

Study Material for Semester- II
Paper – Mauryan and Gupta Empire (Core-3)
Given By- Suvendu Saha, (Assistant Prof) Dept. of History,
Bidhan Chandra College, Asansol

The Empire of Kushana: Ancient History of India

Sources:

Despite many gaps that still exist in our knowledge about the rise and fall of the Kushanas, we have a wealth of historical materials about this period and the Kushanas are much better known to Indian history than their immediate predecessors the Pahlavas and the Sakas.

Evidences—numismatic, epigraphic and literary—partly indigenous and partly foreign as also sculptural and architectural remains make the task of the historians rather baffling, particularly because of the conflicting testimony offered by them.

About the migration of the Yue-chi tribe from the Kan-su and Ning-hsia regions, west of the Huang-ho River in China to India, we have Chinese source of information. Among the foreign literary sources, reference may be made to the Chinese historian Pan-ku's History of the First Han Dynasty (Tsien Han-shu), history of the later Han dynasty (Hon Han-shu) by Fan-ye, chronicle of Ma-twan-lin, account of Chang-kien, the Chinese ambassador to Bactria, account of Chinese traveler Hiuen-Tsang, etc.

Indigenous literature like the epic, the Puranas, Kalkya's Rajatarangini, Asvaghosa's Buddhacharita, Kumaralata's Kalpanamandika, Nagarjuna's Madhyamikasutra threw a flood of light on the history of the Kushanas.

The numismatic evidence about the Kushana period is of great importance in the reconstruction of the history of the Kushanas. The coins struck by the Kushana kings only help us in determining their chronology but also give us a clear idea of their religion. From the distribution of their coins an idea of the expanse of the Kushana Empire can be had. The extent of the Roman influence on the Kushana currency can as well be understood from the coins of the time.

We have a large number of inscriptions of the Kushana period. A few Kharosthi inscriptions are assumed by some scholars to contain reference to the first Kushana. The Takht-i-Bahi inscription of the time of Gondophernes makes reference to prince Kopa who has been identified with Kujula Kadphises.

In the Panjtar inscription where Maharaja Kushana is mentioned, could not be anybody other than Kushana King Kujula Kadphises. There is also another interesting document of the early Kushana period recovered at 'chir tope' near the site of the city of Sirkap. In the silver scroll inscription there is mention of Maharaja Rajatiraja Devoputra Kushana.

Archaeological remains like Stupas, Chaityas, sculptured figures, palaces, etc. furnish us with important source material for the period. The remains of Purushapura, the specimens of Gandhara art, Amaravati art, etc. not only speak of the cultural and artistic excellence of the time but also indicate the extent of foreign influence.

Origin and the Rise of the Kushanas:

On the basis of the Chinese sources it has long been held by scholars that the Kushanas were a branch of the Yue-chi who conquered Bactria and also expelled the Sakas from the Bactrian border land towards the south. In early second century B.C. the Yue-chi were living in Kan-su and Ninyhsia regions south of the river Huang- ho.

They were expelled from their homeland by the Hiung-nu, another tribe about the first quarter of the second century B.C. The Yue-chi divided into two unequal hordes, the lesser horde came to be known as the little Ye-chi and the large horde as great Yue-chi. This larger group trekking westward vanquished a number of Saka tribes on the upper courses of the river Hi and settled there for about three decades before a part of this group was subjugated by another nomadic tribe called Wu-sun, the remaining people withdrew further west and settled in the north of the river Oxus.

When the Chinese ambassador Chang-kien visited Bactria, he found these people dominant in the rich and fertile country north of the Oxus. Ta-hia, i.e., the people of Bactria seem to have been subjected to the rule of the Yue-chi. The Yue-chi, in course of time gave up their nomadic life.

It is generally held that the Kushanas were a section of the Yue-chi and this inference is based on the annals of the earlier and later Han Dynasties—the Tsian Han-shu and Hou Han-shu. But there is a little discrepancy between the relevant statements in these two Chinese annals Tsien Han-shu by Panku and Hou Han-shu by Fan-ye, written at different times.

While in the former work it is said that the Ta Yue-chi subjugated the Ta-hia country which was divided into five hi-hous, i.e., districts, each under a chief, the other work mentions that the Yue-chi divided the Ta-hai into five districts hi-hous. It has been pointed by some scholars that the Yue-chi found the Ta-hia country divided into five districts each under a small chiefs which tore of Sai origin definitely prove that the Yue-chi subjugated the Sakas.

Some other scholars are of the opinion that because of Yue-chi divided the Ta-hia country into five district hi-hous which were under small chiefs of Saka origin shows that the Yue-chi themselves were Sakas. This interpretation that the Kushanas did not belong to the Yue-chi stock was first propounded by the Japanese scholar Kuwabara Jitzue and was accepted by Karlgren, Sten Konow, Haneda Toru, Paul Pelliot, etc. W. W. Taru, however, vehemently rejects the theory and asserts that the Kushanas were a branch of the Yue-chi.

The older view that the Kushanas belonged to the Yue-chi stock commends itself for the simple reason that both the Chinese annals of Panku and Fan-ye agree to the major point that the Yue-chi came to occupy Ta-hia region which was later on aggrandised.

The latest attempt to solve the problem relating to the nationality of the Yue-chi and the Kushanas has been made by the American scholar Maenchen-Helfen. He asserts that there is, in fact, no discrepancy in the two Chinese annals, and that the Kushanas were among five hi-hous as such were feudatories of the Yue-chi king. Maenchen-Helfen's opinion rests on a skillful appraisal of all available historical and linguistic data affecting the ancient composite tribe.

Now if we turn to Fan-ye's annals Hou Han-shu we find that the Kushanas (Kueishuang) was one of the five district hi-hous. After more than hundred years the Chief of the Kushana

group named Kiu-tsiu-kio (Kujula Kadphises) attacked and annihilated the four other chiefs and made himself lord and then invaded Parthia, Kabul, Kipin, Pota and became the complete master of the area.

