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# Manthan

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## Special Issue on Gandhāra-II

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*Cover picture Details: A fusion of Gorkhatri at Peshawar,  
Tilla Jogian and a map of ancient India*

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**Readers' letters**

Dear Shri Mahesh ji,

Namaskar!

I have received the Gandhara special issue of *Manthan* and have read from the beginning till the end. I received the English edition first and this letter is in response to that.

When Afghanistan became an Islamic country, all its pre-Islamic history was pushed into the category of 'Ayyay-e-Jaahilya' (Age of Ignorance). Therefore, finding anyone in that country who would try to discover its past (even though they might not take pride in it) is very difficult, if not impossible. But you fulfil the task you resolve to do. Bringing out a special issue on Gandhara was a complex task, which you have accomplished.

A deep study is reflected in Lokesh Chandra's article, reading which one becomes acquainted with Afghanistan's history and ancient culture. The fact that it was a part of the India of those ages too becomes clear. That region contributed in a significant way in taking India's message to China, Mongolia and countries of afar in the Vedic and Buddhist periods.

Shri Kaul too has presented vital content on the history of Gandhara.

Shri Rajiv Malhotra is a minister in India. He has reminded us of three genocides, of how uncivilised and barbarian invaders slaughtered Hindus and enslaved them. This happened due to lack of unity and not being awake to the need for self-defence. The Shahi and other kings stood up to Islamic invasions for 300 years, whereas Iran suffered defeat in its very first war against them and lost its own religion.

Shri Mohan's article too draws our attention to historical events.

Though there is a lot of content in Dr. Rashid's article, it appears that he is less accustomed to writing in English.

Other articles too shed light on various aspects of Gandhara. One article reminds us how the Congress after coming to power provided no assistance to Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan from 1947 onwards. It is for this reason Khan sahib named his autobiography *Thrown to the Wolves*.

Readers will be grateful to you for this well-researched special issue.

I also venture a suggestion here. Knowledge about the Chola, Pallava, Pandya monarchs and empires and the demise of the Vijaynagar Empire is very less in the northern part of the country. A lot of trade used to take place between India and the Greek and Roman empires before Christ. Residents in northern India are somewhat familiar with the ancient literature of those lands.

Can there be a special issue centred on south India?

Yours

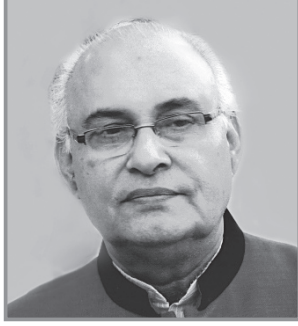
Braj Kishore Sharma

Dear Sir,  
Namaskar!

I went through the special edition of *Manthan* dedicated to Gandhara. I thank you and others for such an enriching issue which opens the window of knowledge & majestic view of the glorious Hindu Civilization in the region.

Warm Regards,

Sunil Raina Rajanaka  
Editor-In-Chief  
Naad



Dr. Mahesh Chandra Sharma

## Editorial

It was a pleasant experience to edit the Gandhāra Special Issue Two. Excepting one or two, most of the contributors of the first issue are very much with us in the today's Bharata. The special aspect of this number is that the contributors are connected with the today's Afghanistan (ancient Gandhāra). They are either from Afghanistan or are connected with Afghanistan for their research studies. I am highly grateful to our Guest Editor Prof. Mazhar Asif for making it possible.

During the course of discussions with contributors they required to be reminded of Gandhāra, but it has got many limitations. The idea of India and Afghanistan existing as two different entities has overpowered the mind so deep that it is not very easy to voice the innate identity of Gandhāra with Bharata in the academia. Attempt has been made to make some correction during the process of editing, but that is not enough. The reality is distorted to such an extent that it seems very difficult to set it right.

Western 'Nation-State' theory has distorted and divided our geo-cultural national identity. Proselytist religiosity has affected our minds to such an extent that we have lost our self identity. The continuous struggle and countless sacrifices that have gone in for this identity have got diluted in our memory. The process of reawakening the remaining memory is tedious and long. The publication of these two special issues of *Manthan* is a step forward towards this long process.

Bharata is an uninterrupted flow of metaphysical identity. It continues to flow unceasingly in the rigour of history. Its fluidity assimilates various hues into its fold. This metaphysical and spiritual flow has into its fold the assimilation of the hues of Advaitavāda, Dvaitavāda, Viśiṣṭādvaitavāda; Saivism, Saktism, Vaisnavism, Buddhism, Jainism; and the cults of Sanatanis, Guru Gorakhanath, Guru Nanak, and the Paigambar Muhammad. Bharata is perpetually living the Vedic fairness of “*ekam sat viprāḥ bahudhā vadanti*”

Semitic religiosity and the western imperialist understanding about nation have interrupted this indestructible Nation-flow. This is the reason that many regions of the Bharata have forgotten their real identity.

There are many who believe that Bharata is a piece of land offered by the British. It is necessary to highlight repeatedly the feeling of Bharata which has got drowned into deep trough of oblivion. This is the job of academia. Therefore, *Manthan* is doing this as an academic exercise. Your cooperation is anticipated.

Gandhāra Special Issue One was warmly received, my gratitude! Hope you will find this issue also interesting. Our next issue will be 'Triviṣṭapa Special Issue'.

Best wishes!

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Prof. Mazhar Asif

## Guest Editorial

It was until not too long ago that Afghans and Hindus were one people. Our language, culture, tradition and faith were one. In ancient times, we knew that region of ours by the names of Ariana, Arianum Vaejo, Pakhtia, Pashtoonkhwah, etc. If we study the ancient texts written in the Pahlavi and Sankrit languages, we would realise that there was no geographical boundary between us like the present. In the ancient age, our borders were from Gandhāra to Brahmadesha (today's Myanmar). The *Zend Avesta*, which is Zarathustra's work, calls this region Arian Vaejo. In the *Mahābhārata* and other texts, this region has been called Gandhāra, Kamboja, Kubhā, etc. Whether Dhritarāshtra's wife Gāndhārī, Shri Rāma's (step) mother Kaikeyī, the illustrious grammarian Pānini or the most ancient university of Takshashilā, all of these were in the ancient Gandhāra. The region is spread across today's Pakistan and Afghanistan. Zarathustra or Zoroaster, founder of the Parsi religion and a great philosopher was a native of this region. Gandhāra has always been the centre of our knowledge, tradition and Sanatana thought. Buddhism spread extensively in Gandhāra during the age of the Mauryas. One of the early Buddhist sects Mahāsāmgika Lokottaravāda (supra-mundane or transcendent teachings) was established in Bamyān in today's Afghanistan. The famous Buddhist monastery established in Balkh, known as Navavihara functioned as the centre for Buddhist teachings throughout Central Asia for centuries.

Afghans and Hindus were tied to each other socially and culturally in such ways that even contemporary politics has proven unable to undo these ties of closeness and God willing, this will continue to remain so. Culture and religion have clashed since ages, but history is testimony to the fact that it always culture that has won out. Islam managed to conquer Iran, Indonesia, Malaysia and Arabia, but has totally failed in extinguishing their cultures and traditions. Similarly, the religion of Islam spread greatly in undivided India too, but our heritage and culture survives with all grandeur and we feel proud to call ourselves Hindu-Muslims. Although there might be manmade borders between us today, we were culturally one and God willing, will remain so.

The Gandhāra Special Issue-2 is in your hands. In this issue, we have focused on the same historical and cultural aspects of Gandhāra of which readers have had a glimpse in the first issue on Gandhāra. Owing to our own limitations, we could not touch upon some of these aspects. This issue fulfils them. Dr. Mohammad Mazharul Haque's article *Gandhāra during Buddhist Era* clarifies the nature of the relationship of this region with the rest of India and also the then prevailing state of economic and military ties with other countries. Along with this, the article also presents the history of the spread of Buddhism in that region. Prof. Alauddin Shah's article *Pre-Islamic Gandhāra with reference to the Shahnameh of Firdowsi* treats the entire history of that region as a conglomeratic entity. It is also important to know how a poet Abul Qasim Firdowsi Tusi, who lived close to the frontier saw the historical event of the coming of Islam on the northwest frontiers and the position of India

before that. Firdowsi was basically a poet and the *Shahnameh* is his work of poetry, which is a work of monarchs, i.e., rulers and reveals the available history of a period well before his own time and until his period. It also throws light on relations between his region and the rest of India. The place which Firdausi knew really well was Gandhāra. It is a different experience altogether to look at history through the eyes of a poet and see one's culture in it. You can glimpse that experience in this article.

It is clear that it were Indians who lived in Gandhāra before the advent of Islam. This is the region where our Vedic culture flourished. Its remains are even today present in this entire region. An analysis of the influence of Hindutva there, through the remnants and indices of this culture, forms Dr. Arihant Kumar Vardhan's article *Hinduness in Gandhāra*. The Nath *panth* (sect) has been an influential sect under the aegis of Hinduism. It is believed that Guru Gorakhnath was born in a village near Peshawar in the region of Gandhāra. This influence can be seen in the form of Gorakh's teachings, and the monasteries and ascetics all over Gandhāra and nearby regions. Isht Deo Sankrityaayan's research article *Disciples of Gorakhnath in Gandhāra* analyses this influence and its spread with the help of historical contexts.

You are all of course, aware that Pāṇini, who gave Sanskrit its contemporary form, belonged to Gandhāra. The folk language of the region Pāṇini belonged to is Pashto. Prof. Mohammad Anwar Khairi's article *The Ancient Phonetic Connect between Dialectical Pashto and Sanskrit* contains an analysis of the similarities between these two languages. It is of course, not possible that we discuss music but do not talk about the Gandharvas. Ordinarily, the word Gandharva is believed to have originated from Gandhāra. There is also a rāga Gāndhār in music, and one of the sub-Vedas is the Gandharva Veda. The relationship of these with the Gandhāra region and the possibilities therein is an area that Prof. Madhu Rani Shukla has tried to explore in his article *Gāndhāra and Gandharvas in Indian Music*. Among the many forms of wedding prevalent in Indian society, one is known as the Gandharva vivāh. You can learn about the connection of this particular form of marriage with Gandhāra in Sonali Mishra's article *Love in the land of Gandharva Vivāh*. Takshashila has been the pride of not only India but of the whole of India. The issue contains a researched article by Dr. Shahbaz Amil on the ancient town's university, while Prof. Ishtiaq Ahmed has revealed the hitherto untouched aspects of Takshashila as a cultural centre. We have also received responses from our esteemed readers, which we appreciate and are grateful for. We shall await your responses for this issue as well. I am also grateful to *Manthan* for having accorded me the honour of being its guest editor.



Mazhar Asif



Dr. Mohd. Mazhar-ul-Haq

# Gandhāra during Buddhist Era

Gandhāra is one of the regions where Buddhism prominently flourished. It is in this very region where owing to contact with Greek art, Gautama Buddha acquired a developed form in icons and statues and a new sect of Buddhism Sarvāstivāda sprang forth. A view on the association of Gandhāra with the rest of India in this era of cultural developments

Ancient Gandhāra, which today is primarily Afghanistan, gains an importance when we consider its geographical location. This region is important not only in the present but has been so in very ancient times as well. Powerful monarchs of the days of yore used to eye this region. Afghanistan has been the centre of the crisscrossing of civilisations. It was at the northern frontier of Afghanistan, where the river Vakṣu (Oxus) lies, that civilisations were born and spread to India, Iran and other regions from there.

It is through Afghanistan that the world famous “Silk Road” passes, the only trade route for West Asia, Central Asia and Europe. Later in history, Greeks, Mongols, Turks, Ghaznavids, Ghurids and Mughals entered India through this route. Even today, the gazes of the world’s major powers are fixed on Afghanistan, who with the help of the United Nations Organisation, wish to retain their hold on Afghanistan.

Gautama Buddha was born in Lumbini (today situated in Nepal) about 2,600 years ago, in 563 BC. The religion of Buddhism is based on the Buddha’s teachings<sup>1</sup>. When the Buddha was spreading his message, Emperor Dara I or Darius I, the fourth ruler of the Achaemenid Dynasty held sway in the region of Gandhāra. Darius I is renowned in history for

his edicts and stone inscriptions<sup>2</sup>, whose influence can later be seen upon the edicts of Emperor Ashoka as well. The Achaemenid edicts mention India; images carved on the walls of the *Takht-e-Jamshed* depict Persian officials receiving gifts from ambassadors from India.

Emperor Darius I wished to extend his sway over all of India. Indeed, his Persian Empire by 516 BC extended till the province of Sind and parts of the western Punjab that touched the western banks of the Indus River. Historians term that period as the Zoroastrian era. This region is extremely fertile, productive and densely populated, and was considered Persia’s 20th province. Greek historian Herodotus in his mention of India mentions the yearly land revenue accruing from India to Emperor Darius and says “The annual revenue of 600 *kintars*, i.e., 720,000 dinars from India exceeded the sum contributed by all of Persia’s provinces”<sup>3</sup>.

There were Indian soldiers as well in the Persian army. Herodotus has mentioned the name of an Indian soldier who was in the Persian infantry, as well as the names of Indian war elephants<sup>4</sup>.

The adherents of the Hīnayāna sect of Buddhism inhabited those regions whose routes led to Central Asia. Gandhāra and Bactria were two important kingdoms of this region.



The region of Gandhāra on its eastern side touched the western Punjab, which now falls in present-day Pakistan, and stretched up till as far the Indus River. In the west, it lay on both sides of the Khyber Pass and beyond the Kabul Valley up to the Hindukush, touching Pakhtia and Zabul in the south and extended up to Panjshir in its north<sup>5</sup>. Similarly, the area of Bactria stretched from Kabul Valley in the south to Uzbekistan and Tajikistan in the north.

Gandhāra has been mentioned in Emperor Darius' edicts. He had to exert his military might considerably to conquer Kabul, facing stiff opposition from the local populace. The Achaemenid monarchs did rule Gandhāra and Bactria for three hundred years, but their sway over those regions ended after Darius' time<sup>6</sup>.

According to the biography of the Buddha's life as recorded in the Hīnayāna texts of Buddhist schools like the Sarvāstivāda, two brothers of Bactria Tāpasu and Bālik, who were traders, were the Buddha's first disciples who undertook the responsibility of propagating the Buddhist discipline. They received the Buddha's enlightenment eight weeks after their formal acceptance of the credo. This event is said to be of the year 537 BC. Bālik later became a Buddhist monk and built a monastery near his town Balkh, which is now near the town of Mazhar-e-Sharif. He had brought eight strands of the Buddha's hair as a relic, to safeguard which he had a dome like structure made. Bactria in that period was still a

part of the Achaemenid Empire<sup>7</sup>.

Schisms emerged among the Buddhists a mere 100 years after the Buddha's *nirvāna*. At the Second Buddhist Council held at Vaishali (in today's Bihar), The Thera Buddhists expelled those Buddhists who differed in opinion, from the Sangha itself. These Buddhists who were thrown out of the fold set up their own Sangha, calling themselves Mahāsāṃghikas, and terming those who had expelled them as Hīnasāṃghikas. This schism became permanent as the two distinct sects of Buddhism, viz., Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna, which later assumed the form of Theravāda<sup>8</sup>.

Many Mahāsāṃghikas, who had taken Gautama Buddha's skull along with them as a sacred relic, reached Gandhāra and built a *vihāra* or monastery by the name of Nagar Vihāra at Hadda, which is situated near today's Jalalabad town in Afghanistan. Some time later, one of the Thera monks by name of Sambhuta Sanawasi gathered his own followers and tried to lay down the

foundations of his sect at Kapiśā, but was not successful in doing so. As a result, it were only the Mahāsāṃghikas who remained as the real community of the Buddhist faith in Afghanistan<sup>9</sup>. It were these Mahāsāṃghikas who had the giant Buddha statues at Bamiyan constructed, which we shall mention later.

Emperor Darius' successor down the centuries Darius III gathered a large army to fight the invading Alexander of Greece, in which there were Indian soldiers as well. But Darius II met with defeat at the hands of Alexander in 330 BC, who along with Bactria and Gandhāra conquered large parts of the Achaemenid territories. Alexander however, did not interfere with the faith of his subjects, as he respected all religious traditions. He was more interested in conquest and adding territory. Alexander's successors, particularly Seleucus, laid the foundation of the Seleucid Dynasty. But Seleucus could not rule Gandhāra for long, as the Mauryan Empire invaded and freed Gandhāra from Seleucid



*The Apadana (audience hall) of Darius I at Persepolis, Iran.*

Courtesy: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Persepolis>

## Manthan

rule in 317 AD, though he could retain Bactria. Thus, the sway of the Greeks was contained to a small part of this region<sup>10</sup>.

Emperor Ashoka (268 BC-232 BC) was a world renowned and powerful Indian emperor of the Mauryan Dynasty. He was the son of Emperor Bindusara and the grandson of Chandragupta Maurya. Ashoka's full name was Devānāmpriya Ashoka Maurya, and he was also called Priyadarshī (meaning loved by the gods). Ashoka had many edicts to his name and achievements, many of which have been found in Afghanistan bearing his name as Priyadarshī<sup>11</sup>.

10 years after ascending the throne, Ashoka undertook the conquest of Kalinga. The resultant slaughter and loss of human lives in the Kalinga War caused immense remorse to Ashoka and his mind turned away from his kingly functions. It was to pull himself out of this torment that he turned to the teachings of the Buddha and finally embraced Buddhism. After his formal acceptance of Buddhism, Emperor Ashoka along with trying to implement its tenets in his own life also sent missionaries to spread Buddhism to Gandhāra, i.e., Afghanistan, along with other parts of the world. One among those missionaries was Mahārākhitā, under whose leadership a team of Buddhist missionaries reached parts of Gandhāra. This delegation erected an Ashoka

pillar in southern Gandhāra, on which commandments of Buddhism were inscribed. It was through these delegations that Theravāda registered its presence in Afghanistan<sup>12</sup>.

After the Third Buddhist Council held during the fag end of Ashoka's reign, the Sarvāstivādins in India broke away from Theravāda. After Ashoka's death, his son Jalok not only took Sarvāstivāda to Kashmir but also propagated its message there.

In 239 AD, the local Greek elite in Bactria rebelled against Seleucid rule and attained independence. In later years, they wrested Sogdiana and Kashmir from the Seleucids and laid the foundations of the Graeco-Bactrian kingdom. Kashmiri Buddhist monks were successful in rapidly spreading the creed of Sarvāstivāda sect in Bactria.

The Greek-Bactrians snatched Gandhāra from the Mauryan Empire in 197 AD. While Theravāda had earlier held sway because of Ashoka and his successors, Sarvāstivāda gradually began making its way towards southern Afghanistan. As a result, Greek culture began casting its influence over Indian culture. Greek culture influenced Buddhist art, especially the casting of images, making statues and that of adornment.

Buddhism spread with all its energy in Afghanistan in two phases. The first was during the

reign of Emperor Ashoka when Gandhāra was under the Indian Maurya rulers. The second phase of Buddhism was actually a revival of Buddhist teachings and art during the great Kushāṇa Empire, during the reign of Emperor Kanishka, under whose rule Buddhism spread greatly in Afghanistan.

Emperor Ashoka appointed missionaries for propagating and spreading Buddhism, issued proclamations and drew upon the services of religious leaders according with their capabilities and worthiness for the spread of Buddhism. The faith saw a revival of its message and teachings when Kushāṇa emperor Kanishka not only totally supported Buddhism and engaged in its proliferation, but actively helped in the spread of its myriad aspects like iconography, architecture, urbanisation, minting of coins (of metals; gold and silver) and edicts, enabling them to reach their zenith<sup>13</sup>.

Emperor Kanishka in the 2nd century AD (127AD-150AD) was a great emperor of India from the Kushāṇa Dynasty, renowned for his military, political and religious accomplishments. Kanishka holds a special place in India's history for his military conquests, religious nature and for being a patron of literature and art. Kanishka ruled from two capitals; Kapisha, 35 miles north of Kabul (located in the present Bagram area) was his summer capital while Purushpur (today's Peshawar) served as his winter capital.

Emperor Kanishka is well ensconced in the history of Buddhism as he not only was personally an adherent of the faith but also encouraged the spread

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After the Third Buddhist Council held during the fag end of Ashoka's reign, the Sarvāstivādins in India broke away from Theravāda. After Asoka's death, his son Jaloka not only took Sarvāstivāda to Kashmir but also propagated its message there

of its message. Evidence of this is the Fourth Buddhist Council, which was held in Kashmir during his time and presided over by Vasumitra and Ashwaghosha. It was at this council that Buddhism split into two sects—Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna. It was also during this period that a portrait of the Buddha with 22 material symbols was made.

The Buddhist stupa of Peshawar was Kanishka's biggest contribution to Buddhist architecture. The archaeologists who discovered its base in 1908-09 revealed that its diameter was 286 feet (87 metres). Chinese traveller and scholar Huen Tsang writes that the stupa's height was between 600-700 Chinese feet (180-210 metres or 591-689 feet), and was studded with precious stones. Doubtlessly this huge and beautiful structure must have been among the wonders of the ancient world<sup>14</sup>.

Apart from this giant *stūpa*, Kanishka also built a fine statue of the Buddha at Peshawar, 150 feet in height, which was regarded as incomparable in its architectural finesse. However, it was Kapisha that was the centre of Buddhist centres of worship and idols. It was also during Kanishka's time, in the 1st or 2nd century AD, that the *Tripitaka* of the Sarvāstivāda was determined at the Fourth Buddhist Council.

Emperor Kanishka was a patron of the Sarvāstivāda sect. Bhāṣika, a subsect of the Sarvāstivāda flourished in Tokharistan. A Tokhari monk by name of Ghoshak collated the Vaibhāṣika commentary on the Abhidhamma (Abhidharma). He was awarded recognition at the Fourth Buddhist Council organised by Kanishka. After his

### Emperor Kanishka was a patron of the Sarvāstivāda sect. Bhāṣika, a subsect of the Sarvāstivāda flourished in Tokharistan. A Tokhari monk by name of Ghoshak collated the Vaibhāṣika commentary on the Abhidhamma (Abhidharma)

return to Tokharistan, Ghoshak laid the foundation of the western sect of the Sarvāstivāda, which came to be known as Bhāṣika (Bāhīka). Within a short time, this monastery of Buddhism became renowned throughout Central Asia as Navavihāra. This centre rivalled the great universities of Nālandā and Takṣaśīla as a seat of learning. Stress would be laid on the study of the Abhidhamma at this Navavihāra, and only those monks would be admitted who had already written something on this subject. As the Buddha's teeth had been preserved as a sacred relic, this place situated on the ancient Silk Route between India and China was one of the important places of Buddhist pilgrimage<sup>15</sup>.

