathematicians being assisted by the grammarians with all kinds of etymologies."

In Islamic Spain, European scholars acknowledged India very positively, as evidenced by an important and rare 11th century book on world science commissioned by the ruler of Spain¹⁹. Its author, Said al-Andalusi focussed on India as a major centre for science, mathematics and culture. Some excerpts:

"The first nation (to have cultivated science) is India. This is a powerful nation having a large population, and a rich kingdom. India is known for the wisdom of its people. Over many centuries, all the kings of the past have recognised the ability of the Indians in all the branches of knowledge."

"The Indians, as known to all nations for many centuries, are

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the metal (essence) of wisdom, the source of fairness and objectivity. They are peoples of sublime pensiveness, universal apologues, and useful and rare inventions.”

“To their credit, the Indians have made great strides in the study of numbers and of geometry. They have acquired immense information and reached the zenith in their knowledge of the movements of the stars (astronomy) and the secrets of the skies (astrology) as well as other mathematical studies. After all that, they have surpassed all the other peoples in their knowledge of medical science and the strengths of various drugs, the characteristics of compounds and the peculiarities of substances [chemistry].”

“Their kings are known for their good moral principles, their wise decisions, and their perfect methods of exercising authority.”

“What has reached us from the work of the Indians in music is the book... [that] contains the fundamentals of modes and the basics in the construction of melodies.”

“That which has reached us from the discoveries of their clear thinking and the marvels of their inventions is the (game) of chess. The Indians have, in the construction of its cells, its double numbers, its symbols and secrets, reached the forefront of knowledge. They have extracted its mysteries from supernatural forces. While the game is being

played and its pieces are being maneuvered, there appear the beauty of structure and the greatness of harmony. It demonstrates the manifestation of high intentions and noble deeds, as it provides various forms of warnings from enemies and points out ruses as well as ways to avoid dangers. And in this, there is considerable gain and useful profit.”

Even as late as the 12th century C.E., al-Idrīsī (1100-1166), a geographer and scholar from Spain and Sicily, included the Gandhāra region, including Kabul, with India²⁰. The region was famous for the export of its three local products: indigo, cotton, and iron.²¹

The Lessons of History

Is the history of Islam in Afghanistan repeating itself a thousand years later? The Arab and Turk atrocities in India, done in the name of Islam a thousand years ago, may be compared to the past ten years in Afghanistan: In the times of Mahmud of Ghazni, India was, relative to other countries, as rich as the United States is today, and hence a comparable target. The Taliban dress code is what earlier Muslim plunderers also enforced in India. The same interpretation of the Koranic verses was used then as is now taught in thousands of madrassas in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia. The main plunderers then were not indigenous to Afghanistan,

but were largely Arabs/Turks; today, again, they are not mainly Afghanis, but tens of thousands of Pakistanis and Arabs with their own agendas.

Where does all this history lead us today? First of all, I emphatically believe that history should not be the burden of contemporary society, and this means that South Asian Muslims are not to be blamed for the past, in which they, too, were victims. Germans are taught about Nazism without being made to feel guilty. U.S. schools teach slavery with black and white kids together in class. Suppressing the past evils from history would be irresponsible, and an invitation to unscrupulous political forces to exploit ignorant people.

More importantly, Indianised Islam is probably the most sophisticated and liberal Islam in the world, because of its prolonged nurturing in the Indian soil. Islam needs the same kind of Reformation as Christianity underwent in the past few centuries. India, with its long experience of Islam co-existing with other religions, its large Muslim population, and its Hindu-Buddhist experience, is the ideal environment for Islamic liberalisation. Islamic majority nations lack the experience of pluralism, democracy, and the Hinduism-Buddhism environment. Western countries have too small a Muslim population, and too recent an encounter, to be incubators. India is the ideal climate for a breakthrough.

In the big picture, the struggle is not against Islam, but is about the kind of Islam that emerges. It is also about conflicting identities within Pakistan: Arabisation

The main plunderers then were not indigenous to Afghanistan, but were largely Arabs/Turks; today, again, they are not mainly Afghanis, but tens of thousands of Pakistanis and Arabs with their own agendas

versus Indianisation. For lasting peace in the region, Afghanistan should once again become a buffer between Arabic-Persian and Indic civilisations. Pakistan has always been unstable, sandwiched between the two very ancient civilisations of India and Arabia-Persia, and obsessed by the need to differentiate itself from both. What Macaulayism is to elitist Indians, Arabisation of identity is to Pakistanis, the difference being that in the latter case it pervades all tiers of society. Pakistan's complexes, due to its lack of heritage and sense of identity, drive much of its insecure behaviour.

One would like that the hundreds of media personnel covering the war would be better equipped to explain the history of the region. That they do not know even the fundamentals is not surprising. But what is disturbing is the way SAJA (South Asian Journalists Association), a 500-member association of Indian journalists in North America, has failed to play any role in educating the American public about this region. Is it ignorance, or is it the complex of being seen as too 'Indian'?

Over the past fifteen years, governmental, academic, and private funding agencies sponsored research on South

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Asia that focused on caste, cows, exotica, sati, and Hindu revolts against Proselytizers, there by propagating the stereotype of the "Evil/Primitive Hindus". In the process, they completely ignored vital topics such as Wahhabi Islam and other movements spawned by the ISI. Consequently, few South Asian experts seem to have even rudimentary knowledge of the 39,000 madrassas of Pakistan, some of which were the breeding grounds of the Taliban, or the related religious movements that are the genesis of today's crisis. These events are about religion, when seen from the perspective of those engaged in terrorism and their vast network of sympathisers worldwide. Yet the academy is ill-equipped to perform its mission to interpret these events and to educate the world about them. After September 11, I wrote privately to the professional association of scholars called RISA (Religions

In South Asia), since Afghanistan and Pakistan fall under their definition of South Asia, to suggest that at their November annual conference, they should have a major discussion on Wahhabism-Talibanism in South Asia. Despite being the world's premier association of scholars who objectively study South Asian religions, they failed to include this topic. Instead, they had a whole panel on how Hinduism textbooks and web sites ignore Islam!

Scholars and the media seem afraid to explain that the soil of Afghanistan is historically sacred to Buddhists and Hindus, in the same manner as Jerusalem is to Jews and the Kaaba is to Muslims. Today's infamous caves were once home to thousands of Buddhist monks and Hindu rishis, who did their meditation and attained enlightenment there. How such sacred geography ended up in evil hands is something I am still trying to come to terms with. ■

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Gandhāra among 16 Mahājanapadas

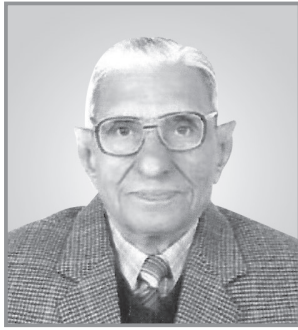
16 Mahājanapadas: 1. Kuru 2. Pancāla 3. Śūrasena 4. Vatsa 5. Kośal 6. Malla 7. Kāśī 8. Anga 9. Magadha 10. Vriji 11. Cedi 12. Matsya 13. Aśmaka 14. Avanti 15. Gandhāra 16. Kamboja.

There were also some small *janapadas* under these *mahājanapadas*.

Gandhar : The Meaning of Gandhāra is fragrance. Gāndhārī was the daughter of Subala, the king of Gandhāra. This is the reason that she named as Gāndhārī, after the name of her native kingdom. She was married to Mahārāja Dhritarashtra, the king of Hastinapur and gave birth to Duryodhana and other Kaurava brothers. Besides Gāndhārī Kaikeyī and Mādrī are two other ladies who are much discussed in Indian literature and have also influenced our culture. Mother Kaikeyī was from Kaikeya and Mādrī was from Madra kingdom. Both of these were neighbouring kingdoms of Gandhāra.

The prime cities of Gandhāra: The western part of today's Pakistan and the eastern part of Afghanistan were consisted under the Gandhāra kingdom of India during those times. Modern Kandahar was situated at the south from this region on short distance. According to Anguttarnikāya at the times of Buddha and even before Buddha's era Gandhāra was counted among the 16 mahājanapadas of the North India. There were some small dominions, like Abhisar and Takshashila etc, in Gandhāra when it was invaded by Alexander. Entire Gandhāra was assimilated into the Mauryan Empire.

Buddhism was in an advanced stage in the most parts of Gandhāra when it was invaded by Mohammed Bin Qasim during 7th Century AD and it was ruled by Hindushahi kings. Gradually it came under political and religious influence of Muslim Caliphate because of their expeditions in 8th and 9th Century AD. In 870, an Arab general Yaqub Eles acquired this kingdom. ■



R. T. Mohan

The Guardians of the Gate Shahis of Kabul and Gandhāra (c. 650-1026 CE)

Coming out of Arabia, Islam conquered Byzantine and Persian Empires, but their invincible armies halted at the frontier of India. It took Islamic forces 350 years to push through Gandhāra and the Khyber Pass. This golden chapter of Hindu History has been kept out of narration, for a thousand years. It is time to include this chapter of Early Indo-Islamic History into mainstream History of India

Gandhāra was the nursery of the Vedic civilisation and the cradle of the Vedas. It is stated that the word ‘Gandhāra’ first occurs in the *R̥g Veda* and is also repeated in *Atharva Veda* and *Shrauta Sutras*. From the various references in Indian literature it appears that the boundaries of Gandhāra varied at different periods of its history. Some Buddhists held Gandhāra as a sacred land. The Chinese pilgrims are unanimous in placing it to the east of river Sindh but they do not agree about its boundaries. It is a pity that no epigraphic records or other vestiges of its ancient past, have survived of this culturally rich region, because of early occupation by Islam.

The word ‘Afghanistan’ is of *comparatively* recent origin. Afghanistan, particularly the region south of Koh Hindu Kush, was always a part of Hindu India – culturally and politically. Situated on the cross-roads of civilisational migrations and international trade, it was often under the occupation of foreign invaders, who sometimes encroached deep into mainland India. This happened particularly during the turbulent millennium following the invasion by Alexander of Macedonia (327-326 BCE). Hindu India successfully repulsed or ‘indigenised’ the

successive marauding hordes of Śakas, Bactrian Greeks, Kuṣāṇas and Hūṇas and regained sovereignty over Afghanistan.

Koh Hindu Kush was the physical and political border on India’s north-west. The Chinese travellers, Fa Hien and Huen Tsang, coming from China by the land route, crossed through Afghanistan in an ambiance of social peace and tranquility in that county. During Fa Hian’s visit (c. 400 CE) to Udyan, the country around Kabul, *the language then spoken there was the language of Mid-India and the dress, the food and drinks of the people were the same. Buddhism was flourishing.* There were many Buddhist ‘vihars’ and thousands of Buddhist monks. These were the cultural conditions there after the turbulence of foreign invasions during the interregnum. However, during the time of Huen Tsang, the other Chinese traveler in the seventh century, Buddhism was on the wane and Brahmanism (Deva) on the ascendant – just as in the rest of India. In Udyan, he records, “there had formerly been 1400 monasteries but many of these were now in ruins, and once there had been 18,000 Brethren (Buddhists) but these had gradually reduced until a few remained.”

A great part of the population in Afghanistan was of Indian

descent, practicing Buddhism or Brahmanism, according to the trends prevailing in the rest of India. The magnificent statues of Buddha in Afghanistan, recently destroyed by the Taliban, were a relic of those times. Huen Tsang reports that “the King of Kapisha was of a Kshatriya caste (pure Hindu), was an intelligent and courageous man and his power extended over more than ten of the neighbouring lands. He was a benevolent ruler and an adherent of Buddhism”. Huen Tsang did not notice any sign of Islamic wind till then (644 CE) but a strong Islamic whirl-wind had reached the western border of Afghanistan, following the conquest of Iran by the Arabs.

Advent and Rise of Islam

Born in Arabia in 570 CE, Prophet Muhammad began preaching his new religion of Islam in 610 and by the time the Prophet passed away in 632 most parts of Arabia owed ‘allegiance’ to the new faith and the state of Arabia, with its capital at Medina. But the new converts had deep reverence for their pre-Islamic traditions and various tribes reverted to these, renouncing Islam in the absence of the strong influence of the Prophet. The first Khalifa (successor) Abu Bakr (632-634) restored the authority of Medina, and Islam, over these recalcitrant tribes. The story of expansion of Islam, and its conquests outside Arabia, starts with the caliphate of the second Khalifa Umar (634-644) – who assumed the title of ‘*Amir-ul-Momin*’ Commander of the Faith, which implied “spiritual as well as political elements of his leadership.” Raiding parties were sent out for conquest and booty on behalf of the state.

At that time there were two world-powers – the Byzantine (eastern wing of the Roman Empire) and the Sassanid (Persian) Empire. They had exhausted themselves by warring with each other. The material energies of the Arabs were turned against them

There was enough in the teachings of Prophet Muhammad to inspire his followers to embark on proselytizing missions of converting humanity to Islam – by force if necessary. The text of the holy book of Islam makes the holy war a major obligation and a test of sincerity of Muslims, to be waged against unbelievers, ‘wherever they are found’ (*Quran*, IX, 5, 38-58, 87). Such a war is ‘just’, its aim being the spread of Islam and the establishment of peace under Islamic rule, under the universal dominance of Islam. Apart from other gains, the raiders had the faith that they were doing God’s work.¹ (André Wink)

The pre-Islamic Arabs wasted their energies in trivial and constant fighting among themselves. To save the country from the anarchy, the raiding parties sent by successive caliphs provided convenient means of removing the troublesome elements from the society. And, apart from the promises by the Prophet to the *jehadis* in their after-life, very liberal share (four fifths) of the spoils of war, was proclaimed by the state as the share of the fighters – the remaining one-fifth coming to the state treasury. With this twin strategy of pelf and piety, the city government of Medina became one of the strongest, as well as the most extensive, government.

At that time there were two world-powers – the Byzantine

(eastern wing of the Roman Empire) and the Sassanid (Persian) Empire. They had exhausted themselves by warring with each other. The material energies of the Arabs were turned against them. Syria, a Byzantine territory was conquered within a year (636-37). The warriors of Allah next turned against the Persians. In the year 637, the great Sassanid army dissolved in panic on a day of dusty storm and the Muslims entered the capital without a fight. Alexandria, the base of the Byzantine Navy in Egypt was also conquered within a year (640-41) without a ship or siege machines. From there the Arab forces moved further west, and took over Tripoli (North Africa) – the land of the Berbers. Despite the discomfiture of the Persian army, mopping up operations took a decade to complete the conquest of Persia (Iran) – till 643. With this the boundaries of the caliphate touched the frontiers of India – or more precisely the western borders of Hindu Afghanistan and Sindh.

Two mighty empires, both great civilisations, lay prostrate at the feet of the Arabs. It is surprising that none of the countries conquered by the Arabs, with such speed and ease, offered any successful prolonged resistance. It is also intriguing that these ancient cultures could not withstand the proselytising fury of the new faith. Gradually

their entire populations were converted to Islam.

It is equally noteworthy that these conquering Arab armies did not continue their march into Al Hind – Hindu India – after swiftly conquering vast regions in two continents. “Many texts attempt to make clear that conquest of India was one of the very early ambitions of the Muslims and that this conquest was envisaged as a particularly difficult one, so difficult in fact that it was set apart from other conquests.”² (André Wink).

During the seventh century, Afghanistan comprised of two Hindu Kingdoms of Kabulistan (Kabul) and Zabulistan (Zabul), broadly the north-eastern and south western regions, respectively. The families of the rulers were related to each other and both states coordinated their efforts to face the danger posed by the Arab occupation of the neighbouring Middle East. Zabulistan, the region between Ghazni and Sistan (the western-most province of Zabul adjacent to the Iranian border), was ruled by Kshatriya Hindu Kings³, believed to be ancestors of Bhatti Rajputs. Not much is known about them, except that they have been identified by their designation of Ranbal (or its variations Ratbal, Zunbal etc.) in Muslim chronicles. The same designation was used by all rulers of the dynasty.

