

GANDHARA: AN APPRIASAL OF ITS MEANINGS AND HISTORY

Gandhara---Meaning:

The word Gandhara makes its first appearance in the oldest religious literature of South Asia, i-e, Rig-veda (Griffeth 1968:652), which is generally thought to have approximately been composed between 1500 to 1000 BC (Basham 1963:31). So far as the meanings of the word Gandhara is concerned it is often translated as ‘the land of fragrance’----- taking “gand” as fragrance and “hara” the land. Thus, the composite form of the word Gandhara suggests “a country or piece of land the soil of which yielded abundant fragrance and because of this quality it, apparently, came to be known as Gandhara ‘the land of fragrance’.

In the Vedic and -Puranic literature the Gandhara is frequently referred to as “Uttara” (northern) country, inhabited by gandharas (Rapson 1955:26). Moreover, Kien-to-lo of the Chinese pilgrims is also identified as Gandhara (Cunningham 1924:55). The measurement of its boundaries are however for the first time described only by Xuan Zang (Beal 1969:55). Thus, the country of Kien-to-lo measures 1000 li east to west and 800 li from north to west. This measurement corresponds with present valley of Peshawar as it is marked by Jalalabad hills on its west and eastern limits by river Sindhu, Swat and Burner hills on northern, and Kala Bagh hills on southern sides, respectively (Cunningham 1924:55). It seems that the term Gandhara is not unusual in the region as we have other nomenclatures on the same pattern such as Nagarahara, Pothohara (or correctly Pithohara), Vanahara etc, which are stretching to western and eastern sides of Gandhara.

From where do these regions derive their nomenclatures may be looked for in the topographical qualities of each region. As, Nagarahara or Na-Kie-Lo-Ho (Beal 1969:91) (meaning city of the land) gives its name to surrounding areas. Likewise, present plateau like tract to the east of river Sindh, particularly, derived its name from its topographical qualities. Infact, the word Pathohara is a corrupt form of the Sanskrit word pithohara, i.e land of the back or hinter land. As this region occupies the back of high hills, it naturally came to be know as 'Pithohara' (Pithahara).

This pattern of nomenclature may be noticed to the south of the salt range hills. This region is still known as 'Vanahara', I-e, wood land. It seems, therefore, certain that all these regions took their names on account of the topographical features of the land they cover. But the name Gandhara, with its meaning, "the land of fragrance" does not fall into this pattern. Therefore, doubts are expressed regarding this meaning of the name. The most prominent feature of the Peshawar valley (ancient Gandhara), topographically, is its river system comprising the Kabul and the Swat which split up the whole valley and then converging a little above Noshera into one stream which ultimately empties into the rive Sindhu near a place known as Kund i.e. reservoir or pond. In rainy season this pond swelled over a vast area converting the land into a big reservoir. Apparently, kund gave its name to whole of the Peshawar valley which came to be known as Kunduhar "the land of the reservoir" (Ahmad 2000:29). It is noteworthy that Qandhar is recorded by early Muslim writers as Qunduhara (Abdur Rahma 1979:14).

Peshawar valley played a very vital role in the propagation of Buddhism. It is from this region that Buddhism spread as far as central Asia and China etc. As a result Peshawar valley enjoyed a very high status as a sacred place in the ancient Buddhist world. Certainly, it was a holy place and abound with the fragrance of Buddhism as is unanimously described by Chinese pilgrims in their itineraries regarding kien-to-lo or Gandhara (Cunningham 1924:55). But, how was Gandhara looked upon in pre-Buddhisst period is hard to say. The name

occurs in the Rigveda about one thousand years before the advent of Buddhism in Gandhara (Smith 1964:162). Was Gandhara a holy place even then to justify the meaning “land of fragrance” there is no evidence to support it.

The composition of the Rigveda was followed by the Brahmanas. During this period the center of religious activities shifted to the adjacent country on the east, i.e., the upper portion of the Doab between the Jumna and the Ganges. This was Brahmarshidesa, i.e., ‘the country of the holy sages (Rapson 1965:40). In the Atharvaveda and also in the Srauta Sutras Gandaris are mentioned as a despised people to whom fever as an illness was wished to be relegated (Majumdar 1951:258). Thus, it appears that Aryans of Vedic period did not look upon Gandhara as a sacred place which could inspire Vedic poets to eulogize its virtues.