Zoroastra was born around 600 BC in the Balkh region, a place that is considered to be the birthplace of the Zoroastrian faith, which is also known as the Parsi religion. The Zoroastrian faith, which lays stress on fire-worship, became popular in Balkh. Kanishka too adopted the Graeco-Bactrian tradition of religious tolerance, which led to Buddhism and Zoroastrianism coexisting peacefully in the Balkh region, and also influencing each other's progress. For instance, it was during this period that Zoroastrian monasteries built inside caves were adorned with murals of flames of the sacred fire and also images of Buddhism. These were called Buda-Mazda, which denoted a

combination of the Buddha and Ahura Mazda, the Supreme God of the Zoroastrians<sup>16</sup>.

In the middle of the 3rd century BC in the Ashokan era in India, Buddhism established itself in Gandhār completely. Similarly, Greek realism and supra-realism along with Indian mysticism gave birth to a new form of art which is now known as the Gandhāra School of art. Hadda (six miles south of present-day Jalalabad) is the epicentre of this Gandhāra school<sup>17</sup>.

The Gandhāra art is actually an amalgam of Greek and Indian Buddhist cultures. One of the salient aspects of this cultural heritage is the art of iconography<sup>18</sup>, which Emperor Kanishka encouraged and patronised to a great extent. One could see the imprint of this artistic tradition on the giant Bamiyan Buddha statues.

The Kuṣāṇa rule over Afghanistan was ended in 226 AD by the Persian Sassanid Empire. Though staunch Zoroastrians themselves, the Sassanids allowed the region's Buddhists to construct more Buddhist monasteries. It was during the period of Sassanid rule that the followers of supernaturalism built the two giant Buddha statues at Bamiyan<sup>19</sup>.

The renowned Chinese traveller and scholar Hiuen Tsang who toured Gandhāra in the 7th century AD, writing about the smaller statue in Bamiyan said that there were many large

Buddhist shrines and the smaller Bamiyan statue (of 35 metres height) was a place of pilgrimage for Afghanistan's Buddhists. The Bamiyan Valley in that period was a prime centre of Buddhist culture, comparable to the main Buddhist centres in the southern parts of Sri Lanka<sup>20</sup>.

Bamiyan lies on the route between India and Balkh; in those days, medicines, spices, ornaments, ivory, cotton and raw materials would be traded along this route. Bamiyan was thus situated on the Silk Route connecting Central Asia with the Chinese Empire and other East Asian kingdoms. As a trading centre, Bamiyan thrived until the beginning of the invasions by Mongol conqueror Ghengis Khan in the 13th century.

Bamiyan is situated 145 miles north of Kabul. 110 miles from there, lies a deep valley named Shibar, which is covered by snow during winter. Walking 19 miles back takes travellers to a road that diverges in two, the right path going to Mazhar-e-Sharif while the road that turns leftward leads to Bamiyan.

It appears that the town of Bamiyan has mostly been a rural settlement and saw development much later. One can see mountains surrounding the town, which might have been dwellings for Buddhist monks and also their places of worship and meditation. The historic town of Bamiyan is located on a mountain 9,000 ft high, which lies amidst the Koh-e-Baba on the Hindukush Mountains, a place that is covered with snow round the year.

Atop a hill at Bamiyan is a town Shahar-e-Galgala, founded by the White Huns, although it lies in ruins today. A look at these ruins

**Bamiyan in that era served as a religious centre for Buddhist monks and it is said that it was from here that the Buddhist faith spread to the entire world and also travelled to China and Japan from this region**

suggests that Buddhist monks and worshippers had built caves there and would have been using them for their meditation and study of the scriptures.

Two huge statues of the Buddha of 53 metres and 35 metres height respectively were carved out of the mountain rocks. There were built in such a manner as to brave the extremely cold mountainous elements and be protected from any damaged that could be caused by nature. These giant Buddha statues were a source of inspiration and for pilgrims traversing the area, as well as of religious fervour and zeal.

Reaching Bamiyan was so difficult that the making the journey was not possible for everyone. There were no means of transport, and mules and other similar beasts were the only vehicles, although most animals were used for carrying food grain.

Hiuen Tsang, who in 630 AD had seen these Buddhist places of worship and their astonishing statues and idols, said: "One sees lines of gold everywhere"<sup>21</sup>.

Bamiyan in that era served as a religious centre for Buddhist monks and it is said that it was from here that the Buddhist faith spread to the entire world and also travelled to China and Japan from this region.

Looking at the mountains, villages, rivers, streams, murals carved on walls and the huge statues in Bamiyan, one could conclude that Bamiyan was a

Buddhist learning centre and was a significant seat of Buddhism in this region until the advent of Islam. The areas settlements have also expanded and progressed to some extent.

Early Islamic historians (before the 13th century) speak of a golden age. A historian by name of Yaqubi has described the murals that adorned the walls of the caves near the statues of Buddha. Yaqubi says that Bamiyan's residents named the bigger of the giant Buddha statues as "Red Image" and the smaller one as "Khaki Image".

I too had the opportunity to tour Bamiyan in 2006 AD. It was the month of January and there was snow everywhere. In fact, it was snowing so heavily that it seemed that the snowfall would never stop. We did not however, cease trying to reach the site of the Buddha statues; the snowfall finally halted when we reached there. We saw the ruins of the giant Buddha statue, which the Taliban had blasted with gunpowder in March 2001, at close quarters. Some Japanese engineers were engaged in the restoration of the statue. One cannot find any justification for the Taliban's destruction of this giant statue, as Islam has never permitted the destruction of any religious place. Evidence of this lies in the pyramids of Egypt and the giant Bamiyan Buddhas which continued to exist till 2001. There certainly appears to be some political reason behind

the Taliban's act of destroying the Bamiyan Buddhas.

Apart from Bamiyan, there have been many other centres of Buddhism in Afghanistan, viz: (1) The Buddhist centre Hadda near Jalalabad (2) Kharwar, which lies on the route between Gandhāra and Karachi (3) Tangi Saidan near Kabul (4) The Kanjaki Buddhist

temple, which is located 25 miles from Kabul in the Paghman district (5) Khwaja Safa Buddhist centre near Kabul (6) Buddhist temple atop the Naranj hills, which presently is situated at Koh-e-Hashmat (7) The Buddhist temple at Poza-e-Shutruk, which is presently known as Sarika Vihar, located at Kapisha (8)

Minar-e-Chakri, district of Khak-e-Jabbar in the Kabul province (9) The Navavihāra Buddhist temple in Balkh (10) The Shahbahar Buddhist temple in Ghazni. Apart from these, many other religious sites are present in Afghanistan, the mention of all of which is not possible within the scope of this article. ■

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## Loya jirga

**L**oya jirga (Pashto: grand assembly) is a code of laws of the Pashtun peoples living in areas of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and neighboring countries in the Pashtunwali. It is a special type of jirga (assembly) that is mainly organized for choosing a new head of state in case of sudden death, adopting a new constitution, or to settle national or regional issue such as war. It predates modern-day written or fixed laws, and is mostly favored by the Pashtun people but to a lesser extent by other nearby groups that have been influenced by Pashtuns (historically known as Afghans).

In Afghanistan, loya jirgas have been reportedly organized since at least the early 18th century when the Hotaki and Durrani dynasties rose to power. ■



Allauddin Shah

# Pre-Islamic Gandhāra with Reference to the Shahnameh of Firdowsi

Poet Firdowsi described Indian culture as well as wealth and valour in his Shahnameh. Obviously it is from the view of Gandhāra, which was his nearest part of India

The cultural, literary and political relations between the great civilizations of India and Afghanistan (this region was also known as Aryana in past) goes back to unrecorded pre-historic times. Close ties between the people of two nations in the fields of culture, ethos and commonalities of race and language certifies that the longstanding civilizations of both countries have sprung from one root and spanned out like branches of one tree in different directions. Archaeologists and researchers of ancient history who have carried out extensive research about people of different races in world tend to believe that after 2000 BC, semi-nomadic tribes moved towards south i.e. greater Khorasan and Afghanistan of present days from Central Asia and these groups of people included Indo-Iranians who spoke Indo-European languages. Later, these tribes migrated beyond towards South Asia, West Asia and Europe, using the northern routes along the Caspian Sea. This region was called “Aryana”<sup>1</sup> at that time. With passage of time branches of these semi-nomadic tribes settled in Afghanistan and the Sub-Continent

and discarded their nomadic nature to set up civilizations based on agriculture and subsequently developed urbanized settlements.

Dr. Ali Akbar Shahabi-Khorasani writes in his book entitled *Literary Relations between India and Iran...* “After Indo-European Aryans descended to land from banks of Danooob River and Baltic Sea, Trans-Oxiana River (*Jihoon Rud*) and the mountain pass of Hindukush they separated from each other. However, intermittent relations including literary and political interactions continued between them. These relations and ties between the two branches of Indians and Iranians (including Afghans) have been more vibrant because people of these two lands shared commonalities since those ancient times in most fields like language, religion, customs and ethics and even post separation their habitats were not far off from each other...”<sup>2</sup> He further adds that a group of researchers believe that till 1350 BC or near about Persians (Afghans at present) and Hindus have been co-religionists and between 19th to 14th BC possible differences between their religions began taking root. Some linguists also believe

that early and ancient Aryans most probably have spoken in the original language of Indians, i.e. Sanskrit. Different branches of the Indo-European languages have sprung from the original Sanskrit. In other words the Indo-Aryan languages (Indian and Aryan) like Sanskrit, Avesta and Old Persian are close to each other and share a similar root and the original source of these languages is one.<sup>3</sup>

The recorded history of the region (present day Afghanistan) goes back to the fifth century BC when it was under the rule of Achaemenid Empire. However, archaeological evidence suggests that urbanized settlements existed there since 3000 and 2000 BC. The Indus Valley Civilization stretched up to large parts of Afghanistan in the north. Alexander the Great and his Macedonian army arrived at what is now Afghanistan in 330 BCE after conquering Persia during the Battle of Gaugamela. Since then, many empires have risen from Afghanistan, including the Kushans, **Hindu Shahi**, Ghaznavids, Ghorids, Khaljis, Timurids, Mughals, Hotakis and Durranis.<sup>4</sup>

Even without the Indian and Afghan civilizations having emanated from a common source, they would have been destined to nourish close ties because of their geographical proximity and common borders during

different stages of their political history. Both countries have not only shared commonalities in their culture, mythologies, religion, literature and philosophy but they have also nurtured vibrant political, commercial, and consanguineous relations over a vast expanse of historical periods. While in the early times, the territorial jurisdiction of Darius is said to have extended well up to the Indian lands, **the Hindu Shahis ruled today's Afghanistan (Kabul Valley and Gandhāra including present day Pakistan).**<sup>5</sup> Besides, trading and commercial commodities, literature, art and culture have also traveled to and fro between the two countries. Because both nations were rich in their respective cultural heritage and aesthetic quest, they were bound to have interaction in these fields.

With such a historical

background it is not surprising that the leaders, writers and poets of both nations have recorded and reaffirmed the common heritage of both countries in their historical as well as other works. The *Shahnameh* is another such example of a historical work recording the literary, cultural and political relations of both nations.

### The References of India and Indian Elements in Shahnameh

The *Shahnameh* is a phenomenal work of assertion of the identity, culture, language, values, religion and history of a nation at a time when it was passing through a tumultuous period of transition, transformation and the resultant confusion under the aggressive march of alien influences. If today Afghanistan can claim to have preserved its ancient culture, values and identity

despite adapting itself to a Semitic religion and laws, a lot of its credit is due to the patriotic and poetic genius of Firdowsi. Many ancient civilizations of the world had preserved their culture and identity in mythologies through oral traditions as in the case of Afghanistan and India. Firdowsi did the seminal work of not only reviving those traditions but gave them a concrete shape and continuity, which was preserved for all future generations to come. He has not only sung the achievements, aspirations and dreams of the people and their history in his work, but he has also recorded their interactions and relations with other people of



*Shah Ismail II manuscript c 1577 CE*

Artist: Ali Asghar

*Khusraw Parviz and Bahram Chubin  
in combat*

Courtesy: [https://www.](https://www.heritageinstitute.com/)

[heritageinstitute.com/  
zoroastrianism/shahnameh/](https://www.heritageinstitute.com/zoroastrianism/shahnameh/)

## Manthan

neighboring countries like India. It is not just a cursory reference to other people in *Shahnameh* but it tells a great deal about them. Let us find here how are India and Indian elements referred to in 'The Epic of the Kings'?

An Adobe Reader search of a downloaded copy of Firdowsi's *Shahnameh* (from Internet site: www.4shared.com) in PDF file yields the result of at least 325 (three hundred twenty five) references of India only by name with usages such as *Hind*, *Hindi*, *Hindavi*, *Hindu*, *Hinduvan* and *Hindustan*. There are many other references of Indian places and principalities like *Sind*, *Kannauj*, and *Kashmir* etc. Many of these references have just come associated with Indian versions of weapons and instruments like sword (*Shamshir-e-Hindi*, *Tigh-e-Hindi*), dagger (*Khanjar*), umbrella (*Chatr-e-Hindi*) and Indian musical instrument/bells (*Hindi Daraey*) and together account for at least 113 references. Consider, for instance, the following verses of *Shahnameh* in different stories of the book:

Examples of the usage of Indian sword (*Shamshir-e-Hindi*, *Tigh-e-Hindi*):

***The moment I sighted an angry elephant amidst dust I got hold of an Indian sword***  
(*Shahnameh-e-Firdowsi PDF*, P.146)

***What Arabian horses with golden harness!  
What Indian sword in golden sheath!***  
(*Shahnameh-e-Firdowsi PDF*, P.86)

Example of the usage of Indian

An Adobe Reader search of a downloaded copy of Firdowsi's *Shahnameh* (from Internet site: www.4shared.com) in PDF file yields the result of at least 325 (three hundred twenty five) references of India only by name with usages such as *Hind*, *Hindi*, *Hindavi*, *Hindu*, *Hinduvan* and *Hindustan*

dagger (*khanjar-e-Hinduan*):  
***In the treasure of mace and on body. It was all over Indian dagger and spear***  
(*Shahnameh-e-Firdowsi PDF*, P.470)

Examples of the usage of an Indian musical instrument/bells (*Hindi Daraey*):

***The ringing of bells and the Indian instrument (Daraey) Arose from behind the curtains of the corridor***  
(*Shahnameh-e-Firdowsi PDF*, P. 116)

Other similar instances of India being frequently named in the verses of *Shahnameh* have also come suffixed with other words such as 'Kishwar-e-Hinduan' (The country of India), 'Darya-e-Hind' or 'Darya-e-Sind' (Indian or Sind Sea) and 'Marz-e-Hind' and 'Marz-e-Hindustan' (the border of India or Hindustan) etc.

Here are examples of such usages:  
'Kishwar-e-Hinduan or Hind' (the country of Hindus or Hind-India):

***He proceeded towards the country of Hindus (India) Through Kabul, Tambour to the land of Birds and Magicians***  
(*Shahnameh-e-Firdowsi PDF*, P:117)

***Yes my mother was the daughter of Mehrab And due to him the country of India was luscious and prosperous***  
(*Shahnameh-e-Firdowsi PDF*, P:117)

***It is impossible to believe that this country of India is destroyed And it becomes the abode of leopards and lions***  
(*Shahnameh-e-Firdowsi PDF*, P: 1895)

'Darya-e-Hind or Sind' (the sea of India or Sindh):

***Some one said that he is the king of Rome and India From Kanauj up to the river of Sindh***  
(*Shahnameh-e-Firdowsi PDF*, P: 20)

***Keep going this way to reach the border of India And from there you cross the Sindh river***  
(*Shahnameh-e-Firdowsi PDF*, P: 424)

'Marz-e-Sind or Hindustan' (border of Sindh or Hindustan)

***I will carry on and follow the land of Magicians Till I reach the border of Hindustan***  
(*Shahnameh-e-Firdowsi PDF*, P: 48)



***To the Shangal, the guardian of India******From Kannauj river to the border of Sindh***

*(Shahnameh-e-Firdowsi PDF, P: 1684)*

Likewise, the name of India has been mentioned in *Shahnameh* along with names of other nations like ‘Hind-o-Iran’, ‘Hind-o-Chin’, and ‘Hind-o-Rum’ etc. or while discussing and alluding to any ruler of India with the title of ‘Rai’ as in the following couplet:

***He conveyed the message of the emperor to him***

***And the face of the Indian ruler (Rai) blossomed like flower hearing this***

*(Shahnameh-e-Firdowsi PDF, P: 1882)*

There are many other such examples of India being mentioned by name in the *Shahnameh* but, as we say, what is there in a name? Well, they tell a lot and it is not possible to discuss all of them here one by one. The real essence of India and its elements comes in the stories and episodes of the *Shahnameh*, which are linked with this country.

**References in the Early Period of *Shahnameh***

Early in the legendary and mythical section of the *Shahnameh* there are references to India which show that India was not only well recognized land but it was a place frequented by visits of

legendary figures and characters of *Shahnameh*'s stories who were in continuous encounters with this country as cited above. A little later Key Khosrow is even reported to have sent Rostam on expeditions to Hindustan.

In one of the episodes of *Shahnameh*, the Turanians suffer a demoralizing defeat in one of the battles against the Afghans and Kamusis slain by Rustam. Then they regroup rallying support of neighboring rulers from China and India. In the story of the Khaqan Chin, a king of India namely Shangal is reported to have come in aid of Afrasiyab in another ensuing battle with Iranians. Seeing Khaqan Chin and Turanians demoralized and losing heart due to prolonged battle and facing the fierce onslaught of a sole hardened warrior Rustam, Shangal delivers an inspiring speech to raise the morale of the Turanian warriors whereupon he is praised by everyone. *(Shahnameh-e-Firdowsi PDF, P: 679)*

**Lohrasp and Goshtasp**

When Shah Lohrasp ascended the Aryana throne and settled down, he dispatched his envoys to every civilized country including India. *(Shahnameh-e-Firdowsi PDF, P: 1056)* But a little later Lohrasp and his son Goshtasp's relations became estranged and the latter leaves him in anger and on being asked where his resting-place will be? He says that he will be going to India where he will be kept in a happy and bright spirit amongst

the Hindus. He has a letter from them pledging complete loyalty to him. *(Shahnameh-e-Firdowsi PDF, P: 1058)*

**The Reign of Dara**

Firdowsi has called the reign of Dara, the son of Darab, as one of benevolence and generosity who had removed the coverings from his father's stores. He lavished his subjects, nobles and troops with gifts because he was himself showered with tributes and presents from notable men and rulers from within and without Afghanistan. Envoys from India, Rum and China poured in his court with valuable gifts and paid tribute in order to obtain his patronage. *(Shahnameh-e-Firdowsi PDF, P: 1328)*

**Sikander and India**

The reign of Sikander (Alexander) in Aryana is full of Indian references in *Shahnameh* because he is seen continuously interested in India during his stay in Afghanistan. Indian historians have also recorded his intention of invading India but he had to ultimately abort it due to unrest and resistance among his troops suffering from fatigue. Firdowsi has recorded many episodes of Alexander's encounters with Indian rulers and sages. The first reference is to an Indian ruler named “Keyd” who had certain dreams, which are explained by an Indian sage “Mehran”. He informs Keyd about the impending march of Alexander's army against him. He further advises him not to enter into war against him and instead seek peace with him. *(Shahnameh-e-Firdowsi PDF, P: 1359)*

In the same story there is reference of Sikander putting

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In the story of the Khaqan Chin, a king of India namely Shangal is reported to have come in aid of Afrasiyab in another ensuing battle with Iranians

to test an Indian physician. (*Shahnameh-e-Firdowsi* PDF, P: 1373)

The next reference to Sikander and India has come in the story of his campaign against a provincial ruler namely “Fur”, known as Porus by Greeks. Few of *Shahnameh’s* verses in relation to this episode are sung by Firdowsi. (*Shahnameh-e-Firdowsi* PDF, P: 1376) and (*Shahnameh-e-Firdowsi* PDF, P: 1378)

Sikander also launches a campaign against Brahmins, who in turn write a letter to him praising the greatness of his empire and the futility of invading a small principality of learned people and God worshippers. Finally Sikander heeds their learned advice and withdraws his campaign against them. (*Shahnameh-e-Firdowsi* PDF, P: 1403)

In the same story, there is debate between Sikander and the Brahmin in a question-answer format about different ethical and philosophical issues. For instance, when Sikander asks the Brahmin questions about proportion of dry land and water, the most enlightened and most sinful men in world, the Brahmin replies that water is also taken care and preserved by dry land. The most enlightened person is the one who is not possessed by greed and jealousy. Its opposite makes man more sinful because he loses wisdom because of jealousy and greed. (*Shahnameh-e-Firdowsi* PDF, P:1405)

### **India as Refuge for Afghan rulers:**

#### **1. The Dynasty of Sasan**

Coming to the dynasty of Sasan, Ferdowsi mentions that when Dara was killed in the battle, his

Ardshir is also shown here sending a messenger to India with plenty of gifts like horses, Dinar and birds for consulting an Indian astrologer to inquire about what stars foretold about his empire and its well-being

son Sasan fled to India. He later died in miserable conditions in Hindustan but not before leaving behind a lineage till fourth generations in India, each father in turn naming his son Sasan. (*Shahnameh-e-Firdowsi* PDF, P: 1447)

#### **2. The Reign of Ardashir**

In the reign of Ardashir, Firdowsi narrates the story of Ardashir killing Ardavan and marrying his daughter. Again two of Ardavan’s sons had sought refuge in India. The eldest son Bahman planned a botched up assassination of Ardashir with the help of his sister and an Indian poison. (*Shahnameh-e-Firdowsi* PDF, P: 1480-81)

Ardshir is also shown here sending a messenger to India with plenty of gifts like horses, Dinar and birds for consulting an Indian astrologer to inquire about what stars foretold about his empire and its well-being. (*Shahnameh-e-Firdowsi* PDF, P: 1487)

#### **Bahram Gur’s visit to India**

Another instance of closer relations between Indians and Afghans has been depicted by Firdowsi in a story during the course of Bahram Gur’s reign when the Indian ruler Shangal nurses intentions of occupying some Aryana territories: (*Shahnameh-e-Firdowsi* PDF, P: 1682)

Bahram later visits India to personally see Shangal and persuade him to abandon his designs. His visit does result

in a peaceful resolution of the problem and strengthening of ties between the two kingdoms. (*Shahnameh-e-Firdowsi* PDF, P: 1696-97)

#### **Kharrad’s explanation of Hindu religion**

During the reign of Bahram Chubina, when Khorow Parviz is overthrown and he goes on a secret journey to Rum, he is accompanied by a retinue which included the famous Kharrad son of Barzin, a philosopher. Kharrad is depicted by Firdowsi as an erudite and knowledgeable person who enters in debate with Caesar of Rum on various subjects. At one place he is seen explaining the Hindu religion to Caesar. In the last verses from a fairly long conversation Kharrad says that in India Cow along with moon are considered pious and gods. (*Shahnameh-e-Firdowsi* PDF, P: 2118)

#### **The Story of Chess: How it came to Afghanistan?**

The story of the game of chess, an invention of Indians, and how it came to Aryana as a gift and challenge to the court of *Nushirvan* has been so extensively described by Firdowsi in *Shahnameh* that such details are non-existent even in Indian sources. He does not contend with the details of the game’s arrival in Aryana, and the Afghans not only being successful in cracking the rules of the game but the great wise minister Bozorgmehr also inventing

another equally challenging game of backgammon in response to the Indian challenge and then taking it to the Indian Ray as a return gift, but Firdowsi also delves deep into the long and fantastic story of how the game of chess came to be invented in India.