After several efforts Sistan was captured by the Arabs in 656. The world conquering Arabs did not have the power to conquer Hindu Afghanistan. So, raiding parties were sent from Sistan and, for a time, slaves were the main booty acquired on the Indian frontier. Sometimes the Arab commanders

were killed, or captured and ransomed. The King of Zabul could not offer protection to the people of each region, which the raiders chose to attack randomly. So, he sometimes agreed to pay ‘Peace Money’ to avoid these state-sponsored incursions. The actual payment was modulated by the real ‘nuisance value’ during a particular period. Muslim chroniclers have referred to it as the ‘tribute’ and its non-payment as an excuse for an attack.

It was after half a century that the caliphate organised special armies to measure swords with the Hindu rulers of the frontier provinces of India, viz. Afghanistan and Sindh. India remained the only country that could halt the march of Arab Islam in the seventh century. Afghanistan was the main rampart where Hindu India continued to resist this onslaught for more than three centuries.

Ignominious Failure of attack by Arabs on Zabul

When Abdul Malik took over the reins of the Caliphate (684-705 CE), Hajjaj ibn Yusuf was appointed as the governor of Iraq (694-713). He infamously brought to his office a policy of extreme cruelty to fellow human beings. He equipped and

dispatched three armies, with different targets assigned to each. First, under Qutaiba went north; crossed the Oxus and reduced Bukhara, Samarqand and Fergana to the north of the Koh Hindu Kush; it penetrated even to Kashghar coming into contact with the Chinese. The second army under Mohammad-al-Qasim was dispatched, via Sistan and Makran which subjugated Sindh, the kingdom of Dahar: another interesting saga of prolonged Hindu resistance. The third army was sent by Al Hajjaj under his experienced general Ubaidullah b. Ali Bakra, in 698, with the orders to invade the country of Ranbal and not to return until he had completely subjugated, or “lay waste the Ranbal’s lands, destroy his forts and kill and enslave the people”, if necessary. “Artfully retiring, Ranbal, the king of Zabul, drew the Mohammedan army into the defiles, and blocking up the rear, cut off their retreat. In this situation, exposed to the danger of perishing by famine, Obaidullah was compelled to purchase liberation of himself and his followers, from the snare into which he had imprudently led them, for a ransom of seven hundred thousand dirhams”. Obaidullah had to promise never to raid the Ranbal’s territory again and he died of grief at the plight of his forces: many of them had died of thirst and hunger.

So thorough was the destruction and so pitiable the condition of the survivors of the Muslim army that it has come to



*Al-Muqtadir coins with bull & horseman motif
Courtesy: https://www.icollector.com/ABBASID-al-Muqtadir-908-932-AR-donative-dirham-3-98g-NM-ND-VF_i29824524*

be known as the “*Jaish ai Fanah*” (the doomed army). Perhaps the only other comparable incident occurred in 1842 when the Afghans, using the same tactics, brought a similar disaster upon the British army.⁴

Another army had to be sent to somewhat restore the Muslim honour. This time Hajjaj dispatched Abdur Rahman, son of Mohammed Ibn al-Ashath, at the head of a 40,000 strong force, ‘equipped splendidly with arms’. Around 700, Zabulistan was penetrated with some successes. But having loaded his followers with booty, instead of remaining to secure the contest, he returned to Sistan, from whence he dispatched to acquaint Hajjaj with the success of expedition. He was vehemently denounced by Hajjaj “for turning away from *Jehad* against the infidels” and threatened that he would be removed from his command unless he completed his assignment before the end of the year. Abdur Rahman’s principal commanders knew about the plight of the previous army and were in no mood to take the field against Ranbal. Urged by them, Abdur Rahman declared war against Hajjaj. It was a rebellion (*fitna*) against the caliphate – the mightiest seat of power of its times. Before setting out for Iraq, Abdur Rahman concluded a treaty of alliance with the enemies of faith (Ranbal) in which it was stated that if his campaign be attended with success, Ranbal would be absolved from every species of tribute forever and Ranbal agreed to afford him asylum in the event of failure of this campaign against the caliph.

Abdur Rahman initially achieved some victories and

Sustained political intervention by Ranbal brought the Islamic expansion to a halt and for more than one and a half century no lasting gains were made by the Arabs in these territories. Both Hindu states of Zabul and Kabul could preserve their sovereignty

finally took the field against the Caliph himself with 100000 soldiers under his banner. The Caliph tried to placate him with alluring assignments (governorship of his own choice etc.) and liberal privileges of pay and pension for his soldiers but his troops considered themselves unconquerable and refused to yield. Finally, the Caliph was forced to appeal to Hajjaj for help and the battle (July 702) ended in a victory for Hajjaj. Ultimately, Abdur Rahman retreated to safety under the Ranbal.⁵

The interest that this contest excited throughout the caliphate, invested Ranbal with a celebrity and he was hero of many Arab stories of the holy war. He was a formidable foe who had made Sistan an ill-omened frontier for the Arabs. Sustained political intervention by Ranbal brought the Islamic expansion to a halt and for more than one and a half century no lasting gains were made by the Arabs in these territories.⁶ Both Hindu states of Zabul and Kabul could preserve their sovereignty. This signal failure was an unprecedented ignominy for the Arab forces that had, by then, conquered vast regions without a setback.

India was the first nation that could halt the march of ‘invincible arms’ of the Arabs when they were still in their elemental fury – the original *Jehadis*. It would be another 300 years that the Muslim arms (the Ghaznavids)

managed to breach the Khyber Pass. It took them 200 years more to reach Delhi.

Non-Arab Muslim States of Afghanistan

In theory, the caliph as the successor of the Prophet Muhammad, was the fountainhead of all political authority. All Muslim Kings and tribal chiefs were subordinate to him and his sanction alone could provide legal basis for their authority. However, with the gradual waning of the political might of the caliphate, the governors appointed by the Abbasid Caliphs in far off lands, caste off the caliphal yoke and set up their independent chiefdoms. And as they acquired more power they threatened the caliph to seek his sanction for their rulership and paid only lip service by reading *khutba* in the name of the caliph after their weekly prayers. Two such Muslim Kingdoms, viz. the Samanids and the Saffarids, arose close to Hindu states in Afghanistan. For one and a half century Ranbal ruled in peace without any serious campaign mounted by the Arabs or others. The Kingdoms of Zabul and Kabul seem to have strengthened their defensive capability to meet this danger.

Samanids

The Samanid state was established by four brothers, grandsons of Saman, a converted Persian Zoroastrian. They

were ruling over four regions on behalf of Abbasid Caliph. It was the first native dynasty to rise in the region, virtually independent of the Caliph. They gradually extended their rule over a vast territory. The earlier Samanid Amirs (Rulers) adopted an expansionist forward policy and the kingdom had lucrative prizes like the rich cities of Persia (Iran). Yet they do not seem to have meddled with the Hindu states of Zabul and Kabul. Contemporary Muslim records do not have record of any such confrontation.

Under the Samanids Transoxiana and Khurasan prospered with a notable expansion of industry and commerce. Samanids were great art patrons and they turned Bukhara and Samarkand into famous cultural centers rivalling Baghdad. It was the new main centre of power in the region. The Samanids started employing Turkish slaves from beyond the frontier (Jaxartes) into army and other offices of the state. By the latter part of the tenth century, as the Samanid Amirs were themselves occupied with 'high culture', they gave direction of their army, including governorship of the provinces, to the Turkish generals. Ultimately a mutinous Turkish Hajib (doorkeeper) established an independent principality in Ghazni, which in its wake threatened every kingdom between the Oxus and the Ganges – including their masters, the Samanids.

Saffarids

Sistan had been finally occupied in 656 by the commanders of the caliphate after three attempts. There was enough *fitna* (internal



Iraq: Coin of the Abbasid Caliphate, Baghdad, 908-930 CE (Caliph Al-Muqtadir), apparently influenced by the coinage of the Kabul Shahi Dynasty of India
Courtesy: <https://www.agefotostock.com/age/en/Stock-Images/Rights-Managed/GBP-CPA022498>

strife) in the governance of the province of Sistan, among others, because of resentment of the Persian population. In 861 Yaqub-ibn-Laith assumed control of Sistan as its Amir Yaqub, of Persian lineage, was born in a Sistan village. Saffar, i.e. coppersmith by profession, he took to banditry and became chief of highway robbers; joined army; became its commander; and gradually secured for himself the position of Amir of Sistan in 861.

Ranbal Killed by Treachery

Yaqub snatched Eastern Iran and Baluchistan from the rule of the caliphate in various campaigns but had not ignored Zabulistan in his neighbourhood. He started encroaching the territory on western border of Zabulistan and in 870 Ranbal himself led an army to decide the issue. When Yaqub came in front of the 'huge hordes of the enemy' he decided to avoid a clash, using stratagem and deception. He managed to assassinate Ranbal, by treachery, on the ruse of paying homage to him. "The victory which he achieved was the result of treachery and deception, such as no one had ever committed."⁷

Yaqub thus made himself the

master of Zabulistan. He next attacked Bamian which was a great commercial and cultural centre. From there he marched to Balkh and is stated to have destroyed and looted the famous temple *Naushad* there. He proceeded as far as Panjshir in the Kabul valley, where he stayed for a few years and struck his coins there.

As a result of the treachery by Yaqub, the Hindu Kingdom of Zabulistan, which had carried on a heroic resistance for more than two centuries ceased to exist. It was lost to Hindu India politically and culturally, as the residents were gradually converted to Islam. The western border of the adjoining Hindu state of Kabul, guarding the Khyber Pass, became the north-western frontier of India. It would play a role as heroic as its sister state of Zabulistan, for another more than a century.

Brāhmaṇa Hindu Shahis of Kabul and Gandhāra

Kallar the Founder

The Hindus had kings residing in Kabul, Turks who were said to be of Tibetan origin. ... The first of them (was) Barhatakin ... (He) ruled them under the title of a Shahiya of Kabul. The rule remained under his descendants for generations, the number of which is said to be about sixty. ... The last king of this race was Lagaturman, and his Vazir was Kallar, a Brahman. ... Lagaturman had bad habits and

Manthan

a worse behavior, on account of which people complained of him greatly to the Vazir. Now the Vazir put him in chains and imprisoned him for correction ... and so he occupied the royal throne. After him ruled the Brahman kings Samand (Samanta), Kamlu (Kamlavarman), Bhim (Bhima), Jaipal (Jayapala), Ananadapala, Tarojanapala (Trilochanapala). The latter was killed in A.H. 412 (AD 1021) and his son Bhimapala five years later (AD 1026).⁸ (Abu Rehan 'Al Beruni')

While the Ranbals were engaged with the turmoil in their western region, a revolution took place in the kingdom of Kabul. The earlier ruling dynasty (Turk Hindu Shahis of Alberuni) was replaced by the Brahmana Vazir Kallar, starting a new dynasty, generally referred to as the *Brahmana Hindu Shahis*, Kallar (Spalapatideva of the coins), proved to be an able and competent administrator. With appropriation of government by him, an era of sound economy and stable political power was introduced in the Shahi state. The menace of periodic Arab incursions came to an end. As a devout Brāhmaṇa he was of a religious nature (Shaiva) and governed like an efficient Kshatriya – being correctly described as a *Brahma-Kshatra*.

Bull and Horseman Type Coins

Like the Romans and the Kuṣāṇas, he used coinage as the medium of

manifestation of his royal power. He introduced the “Bull and Horseman” type of coins.⁹

Obverse: A couchant bull to the right. The rump of the bull bears a trident. In the field above the bull is the legend ‘Sri Spalapatideva’ in neat Sharada letters.

Reverse: A horseman (King?) moving to the right with a lance banner in right hand

The new legend *Spalapatideva* on the coins declared the fact of change in the government, further proclaiming who was in command of it; the humped bull (*nandi*, a *vahana* of Shiva), the trident, the conch shell and *deva* name-ending showed the new rulers were devotees of Shaivism –conveying a conclusive break with the previous state-patronised Buddhism; the ruler riding on horseback and holding a raised weapon (lance) as inscribed on the reverse of the Shahi coins, tended to convey a strong message about the might of the new administration; for the first time, Śāradā script was used on the Shahi coins, which practice was continued by his successors. Spalapatideva must have been a strong ruler himself as there is no indication of any serious trouble from the traditional foes during his time and the Muslim chronicles make no mention of Kallar/Spalapatideva.

As a good Brahmin he must have been aware that he was only

a mortal and aging. Spalapatideva did not promote his own clan. He selected a most suitable incumbent for the difficult throne of Kabul and installed him, after proper grooming.

Vakkadeva

Among the large number of coins which are attributed to the Brāhmaṇa Hindu Shahis, there are some with the legend Vakkadeva and Khudavayka, which names do not figure in Al Beruni’s list. A stone inscription found recently in Afghanistan has solved one of the problems of the jigsaw puzzle of Shahi history.

Translation of Mazar-e-Sharif Inscription of Sri Shahi Vakkadeva¹⁰

Om. In the year 138, one hundred increased by thirty-eight, on the white-half of Magha during the reign of Sri Shahi Veka (sic.), marked by powerful Ksanginga, having occupied the earth, markets and forts, by eight-fold forces; the godly image of Shive Bhattarka with Uma was established at Maityasya by Parimaha (the great) Maitya. Here Shiva Bhattarka is worshipped with great devotion for the merit of both along with son; hence Shiva Bhattarka with Uma (‘s blessings) may protect the teacher, mother and father. At the temple of Shiva with embrace of Uma, eight desired ceremonies should be performed for the attainment of Swarga etc. Friends be pleased. Sri ...

So far name of Vakka was known only from his copper coins. It now appears that Vakka was sent by Spalapatideva, who was till styling himself as *Vazir* (Amātya), to conquer

Spalapatideva must have been a strong ruler himself as there is no indication of any serious trouble from the traditional foes during his time and the Muslim chronicles make no mention of Kallar/Spalapatideva

the Northern Areas (Mazar-e-Sharif), so vital for the safety of the traditional trade route from Kabul to Central Asia. Vakka was allowed to administer that area and, later, allowed to issue copper coins (a series of five issues) with his own name, as a cadet heir. Contemporaneously, Spalapati ceased to issue his coppers but continued with several issues of his 'Bull and Horseman' type silvers (a series of IX issues).¹¹

Sāmantadeva

In due course of time, Spalapati anointed Vakka as the ruler of the Shahi state, with the new name Sāmantadeva. This name does not figure directly in any chronicles. However, Sāmantadeva issued many coins, including the 'King on Elephant' silver coin to commemorate his accession to throne.

Sometime during this period, the Shahi capital was shifted from Kabul, to another equally important town, Udabhāṇḍapura (Udabhāṇḍa, Wahnd, Ohind or Und) situated on the north bank of river Sindh, fifteen miles above Attock. In view of the importance of Kabul, a Shahi prince must have been appointed as a governor there. With the loss of Zabul, which had served as a buffer against Islamic forces, and Yaqub acquiring territory north of Koh Hindu Kush, it was a timely strategic move. Protected by the intervening mountains with Khyber Pass and its contiguity with the Hindu state of Punjab, it later proved to be a very wise decision.

Kalhan's *Rājatarangīnī* gives a very colourful description of the Shahi ruler of Udabhāṇḍa:¹² *Alakhana's support the illustrious Lalliya Shahi – who, (placed)*



spalapatideva coins

between the rulers of the Darads and Turushkas as between a Lion and Bear ... In whose town of Udabhāṇḍa (other) kings found safety ... whose mighty glory (outshone) the kings in the North, just as the sun-disc (outshines) the stars in heaven – he was not received into service (by Shankaravarman), who desired to remove him from his sovereign position

Shankaravarman was the king of Kashmir between 883 and 902 CE. Chronologically, this makes him a contemporary of Sāmantadeva (c. 860-895), at least for some period. Lalliya Shahi of Rajatarangini is obviously Sāmantadeva, the Shahi ruler of that period.

Bull and horseman type Sāmanta coins became very popular in international trade and continued to be issued posthumously by his own successors, with or without issuing coins in their own names. "The success of these coins in gaining acceptance is attested in coin finds north of Caspian Sea, near the Volga River, north Black sea, north Dnepr River, near Moscow and near Baltic Coast in Estonia and Poland. ... It has been estimated that under the

Hindu Shahi Rulers the number of Bull and Horseman coins in circulation in their kingdom was somewhere between 400 million and one billion."¹³ "Abbasid Caliph, Al Muqtadir, issued coins of the pattern and with the types of these Shahi Kings about the year 908, only super imposing his own name in Arabic. This unparalleled behaviour at least indicates the importance of the Hindu Shahis, and the quality of their coinage in Muslim eyes."¹⁴

The Shahis were ruling in the region with power and glory – the mightiest kings in the North. It would be ridiculous to surmise that they had been turned out of Kabul by Yaqub: there is no mention in history about any battle fought in Kabul during this period.