Moreover, along with several other tribes Rigveda also mentions Gandaris but does not specify the boundaries of their country. In post Rigvedic period, however, we learn about new tribes, as several old ones disappeared and got merged into each other under new names. One of them was Druhyus who were once counted amongst the five principle tribes of the Punjab. However, they were pushed during this struggle into the north western corner of the Punjab, (Majumdar 1951:258) between Rawalpindi and Attock. Angara, the Druhyus king, was killed in the turmoil and was succeeded by a person named Gandhara, after whose name the Druhyus settlement in the Punjab came to be known as such. The traditional history (based on Puranas) says thus the term Gandhara came into vogue as the name of a territory. The Druhyus (now Gandaris), after sometimes crossed the borders of India, i.e., Indus, and founded many principalities in the Mleccha territories in the north (i.e., Gandhara). A certain king Skuni of Gandhara longwith several others is also mentioned to have taken part in the Bharat war. Another ruler of Gandhara was Pukkusati or Pushkarasarin in the middle of the 6th century BC who had established diplomatic relations with his contemporary king Bimbisara of Magadha (Ibid:279).

In brief we have four different options regarding the meaning of the Gandhara: (1) the land of fragrance as country or a huge pond of water, (2) Gandhara a king of Druhyus, (3) Gandharas as a tribe mentioned in Asoka's rock Edict and (4) Gandaris as mentioned in post Vedic literature. Which of these is correct is anybody's choice. Whatever may be the case it seems certain that the country of Gandhara existed to the west of river Indus till the Achaemenian invasion (Majumder et al 1980:41). Moreover, the name is also mentioned by Albiruni early in the 11th century (sachaul 1992:21).

Achaemenians:

So far as the history of Gandhara is concerned its earliest definite reference is found in the Achaemenian inscription of Behistun (c.520-518BC) which lists twenty three satrapies including 'Gadara' (=Gandhara) of the Achaemenian empire of Darius but Sindhu (the Indus region) is omitted (Thripathy 1942:15-16). Thus, this epigraph suggests that at the time of installation of Behistion inscription Indus region did not form part of Persian Empire. However, the other two inscriptions discovered from Persepolis (c.518-515) and Naksh-I-Rustan clearly mention Hi (n) du, taken to be upper Punjab as a part of Persian realm.

The fourth inscription coming from Hamadan, however, omits Gandhara and mentions only the name of Hindu satrapy of Achaemenian Empire (Majumdar 1980:41). It may be inferred that by the execution of Hamadan epigraph the whole Sindhu valley including Gandhara was compositely represented by term Hindu as the Achaemenian satrapy. The Achaemenians kept control over Gandhara almost for two centuries, but, unfortunately that long span of occupation is nowhere recorded except in stray references.

Apparently, the Achaemenians were on the decline under Xerxes but their control over the far flung regions continued. Particularly, Persian sway over Gandhara is proved by the call of Darius 111 to Indian troops in his final encounter

at Arbela to repel the Greek invasion of Persia (Rapson 1965:305). Persian defeat at Arbela by the Greek and Macedonian forces ended the Achaemenian political sway over their eastern provinces in which Gandhara was also included.

Alexander's invasion:

Alexander's campaign in the Sindhu valley is documented merely by classical writers whose accounts are not quite as full as one may desire. Unfortunately they do not refer to the Persian satrapy of Gandhara by its own name. However, the capital of Gandhara, i.e., Peucelaotis (=Pushkalavati) and its occupation by Alexander is recorded. Hephaestion and Perdikkas were dispatched by Alexander to lay siege of Pushkalavati (near the modern city of Charsadda in NWFP). Astes was king of small sate of Astakenoi (=Ashtakaraja) who refused to surrender before the Macedonians (Majumdar et al 1980:43). After subduing the states of Swat and Buner Alexander also joined his generals at Pushkalavati. For a month or more Astes resisted Alexander's army but finally he was killed in fighting and thus the city was occupied and given over to a certain Sangaya or Sanjaya _____ an enemy of Astes (Rapson 1965:318). Gandhara was now included in the new satrapy, constituted by Alexander, comprising the areas of west of river Sindhu, and Nicanor was made its governor (Majomdar 1960:15) (326BC). However, the people of Gandhara, soon after the invasion, stood up against the governor of Alexander in revolt. The latter was killed in this revolt. Shortly afterward this revolt was put down by Philip, the Governor of Taxila (Rapson 1965:331). While Alexander was retreating he divided the conquered territories into seven satrapies. The satrapy to the west of Sindhu included Gandhara. It was put under the governorship of Philip (Majumdar et al 1980:52).