The story of the chess begins thus that one day while the Shah was in ceremonious conclave; he received information from his vigilant spies that an envoy had come from the ruler of India with elephants, parasols and Indian cavaliers. With him also were a thousand laden camels and he sought audience of the Shah (Reuben Levy (Tr.); 1973; P: 327) and (*Shahnameh-e-Firdowsi* PDF, P: 1877)

The envoy now presented a message on silk, which the Ray of India had sent to Nushirvan which contained the challenge to the Afghans to solve the rules of the game: (*Shahnameh-e-Firdowsi* PDF, P: 1877-78)

While everybody whose help Nushirvan sought in discovering the rules of the game failed (*Shahnameh-e-Firdowsi* PDF, P: 1878), It was left to the noble and wise minister Bozorgmehr to solve the intricacies of the game who addressed the depressed Shah and took upon himself to unlock the intricacies of the game (*Shahnameh-e-Firdowsi* PDF, P: 1879). After studying and finding clue to the game, he informed the king (*Shahnameh-e-Firdowsi* PDF, P: 1879)

Although Firdowsi's patriotic pride has depicted Afghans victorious against Indians in

this creative rivalry in face of Bozorgmehr's wisdom and intelligence, it, however, points to cordial and vibrant relations between the rulers of both countries at that time.

At the conclusion of this episode Firdowsi narrates the long story of Talkhand and Gow of India on how the game of chess came to be invented there. This story tells a lot about Indian culture including a probable reference to the practice of 'Sati' (the widow burning herself on pyre of her husband) by Firdowsi. (*Shahnameh-e-Firdowsi* PDF, P: 1879)

### The Story of Kalileh-o-Dimnah

The rendering of the Sanskrit text *Panchatantra* into Pahlavi marks the epitome of Indo-Iranian literary relations. This text named *Kalileh-o-Dimneh* in Dari, to the best of our knowledge, was for the first time, translated or rather adapted into Pahlavi (Middle-Persian) during the reign of Khosro Anushirvan (AD 550-578). This version was executed under the emperor's orders by

his court physician, Burzoe. The story of the translation of this 'Book of Stories' into *Pahlavi* is a fascinating tale in itself and was probably set as a prologue to the lost *Burzoe's* redaction. It has been carried over into Arabic and Persian renderings in two versions. The first story, as recorded by Abu Mansur Saa'labi Nishapuri (350-429 A.H.) in his book on history of Persia (*Tarikh-e-Ghur-e-Akbar-e-Maluk-al-Furs*, Rotenburg Pub P. 629-633.), has also more or less precisely been versified by Firdowsi in '*Shahnameh*'. The reliefs based on *Panchatantra* stories can also be seen in Indonesia.

Once, while in the audience of the emperor, Burzoe informs him about the existence of an elixir in India and its effectiveness in reviving the dead man. As per his request Burzoe was dispatched by Anushirvan to India in search of the elixir with a letter to an Indian ruler for all possible assistance in the endeavor. However, as it turned out Burzoe found the elixir but no dead could be revived by it (*Shahnameh-e-Firdowsi* PDF, P: 1911)



A Panchatantra relief at the Mendut temple,  
Central Java, Indonesia  
Courtesy: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panchatantra#/media/File:Mendhut-Tantri02.jpg>

*Burzoe*, greatly distressed, consulted the learned sages as to what he could do to not return empty handed to his king. Then ‘a famous philosopher’, who had also searched long and in vain for the Elixir of Life only to discover in the end that the elixir was in truth a book and showed *Burzoe* a copy of it. This philosopher also explained the allegory contained in the first book, the one presented to the king of Iran, which started *Burzoe* on his travels, as follows: the high mountains were the wise and learned men of lofty intellect; the trees and herbs their virtuous writings and the wisdom extracted from these writings the Elixir of Life that revived the dead intelligence and buried thoughts of ‘the ignorant and unlearned’.

*Burzoe* asked for a copy of that book which was ‘always in the hands of those kings, for that it was full of Morall Philosophy’ and permission to translate it into his own tongue for his king. Therefore, ‘with the help and knowledge of all those learned philosophers’, *Burzoe* rendered the famous book into *Pehlevi* and returned home with it. (Chandra Rajan, 1993, P: Xvii-Xviii)

### Conclusion

Thus we see that *Shahnameh* of Firdowsi is replete with references of India and Indian

The high mountains were the wise and learned men of lofty intellect; the trees and herbs their virtuous writings and the wisdom extracted from these writings the Elixir of Life that revived the dead intelligence and buried thoughts of ‘the ignorant and unlearned

elements spanning throughout the *Shahnameh* beginning from its very early and mythological period till as late as Firdowsi’s own time, the reign of his ambivalent patron Mahmood Ghaznavi whom he himself introduced as the king of India.

The references in the early period of *Shahnameh* do not seem information which the poet has inserted therein deriving it from his current knowledge. Historical records which have been verified by historians with hard evidences of seals and coins indicate that flourishing trade and commercial relations seem to have taken place between early Afghans and the ancient Indus Valley civilization of India. Therefore, the acquaintance and usage of Indian versions of instruments and weapons shown in the early period of *Shahnameh* are not just instances of later ascriptions.

India has been depicted by *Shahnameh* as a land where Afghan rulers and warriors repeatedly sought refuge in their times of distress. Because *Shahnameh* is

supposed to be a treatise on the history of warriors, wars, kings and kingdoms and India being a close neighbour there are bound to be some reference of conflicts.

Instances of friendly and cultural relations have been dealt most extensively by Firdowsi like the game of chess and the story of *Panchatantra* (*Kalileh-o-Dimneh*). Sometimes India has been depicted as the land of idolaters and magicians (*Jadustan*) as his patron Mahmood Ghaznavi had himself undertaken campaigns to destroy and loot rich bastions of idol worship but Indian rulers and sages have been repeatedly praised for their wisdom, knowledge and philosophy. Indians’ knowledge of medicine, astrology and philosophy has been acknowledged and appreciated.

Overall, *Shahnameh*’s references depict flourishing and cordial relations between India and Afghanistan which has been intermittently overshadowed by the negative campaigns of Mahmood Ghaznavi against India in the Islamic period. ■

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## Pashto Folktales

### Where is good luck?

A man asked his lucky brother, "Where is good luck?" "In the forest," his brother replied. So the unlucky man set out for the forest. On the way he met a lion. When the lion heard where the man was going, he begged him to ask why he was ill, and why nothing made him feel better. When the man had gone a little farther, he found a horse lying down, too weak to stand. Next he came upon a tree, who asked the man, "Please, enquire on my behalf, why am I leafless?" When the man reached the place where he found his good luck, he seized it. His good luck said, "You may have good luck, but you still do not have intelligence." The man asked the questions he carried for the lion, the horse, and the tree. His fortune replied, "Tell the lion that he should devour a fool and he will recover his health. Tell the horse that he should take a master who will ride him and he will grow strong. And tell the tree that under its roots lies the treasure of seven kings. If the treasure is dug up, the tree's roots will flourish." On his way home, the man stopped first by the tree. He told the tree, and the tree begged him to dig the treasure from his roots. The man replied, "What good are riches, since I have my fortune." When he reported to the horse, the animal begged, "Please, sir, become my master!" But the man replied, "I have my fortune now, so look for someone else to be your master." Finally, he reported to the lion that he should devour a fool—and he told the lion all about the tree and the horse, too. When the story was finished, the lion said, "You yourself are a superlative fool!" And, with that, the lion devoured the man. ■

### The pumpkin and the walnut

One warm day, Nasrudin was relaxing in the shade of a walnut tree. After awhile he pondered the huge pumpkins growing on vines nearby and the small walnuts growing on a towering tree.

"Sometimes I just cannot understand the ways of God" he thought. "Why on earth does he let tiny walnuts grow on such a majestic tree and pumpkins on those delicate vines!"

Just then a walnut fell from the tree and smacked Nasrudin square on top of his bald head. He got up at once and lifted his hands to the heavens in supplication.

"Oh my God! Forgive me for my questioning ways! You are the one who is all-wise. Where would I be now if pumpkins grew on trees!" ■

*Courtesy: <http://afghanliterature.blogspot.com/>*



Dr. Arihant Kumar Vardhan

# Hinduness in Gandhāra

Gandhāra, one of the sixteen mahajanapadas of ancient India, today lies partly in Pakistan and partly in Afghanistan. This is the region where Vedic culture blossomed and spread. Therefore, despite being politically separated from India, the remnants of Hindu culture and civilisation till abound in this entire region

I had become familiar somewhat with Afghanistan right from my early years, through Rabindranath Tagore's story "Kābuliwālā", which was among the many stories I had read in my childhood. I make mention of the title "Kābuliwālā" merely to highlight Kabul, the capital of present-day Afghanistan. This story depicts the purity of the humanitarian bond and affection between India and Afghanistan. Written in 1892, the story revolves around a Muslim Afghan Rahmat Ali and a girl Mini of a Bengali Hindu family, depicting a unique tale of affection and love. Mini's father reduces his expenditure on her wedding so as to give Rahmat Ali some money to enable the latter to return to his homeland Afghanistan; truly a touching tale of brotherhood and humanity.

When I began understanding ancient Indian history outside the realm of stories, I found mention of the *Mahajanapadas* as the standard model of the earliest state in India. One can see the continuation of the saga of the *Mahajanapadas* well into the post-Vedic era and Buddhist texts. The *Anguttara Nikāya* of the Buddhist texts contains mention of the 16 *Mahajanapadas*, and Gandhāra too is one among them. Gandhāra is the Kandahar province of today's Afghanistan, whose capital was Takṣaśilā, an ancient seat of learning.

Shubha, the daughter of King Subal of Gandhāra became the wife of Hastinapur's monarch Dhritarashtra and later the mother of the Kauravas, renowned in history as Gāndhāri. An Afghan writer Ahmed Ali Khan Kohzad writes that the eastern part of Afghanistan stretched from the Kabul River till its confluence with the Indus, a region which during the Vedic age was known as Gandhāra. There existed another city in the heart of Gandhāra, known as Nangarhar. Nangarhar today is a province of Afghanistan<sup>1</sup>, alternatively called Kafiristan and Nuristan.

There was no country by the name of Afghanistan before the 17th century. This came about during the reign of Ahmed Shah Abdali (1757-1773). The region was known as Ariana, Pakshia, Khorasan, Pashtunkhwah1 and Roh<sup>2</sup>. Heragapsenes, a Greek historian had about 2,500 years ago used the term Pakshia for this country. Other writers have mentioned the names of Ariana, Airya, Airyan, etc. Strabo, a prominent geographer of around 64 AD had called the region between India and Persia as well as this country called Arian as the land of the Aryans<sup>3</sup>.

Kabul and Gandhāra were the twin doors for any invasion of India. Gandhāra was the point of entry into India from the northwest<sup>4</sup>. At the time of the invasion by Alexander

of Greece and Macedonia, all of western and northwestern India was ruled by Indian monarchs. Chandragupta Maurya in 305 BC annexed Heart, Kabul and Makran after defeating the Greek viceroy Seleucus; all these regions were under the influence of Indian culture<sup>5</sup>. We also learn of the rivers of Kubha (Kabul), Swastu (Swat) and Gomati (Gomal) in the Vedas.

Afghanistan remained a part of India from Chandragupta Maurya till the time of Harshavardhana. Even after that, it continued to remain a part of India from time to time at various periods in history. For instance, it was a part of India from the period of the Delhi Sultanate till the Mughal era. In March 1739, Persian invader Nadir Shah attacked Delhi and defeated the then Mughal ruler Muhammad Shah, and captured portions of north India<sup>6</sup>.

About Afghanistan's prominent cities, Marco Polo in the 13th century wrote that Balkh was a large and grand city, but it was grander and more prosperous before that century<sup>7</sup>. The renowned Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsang too writes about Balkh, mentioning his visit to the Buddhist monasteries in Balkh in 630 AD. It was then a city whose circumference was about six and a half miles, with six muths (monasteries), of which the Navavihara as the biggest. Nurcroft, an Englishman in 1824 AD wrote that when passing through the ruins of Balkh, they found a bazar almost 600 kilometres in length, which is an actual tribute to the ancient grandeur of that city. Henry III's ambassador travelled to Samarkand from Balkh in 1403 AD. He met Timur, Samarkand's ruler, who then was blind and sat

“kush” in the name Hindu Kush is derived not from “kush” meaning slaughter, but from “kasheedan” which in Persian means dragging or pulling. The waters of the mountain are pulled to Kabul to irrigate it, and hence the name Hindu Kush

motionless in his throne. It is also said about Balkh that farming was done between the inner and outer boundaries of the city, with cotton seeds being sown and then reaped for harvest. The inner parts of the city were sparsely populated. The Amu Darya River served as the natural boundary between the region and the Persian and Turkish speaking kingdoms. The inhabitants of the Chagtai clan lived to the south and west of the Amu Darya and spoke Persian. The language of the Amu Darya Valley during now is entirely Turkish.

Afghanistan in the 15th century was in the hands of Timur's son Rukh. The southern part of the Hindu Kush was known as a little India in those days. 14th century traveler Ibn Batuta (1304-1368) described the etymology of the term Hindu Kush as “the killer of Hindus”. According to Batuta, innumerable Hindu men and women, enslaved after Islamic raids on India were forcibly transported to Afghanistan. On the way, owing to the sheer cold and snowy weather of these mountains, they died in large numbers, giving this mountain range its infamy as the killer of Hindus. But Meharchand Varma, who was the Deputy Secretary in the India and Afghanistan Department of the council for International Peace and Unity, has a different take on this. Varma is quoted in Nasira Sharma's book *Afghanistan Bujkashi ka Maidan*

as saying that “kush” in the name Hindu Kush is derived not from “kush” meaning slaughter, but from “kasheedan” which in Persian means dragging or pulling. The waters of the mountain are pulled to Kabul to irrigate it, and hence the name Hindu Kush, says Varma. Meharchand Varma's account does point to the presence of Hindu dharma in Afghanistan.

There is a place by the name of Pagman near Kabul, which in earlier times was known as Bhagwan or Bhagiman. Sheekardara was earlier called Shankardara. There is a lake by the name of Manasarovar atop the mountains, to the north of which a place by the name of Kishan Dev exists even today.

Near Jatashankar in Bamiyan in Afghanistan is located a place by the name of Pachshiror Panchshir, which is read as Panj+Shir in Persian, meaning five lions, which is a valley. The Panjshir Valley bespeaks of the five Pandavas of the Mahabharata Era, who lived here for a while. There is a Golan province in the country, in which is situated a place by the name of Shiv Bala. This is spread out in the form of a cave where huge natural stone pillars have been formed over time and a Shiva Linga stands amidst them. In another era, this was a temple dedicated to the Mother Goddess by the name of Kali kalat Wali.

According to Meharchand, an Afghan magazine Janado

mentions a mountain by the name of Āsāmāi, which is 5,000 years old. It is a temple dedicated to the mother of hope and aspirations (āśā). The place is today known by the name of Chahaldukhtar.

The Harirudra River, now called the Heart River flows from Afghanistan towards Turkmenistan. Its ancient name was in honour of King

Harishchandra, an ancestor of Rama. Harishchandra was famed for his total and uncompromising adherence to truth, and was known as satyavādī (a man of truth).

Excavations in Afghanistan's Gardez have yielded an icon of Ganesha that dates back to the 5th century, which has been kept in the custody of the Pir Ratan Nath dargah in Kabul. This icon

is associated with Khingal, a ruler of the Hepthalite dynasty.

When one casts a look at the period of reign of Hindu Brahmin rulers like Samand (Samant), Kamalu (Kamalvardhan), Bhima, Jayapala, etc., one cannot help reach the conclusion that Hinduism held sway in Afghanistan in the ancient period in much the same way it did in India. ■

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## Jirga

A jirga (occasionally jarga or jargah; Pashto) is a traditional assembly of leaders that make decisions by consensus and according to the teachings of Pashtunwali. It predates modern-day written or fixed-laws and is conducted to settle disputes among the Pashtun people but to a lesser extent among other nearby groups that have been influenced by Pashtuns (historically known as Afghans). Its primary purpose has been to prevent tribal war. Most jirgas are conducted in Afghanistan but also among the Pashtun tribes in neighboring Pakistan, especially in Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK). In 2017, the Pakistani government was aiming to integrate jirgas into the formal justice system.

Jirga is a term of Mongolian origin, historically referring to a large assembly of men forming a very broad circle, initially intended for laying siege around games or animals to be hunted for sport or for food. Probably, the Pashtun elders were also sitting initially in a circular formation when debating and hearing a given dispute. ■





Isht Deo Sankrityaayan

Entire Gandhāra Mahajanapad was enlightened by the teachings of Guru Gorakhnath upto the 18th Century CE. His *padas* [verses] were echoed by a number of his followers, known as Jogis, alongwith the soothing and melodious music of the Sarangi. Despite being in distressful situation Jogis are still spreading their Guru's message in this region

# Disciples of Gorakhnath in Gandhāra

It can be a surprising fact for us that calling someone JAT can be taken to be a form of harassment, but the Jogis in Afghanistan are called Jat there and it is taken to be a pejorative. Now they are being mentioned as Gypsies. The main problem they are facing is of the issuance of *Tazkira* [an identification document, which is needed for all purposes in Afghanistan].<sup>1</sup> I am not surprised that the term Gypsy is being used for some people who are actually of Indian origin, because it is a well-known fact now that the people who fled from our north-western frontiers in times of insurgencies and kept living a wandering life like nomads in the countries of Europe are now identified as Gypsies and Romas. They are now accursed to live a marginal life, unable as they were in settling in any alien land. When I searched for details of what *Tazkira* is and why it is not being issued to Jogis in Afghanistan, I came across a number of new facts.

## Jogis and Political Promises

The first of these was that a few political leaders made promises of considering the issuance of *Tazkira* to the Jogis. This promise was perhaps made in 2011 but still remains unfulfilled. It was not the first time

such a promise had been made, nor the last. Jogis in Afghanistan are perhaps habituated to these kinds of promises that have been made to them many times before. They still continue to be hopeful, though disappointedly, that they will be successful in obtaining the *Tazkira* one day along with many other facilities which other bona fide Afghan citizens are entitled to. There is a reason for this tendency.

This is pointed out in a research article by Vaibhav Jain, *Ethnological and Legal Study of Jogis*. In it, Jain says, "The Jogi peoples have been used just as a vote bank but have not been given anything except fake promises and fake assurances."<sup>2</sup>

In the same article Jain brings out the fact that Jogi people don't have any citizenship document granted to them but have the right to vote in elections [Zahir, 2012].<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, he also points out that in 80 per cent of Jogi households, no one has any election ID cards, or is even registered and has any ID [Samuel Hall Consulting, 2011].<sup>4</sup> While voting rights for Jogis is useful mainly for politicians, it does not enable Jogi children to be admitted in schools. If they somehow manage to get admission, they children are not treated as equals even by their mates.

Fake promises and fake assurances are perhaps the biggest flaw of a democracy. Another drawback is corruption. As a UNHCR Report states, Abdulhadi Hairan, an eminent author and analyst indicated that he had to bribe a population registration employee and 'use' his contacts in order to obtain a *tazkira* in February 2009 in Kunduz province, district Qilae-Zal (*Huffington Post*, 15 April, 2010). If this is the case of a noted author, we can easily imagine what the condition of a normal wanderer who is taken to be a refugee would be. The same report reveals further, "Hairan also reports that 'aggressive behaviour' and 'bad language' were used by an employee of the population registration office towards an applicant."<sup>5</sup>

### There still is Hope

The problems of political promises and corruption, though, aren't confined to Afghanistan alone. It is now a global phenomenon, particularly in Third World countries. As corroboration of this fact, a report on the Institute for War and Peace Reporting's website informs us, "Hamayoon Mohtat, the newly appointed national Population Registration Director, told IWPR that he had asked the president to issue a decree that would see *Tazkira* distributed to all Jogis nationwide."<sup>6</sup> No one knows though that when this wait will come to an end.