Khudavayaka

Trade: Commercial ties between the Persian Gulf and India had always been close but under the Muslims it evolved into an integrated trading empire. From the eighth and ninth centuries, the India trade assumed central importance for Islam, because the sub-continent and its Indianised hinterland provided products of almost every type that was on

demand in the world market. India always had a very favourable export-import balance. It seems to have maintained steady development of its traditional trading capacity and exportable surplus during the Early Medieval Period also.¹⁵ And as always, India accepted only gold or coins of precious metal in return. That was why even an Arab Caliph had to mint Shahi Coins in 908 to purchase Indian goods.

According to the study of 'Chronological Sequence of the Coins of the Shahis of Kabul and Gandhāra' several series of the Bull and Horseman type silver coins with the legend Sāmantadeva continued to be issued during the rule of the successors of Sāmantadeva. All this points to great demand for this particular type of Shahi coins.¹⁶

Some silver coins of the Bull and Horseman type coins of this period have become available on which the legend has been read as Khudavayaka or Khudarayaka (correctly *Kṣudra Rājka* = Little Raja).¹⁷ It can be fairly surmised that the Shahi Prince administering Kabul was permitted to issue these to meet immediate demands.

Kamalavarman

According to Al Beruni, Samanta's successor was Kamalu (aliases Kamalva, Kamalavarman, Tormana-Kamluka).

After the death of Yaqub-i-Lais of Sistan, who had annexed Zabul to his kingdom, his brother Amr-i-Lais took over. There is a *hikāyat* (anecdote) by Muhamad Ufi that Amr-i-Lais appointed Fardaghan as governor of Zabulistan. There was a large Hindu place of worship called Sakawand in Zabul and people

There was a large Hindu place of worship called Sakawand in Zabul and people used to come on pilgrimage from remote parts of Hindustan. Fardaghan marched to Sakawand with his army, broke the idols, overthrew the idolaters and distributed some of the plunder among his soldiers

used to come on pilgrimage from remote parts of Hindustan. Fardaghan marched to Sakawand with his army, broke the idols, overthrew the idolaters and distributed some of the plunder among his soldiers. "When the news reached Kamlu who was Rai of Hindustan, he collected an innumerable army and marched towards Zabulistan". The story goes that on hearing about this, Fardaghan spread a rumour that a large army was being sent by Amar-i-Lais, on hearing which the Shahi stopped in his tracks.¹⁸ This anecdote received wide circulation, being the only reference relating to Kamalavarman in Muslim chronicles.

Reliable evidence has become available that this oft-quoted narration by Ufi was short of the "whole truth". According to *Tarikh-i-Sistan*, this provocative action prompted two Indian Kings (Rai of Hindustan), whose names reported in very corrupt form have been restored as *Ashta* and *Tormana*, to take firm retaliatory measures. They combined their forces and launched a united invasion of Ghazni.¹⁹ Who was the other *Rai Ashta*, who joined to avenge desecration of a Hindu temple?

Rājatarangiṇī records an instance of a *Shahi-Vigraha* in which a rebellious Shahi usurped the throne of Udabhāṇḍa and the state of Kashmir intervened.

Prabhākaradeva, the minister of Gopalavarman (902-904) led a victorious expedition against the seat of the Shahi power at Udabhāṇḍa and "bestowed the kingdom of the rebellious Shahi (*ajñātikramī Shahi* – a Shahi violator of the order) upon Tormana, Lallaya's son and gave him the new name Kamaluka."²⁰ With a short gap on account of this family feud, Kamalavarman may have ruled from 895 to 921.

Bhīmadeva

Kamalavarman was succeeded by his son Bhīmadeva, identified as Shahi Śrī Bhīmadeva in inscriptions and coins.

DEWAI STONE INSCRIPTION OF SHAHI ŚRĪ BHĪMADEVA²¹

Translation: By the supreme sovereign (paramabhāṭṭārka), superior king of great kings (Mahārājadhīrāja) and supreme lord (parameshvara) he Shahi, the illustrious Bhīmadeva, who holds the mace (gadāhasta) in his hand and is sprung from the illustrious Kula Kamalavarman (or sprung from Kamalavarmā of an illustrious family).

Coins: Bhīmadeva issued some coins in copper, silver and gold. His gold coin is unique in many ways:²²

Obverse: The king, bearded and with long hair, wearing *dhotī* (loin cloth) and *uttarīya* (upper garment)... seated crosslegged on throne, right hand stretched

out (as if receiving something), with the legend *Shahi Śrī Bhīma Deva* above.

Reverse: King with peaked beard, wearing *yajñopavīta* (sacred thread) and clad in *dhotī*, sitting in *rājātila* (kingly pose) on decorated *vatrasna* (wicker seat) with right hand raised and palm open inwards (as if giving something). The inscription reads *Śrīmadguṇanidhi Śrī Sāmantadeva*.

This unique gesture, remembering reverentially (reads *Śrīmad Guṇanidhi*) through a gold coin, his illustrious grandfather who ruled ahead of them, is a very touching tribute by a ruling monarch.

Defence Preparedness: The Shahi state of Kabul was surrounded by strong Samanid and Saffarid Muslim kingdoms on the west and Kashmir, Kannauj (Pratiharas), Multan on the other side. The Brāhmaṇa Shahi dynasty ruled with power and glory and did not lose any territory during their rule of over a century. Obviously, they maintained a ‘balance of power’ vis-à-vis the neighbourig states. The *Khajuraho Stone Inscription*

of *Chandella King Dhanga VS 1011 (954-55 CE)*²³ imparts an interesting information that the Shahi King Bhīmadeva obtained a force of elephants and horses from Herambapāla (alias Mahipāla) the Gurjara Pratihāra, in exchange for a precious possession, namely, a Vaikunṭha image, originally believed to be from Kailash.

Kashmir: So far as known, Bhīmadeva had only one daughter and no son. This (unnamed) daughter was married to “king Simharāja, the lord of Lohara (Punch-Rajauri area)”.²⁴ Didda, the daughter of Simharāja out of this wedlock, was married to Kṣemagupta, the King of Kashmir (950-958). ‘Illustrious Bhīma Shahi’ built a richly endowed temple, *Bhīma-Keśava* near Martand in Kashmir.

Bhīmadeva was safely ensconced on the throne of the flourishing Shahi state. But he was aging and had no male heir. His grand-daughter, Didda, was the Regent Queen of Kashmir, but she had plenty problems of her own and Afghanistan was not a crown of roses. Bhīmadeva seems to have decided to merge

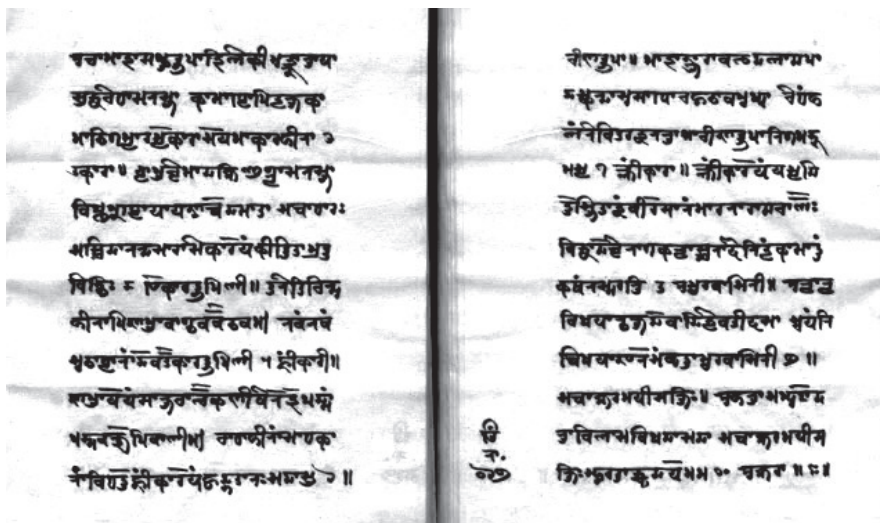
the Shahi state of Kabul with Punjab, which was also then ruled by another dynasty of militant Brāhmaṇas (*Brahma-Kshatra*). As a devout Brāhmaṇa, he committed ritual suicide at a time of his own choosing, like savants and sages before him. This has become clear from a stone inscription which became available at Udabhāṇḍa (Hund).

*THE HUND SLAB INSCRIPTION OF THE TIME OF JAYAPALADEVA*²⁵

To the north of the Indus... There is (a city) by name Udabhāṇḍa which has been made their home by learned men... There dwelt the chief of kings, Bhīma of terrible valour by whom, having conquered his enemies’ troops, the earth was protected... who was burnt up by himself through (Shiva’s) desire, but not through terrible enemy... The king of that country is (now) Jayapāladeva...

According to one native account, Sāmantadeva was not the son of Kallar (Spalapatideva) but from another Brahman family. Kamalavarman was the son and Bhīmadeva grandson of Sāmantadeva (Deva dynasty). Jayapāla was from another Brāhmaṇa ruling dynasty of Punjab. Ānandapāla, was the son, Trilocanapāla the grandson and Bhīmapāla the great grandson of Jayapāla (Pāla dynasty).²⁶ Jayapāla ascended to a throne extending from Sirhind to Kabul.²⁷ The account that follows is largely based on Utbi (Tarikh al-Yamini) the official historian of Mahmud Ghaznavi. For lack of space only main events are being highlighted.

A rebellious governor of the Samanids had established an independent Sultanate at Ghazni (965) which grew in



sharda script

power by occupying territory of the adjoining Muslim states. Jayapāla ruled peacefully for a couple of decades but felt the menace of this rising power in the neighbourhood. He collected a large army and attacked Sabuktigin, the ruler of Ghazni. The armies fought for several days. Then came a snow storm, extraordinarily severe. "A great part of the cattle was killed and some thousands of soldiers of both armies perished." Jayapāla failed in his objective. After some time, once again Jayapāla attacked and there was a fierce fighting but Jayapāla did not succeed. In retaliatory attacks by Sabuktigin, the Afghanistan part of his kingdom was lost but Jayapāla continued to rule from Udabhāṇḍa and Peshawar. Despite his victories, Sabuktigin did not attack again, but the Ghazni Sultanate became very powerful.

Mahmud ascended the throne of Ghazni in 998. He further consolidated his grip on Khurasan and other Muslim territories on his western front. He next attacked Peshawar in 1001 and Jayapāla was defeated in this sudden invasion. Having advanced in age he did not forget the quest for *Mokṣa*. Leaving the remaining Shahi kingdom to the care of his son Ānandapāla, he committed ritual suicide, like his predecessor and benefactor Bhīmadeva. This was the graceful and sublime exit by the unfortunate Jayapāladeva from an action filled life.

Shahis were the main bulwark hindering Mahmud's free passage through Punjab. So he first secured his left flank by the conquest of Bhatia (Uch) and Multan, who were allies of the

Shahis were the main bulwark hindering Mahmud's free passage through Punjab. So he first secured his left flank by the conquest of Bhatia (Uch) and Multan, who were allies of the Shahis

Shahis. Crossing the Khyber Pass, he next appeared on the Shahi territory in 1008. This time Ānandapāla was ready and the two armies faced each other for forty days. Finally, Mahmud ordered his archers to provoke the enemy, "The battle lasted from morning till evening and the infidels (Hindus) were near getting the victory."²⁸ But "on a sudden the elephant on which the prince who commanded the Hindus rode, becoming unruly from the effect of naphtha balls and flight of arrows, turned and fled."²⁹ This circumstance produced a panic among the Hindus seeing themselves deserted by their general, gave way and fled also.

Before Hindus could re-organise, Mahmud took advantage of this favourable moment and invested temple of Bhīmanagar (modern Nagarkot). After facing resolute defence for three days, Mahmud became master of the citadel. There he got booty beyond imagination: gold and silver ingots; jewels and pearls; besides seventy million stamped gold coins.

The next confrontation was during the reign of Trilocanapāla, son of Ānandapāla, when Mahmud arrived with a large army in the spring of 1014. The Shahis checked him in battles first at Margala Pass near Rawalpindi, next at the fort of Nandana situated in the Salt Range in Punjab and finally on a hill side near Tausi (modern Tohi) in Kashmir.

This was a strong blow which almost destroyed the Shahis as a strong reigning power in the region. With this, Gandhāra was lost forever. Kalhaṇa says in his *Rājataranginī*.³⁰

Nothing is impossible to fate. It effects with ease what even in dreams appears incredible, what fancy fails to reach.

That Shahi Kingdom whose greatness on the earth has been briefly indicated..., now one asks oneself, whether with its kings, ministers and its court, it ever was or was it not.

"These words may be taken as representing correctly the feeling which the catastrophe had roused in the hearts of people." (MA Stein)

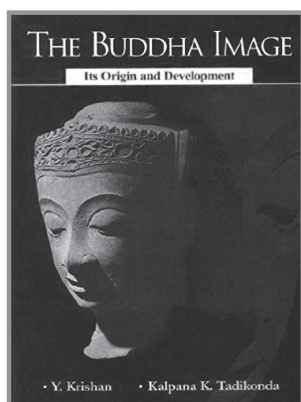
Still more touching tribute was paid by Al Beruni, a Muslim scholar who came to India with the train of Mahmud Ghaznavi and may have met Trilocanapāla during his long stay in Lahore.

*The Hindu Shahi Dynasty is now extinct, and of the whole there is no longer the slightest remnant in existence. We must say that in all their grandeur, they never slackened in the ardent desire of doing that which is good and right, that they were men of noble sentiment and noble bearing.*³¹

The off-springs of the fading civilisation of Gandhāra, the Brāhmaṇa Hindu Shahis, were a tribute to that ancient culture, which came under serious threat with their departure from the scene.■

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Y. Krishan

The Buddha Image, Its Origin & Development

India has a long tradition of sculptural art and also the mastery in iconography, yet we don't find the portrayal of Buddha in human form before Greeks. Our early images of Buddha are in aniconic form, representing Buddha only in symbols. In later stages we see it in an iconic form. The factors which brought about the change from aniconism to iconism are of great importance and interest

This book deals with some of the most fundamental controversies in Buddhist art. First and foremost: "Early Buddhist Aniconic Art." The earliest Buddhist art of Bharhut and Sanchi is aniconic: Buddha is represented only in symbols in conformity with the Vedic tradition. The iconic representation of the Buddha in the later schools of art of Gandhāra and Mathura generated a most vigorous impulse which led to intensive and creative works of art-- the Buddha image and the episodes centering around the life of the Master. This culminated in the Sarnath Buddha in the 5th century AD which is a masterpiece of world art and which became the model of the Buddha heads in whole of Asia. The illustrations bring out vividly the transformation from aniconism to anthropomorphism in Buddhist Art.

The creation of the Buddha image also created the need for housing the image of the Buddha and was thus responsible for the construction of caityas and temples enshrining the Buddha image.

Anthropomorphic representation of the Buddha was thus the one important inspiration for the creation of Buddhist art and architecture.

So the factors which brought about the change from aniconism to

iconism are of great importance and interest.

Aniconism or unanthropomorphism of the early Buddhist art was not, as is commonly believed, the result of a belief among the earliest Buddhists later classified as the followers of the Hīnayāna, that Śākyamuni Buddha could not be represented in human form either because he was only an ordinary being who did not deserve to be idolized in an icon or because of a canonical injunction against deification of Gautama in human form. Aniconism was also not an exclusive feature of the then Buddhist art. The earliest contemporary Jain art of Khandagiri and Udayagiri was equally aniconic or unanthropomorphic. These are ample reasons to believe that the aniconism of early Buddhist art was rooted in Vedism in which the highest gods were conceived as impersonal forces of nature and amūrta, without form. It was foreign to the then contemporary Indian genius to represent a mahāpuruṣa, a great being, as puruṣa, human being. The Buddhists, in conformity with the Vedic tradition, eschewed the representation of the Buddha in human form.

Further evidence of conformity to the indigenous Vedic traditions is also to be found in the art motifs used

by the Buddhists (as also by the Jains).