Soon after the departure of Alexander the satrap Philip (or Philippus) was treacherously killed by mercenaries as Arrian says (Majumdar 1960:89). As a result, Pithon, the son of Agenor, was transferred to the northwest or Gandhara (Ibid: 239). After the retreat of Alexander from the Sindhu Valley the country of Gandhara went under the control of Pithon with Pushkalavati as

its capital. The news of the death of Alexander in summer 223 BC spread like wild fire. Alexander had no legitimate successor. This led his generals to take share out of his conquered territories. As a result, Pithon also abandoned the northwest and rushed to Western Asia to help his friend (Rapson1965:385). To whom did Pithon entrust the administration of the northwest or Gandhara, the classical writers do not allude. Nothing is known about the political setup of the county of Gandhara till it was annexed to the huge Mauryan Empire.

Alexander's satraps of the Indus valley, in fact, could not survive his death and, consequently, a political vacuum was created which was yet to be filled by a man of supreme courage, named Chandragupta Maurya (Sandrocottus of classical writers.) When political anarchy or fermentation or polarization, both in the Indus valley and Western Asia settled down, it paved the way for the rise of Chandragupta Maurya as a dominating force to the east of river Indus down to Indian sea, including whole of northern India. At the same time Seleucus established his hegemony over Western Asia including Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and the valley of Oxus and Jaxartes rivers. Having firmly established himself over the eastern provinces of Alexander, Seleucus marched towards his veteran and valiant leader Chandragupta Maurya. In 305 BC both Greek and Indian armies met each other at the eastern bank of the river Sindh. The classical writers are unanimously silent on the happenings of this significant historical event. They just narrate very simply the terms of the treaty concluded between Chandragupta and Seleucus. The most significant outcome of this treaty was that Seleucus had to cede vast territories lying between the river Sindhu and Hindu Kush mountains to Chandragupta Maurya (Majumdar et al 1980:60).

Mauryan rule:

After this humiliating defeat of Seleucus, the country of Gandhara passed on into the hands of the Mauryans. We do not learn about any significant role played by the country of Gandhara or its people during the rule of Chandragupta Maurya or of his successor Bindusara. Most probably Gandhara was

administratively included in the viceroyalty of Taxila. During Asoka's reign, however, Gandhara received one of the Buddhist missionaries, dispatched by Asoka for the preaching of Buddhism, under Madhyantika (Rapson 1965:449). No significant event took place in the subsequent history of Gandhara other than this Buddhist missionary who left far reaching effects on the history as well as the cultural life of Gandhara.

Asoka succeeded his father in 273 BC and continued the usual aggressive policy of expansionism. However, prolonged war of Kalinga left very depressing effects on Asoka, and also, according to Buddhist literature, the teaching of Buddha changed his whole outlook of life and made him a pious person from a ferocious and tyrant one, as soon as he was converted to Buddhism (Tripathy 1942:163-64). As a result, he adopted a new state policy well known as 'Dharma Policy' which he also propagated by engraving rock edicts carrying his 'Dharma Policy'. Asoka also installed two of these edicts in the country of Gandhara along the ancient Rajapatha which connected the northwestern countries with south Asia. The remains of these rock edicts are now situated in Mardan district of NWFP at a place called Shabaz Garhi and at Mansehra near Abbotabad.

Except for the work of Buddhist missionary we do not learn about any activity that might have taken place in the subsequent Asokan period, although Gandhara remained a part of Mauryan Empire till its disintegration, As we learn from Taranath that one of the successors of Asoka named Virasena set up a kingdom in Gandhara (Taranath 1869:48-50).

Moreover Polybius informs us about a certain Sophagaseus or Subhagasena who was an Indian king of northwest frontier (c.206 BC), with whom Antiochus 111 renewed his ancestral relationship (Rapson 1965:462). It seems that Subhagasena or one of his predecessors was, probably, a viceroy of Mauryan emperor and later on he declared himself independent king of the northwest in which the country of Gandhara was also included.