The basic problem is actually quite different. It is something else than the political promises and even official corruption. It is actually related to the misconceptions about the Jogi community and its roots lie in modern social beliefs and some historical slips. Assuming Jogis to be Gypsies is because of a gap in some threads in the history of Afghanistan. Before digging through the past though, it would be better to have a glance at the present social scenario for Jogis in Afghanistan. The prestigious *Afghandaily Outlook Afghanistan* reports, "Afghan society is male-dominated. Men are responsible for working, earning livelihoods and meeting all expenses while women are normally not allowed to come out of their homes. Unlike this, women of the Jogi work and are the bread-winners of their families. They work as palm-readers or are involved in begging. A Jogi woman, in spite of being pregnant, holds her child and a bag and has to work from dawn to dusk. For delivery of their babies, women do not go to maternity hospitals; delivery takes place in quite a natural way. Mother and child mortality rates are quite high among the Jogis. Jogi men generally do not work but are qualified in looking after horses kept for *Buz Kashi* (a traditional Afghan game), gaming partridges, quails, etc., hunting grey hounds and playing the *dambora* (a traditional musical instrument in Afghanistan). Jogis

are the most deprived section of Afghanistan."<sup>7</sup>

It shows that unlike conventional Afghan women, Jogi women are not confined within the walls of home. They do not even observe the practice of the veil much, like other women in Afghan society do. For their livelihood, they work as palm readers or do begging while the menfolk are good at playing the *dambora* along with doing other jobs. Here, in India, we find Jogi women looking after their family fields while Jogi men play the *sarangi* and beg for alms. This is true of Muslim Jogis. Hindu Jogis, though, are mostly not family-men like Muslims. Perhaps this is the reason that Briggs terms the Muslim Jogi "rascally beggars".<sup>8</sup> The *dambora* instrument is just like the *sarangi* or *iktara* which is used by Jogis. Jogis in India and Pakistan play the *sarangi* and *iktara* and sing the songs of Bharthari (Bhartrihari), Puran Bhagat and many others, which are related to Gorakhnath. The same story talks of a particular person Rangin, who is an expert in playing the *dambora*. The article says, "He participated in an All-Afghanistan Dambora contest held in the Shibarghan province of Afghanistan and was awarded the first position. After some time, the same kind of contest was organized in Uzbekistan. Five contestants including Rangin were invited from Afghanistan. Because of not having a *Tazkira*, Rangin could not get a passport."<sup>9</sup>

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### Misconceptions

The actual reason behind this misery of Jogis is a misconception about their native place. Some believe that Jogis migrated to

The 1st-century BCE Tilla Jogian  
temple complex

Courtesy: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tilla\\_Jogian#/media/File:Hindu\\_Temple\\_at\\_Tilla\\_Gogian.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tilla_Jogian#/media/File:Hindu_Temple_at_Tilla_Gogian.jpg)

Afghanistan from Tajikistan, some are of the view that they came from Ajarbajjan and others think that the Jogis are natives of Bukhara.<sup>10</sup> Mostly, they are thought to have migrated some 100 to 250 years ago. It seems that due to their original place being a frontier area and also a war-ridden zone for a long time, the Jogis fled and could not settle themselves in alien lands. Government officials though say that there is no official and historical record of Jogis being native to this place, but there are still enough evidences of the connections of the ancient Gandhar region, which is now spread over two parts – one of which is in Pakistan and the other in Afghanistan, with the cult of Gorakhnath. After Bhagwan Shri Rama and Buddha, Guru Gorakhnath is the only figure who connects the entire Indian peninsula from the north-east to Gandhar and Tushardesh [now Afghanistan in the far west] and also from Tibet and Nepal to Sri Lanka. The Nath *panth*, which was established by Gorakhnath, is perhaps the only cult that includes ascetics [*sanyasis*] and householders and Hindus as well as Muslims within its ambit. All those who follow the cult of the Nath *panth* are called Jogis, no matter they are Hindus or Muslims.

In India, Jogis, though Shaivite Hindus, are thought to be above the confines of caste and religion and this is not a matter of disgrace to them. It comes, perhaps, from the system laid down for *sanyasis*, who are thought to be above



all the worldly *varna* and ritual systems. In Afghanistan though, other children dislike the children of Jogis and do not allow them to take part in games they play in schools or playgrounds. This is because it is believed that Jogis do not possess any status in Afghan society as they do not belong to any religion and therefore are not respected.<sup>11</sup>

When we look at the names of Jogis [in Afghanistan] included in different reports about them, we find most of them having names similar to Muslims. Not only this, they are also categorised under the Sunni sect of Muslims as an ethnic group.<sup>12</sup> Despite this, they are regarded as not belonging to any religion. Why is this so? Reports are silent about this. They speak about their social and legal status, profession and also their humble and peaceful nature, but are silent about their cult or worship rituals. When we look deeper into their professions, we find that they do palm reading, begging, horse taming, *dambora* playing

and even snake charming, i.e., the same things that Jogis do in India, Nepal or Pakistan.

### The Jat Origin of Jogis

To learn about the reality of the situation we would have to look back into the past. H.A. Rose, describing the Jogis, says, “Legends connect the Gorkhatri at Peshawar with Gorakh, and it was once a Jogi haunt as both Babur and Abu’l-Fazl testify. The chief saint of the Jogis in the north-west is Pir Ratn Nath of Peshawar, in which district as well as throughout Kabul and Khorasan, a *kabit* is said to be current which describes his power.”<sup>13</sup> He further states, “The disciples of Pir Ratn Nath do not wear the *mundra*, and to account for this tradition says that once when Jogis of the 12 orders had assembled at Tilla [Tilla Jogian is now in Punjab province of Pakistan] for a *tukra* observance, Ratn Nath, who had no earrings, was only assigned a half share. He protested that a Jogi who had

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earrings in his heart need wear none in his ears, and he opened his heart to exhibit the *mundra* in his heart! So his disciples are exempt from the usual rule of the sect. They appear to belong to the Darya-nathi *panth* but the branch of Pir Ratn Nath's dera at Miani in Shahpur is held by *Bairag-ke-Jogis*.”<sup>14</sup>

As we know, as a country Afghanistan came into existence in 19th century. Earlier, in ancient era, this land was known as Gandhar Mahajanapad of Bharatvarsha and Tushardesha. Currently, Peshawar is in Pakistan and on the frontiers of Afghanistan. As the main seat of Darya-nathi panth of Gorakhnathis or Jogis is situated at this very place, this region would be mostly influenced by them. This influence can still be traced in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Perhaps these Jogis don't wear *kundals* or *mundras*, as Kanphatas do, and therefore reporters or researchers who aren't aware about this sect's unique religious identifications or traditions would also not be able to mark the same as a separate identity. As we see, many ethnic groups like Jogis, Jalalis, Pikrag, Sheikh Mohammadi and Shadibazs are categorized under Jats, which are also pronounced as Jots, we should see what other texts say about their Jat origin.<sup>15</sup> We have again authentic research work of H.A. Rose, in which he not only tells about Jats but also Mohammedan sect of Jogis. “Bachhowalia is a group of Muhammadan Jogis who claim descent from one Gajjan Jat and yet have more than one Hindu got (Pandhi, Chahil, Gil, Sindhu and Rathors). Like Hindus they marry outside the got (*gotra*).”<sup>16</sup> Further he tells about their job, “They are

Bachhowalia is a group of Muhammadan Jogis who claim descent from one Gajjan Jat and yet have more than one Hindu got (Pandhi, Chahil, Gil, Sindhu and Rathors). Like Hindus they marry outside the got (*gotra*)

chroniclers or panegyrist and live on alms, carrying a *jholi* (wallet) and a turban composed of two *dupattas*, each of a different colour, as their distinctive costume.”<sup>17</sup>

### How Proselytisation make People Stray

Rose also narrates the story that how conversion veers people away from their native place and the cultural roots. As in the case of Bachhowalias, he says, “Originally Hindus, they adopted Islam and took to begging, their name being doubtless derived from H. *Bichha*, ‘alms.’ But they have of course, a tale to explain their name and say that their forebearers grazed a *kumhar's* (potter) *bachha*—a story inconsistent with the fact that they are not of one and same got, but which doubtless alludes to their ancient worship of the earth-god.”<sup>18</sup> As a mantra bearing rules for Jogis states, it is necessary for Jogis to use *miṭṭī kā āsan*, *miṭṭī kā bāsan*, *miṭṭī kā sirhānā*, *miṭṭī kā bānā* (The earthen āsan (carpet), the earthen pitcher, the earthen pillow and the earthen woof).<sup>19</sup> In practice, they have stuck to these things and their native traditions even after conversion. It seems that this story of the *kumhar* and his *bachha* would have been told to them by those who made them convert by employing threat or greed. When, those who converted these Jogis, would have seen them still attached to their kins and relatives, they would

have forced them to be confined in their new group of converts. For this, they also handed them a narrative. This narrative, passed through generations, made them falsely believe that they were really different from their kins and relatives.

The Jogis who endured through proselytization could not sustain their actual past for a long period. Particularly in the case of nomadic life, this is much tougher. So it is also possible that the Jogis, now in Afghanistan, have lost the memory of their origins. This is so because they have gone through very hard times during the last three to four centuries. Particularly, after delimitation of Afghanistan as a separate country during British rule, the country itself underwent crises, as it faced a series of misfortunes like two World Wars, the Cold War and later Talibani fanaticism. Under such circumstances, the Jogis did not have even any way to keep themselves connected with the mainland of their culture; this zone remained war-ridden for a long time. Protecting their lives from different invasions and running the gauntlets of the followers of other religions, Jogis did not have any choice except fleeing. They fled to wherever they found a chance but ultimately felt helpless in connecting with their new lands and so came back to their homeland whenever and howsoever they could get a chance. This displacement too can often be a reason that they

became unaware of their past but not of their talents and the traditions their ancestors had followed. Even now, conversion of Jogis continues in Pakistan. Talking about the Jogis in the Sindh province of Pakistan, Yoginder Sikand quotes an elderly Jogi from Tando Alla Yar, "The Jogis are Naths, traditionally followers of Shiva, who is nearly always depicted with snakes," the man says. Most Naths in Sindh are Hindus. Some have become Muslim but still enjoy cordial relations with other Naths. They are a nomadic people, and travel for days looking for snakes and curing cases of snake bite."<sup>20</sup>

The reality of nomadic life is true the Jogis of Afghanistan as well and they too are leading a marginal life. In Pakistan too, Jogis are treated as *dalits*. Sikand quotes his friend Khurshid Khaimkani, a noted writer and social activist, who says, "By and large, the so-called upper caste Hindus in Sindh, like many Muslims, are simply not concerned about the *Dalits*."<sup>21</sup>

Jogis too are divided into many sub-castes and do not like to sit and eat with their kin of lower castes. This has made them a divided lot despite being largest minority group<sup>22</sup> in the Sindh province of Pakistan. As a result, they cannot work together for their own well-being. It is perhaps this lack of unity among Hindus that led to many of their

shrines perishing in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

### Birthplace of Gorakhnath

Otherwise, at a time the entire Gandhar region was enlightened and deeply influenced by the teachings of Guru Gorakhnath and his successors. There were many seats of this sect in this region and one of these was Tilla Jogian in the Punjab province of present-day Pakistan. Even Peshawar, bordering Afghanistan, is counted among one of the legendary birthplaces of Gorakhnath. According to a legend, as cited by Crooks and Grierson, Gorakhnath was born in Peshawar city of Punjab (now Pakistan) in the *Satyug*, at Gorakhpur (Uttar Pradesh) in the *Treta Yuga*, at Hurmuj near Dwarka (Gujarat) in the *Dwapar Yuga* and at Gorakmarhi of Kathiyawad (Gujrat) in *Kalikal (Kali Yuga)*.<sup>23</sup> According to what a *mahant* of Gorakhpur told Nagendra Nath Upadhyaya, Gorakhnath had come there (Gorakhpur)

from Jhelum (near Taxila, now in Pakistan, earlier it was a part of Gandhara).<sup>24</sup> According to the yogis of Nasik, Gorakhnath first came to Punjab and then to Nasik from Nepal. In the Nepali tradition too, it is clear that he had gone to Nepal from Punjab. Dr. Mohan Singh is of the opinion that Gorakhnath was born in a village named Gorakhpur, which falls in Rawalpindi district near Peshawar.<sup>25</sup> Dr. Rangeya Raghav too is of the same opinion, though he thinks that the village might be named as Gorakhpur only after his birth.<sup>26</sup> Citing a number of opinions from authentic sources Dr. Vedprakash Juneja concludes that most scholars point to the north-western region of India as the birthplace of Gorakhnath. We can therefore accept some village near Peshawar as his birthplace.<sup>27</sup>

As far as the time of Gorakhnath is concerned, there is a great difference of opinion among the scholars. His period is considered to be between



*Gorkhatri: S.M. Jaffar identified it with the place of Hindu pilgrimage where they performed the Sardukahr ritual, shaving off heads)*

*Courtesy: <https://hindulinebengal.wordpress.com/2010/08/06/gor-khatri-peshawar-ancient-gorakshnath-temple-and-place-of-pilgrimage-of-the-yogis-and-hindus-of-pakistan/>*

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7th to early 15th century CE by different scholars. Dr. Shahidulla, citing traditions of different sects and political and religious facts available in Nepal, opines that he was born between 7th to 9th Century CE. Mahapandit Rahul Sankrityaayan, examining a variety of Tibetan and Indian traditions and the language, fixed Gorakhnath's time as Gorakshapa at 845 CE. Whereas the Nagri Pracharini Sabha in its 1902 report opines that he lived around early 15th century CE.<sup>28</sup>

During all these times Peshawar was known as Purushpur, one of the main cities of the Gandhara Mahajanapad. The other main cities of Gandhara were Takṣaśilā (now spelled as Taxila and located in the Punjab province of Pakistan), Puṣkalāwatī (now Charsadda in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan), Udbhāṇḍepura (now Hund, in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan) and Kapiśā (now Bagram, 25 km north of Kabul). At one time, Gandhara was ruled from Kapisa. Kabul is even now the capital city of Afghanistan. At other times though, this mahajanapad was ruled from Takshashila.

Certainly, it was Early Middle Period (8th to 13th Century CE) when Guru Gorakhnath would have propagated his ideas of mysticism and yoga into the society. It is this very period when his philosophy took to its root into the entire Indian

soil. This is why many shrines in the form of caves and mutts are still found all over India in his name. Most of these shrines date back to 15th Century CE. It spread all over India, along with Gandhar as a thought and way of life influencing both Hindus and Muslims, till 18th Century CE. After Guru Gorakhnath a number of his learned disciples and ascetics tirelessly worked to spread his message to every strata of the society.

### Tilla Jogian, the Chief Seat

Tilla Jogian, considered to be one of the main seats of Nath Sampraday, is 73 kilometres far from Taxila. Briggs writes, "From a remote period all other centres of the Kanphatas in the Punjab have been under Tilla. At Gorakhpur, Yogis stated that Tilla is now the chief seat of the sect. The *pir* of Tilla is the head of all the Gorakhnathis."<sup>29</sup> It is this very place which is featured in the ballad of Hir-Ranjha. Many Mohemmadans like Ranjha came to this seat by self-motivation and asked to be initiated for their spiritual growth. As Briggs states, "Lakpnanndth, Laksmannath succeeded Gorakhnath at Tilla. This panth has two divisions, or schools, Natesri and Darya. The distinctive characteristics of these two are that the former reside on the hill at Tilla, while the latter live on the plains. Darya is also considered as a separate panth

having its origin at Tilla. The other sub-sect is known as Natesri in Amritsar, and as Darbari Tilla Bal Gondal in Hoshiarpur. This is the Heth, or Hethnath, panth of the original Gorakhnathis. To this division belong the Haith of the Ambala and Jhelum districts and Baljati of the Karnal. Ranjha belonged to Natesri."<sup>30</sup> Further, he makes a note through the legends, "There are many references to the fact that these Yogis had their ears split and wore great ear-rings. Of Ranjha it is recorded that his right ear-ring was of baked clay and his left one of unbaked clay."<sup>31</sup>

Here Ranjha did his penance, subjugated his passions and became a jogi of the Kunphatta sect. Even in Afghanistan itself, there are many folk tales of Muslims being initiated into the Nath *panth* by self-motivation, one of which is of Adam Khan, the main protagonist of the Pashtun love tale of Adam Khan and Durkhanai".

However, after Partition, circumstances turned over. Tilla Jogian now lies deserted and all the jogis here have fled. A travelogue by Salman Rashid, a fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, reveals the current situation. Rashid reports, "The undoing of the ancient monastery of Tilla Jogian came after the creation of Pakistan. Persecution forced the jogis to flee the new country leaving Tilla Jogian deserted. No longer did the tree-shaded peak resound with the drone of *mantras*, no longer did those who repudiated the world resort here. Tilla Jogian was no more the haunt of the great gurus of the Kunphatta sect of Jogis. The only visitors now are shepherds and woodcutters from the villages around its base. There

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are as well the occasional tourists from the cities.”<sup>32</sup> Further, he also narrates the trivialities of the people, “There is yet another kind of visitor, the one whose heart is filled only with malice and greed. He comes here to seek not nirvana of the spirit, but worldly treasures. Armed with crude digging tools he uproots temple floors, lays low entire buildings, and smashes ancient *samadhīs* in his search for non-existent buried treasure. The avarice of this kind of visitor to Tilla Jogian is only matched by his foolishness: how could the last resting place of one who gave up the world to lead the Jogi’s life contain treasure?”

Even after this acute type of fanaticism towards non-Mohemadan religions Jogis do exist in Pakistan and their mantras echo as well. It is in Sindh, Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces that some abodes of the Jogis still remain and both Hindu and Muslim Jogis pay their heartfelt reverence. As Zahid Rahman Jatt reports, “It was at that time that I saw a *marhi* of Girs (a sub-group of jogis) in Shahdadpur. Anthropologist Zulfiqar Ali Kalhoro describes a *marhi* as ‘the centre or a monastery of the Nath’s’.”<sup>33</sup> In Afghanistan, the population of Jogis is recorded over one lakh,

but in Pakistan it is not separately recorded. They exist though, in the entire ancient region of Gandhara and other parts too. They still chant and echo the *mantras* of Guru Gorakhnath. Society still needs their services for its well-being, among which both Hindus and Muslims are included. Jogis in Afghanistan who are known to be Jats or Gypsies there, are still sincerely influenced by the teachings of Guru Gorakhnath and this influence can be traced from the fact that they have not been found involved in any kind of crime till date. In prison none can find a single Jogi man or woman.<sup>34</sup> ■

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# The Ancient Phonetic Connect between Dialectical Pashto and Sanskrit

Gandhāra as the frontier of Bharatavarsh didn't only played the key role of its sentinel, but also had been a catalyst in cultural connect, of which the greatest sign can be marked in the relationship between Sanskrit and Pashto

*In this endeavor our attempt is to examine, analyses and validate the ancient linguistic connect and its continuity that is still preserved in some communities of India and Afghanistan.*

*This research paper begins with the study of variations in the pronunciation of phoneme 'بن' in Pashto language which is named as - نې بن [ɣ] (K) in Kandahari [Abdali] dialect of Pashto language and in many other dialects of Pashto language like [x] in Pashto dialects of (ɣ) central Afghanistan [Galji] and (N) [xin] /ʌ in Nangrahari [Yousafzai] dialect- and has IPA phonetic symbol of [ɣ] (K) / [ç] (S) / [x](N). The phonetic symbol 'ɣ' for the alphabet 'بن' is a "voiceless retroflex fricative". A similar alphabet with the same phonetic properties is earliest found in Old Sanskrit grammar texts dating far back than the history of Pashto language with the same place of articulation mentioned by one of the oldest Grammarian Pāṇini in his work 'Varṇocāraṇa Śikṣā' (A Sanskrit text on the phonology/ articulation of Sanskrit alphabet). The Laghusiddhānta-kaumudī text by Varadarājācārya mentions a verse "Ṛturaṣāṇām mūrdhā"<sup>1</sup> which*

*means that the Sanskrit alphabet - (ऋ ṛ), (ॠ ṛḥ), (ट t), (ठ tʰ), (ड d), (ढ dʰ), (ण ṇ), (र r) and (श् ṣ) is pronounced from above the palate (Mūrdhā). Our conjecture here is that the Pashto 'بن' has its phonetic origins in the Sanskrit alphabet श्. One of the primary task here is to compare the linguistic properties, place of articulation and manner of articulation of Pashto 'بن' and Sanskrit (श् ṣ) and to locate them within the accepted modern linguistics regarding the phonetic symbol 'ɣ' as 'voiceless retroflex fricative' to show origin of Pashto 'بن' (ɣ) from Sanskrit श् (ɣ) and to study the regional phonetic variations of the pronunciation within Pashto dialect and Sanskrit.*

## The place of the phoneme in Pashto language -

Afghanistan has two official and national languages, one is 'Pashto' and the second is 'Dari' (Farsi Dari-Persian), but in Afghanistan Pashtuns are in majority as per the population, a majority of them speak in Pashto language. This language is spoken in Pashtunkhwa, Kashmir and in many other regions of the world.<sup>2</sup>

Pashto and Sanskrit are sister



languages and have a lot of similarity, Like -

- 1 Both the languages have retroflex phoneme.
- 2 Both the languages have the differences in words as per the gender.
- 3 Both the languages have lots of similarities on grammatical points like transitive and intransitive verbs.
- 4 Many words or nouns in Pashto have direct similarities with Sanskrit lexicons.
- 5 Idioms and Sayings are also there in Pashto as well as Sanskrit.
- 6 In the same way the cultural connotations in the language.

These all points can draw a stream of researches into these issues differently. We are here discussing on a phoneme in Phonology that is [ʃ]. Pashto language has 36 letters, of which 7 are vowels and the rest are consonants. [ʃ] in Pashto alphabet is the 20th letter and has different pronunciation in different dialects, but the pronunciation, manner and place of articulation of this letter is exactly the same in Kandahari dialect as has been prescribed in Sanskrit and as well as in Avestān. Like *ماښم* (*maṣyā*) meaning 'husband' and *ډابښ* (*Ṣātā*) meaning 'happy'. This phoneme is also present in other languages in Afghanistan which has its roots in the branches of Indo-European languages, like in some mountainous languages, which are spoken by a very small community of people residing in the mountains in the east or in the northeast regions of Afghanistan.