Kui-tsiu-kio died at the age of eighty and his son Yen-Kao-tchen succeeded him and in his turn conquered India, apparently the kingdom of Taxila and established there a chief for governing it. From this time the Yue-chi became extremely powerful. All other countries designated them Kushana after their king, but Han retained the old name, and called the Ta Yue-chi.

The Yue-chi (Kushanas) seem not only to have imbibed many cultural traits of the Sakas, but also to have absorbed a large Saka ethnic element much in the same way as the Sakas of another region appear to have incorporated an appreciable quantity of Parthian traits during their long sojourn in eastern Iran, before they invaded India.

The Kushana Kings:

I. Kujula Kadphises (c 15-65 A.D.):

Kiu-tsiu-kio mentioned in the annals of the later Han dynasty has been identified by scholars with Kujula Kadphises who was the first Kushana king about whom we know definitely. He was originally the Chief of one of the divisions of the Yue-chi who ultimately succeeded in bringing other divisions to subjection and made himself the sole monarch Of the Yue-chi nation.

There is a good deal of controversy about the date of the first Kushana king. At first it was suggested that the Indo-Greek king who sought the help of the Kushana chief against the Parthians and eventually allowed some position to his barbarian ally both in adm-nistration and territory was none other than Kujula Kadphises. After sometime the Indo-Greek king Hermaues disappeared from the scene, either by death or forcible removal and the Kushana chief became paramount in Kabul region.

Rapson has demonstrated the untenability of this view basing his argument on' the numismatic evidence that Kujula Kadphises could not have succeeded Hemaues and these two were separated by a long gap of time.

On the basis of the Takht-i-Bahi inscription Sten Konow suggests that Kujula Kadphises was not a chief in c 45 A.D. far less the master of all the five Yue-chi tribes. The Chinese account of the aggrandizement of power by Kui-tsiu-kio corroborated by Pantiar inscription bearing the date 122 corresponding to 64 A.D. wherein there is men-tion of Maharaja Cushana refer to none other than Kujula Kadphises.

Konow further suggests that the Kushana dominion extended during Kujula Kadphises' time upto Taxila. The Taxila scroll of 78 A.D. which mentions Maharaja Rajatiraja Devaputra Kushana is accord-ing to Sir John Marshall and Sten Konow none else than Kujula Kadphises.

Dr. H. C. Raichaudhuri and Dr. D. C. Sarkar do not accept the view of Sten Konow in placing Kujula Kadphises to so late a period. They point out the Maharaja Rajatiraja Devaputra Kushana mentioned in the Taxila scroll was not a king of the Kadphises of king, it was a title adopted a Kushana group of kings. Dr. Smith places Kad- phises-I between 40 and 70 A.D.

But according to Dr. R. K. Mukherjee and Dr. D. C. Sarkar Kadphises-I ruled from 15 to 65 A.D. This view is corroborated by the numismatic evidence.

According to Dr. Smith Kujula Kadphises-I wrested Kabul valley from the Parthians, made himself master of Gandhara and Bactria, as also extended his sway upto Taxila. Thus his empire extended from the borders of Persia to the Indus.

Many coins bearing the name of Kadphises-I have been discovered. In the earlier coins there is no royal title in the legend but in coins issued later royal title appears. From this it is presumed that he may have begun his career as a vassal of the Greek king Hermaeus with whose assistance perhaps he had brought the other four divisions of the Yue-chi to subjection. But this view is very much controversial.

The epithets adopted by Kadphises-I, namely dhramathida and Sachadharmathida meaning established in true faith may indicate that he was a worshipper either of Buddha or Siva. One of the coins of Kadphises has a figure on it which the numismatists interpret as Buddha seated in the conventional picture. But the figure has also been taken to represent Siva by some scholars.

Kadphises' coins with a diademed head on its obverse shows the Roman influence, for it was a close imitation of the coins of Emperor Augustus or his successor Tiberius. Kadphises was succeeded by his son Kadphises-II, also known as Wima Kadphises.

Kadphises-II (65-75 A.D.):

Dr. Smith assigns to Kadphises-II (Wima Kadphises) a period of rule from 70 A.D. to 110 A.D. But Dr. R. K. Mukherjee, Dr. H. C. Raichaudhuri, Dr. D. C. Sarkar and others do not accept Smith's view as correct. They fix his reign from 65 A.D. to 75 A.D. Sten Konow and Sir John Marshall's opinion that Kadphises-II came to the throne in 78 A.D. from which the Saka era (Sakabda) is counted is also considered untenable by modern scholars, for this view has not been corroborated by any independent evidence.

In a statute discovered nine miles north of Mathura the name of Kushana King Wima appears on the inscription reading Kushanaputra shahi Vematakshama. The word takshama is an Old Persian word meaning strong. From the inscription it is known that Vema the strong scion of the Kushana race. This Vema is identified with Wima Kadphises-II. This gives us an indication of the personality of Kadphises-II.

Kadphises-II was a valiant warrior and a successful conqueror. As a prince he conquered Gandhara as the lieutenant of his father. On ascending the throne Kadphises resumed his father's policy of conquering Indian territories and from the Chinese annals we know that he carried his arms into the Punjab, a considerable part of the Gangetic Valley and probably upto Benares. He had also conquered Mathura. His empire thus comprised the entire territories from the borders of Persia upto Mathura and probably upto Benares. He appointed a governor to rule over his Indian conquests on his behalf.

According to Dr. V. A. Smith, the Chinese General Pan-chao led his victorious army to the boundaries of the Roman Empire and forced the kings of Khotan, Kashgarh and others to buy peace by timely submission. Kadphises-II was naturally alarmed and in his effort to establish peaceful relations with China proposed marriage with a Chinese Princess.