It is the Buddhist Indo-Greeks, the Greeks who settled down and ruled over the Gandhāra region (present North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan and parts of Afghanistan), in the wake of Alexander's invasion, who provided the impulse for a break from the past: the artists of Gandhāra of Greek origin, had no inhibitions in representing the Buddha in human form. In fact the Greeks had revelled in chiselling in stone sublime figures of their gods which are masterpieces of art of all times. It was, therefore, quite natural for the Buddhist Indo-Greeks to represent the master of their faith in stone in the tradition of their forefathers. Thus Greek aestheticism combined with Buddhist religious fervour to create the Buddha image in Gandhāra.

There is acute controversy among scholars, regarding the relative priority in the execution of the Buddha image between Gandhāra on the one hand, and Mathura on the other. It is not just an academic debate but has a bearing on the question of the origin of the Buddha image. There is considerable evidence, archaeological, epigraphical and numismatic, which establishes the chronological priority of the Buddha image of Gandhāra over the Buddha image from Mathura. This provides confirmation of the thesis that the creation of the Buddha image was the result of Indo-Greek inspiration.

Buddha Aniconic: Buddhapada [Buddha's Footprints] / Aniconic representation of Buddha
 Courtesy: <http://www.publicartinchicago.com/buddhist-art-aniconic-versus-ionic-phase/>

Again, the ideological affiliation of the creators of the Buddha image has been considered to have a bearing on the area where it could have originated. As mentioned earlier, hitherto, the scholars had assumed that the followers of the Hīnayāna, dominated by bhikṣus or monks in the earliest phase of the growth of Buddhism, considered the representation of the Master in human form as heretical, being contrary to canonical injunction. More importantly, it was assumed that the representation of the Buddha in human form was an innovation of the Mahāyāna. Consequently the Gandhāra school of Buddhist art was identified as belonging to the Mahāyāna. But the substantial epigraphical evidence, the account of the Chinese travellers and the content of the art of Gandhāra proves that the Buddhists of Gandhāra were not followers of the Mahāyāna but of the Sarvāstivāda School of the Hīnayāna.

The content of the early Buddhist art of the Central Asia, Eastern and Western Turkistan, shows that the Central Asian early

Buddhist art was an extension of the Buddhist art of Gandhāra and Hīnyānic in character.

Thus the first five chapters establish that the aniconic character of the early Buddhist art is not rooted in orthodox Buddhist doctrine but in Vedism, that the first Buddha images are to be found in Gandhāra, that the Buddhism of Gandhāra and early Central Asian Buddhist settlements was the Sarvāstivāda School of Hīnayāna and that the credit for representing the Buddha in human form goes to the Indo-Greeks who owed allegiance to the Hīnayāna.

The last two chapters deal with two important iconographic features of the Buddha images (a) The Hair on the Buddha's Head and Uṣṇīṣa, and (b) The Crowned and Bejewelled Buddha images.

The Buddha images are commonly represented with short curls and a protuberance on the top of the skull. These have been considered as depicting one of the 32 mahāpuruṣa lakṣaṇas, the signs of a great being, a buddha, an enlightened being or a cakravartin, a universal



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sovereign. However, on the basis of literary evidence, the manner in which hair are represented in the Gandhāra and Mathura images of the Buddha, the Jaina tradition regarding the representation in art the heads of tīrthankaras with hair and uṣṇīṣa, it is established that the hair on the head were originally depicted in Gandhāra and Mathura in imitation of the locks of hair of Brahmā, that uṣṇīṣa is not a cranial bump but an emblem of the Buddha's spiritual sovereignty and which is traceable to Vedic tradition. "The Buddha was conceived as the spiritual or divine counterpart of a cakravartin (a universal monarch)... Just as cakravartin was endowed with a crown of temporal royalty, so was the Buddha endowed with an uṣṇīṣa which symbolised his attainment of spiritual sovereignty." In arriving at this conclusion, for the first time the present work makes use of the valuable evidence of Jaina iconography. Further the Buddha's uṣṇīṣa provides valuable evidence of the influence of Vedic Brahmā on the iconography of the Buddha images.

The second feature of Buddha iconography is the Buddha depicted in royal attire—crown and jewels. Such images are prima facie aberrant and a deviation



from the orthodox tradition according to which, at the time of renunciation, the Buddha had discarded his royal robes and the jewellery. Here again the scholars have found a simplistic explanation—the crowned and jewelled Buddha images in eastern India were a product of buddhology of the Mahāyāna

Gandhāra Buddha: Buddha / Gandhāra Art – 1st century AD

Courtesy: <http://www.publicartinchicago.com/>

buddhist-art-aniconic-versus-iconic-phase/

Buddhism. But the Buddha image in royal attire are to be found in Cambodia, Siam, Laos and Burma where the Buddhists owe allegiance to the most orthodox school of Hīnayāna Buddhism—the Theravāda. The Jaina art tradition of the Śvetāmbara sect depicts the tīrthankaras embellished with gems and ornaments in spite of the fact that Jainism is rigidly austere and the second great branch of Jainism, the Digambara sect depicts tīrthankaras as absolutely naked. The finding is that crowned and jewelled Buddha images do not represent any particular school of Buddhism: the crown and the jewellery were intended to proclaim the Buddha's sovereignty.

So besides exploring the origin of the Buddha image and certain basic features of the iconography of the Buddha images, the present work also makes manifest the Vedic roots of the early Buddhist aniconic art and the Vedic Brahmā's influence on the Buddha's iconography. ■

Courtesy: The Buddha Image, Its Origin and Development (Book)

Parthia

Parthia is a historical region located in north-eastern Iran. It was conquered and subjugated by the empire of the Medes during the 7th century BC, was incorporated into the subsequent Achaemenid Empire under Cyrus the Great in the 6th century BC, and formed part of the Hellenistic Seleucid Empire following the 4th-century-BC conquests of Alexander the Great. The region later served as the political and cultural base of the Eastern-Iranian Parni people and Arsacid dynasty, rulers of the Parthian Empire (247 BC – 224 AD). The Sasanian Empire, the last state of pre-Islamic Persia, also held the region and maintained the Seven Parthian clans as part of their feudal aristocracy. ■



Sonali Mishra

Gandhāra in Indian Literature

Gandhāra has always been an integrate part of the collective consciousness of India. This is why it reflects in one or the other form in the Indian literature of every period. A critical study

Like a breath of air wafting across the landscape or a silken thread that binds together various entities, a bond binds India from Kashmir to Kanyakumari. So too are the regions in the distant Northeast bound to the rest of India. Such bonding has given birth to many stories, legends and fables; indeed, a rich tapestry of literature has been woven because of it. One such tale emanates from Kashmir and reaches its fulfilment upon reaching as it were, the feet of India. However, the moot aspect meriting attention is whether India exists only from Kashmir to Kanyakumari and Rajasthan to the Northeast. Is there another India beyond this? Do the regions that today fall outside the geographical boundaries of today's India have nothing to do with India? Does literature tell us a tale different from the picture we know? The India of today came into existence after 1947, while the India before that was much beyond the present frontiers. It was an India whose boundaries encompassed Gandhāra and Iran as well. Indeed, the boundaries of that Bharat touched even the present-day Syria. While even recorded history bears testimony to this, literature too records this fact. Tales of India are even now a part of the socio-cultural life of those regions that currently

lie outside our country. There are for instance, tales, stories and literature that come from the land of Gandhāra, which reveal the fact that Bharat in fact extends till Gandhāra and even beyond. Gandhāra is today's Kandahar, which lies in Afghanistan, but which was once a part of India. Temples of Sanatana Dharma (Hinduism) existed in that part of India. Takṣashilā, which was its capital during some period in history, was a seat of learning renowned throughout the world. Puruṣapura (today's Peshawar) and Kamboja were its neighbours. And Gāndhārī, one of the principal characters in the events of the *Mahābhārata*, was born in Gandhāra; the *Mahābhārata* is incomplete without her mention.

The earliest description of Gandhāra appears in the Ṛg Veda; the residents of the region of Gandhāra are mentioned as the Gandhārai people. Dr. Ramvilas Sharma in his book *Bhāratīya Sanskr̥ti Aur Hindī Pradeśa* writing about Gandhāra says that the Gandhāra *mahājanapada* stretched from the Kunad or Kashkar river to Takṣashilā. Gandhāra's capital was Puṣkalāwatī; on its current location is the town of Charsadda on the banks of the confluence of the Kabul and Swat rivers, located in present-day Pakistan.

Gandhāra is mentioned in other

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Indian literature as well, right from the age of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. The Uttara Kāṇḍa of the Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa* describes Gandhāra as a country that is well endowed with all kinds of natural bounty and ruled by the Gandharvas. Vālmīki writes:

***Yudhājīṭprītisaṃyuktam
Shrūyatām Yadi Rochate|
Ayam Gandharvaviṣayaḥ
Phalmūlopaśobhitah||***¹

If thou be inestrated, do know the Gandharvas, who live in a land blessed with fruit and vegetation (i.e., well endowed by nature) to be both warlike as well as cordial.

Vālmīki further writes that this country of the Gandharvas is situated on the banks of the Sindhu river.

***Sindhorubhayataḥ Pārśve
Deśaḥ Paramaśobhanah|
Taṃ Ca Rakṣanti Gandharvāḥ
Sāyudhā Yuddhakovidāḥ||***²

This beautiful country (i.e., Gandhāra) is situated on other bank of the Sindhu river (meaning the western side) and is protected by the Gandharvas who are equipped with weapons and are skilled in warfare.

Rāma is happy at receiving these directions from his maternal uncle and directs Bharata to free Gandhāra from the Gandharvas, quell them and divide their kingdom into two. Bharata, obeying King Rāma's command invades the country of the Gandharvas, defeats them and

establishes two new cities, which he names after his two sons Takṣa and Puṣkala, i.e., Takṣaśilā and Puṣkalāwatī. Both these regions were rich in wealth, grain as well as human values.

***Takṣam Takṣashilāyām Tu
Puṣkala Puṣkalāwate|
Gandharva Deśe Rucire
Gāndhārviṣaya Ca Saḥ||***³

The Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa* provides a very vivid and captivating account of both these cities, in which there is also description of grand temples in Takṣaśilā as well as Puṣkalāwatī.

As we move onwards from the era of the *Rāmāyaṇa* to that of the *Mahābhārata*, Gandhāra comes forth in a fuller way. Bhīṣma, the grandsire of the Kuru Dynasty and empire forces Gandhāra to yield its princess Śubhā to the Kurus to become the wife of its blind ruler Dhṛtarāṣṭra. Śubhā is forced to accept this union and adopts the name Gāndhārī. Bhīṣma, who belonged to Hastināpura in the plains of India forcibly acquired a princess from a distant northwestern mountainous region as she had a boon from Lord Shiva whereby she would beget a hundred sons. This incident has been presented in the *Mahābhārata* and other works of Indian literature in a manner that it readers can feel the trauma of Śubhā's transition to Gāndhārī and her journey thence.

In this context, Manu Sharma's

novel *Gāndhārī Kī Ātmakathā* can be said to be particularly worthy of mention. In this novel, the writer has tried to portray the contemporary culture of the region of Gandhāra in its original form. The worship of Lord Shiva has been very significant in this particular northwestern region; indeed, it extended to Kashmir as well, a Shaivite tradition whose influence can be seen and felt even today. Manu Sharma expresses Gāndhārī's story in the following words:

“Today is Shivarātri. Nature has arrived in all its enchanting splendour. Winter has expended all its harshness by then and the trees too shedding their old foliage and donning fresh greenery. Dressed in light yellow robes, we welcome this enchanting visage and its sensuousness.”

The writer then narrates the Madanotsava (a celebration dedicated to Kāmadeva, the deity of love). Nearly every moment of life in Gandhāra seems to be festive. The writer explains, “We have a Madanotsava even on the day of the Basanta Pancamī.”⁴

Manu Sharma goes on to describe vividly the frolic of Gandhāra's climate in his novel. The story speaks of clouds gathering in Gandhāra following the Madanotsava, throwing Shubhā i.e., Gāndhārī into a troubled state of mind. Describing both the weather and Gāndhārī's state of mind, the writer says: “Clouds darkened the sky everywhere all of a sudden and began dispensing arrows of fire (i.e., lightning) with a fierce rumble and thunder. What does this untimely rain portend? It does not rain during Basant in Gandhāra.”⁵

However, it does bear iteration

Bharata, obeying King Rāma's command invades the country of the Gandharvas, defeats them and establishes two new cities, which he names after his two sons Takṣa and Puṣkala, i.e., Takṣaśilā and Puṣkalāwatī

that the climate of Gandhāra prevalent in those days of yore is a far cry from the one found in the Gandhāra of today's. Is this change in the climatic environment of that region an outcome of the clash of two cultures? Or does it bespeak of a certain civilisation, which is infamous for its intolerance and zealotry, having become prevalent? A. Foucher in *Notes on the Ancient Geography of Gandhāra* does indicate so. The feature commences its narrative with the sojourn of Chinese traveler Hiuen Tsang, and also accepts Gandhāra as the birthplace of Sanskrit grammarian Pāṇini. This write-up finds the influence of Buddhism the distinct feature of the region. About the change of climate Gandhāra underwent, the article injects an element of curiosity by asking whether the radical environmental change appeared with the advent of Muslims, who cut down trees and wiped out the flora and fauna of the place, which Hindus worshipped as divine and also used the dung of livestock as their domestic fuel.⁶

Gandhāra is described in Sushil Kumar's novel *Gāndhārī* as well. The novel however, describes Takṣaśilā, the then capital of Gandhāra as having been founded by Takshaka of the Nāga race. Quoting some modern scholars, Sushil Kumar argues that Takṣaśilā perhaps had not come into existence till the age of the *Mahābhārata*. However, the kingdom of Gandhāra certainly existed and it is only because of that Gāndhārī too existed. Sushil Kumar describes Gandhāra at the very outset of his novel and writes:

“The region of *Gandhāra*,

situated on the northwestern frontier of the Indus was a highly prosperous and sovereign kingdom of that age. Its ruler Subal was a valorous warrior. Actually that era was such that valour alone was the means and basis of freedom and power. Gandhāra flourished under the reign of king Subal, who reigned as a free ruler without any enemies, nor did he fear anyone.”

Further in the novel, Sushil Kumar says that Puṣkalāwatī was the capital of northern Gandhāra, the very city and region which was established by Bharata's son Puṣkala.⁷

Many plays have been penned depicting the grief and trauma of Gāndhārī, among which *Komal Gāndhāra* by Shankar Shesh stands out. This particular play has been staged many times. In it, Shankar Shesh has presented the final dialogue between Gāndhārī and Duryodhana in a very sensitive manner.

When we come to the later era following the period of the *Mahābhārata*, we find Gandhāra becoming the victim of many a foreign invasion. There is another incident similar to that of Gāndhārī's forced relocation to Hastināpura, which also is embedded in Gandhāra's and India's history. This was the invasion of the Hūṇa aggressor Mihirakula on India via Gandhāra, and his final defeat at the hands of Malwa ruler Yashodharman. Vishnu Prabhakar's novel *Gāndhār kī Bhikṣuṇī* deals with this episode of our history. The coverage of this episode in history is limited to Mihirakula's invasion of India and the war between the Huna invader and Yashodharman (also known as Janendra), this play is

a sharp political commentary of the same. King Yashodharman is symbolic of awakened national consciousness in this drama. This event occurred around AD 528, when the cruel Mihirakula began the persecution of Buddhists. Malwa ruler Yashodharman resolved to put an end to this, and acquires two allies in this onerous task; one is Mihirakula's daughter Anandi and the other is the daughter of a rebel Hūṇa commander Marut, by the name of Malwi. It is Mihirakula's daughter Anandi who has been termed as “Gāndhārakī Bhikṣuṇī” (the lady monk of Gandhāra) in the drama. She rebels against her father Mihirakula and joins hands with Yashodharman to spark the flame of devotion and commitment to her motherland, i.e., India, among the common folk.

Another novel *Yaśodharmana*, by Rameshwar Ashant pertains to the same background. The novel vividly describes the barbarism inflicted by Mihirakula. Ashant while depicting the contemporary political circumstances also makes it a point to highlight how the common people yearn for peace as a result of the weariness resulting from unrelenting conflict, at any cost whatsoever. Yet, the Hūṇas would not accept even this. Toramāṇa the Hūṇa invader had already once attacked India and subjected it to rapine and plunder; his son Mihirakula invaded the country again in order to reenact the orgies of blood and gore his father had done. Rameshwar Ashant's work describes the sheer barbarism of Mihirakula and also Yashodharman's resolute repelling of the Hūṇa invasion.