- 1- Shīghnī language = ruṣṭ (to fly)
- 2- Sanglīčī language = goṣa (in all the four corners)

Pashto language has 36 letters, of which 7 are vowels and the rest are consonants. [ʃ] in Pashto alphabet is the 20th letter and has different pronunciation in different dialects, but the pronunciation, manner and place of articulation of this letter is exactly the same in Kandahari dialect as has been prescribed in Sanskrit and as well as in Avestān

- 3- Wāxī language = yārḱṣ (activity)
- 4- Aṣkāṣīmī language = zaṣṭ (bad omen)
- 5- Munzi language = wīṣ (rope)
- 6- Nūrastānī language = ṣaṣṭa (soft)<sup>3</sup>

And also in Russian and in Ukrainian language, like the word 'što' (meaning 'what' in Russian as well as in Ukrainian). The place of articulation of the phoneme is articulated in the palate and the tongue will be folded towards the palate producing the friction making it a fricative and does not contain voice, that is, it is voiceless.

In Pashto there are six phonemes in which the tongue turns towards the palate, like -

- 1- ټ = ṭ, koṭa (meaning castle in Pashto as well as Sanskrit)
- 2- ډ = ḍ, ḍār (fear)
- 3- ړ = ṛ, ṛund (blind)
- 4- ښ = ṇ, raṇa (light)
- 5- څ = ṣ, koṣ (bent, hyena)
- 6- ښ = ṣ, ūṣ (camel)

In Pashto the phoneme ښ (*ṣ*) is used in the start, middle or in the end of the word, like -

- 1- Nouns = in the beginning of the noun -  
ex- ṣār (city), ṣāīstā (beautiful), ṣāx (branch)
- 2 - In the middle -  
ex- wāṣṭa (grass), pṣa (foot), bālṣ (pillow)
- 3 - In the end -  
ex- ghāṣ (teeth), laṣ (dead body), brīṣ (brightness)

In verbs as well this phoneme is used -

ex- kṣṭal = to write, muṣṭal = to massage, čṣṭal = to drink

References made to the consonant ष (ṣ) in Sanskrit Linguistics:

Panini places eight points of the origin of voice in the human body -

- 1-Urah (उरः) - Chest
- 2-Kaṇṭhaḥ (कण्ठः) - Gutter
- 3-Śīraḥ (शिरः) - Head
- 4-Jihvāmūlam (जिह्वामूलम्) - Tongue root
- 5-Dantāḥ (दन्ताः) - Teeth
- 6-Nāsikā (नासिका) - Nose
- 7- Oṣṭhau (ओष्ठौ) - Lips
- 8- Tālu (तालु) - Palate

As per the Pāṇinīya Śikṣā -

“Aṣṭhau sthānāni varṇānāmuraḥ kaṇṭhaḥ Śīrastathā.

Jihvāmūlam ca dantāśca nāsikoṣṭhau ca tālu ca.”<sup>4</sup>

There are eight places of articulation heart, throat, head, tongue root, teeth, nasal cavity, lips and palate.

According to Sanskrit grammar there are three categories of consonants-

**Sparśa (स्पर्श) - Plosive consonants**

**Antaḥstha (अन्तःस्थ) -**

**Intermittent consonants**

**Uṣma (उष्म) - Warm consonants**

The first mention of the consonant is found in the *Varṇoccāraṇa Śikṣā* text by Pāṇini through the verse

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"*R̥turaṣā mūrdhanyāḥ*"<sup>5</sup> which means that the Sanskrit alphabet - (ऋ ṛ), (ॠ ṝ), (ट t), (ठ t<sup>h</sup>), (ड d), (ढ d<sup>h</sup>), (ण ṇ), (र r) and (ष ṣ) is to be pronounced from above the palate (मूर्धा). Varadarājācārya in his text "*Laghusiddhānta Kaumudī*"<sup>6</sup> mentioned that in the pronunciation of श (IPA- ʃ, IAST- ś), ष (IPA- ṣ, IAST- ṣ), स (IPA- s, IAST- s) and ल (IPA- l, IAST- l) warm air comes out of the mouth and classified them under the category of "**warm consonants**" through a sutra "शल उष्माण", Since warm air comes out of the mouth due to the friction that takes place in the oral cavity to pronounce these consonants. In the Vedic sound, consonants श (IPA- ʃ, IAST- ś), ष (IPA- ṣ, IAST- ṣ), स (IPA- s, IAST- s) and ह (IPA- h, IAST- h) have been described as "अघोष सघर्षी" that is "**Voiceless fricative**". But Kapil dev Dwivedi has kept ह (IPA-h, IAST-h) under the category of "घोष ऊष्म" (**voice warm consonants**) [Kapil dev dwivedi, 2012, p. 148]. The etymology text "**Amarakosh**" gives the etymology of "मूर्धा" or the "**Cerebrum**" as "मुह्यति अस्मिन् आहते इति मूर्धा"<sup>7</sup>, that is, मूर्धा or the "**Cerebrum**" is the place in the oral cavity from where a consonant is specially articulated when it is influenced by the tongue. Such consonant is called "मूर्धन्य व्यंजन" or "**Retroflex consonant**". Modern linguistics defines "**Retroflex consonants**" as the one which can be articulated from between the

"**alveolar ridge**" and the "**hard palate**". Bhimsen Shastri in his commentary on "Laghusiddhant Kaumudī"<sup>8</sup> has located the 'murdha' ("मूर्धा") on the roof of the oral cavity behind palate the place of soft skin. It has been termed as "**Cerebrum**". Monnier Williams defined it as the roof or the top of the palate. The Sanskrit consonant "ष" (IPA phonetic symbol ṣ) is pronounced in many of the texts of Sanskrit as **Guttural consonant** "ख" (IPA-k<sup>h</sup>, Transliteration-kha), references to this is found in an old Sanskrit text "*Laghumādhyandinīyā śikṣā*" which is a Śikṣā text. Vedic Sanskrit requisites the knowledge of six auxiliary disciplines of Vedic Sanskrit language to be comprehended first in order to understand the Vedic Sanskrit language, they are collectively called "*Vedāṅga*" (**Sanskrit: वेदाङ्ग, Vedāṅga, "limbs of the Veda"**) and they are:

1. (śikṣā): phonetics, phonology, pronunciation.
2. (chandas): prosody.
3. (vyākaraṇa): grammar and linguistic analysis.
4. (nirukta): etymology
5. (kalpa): ritual instructions
6. (jyotiṣa): Auspicious time for rituals, astrology, and astronomy.

śikṣā, is one of the *vedāṅgas* that primarily deals with phonetics including the place and manner of articulation, of which *laghumādhyandinīyā śikṣā* and *keśavī śikṣā* text is a type of śikṣā text. The *laghumādhyandinīyā śikṣā* text dictates of replacing

the consonant ष (IPA- ṣ, IAST- ṣ) with ख (IPA- k<sup>h</sup>, IAST- Kh) as an instruction-

"*śakārasya khakārah syāṭṭukayoge tu no bhavetiṣe lakṣhyaṃ kṛiṣṇa'ukṣhā samudrah pratyudāhritih.*" (**Laghumādhyandinīyā śikṣā, verse 1-2, śikṣā saṅgrahḥ, p.93**)

Another śikṣā text, *keśavi śikṣā* also reiterates the same point of the replacement of the same consonants during the recitation-

"*śaḥ khaṣṭumṛte ca*" "*padāntmadhye śkārasya khakāroccārah syāhavarg vinā chandasi mādhyandanīye*" (**keśavi śikṣā, sūtra.3, śikṣā saṅgrahḥ, p.117**)

**Modernlinguisticson "Voiceless Retroflex Fricative".**

The Modern linguistics defines the sound 'ṣ' as **Voiceless Retroflex fricative**. The IPA 'ṣ' letter is formed by adding a rightward-pointing hook to the bottom of the 'ess' which is used for the corresponding alveolar consonant. The Place of articulation is **Retroflex** which means it is articulated between the **alveolar ridge** and the **hard palate** with a change in the shape of the tongue, the tongue may be flat, concave or curled shape. The word **Retroflex** is **latin** derived that means '**bent back**' since it is articulated with the tongue tip curled up that is **subapical** articulation, keepig in mind the reservation in the pronunciation of the consonant we may devise an another additional term '**Postaleveolar Unpalatalized Consonant**' which best defines and categorises the consonant, that is, the consonant is articulated with the tongue nearly touching

The Modern linguistics defines the sound 'ṣ' as Voiceless Retroflex fricative. The IPA 'ṣ' letter is formed by adding a rightward-pointing hook to the bottom of the 'ess' which is used for the corresponding alveolar consonant

the back part of the *aleveolar ridge* and not the *hard palate*, since generally the *palatalized consonants* are articulated when the tongue touches the *hard palate* that is why it is *Unpalatalized*. It is the narrow touch of the edge of the tongue with the *place of articulation* that describes the *manner of articulation*,

since the air is channeled to flow through the narrow pass of the curled retroflex tongue *sulcalizing* the flow of air to the *place of articulation* ending up articulating the consonant and this is the reason why the phonation of the consonant is *voiceless*, that is, the consonant is not produced through the

vibration of the *vocal cords* but with the *sulcalization* of the air at the *place of articulation* and the sound originates from the friction of the air with the place and manner of articulation that produces the sound of the consonant and hence the consonant is classified as *fricative*. ■

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8. 2014, p.22

### Pashto Folktales

#### Respect Follows Service

There was once a poor farmer who found it a great struggle to get ahead in the world. Though the A dervish was once sitting alone, meditating in a patch of desert. A ruler passed by. The dervish, being free from the cares of this world, neither lifted his head nor paid any attention. The ruler, with the violent pride of power, was furious and said: "These dervishes in their patched cloaks are no better than animals!"

His minister scolded the dervish and said: "The great ruler of all the world passed by and you did not stand and bow: why were you so rude?"

The dervish replied: "Tell your king to expect those people to bow who hope for some reward from him. Tell him that rulers are there to protect their people. The people were not created just to obey rulers. The ruler is the watchman of the poor, though he has greater wealth and glory. The sheep are not made for the shepherd, rather the shepherd is there to serve the sheep. Look around you: today you see one man carefree and successful, the other struggling sore-hearted to survive. Wait a day or two, and see how the earth devours the brain once troubled with so many foolish thoughts! When the irresistible decrees of Fate are issued, neither king nor slave remain. Open up the tomb and search these dusty bones: can you tell which was the rich man or which was the pauper?"

The ruler was struck by the words of the dervish. He said: "Ask me a favor!"

The dervish replied: "I would ask you to never disturb me again."

The king begged: "Give me a word of advice!"

The dervish replied: "Now that wealth is in your hands, realize before it is too late, that this wealth and this power pass from hand to hand." ■

Courtesy: <https://www.afghan-web.com/culture/stories/>



Dr. Mohd. Akhlaque Azad

Today's Afghanistan, which in the ancient age was mostly Gandhāra and Tushardesha, was once one of the prominent centres of Hinduism and Buddhism. It is today under the rule of Islam. Along with political power, the process of religious and cultural change had begun quite before its advent. This article is an attempt to understand this change in its historical context

# Advent of Islam in Gandhāra

Before the arrival of Islam, today's Afghanistan was known as Ariana, Pakhtiā, Khorasan, Pashtunkhwa, Roha and other names, which included Gandhāra, Kamboja, Kubhā, Varṇu, Suvāstu and other regions. This is described in the Mahabharata and other epics. The Zend Avesta composed by Zoroaster calls this region Ariana-Vejo or Arianum-Vejo. Zoroaster, the first prophet to establish a monotheistic religion lived in this region. The great poet of the 13th century Rumi too was born in Afghanistan. Gāndhārī, wife of Dhritarashtra, the father of the Kauravas, and Pāṇini, the great Sanskrit grammarian too belonged to this region.<sup>1</sup>

The Umayyad Caliphate began with the conquest of Balkh in 708-09 AD, i.e., today's Afghanistan. Some in Afghanistan rebelled against the new masters of Damascus, while some joined the army and in 749 AD enabled the rival Abbasid caliphs to capture power from the Umayyads. By the 9th century, Balkh had started becoming a centre of Islam. Muslim intellectuals, who arrived here before the army, had dedicated themselves to segregating the holy places of saints from their original identity and associating with an Islamic identity. Their attempt was to find a way to firmly assimilate

the Islamic Caliphate into the civilisation of thousands of years of antiquity. Only by knowing this can we understand how the Arab invaders adopted a strategy to establish their hold over Afghanistan, which could be economically feasible and also maintain political stability.

A scrutiny of the geographical context and sources available for the study of early Islamic rule in Afghanistan reveals that before the Arab invasions and their ascendancy over Afghanistan and Islamic rule, there are rather brief descriptions of this period in history. This description then sheds light on the amalgam of the religious ideas of Arab invaders with the local beliefs and traditions of Afghanistan. The Umayyad and later the Abbasid caliphates ruled parts of Afghanistan in the 8th and 9th centuries. This article pertains to the establishment of Umayyad rule in 709 AD, when Arab armies captured Balkh. This phase culminates with the Saffarid Dynasty of Sistan capturing Balkh in 870 AD and the deposal of the then Abbasid ruler. The descriptions of Herat and the western region, Kandahar and the south, Balkh (today's Mazar-e-Sharif), the north, Kabul and the eastern part of Afghanistan are available since ancient times.

Medieval Islamic scholars described the present-day Afghanistan

in different parts, dividing it into separate kingdoms. These were mainly two—Khorasan and Sistan. Khorasan was an eastern satrapy of the Persian Sassanid Empire. Balkh and Herat, which fall under today's Afghanistan, were the provinces where these satrapies were homed. Along with them, Nishapur in Iran and Marva in Turkmenistan (today known as Merv) were each oasis cities, and part of large districts which were known by the same name. Elton Daniel's monograph *Early Abbasid Khorasan* describes the conditions following the Abbasid upheaval. Daniel has penned the entire history of the revolt, narrating all the movements in this rebellion that happened after the assassination of Abu Muslim Al Khorasani in 755 AD. Documents translated from Bactrian and Arabic into English by historians Prof. Nicholas Sims-Williams and Prof. Geoffrey Khan are important sources to understand the effects of Umayyad rule over Afghanistan. Among standard sources are included Arabic political and geopolitical factors, which have been cited in this article with the references of Ibn Al Faqih Al Hamdani (903 AD), Ibn Khurdbi (911AD), Qudama Ibn Zafar (922AD), Al Tabari (923 AD) and Yaqut Al Rumi (1229 AD).

*Fazail-e-Balkh*, a local history of the region of Balkh written by Shaikh Al Islam Al Vaz towards the end of the 12th century describes the incidence of large-scale religious conversion under Abbasid Caliphate. Abdul Rehman Fami's incomplete historical account of Herat in the 12th century is one local source that enhances our knowledge of the Umayyad and the early

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Abbasid Afghanistan.<sup>2</sup>

Sistan is the next region of the medieval period after Khorasan where many of the present Persian and Afghan towns were located. Ghazna of Afghanistan (now known as Ghazni), Zaranj, Bast, Kandahar, Kabul, Kabulistan and Zabulistan (the territory between Ghazna and Kabul) were the towns that fell under this region. In medieval sources, Kandahar is referred as Al Rukhkhaj and Zamindavar.<sup>3</sup> Zaranj had already become an Umayyad base in 652-653 AD and it was from here that the Arabs launched their invasions into the east. Local history by the name of *Tarikh-e-Sistan*, which is used chiefly for the study of the Safavid Dynasty, provides an interesting account of the early Islamic period in Sistan. C.E. Bosworth's essay *Sistan Under the Arabs* is a comprehensive description of this entire subject. Significantly, even fifty years after this was published, it remains the most authoritative work on this subject with no other work being able to approach its comprehensiveness.<sup>4</sup>

In order to understand the process of Islamization of Afghanistan, the study of its history should begin with the background and context of the Arab seizure over a large region of northern Afghanistan—Bactria—because of which it

fell under the Sassanids. Before it came under Arab Islamic influence, three of the four Afghan regions, i.e., Balkh, Herat and Sistan were Sassanid provinces. Balkh and Herat were associated with Khorasan, which was one of the four Sassanid provinces, and were governed from Merv by an 'Ispahbadh', a Sassanid general.

705 AD was the last time an Umayyad general controlled Balkh. The Ispahbadh of Balkh and some prominent local individuals allied themselves with Qutayba Ibn Muslim. The Ispahbadh was one of the local rulers in 708-9 AD trying to organise people against Qutayba and the local feudocracy in Tokharistan. There was also one Barmak, a leader of a Buddhist monastery at Navavihar, who it appears was one of the organisers of this revolt. His wife was abducted and imprisoned.<sup>5</sup>

Barmak was a powerful man during the time of Qutayba, the source of his power being Navavihar, which was not only a Buddhist religious centre, but also a place that generated substantial agricultural produce and revenue. Navavihar was spread over more than one-thirds of Balkh and covered a territory of more than 72 square miles. Sassanid narratives and myths abounded in Balkh. According to Sassanid sources, Zarathustra or Zoroaster

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died here and his patron Gushtasp had founded this town. The fire temple of Zoroaster in this region too indicates Sassanid cultural and religious influence. Like pre-Islamic Balkh, Tokharistan's population too was diverse. People there spoke and read many languages, including Bactrian, Syriac, Pali and Sanskrit.<sup>6</sup> The Bactrian language was linked to the Iranian linguistic group and used to be written in the Cyrillic script as well. This was a legacy of the victory of Alexander and the Seleucid empire, which took place between the 4th and 1st centuries BC.

When one reaches the southern part of Afghanistan, the presence of the Sassanid Empire is diminished. Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Hiuen Tsang travelled to Balkh in 630 AD and described the two huge statues of the Bamyān Buddhas, which were built probably in the 6th or 7th century. It appears ancient Bamyān was ruled by a dynasty which was possibly of Hephthalite origin, but definitely was under the western Turkic kingdom known as Yabghu. The dynasty continued to rule in the first quarter of the 8th century, when the spread of Buddhism was in full bloom.

Towards the west of Herat in the Kaaba-e-Zarathustra Harev near ancient Persepolis in Iran are stone relics among which Sassanid ruler Shapur I's edicts are listed. The name

“Hr'y” has been mentioned in the Pahlavi catalogue of the regional capitals of the empire. Sistan was a part of the territory ruled by the Sassanids, an area that was situated in the south of the Hindu Kush in Afghanistan (near Zaranj and Nimruz) and in southwestern Iran (Zahidan). This was a shallow basin along which civilisations clustered around regions on the coast of the Helmand river. Sistan emerged out of central Persian Sakastan, which is mentioned in another edict of Sassanid ruler Shapur I at Naqsh-e-Rustom, an ancient necropolis near Persepolis. When the Muslim Umayyid armies made Zaranj their base in 653-53 AD, the Parsi faith of Zoroaster was well established, marked by the presence of chieftains Mobah and Hirbad. The prominent Zoroastrian fire temple of Karkuiya continued to exist with an exalted status until long after the Umayyid conquest. A bishop represented the Nestorian church which continued well into the Islamic age. Kandahar of Sistan (i.e., Al Rukhkhaz and Zamindawar) though did not fall under Sassanid or Arabic control. Kabul and Zabulistan were part of the Graeco-Bactrian domain from the 3rd to the 1st century BC. Later, nomadic tribes, the Kushanas, Kidarites and Hephthalites ruled the northern regions. Buddhist and other Indian faiths continued to flourish here throughout this period. Zunbil

and Kabul Shah remained in firm opposition for two centuries to Islamic rule, till the Saffarids of Sistan temporarily took them under their control in 870 AD.<sup>7</sup>

The Umayyads had conquered the Sassanid Empire in the 7th and 8th centuries AD. The fall of Ctesiphon (22 miles southeast of Baghdad), the Sassanid capital in 637 AD and the murder of Yazdegerd (III) the last Sassanid emperor in 651 AD had far-reaching effects. Afghans initially rebelled against the Islamic rulers and opposed them, but eventually accepted their suzerainty. Balkh was the first city which fell under Umayyad control in 709 AD after Qutayba Ibn Muslim's victory. Arab soldiers and their mawlas (bards of Arab settlers) entered Balkh in 724-25.

Like the Sassanids, the Umayyads too ruled Khorasan from their regional command centre. Barmak, who earlier ruled most of the region from his base at Navavihar, was now proving to be a useful associate for the Umayyids. The Caliphate had spread till quite far away from its capital Damascus and the Caliph had to seek the cooperation of local satraps and therefore establish cordial ties with them. The conversion of the Buddhist Barmak dynasty to Islam is one of the most discussed events of medieval Islamic religious conversions. Owing to his loyalty to the then Umayyad Caliph Hisham Ibn Abdal Malik, Barmak undertook a journey to Syria and accepted Islam. After his support to the Umayyads in their rebel against the Abbasids, Barmak's status and influence increased; however, the Abbasids were successful in capturing the Caliphate in 749 AD. The next

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generation of the Barmaks became close to the new Caliph Haroon Al Rashid in the Caliphate's new capital Baghdad. There Yahya ibn Barmak and his sons Fazal (in 808 AD) and Zafar (in 803 AD) served as minister and governor respectively. The relationship between Caliph Haroon Al Rashid and the Barmaks has been depicted as legends in the tales of the Arabian Nights. The Barmaks were an Afghan dynasty whose members held high posts and were among the most important leaders of the Caliph's rule in both its royal centre at Baghdad and in Khorasan, a most important province of the Caliphate in that period. The Barmaks in Khorasan played an important part in formulating the policies and laying down practices of the Caliphate. Although not the original inhabitants of Baghdad, the Barmak ruling dynasty utilised its reach and influence to bring together the two distinct parts of the Caliphate, i.e., its eastern and western territory. It were the Barmaks who authorised Yahya Ibn Barmak (805 AD) to undertake a translation of Sanskrit works and preserved the tradition of the Buddha.