This assertion of equal status by Kadphises was taken as an insult and the envoy sent by Kadphises was arrested by General Pan-chao. Kadphises sent an army of 70,000 cavalry under the command of his viceroy named Sic. The difficult terrain through which Sic passed caused much exhaustion to his army which was also decimated. The result was defeat of Kadphises' army. Kadphises was obliged to agree to the term of paying tribute to the Chinese emperor.

Kadphises-II opened up path of commercial intercourse with China and Rome. It was he who had sent an embassy to the Roman emperor Trajan. He issued gold coins of Roman weight and standard besides an extensive number of copper coins. Some gold coins of Kadphises-II were issued in imitation of the Greek coins.

The great influx of Roman gold through commerce accounted for the economic prosperity under Kadphises-II. Indian spices, silk, gems were much in demand in Rome. Pliny bitterly complained against drainage of Roman gold to India. In order to stop the drainage of Roman gold to India, import of Indian goods was banned in Rome by legislation.

Kadphises-II became a zealous convert to Pasupata or Mahesvara creed. He is supposed to have been converted to Saivism some time before his formal accession. This is presumed from the fact that the reverse device of his coins almost invariably consists of Siva with a long trident and sometimes accompanied by a bull. His coins not only indicate his religious belief but also accession to great power for the obverse of his coins depicts him as the Lord of the Worlds, the Great King, King of Kings, etc.

There is a difference of opinion as to the succession to the Kushana throne after Kadphises-II. Some scholars suggest a period of conflict and confusion soon after the death of Kadphises and Kanishka-I had to suppress the disorder before, accession. Dr. D. C. Sarkar, how-ever, remarks that it is not altogether impossible that the issuer of the Soter Megas coins was the semi-independent governor of the Indian possession of Wema and is mentioned in the Panjtar inscription of AD. 65, and that Kujala Kara Kadphises, probably identical with the Kushana ruler mentioned in the Taxila inscription of A. D. 79, was the governor's son and successor.

According to him for a Short period after the death of Wema, Kujala Kara and probably also his father towards the end of his life ruled independently. Some nameless coins of the period have also been taken by Dr. Sarkar and some other scholars to justify the contention that there was a period of turmoil when the local governors assumed independence and even extended their influence over Kabul and Kandahar region. They were ultimate-ly overthrown by Kanishka-I.

Kanishka:

His Date:

There is a sharp controversy about Kanishka's date centering round two points:

- (1) Whether the Kanishka group preceded or succeeded the Kadphises group, and
- (2) Whether Kanishka started his rule in 78 A.D. or later or earlier.

(1) Cunningham was the first writer to sponsor the theory that Kanishka's era started from 58 B.C. which came to be known after-wards as Vikrama Samvat: Cunningham, however, gave up this theory later on, but Fleet and after him Kennedy held this view with all ear-nestness.

As a corollary of the above contention it follows that Kanishka group of kings preceded Kadphises group of kings.

But on a careful analysis of the archaeological and numismatic evidences scholars have come to the conclusion that there can be no doubt that the Kanishka group of kings did not precede but followed the Kadphises group of kings.

In support of this view scholars point out if the series of coins issued successively by alien rulers of India upto Vasudeva-I, are care-fully studied it will be evident that the coins of the Kadphises kings were issued immediately after those of the Sakas and the Parthians.

Again, the coins of Kanishka and Huvishka, although differ in some details, they seem to be largely prototypes of Wima Kadphises.

It must also be noted that the practice of issuing bilingual and by scriptural coins introduced by the Indo-Greek kings was continued throughout the Saka-Pahlava period upto the time of Kadphises. The continuity of the practice without break till the time of Wima Kadphises was broken only at the time of Kanishka who gave up the practice of issuing bilingual coins.

The legend of his coins was Greek but most of them were not, however, in Greek. Hurishka and Vasudeva followed the practice of Kanishka. Thus we find that while there was a continuity in the method of the striking coins followed upto Wima Kadphises from the line of the Indo-Greeks a different method was followed and continued by Kanishka and his successors. These two different sequences when compared leave no doubt that the Kushana group followed Kadphises group of kings.

Turning to the second point, we find that scholars like Sir John Marshall, Sten Konow, Vincent Smith, Van Wijk and some other scholars are of the opinion that Kanishka began his rule in the first quarter of the second century A.D., sometime between 125 to 128 A.D. which lasted for about a quarter of a century.

But Ferguson had held long before that Kanishka started his first regional year in 78 A.D. and inaugurated an era from that date which came to be known as the Saka era (Sakabda) which is still current in different parts of India. Ferguson's view has been supported by scholars like Oldenberg, Thomas, Rapson, R. D. Banerjee, Dr. Raichaudhuri and others. One of the latest scholars to support the view that Kanishka started his rule in 78 A.D. which was also the beginning of an era is Van Lohuizen-de Leeuw.

It has been argued against the above view held by most of the scholars, that if we agree that Kadphises-I reigned about 50 A.D. and Kanishka about 78 A.D. then we are left with only 28 years roughly for the two reigns of Kadphises-I and Kadphises-II which is a very short span for two reigns. But when we remember that Kadphises died at the age of eighty, his son Kadphises-II must have ascended the throne at pretty old age. This makes accession of Kanishka in 78 AD. quite tenable.

Marshall, Sten Konow and others who are of the opinion that Kanishka ruled in the first quarter of the second century A.D. is- directly against the evidence of Junagarh inscription of Rudradamana. Dr. Raichaudhuri draws our attention to the fact that it is clearly mentioned in the Junagarh inscription that Rudradamana held sway over the lower Sindhu region in the first half of the second century A.D.

