

DEVELOPMENT OF BUDDHISTIC ART AND ARCHITECTURE OF KASHMIR FROM 3rd CENTURY.B.C TO A.D. 13th CENTURY.

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Abstract: Buddhistic art and architecture seems to have obtained a footing in Kashmir valley, during the 3rd century B.C. From 3rd century B.C to 13th century A.D. Kashmir was ruled by the rulers of Mauryan, Kushan, Gonanda, Hun, Karkota, Utpala, Lohara and Dev dynasties, except the rulers of Huna and Dev dynasties, the Buddhistic art and architecture of Kashmir got liberal patronage from time to time. Many rulers of Mauryan, Kushan, Gananda, Karkota, Utpala and Lohara dynasties built many Viharas, Mathas, Chaityas, Stupas, Scluptures of Lord Buddha and Bodhisatvas and similar other structures.

Keyword: Development , Architecture , Buddhistic Art , liberal patronage ,

INTRODUCTION:

We learn from Kalhana's Rajtarangani that the development of Buddhistic art and architecture of Kashmir begin from the reign period of Mauryan emperor Ashoka. The emperor built in the valley numerous Stupas, some of which were existing as late as the time of Chinese pilgrim Hiuen-Tsang's visit. The Buddhistic art and architecture of Kashmir entered its golden phase under the patronage of Kushan kings who came to occupy the valley about the end of A.D. Ist century. The Kushan kings built many Viharas, Mathas, Chaityas and towns. Not only the Kushan kings, but local rulers of Gonanda dynasty of Kashmir also seem to have patronized the Buddhist art and architecture of Kashmir valley in the early centuries of Christian era. (1)

Hiuen-Tsang entered Kashmir during the period of Karkotas. The kings of the Karkota dynasty were followers of Hinduism. But some of the monarch's of this dynasty also gave liberal patronage to the Buddhistic art and architecture like Durlabhavardhan's wife, Lalitaditya . Like Karkota monarchs many rulers of Utpala and Lohara dynasties also gave liberal patronage to Buddhist art and architecture, because it is almost definite that Buddha was held in high honour in Kashmir up to the last days of the Hindu rule e.g. a stone inscription, generally taken to have been dated A.D, 1197 has been discovered at Arigon (Ancient Hadigrane), about 15 miles south- west of Srinagar city. The inscription opens with a salutation to Buddha Avalokitesvara and exalts him with glorious titles. (2)

The development of Buddhistic art and architecture of Kashmir valley from 3rd century B.C. to A.D. 13th century during the reign period of different dynasties is carefully mentioned as under:-

1. During Mauryan Dynasty: The Rajatarangini states that

Mauryas extended their sway in 3rd century B.C. in the valley and King Ashoka, who embraced Buddhism, set up Viharas and erected Stupas in Srinagari, the modern Srinagar city. Ashoka, also built the town of Srinagari (modern Srinagar). (3)

Kalhana tells us that Ashoka himself was a Buddhist, who built many Buddhist Stupas on the banks of the Vitasta (river Jehlum). He also built a Chaitya so high that its top could not be seen. Again Kalhana mentions that Ashoka pulled down the wall of an old Hindu temple and built a new wall to it, and the writer of the "Ain-i-Akbari" Abul Fazl is therefore, probably right in saying that Ashoka abolished the Brahminic sites and substituted those of Jina. (4)

It is mentioned that there were 500 monasteries in Kashmir at the time of Ashoka and he built a Buddhist monastery between Pandrathan and the nearby steep hill-side. (5)

It is Perhaps true that Ashoka repaired the temple at Vijays near Bijbehara in district Anantnag. The temple is said to have been so high as to have thrown a shadow a Kos (1 Kos= 2 miles) long at the time of sunrise. (6)

According to Kalhana the son of Ashoka, called Jalauka succeeded him in Kashmir. Jalauka was a staunch follower of Shaivism and did not favour Buddhism in the beginning, but later on showed consideration to it by building a Buddhist Vihara named "Karityasrama." (7)

2. During Kushan Dynasty: After the Mauryas Kashmir valley was occupied by the Kushans or Tartars. Three of their kings are supposed to have ruled simultaneously. They are Hushka, Zushka and Kainshka. These three kings founded three towns in Kashmir like Huska founded Aushkar near Badgam, Zushkr founded Zugar near the Nasim Bagh, Srinagar and Kanishka founded Kanisapur. (8)

Harwan (34°09' North latitude and 74°54' East longitude) is situated 3kms. beyond Shalimar garden in Srinagar. It is referred in Kalhan's Rajatarangini under the name of "Shadarhadwan" grove of six saints. It is also mentioned by Kalhana that famous Buddhist philosopher, Nagarjuna, lived here in the reign of Kanishka. (9).

An informative (label) board installed by A.S.I. Kashmir circle in front of Harwan monuments gives information that the 4th Buddhist council was held here during the reign of Kanishka and the monuments of Harwan were constructed by him.