During the first hundred and sixty years of caliphate rule in Afghanistan other local conquerors became the local rulers of Rob, which is situated in Tokharistan, a hundred and thirty miles southeast of Balkh. A rebellion by one Al Haris Ibn Suryaz, which lasted from AD 734 to 746, was particularly popular in the areas around Balkh. According to the historian Al Tabri (923 AD) who was based in Baghdad, Al Haris adhered to the murji'ite principle and claimed that belief alone

Ustadh Sis captured Herat and Bushanj, killing hundreds of original Arab settlers and Abbasid leaders. The Ustadhs then took to the reformist version of the Zoroastrian institution preached and propagated by Behafarid (probably 748 or 749 AD), who adopted the practices and taboos. The supporters of the Ustadh Sis numbered around three lakh

was sufficient in order to be a Muslim. He obtained support from those converted folk who had been told that without Islamic acts, their conversion to the faith would not be recognised. Al Haris challenged the process of selection of Nasser Ibn Sayyar to the governor of Balkh (AD 748) and even to the Caliph. Almost immediately after this, there was a challenge to the Umayyads in Khorasan. The rebellion this time was led by Abu Muslim and the Abbasids, who were demanding a Caliphate based on the principles of Islam. They were successful in uprooting the Umayyad Caliphate in AD 749 and establishing their own hold.

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Zaranj in the south surrendered to Arab armies in 652-53 AD in the capital of Sistan. This later

became an important centre from where first the Umayyads and later the Abbasids waged war against Zumbil, Al Rukhkhaz (Kandahar) and Zamindawar, as well as the local rulers of Kabul Shahi rulers of Kabul. Those who had fled from Kerman in Iran because of steep taxes levied against the local populace came out in support of the Khairazis, but tasted defeat, first at the hands of the Umayyads. The Khairazis then sustained their raids in the smaller towns of Khorasan and Sistan in Afghanistan from 861 to 1003 AD, till the rule of the Saffarid Dynasty. The dynasty was founded by one Ya'qub Ayyar who eventually ended non-Muslim control over Kabul.

The Umayyads and Abbasids both benefitted financially from gaining control of Afghanistan. For example, according to Ibn Khurdadbih (911 AD) in the financial year 826-27 alone, Khorasan yielded 44.8 million dirhams as kharaj (tribute) to the Caliph. The loss of this revenue from the Saffarid Dynasty is often mentioned, because its loss completely devastated the Abbasid Caliphate. It was control over Afghanistan's towns like Balkh, which enabled trade with India through land, via the famed Silk Route. The Caliphate came into contact with the non-Muslim world of India and Central Asia through the existing

trade network. Thus, elephants from India and musk from Tibet could be procured for the Islamic world. Islamic history tells us that trade with afar filled Afghan bazaars with horses, camels, dry fruits, wine, spices, sweetmeats and fabrics.

With a change in the Caliphate Islam entered Afghanistan as a new religion. The question is how did Islam weave itself into Afghan society? Who were its supporters? How did the new religion spread its message? What was the rate of conversion to Islam? Who inspired the local people to convert to it? What tactics did the local people adopt in order to keep the environment favourable for indigenous traditions in the face of religious conversion, which came as a result of caliphate rule? Were there any scholars or ulema (clergy) in Balkh and anywhere else in the Caliphate? In Balkh, as described in the *Fazail-e-Balkh*, forty out of the seventy ulemas of Balkh lived there during the first two centuries after the advent of Islam. All of them had studied the Qur'an and its interpretation, as well as the Hadith. These have been described in more than thirty pages of the *Fazail-e-Balkh*.

The early Muslims were a mix of Arab and converted mawlas who had come from the Nile and Oxus, all members of the Caliphate. In the early days of Islam, the ulema were not

professional Muslims, as the objective of Islamic scholarship was to a large extent personal progress or even a part-time employment.

This aspect of Muslim teaching and practical way of working reveals that Balkh was similar to the other Muslim religious centres of Damascus and Baghdad.<sup>8</sup> A substantial portion of the ulema earned renown as juhads (pious monks) of the Balkh region, owing to their knowledge of the religion. The later ulema could have been probably sufi, though the *Fiza-al-Balkh* does not use the term sufi anywhere.

There were legal experts as well among early Muslim scholars of Balkh, who would advise people on the use of the Shariat in their daily lives, as well as administer justice. Their name was widespread and associated with expertise, and involved many issues, in which were included food, personal hygiene, inheritance, property and rights from marriage. Despite being directly appointed by the Caliph, the early qazis (magistrates) of Balkh were empowered and independent. The qazi presented himself as a protector of the common people's rights against the corruption and impropriety of political rulers.<sup>9</sup> In fact, because of his opposing stance towards the political establishment, the institution of the qazi was

abolished during the 9th and 10th centuries. In its place, the political class established another institution called the Majlis whose main function was to dispose of complaints. Thus, people's complaints began to be directly heard by political leaders and justice dispensed by them. Chard Bulliot has estimated that by the 11th century, the population in this part of the Caliphate was 90 per cent Muslim. The *Fazal-e-Balkh* describes many holy places, especially those constructed by the ulema of Balkh between the 8th and 9th centuries. All twenty seven places of religious importance situated in Balkh were centered around five prominent points. One by one, Sheikh Al Islam Al Vaz wove these places into the accounts of Muslim piety.

The Muslim religious landscape in this region however, has a Buddhist past. Buddhism began to be promoted in an institutionalised way in the 2nd century during the reign of Kushana emperor Kanishka I. Later, during the 7th and 8th centuries, the landscape of Balkh was described and written about by Chinese pilgrims, in which hundreds of Buddhist stupas and places of worship have been mentioned.

The Navavihara monastery was the biggest of Buddhist monasteries in Balkh. The *bhikkhus* (Buddhist monks) of Navavihara studied the religious sect of Śrāvakayāna Buddhism, which Chinese pilgrim traveler Hiuen Tsang mentions as the Hīnayāna sect. After the Islamic conquest, the Sanskrit name of Navavihara was altered to the Persianised Nav Bahar and became one of the three holy

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entrances to Balkh.

During the first century of Islamic rule, Muslims captured the existing holy places and added a few to them. Balkh seems to be a holy place and highly concordant. In this view, the Buddhist past was combined with Zoroastrian and Biblical sources. For example, the oldest among the five holy places of Balkh is Gustas Mound (Tal-e-Gustasp) which Al Vaz has listed in his *Fazal-e-Balkh*. When Al Vaz wrote this history, the Buddhist significance of the Gustas Mound had been lost although its sanctity had been maintained. In Zoroastrian tradition, Gustas

was a royal patron of Zoroaster. Naturally, Muslims did not adopt places like the Gustas Mound without reconfiguring it in their Islamic language, imagination and symbolic meaning. These places retained their previous religious importance and sanctity.

Before the Arab conquest, the people of Afghanistan had been multi-religious. There were various religious traditions in the land, among which were included the Parsi faith (in the country's northeastern part), idol-worshipping faiths (in the south and the east), Buddhism (in the southeastern part) and Hinduism (in Kabul and many

other places). Afghanistan was the base for Persian, Khilji, Turkic and Afghan rulers. The Arabs invaded Afghanistan in the middle of the 7th century through two points, Herat in the north and Sistan in the south. In the south, after entrenching themselves in Sistan, the Arabs entered Kabul. Islam did not come to medieval Afghan society as a readymade product; instead, the medieval society of Afghanistan lent it their own shape and hue. For example, the early Murji'ite movement in Balkh enabled the region to convert to Islam without forsaking the practices of the earlier religion. ■

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## Pashtunwali

**P**ashtunwali, also known as Afghanyat, means the traditional lifestyle of the Pashtun people. Its meaning may also be interpreted as "the way of the Pashtuns" or "the code of life". Pashtunwali is widely practiced among Pashtuns, especially among the non-urbanized Pashtuns in the countryside. In addition to being practiced by members of the Pashtun diaspora, it has been adopted by some non Pashtun Afghans and Pakistanis that live in the Pashtun regions or close to the Pashtuns, who have gradually become Pashtunized over time.

The native Pashtun tribes, often described as fiercely independent people, have inhabited the Pashtunistan region (eastern Afghanistan and north western Pakistan) since at least the 1st millennium BC. During that period, much of their mountainous territory has remained outside government rule or control. This is perhaps the main reason why indigenous Pashtuns still follow Pashtunwali, which is a basic common law of the land or the code of life.

Pashtunwali rules are accepted in Afghanistan and Pakistan (mainly in and around the Pashtunistan region), and also in some Pashtun communities around the world. Some non-Pashtun Afghans and others have also adopted its ideology or practices for their own benefit. Conversely, many urbanized Pashtuns tend to ignore the rules of Pashtunwali. Passed on from generation to generation, Pashtunwali guides both individual and communal conduct. Practiced by the majority of Pashtuns, it helps to promote Pashtunization. ■



Dr. Madhu Rani Shukla

# Gāndhāra and Gandharvas in Indian Music

Gandharvaveda is an Upaveda of Sāmaveda and the subject it deals with is music, dance, drama and the fine arts. While history holds the origin of the word Gandharva to be associated with the region of Gandhāra, in the world of Indian classical music it is Gandhāra that is associated with the Gandharvas. The relationship between Gandhāra and Gandharvaveda is still a subject of research

Music is the foremost among the abstract art. Music, which paves the way for the worship of the Supreme One from a definitive shape to its formless one, establishes India as the *Vishwaguru* or teacher of the world. The spiritual, philosophical and scientific forms are wondrous and indeed divine. Music takes us far away from the intrigues of the world to that divine entity where harmony exists and also governs. It is a realm where neither joy nor sorrow is yours or mine. Everything becomes ours, of all of us. The eternal maxim *ayam nijaḥ paroveti gaṇanā laghucetasām udārcaritānām vasudhaiva kuṭumbakam* (that is mine, that is someone else's is the thinking of small minds; for the truly liberal, the entire world itself is a family) is also akin to music, which emanates from the soul and is imbibed by its entity. The quietening of the knots of the *raja* (urging), *tama* (falling to negativity) and *sat* (tending to benignity) attributes is the realisation of the sublimity of music. This transports us from the mortal world to that of “*raso vai sah*” (“that is verily the life”). The basis of this music, which is sound, is embodied in the form of *swara* or note, which is termed *shruti*, i.e., meant to be listened to and imbibed.

It is this *swara* which together with time and voice becomes a musical composition. Musical strains and their developed form, i.e., *rāgas* are the detailed exposition of *swaras*.

In the *prātishākyas* (scriptures or studies pertaining to the pronunciation, mutual relationship and subtleties of the concerned branch of study), *swara* has been called the *akṣara* (the indestructible). The commentators of this scriptural branch of study have said that that which adorns itself is *swara*—*swayam rājante iti swarāḥ*<sup>1</sup>. This sound, which emanates from natural elements and has distinct names, which are actually symbolic and not its actual form. Thus, *akṣara* is symbolic of the ever present original elemental sounds<sup>2</sup>. *Swara* has a seminal place and function in language. It is the life of *varṇa* or alphabet; *varṇa* itself being the essential adjunct to complete and clear sounds. Therefore, the seven *swaras* or notes of music are *Ṣaḍaja*, *Ṛṣabha*, *Gāndhāra*, *Madhyam*, *Pancham*, *Dhaiwat* and *Niṣād*, which are known as *sā*, *re*, *ga*, *ma*, *pa*, *dha* and *ni* respectively.

The sublime *swara* has been called *ucca swara* (high note) in Pārī teachings and *Gāndhāra* is uttered in this manner. From the Vedic literature

scattered everywhere, we can surmise that the sounds of ‘a’ and ‘aa’ are the chief *swara* forms of language. They can therefore be discernible.

Abhinava Gupta explained three *swaras*—*Udātta*, *Anudātta*, *swarita*—in the following manner: if the *catuḥśrutik swara* is high, it is *Udātta* (fine and high tone), the *dwiśrutik* being lower gives an *Anudātta swara* i.e., base tone and the accumulation of both is a complete *swara*.<sup>3</sup>

*Gāndharayati iti Gandhārah* (*Gām dhr̥ Aṅ*) meaning the word *Gāndhāra* derives by having *Gorūpakarma* as sub clause and suffixing *Aṅ* in *dhr̥* root. It means one who grasps a musical voice is *Gandhāra* or it is called as *Gandhara* because of being the reason for the pleasure of *Gandharvas*.<sup>4</sup> The word *Gāndhara* is nasal in nature.<sup>5</sup>

In the *Sangīt Ratnākar*, which is the signature work of Indian music, Śārangdeva has identified the origin of the *Gāndhāra swara* from its comprehensive *varṇa*, hue, the *rishis* and the celestial couplets from which it emanated, and termed it to be a bliss-filled syntax for the sublime. Its place is the sky, and it has two locations, two citadels and two satellites, i.e., sub-notes. The *Gāndhāra swara* is the third among the seven *swaras* whose sound has been measured like that of

a goat’s bleat.

The *gāndhār swara* has also been called *devakula* or the celestial body:

“*Gīrvānakulasambhūtāḥ ṣaḍajagāndhāramadhyamāḥ*”,<sup>6</sup> whose *varṇa* (meaning category here) is *Vaishya*, expressed as:

*Righautu Kṣatriryojñeyovaiṣhya jātinigaumatauḥ I Śūdrāvantarkākalyoswaraurvar ṇāswimenkramāt II*<sup>7</sup>

Whose *varṇa* (here it is taken as hue) is golden –

*Padyanābhaḥ Pijaraḥ Swaravarṇaḥkundaṁ Prabho'sitaḥ I Pītakarbura Ityeshām Janmabhūmirathaburave II*<sup>8</sup>

That which belongs to the island, i.e., realm of *Kusha*, whose *rishi* or guiding force is *Chandramā* or the moon and whose presiding deity is

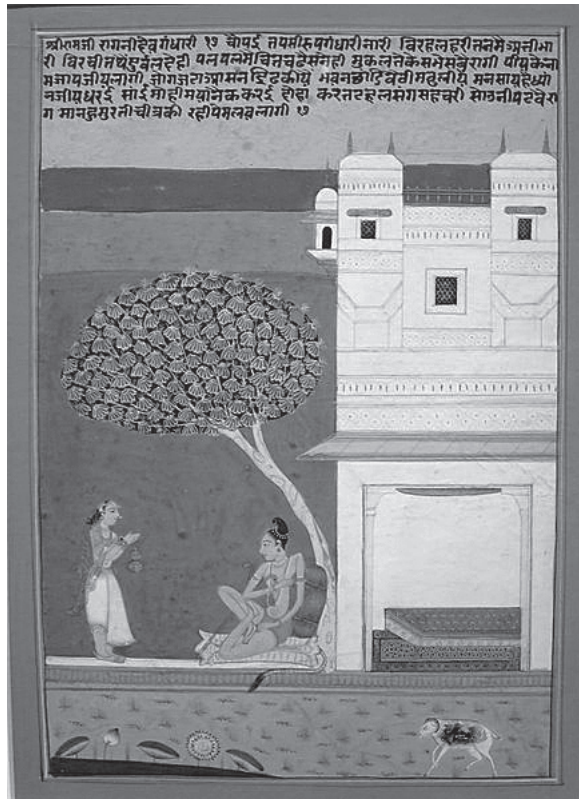
*Saraswatī* –

*Vahnibrahmasaraswatasyaḥ Sarvaśrīgaṇeśwarāḥ I Sahasāśurītiproktāḥ Kramatṣadajādidevatāḥ II*<sup>9</sup>

Whose *chand* (verse) is *Triṣṭup* and which is deployed in the *karuṇa rasa* –

*Sarvīredbhuteraudreyovībhatse bhayānake I Kāyoganitu Karuṇe Hāsyāśringārayormapau II*<sup>10</sup>

After the explanation of the musical peculiarities of the *Gāndhāra* notes, the name *Gāndhāra* appears in particular ways in tomes in the section pertaining to *grāma* and *jāti*. For instance, it is said in the section on *grāma* *Gāndhār* is situated in the ninth *śruti* *krodhā* in the *Ṣaḍaja grāma* and in the *Gāndhār grāma*, *Varjikā* is situated in the tenth *śruti*. The form of the *Gāndhār* is of a high note conveying the feeling of compassion. In the old texts, three forms of this not viz., *Gāndhāra*, *Sādhāraṇa* *Gāndhāra* and *Antar Gāndhāra* have been mentioned, which are based on varying numbers of *śrutis*. These have been accorded the foremost place among *swaras* as they have originated in the celestial *Gāndhāra* family. *Maheshwara* (Lord *Shiva*) is their presiding deity. It is meant to be sung particularly during the monsoon before and during the afternoon by those desirous of welfare. It begins in the *Nishāda swara*, also called the *Nishāda grāma* by some scholars. But because of the note being used by the *Gandharvas*, it is also



'Devchandhr Ragini of the Hindol Raga' by Chetan Das  
 Courtesy: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:%27Devchandhr\\_Ragini\\_of\\_the\\_Hindol\\_Raga%27\\_by\\_Chetan\\_Das,\\_HMA\\_10734.1\\_.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:%27Devchandhr_Ragini_of_the_Hindol_Raga%27_by_Chetan_Das,_HMA_10734.1_.JPG)

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called *Gāndhāra grāma*. The *mūrchanās* (modulations in music) of the seven notes of the *Gāndhāra grāma* have been categorised as *Nandā*, *Vishālā*, *Sumukh*, *Citrā*, *Citravatī*, *Sukhā* and *Ālāpā*.

### Ālāpā Cetigāndhārgrāmesyuh Saptamūrchanā II<sup>11</sup>

Similarly, in the *jāti* section, Pt. Sarangdev has mentioned the *Gāndhārī jāti* under pure *jāti*. In this, apart from the *Ṛṣabha Dhaivat* there are five parts that are *swara*. Along with the *nyāsa* and *anśa* (part), there is also the company of other *swaras*—one has to arrive at *Ṛṣabha* from the *Dhaivat*. In this, the receding of the *Ṛṣabha* and *Dhaivat* creates forms of *Ṣāḍav* and *Auḍav*. There are 16 various arts in this. There are also *mūrchanās* (modulations of music in this) of the *Dhāivata* and other varieties along with the *tāla caccapūṭa* and it is deployed at the third level of the singing of the *dhruvā*. The *Gāndhāra* is the investiture in this *Gāndhārī* and the *Ṣāḍaj pancham* the sub-investiture.<sup>12</sup>

Next, the word *Gāndhārodiccavā*<sup>13</sup> is found in the explanation of corrupted segments, in which there are parts of *Ṣāḍaj pancham*. The dissipation of the *Ṛṣabha* produces the form *Ṣāḍav*. There are indications in the *Gāndhārī* texts<sup>14</sup> of these corrupted segments. They are deployed in the *dhruvā* of the third level, whose style of singing too has been explained.

Acharya Brihaspati has written that in this, the feeling in Abhinava Gupta's inner mind, wherein he synthesised the Veena *Ṛgveda* and *Gāndharva*, appears to be the driving force. The seer sages too have been mentioned the *swaras*. For instance, the sage Narada is the seer of the *pancham swara* and sage Tumburu of the *Nishāda*. These rishis are also called *gandharvas*. If we take the first *swara* of *Sāma* music as *Ṣāḍaj*, it was the sage Tumburu who recognised the self-originating sound of the *Gāndhāra*. If the first *swara* is taken as *madhyam*, the self-originating sound will be *Dhāivata*. Thus, these sages were known as *Gandharvas* because of their recognition of the sub-*swaras* of the *swaras*.

Abhinava Gupta has explained the word *gāndharva* in a different way. He has used the term *Gāndhārayatītigāndharvam*<sup>15</sup>, i.e., one who bears the *vāṇī* or voice is a *gāndharva*. The names of its *swaras* have been in vogue since times immemorial. There is an order of ascendancy in them, not created by man. These sounds must have been 'seen', i.e., perceived only by sages like Nārada and others. These have been called self-initiated *swaras*<sup>16</sup>. Only the *gāndharvas* must have had the subtle knowledge of the sounds of these *swaras*. The name *Gāndhāra* appears as the name of a *swara* along with *gāndharvas*.

Damodar Gupta has mentioned the descendants of the Bharatas in *Kuttanītam* and

*Rasavarṇasudhākar*, in which he lists the names of his hundred sons, who are actually his disciples. In many later texts, they have been called Bharatādi (Bharatas et al), Bharatajana (the Bharata people), by the Bharatas and Bharata Varg (of the category or community of Bharatas). We come to know of the Bharatas of the fine arts through these testimonies. The *Yāgyavalkya Smṛiti*<sup>17</sup> in its discussion about the *jīva* (being) and *ātmā* (soul) explains that just as the Bharatas take on various forms and play various characters, the soul too takes on different bodies and conducts itself in the world. Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī* clearly says "Pārāśarya Śīlālibhyāmabhikṣunatasūtrayo", i.e., the actors too had their precepts.

The word *naṭa*<sup>18</sup> as described in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* means an actor. This makes it clear that a class of people who were actors existed since very early days. The words *naṭa*, *nartaka* (dancer) and *gāndharva* have been used in Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Arthashāstra* of Chāṇakya and other works. All three were of different categories. The Bharata tradition developed in this very *gandharva* class. Brahma the Creator after conceiving of the four Vedas and the four Upavedas (respective branch of each Veda) created the fifth Veda by employing eight qualities, which is the *Nāṭyaveda* or the Veda of dance. This is meant for all the categories in their all-*varṇa* function<sup>19</sup> of producing worldly enlightenment, to be used in a similar manner, following a captivating creation in the form of prayers to the celestials. The utilisation of this *shāstra* (scripture) is as beneficial and

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holy as a *yajna*. The use of the term *gandharva* in music is amply found.

The word *gandharva* comprises of two other words. The first is *Gam* or *Gām*, which means musical sound, while *dharva* means one who bears<sup>20</sup>. *Gandharva* thus means one who bears or sustains the musical sound. This community were spiritual by nature and were practitioners of music in the court of Indra (king of gods) and Kubera (deity of wealth) in heaven. The *Shivamahimnastotra*, a renowned hymn in worship of Lord Shiva, which He is fond of, was composed in great affection by *Gandharva* ruler Pushpadutta.