The South Bihar (Sui-Bihar) inscription of Kanishka mentions lower Sindhu area as within the dominions of Kanishka. Obviously, both Rudradamana and Kanishka were not rulers over the same region simultaneously. This proves the untenability of the view that Kanishka ruled in the second century A.D. There is also no evidence to show that there was the inauguration of any era in the second century A.D.

Dr. Majumdar's contention that Kanishka was the founder of Traikutaka-Kalachuri-Chedi era of 248-249 A.D. is absolutely untenable in view of the Chinese evidence that An-Shi-Kao who lived during the second century A.D. translated a work Margabhumi-sutra written by Sangharaksha, chaplain of Kanishka. This precludes placing Kanishka in the third century A.D. as Dr. R. C. Majumdar has done. Dr. R. G. Bhandarkar's view that Kanishka ascended the throne in 278 A.D. is untenable on the same grounds.

Thus most of the scholars are of the view that Kanishka started his rule in 78 A.D. which was also the year from which the Saka era is counted.

It has been contended by some scholars that if the era was founded by Kanishka why should it have been named Saka era and not Kushana era, after all the Kushanas were not Sakas. But it may be pointed out that the close association of the Yue-chi people of which the Kushanas were a branch, with the Saka-Pahlava made them a composite people with a composite culture in which the contributions of the Sakas was quite large.

Further, the Kushanas were not Greeks but some of Kanishka's coins bore Greek legend on them. It is therefore no conclusive argument to say that since the era was called Saka era Kanishka could not be its founder. Likewise the contention that the Saka era was not followed in northern India although Kanishka was a ruler of the north is untenable.

Facts are, however, otherwise. This era was abandoned temporarily during the Gupta rule when it was confined to the south where its use was spread by the Jainas. But with the end of the Gupta rule the Saka era came back into use and continues to be used even today in different parts of India.

Thus after an analysis of evidences, literary, numismatic as well as epigraphic, the balance of arguments remains in favour of placing the Kanishka group of kings after the Kadphises group of kings and fixing 78 A.D. as the starting point of Kanishka's rule, and also the beginning of the era known as Saka era or Sakavda.

His Conquests: Extent of His Empire:

Kanishka was alone among the Kushana kings who has left a name cherished by tradition and famous in India as well beyond her limits.

At the time of accession to the throne Kanishka's empire comprised Afghanistan, large part of Sindhu, portions of Parthia and the Punjab. He appears to have not forgotten to avenge the defeat of his predecessor Kadphises at the hands of the Chinese general Pan-chao. He also played the part of a conqueror in the early years of his reign. Dr. Smith credits him with the conquest and annexation of the Kashmir Valley. He certainly showed, remarks Smith, a marked preference for that delightful country.

Here he erected numerous monuments and founded a town, which although now reduced to a petty village, still bears his honoured name. We have, however, no details about the war with the king of Kashmir. Rajatarangini refers to three kings Hushka, Jushka and Kanishka

who are described as descendants of Turuksha ruler and were given to acts of piety and built monasteries, Chaityas and similar other structures.

According to tradition Kanishka penetrated into the interior of India and attacked Pataliputra, the capital of Magadha. It is said that he carried away Asvaghosh, a Buddhist tradition, after the capture of Pataliputra and Buddhist Philosopher Asvaghosa fell into the hands of Kanishka who took the saga with him. Asvaghosa was in-deed one of the luminaries that graced the court of Kanishka. We may, therefore, conclude that at least a part of Magadha including Pataliputra was conquered by Kanishka.

Kanishka seems to have waged war against the western Satraps of Ujjaini. Numismatic evidence proves the inclusion of Malwa in his empire. Sylvan Levi, D. C. Sircar and Rapson suggest that the western Satrap Nahapana who ruled over Kathiawar, Malwa and Sourashtra had been a vassal of Kanishka. Some scholars hold that it was Chastana who was defeated by Kanishka and was compelled to hand over a part of Malwa to him.

According to Dr. Smith, Kanishka also waged war against the Parthians. Kanishka also con- quered Kashgarh, Khotan and Yarkhand. He is credited with defeat- ing the Chinese and thereby avenging the defeat of his predecessor Kadphises II at the hands of the Chinese general Pan- chao and com- pelled the Chinese to surrender hostages to him.

From the Chinese source as also from Buddhist traditions we come to know Kanishka conquered Kajangal in the Rajmahal hills in Bengal, some parts of Malda, Murshidabad, Bogra, Midnapur, etc. But in absence of any other evidences to support the indirect evidence furnished by the find spots of the coins of Kanishka it is difficult to come to any definite conclusion with regard to the inclusion of Bengal in Kanishka's empire.

Kanishka's empire comprised vast tracts of land extending from Afghanistan, and Khotan, Yarkhand, Kashgarh, etc. in Central Asia to Benares, and perhaps to parts of Bengal. His empire included Gandhara, Peshawar, Oudh, Pataliputra, Mathura. Inclusion of Kashmir is borne out by both the Chinese and Buddhist evidences. The western Satrapies seem to have been under his suzerainty.

Ac- cording to Hiuen TSang Kanishka Raja of Gandhara in old days having subdued all the neighbouring provinces and brought into obe- dience the people of distant countries, governed by his army a wide territory even to the east of the Tsung- ling mountains. All this proves that Kanishka's sway extended beyond the borders of India.

The Buddhist tradition and Kanishka's own inscriptions are ample testimony to the vast expanse of his dominions within India. Selec- tion of Purushapura, i.e. Peshawar, proves that Kanishka's imperial possessions spread far towards the west and north.

Administration:

Kanishka was a mighty conqueror, but no less was his ability as an administrator and he was even mightier in peaceful pursuits and in his solicitousness of the welfare of the people. For an effective and efficient rule of the empire he resorted to the system of Satrapies and appointed Mahakshatrapa Kharapallana and Kshatrapa Vanaspara in the eastern part of the empire.