At Harwan large quantities of small pebbles were available. So buildings were constructed at first with pebbles and mud mortar. The small enclosures as well as the wall around the apsidal Chaitya built in this fashion belongs to earlier phase. (10)

The pebble style probably could not be a durable structure. Some improvement was made on it. When the wall is reinforced with the insertion of irregular blocks of stone at intervals. This type of structure may be called diaper-pebble style like the style of apsidal temple. The diaper pebble style was replaced by what may be called diaper rubble style, in which the walls were composed of large stones with spaces filled with smaller stones like the Stupa and sleeping rooms. (11)

The temple, almost in ruins, is square in front side and round at the back. The building accommodation consists of a spacious rectangular antichamber with a circular sanctum behind. The plan of this temple is like the Buddhist Stupa. The Stupa is surrounded by a rectangular courtyard about 85x70 feet and its height is 2 feet. The monastery which is made of stones in which less quantity of mortar was used is rectangular in plan which measures 34x46 feet and its height is 2 feet 10 inches. The pebble wall is in the form of English letter "L" is only built of small pebbles. The pebbles shine like mirror pieces. The pebbles are very carefully packed by mud. The four sleeping rooms are built of large stone boulders. The spaces between large stones were filled with smaller stones like the Stupa which is called "diaper rubble style". (12)

A large number of terracotta, figures mainly busts or heads of Buddha, Bodhisattvas and Buddhist monks have been recovered from another ancient site, Uskur (Huviskapura) and are assignable stylistically to the A.D. 4th or 5th century. In fact, the Uskur art is a religious one centered round the cult of the Sakya prince. In Uskur art Buddha, sometimes in his contemplative look or with eyes closed altogether was shown. Buddha was also shown with a delicate face and a crown over his head is a charming as ever. In another statue of Buddha prominent veins coming out on the face with rude look on the eyes are shown. (13)

3. Gananda Dynasty: The local rulers of Kashmir has also seen to have patronized the Buddhist art and architecture of Kashmir in the early centuries of Christian era like Meghavahana, the ruler of Gonanda dynasty built many Viharas and his chief queen "Amritprabha" erected a Vihara for Buddhist monks, which was called "Amratabhavana".

Another notable king of this dynasty was Praversena. His maternal uncle Jayendra built a Vihara and

erected a statue of Buddha. His ministers like Sarvartna, Jaya and Skandagupta erected many Viharas and Chaityas. But these monuments are now not available. (14)

4. Karkota Dynasty: King Lalitaditya and his court spent a lot of wealth on the construction of his splendid capital, Parihaspura. Parihaspura is about 13 miles from North-west of Srinagar which was founded in A.D. 750. (15)

At Parihaspura at least some Buddhist ruins can still be seen, and they are indeed very impressive. Lalitaditya's Chaitya, which once harbored a gigantic Buddha image, monastery called Raj-vihara and finally the Stupa erected by his Tokharian minister Chankuna are noteworthy. (16)

The Chaitya of Parihaspura is a square chamber on a raised plinth and measures 8x8m. It is surrounded by a circumbulatory passage and supported at the corners by a set of four stone columns. Today only the base of these columns has survived. The royal monastery of Lalitaditya called Raj-vihara is built to the south of Stupa. The monastery is a quadrangle of 26 cells fronted by running a verandah. The cell in the centre of wall is larger than the rest and must have been used as shrine for the large Buddha image. All the cells are around the open square courtyard. The cells were built of stones and the space between these cells was filled with mud. The Stupa consists a double platform, one above the other, these platforms are built of stones. The base of the Stupa is square in plan and measures 74x74m. The drum of the Stupa has been ornamented with niches containing standing and seated figures of Buddha and Bodhisattvas. Jaypida another ruler of Karkota dynasty set up three images of Buddha and a large Vihara in Jayapura, modern Andrakot. (17)

5. During Utpala Dynasty: Queen Didda of Utpala dynasty built monasteries or Mathas and a Vihara. The most interesting is Diddamatha. (18) Now- a- days, the Diddamatha is called as Diddamar and the ruins of the structure are still visible on the right bank of the river Jehlum in Srinagar.

6. Lohara Dynasty: The Buddhist Stupa at Malangpur of king Harsha's reign of Lohara dynasty is situated at a distance of 34 Km. south-east of Srinagar. It lies half way between Avantipora and Payar. (19)

The only part of Malangpur Stupa that is in position being the base. The Stupa is square with two projections on either side and large staircases, the most interesting feature of the ruins are the sculptured reliefs, which adorn interesting. The exterior of the either side of the walls of the stairs is only partly preserved, but the complete group represents a man, who is flying. The creature half brute and half reptile are horned, winged with huge eyes. This is the scene as depicted on the left flank wall of the southern staircase. On the right flanking wall of the western stair, the ornamental wheels are much better preserved. (20)

Buddhist art and architecture received patronage from king Jayasimha. Many Buddhist viharas were built or repaired during his period. He completed the construction of Sullavihara, which was started by his uncle, Uccala. Another vihara, built by the queen Ratnadevi, also received the kings

care. The king's minister Ralhana constructed a vihara in memory of his wife Sussala. Cinta, the wife of Jayasimha's commander, Dhanya by name, commenced the construction of a vihara, but could not complete the structure, due to his premature death. Then Jayasimha, himself made arrangements for its completion. (21)

CONCLUSION:

It is almost definite that the Buddhist art and architecture of Kashmir made much development and progress from 3rd century B.C up to the last days of the Hindu rule i.e. A.D. 13th century. Probably all the Buddhist and many Hindu rulers of different dynasties during this period gave liberal patronage to the Buddhist art and architecture of Kashmir. Many Stupas, Viharas, monasteries, statues of Buddha, Buddhist monks and Bodhisattvas were built under the care of royal patronage.

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