The *Gandharvas* were the only deities in the Vedas who laid open the mysteries of heaven and other truths. They have been regarded as the blaze of the sun. The presence of *Yakṣas* (another category of semi-celestial beings) and *Gandharvas* is found in the Vedic, Buddhist and Jain texts<sup>21</sup>. In the *Purāṇas*, the *Gandharvas* are spoken of as a community similar to the *Devas*<sup>22</sup> (celestials). They were regarded to be the offspring of *Brahma* and similar to *Indra* and they are said to be 6,333 in number as mentioned in

In the *Purāṇas*, the *Gandharvas* are spoken of as a community similar to the *Devas*<sup>22</sup> (celestials). They were regarded to be the offspring of *Brahma* and similar to *Indra* and they are said to be 6,333 in number as mentioned in the *Atharvaveda*

the *Atharvaveda*. Various acts by the *Gandharvas* are discussed in the *Vishṇu Purāṇa*, *Harivamsha Purāṇa* and other *Purāṇas*. In *Purāṇic* references, the terms *Yaksha*, *Rākshasa*, *Siddha*, *Chāraṇa*, *Nāga*, *Kinnara* and other terms too are often used for such beings.

There are many other legends based on esoteric interpretations of the word *gandharva*. *Sāyaṇa* has written about this in two ways. The first says *Gānūdakam Dhārayīti Gandharva*<sup>23</sup> (those who bear the holy water of music are *Gandharvas*). The second reads as *Gavāmrashminām Dhartāra Sūrya Gandharvo* (those who bear the musical rays are *Gandharvas* resplendent like the sun). *Gātu* and *Pulam* too are names used for *Gandharvas*. The *Mahābhārata* mentions them as a community that lived in the mountains and forests. Sanskrit literature is replete with the musical cadence, melodious

lives and the association with the fine arts of the *Gandharvas*. *Gandharvas* inhabiting the sky and roaming in it are depicted in the frescoes of *Ajanta*.

A scrutiny of several facts leads us to the conclusion that the *gāndhāra* note appears to have originated by itself, which resonates in the air in a seemingly incessant way as soon as the strings of the *tānpura* (a stringed musical instrument similar to the *sitār*) are plucked. The *gāndhāra* note has a special place in the comity of musical notes.

The word *Gāndhāra* is used for a class of practitioners of music in the heavenly and mortal worlds. This class used to entertain people with music as well as teach the art, and was generally a community on the move. Even today, musicians from these communities can be found. Whether they have links to the region of *Gāndhāra* or not is a subject of research. ■

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## Pashto Folktales

## Adam Khan and Durkhanai

**A**dam Khan and Durkhanai were from Upper Bazdara and belonged to one of the Pukhtoon Yousafzai tribe. Adam Khan, the son of Hasan Khan, was a very handsome young man. Durkhanai, daughter of Taus Khan, was an extra ordinarily beautiful young woman who was very intelligent as well. A man named Payu Khan heard of the beauty of Durkhanai and he fell in love with her without ever seeing her. His father sent a formal proposal to Taus Khan for the hand of Durkhanai. A date for the wedding was set in the near future.

Durkhanai went to Upper Bazdara to attend her cousin sister's wedding. That evening the groom's friends had gathered there and were singing couplets and ballads accompanied to the beautiful tunes of the rabab. The rabab's melody touched Durkhanai's very soul and she felt herself drown in the music that was played by Adam Khan. She fell in love for him.

Adam Khan was not unaffected either, he was as love struck and swore that he will tie his knot only with Durkhanai. Durkhanai's wedding day was approaching and yet there was no way out of it. Durkhanai got married to Payu and yet she did not let him consummate the marriage. As he was patient with her thinking that she needs time to adjust to her new home. One day Payu went on a hunting trip. Durkhanai at her wits end sent message to Adam Khan who hurries to her husband's house and snatched her up on his horse and galloped off to a neighbouring village. Payu gathered the elders of his village, reached there and took his case to the jirga.

It was agreed that Durkhanai is rightfully Payu's wife and thus has to be returned to him. Durkhanai returned to Payu's house but she refused everything. Adam Khan too became mad and took to wandering aimlessly in the wilderness. One day having collapsed of exhaustion he got found by a group of holy Hindu Yogis. They nursed him back to health. Adam Khan got his head shaved and dressed in the robes of the yogis. He told them his story and they decided to help him. Together they all go to Bazdara where no one could recognize Adam Khan. Once there they show up at Payu's door who welcomed them into his home for a meal. The Yogis told him that they can sense his deep sorrow and that they also sense someone who is possessed. They would like to heal both him and the afflicted person within his house. Payu who was at his wits end, decided that it worth a try. Durkhanai brought in like a shrieking mad woman but she immediately calmed when she saw Adam Khan, she recognized him even in his altered state. Payu was so amazed at the transformation that he invited the Yogis to stay in his garden. Both Adam Khan and Durkhanai healed and Yogis wanted to return to their prayers and meditations. Adam Khan was well enough to go back to his father's house. His father arranged for a beautiful girl called Gulnaz to marry his son. Gulnaz who was aware of her husband's affliction patiently listened to his woes and to some extent eased his pain. Durkhanai on the other hand did not do so well without Adam Khan. Payu remarried and let Durkhanai be. Adam Khan set out for Bazdara and cried so much for Durkhanai that he lost his eyesight. Pleading with to be taken to the wall of Durkhanai's garden, he died just before reaching there. Durkhanai also succumbed to her grief and Payu in a moment of guilt let her be buried next to Adam Khan. Years later when the graves had flattened and were dug up by mistake people were shocked to find two bodies in a lovers embrace. They were separated and the graves once again covered over. A century later they were once again found together. This time it was decided to leave them together. ■

*Courtesy: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk%3AAdam\\_Khan\\_and\\_Durkhanai](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk%3AAdam_Khan_and_Durkhanai)*



Sonali Mishra

# Love in the Land of Gandharva Vivāh

In our way of life, love has been considered as something that transports the being from darkness to light and from mortality to immortality. Marriage, called vivāha in Indian terminology, is the significant way of culmination of love. Among the accepted forms of marriage in Indian society, the Gandharva vivāha is one, which is associated with the region of Gandhāra

It is said that if one obtains love, it does not attain fulfilment and remains unfulfilled one! The moment lover and beloved come together, the essence of love is over. Those who believe in this maxim, propagate the same point to the fables of Laila-Majnu, Shiri-Farhad, Heer-Ranjha and so on. All of these tales are those in which the love meets a tragic end, though this very tragedy lends immortality to their tales. In each of these, the story of the couples in love is one of becoming immortal after their love story culminates in the tragic end of the lovers themselves, i.e., all of these famed folk fables are of the lovers not meeting in happy unison in the end, but of separation. In Laila-Majnu, the Majnu loves her deeply and wishes to marry her, but fails to do so. Laila's family marries her off elsewhere while Qais (Majnu), pining for her becomes a forlorn lover. Fate does not permit him to be at his parents' side even in their last moments. Laila, meanwhile, yearning for her lost love courts an untimely end and so does her lover Majnu, thus making their love immortal. Similar is the tale of Sohni-Mahiwal. While these tales depict the incompleteness of love, they are also remarkable in the terms that they happen to be associated with a particular region. These tales are of the region from Punjab to

Pakistan and Afghanistan, i.e., from the ancient Sindhu to Gandhāra. They also pertain to a particular period in time and are located in the period after the advent of a certain culture.

It is this very incompleteness of love that is the salient feature of the love stories that tell the tale of love in a particular region. However, when we turn towards these regions, we encounter a very different culture and facts. The culture of any region is subject to change with the passage of time and every period of time carries its own specialities and features. One such feature is reflected after the arrival of Islam in that particular region. Presently, there seems to be a total ban on any kind of love there. While lovers across the world express their love for their beloved on Valentine's Day, this very expression has today become an act of daring in places like Kandahar, i.e., the Gandhāra of the days of old. The Western media condescendingly writes about this region: 'Valentine's Day blooms in conservative Afghanistan'; in other words, Afghanistan is a backward region.

It is not as though this entire region was always an enemy of love, or that no one in this part of the world ever fell in love with another. Before Islam set foot in this vast territory, every

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facet of love found in Sanatana Dharma was prominently visible here. In fact, mokṣa or liberation follows only after dharma (virtue), artha (prosperity and kāma (gratification of desires). But such sensual gratification had to have the approval of the woman. Even the Manusmriti says:

***Yokāmām Dūṣayetkanyām Sa Sadyo VadhamarhatiI  
Sakāmā Dūshayanstulyo Na Vadham PrāpnuyānnaraḥII<sup>1</sup>***

Meaning, those who forcibly have sex with a woman must immediately be punished with death.

Love is the eternal feeling that resides in humankind. It is not merely the basis of life, but also essential for the building of any nation. It is only when humans love with all their heart will they be able to produce healthy and happy offspring who will function happily in their society and nation. Such love might not appear personal, but is in fact personal as well. The following shloka reflects this:

***Abhivardhatam Pāyāsā Abhi-Rāshtra-Tremā VardhatamI  
Rāmyā Sahasravarchasā Imo Stam AnupekṣituII***

May the newlywed bride and groom obtain strength from milk and progress along with the nation.<sup>2</sup>

The present Sind, Gandhāra and Kabul which have many tales of unfulfilled love were all once part of India. Kandahar or Gandhāra is mentioned in the *Rg Veda*. The *Rāmāyaṇa* too mentions this place. Did Gandhāra and its vicinity have these tales

Gandhāra was a vast republic whose borders once upon a time touched the Mediterranean Sea. The people we know as Gandharvas were inhabitants of this region, also called demigods. The name of these demigods of the Himalayan region also resonate in the seven swaras or notes of music, i.e., sā re, gā, mā, pā, dhā, nī, sā of which gā is associated with Gāndhāra

of unfulfilled love then? Was freedom to love not there? Was this land, which is today riven by gunfire and bomb blasts, always torn apart like failed love and cursed like it? When would this saga of casting a malevolent eye on love have begun there? Gandhāra once was a heavenly place, whose residents were well versed in the arts, particularly music and dance, and whose Gandharva residents possessed expertise in warfare. The beauty of Gandhāra during the Rāmāyaṇa Age came to the notice of Rāma too, who learnt that the land of the Gandharvas was bountiful in fruit and roots (i.e., vegetation). It was situated on both sides of the Sindhu (Indus) and protected by Gandharvas well versed in the use of weapons and warfare.

***Sindhorubhayataḥ Pārshwe Deśaḥ PāramaśobhanaḥI  
Tam Ca Rakṣanti Gandharvāḥ Sāyudhā YuddhakovidāḥII<sup>3</sup>***

Vālmīki further writes about the valour of the Gandharvas:

***Tataḥ Samabhavadyuddham Tumulam LomahaṣṇamI  
Saptarātram Mahābhīmam Na CānyatarayorjayaḥII<sup>4</sup>***

Rāma's army, which was led by Bharata, fought the Gandharvas for seven days and nights in a hair-raising battle, but neither

side was conquered.

The above example is sufficient to demonstrate how valiant the Gandharva residents of the region of Gandhāra were, and were capable of defeating their adversaries under any circumstances. What happened with the passage of time that these brave people of Gandhāra became enemies of their own progeny and also an enemy of their love?

Gandhāra was a vast republic whose borders once upon a time touched the Mediterranean Sea. The people we know as Gandharvas were inhabitants of this region, also called demigods. The name of these demigods of the Himalayan region also resonate in the seven swaras or notes of music, i.e., sā re, gā, mā, pā, dhā, nī, sā of which gā is associated with Gāndhāra. These communities would fight for the Devas (celestials) in their wars with the Asuras or demons. It was near-impossible for even the most valiant of warriors to understand the battle formations of the Gandharvas, leave alone penetrate them. So valorous were these musically accomplished Gandharvas that when they settled on the foothills of the Himalayan ranges, most other denizens, including kings and emperors preferred to be friendly with them.

The valour of Chitraratha,



king of the Gandharvas during the *Mahābhārata* Age was no less than that of Arjuna, the greatest bow warrior of that era. Chitraratha also happened to be a personal friend of Arjuna. Description of the origin of the Gandharvas is found in the Ādi Parva of the *Mahābhārata*. Prominent Gandharvas like Atibāhu, Hāhā, Hūhū and Tumburu are mentioned in this section of the epic. Tumburu, Nārada, Hāhā, Hūhū and others were well versed in music and would visit heaven and make the hall of Indra, king of the gods, resonate with their divine music. It appeared that the Gandharvas had sole mastery over the art of music. Vishwāvasu too was an *ācārya* (preceptor) of music. Indeed, the art and discipline of music is called Gandharva Veda.

The women of the Gandharva community were called *apsarās*. These *apsarās* were blessed with greatly beauty and were also skilled in the fine arts. *Apsarās* were free to marry the men of their choice. Some among them were divinely beautiful. The love story of Urvashī and Pururavā is one of unison, separation and coming together again.

The Gandharvas of Gandhāra enjoyed a great deal of freedom in their social life. Their views on love and relationship were marked by a high degree of freedom. Urvashī consented to marrying Pururava only when she wished to enter the bond of marriage. Gandharva society was not bound by rigid rules of marriage. Young men and women were free to choose their life partners.

This kind of marriage was known as Gandharva *vivāha*. The *apsarā* Menakā in order

to disturb sage Vishwāmitra's penance enmeshed him in her affectionate charms and enjoyed filial bliss with him and also bore the sage a daughter Shakuntalā. It was this Shakuntalā who wed king Dushyanta according to Gandharva rites; their son was Bharata, from whom this land acquired its name Bhārat.

Thus, Gandharva *vivāh* is that form of marriage in which the man and woman choose their respective life partners of their own accord and present them to the community. There were eight kinds of marriage prevalent in the society of those days. According to the *Manusmṛiti*:

***Brāhmaṇo Daivastayaivārthaḥ  
PrājāpatyāstathāsuraḥI  
Gāndharvo Rākṣasaścaiva  
PaiśācaścāṣṭamodhayahII***

Meaning, there are eight kinds of marriages; the *brāhmaṇa vivāha*, *deva vivāha*, *ārṣa vivāha*, *prājāpatya vivāha*, *āsura vivāha*, *gandharva vivāha*, *rākṣasa vivāha* and *piśāca vivāha*. Of these, the *brāhmaṇa vivāh* is considered the highest form of marriage as a groom of similar status and category is chosen with the mutual consent, and formally solicited in marriage by presenting him attire and ornaments and honouring him in the traditional manner. The groom is then formally presented to the bride in wedding.

Under a *deva vivāha*, the girls are given in marriage to the scholars who are performers of *yajñas* and other rituals.

In an *ārṣa vivāha*, the girl is married off after receiving a pair of cows or bullocks from the groom's side, as a symbolic ceremony. In *prājāpatya vivāha*, a boy and girl desirous of entering into a matrimonial relationship with each other are formally accepted as groom and bride and the girl is given away in marriage to the boy after suitably honouring him. The *prājāpatya vivāha* may be called a brief version of a *brāhmaṇa vivāha*, as one of its very particular rules, namely that the next seven generations of the father's side and five of the mother's side shall not enter into matrimonial alliance, is not observed in a *prājāpatya vivāha*. In an *āsura vivāha*, the girl's side is paid a sum of money following which the girl is given in marriage. Then there is the *gandharva vivāha* in which the man and woman marry by mutual choice holding the sacred fire as witness, with their families coming to know of their wedding after the event.

The *rākṣasa* and *piśāca vivāhas* do not have the approval of dharma, but are instead considered as practices to be shunned, as the girl's consent is not sought in either of these forms of marriage. Instead, the girl's family is threatened and

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The Gandharvas of Gandhāra enjoyed a great deal of freedom in their social life. Their views on love and relationship were marked by a high degree of freedom. Urvashī consented to marrying Pururava only when she wished to enter the bond of marriage. Gandharva society was not bound by rigid rules of marriage

bullied in order to acquire the girl in marriage. The *piśāca vivāha* is considered the lowest form of marriage as it involves a practice of physical intercourse with a girl when she is asleep, drugged or otherwise forlorn or helpless, and then forcing her into marriage. The *rākṣasa vivāha* avoids this hideous practice but the *piśāca vivāha* does not. This is the reason these two forms of marriage are considered odious in Sanatana Dharma, which considers them a practice to be shunned.

In the *Mahābhārata*, speaking on *gandharva vivāha*, Dushyanta says to Shakuntala that her guru and foster father sage Kaṇva wouldn't object to their union, as the daughters of many *rājarṣis* (kings who later became hermits) had earlier married according to this practice and were duly accepted.

Apart from the *gandharva vivāha*, marriage under an agreement was also prevalent among the Gandharvas. An example of this is the marriage between the heavenly nymph Urvashi and King Pururava. Urvashi had laid down three conditions for marrying the king and left him when he violated them, although their mutual love brought them together again. While there is the poignancy of separation in this tale, it is not a lasting one, as is found in Islamic love stories.

The idea of heaven in Islam is a misleading one. "Do deeds here and you shall enjoy their fruit in heaven" is its message. All Islamic invasions of India were for loot and plunder but also unmistakably were replete with the fanatic zealotry of destroying the *kafirs* (infidels)

The new idea that took root was that falling in love might fetch merit in heaven, but it is a sin on this earth. This completely changed the very facet of love. Women were now considered mere territory to be conquered and exploited, an outlook that grew relentlessly harsher towards the woman and struck at the very idea of love

and their way of life. Making towers of the severed heads of slaughtered Hindus was a favourite sport of Islamic invaders. Islamic invasions of India began from the beginning of the 6th century AD onwards. The invaders would enter India through Gandhāra and Multan, their chief aim being to destroy the culture of our land. Till the 7th century AD, Hindu and Buddhist cultures were at their zenith in the Gandhāra region, with thousands of Buddhist monasteries in the Bamiyan and Balkh districts. The Shaivite community too thrived in Gandhāra around this period.

With the forced changes wrought on the region's culture with the severe invasions of Islam, the idea of love too underwent change. Love and attraction for a woman gradually began receding into the confines of the *pardah* (Islamic veil). Earlier, it was though intense and was celebrated in an open and healthy way. Islamic invaders strictly followed the injunctions of the Qur'anic verse which lays down that east and west both belong to Allah and wherever one turns one's face, one will see the glimpse of Allah. Allah is doubtlessly one who is spread everywhere and knows everything.

While the Sanatana sentiment of love was based on mutual respect, the advent of Islam forcibly introduced the element of religious conversion. Any

love meant a change of religion to Islam, as the Qu'ran clearly forbids marrying non-Muslim women until they accepted the Islamic faith. Islam's holy book says that a *momin*, i.e., faithful Muslim slave-woman is superior to a free non-Muslim woman, no matter how much in love one might be with her. While Sanatana Dharma forbids any use of force in marital love and life, Islam clearly lays down that a woman is a man's field, i.e., territory to be ravished.

This difference in approach towards and thinking on love altered social outlook on women and love in this region. The new idea that took root was that falling in love might fetch merit in heaven, but it is a sin on this earth. This completely changed the very facet of love. Women were now considered mere territory to be conquered and exploited, an outlook that grew relentlessly harsher towards the woman and struck at the very idea of love. The region where marriage according to one's choice after falling in love took real shape gradually began becoming a graveyard of love itself.

There was also no concept of divorce in the Sanatana tradition of marriage. Marriage meant a bond for seven lives. The man and woman would enter into a relationship of love desiring a bond with the other partner that was supposed to last for several

lives, and indeed for eternity. This was an exalted form of love, which Islamic invaders could never imagine, as marriage in Islam is considered to be a mere contract. Whatever is happening today has its roots in the pernicious idea of acquiring ownership of the woman. It is a tussle between two conflicting views regarding women; one considers the woman a mere object while the other holds her status to be that of a living person with rights and an identity of her own. Where Sanatana tradition accorded a respectful place to the woman's rights along with love and companionship, in Islam, the basis of such a relationship was only wealth and moreover, Islam considers the woman to be a mere object.

A change of outlook towards women also produces a change in outlook towards love. That is why in the land of Gandhāra, till *mokṣa* (liberation) was considered as an outcome of the three other *puruṣārthas* of dharma (virtue), *artha* (prosperity) and *kāma* (gratification), women remained free and so was love. This was in accordance with the Sanatana tradition. So free was love that while the concept of marriage was still in its infancy in every other culture, girls in Gandhāra freely chose men of their choice as their life partners. This was not limited to Gandhāra; the intensity of love among the Gandharvas and their desire for sexual bliss produced the practice

of Gandharva *vivāha*.

While there is still some regard for love in the land of Gandhāra today, this regard is for a love that cannot be found in this world. The present-day inhabitants of that land do not respect that kind of love for which lovers never forsook their love nor insulted it. In the Gandhāra of today, the love story of Savitri of Madra, which is adjacent to Gandhāra, is no longer worshipped, a saga that is the highest ideal of love. It is an example of marital love which every Hindu woman wishes to live up to. Savitri, a princess of Madra loved an individual who had just one more year of life. But such was Savitri's love for Satyavan that she chose to marry him. Her father, the king of Madra, in deference to his daughter's love married her off to Satyavan.

And finally, Savitri snatched her husband back from the clutches of Yama, the deity of death. This is true love. Indian love seeks liberation as well as unison through love, whereas the love in alien cultures accords immortality to love only when it culminates in separation. Its emphasis is on meeting in the court of Allah, whereas Sanatana Dharma holds that the being will beget its next birth or *mokṣa* (liberation) only due to the karma (action) it does in this world.

It is thus clear that both the intensity of love and its mortality are altered with a change in culture. An invading way of life

presents only repressiveness in love, and tries to find its god in it, as the divine is without form or shape in such a way of life. In the Sanatana way of life, everything has a form and shape, even God, who appears in a definite form for the sake of His devotees.

The manner in which lovers like Zakia and Ali in Buddha's and Ashoka's Gandhāra are being forced to flee from their fate is unfortunate. More unfortunate is the stark reality that if they are murdered, they will be worshipped like Laila-Majnu were got worshipped after their martyrdom. Laila and Majnu, pining for each other, were stoned by their own people and stumbled along their paths hungry and thirsty, to somehow escape but could reach only the borders of Rajasthan where they collapsed and shed their lives. If it that love would not demand such sacrifice! Had love lived on the form of Savitri, it would have obtained its true form according to the standard set by that princess of Madra.