The northern part was ruled by Gene- ral Lala as Mahakshatrapa with Vaspasi and Laika as Kshatrapas. The seat of the Central Government was at Purushpura or Peshawar. This

practice of rule through Great Satraps and Satraps was the continuation of the system followed by the Sakas and the Pahlavas.

We find a conscious emulation of the methods of Asoka by the Kushana king Kanishka. He pursued the policy of propagating Buddhism both within India and outside India. It was in connection with his missionary activities that he established close relationship, religious cultural and commercial, not only with China, Tibet and Central Asia but also with Rome and influx of gold from China and Rome in particular. The prosperity of the empire attested by the fine gold coins struck by Kadphises I appears to have increased under Kanishka. The unmistakable influence of Rome on the Indian coinage of the time could be noticed.

From the Periplus we know that gold and silver specie constituted one of the imports of Barygaza, i.e., Borach, a port on the eastern sea board of India. Swell has also mentioned to huge hoard of Roman coins of the first five Roman emperors discovered in the Madras Presidency. The very name dinara of gold coins seems to have close affinity with the Roman denarius and drama for silver coins has been adopted from the Greek drachma.

Kanishka assumed epithet like Shaonau Shoo, as found on his coins, was an adaptation of the Parthian title Basileos Basileon. From Shaonau Shoo the letter Shaahan Sha was derived.

Religion:

As it is customary for the Buddhist writers to depict a person wicked before conversion and turned into saint after conversion to Buddhism. Kanishka has been described by them to be devoid of the sense of right or wrong before his conversion. This view of the Buddhist writers has not been accepted by most of the scholars who think that it is an attempt on the part of the Buddhist writers to glorify Buddhism.

Before conversion to Buddhism Kanishka was a believer in many gods, Persian, Greek, Hindu, etc. This is proved by the figures imprinted on his coins. The exact date of conversion of Kanishka is, however, not known. The conversion is supposed to have taken place after some years he had been on the throne. It is supposed that after his association with the Buddhist philosopher and Saint Asvaghosha, he must have come under his influence.

Asvaghosha must have won the heart of Kanishka so completely that the latter gave up his allegiance to his previous gods and got converted to Buddhism. Here is a second instance of a great conqueror and emperor being converted to Buddhism and taken to the policy of peace and brotherliness in place of the policy of military conquests.

Kanishka was a close copy of Asoka. What is specially noteworthy about Kanishka is that he was the only foreigner who became a convert to an Indian religion and turned into zealous missionary. In his missionary activities we find him to an emulator of Asoka whose foot-steps he tried to follow closely.

We renovated the old monasteries which were in a state of disrepair and built many a new one. He endowed the monasteries with liberal money grants for the maintenance of the monks who dwelt in them. Kanishka caused the construction of a number of stupas in the memory of Sakyamuni.

He also sent missionaries for the propagation of Buddhism to China, Tibet, Japan and Central Asia. The sculptors, painters, as well as the architects of his time also became active propagandists of Buddhism. The celebrated Chaitya at Peshawar constructed under his orders

excited the wonder and appreciation of travellers down to a late period and famous sculp-tures therein included a life-size statue of himself.

During his time there arose disputes about Buddhism, among 18 schools of Buddhism prevalent at that time, as we know from the Tibetan historian Taranath. It became necessary to restore the dis-putes and to that end Kanishka convoked the Fourth Buddhist Coun-cil to which was attended by 500 monks.

There is a controversy with regard to the venue of the Council. According to some it was held at Kundavana in Kashmir but others hold that it met at Jullundur in the Punjab. In the Council the entire Buddhist literature was thoroughly examined and commentaries on the three Pitakas were prepared, which were compiled in Mahavibhasha which is the greatest work on Bud-dhist Philosophy.

This voluminous work is considered to be the encyclopaedia of Buddhism. The decisions of the Council were ins-cribed in copper plates and deposited in a stupa built for the pur-pose, packed in stone chests. Vasumitra acted as the President and Asvaghosha as the Vice-President of the Council.

Buddhist Council:

The period of Kanishka saw the transformation of the Hinayana form of Buddhism into Mahayana form. In the Hinayana form the worship of Buddha was only by relics like footprint of Buddha, an empty seat of Buddha, that is, some sort of symbol used to be placed in front of the worshipper.

There used to be no figure or image of Buddha to worship. This needed great concentration of mind on the part of the worshipper and the method was very subtle and could be followed by persons of great self-control, and of deepest religious bent of mind. This method of proceeding along the Path of Buddhist reli-gion was called Hina-Yana, i.e., lesser vehicle, i.e., subtle mode of trans-port in the path of religion.

But during Kanishka's time worship of the image of Buddha came into use. It became easy to concentrate by keeping as visible representation of Buddha in form. This was a greater and easier method hence called Mahayana Buddhism. In the Hinayana form of worship emphasis was laid on good action but in Mahayana system worship of Buddha and Bodhisattvas was emphasis-ed. The use of Pali as the language of the Buddhist religious books was now replaced by Sanskrit.

Art and Learning:

Kanishka's patronage of art and learning marked the beginning of a cultural renaissance which was to reach its peak and flower under the Guptas A large volume of Sanskrit literary works both religious and secular, was produced during the period. Asvaghosha, the great-est Buddha Philosopher, saint and literary figure of the time adorned the court of Kanishka.

He was a versatile genius whose contributions to the cultural life of the time centred round poetry, philosophy, drama, music. Buddhacharit and Sutralankar are his two most famous works. Buddhacharit on the life of Gautama Buddha in Sanskrit verse has been regarded as a

Buddhist epic. Another great Buddhist writer of fame who adorned the court of Kanishka was Nagarjuna. He was the greatest exponent of Mahayana Buddhism.