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Along with prose, Gandhāra has found treatment in poetry too, with many poetic works composed on the region. Jayashankar Prasad's epoch *Kāmāyanī* describes Gandhāra thus:

The blue-haired sheep of Gandhāra whose wool is soft and caressing

Cloaked her golden frame in a skin that is soothing and encompassing

That soft body flowers thus amidst the blue fabric

As though a flower blue lightning amidst roses spreads its magic⁸

The most popular poem on Gāndhārī is *Andhāyuga* by Dharmaveer Bharati. This verse play lends eloquent expression to the curse pronounced by Gāndhārī on Krishna. Gāndhārī demands to know from Krishna why he did not prevent the destruction from Gandhāra to Hastināpura, when he could have done so. She holds Krishna responsible for the holocaust (of the Kurukshetra War). Upon seeing her fallen son Duryodhana's skeleton, Gāndhārī, unable to contain her grief, gives vent to it in the following manner in Bharati's poem:

I, Gāndhārī, who has done penance

*Do swear on all my life's merit
And on deeds in past lives I inherit*

Listen! O Krishna!

You could have, had you wished prevented this war

*I had not conceived of my child to see him fall as a skeleton afar
Why did you not curse Bhīma
In the manner you cursed Ashwatthāmā?*

Grossly you have misused your power

If there be merit in my karma

And my piety in my dharma

If there be God or hereafter

Your race too will tear itself asunder

You shall destroy it yourself many years hence

And shall be brought down by an ordinary hunter in the forests dense

Be thou the Lord Himself

*But a beast-like fall shall be thy deliverance.*⁹

In later years, some poets used Gāndhārī as a metaphor. She has been portrayed as someone who though knows everything, draws a blindfold over her eyes. One such work is Gāndhārī Hai Merā Yuga by Rameshwar Dayal Shrimali. In it he writes:

My era is of Gāndhārī

Eyes blindfolded

Pretends to uphold truth

What mockery!

What a combination!

Of eyes and over them a curtain!

How convenient this is

The 'truth' of Gāndhārī!

That gets along with a veil over the eyes

*Without any worry!*¹⁰

Renowned Hindi poet Ajneya has a different view on Gāndhārī's willing acceptance of the blindfold. He says that Gāndhārī accepted this artificial blindness in order to become indifferent to the injustice constantly meted out to her. He writes:

Oh! Were it that her eyes could witness

But then this indeed was her blindness

Constant injustice inflicted

And callousness along with it

Better not to see

Than meekly submit to it

*And therefore her choice of willing sightlessness.*¹¹

We thus see that from the age of the *Rāmāyaṇa* to the modern period, Gandhāra has been part of not only our literature but also of our collective consciousness in some or the other form. Be it the *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Mahābhārata* or the Gupta era, it is well established that Gandhāra is after all a part of India, which draws Indian litterateurs even today. The region that was separated from us, and from where important symbols of our culture have been erased, continues to remain alive and resonate in our stories as well as consciousness. Gandhāra is indeed our heritage. ■

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Isht Deo Sankrityayan

Gandhāra: Social and Cultural Changes

The Perspective of Rahul Sankrityayan

One of the most important litterateurs of India Rahul Sankrityayan had traveled across the world and also acquired knowledge about different regions through many sources. His outlook towards Gandhāra is unique and interesting

Mahapandit Rahul Sankrityayan, an Indian polymath, not only studied history, but felt it within himself. He was an intrepid traveler, who journeyed across the world and during his travels always tried to traverse the history, geography, literature and culture — in brief the entire public life of every region. Rahulji had an inborn skill of striking up direct connect to local people and knowing their sagas through them only. In these, their grief and pleasures, defeats and victories, trivialities and greatneses were all being knitted finely. These were interwoven with both a bit of inhibition and hyperboles, to filter which though, one needs much reasoning. This Rahulji possessed due to his irrepressible studious nature and scientific vision. This is the reason his works on history give the reader the feeling of wandering through the venues of a country and its times.

One of such works of Rahulji is *Madhya Esiyā Kā Itihāsa* (The History of the Central Asia). It covers though the entire central part of Asia and from the very beginning of the earth viz the Dark Ages to the modern times. However, the desideratum of this essay is neither all of Central Asia

nor the Dark or Palaeolithic Ages. All that I wish to do is to underline the social and cultural changes through which a part of it, namely Gandhāra, one of the sixteen *mahājanapadas* of ancient Bhāratavarṣa, underwent. One of his significant works in this regard is *Bauddha Sanskrīti* (Buddhist Culture) as well, though it has only one chapter titled 'Afghanistan' and discusses the culture there from only the Buddhist point of view. In *Madhya Esiyā Kā Itihāsa*, if we broadly see, after the Dark Ages he mainly described different dynasties and the wars fought between them, but if we go through it subtly, we find enough material that reflects the social and cultural changes that occurred into the regions over the course of time.

While it is true that there was cross movement of people, the borders of the land changed along with regimes and the culture too went through many changes but the land was always there since beginning of the present form of the earth along with the hearts of the people. Even today, after the blasting of the Bamiyan Buddha, people sing the songs of social and cultural unity with our land and of tolerance and respect to all thoughts, cultures and faiths as well. The names of places however, got changed many

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times. The region, which was known as Gandhāra at a time, now is stretched from Pakistan to Afghanistan. Puṣkalāwatī, once the capital of Gandhāra now exists in the form of ruins near a city of modern Pakistan, Charsadda. Puruṣapura (also the capital of Gāndhāra) is now known as Peshawar and the ruins of Takṣaśilā now lie in Punjab province of Pakistan, about 32km north-west of Islamabad and Rawalpindi. Kapiśā of the old ages is now known as Kabul, the capital city of Afghanistan. At a time Gandhāra was spread from today's Rawalpindi to the Hindukush.¹ All of it was a part of Gandhāra, which is well-described in the Ṛgveda to the oldest Sanskrit epic *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata* and even many other classics. During this entire period, it was very much a part of Indian culture.

Changes Reflected through Numismatics

As cultural borders had never been as sharply etched as political ones, the culture of Gandhāra also influenced the Pahlavs (now a part of Iran) and Tuṣārs or Bactria (now a part of Afghanistan). The Kuṣāṇas, who at a time established one of the

largest empires in North India, were from Tuṣārdeśa, which later became Tokharistan, then Bactria and now it is western part of Afghanistan. Discussing the influences of Indian culture and Hinduism on the coinage of Vima Kadphises, who ruled from 50-78 CE, Sankrityayan says, "On the other side of the coin there is an icon of Shiva holding the *trishul* in his hand and the words inscribed in the side of the image are as 'Īśwarasa Mahīśwarasa Vimakadaphisa' in Kharoṣṭhi. In it, 'Īśwara Mahīśwara' is perhaps a translation of the Greek words 'Basileusa vesilyona' (king of the kings). Looking at Kushāṇa connections with Buddhism and Shaivism, we erroneously conclude that they adopted Hindu culture and dharma after their arrival to India. This is because we do not know that the place of their origin (Tuṣāra deśa, Tarima valley) was already Hindu, by the way of dharma and culture."²

Talking about Demetrius II who ruled from 189-167 BC, RahulSankrityayan cites a sentence from Patanjali, contemporary grammarian to Demetrius, "Arunad yavana sāketa" (Greeks besieged Ayodhya) and opines that his (Patanjali's) point is to the Demetrius only³. Bactria's

Greek rulers had close relations with India. The relationship that Seleucus entered into by giving his daughter to Chandragupta in marriage, was further maintained by his progeny.⁴ Demetrius issued coins following the old square coins of India, in which he completely replaced Greek language and the script and used Brāhmī script and the Pālī language, both Indian, in place of that. He was the only Greek king who thoroughly Indianised his coins. On his square coins there was inscribed a mountain on one side and a tree in the centre of a stone platform. This is perhaps a symbol of the Bodhi tree. He also inscribed 'dikaios' (*dhārmika*) on his coins. In Pali 'dammiko rājā' is an ancient complimentary phrase. Kapiśā or Paropamisadae was a country of Buddhist dominance during those times.⁵

A portrait of Demetrius is depicted in the Tetrachm silver coins. Demetrius is shown in a serious mood having an elephant-faced crown on his head. On the copper coins issued during his tenure, an elephant-head is inscribed as the symbol of India. Rahulji writes, "It is a remarkable fact that though Greek kings ruled Iran, Baberu and even Egypt, they nowhere used the local script and the language on their coins. The change in the monetary policy they brought about just after the establishment of their connections with India is of great significance. Demetrius II had also ordered inscribing in Pali language and Kharoṣṭhi script along with the Greek, on the coins issued during the regime of his father Demetrius I."⁶



Gold coins of King Vima Kadphises
Courtesy: <http://coinindia.com/VimaK-19-59.10.jpg>

Social Changes

Demetrius had to rush to his mainland Bactria to face an attack by Seleucid General Eucratides. In 189 BC, a decisive battle took place between Antiochus and Rome, in which Rome became victorious and all the rulers of Asia Minor became taxpayers to the Roman Empire. On the other hand, Eucratides I won the countries lying to the west of Hindukush till 167 BC. He captured Sistan, Arachosia (Baluchistan), Herat, Bactria and Sogda. That was the time he moved to achieve victory over India, which Demetrius II could not countenance and sped to his mainland Bactria to face this attack from Eucratides. Demetrius II also commanded his General Menander to join him though the latter did not. Although Demetrius besieged Eucratides at a place the latter managed to escape; finally Demetrius II perished in the battle that occurred near Hindukush. Mentioning all these events Rahul Sankrityayan later explained, “Demetrius II also sought to remove the difference between Greeks and non-Greeks from his government and the army like Alexander. This perhaps caused discontent among the Greek soldiers in his ranks. Whereas, Seleucid kings had always been protective about the Greek lineage.”⁷

No wonder, a king who made efforts to remove disparity from his government and army, could not stick to the same in the society of his kingdom. After Demetrius II Menander came to reign, who was succeeded by Strato I and then Strato II came to power. Describing the circumstances in his times, Rahulji mentioned, “These Greek kings had been Indians and had had marital

relationship with Scythians too.”⁸

The system of the governance in Bactria was also the same which Alexander had taken from Iranian system of governance laid down by Darius I, though with little reforms. They settled a number of Greek colonies, among which Balkh (Bactria) and Pushkalawati (Gāndhāra) were the main. In Seleucid colonies, they maintained differences between Greeks and non-Greek. It was somewhat like the British maintained in their cantonments. “Kings like Demetrius I felt that this type of discrimination was not good and so this tendency subsided a little in the colonies. Demetrius II also appointed local people for high posts in his administration. He made way for Parthians (Pahlavs) and Scythians to become satraps. Mauryans appointed foreigners too as governors, as we see in the case of the Mauryan Governor of Saurashtra. The tradition of Scythian (Pallava) Governors at Saurashtra, Avanti, Mathura and Takṣaśilā began during the Greek kings.”⁹

It may be that the social order were imitated by the local people as an influence of Greek settlements, but they didn't force the local population to adopt their social order or culture. Rahulji further opines, “It is possible that the extent to which Greeks adopted Indian culture, they could not do so in Central Asia.”¹⁰ Discussing about Nasik and Karla caves, he says, “Kings like Apollodotus had Indianised their coins so much that they removed Greek language and script from it and inscribed only in Indian languages with Indian script on it. In the 2nd Century

BC, Greek kings in India placed Indian deities on their coins. Menander openly converted to an Indian (Buddhist) religion. Beginning from Demetrius I (189-167 BC) many kings made efforts to become ‘dhārmik dharmarāja’ (religious kings abiding by law).”¹¹

Deities and their Icons

It is natural that Greeks brought their own deities here to worship, but they never showed any disrespect to the local deities. Describing different deities at that time, Rahulji explains, “Suryadeva (Sun God) attracted Greek devotees a lot, by the name of Mitra. It is said that during the beginning of Christian era, the Mitra sect influenced the Greeks so much that became an issue as to which one would be the prime religion in Greece and Rome between the Mitra and the Christianity. It seems that Mitra was a national deity of the Shatam family. Iranian Aryans also worshipped the Sun God as Mitra. Though reforms by Zorostra placed Ahura-Mazda in the first place, they could not displace Mitra. Indian Aryans too worshipped the Sun god by the name of Mitra. He is one of the main deities in the Ṛg Veda. However, Indian and Iranian Aryans did not make statues of the Sun god in that period; rather, they worshipped Him directly facing the sky. Though later, we also started making statues of the Sun god.”¹² In Bactria, Mithra (Mitra) and Anāhitā held great reverence of the people during third and second century BC. “Scythians soon converted themselves to the Indian religion and culture. They could not maintain their separate existence through their dressing

and catering for more than one or two centuries. They mixed so much with the Indian population that it became difficult to identify them separately. However, they made their lasting mark in India in the form of the statues of the Sun god. Their Sun deity appears with two hands and wears boots in feet, like the Scythians themselves. The boot that Russians wear even today is one which we can see in the statues of Kanishka.”¹³ One of the Vedic Indian deities is goddess Gṛiṣāṇā. Though not very popular in India, she was much venerated to the Bactrian Greek kings. Perhaps she represented some natural power, so we don't find her statues anymore. Rahulji informs, “They found a two-armed seminude statue in a metal bowl, on either side of which two men (both Aśvinīkumāras) are shown.”¹⁴

Art and Culture

The making of Buddha statues too began from Gandhāra Art. It grew as a fusion of Greek and Indian art. Greco-Bactrian Art holds a high place in Asian art. It was also very much respected in Seleucian colonies though it could not produce any classics. After its arrival in Bactria it influenced India, Afghanistan and Central Asia; the same became popularised as Gandhāra art, when it entered India. Particularly portrait art took to such heights that it had no match at all. Greek art deeply inspired Indian art, but the Central Asian countries did not acquire this motivation to the same extent and

so could not flourish in that way. We can though see its influence in the samples of art that were found in Khwarezm. As far as the matter of political influence is concerned Khwarezm had neither been subjected to Alexander nor his heirs like Seleucus and the other Greco-Bactrian kings. Says Sankrityayan, “Coming to the end of 7th Century CE, this land began coming into contact with Islam. During three centuries—8th, 9th and 10th of CE this region bore substantial brunt of the blows struck by iconoclasm. There did not remain an iota of the flourishing of any art. Thus there could not remain any stream of Gandhāra or its following arts continue in Central Asia.”¹⁵

It was the time of Kanishka when Gandhāra flourished and reached to its highest glory. According to Rahulji, he ruled between 76 to 106 CE. “He made his capital in Puruṣapura (now Peshawar) city. Before him this city of Gandhāra could not attain much significance. The famous city and the capital of Gandhāra was Takṣaśīlā.”¹⁶ The Kushanas had particularly identified the importance of trade, which is why they paid much attention to the trade-routes. “They not only used large rivers, but also those small rivers which had the flow of water only during the two-three months of monsoon.”¹⁷

Bactrian Greeks promoted art to fullest extent though; it could not take to Indian colours till the all-round progressive governance of Kanishka made it to be so. It was during his regime that the

transformation of Greco-Bactrian art into Indian took place. “The first icon of Buddha got created during the time of Kanishka. On the pleats of its chivar one can see the Greek influence in a subtle and sweet way.”¹⁸ Aśvaghōṣa, a Sanskrit dramatist of his times, took to the line of Greek dramatic art. Kanishka is well-known for patronising Buddhism. He constituted a committee for revision and collection of the Buddhist *Pitaks*. It was during this time that the text of the Mūla Sarvāstivāda, the final form of Sarvāstivāda, got finalised and collated. This committee had also created the commentary of the three *pitaks*. None of these though is available now in their original Sanskrit. These commentaries are called *vibhāṣā* in Sanskrit and this is reason that Sarvāstivādīs later used to be called as Vaibhāṣikas. “Even after the decline of the Kushāṇa dynasty, Kashmir and Gandhāra remained the centres of Vaibhāṣikas. We know this through the documents of Vasubandhu. It is Puruṣpur, the capital of Kanishka, which enjoyed the fortune of producing Vasubandhu and Asang. Both these brothers are unique among Buddhist philosophers.”¹⁹ During this time Indian and Greek poetry, sculpture and theatre too came into mutual contact. This was the period of the union of Greek and Indian thought as well. “The era of the contributions to the Indian schools of philosophy like Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika, Indian astrology and other scriptures, which we accept as made by the Greek thinkers, is too of Kanishka. Among his contemporary and respected masters Carak, the propounder of Ayurveda, is also included.”²⁰ This is why he is