Occupation of Bactrian Greeks:

Who did follow Suhagasena in the office is nowhere recorded nor is there any reference to the Indian invasion by the Bactrian king Demetrius, although the latter is remembered as 'king of the Indians' (Majumdar et al 1980:108). However, it seems that after one hundred years of local rule the fortunes of the Gandhara once again fell into the foreign hands. In subsequent centuries Gandhara saw a succession of foreign invaders who followed each in their footsteps. The political domination of the Bactrian Greeks continued almost for two centuries (2nd and 1st centuries BC) as is evidenced by the profuse distribution of coins issued by more than thirty (Bactrian and Indo-Greek) rulers (Ibid:111).

Among the most outstanding kings are included Demetrius, Eucratides Heliocles, Menander, Antialcidas etc. On the basis of numismatic evidence, it is sometimes suggested that the kings of Bactrian Greeks belonged to two different houses headed by Euthydemus and Eucratides. In the second half of first century BC the Bactrians of Gandhara came to face with new threat spearheaded by a fresh Central Asian invader. These invaders were known as Scytho Parthians. On the basis of numismatic studies, it has been suggested that the Scythian ruler Azes I deposed the last Greek ruler of Pushkalavati (the capital of Gandhara) named Hippostratus (Bopearachi et al 1995:44-45). The Greek cultural impact on the contemporary Indian society where they ruled almost two centuries is not much evidenced except in stray elements, as it is proved by archaeological excavations, particularly at Taxila and Shaikhan Dheri. However, in the field of numismatics the Greek mint masters showed unprecedented skill, and definitely introduced new mythology, script, devices etc. The real cultural impact of Bactria based Greeks began to penetrate after the extinction of their political suzerainty over northwest of South Asia in the succeeding centuries during the Scytho-Parthian and Kushan.

Indo-Scytho-Parthians:

Sakas, generally known as Scythians and were originally Central Asian nomads seems to have had been striving with their

rival tribes in the second half of 2nd century BC. They pushed the Greeks out of Bactria down to the Sindhu Valley. There were three Sakas settlements, namely (1) Saka Tigra Khauda (with pointed helmets), (2) Saka Haumavarga and (3) Saka Taradarya (beyond the sea) (Majumdar et al 1980:120). Saka Haumvarga, however, has been identified by Thomas with Scythians, who afterwards occupied Sakastan (Sijistan or Seistan) which is identified with southern Afghanistan (Thomas 1906:186).

The earliest among the Scythians was Vonones who may have originally been a governor of Drangiana (eastern Iran), but, by taking advantage of the relaxed Parthian control over the eastern frontier regions, declared his independence, as his coins show imperial title the Great king of kings'. Further, numismatic evidence informs that his brother Spalirises was a subordinate ruler in relation to the Great king of kings'. Another group of the Scythian coinage treats Spalirises as the Great king of kings' while Aya (Azes 1) takes a subordinate position. The imperial title 'the great raja' appears on the coins of Aya or Azes 1 in kharosthi legend. About this time the eastern districts comprising the Indus Delta and adjoining regions of the Parthian empire were governed by the official of Scythian origin (Majumdar et al 1980:123-24), who, in the beginning, owed their allegiance to Vonones but later on declared themselves independent ruler. The earliest was Maues (Moa or Moga) whose name is also found on numerous coins issued by him, and discovered by Marshall at Taxila. On the basis of evidence of coins issued by Maues, (known as over-strikes of Maues) it has been suggested that the Greek ruler of Taxila was deposed by Maues, who started Vikrama era in 58 BC. But, later on, Maues was ousted from Taxila by a Greek ruler of the house of Eucratides, named Apostratus. Apostratus 11 was, however, dethroned by Azes 1 as the later issued over-strikes of the former. Thus, Gandhara fell into the hands of the Scythians in 55 BC (Bopearachchi et al 1995:44-45). There are other Scythian rulers whose names are known from numismatics such as Azilises (Ayisha) and Azes 11 (Aya or Aja).

To establish the precise chronology of the Scythian rulers it seems impossible to a great extent. However, Marshall was the first one who attempted to distinguish the coins of Azes I from those of Azes II (Marshall 1951:769). Moreover, Rapson believes that Azes II was succeeded by Gondophares in AD 19 (Rapson 1965:515).