Charaka, the celebrated master of the science of medicine, was the court physician of Kanishka. Mathara, a politician of great acumen, was a minister of Kanishka. Besides these worthies, the Greek engineer Agesilaus and many others played a leading part in the religious, literary, scientific, philosophical and artistic activities of the reign. It is of great interest to know that Nagarjuna in his celebrated work Madhyamikasutra expounded the theory of relativity in its preliminary form.

Another celebrity that adorned the court of Kanishka was Vasu-mitra who presided over the Fourth Buddhist Council held during the reign of Kanishka.

Kanishka was also a great builder and a patron of art and architecture. The works of architecture, art of sculpture of his time are found in Mathura, Peshawar, Taxila and Amaravati. The Sirsukh city in Taxila with its hall, buildings and monasteries was built by him. Statues, sculptures, monasteries added to the beauty of the city.

The Gandhara School of art was the product of Graeco-Roman-Buddhist school of art and sculpture. Totally indigenous art also flourished during his reign at Amaravati. The ornamental sculpture depicted in the Amaravati medallion bear testimony to the excellence of purely Indian style uninfluenced by any foreign art. At Mathura find of Kanishka's headless statue is an example of the massive sculptural art of the time.

Kanishka's Successors -

Kanishka was succeeded by his son Vasishka. He is supposed to be the son Kanishka. His inscriptions have been found in the Mathura district of U.P. and in Bhopal State in Central India. There has been difference of opinion with regard to the identity of Vasishka. Vajishka, Jushka.

If he is identified with Vajishka, father of Kanishka II, and Jushka, founder of Jushkapura in Kashmir as mentioned in Kalhana's Rajatarangini then Kashmir must have also been included in his dominions. His only two inscriptions dated 24 and 28 corresponding to 102 and 106 A.D. discovered at Mathura raise the presumption that he ruled for four years only.

He was succeeded by Huvishka or Hushka who was credited with the founding of the city called Hushkapura. He ruled from 106 A.D. to 138 A.D. He is supposed to have ruled conjointly with Kanishka II, son of Vasishka. The confusing maze is of suggestion and counter-suggestion about the relations between the successors of Kanishka.

After a conjoint rule with Huvishka, Kanishka II became the sole ruler after the death of Huvishka and assumed the title of Kaisara, i.e., Caesar in imitation of title of the Roman emperors. According to some Kanishka II predeceased Huvishka.

Kanishka II was succeeded by Vasudeva I. This was a purely Indian name and denotes the complete naturalisation of the Kushanas in India. He appears to have ruled between 138 A.D. and 126 A.D. The religious eclecticism of Huvishka and Kanishka II as notified from their coins is less evident under Vasudeva I.

He became a wor-shipper of Siva. Most of his coins represent the figure of Siva with the bull Nandin although his name Vasudeva indicates his nearness to Vaishnavism. There is no clear evidence of Vasudeva's extent of empire. It is suggested that in all probability his rule did not extend much beyond a portion of modern U. P. His rule, perhaps, came to an end soon after 176 A.D. for no coin subsequent to this date has been discovered. With his death the Kushana Empire melted away.

It is nearly impossible in the present state of our knowledge to form a clear idea of the history of the Kushanas after the death of Vasudeva I. There are neither archaeological nor literary evidence for the period. There are only coins that give us an inadequate idea. After Vasudeva I we come across Kanishka III, Vasudeva II.

It appears that Kanishka III succeeded after Vasudeva II. From the coins it is supposed that Kanishka III and Vasudeva II lost their hold on the interior of India and their rule was confined to north-western and northern India. The final breakup of the Kushana power seems to have been complete during the rule of Vasudeva I's successors.

The Downfall of the Kushana Empire:

The Kushana Empire went the way of all other empires in history and fell victim to decay and fall, the inexorable law of Nature.

Kanishka's rule saw the Kushana Empire reach its meridian but it did not take too long to reach its final setting. Huvishka was the last Kushana King under whom the Kushana Empire did not suffer any diminution. But from Vasudeva's time decadence set in and as it happened with most of the empires, centrifugal forces began to gain momentum and different parts of the empire fell off from it and the weakness was taken advantage of by foreign invaders. The breakup of the empire into fragments after a period of splendid unity must have been hastened by a terrible plague which started in Babylonia, and stalked the Roman Empire, Parthia and India.

The final breakup of the empire was complete during the weak successors of Vasudeva. It is true that the Kushanas who had become totally Indianised, adopted Indian social customs, religion and culture yet the ruling houses dispossessed by them were not reconciled to their rule and as soon as the Kushana rulers showed signs of weakness, the Indians rose in revolt. The Yaudheyas, the Kunindas, the Madras, the Arjunayanas, the Nagas, Padmavati, Achhatra and Kantipuri and Maghas pulled down the mighty edifice.

The Yaudheyas threw off the Kushana allegiance in the south-eastern Punjab where they had been ruling before they were brought under the Kushana suzerainty. The Kunindas made themselves independent in the Sutlej Valley of the Punjab and most probably joined hands with the Yaudheyas in expelling the Kushanas from the eastern Punjab. The Madras or the Madrakas made themselves independent in the region between the Ravi and the Chenab. The Arjunayanas also regained their independence after the collapse of the Kushana power.

In the territory below the confluence of the rivers Jhelum and the Chenab extending towards the Ravi the Malavas who had once put up a brave resistance to Alexander later migrated to the Vidhya plateau where they overthrew the Kushana suzerainty and became independent till the rise of Samudragupta.

From the Allahabad Pillar inscriptions and the Puranas we come across the names of the Naga rulers of northern India. These princes were Nagadatta, Nagasena, Ganapatinaga. Their

two different families were ruling at Mathura and at Padmavati in the Navwar district of Gwalior.