The Kushanas had particularly identified the importance of trade, which is why they paid much attention to the trade-routes

known not only as the patron Buddhism, but of arts and culture as well. He invited many scholars to his court. One among those is Mātr̥c̥eṭa, who could not join though owing to his age and sent one of his works *Adhyardha Śataka* as a token of grace. “The communion of the Navaratnas of arts and scholarship that took place in the capital of Kanishka, was later followed by Chandragupta Vikramāditya, after three centuries.”²¹

In the latter half of the 2nd Century CE, we find that Kushāṇas did not remain only influenced with Indian culture, but also become fully Indianised. We can see this in the name of king Vāsudeva, who reigned from 152 to 186 CE. Vāsudeva is a pure Indian and Brahmanical name. “We cannot find a single coin in the time of Huvishka (father of king Vāsudeva) with Buddha’s icon; rather, there are many coins with the icons of Shiva, Vishakha and other deities. It seems he had more faith in Brahman dharma and this is the reason that he named his heir as Vāsudeva.”²²

Arabian Invasion and Devastation

As we have seen above, there is no sign of religious or cultural intolerance or fundamentalism at all during all this period. Though

there would have been some discrimination between locals and the rulers’ own people, but this never went to the extent of devastation. Rather, those rulers tried to enrich themselves by the local culture and also reciprocate without forcing or harming anyone. How did it happen that this very region became prey to fundamentalists who blew up the unparalleled colossal works of art like the Bamiyan Buddha? This indeed is a matter of great concern. Giving details of many other dynasties and wars between them, Rahul Sankrityayan comes to the 7th Century CE. This was the time when all rulers and heads of Central Asia were divided due to their vested interests or the ego. Battles were like games for them; there was no unity among them, whether Turks or non-Turks. This was also the time when Arabs were making advances into Central Asia, and the rulers of this region did not hesitate in helping them against their brethren. “Caliph Umar laid down a rule that no else, except Momins (Muslims) could bear weapons. It was the stiff opposition they had to face in their conquered territories of Rome and Persia (Iran) that made them believe that no else other than Muslims could be faithful to them. This was also understandable, because Arabs

not only politically subjugated a country but believed that the other religions and cultures are dangerous to the Islam and wanted to uproot them. This was the reason that the conflict between them and others used to be terrible. Before them Turks, Hephthalites, Scythians, Greeks all came to Central Asia, but none of these became hostile to the local culture. They held the local deities as sacred for them as did the host culture, and in case they perceived themselves to backward with regard to the culture of their subjected nations, they made an effort to learn from them and thereby made themselves cultured. However, Arabian policy was not like this in the least.²³

After this era, this entire region fell on bad times. Much was changed, but one thing that had never underwent any change is the hearts of the people. It is those who even today, after devastation of Bamiyan Buddha and many other sculptures and masterpieces of arts sing the songs of culture oneness and harmony to our land. As Rahulji says, “How can one find it wrong if ancient Gandhāras and today’s Pathan nationals feel proud of their sculptures and the all-time great thinkers like Vasubandhu and Asang?”²⁴ ■

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Dr. A. K. Rashid

One of all-time greatest personalities from Gandhāra is Pāṇini. Not only India, even entire world feels indebted to him for his contribution to the grammar and linguistics. An in-depth analysis of his contribution and the inter-relationship of Pashto and Sanskrit languages

Pāṇini

A Great Linguist and True Representative of Indo-Pashto Language

The Pāṇini was born in the Shalautula/Puṣkalāvātī region in 5th or sixth Century BCE. Both the regions have been part of present Pakhtunkhwa and ancient Gandhāra. According to scholars, Pāṇini is the person who has introduced about 23,000 new words into the Sanskrit language, a number of linguistics scholars believe that his theory of morphology is more advanced than the 20th century linguists' theory. In the sense, that the present scholars have not done much and better work than him. Pāṇini's comprehensive and scientific theory of grammar is conventionally taken to mark the start of classical Sanskrit and end of the Vedic period of India. The point to be noted about this renowned scholar is that the famous writer of the ancient Indian treatise on grammar Patanjali has reverently remembered this renowned Pakhtoon whose mother's name was Dākṣī and who got famous by his mother's name (Dākṣīputra, Son of Dākṣī) in his time. This word (Dākṣī) is itself a word of Pashto origin (*Adai*) which is same in the terms of meaning and concept and still it is being used for 'mother' in Pashto so far, and this

word Daal signifies and confirms the Being of Afghani (Afghaniyat). Renowned Pakhtoon and one time rulers of Afghanistan, such as Mirwais Khan, and Muhammad Shah Abdali who were great persons, also got famous of their mother's name. Mirwais (son of Nazu) and the Afghan emperor Ahmad Shah Abdali, (son of Zarghuna) are still remembered as and it is still used in Afghan society. And even these names (*Adika, Adki*) are used in Pashto.

A great Afghan scholar Ahmad Ali Khan Kohzad, writes about Pāṇini, "The first person who reminded us the name of 'Kapiśī,' was Pāṇini, the Scholar of Morphology and Sanskrit who used to live in present Peshawar, the outskirts of Attock. This scholar was also the contemporary of Herodotus, the father of ancient Greece. He has defined the wine of Kapiśī. As the French Orientalist Musivafar Dofat says, from the Period of Pāṇini to Hsuan Tsang of China (from fourth Century A.D. to seventh Century A.D.), it means one thousand years before the advent of Islam, by the name of Kapiśī or Kapiśā has been mentioned which also has been mentioned in the

south of Hindu Kush of Greek's coins."¹

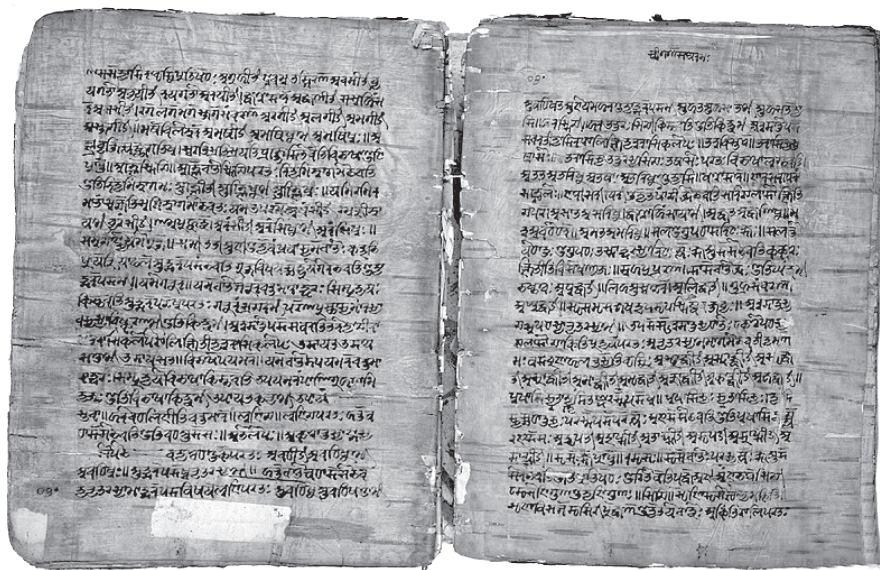
Pāṇini was among the scholars who first worked on grammar in the world and laid the foundation of scientific grammar writings. He was the first scholar who wrote Grammar of Sanskrit language in the Indian peninsula. Therefore, this scholar (Espa Zi-Yousafzai Afghan) should be studied in the context of his work. His works are one of the most reputable works in the field of grammar writings in the world. In the field of linguistic science, especially comparative historical linguistics, it is of great importance. Years ago, Academician Abdul Shakur Rashad, a renowned Afghan writer and scholar of the Dari, Pashto and Hindi languages of Afghanistan, researched Pāṇini's works and first time he brought out a number of words from his book *Aṣṭādhyāyī* which still exist and are being used in Pashto language. But some scholars and orientalists like Prof. Rashad did not agree that Pashto language is related to the family of

Indian languages, while during discussion he says that the Pashto language has influence over Indian languages and itself has been from the family of Aryani or Iranian. Now, let's take a look at why Sanskrit has taken a number of words from Pashto, or its vice-versa? As far as I'm concerned that the thing which has been very important and researchable that this influence was due to the economic and cultural relation of the Pashto language in the ancient era with Indian languages and cultures. The influence of the Pashto language on the land of India does not go beyond cultural, educational and to the some extent trade. We should take two principles into account, one record of this language which has not only preserved its family's languages, (Aryani) like Avista and Persian but also preserved Hindi language of which the roots also go to the language (Indo-Aryani) and Indo-European. If the Pashto language has its role and influence on Sanskrit, similarly same issues

are with Pali language. The Pali language on the peninsula is one of the languages that have a long history of works in period of Buddhism, and it has preserved the *sanskāras* and values of the Buddhism. After Pali and Chinese, perhaps Pashto is the language that has preserved the treasure of folk literature and has drawn the attention of litterateurs and folklorists. The basic reason behind this is that the Pashto is actually a native language. It has made co-ordination between culture and politics in our Asia.

The second and most interesting point here is that why Pashto found place in the works of the world's greatest Scholar (Pāṇini). And why words of this language have come from there? I am not going here into the technical problems and details of linguistics because linguistic science was actually in the phase of only discussion at that time. No doubt, a day will come that most of our unsolved problems and our quest particularly in relation to Pashto language will be solved, but I would like to remind you that this impact is of the same common culture and has been a part of our common historical heritage. Pāṇini and his works must be seen as a common heritage of the same culture and studied on the same basis.

However, many may have been confronted with the question of how Pāṇini could deal the ability which he had at that time with the Pashtoon community and their language. But we will prove from this Indian Scholar's method of research and function of work that he was an Afghan Pashto at the same time he was a Hindu, a true Brahmin from belief and doctrine. In Relation to this we



A 17th-century birch bark manuscript of Pāṇini's grammar treatise from Kashmir
Courtesy: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/P%C4%81%E1%B9%87ini#/media/File:Birch_bark_MS_from_Kashmir_of_the_Rupavatra_Wellcome_L0032691.jpg

can have opinion of one of the greatest scholars of India and vice Chancellor of Banaras Hindu University, a biggest university of India of that time, who writes:

This undoubtedly brings to the fore the other side of the picture, one side of which having been already presented by those who under the plea of love for the land, in effect, propagate chauvinism and talk about Indianisation of India's people. We would have to face the problem that aren't they lop-sided, who are offering such plea? For example, that the greatest scientist in Sanskrit grammar Pāṇini albeit a Brahmin, was a Yosufzai Pathan and citizen of Iran not India.²

In relation to these problems, not only opinion of this scholar stands pioneer to us but evaluation of Pāṇini's works and his approach to Pashto language validate this fact that this great man of ancient India had knowledge of Pashto language and he has vehemently used Pashto words in his works. This was not a single example but we can draw similar examples. As the same writer writes in his work that:

“It is significant that Ashoka used Persian words *dīpī* and *divira*, *līvī* and *livira*, for writing and scribe, also *nipishta* (write, written). Both *dīpī* and *nipishta*, occurring in the Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions of Ashoka used in the Achaemenid records. Since the great grammarian Pāṇini too knows and use them, they may have been introduced in Gandhāra, when that region was occupied by Cyrus. It is significant that Pāṇini, the first user of the words, belonged to western Gandhāra, in Yusufzai, and was an Iranian citizen. The Sanskrit word *lipi* for writing, or pen, *lekhanī* and

Espazai were people belonging to one of the branches of Sākyāna or Sātīna and when the great ruler of Persia Cyrus (korūsh) invaded Gandhar he had to face severe resistance from the Sākyāna people

kalama (introduced from the Greek, *kalamus*, by the Arabs), were unknown in Sanskrit yet.”³

Above writer has used Persian words instead of Pashto word which he could not understand. However, he himself mentions about the west Gandhāra land or language of people (Espazai or Yusufzai) which has not been other language than the Pashto. Espazai were people belonging to one of the branches of Sākyāna or Sātīna (the forefathers of the people currently known as Pakhtuns belongs to the same tribe - based on the research of Professor Ziar, famous Afghan linguist), and when the great ruler of Persia Cyrus (korūsh) invaded Gandhar he had to face severe resistance from the Sākyāna people. In his thirst for conquering Gandhāra he lost his life by the hands of Sākyān. These words, which are said to have been spoken in Persian, it does not seem correct. On the Contrary, these words have come from Pashto of the period of Ashok. At the same time, it can be said that *likī* in the sense or meaning of writing was not the Persian word, but have been of the origin of Pashto. The words like *Līkī* or *Dīpī* or *Līvī*, are still being used in Pashto in day to day life. Similarly, words *Nepushte* (*Neweshte*, *Namīshate*, *Nabeshate*) are also used in Pashto and Persian languages in the form of '*Namishte*' which we can now associate with the common terms of the three languages Pashto, Persian and

Sanskrit. The author of the above mentioned quotation on this topic while mentioning this, writes, “the word '*līpī*' which is used in meaning of writing in Sanskrit and other similar words like this have not been clearly mentioned till now.”⁴ In the Sanskrit language for writing *lekhanī* is used, though, the 'Kalam' is used in the meaning of *lekhanī* by the Arabs has been taken from the Greek word 'Qalamus'. The word 'qalamus' is still unknown to Sanskrit language. Because in India, before Ashoka, the inscriptions engraved on the pillars or the stones were not properly recorded.⁵

Though they have linked the word 'qalam' with Pashto pronunciation 'kalam', to 'qalamus' and 'kalamus', but for the word '*līvī*' or '*dīpī*', they do not have an alternative except Pashto original word '*likī*'. And the mentioned writer considered these unfamiliar words as Sanskrit. The reason for this was that he was not well aware of the Indo-Iranian group of languages or he was unable to pay attention to this important point. Although, it is clear that Sanskrit and its group of other languages do not recognise these kinds of words which were unknown to Indians. In the long history of Sanskrit language it has taken so many Pashto words on so many occasions which they do not have its equivalent.

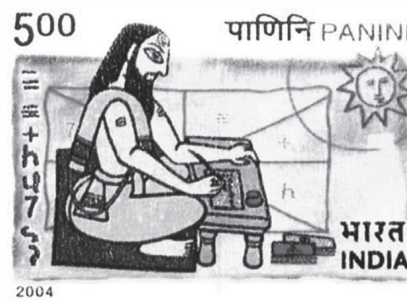
Pāṇini and Gandhāra:

Pāṇini was born in Gandhāra.