Like Vonones, Gondophares originally was a Parthian governor of Arachosia (Kandahar) under the Preek king of kings Orthagnes. Various versions of the same name in different texts point out the problems of different Prakrits or dialects. Gondophares was certainly the greatest among all the Indo-Scytho-Parthians. So much so famous he was that, according to the Christian tradition, the Pathians were allotted to St. Thomas as a special area of missionary activities (Smith 1974:145). The coin types and their distribution show that Gondophares became master of the Saka-Pahlava dominions both in eastern Iran and in Pakistan. The Takht-I-Bahi inscription of Gondophares leaves no doubt that he was a ruling monarch by his own name (Sircar 1965:245). Gondophares captured Gandhara and the adjoining areas by defeating the last Scythian ruler Azes II, most probably in AD 19 or some time earlier, as the date of his inscription of Takht-I-Bahi favours it. However, the precise chronology is one of the most perplexing problems of South Asian history.

The exact date of Gondophares is nowhere recorded. So also is the case of his predecessors namely Pacores (Majumdar et al 1980:131) and Abdagases (Cribb 1985:282-300). From the coins we also learn about other names, sometimes as subordinate to the 'Great king of kings' and sometimes with the imperial title. This list includes Aspavarman, Sasa or Sassan, and Satavastra (styled as Great king of kings), Phraates (sometimes as governor of Gandhara) etc. the rulers of Scytho-Parthian line held their sway for more than a century (from the 2nd century BC to the 1st century AD) over the eastern region of Iran and the areas corresponding to the present day Pakistan. Moreover, the flow of cultural traits, as compared with earlier period became more rapid from the northwest as archaeological data of the period corroborates.

Article I. Kushans:

The most celebrated and gifted people as rulers in the history of Gandhara were Yueh-chis, also known as Kushans (as abbreviated form of the original word Kuei-shuang). Chinese historical literature brings Yueh-chi in the limelight of history as nomads, who, being ousted by their powerful rival tribe from their original abode (Tien-shan range in the Chinese Turkistan), marched towards the west and, having faced many vicissitudes on their way, finally succeeded in setting down in the country of Bactria in the last quarter of 2nd century BC (Puri 1965:3-5). Infact, the Yuch-chi tribe comprised of five major sections, each having its own independent principality with its own ruler at the head in the country of Ta-hia or Bactria. Kuei-shuang section was, however, most outstanding among all which, subsequently, under their wang or king Kiu-Siu-Kio or Kujula Kadphises (Kadphises 1 AD 15-65) attacked and annihilated the four other His-hou or principalities (Majumder et al 1980:139).

Later on, Kadphises 1 conquered Kao fu (or Kabul) and Ki-Pin (or Kafirstan) by defeating the Parthians; the overstrike coins of the former speak for evidence (Bopearachchi et al 1995:49). The conquest of Gandhara by the Kushans is also attested by the Panjtara inscription which has been assigned roughly to the period between AD 15 and 65 (Ibid: 1396). The epigraph clearly refers to a Kushan monarch, although he remains incognito. By that time Gandhara was under the Parthian control till about AD 56. The Panjtara inscription, no doubt, would have been installed by Kujula Kadphises soon after his conquest of Gandhara. Senavarmas' inscription supplies further evidence as it clearly mentions both Kujula Kadphises and his son Sadashkano. The inscription, apparently, suggests that Sadashkano was Kujulas' governor of Gandhara. The relevant portion of this inscription reads: 'Honored is the Great king of kings, Kujula Kadphises' son Sadashkano, the Devaputa' (Bailey et al 1980:22-29).

Another inscription of the time of Kanishka was found from Afghanistan in 1993 at a site called Kafir Qala near

Rabatak Pul-I-Khumri. In the Rabatak inscription the predecessors of Kanishka are thus mentioned: Wima Kadphises as father, Wima Takto as grandfather, and Kujula Kadphises as great father, (Cribb 1996:1-2). In the light of the above mentioned inscription it become evident that Kujula Kadphises had two sons, i.e., Wima Takto and Sadashkno. Coins of the Kushan period, however, do not mention their names. The absence of Sadashkno's name from coins is to large extent, understandable for Senavarma's inscription suggests that he served as governor of Gandhara under his father Kujula Kadphises. But the omission of Wima Takto's name from the Kushan coinage adds more confusion to the to the Kushan chronology, as he is explicitly mentioned as the successor of Kujula Kadphises in the Rabatak inscription. Now, the Chinese historical literature places Yen-kao-chen on Indian throne after the death of his father, Kiu-siu-kio or Kujula Kadphises (Mijumdar et al 1980:136-39). Was Wima Taktos' predecessor Kujula his octogenarian father or did he ascend the Kushan throne for a very short period and could not issue coins of his own name? As Kujula Kadphises died at a ripe age of eighty.