A third family was ruling at Kautit near Mirzapur in the Uttar Pradesh. According to Altekar the title Bharasiva was adopted by the Nagas who were worshippers of Siva. The Naga kings of Padmavati possibly raided the Kushana territories and temporarily held sway over the Ganges Valley.

The Maghas of Kausambi originally belonged to Rewa in the Vindhya Pradesh but in course of time they extended their sway over Kausambi and the neighbouring regions. They were originally feudatories of the Kushana kings but later they became independent after their coins prove. They remained independent rulers before Kausambi was annexed by Samudragupta to his empire.

Thus was the Kushana Empire broke into pieces and its different parts fell off from the empire. The weak successors, however, continued to rule in the northern and north-western parts of India and parts of Afghanistan. But with the rise of the Sassanian power in Iran under Ardeshir I there began expansion of the Sassanian power in the east.

Ardeshir I came as far as Khorasan whereupon the Kushana king who was still ruling in the north-west of India and beyond sent his envoy and acknowledged the suzerainty of Ardeshir. But in course of time the Sassanian power spread over parts of western and central India and Bactria and the whole of north-western India became provinces of the Sassanian Empire.

An attempt at regaining independence by the Kushanas appears to have failed. There is no doubt that the rising empire of the Sassanians administered a staggering blow to the declining strength of the Kushanas who were ruling in northern, north-western parts of India and beyond.

Some remnants of the Kushana rule lingered for sometime more in local areas of some parts of the Punjab, Kashmir, north-western province, etc. This is proved by numismatic evidence. They took a new name and were known as Kidara. It is difficult to determine the period of their rule, but under the presence of the Gupta emperors of India and the Sassanians the remnants of the Kushana power faded away.

Achievements of the Kushanas: A Review:

The abundance of coins and inscription as well as of literary evidence make it somewhat easy to have an idea of the overall condition of India under the Kushanas and to estimate the achievements of the period.

The dark age that commenced upon the downfall of the Maurya Empire and the political unity which the labours of Chandragupta and Asoka gave to India, was broken by the intruding Indo-Greek Parthian and the Scythians ended with the triumph of the Kushanas. The darkness was lifted and lost political unity was re-established. The Kushana Empire embraced most of northern India, north-western India and beyond, upto Central Asia. The Kushana empire was the second great Indian empire, the first being that of the Mauryas.

Administration:

The Kushanas were foreigners who got Indianised. The administrative system under them was, therefore, a mixture of both foreign and Indian elements. Government by the system of

Satrapies was the foreign elements in the Kushana administration and the use of the names like Satraps for Governors and Viceroys, Strategos for the military governors, Meridarch for district officers, while manifested it, the use of the names such as Mahasenapati, Amatyas, etc. showed the Indian element in the administration.

It is of interest to note that the areas in the north-west which were under the Bactrians, Parthians and Scythians before coming under the sway of the Kushanas were placed under officers with foreign designations whereas officers with Indian designations were placed in charge of territories in the interior.

The Indo-Greek system of conjoint rule was also followed as we understand from Kanishka II and Huvishka's joint rule. The Satraps—senior and junior—were called Mahakshatrapas and Kshatrapas. The Kushana kings assumed titles Mahisvara, Devaputra, Kaisar, Shahnu Shah, etc.

For administrative purposes the empire was divided into Rashtra, Ahara, Janapada, Desa or Vishaya. There appears to have been no Assembly or Council of Ministers. The king appears to have been the supreme head of the state in all matters, religious and secular. Under the Kushanas there was a spirit of toleration prevalent all over the country.

Society:

Although the society, generally speaking, retained the original fourfold division into Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and Sudras, but the rigidity of the caste-system under the Kushanas does not seem to be so exclusive as to preclude foreigners from entering the Hindu Society. The Kushanas, an outlandish race, gradually became thoroughly Hinduised. This shows the basic virility of the Hindu Society and culture.

Religion:

The Kushanas were of the Yue-chi origin and were foreigners who were eclectic in their religious belief to begin with as we understand from the numismatic evidence. But they later became either Buddhists or worshippers of Siva or Vishnu. While Kaniska became an ardent follower of Buddhism, took measures for propagation of the religion even in foreign countries like China, Tibet, Japan etc. some of the Kushana kings, it seems from their coins, honoured Greek, Sumerian, Elamite, Zoroastrian and Mithraic deities. Some again, for instance, Kadphises II was a Saiva and Vasudeva perhaps a follower of both Vishnu and Siva.

Kanishka as a Buddhist emulated his royal predecessor Asoka of the Maurya Dynasty and not only sent missionaries to outside countries but also took steps to resolve the disputes among the followers of Buddhism with regard to Buddhist doctrines. He summoned the Fourth Buddhist Council which thoroughly examined the whole Buddhist literature and prepared voluminous commentaries on the three Buddhist Pitakas. The commentaries were collected in Mahavibhasha, regarded as the Buddhist encyclopaedia. Mahayanism now became the dominant form of Buddhism.

The Kushanas followed a policy of toleration and Brahmanical Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism flourished side by side under their rule.

Art, Sculpture and Architecture:

The Kushana period witnessed a remarkable development in art, sculpture and architecture. The Gandhara School of Art and Sculpture marked a happy blending of the Greco-Romano-Buddhist style and techniques. The distinguishing features of the Gandhara Sculpture owed their origin to Greek and Roman styles yet the art essentially was Indian in spirit. The Gandhara artists had the hand of a Greek but the heart of an India.

The most remarkable contribution of the Gandhara School of art is to be seen in the evolution of the image of Buddha, perhaps in imitation of the Greek God Apollo. Images of Buddha and Bodhisatva illustrating the past and present lives of Buddha were executed in black stone. The figures show an excellent idea of human anatomy that swayed the artists.

These works of art offer a striking contrast to similar art that we witness elsewhere in India. The smooth round features of the idealised human figures, draped in transparent and semi-transparent cloth closely fitting to the body and revealing its outline were due to the influence of the Hellenistic art of Asia Minor and the Roman Empire.