Gandhāra is in Central Afghanistan. A river named Indus passes through this city. Important cities located in this area are Taxila, Charsadda, Mardan, and Peshawar. But an Afghan writer Ahmad Ali Khan Kohzad is of the opinion that one of the most important cities of Gandhāra region was Nagrahar or Jalalabad which is an important city of modern Afghanistan. He further writes, "In the eastern part of Afghanistan the entire region spread between the origin of Kabul River and its meeting with Sindh River was known as Gandhāra during the Vedic period. In the heart of the Gandhāra, the other city exists which is known as Nagrahar. Now Nagrahar is one of the provinces of modern Afghanistan ..."⁶

We also read about this on Wikipedia: "Gandhāra was an ancient state, a *mahājanapada*, in the Peshawar Basin in the northwest part of the ancient Indian peninsula, present-day Afghanistan and Pakistan. The centre of the region was at the confluence of the Kabul and Swat rivers, bounded by the Sulaiman Mountains on the west and the Indus River on the east. The Safed Koh Mountains separated it from the Kohat region to the south. This is the core area of Gandhāra, the 'Greater Gandhāra' cultural influence extends across the Indus River to the Taxila region and westwards into the Kabul and Bamiyan valleys in Afghanistan, and northwards to the Karakoram Range."⁷

Nagrahar has undoubtedly been one of the most important centres of science and technology in Gandhāra. Historical facts reveal to us that this city from historical and cultural point of



view has preserved the most significant remains of Vedic Culture. It is because there are other holy places in and around Nagrahar which reveal historical, cultural and religious contact with India. For example, one of the important places in the vicinity of Nagrahar is called Pawmapur, which means city of Niloufar (lotus). The Afghan sources tell us about this city in the following words: "As the Niloufar had been the symbol of purity and prosperity in Buddhism. In this way we can say that this city was one of the most sacred cities of this region. This town has been vividly pronounced in Afghan as well as Chinese sources. In Chinese this town is pronounced as Hawa shi Shang. Like this there was also another city in the region known as Vipankarbudha. Or before that it was recorded as Re Pawti."⁸

Our historical and inscriptional evidences tell that the last border of the city of Kandhāra was the land of Arachosia. Now this region is a part of modern Kandahar. The Gandhāra inscription which was engraved during the time of Ashoka tells us that the last border of Gandhāra (Kandahara) was Persia which even exists today. This inscription was engraved both in Brāhmi and Greek script. Arachosia was the last point between Gandhāra and Persia. Even Indian Muslim rulers, such as Sher Shah Suri and

large-Indian-stamp-honouring-Panini
 Courtesy: <https://www.newsgram.com/panini-indian-scholar-who-gave-world-the-concept-of-grammar>

Emperor Akbar to Aurangzeb considering the strategic value of this region were always in fighting with Persia. Ashoka's inscription, which is in and around Chahle Zeene, the old part of the modern Kandahara, and not far from Panzwai, make it clear that once upon a time this area was prosperous and also had a dense population. This area was in the vicinity of left side of city Aragandab which is now part of Manatiqabad. During the reign of Mauryan kings this valley was one of the most inhabited valleys of the region. It appears that Alexander of Macedonia while crossing this pass settled a Greek colony near city of Arachosia.⁹

However, when we talk about the greatest linguist Pāṇini, who was born and brought up in Gandhāra, we can say without any doubt that the deep relation between languages spoken in India and Gandhāra of that time is reflected in the history of Afghanistan or Rohistan. The survival of the language and the culture of Kandahar and modern India depend on the language in which we talk today. A number of Afghan authors, including Ahmad Ali Khan Kohzad, believe that:

"There is no doubt that the Afghanistan is located between India and Iran. There is also no doubt that in the territory between India and Iran more than twenty languages exist in different valleys, where people speak in those languages, some of which are related to and dependent on Sanskrit and Avestan languages and even languages which

exist, have same relation with both Sanskrit and Avestan languages.”¹⁰

In the course of history, Gandhāra has not been only a geographical region, but it has also been a cradle of the culture and civilisation during the different periods of history, which is now known as Afghanistan and Pakhtoon. Gandhāra has a brilliant history and has been a land which is remembered as ‘Independent Land’ most of the time:

"During the Muslim period, the area was administered from Lahore or from Kabul. During the Mughal times, it was an independent district which included the Kabul.”¹¹

Its roots reveal that Pāṇini, at the time, was engaged in study of these languages and studied different languages, including his own mother tongue (Pashto), as we pointed out before, that this scholar was very famous as the son of Dākṣī (Dākṣīputra).

He collected source materials from the local languages existed at that time in Gandhāra and Afghanistan and tried his best to include it into Sanskrit. As far as the present facts and current state of Afghanistan shows, there are now more than forty dialects and languages spoken in the present Afghanistan by the people of this country. This is the legacy of the Gandhāra left out for the present people of Aghanistan. Details of these can be seen in the works of Pāṇini. We are giving some example from his works.¹²

(Sanskrit) *anisa* (bearing a burden on the shoulder)

(Pashto) *wanisa _ niwal* (meaning the same)

(Sanskrit) *aksi* (the eye)

(Pashto) *ksi* (pupil)

(Sanskrit) *a-gada* (healthy free from disease)

(Pashto) *ragda* (roga) (healthy)

(Sanskrit) *agdyā-rogavcheda* (to have good health)

(Pashto) *rogdyā-roghtya* (to have good health)

(Sanskrit) *g.gargadi* (a gotra ancestor)

(Pashto) *gadi-gaday* (palce of ancestor)

(Sanskrit) *agni-data* (name of peson)

(Pashto) *dada* (elder sister, gran parents)

(Sanskrit) *sarman* (a person)

(Pashto) *sarman-saronkay* (watch man)

(Sanskrit) *vanam* (forest)

(Pashto) *wana – wane* (forest)

(Sanskrit) *angushta* (the thumb)

(Persian) *angusht.* (finger)

(Sanskrit) *vyaja* (driving away)

(Pashto) *waza, warza* (go away)

(Sanskrit) *vyadh* (verbal base)

(Pashto) *vayna, veyal* (speech)

(Sanskrit) *vyava* (bestowing, gift)

(Pashto) *vyar, stayal*

(appreciated)

(Sanskrit) *vyavastha* (settlement)

(Pashto) *vosedana-vosedal*

(settlement)

(Sanskrit) *vaiyakarna* (grammer)

(Pashto) *vayi poha* (grammer) ■

References:

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3. Ibid, p 37)
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6. Ahmad Ali Khan Kohzad, *Afghanistan dar Partau-i-Tarikh*, tr. Pashto, p.358)
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Bactria

Bactria or Bactriana was a historical Iranian region in Central Asia. Bactria proper was north of the Hindu Kush mountain range and south of the Amu Darya river, covering the flat region that straddles modern-day Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. More broadly Bactria was the area north of the Hindu Kush, west of the Pamirs and south of the Tian Shan with the Amu Darya flowing west through the center.

The English name Bactria is derived from the Ancient Greek: Baktriani, a Hellenized version of the Bactrian endonym Bakhlo. Analogous names include Avestan: Bakhdi, Old Persian: Bakhtrish, romanized: Bākhtar, Pashto: romanized: Balkh, and Sanskrit: Bāhlika. ■



Devesh Khandelwal

A Patriot From Frontier: Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan

One of the great freedom fighters from erstwhile Gandhāra region is Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan. He was a follower of Gandhiji in true sense. This is why he is also known as Frontier Gandhi. He vehemently opposed partition, though, it happened. An article regarding his contributions

Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan was born in Utmanzai village of Peshawar in the erstwhile North-West Frontier Province of British India, now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in Pakistan. Four miles from the village lay the ancient city of Charsadda, the capital of Gandhāra. The Khyber Pass started twelve and a half miles west of Peshawar. About 130 years before the time of Ghazni, an invader called Yaqub-i-Lais converted many in Kabul, Ghazni and Khyber areas to Islam.

Ghaffar was a devoted Muslim, believed in Islam and had equal regard for all other religions. For his liberal attitude towards religion, some of his critics and adversaries have often called him a 'Hindu'. Mahatma Gandhi wrote, "During his stay with me for over a year, I never saw him miss his *namaz* of *Ramzan* fast except when he was ill. But his devotion does not mean disrespect for other religion."¹ About Hindus, Abdul Gaffar remarked, "If they (Hindus) are idol worshippers, what we are? What is the worship of tombs? How are they any less devotees of God when I know they believe in one God?"²

In his early education he was given religious instruction. For regular schooling, he was sent to Mission

High School at Peshawar but could not pass the matriculation examination. Then he moved to Aligarh where he studied Urdu newspapers. He read the daily *Zamindar* edited by Maulana Zaffar Ali Khan and *Al Hilal*, an Urdu weekly of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. These readings created him an interest in politics and turned into a patriot.³ His political career started from 1919 when he plunged into the agitation against Rowlett Bills. He was arrested but later released.

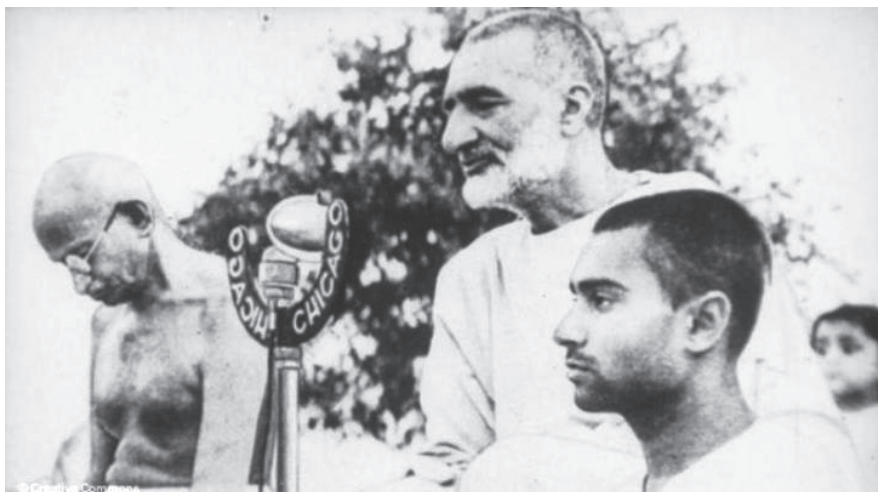
On his release, he settled down to quiet work of social reforms. Soon he laid the foundation of constructive activity by establishing Azad High School in his village. Abdul Gaffar Khan's activities alarmed the British Government. His school was only six months old when Chief Commissioner John Maffey summoned Khan's father and tried to persuade him to ask his son to close down the school, as it was anti-British. Thus, for germinating the idea of nationalism into the minds of Pathans, he was arrested in 1921 under the Frontier Crimes Regulations.

This sentence proved him rich in spiritual experience. He established life-long contacts with Hindu and Sikh friends and began study of different faiths and cultures. He described to Mahadev Desai "I read the *Gita* for

the first time here and also read the *Sri Guru Granth Sahab* and the Bible. It was Pandit Jagatram from Andaman who really taught me the *Gita*. He had a passion for it and he made me enter into its spirit.”⁴

After his release in 1924, he was transferred to Peshawar. Deputy Commissioner of the city ordered the police to take him to his village. They set Abdul Gaffar free near the Azad School. The annual gathering of the school was postponed in anticipation of his release. When it took place, thousands of people were present, brimming with enthusiasm, admiration and love for the youthful leader. On behalf of the people Abdul Gaffar was honoured with a medal of distinction and the title ‘Fakhr-e-Afghan’, ‘Pride of the Pathans’.

The attitude of Abdul Ghaffar towards social reforms was modern. He firmly believed in uplift of Pathans and worked wholeheartedly for them. Soon after his return from the haj, he undertook long and arduous tours on foot to carry to the Pakhtuns the message of social and political reconstruction. Most of the Pathans were illiterate; a written piece of paper meant nothing to them. So he went from village to village talking to them. There are over ten million Pakhtuns, including those staying in the NWFP, the tribal territories and Afghanistan. “The Pakhtuns then had no love for their own language,” observes Abdul Ghaffar, “They were not even conscious that Pashto was their language, and wherever they went, they adopted the local language and forgot their mother-tongue.”⁵



Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan with Mahatma Gandhi.

Courtesy: <https://en.qantara.de/content/pashtun-freedom-fighter-khan-abdul-ghaffar-khan-islams-forgotten-gandhi>

In such circumstances the journal, *Pakhtun*, was born, and in a short time it became popular all over the world. The Pakhtuns living in America not only gave the biggest help in its circulation, but they helped it financially. The *Pakhtun* contained well-written articles on political topics, such as the threat to tribal territory and the boycott of the Simon Commission. The journal continued as monthly till it was banned in April 1930, when Abdul Gaffar plunged himself in Civil Disobedience Movement and arrested. Thousands of people surrounded by the place of his detention and there was a mammoth demonstration in Peshawar.⁶

In December 1928 Abdul Ghaffar, with some of his colleagues, went to Calcutta to attend a Khilafat conference. It revealed a serious rift between the Ali brothers and the Punjabi leaders. In his presidential address at the Khilafat Conference, Mohammad Ali had attacked the Hindus, ridiculing their civilisation, culture, customs and manners. It was an unpleasant experience for Abdul Gaffar, as

he never accepted the policy of separation. The Congress session was being held simultaneously in Calcutta. Abdul Gaffar decided to attend the Congress session. In spite of interruption and criticism, Mahatma Gandhi delivered his speech in good humour and unperturbed. It was a novel experience for Abdul Gaffar. On return to his camp, he narrated his experience to his companions. He also drew their attention to composure of Mahatma Gandhi, the leader of Hindus that stood in contrast to the behaviour of our Muslim leader, Maulana Mohammad Ali.⁷

Later, he did not attend the Khilafat session anymore and went back to his province. Here, he founded Khudai Khidmatgar, ‘Servant of God’ a volunteer organisation, commonly known as Red Shirts. Its aims were entirely for the social causes like weaning the Pathans from lawlessness and loot and educating them. In his own words, “In September 1929, we succeeded in forming the Khudai Khidmatgar organisation. We called it so, in order to fulfil a particular purpose; we wanted to infuse among the Pakhtuns the

spirit and consciousness for the service of our community and country in the name of God.”⁸

One who aspired to become a Khudai Khidmatgar, declared on solemn oath, “I am a Khudai Khidmatgar, and as God needs no service I shall serve Him by serving His creatures selflessly. I shall never use violence, I shall not retaliate or take revenge, and I shall forgive anyone who indulges in oppression and excesses against me. I shall not be a party to any intrigue, family feuds and enmity, and I shall treat every Pakhtun as my brother and comrade. I shall give up evil customs and practices. I shall lead a simple life, do good and refrain from wrong doing. I shall develop good character and cultivate good habits. I shall not lead an idle life. I shall expect no reward for my services. I shall be fearless and be prepared for any sacrifice.” He had organised his organisation in such a disciplined and devoted manner that the

most feared part of India became the safest centre for the working of non-violent, non-cooperation movement.⁹

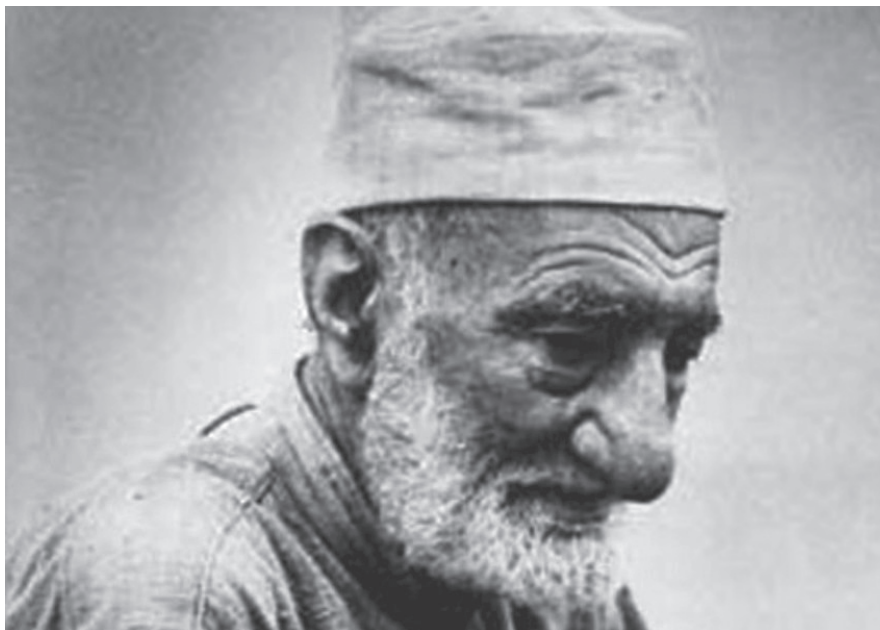
Up till April 1930, the Khudai Khidmatgars did not number more than 500. But then within six months they numbered over 50,000. The movement rapidly spread and reached the tribal territory. It became so popular that to whichever village Abdul Ghaffar went, he found that Khudai Khidmatgars were doing their work.

Mahatma Gandhi set on the historic salt march to Dandi on 12 March, 1930. On this occasion, first official meeting of the Khudai Khidmatgars was convened at Uttamanzai. About 200 Red Shirts attended the meeting. On 23 April Abdul Ghaffar addressed a mass meeting at his village, exhorting people to participate in civil disobedience. He was a true follower of Mahatma Gandhi. The name ‘Frontier Gandhi’ affectionately by his admirers and

slighting by enemies would seem to have been derived from this period. He had studied Mahatma Gandhi’s life and always showed a readiness to take leaf out of his book. According to him, “My non-violence has almost become a matter of faith with me. I believed in Gandhiji’s ahimsa before. But the unparalleled success of the experiment in my province has made me a confirm champion of non-violence. God willing, I hope never to see my province take to violence.”¹⁰ He subscribed fully to the doctrine of non-violence. It had almost become a matter of faith with him. He believed that his people needed non-violence than anything else.