Nonetheless, numismatic evidence favours Chinese chronicles that Kujula Kadphises was succeeded by Wima Kadphises (or Kadphises 11)(AD 65). Wima Kadphises was, infact, a powerful Kushan ruler who established trade relations with Romans as his gold currency was based upon the weight standard of the Roman aureus (8.035 grammes or 124 grains). Moreover, coins weighting double the weight standard of an aureus were also struck. This gold currency of Wima Kadphises brought prosperity and gave boost and impetus to commercial activities. The kharosthi legend maharajasa rajadirajasa sarva loga inverse mahisvarasa vima kath phisasa tratarasa appears on the reverse of the gold coins of Kadphises 11. It is remarked that Wima Kadphises must have been converted to Hinduism (Chattapadhyaya 1979:37) and that he became a votary of Siva while his father Kujula was a Buddhist.

Moreover, Soter Megas (the great saviour) group of cooper coins, found over an extensive area stretching from

Khotan (Chinese Turkitan) to Mahtura, present a puzzle as to which period precisely they belong to. These coins show particular symbols along with corrupt Greek legend 'Basileos Basileon Soter Megas' (the king of the kings, the great Saviour). In some cases these coins display a Kharosthi legend which reads maharajasa rajadirajasa mahatasa tratarasa (of the great king, the king of the kings, the great saviour). In fact, the Kharosthi legend on the reverse side of the Soter Megas group of coins has striking similarities with the kharosthi legend found on the coins of Wima Kadphises (or Kadphises 11), this may lead one to conclude that they were issued by one and the same, i.e. Wima Kadphises, if this explanation is correct, then, why did not Wima Kadphises place his name along with Kharosthi and Greek legends? This puzzle may be looked for in the light of Senaverma's inscription which, no doubt, mentions a certain Sadashkno, son of Kujula, whom the latter may have appointed governor of Gandhara, did Sadashkno issue this Soter Megas group of coins, if so, then it seems very strange that he, as a viceroy of Gandhara, enjoyed such an elevated status, that he introduced so glorifying a title which was only specified for a king. Otherwise, it seems most probable that Soter Megas group of coins, with all probabilities, would have been issued by Kadphises 11 or more probably Wima Takto.

After the death of Wima Kadphises (or Kadphises 11) his son Kanishka (or Kanishka 1) ascended the Kushan throne, most probably in AD 78 (Puri 1965:35-36). The genealogy of the Kushans is a controversial subject among scholars of ancient Indian history, formerly, it was generally held that Kanishka was not the son of Kadphises 11 and that he belonged to another branch of the Yuch-chis or probably hailed from the little Yuch-chis. Now, the discovery of the Rabatak inscription (Afghanistan) has finally settled down this long genealogical dispute as it clearly mentions that Wima Kidphises was succeeded to the throne by his son Kanishka (Cribba 1996:1-2), (Kanishka 1).

Kanishka 1 is regarded as the greatest ruler among all the Kushans. He is generally believed to have elevated Po-lu sha of all the Chinese pilgrims (= Purushapura, Present Peshawar) as

capital of Kushans (Beal 1969:97). Buddhist tradition tells that Kanishka was converted to Buddhism by the magical influence of Buddha's teachings. He is also depicted as an impious and cruel person, but like Asoka, he took refuge in Buddhism owing to the feelings of profound regret over his misdeeds (Ibid: 99-100). Thus Kanishka became a zealous follower of Buddhism. During the reign of Kanishka Gandhara experienced most glorious period of its history, as it emerged as a great cultural as well as flourishing trade center where from all directions traders used to come. That is why one modern historian has translated the word Peshawar as Peshaha-war, i.e. full of artisans (Dani 1979:223 fn). Kanishka issued a variety of coins, especially his gold currency, like his father, was of Roman standard to compete the international market. Buddhist art touched its unprecedented height as it displays a variety of shades and reflected the cosmopolitan nature of Gandhara. Like Asoka, Kanishka patronized Buddhism. Buddhist tradition tells us that on the advice of Parsva (or Parsvika) a Buddhist assembly was held to settle the disputes that had crept into it with the lapse of time. According to a Chinese account the meeting took place in Gandhara. Kanishka ruled for 23 years till AD 101 or 102, provided his reign started in AD 78 (Majumdar 1980:144).