The images of Buddha pertaining to the Gandhara school centres of which were Gandhara, Jalalabad, Hadda and Baniyan in Afghanistan, Peshawar and Swat Valley, were more animated and anatomically perfect than those found in other parts of India. While the former are more beautiful physically and accurate in anatomical details as such more realistic, the Indian art and sculpture which produced the images of Buddha were more idealistic giving a spiritual and sublime expression to the images.

The technique of the Gandhara School of art of the Kushana period spread through China to the Far East and influenced the art of China and Japan. The Gandhara art, according to V. A. Smith, was based on the cosmopolitan art of the Asia Minor and the Roman Empire.

There were also purely Indian schools of art in India during the period of the Kushanas. There were the schools of art at Amaravati, Jagayyapeta and Nagarjunikonda. In the Amaravati human figures are characterised by slim, blithe features and have been represented in most difficult poses and curves. The technique of art reached a high standard of development. Plants and flowers, particularly lotuses, have been represented in the most perfect, lifelike manner.

Two Chaityas and a Stupa discovered at Nagarjunikonda are the relics of the indigenous school of art and show a high standard of development. The limestone panel of figures depicting the nativity of Buddha is an excellent piece of sculpture of the Kushana period which was entirely indigenous.

Architecture of the Kushana period was not so remarkable as the sculpture of the period. There were beautiful temples, monasteries, Stupas which indicate considerable development during the period although the technique of architecture did not attain the standard of excellence of sculpture. The famous tower of Kanishka at Purushapura (Peshawar) was one of the wonders of the world. Much of the architectural specimens of the period perished with time.

Caves hewn in solid rock with pillars and sculptures, hundreds of which have been found in different parts of the Kushana Empire show a great improvement upon the technique of excavation that was in use during the time of Asoka. A Chaitya with rows of columns on two sides was a fine work of art of sculpture and architecture. The Chaitya at Karle is an excellent illustration.

Fa-hien who visited India during the rule of Chandragupta II (5th century) was struck with wonder to find a large number of Stupas, dagobas (small stupa), Chaityas and images of Buddha carved out of stone during the Kushana period.

There has been a sharp difference of opinion about the celebrity, and the extent of influence of the Gandhara art upon the Indian art during the reign of the Kushanas. Modern scholars think that the Gandhara School of sculpture has attained a celebrity perhaps beyond its merits.

According to some European scholars, the Gandhara School of art was the only school in Ancient India which can claim a place in the domain of art. There are others who are of the opinion that the source of subsequent development of Indian art as well as of the Far East was the Gandhara School of art which developed as a result of a happy blending of the Graco-Romano-Buddhist art.

But despite the foreign influence upon the school of Gandhara art, scholars like Havell, Will Durant, R. C. Majumdar and others are of the opinion that the influence, Hellenistic and Roman, upon the Indian art which was the Gandhara School of art was technical but spirit and the subject matter of the art was purely Indian.

R. D. Banerjee's view that the Gandhara art influenced the Indian art for nearly five centuries to follow is untenable on the ground that there were indigenous schools of art at Ainaravati, Nagarjunkonda, etc. where there was no influence of Gandhara School of art. The influence of the Gandhara art failed to penetrate into the interior of India and had no influence on the later development of the Indian art. But the Gandhara School of art achieved a grand success in becoming the parent of the Buddhist art of Eastern and Chinese Turkestan, Mongolia, China, Korea and Japan.

Literature:

The Kushana period witnessed a remarkable development of literature and Sanskrit language. Under the patronage enjoyed by the scholars and Buddhist philosophers of the time a massive development in secular and religious literature took place. A large number of standard works in Sanskrit language were written during the period.

Asvaghosha's Buddhacharita, Saudarananda Kavya, Vajrasuchi, Sariputta Prakarana, Vasumitra's Mahabibhasa—regarded as the Buddhist encyclopaedia, Nagarjuna's Madhyamika-Sutra in which the theory of relativity was propounded, Charaka's work on medicine, etc. contributed to the fund of human knowledge. Under the Kushanas the royal court became a seat of luminaries mentioned above as also of the Political Scientist Mathara, Greek engineer Agesilaus, etc.

Economy:

The Kushana period saw an all-round development. In the field of economy the peace and tranquility ensured by the efficient rule of the early Kushana rulers, absence of internal revolt and external invasion conducted to an unprecedented economic prosperity. Commercial relations with Eastern and Western countries led to an influx of gold.

India had a brisk trade with Rome and China where- from gold poured in due to the balance of trade that India had. Such was the huge amount of gold that came from Rome into India

for the export of spices, silk, muslin, gems, etc. to that country that Pliny lamented over the drainage of gold to India.

Historian Mommsen also refers to the heavy drainage of Roman gold to India for imports from India. The Roman government ultimately had to ban imports from India by passing a law. Sea-borne trade used to be conducted through ports in the Western and South Indian coasts, particularly from Broach.

The coins of the Kushana were mostly of gold and to some extent of copper. The coins depict the foreign influence—Roman—on the currency system. The eclecticism of the Kushana kings can as well be understood from the representation of deities—Iranian, Elamite, etc. on the coins. The Kushana coins also had representations of Brahmanical deities on them.

From the cultural point of view the Kushana period marked the beginning of a renaissance which was to reach its peak and flower under the Guptas. The cultural renaissance which saw its beginning under the Kushana rulers was the result of the impact of diverse foreign influences, Hellenic, Roman, Parthian, and Scythian on the Indian cul-ture.

The happy blending of these diverse influences gave a new life to the Indian culture which was for a time became somewhat disturbed by foreign invasions. These diverse influences found opportunities to settle down during the peaceful rule of the Kushanas and led to the beginning of a cultural renaissance.

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