But this will be only a hope where ideological conflict happens. Such sentiments have no value in such a scenario. The tussle between history and memory cannot prevent youth from falling in love, nor stop them from sacrificing their own self. While it is true that it is civilizations that render love accursed, it is also essential to understand which civilizations do so. ■

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Prof. Ishtiaque Ahmed

# Takṣaśilā: An Important Cultural Centre

Takshashila, which is well known for its multi-disciplinary university, was not only an intellectual but also an important cultural centre of those times. It is referred in different international texts for its civilisational and economic prosperity. A glance into the important texts

In the history of the world, great civilisations have emerged and extensively influenced the course of human knowledge, learning, life and culture. Undoubtedly Takṣaśilā was one amongst those. Takṣaśilā the great Centre of learning and important cultural epicenter between the Indian Peninsula and the Central Asia regions had been remarkably significant from the ethnic, traditional, artistic and educational point of views. When we mention the Indian Peninsula, it reminds us the monumental and vast empire, the great Indian rulers developed in the course of history. In order to rightly figure out the location and strategic importance of the mighty Takṣaśilā, it is also pertinent to indicate the areas of the Central Asia, existed along. The then areas of Central Asia, though named differently, had been spanning from the China in the east to the Caspian Sea in the west and from Russia in the north to Afghanistan in the south, during the ancient times.

Takṣaśilā is considered to be the important archaeological site. The archaeological position of Takṣaśilā is important in many ways and contributes significantly in establishing the core sources

for interpreting the ancient Indian history. In fact, Takṣaśilā as a Culture and Civilization has served as a connecting point and intellectual link between the Vedic ages, the age of Mahabharata and the Age of Buddha, mighty Mauryas & Guptas. Etymologically, it had been difficult to establish the origin of the word Takṣaśilā/Taxila and its exact meaning that has changed historically, with the passage of time and ages. The word, in the dominant languages of the Takṣaśilā Culture, i.e. Sanskrit and Pali, has been presented in many ways with different meanings and interpretations. Plainly, in Sanskrit Takshashila and in Pali Takkasila, establishes the meaning as “City of Cut Stones” or “Takṣa Rock”.

Takṣaśilā had been actively dominating the scene from 1000 BCE to 500 AD, as an important Centre of learning to the extent that princes from other parts of the continent were sent to obtain learning and education at Takṣaśilā. During the period of Cyrus the Great (558-530 BCE), the city of Takshashila, in the North-West, was already a Centre of learning and trade. Young men from Magadha were sent there to complete their education, and Bimbisara was in diplomatic

contact with Puskarasarin (in Pali, Pukkusati), king of Gandhara, whose kingdom probably included Takṣaśilā. Bimbisara was a learned king. As mentioned in Buddhist scriptures, Bimbisara was deeply influenced by the teachings of Buddha and became a disciple of Buddha. The Burmese art also depicts, Bimbisara offering his kingdom to Buddha. This clearly shows Bimbisara had no greed and desire to rule the territory in the age of religious enlightenment and spirituality and must have offered in the interest of public welfare. It is equally astonishing to find in sources that Bimbisara was deposed, imprisoned and murdered by his own son Ajatasatru, some seven years before the demise of Lord Buddha.

As a cultural hub and one of the great intellectual Centers, Takṣaśilā had many more to offer. There had been many other Centers of learning on the territorial map of the Indian sub-continent during the age of Takṣaśilā. Nalanda is widely referred as one of the pioneering Buddhist Centre of learning for over 600 years, first University in India known for its recorded history and for the existence of a large number of Buddhist monasteries. But Takṣaśilā had been entirely different altogether. It is known for its unique culture, distinctive system of learning and great seat of religious discourses. Takṣaśilā is widely referred as ancient capital city of Gandhara and a lively Centre of learning and one of the oldest Universities in the world. Known for religious

and historical sanctity as both Hindus and Buddhist had naturally excelled in Vedic system of learning. It is widely believed that the Mahabharata had been first narrated here.

It is widely mentioned in various historical sources that Chanakya took Emperor Chandragupta Maurya to Takṣaśilā for religious education and learning. Chandragupta Maurya acquired knowledge in all sciences and arts of the period including the military sciences. He was student of this great Centre of learning for eight years. It was here, Arthashastra was written by Chanakya. The prominent subjects included in the curriculum in the Takṣaśilā system of learning had been Philosophy, Astronomy, Military Science, Politics, Medicine, Mathematics, Sciences, Languages and Literature etc. Sanskrit and Pali were the dominant languages here. Scholars and historians are of the opinion that, Kharoshthi script based on Aramaic developed at Takṣaśilā only. Takṣaśilā is

also known for minting of coins and referred as, 'city of minting coin'. Music and dance also constituted relevant part of the curricula. This Centre is also known as the city of the great grammarian, Panini.

Even Buddhism was closely associated with Takṣaśilā as the Mahayana sect of Buddhism grew and took a mature and intellectual shape at this very Centre of learning. Hence the Buddhist traditions honor this institution significantly and attach a great deal of academic importance. In Buddhist tales, Jatakas, Takṣaśilā has been mentioned as capital city of the Kingdom of Gandhara. But historians have disputed Takṣaśilā being the capital of Gandhara.

Beyond India, Takṣaśilā has found important mentions and references in Greek-Roman literary sources. The Greek historians have described Takṣaśilā as wealthy, prosperous and well managed city of that period. Also the Persian Achaemenid rulers were in close



Courtesy: <https://www.diarystore.com/takshashila-university-worlds-first-oldest-university-taksha-institute>

contact with Takṣaśilā Centre and later on annexed areas near to Takṣaśilā and Gandhara. They did not stop here, the importance of Takṣaśilā and Gandhara was so stimulating to them that they decided to annex and make it part of their own empire. The Achaemenids rule continued unabated till the arrival of Alexander of Macedonia. With the Achaemenids conquest of Takṣaśilā, the existing Takṣaśilā University developed a cosmopolitan environment in which various cultures and ethnicities were seen interacting and exchanging knowledge and wisdom. It is widely believed that close followers of Buddha and his contemporaries had visited Achaemenid Takṣaśilā for acquiring knowledge, intelligence and acumen and these experiences and gain of knowledge and wisdom must have benefited even lord Buddha. As a hub of Buddhism, this Centre of learning served as a meeting point of various cultures, namely the Achaemenid, Greeks, Mauryas, Scythians, Parthians, Kushans, Huns and eventually the Muslims. The importance of Takṣaśilā had been instrumental in attracting students and scholars from various parts of the world. Scholars from China, Greece and Persia were common visitors both in Takṣaśilā and Nalanda Universities at a later period. According to the Jatakas, even students from Arab world visited this Centre of learning. The qualifying age for admission into Takṣaśilā University was sixteen.

As a center of trade, Takṣaśilā had been popularly known in the trading world. It was not only

When the importance of this city as the great ancient trade routes (Silk Road Trade Route) connecting major parts of the world increased, rivalry surpassed and unfortunately this great Centre of learning and culture and trade suffered at the hands of Hunas (Huna), the Central Asian tribes in 5th century C.E.

a Buddhist Centre of learning but a strategically located city on the famous Silk Road that connected East to the West, the Greek writer Megasthenes has described the one route coming from the eastern part of India as 'Royal Highway' with major importance attached to it from the perspective of trade and commerce. Thus, Takṣaśilā flourished both economically and culturally. Takṣaśilā presents eighteen locations of cultural importance. It is due to these significant cultural values, UNESCO has declared Takṣaśilā as one of the important Centres of Cultural Heritage of the world. When the importance of this city as the great ancient trade routes (Silk Road Trade Route) connecting major parts of the world increased, rivalry surpassed and unfortunately this great Centre of learning and culture and trade suffered at the hands of Hunas (Huna), the Central Asian tribes in 5th century C.E.

Undoubtedly, Takṣaśilā was a unique Centre of learning with princes, nobles found their ways to this city in search of knowledge and wisdom. It was a Centre of learning and training, where both religious and political life found better opportunities to grow intellectually. Cities in Takṣaśilā valley presented exclusive examples of developed form of

urban life. The cities like Bhir Mound, the Parthian City at Sirkap and the Kushan City at Sirsukh were highly advanced and contributed well in the growth of the Centre of learning. It is extraordinarily significant for Buddhist monasteries, sanctuaries, stupas and temples. The great contribution and scholarly efforts of Sir J.H. Marshall are well recognized in the re-invention of Takṣaśilā. It was only possible through his deep archaeological interest and dedication. It was also a powerful international trade and commerce route in the history of ancient India in the Age of Buddha and Gandhara and witnessed vast encounter between great cultures. Takṣaśilā should always be remembered for its contribution to world civilizations and exclusivity as a Centre of learning and Culture. ■

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Dr. Shahbaz Amil

# Takṣaśilā: The Oldest University of the World

Takṣaśilā, one of the most precious gems of Gandhāra, was not only a centre of higher learning, but also an intellectual hub of Bharatvarsha. An insight into its genres of studies, faculties, administration and life

The credit of being the first international institute of advanced learning goes to one established and founded at Takṣaśilā in the North Western part of Indian peninsula. The University symbolizes the zenith of human achievement in terms of knowledge in aggregate; the subjects taught and researched there cannot be paralleled with the modern concept of disciplines in academics available today. It is believed that the university was established by the Kuru Prince, Duryodhana in order to commemorate the birth place of his mother Gandhari. This university lies at the centre which connects the Central Asia with India and the West Asia. According to the Pliny this university was situated at the fifty five miles east of the river Sindhu. It was an important learning centre of Buddhism during the period of Kushan rulers. This university also became famous because Takṣaśilā was the commercial hub as well as located at the meeting point of the triangular trade routes of the world.

The decline of the university corresponds to the invasion of Takṣaśilā by Huns in 455 C.E. It was first reported by Fahien who

visited India in 400 C.E. Fahien did not notice anything of educational importance when he visited Takṣaśilā. The university was destroyed along with almost all the original manuscripts during the invasion. However some Buddhist bhikshus managed to escape to China through tunnels with some of the rare manuscripts<sup>2</sup>.

## Admission Process

The admission was based on merit and personality; any person of any background of any caste can be admitted subject to their understanding of basics of the education. The eligibility criteria for the admission were set at the age of sixteen when students have completed their undergraduate studies from different *Ashramas* (schools). Actually admission was never a problem for those who had the requisite qualifications namely, freedom from jealousy, straightforwardness and self-control. In fact, teachers were eager for students and offered prayer for that<sup>3</sup>.

Jatakas mentioned the stories of princes at the age of sixteen were sent to Takṣaśilā by Kings for advanced learning<sup>4</sup>, besides some kings also awarded scholarships

to other students. Jotipala, a Brahmin boy from Banaras was sent by the ruler for specialising in the skill of archery<sup>5</sup>. Some students also accompanied their princes to get training in different academic fields. The amount of fees demanded from such students was around one thousand gold coins. Those who were unable to pay the amount carried out physical labour in exchange<sup>6</sup>. Such students received education at night. All students may not necessarily be boarders; many were day scholars also. Prince Jhuna of Banaras lived in a rented accommodation outside during his stay<sup>7</sup>.

Students enrolled at the university were free to choose their subjects of learning. The method of imparting knowledge differs from programme to programme. Both theoretical and practical parts were given prominence: practicals followed theoretical. In many disciplines, the practical work was to be followed after the completion of the study. Of course, someone who remembers scriptures word by word and does not understand the meaning and does not practice it in real life was debarred from admission and relieved in between his course of study.

The personality growth of students was the only

certificate and degree; there was no convocation kind of thing for awarding the degree<sup>8</sup>. Knowledge was regarded as true reward using it for any monetary benefit was considered immoral<sup>9</sup>.

The student was not allowed to advance further unless he thoroughly mastered his preceding levels<sup>10</sup>. Normally specialisation in various subjects of study took eight years, but the period could be reduced or lengthen in accordance with the intellectual capacity of the students and the amount of energy and application shown by them<sup>11</sup>.

Teaching activities of the university were not under any control. It was generally managed by the scholars of the institutes. Each teacher was an institution within himself and enjoyed complete autonomy in his work. His authority was final in fixing up the duration of the course, in directing the courses of studies, in selecting or rejecting students and in laying down rules for guiding the day-to-day work<sup>12</sup>.

Every Scholar was independent for his work; study was terminated when the teacher was satisfied with the students' level of achievement. At the completion of the study the student paid something to his teacher by way of *Dakshina*,

but the sum thus paid was never sufficient to cover the expenses of his education. Many times it was only a turban, a pair of sandals, an umbrella or upper garments<sup>13</sup>.

This seat of learning attracted students from far of places like, Rajgrih, Banaras, Ujjain, Mithila, Kosala, Madhya Desa and from the Kuru Kingdoms in the north etc. in India and Persia, Arabs, Greeks, Chinese etc from abroad. Takṣaśilā was, thus, the intellectual capital of India, a central university that exercised suzerainty over the world of letters in India. All the other centres of learning in different parts of the country were affiliated to it<sup>14</sup>.

### Courses Offered

At this University, subjects taught were not institutionalised (static), but were evolutionary; every teacher was an institution within the campus and outside. The range of courses offered at Takṣaśilā was both fundamental and applied in nature. The applied ones mainly consisted of the scientific or technical courses named as *Shilpas*. The technique of teaching of the Vedas was oral (*Shruti*) and learning of the same was memorisation (*Smriti*). More than 60 courses pertaining to different subjects were taught here. Subjects such as, the Vedas, the Vedanta, Linguistics, Aurveda, Surgery, eighteen crafts (*Shilpas*), Military training including the warfare and archery, Astronomy, Agriculture, Commerce, Politics and many more were taught at the university. Of course India has been renowned for its scientific

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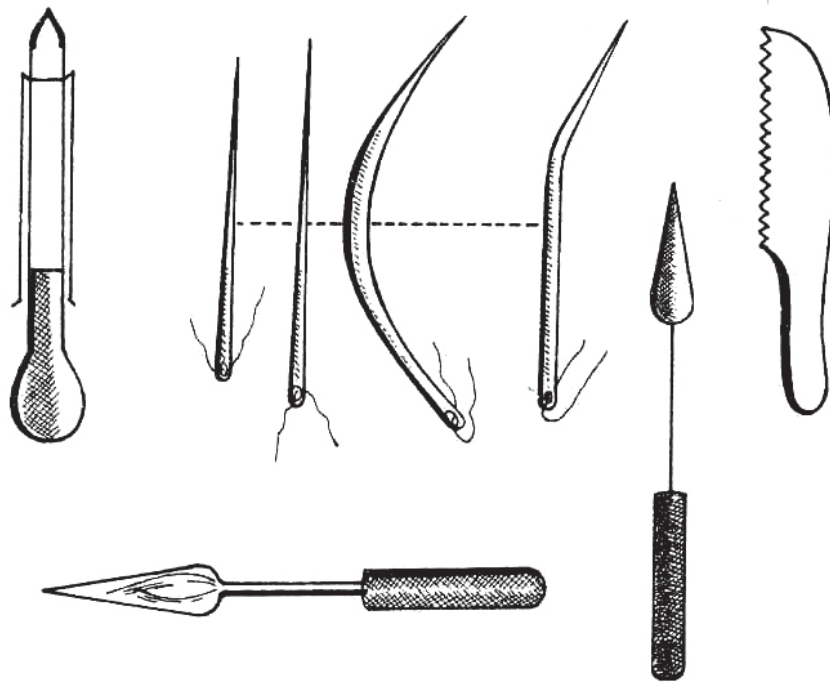


and intellectual endeavours in various disciplines since time immemorial. The Intellectual tradition of India many times and in many ways surpasses even the modern world. The existence of an institution of such magnanimity around three millennia ago highlights Indian intellectual pursuits in the field of science, humanity, social and political economy, linguistics, law and philosophy etc. These are evident in the conglomerate of academic disciplines studied, taught and researched at Takṣaśilā by an aggregate of scholars and teachers who were mastered in their own domains. There was no administrative and academic hierarchy as is found in any or all modern institutions of the world.

This university was prominent for its medical education; the duration of the course was seven year after which the students acquired expertise in the field of medicine and surgery. Complicated surgeries, like those of skulls and stomach were performed here. Every medical student was expected to have command in medicinal botany since they were taught to treat the ill ones by plant and herbs having medicinal efficacy. Once the student completed his education, he was allowed to depart and practice medical and surgical treatment. Snake bites were treated effectively. A practical training was given to the students in use of surgical instruments<sup>15</sup>.

The institute of military science at this university was particularly meant for the training of princes. The average attending strength of students in this department was around

### Surgical instruments used by Susruta



*Surgical Equipments of Sushruta*

Courtesy: [https://haribhakt.com/wpcontent/uploads/2015/01/sushruta\\_surgical\\_devices\\_instruments.jpg](https://haribhakt.com/wpcontent/uploads/2015/01/sushruta_surgical_devices_instruments.jpg)

103 but once it increased to 500. The military school offered training in archery, mountain-climbing and wrestling. *Sanjiva Jataka* mentions that the science of witchcraft was one of the subjects that were taught in the university<sup>16</sup>. A variety of mysterious spells were also taught at the university.

The university accommodated above ten thousand students and two thousand faculty members. Thus, the Teacher and student ratio was around one is to five. The campus had three hundred lectures halls, laboratories, an observatory and a huge library that spanned into three buildings namely Ratnasagar, Ratnadavi and Ratnayanjak. The university had in its library a vast collection of manuscripts

on a variety of subjects such as religion, polity, literature, medicine and philosophy<sup>17</sup>. The system of classification used in the library was worked out by Panini the great<sup>18</sup>.

### Alumni

Faculty and students of this university were who's who of that period in India. The father of Linguistics, Panini was both a student and teacher at this university. He has codified the principle of language structure in a very brief book, *Aṣṭādhyāyī* is the grammar of any language of the world. All the modern linguistic theories have emerged from this. Noam Chomsky proclaims that he owes a lot to Panini whose mathematical work in his grammar is considered as the harbinger

of computer science<sup>19</sup>. Other scholars like Pingla, younger brother of Panini, and Patanjali (writer of *Mahābhāṣya*) were students and teachers of this university.

Chanakya, the mentor and preceptor of Chandragupta Maurya who led the foundation of the Mauryan Empire was a professor of this university. It is believed that he composed the *Arthashastra* which consists of fifteen books based on statecraft, administrative skills and economic policies while studying there. Vishnu Sharma, the author of *Panchtantra*, Jotipal, Commander in chief of Banaras, with great proficiency in archery and military science and Prasenajit, the learned ruler of Kosala were alumni of this university.

*Charak*, the famous Ayurvedic physician who simplified *Agniveṣa Samhitā* into the *Carak Samhitā* and also incorporated his research of medicinal plants was a

**Charak, the famous Ayurvedic physician who simplified Agniveṣa Samhitā into the Carak Samhitā and also incorporated his research of medicinal plants was a student of this seat of learning. Jivaka, the great physician who specialised in pulse reading graduated from here**

student of this seat of learning. Jivaka, the great physician who specialised in pulse reading graduated from here. He was the court physician of Bimbisara, the king of Magadh and personal physician of Buddha. He also invented a cure for filariasis and has fifteen thousand handwritten manuscripts which are still preserved in India today.

### Conclusion

Takṣaśilā was the oldest and most renowned institution of higher education and the intellectual hub of ancient India. It was the centre of intellectual activities in ancient India and almost all other institutions

of the country of that period were affiliated to it. It got its prominence because it gathered in it the best scholars and intellects of ancient times who were believed to be authority over the disciplines they taught and in their respective fields. The students, after bearing hardships of travel, reached Takṣaśilā to obtain advance education not only from distant parts of India but also from other parts of the World. Even kings used to send their sons far away from palace life to Takṣaśilā with a purpose to train them in discipline and gesture. It signifies the importance of education in India even at those points of time. ■

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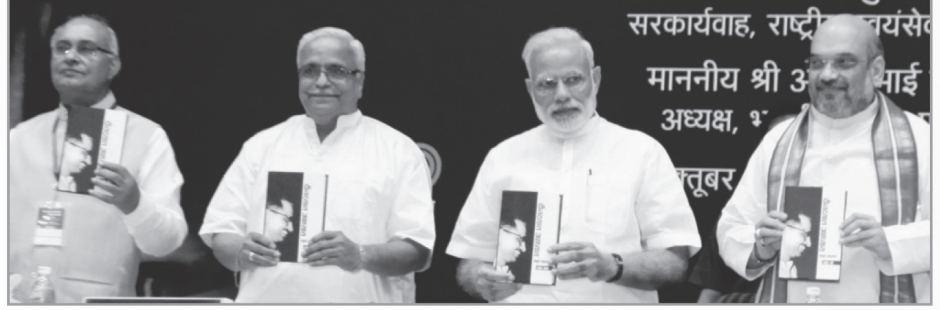


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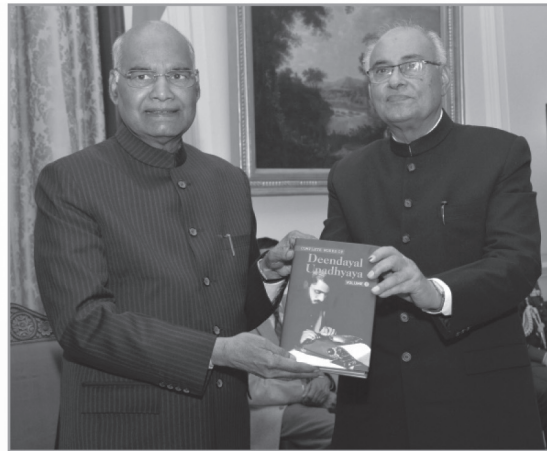
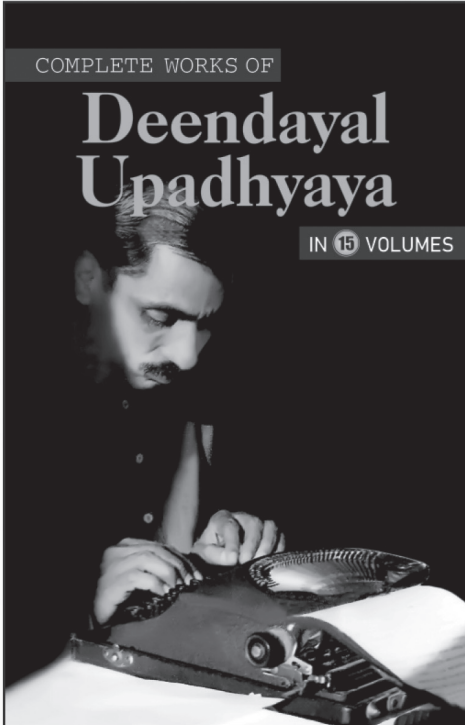
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