In April 1930, He was arrested for violating the Salt Act. At long last, after six years of exile, Abdul Ghaffar entered the NWFP at the end of August 1937. He was welcomed back amidst scenes of great enthusiasm. His reception was followed by a mass meeting at Peshawar. Addressing the gathering he said, “Thank God, I am once again with you to share your joys. But the real joy has yet to come, and our happiness is meaningless until we have achieved our goal of independence. Our struggle for freedom has reached a stage that calls for still greater sacrifices from us. As for my part, let me tell you once again that I will continue to struggle for liberty until we have shaken off the foreign yoke and set up a true people’s government in this country.”¹¹

Following the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, he attended the 45th session of Congress in Karachi. He made an impressive and historic speech in Hindi, “We are devoted to love and affection. We are



Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan.

Courtesy: <http://bolbihar.in/2017/01/20/remembering-khan-abdul-gaffar-khan-on-his-death-anniversary/>

After the partition of India and creation of Pakistan, Abdul Ghaffar did not rest. He started agitation for the establishment of Pakhtoonistan and was jailed quite number of times by Pakistan government. After his last imprisonment he lived in exile in Afghanistan for a long period during the military dictatorship in Pakistan

ready to sacrifice for the freedom and if Mahatmaji will keep this struggle continue we will reveal our devotion and the true identity through the action on time. Borders are the doors and we are the guards of that. You should know that the message of Mahatma Gandhi has crossed the Khyber Pass. We, the border guards will prove very faithful to him." In 48th annual session of Congress, he introduced a patriotic resolution, "We must keep ourselves busy in the service of our nation till the Home-rule is appropriated."

The political awakening among the Pathans has been largely due to the work carried on by Abdul Gaffar Khan and his close associates over a period of nearly three decades. For his quality of leadership he was also known as 'Bacha Khan' which means Sardar or leader. Badshah Khan is another name by which he popularly known. His influence had spread right across the settled districts of

the Frontier (these were, from north to south, Hazara, Mardan, Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu and Dera Ismail Khan).

Gaffar Khan realised that the Congress support was essential for any peaceful propaganda work against British. About his attitude towards British, he often used to say that he hardly trusted their words. He had no personal animosity towards them but was very sore over the British painting his province as a 'province of murders' and for the cruelties perpetrated on his people.¹²

The British attitude of bombs and bullets did not appeal to the Pathans. That is why they were ready to rise and drive the *kafir firingee* beyond the Indus. The dynamic qualities of Abdul Gaffar Khan were alone kept them within the tether of law and doctrine of love.¹³

During the 1946-47, Ghaffar Khan vehemently opposed the partition of India. It was perhaps the bitterest disappointment for him when the Congress leaders

accepted partition. He expressed his anguish at the working Committee meeting and felt hurt at the way he and the nationalist Pathans had been let down by those as they stood fast under all circumstances.

After the partition of India and creation of Pakistan, Abdul Ghaffar did not rest. He started agitation for the establishment of Pakhtoonistan and was jailed quite number of times by Pakistan government. After his last imprisonment he lived in exile in Afghanistan for a long period during the military dictatorship in Pakistan.

Then he went into exile in Afghanistan, and returned from exile in 1972. The very next year he was arrested by Prime Minister Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's government at Multan. While under house arrest, Abdul Ghaffar Khan suffered a severe stroke. He was taken to India, where the doctors in India declared him untreatable. He was then admitted to Peshawar's Lady Reading Hospital, where he breathed his last on 20 January, 1988. Over 200,000 mourners, including the Afghan president Mohammad Najibullah and the Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, attended the funeral. Bacha Khan was buried at his Jalalabad home in Afghanistan. ■

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Prof. Dr. Lokesh Chandra

Bamiyan and The Buddhist Art of Colossi

Colossi of Bamiyan is though just a part of our memory now, it's actually a great contribution of Gandhāra to the world Art and will continue to influence the intellect forever. An insight into Bamiyan

The name *Bamiyan*. Bamiyan was conceived of as the glory of classical Afghanistan, sanctified impirium, splendour charred by her ruler and her people, stabilisation and, prosperity of the state in a common cultural syndrome with neighbouring kingdoms, in the majesty of the colossi. The word Bamiyan itself denotes light and resplendence from the root *bha* to shine, be bright or luminous'. Bami-yan was 'the resplendent metropolis'.

Bamiyan is situated in the Lamghan or Lamkān valley. It is Ramyaka in Sanskrit. In the Chinese Tripiṭaka Āryasthira translated the Ramyaka-sūtra in 388-407. In Pali texts, Ramma, Rammaka, and Rammavaṭī is the birth place of two Buddhas: Dipankara and Koṃḍañña Atideva lived here in the time of Revata Buddha. *Ramya* means 'delightful, beautiful', it is pleasant abode in the Viṣṇupurāna, *Ramyā* is the name of a river. *Ramya-grāma* is the name of a village in the Mahābhārata (MW). In Sāmkhya *ramyaka* is one of the eight perfections or siddhis, and in the Purāṇas it is a region (varṣa).

In the 16th century Babar expatiates on the beauty of the forested hill-sides of Lamghan and on the fertility of the valley in his

Babar-nama. The Hudud al-ālam written by an anonymous author in 982 calls the middle stretch of the Kabul River "the River of Lamkan" (sic). Lamkan reflects the earlier name Ramyaka.

Bamiyan is the fantasy of light and time, the imageless vision of appearances, where we may drink the plenitude of the Void. Honeycombed with over two thousand caves, the Bamiyan River flowing by, ruins of the metropolitan Red City rising to the skies, the dynamited Colossal Buddhas: all this reminds of the incessant combat and instantaneous embrace of Light and Darkness, where once minds sought to discover the infinities and transfinities.

The name Bamiyan has been transcribed as Fan-yang in the Annals of the Northern Wei who ruled from 386 to 556. It is named as a region bordering Tokharistan in their account of the Western Region (Godard 1928:76). Pelliot was the first to identify it, but Soper (1959:270) disbelieved it as he felt that the colossi at Yun-kang matched the Darel colossus, even though Darel is not mentioned in the Northern Wei Annals. The Northern Wei were in close touch with NW India. The Fan-yün-ssu monastery was founded by a monk from Udyāna

named Seng Ma-lo, rendered as 'Brother Māra' by Soper (1959:109). A monk cannot be named Māra. The name has to be restored as Saṅghamalla. He was extremely learned and had remarkable proficiency in spoken and written Chinese. Kekaya was again from NW India and he collaborated with T'an-yao in the translation of 'The Collection of Jātaka and Nidāna Stories' (Tsa-pao-tsang-ching) that are represented on the walls of caves 9 and 10 of Yün-kang. A number of such contacts of the Northern Wei with the NW in the execution of the Yün-kang caves heightens the probability that Fan-yang transcribes Bam-yan.

Watters (1904:1.116) cites two other transcriptions of Bam-yan: Wang-yen. It is transliterated as a two-syllable word.

Hsüan-tsang was in Bamiyan in 632. He transcribed it as a three-syllable word: Fan-yen-na in his Records of the Western World. The first Chinese Character fan is used by him for Brahma in two names: Fan-shou = Brahmadata, and Fan-yü = Brahmānanda (yü 'enjoyment, pleasure' Giles 13678). It seems to be by intention that he employed the ideogram for Brahmā, and reflects a popular etymology prevalent in Bamiyan. The second and third character yen-na denote yan-na or yāna, and certainly not the monosyllabic yan of Bam-yan. Hsüan-tsang understood the name as Brahma-yāna or 'the Way to Brahman'. The word Brahma-yāna actually occurs in the Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra (ed. Bunyiu Nanjio 1923:134, 322) twice, along with Devayāna.

Bamy-an can also be related

to Iranian *bāmī*+an the suffix for place names. It results in Bamy-an by sandhi, or Bami-y-an with y as an intervocalic glide for ease of pronunciation. *Bami* in Iranian means 'resplendent' as well as 'sublime'. It is suffixed to Balkh / Bactria in the term *Balkh-i-bāmī* 'the resplendent Balkh', which was famous in the Iranian world by the celebrated Buddhist monastery of Navbahār renowned for its exquisite and concupiscent images; as a meeting place of trade routes from China, Central Asia, India, and Iran; and Barmaks the abbots of Navbahār who held high positions at the Court of the Caliphs. The Barmaks were responsible for the translation of masterpieces from Sanskrit, Greek and other languages into Arabic which led to cultural, artistic and scientific achievements in the Arab world. The rise of sciences in Arabic triggered the Renaissance in Europe. The expression *bāmī* implies all-round development in art and architecture, religion and philosophy, literature and astronomy, and above all in the exact sciences.

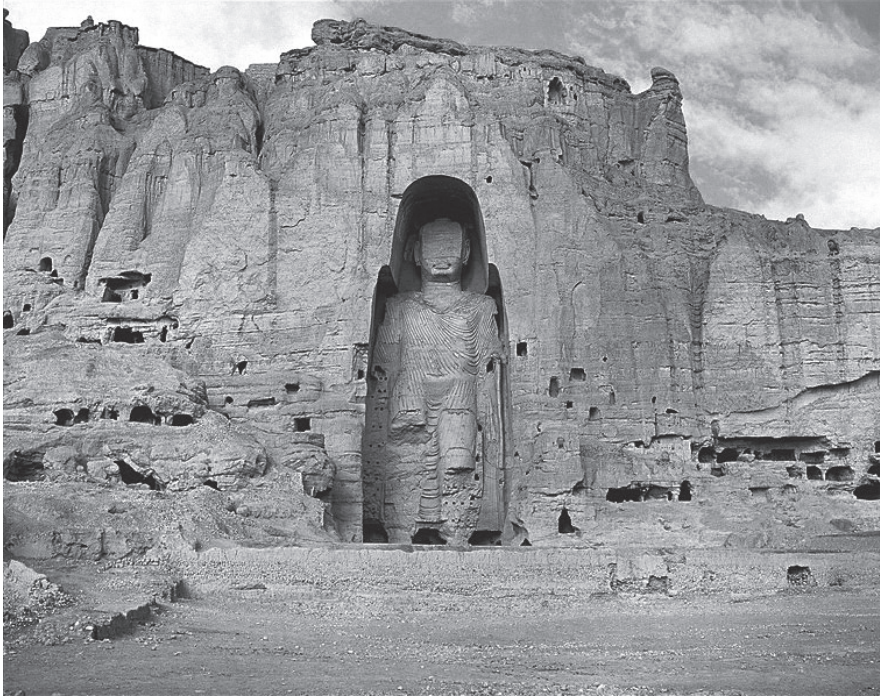
The name Bamiyan denotes light and illumination, resplendence and the sublime, that is, 'The City of Resplendence'. It is cognate to Avesta *bāma*, Pahlavi *bāmīk*, Afghani *bām*. Avesta *bāmya* means 'sublime' (Geldner), *vīspo.bāma* (=Skt. *viśva.bhāma*) 'all-illuminated'. The three Chinese

transcriptions before Hsüan-tsang (who was in Bamiyan in AD 632), transliterate the name as dissyllabic Bam-yan. The form with the glide, Bami-y-an, does not occur in Chinese.

In Sanskrit *bhāma* means 'light, brightness, splendour' in the Ṛgveda (RV) and later literature. It is from the root *bhā* 'to shine'. RV. 3.26.6 *agner bhāmam marutām ojaḥ* 'the splendour of Agni and the might of Maruts' is invoked for affluence. RV.5.2.10 seeks the bursting forth of the splendours of Agni (*agneḥ...bhāmaḥ*) with sharp weapons to destroy the demonic forces, so that godless bands cannot stay him. RV.6.6.3 exhorts: O pure Agni, thy flames (*bhāmāsaḥ*) may move onward pure and devastate the destructive. In RV.10.3 Agni is the terrific and potent envoy whose effulgent splendours flow and who shines with radiant flames.

The Chāndogya-upaniṣad 4.15.4 has the word *bhāmanī* 'one who leads (*nī*) to Light (*bhāma*)'. The entire section speaks of Brahman. That (=Transcendent) Being (*Puruṣa*) seen in visualization (*akṣiṇī*) is the Ātman. He is immortal, beyond fears. He is Brahman. He is called samyad-vāma, that is, all desirable things (*vāma*). He is also *bhāma-nī*, or one who leads to the splendour of all the universes. One who knows (i.e. realises) Him shines in all

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Courtesy: <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/should-afghanistan-s-bamiyan-buddhas-be-rebuilt-n822781>

universes. That being is trans-human (*Tat Puruṣo' mānavah*). He leads them to Brahman (*Sa enān brahma gamayati*). This is the way to the gods, the way to Brahman (*eṣa devapatho brahmapathah*). Those who proceed by this way attain liberation from birth and death.

This *bhāmanī* is 'That Being' (*Tat Puruṣah*), who leads the *sādhaka* to Ultimate Splendour (*bhāma*). He is trans-human, and the way to Brahman. This context equates *bhāma* to Brahman. Brahman is the Being of the cosmos, and it is identical to Ātman the being of man. When Hüsan-tsang transcribed Bam-yan as *Brahma-yāna*, he could have been following a local tradition linking Bamiyan to Brahman. The Pilgrim's transcription Fan-yen-na with double n may represent the cerebral *ṇ* of *Brahma-yāna* where the r has cerebralised the *ṇ* (compare *niryāna* and *prayāna*), to obtain a hypercorrect Sanskrit

form. *Bhāmatī* is the celebrated commentary of Vācaspati Miśra (AD 840) on Śaṅkara's commentary on the *Brahma sūtras*.

Mahāvastu 1.294.20 enumerates *Bhāma* Kanakamuni among the Seven Buddhas, with the variant *Bhāna*-. *Bhāma* can refer to Bamiyan, and if so Kankamuni could have been a resident of Bamiyan, as *Dīpaṅkara* Buddha another of the Seven Buddhas, hailed from *Ramyaka* (modern *Lamqān* or *Laghman*). *Konāka* (-*nāma*), *Konāka-sāhvaya*, *Konāka-muni*, *Konāga-muni* are variants of his names (Edgerton 1953: 194). Can *Konāka* be a Tocharian word: *Kom* or *Kaum* is 'day, Sun', *Komñkāt* 'Sun', or can it be related to *Koṅārka* 'Sun'?

Selection of a spot for meditation is specified in Buddhist texts like the *Vairocana-ābhisambodhi-sūtra*. It was chosen with care to be both pure and pleasing.

Meditation has to be in natural surroundings: by water or near a mountain. The Zen paintings of meditation are *sansui* (*San* 'mountain' + *sui* 'water') and they depict waterfalls cascading down mountains. The cliff of Bamiyan has a river flowing by. Bamiyan was the sheen of vision, rays of illumination, an illumined temenos for a journey into the heart of Dharma. With its thousands of caves, Bamiyan was the mysterious womb for enlightenment, an ornate heart of mystery.

The *Atharvaveda* 11.5.10 says that the treasures of sacred lore of a brahmin are hidden in the cave (*guhā nidhī nihitau brāhmaṇasya*), and *Śatapatha-brāhmaṇa* 11.2.6.5 equates the cave with the heart (*tasmād idam guheva hṛdayam*). Cave is the deep of being where the ātman resides (*ātmā guhāyām*) in the *Śvetāśvatara-Upaniṣad* 3.20. Brahman resides in the *guhā*, the supreme space (*brahma yo veda nihitam guhāyām parame vyoman* (Indische Studien 2.217). Bamiyan is a sanctum where millenia blend as one, an incandescence of contemplation surrounds it, and rhythms of meditation prevail in its desolation and eerie silence. *Bhāma* is the glory of the Divine in man.

Bamiyan can have a very ancient sanctity going back to *Ṛgvedic* and *upaniṣadic* times. The *Bashgali* and *Kati* languages of the region go back to the *Vedic* words *Bāṣkala* and *Kāti*. *Bāṣkala* is a lost recension of the *Ṛgveda*, and *Kāti* is a *Vedic* sage whose descendants are *Kātyāyana*. ■

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