Kanishka met a violent death by his own people and was succeeded by his own son Huvishka (A.D. 104-138). The date of Huvishka's accession is well attested by the inscriptions, as Brahmi inscription of Mathura fixes his reigning period from the year 26 to 60 of the Kanishka era, well corresponding to the years AD 104-138 (Ibid: 148-149). Among the Kushan rulers Huvishka issued a large number of coins. His gold coins are the most interesting of all the Kushan series and show about thirty different representation of king on the obverse side. On the reverse is the largest number of divinities (Mitterwalner 1986:5-6).

Huvishka was succeeded by Vasudva who is regarded as the last intestine of great Kushans. In his several Brahmi inscriptions he is mentioned as maharaja rajatiraja devaputra shahi or simply maharaja Vasudeva. Vasudevas; reign according

to Kanishka or is dated in the years 99 (AD 177). Like his predecessor Huvishka, these epigraphs evidently refer him to the regnal reckoning of Kanishka 1 (Ibid:26). Vasudeva 1 is regarded the last representative of Great Kushan family founded by Kujula Kadphises 1. it does not mean that the Kushans ceased to rule. In fact, the line of the kushan emperors who reigned after Vasudeva 1 is treated as 'Later Kushans'. Alexander Cunningham was the first to coin the term. (Cunningham 1962:18).

Various inscriptions, found from Mathura, Gandhara and Afghanistan, together with the evidence of coins show that certain Kushan emperors ruled over extensive areas, stretching from Kabul to Bihar even after the Great Kushans. Although, the precise genealogy like the one with regard to these rulers from Rabatak inscription is not know. But, in the light of inscriptional as well as numismatic evidence, the so-called 'Later Kushan' have been approximately arranged in a rough chronological order. The exact period in term of years of these Kushan Kings seems hard to establish in the absence of any reliable literary or archaeological data. However, it is generally suggested that Kanishka 11 was the first Later kushan emperor who followed Vasudeva 1 on the Kushan throne. He is also said to have inaugurated a new regal era. Kanishka 11 was succeeded by another Kushan ruler named Vasishka (or Vajheshka of Ara inscription or Jushka of Kalhana). After Vasishka, Kanishka 111 ascended the kushan throne. According to the Ara inscription Kanishka (111) was son of Vajheshka. Thus we have another genealogical evidence of the Kushan kings, like that of Rabatak inscription, Kanishka 111 was followed by Vasudeva 11. although no inscriptional record has so far come to light to prove the existence of Vasudeva II, a sizable body of coins both in gold and copper are found which preserve the name Vasudeva in Bactrian Greek legend. Moreover, there are other Kushan rulers whose names are found on stray coins and who might have succeeded Vasudeva 11. These are Skkinatha and Gadakhra or Ggadakhra is said to have normally belonged to the thought of the king Kirada Kidar (Mitterwalner 1986:27-40).

The last Kushan ruler of Gandhara and northern Punjab was first ousted into a subordinate position by Kujula, and then deprived of whatsoever authority he had. Thus, most probably, in the 4th century A.D, the country of Gandhara passed into the hands of its new masters, well known as Kidara Kushans. The most outstanding ruler among the Kidara Kushans was Kidara himself, to whom the Kidara-Kushans owed their political foundation in north-western India (Gandhara and northern Punjab) (Ibid:40-44). There was no great king like Kujula, Wima or Kanishka in this new line of Kushans who could revive the past glory of their ancestries.

In the middle of the 5th century AD Ephthalite or Huns appeared on the political horizon of north-west India and without evident resistance, swept away the cultural life of Gandhara. Toramana and Mihiragula were their most powerful leaders, who carved out a huge empire, stretching from Hinku Kush to Bihar. According to the Kura inscription, found in the Salt Range Toramana enjoyed a high royal status as his title shows, Rajadhiraja Maharaja Toramana Shahi Jabula. Another inscription of Madhya Pradesh. It also speaks of Maharajadhiraja Toramana denoting that the latter had established his rule as far as the Gangetic Valley. Toramana was succeeded by his son Mihiragula, whom Xuan Zang called the king of Shakal, i.e. Sialkot. The evidence of his coins shows that he was a follower of Pashupati, i.e. God Siva. Mihiragula, probably, died in AD 550 (Qureshi 1967:159-60). With the death of Mihiragula the glorious period of Hun rule ended. After the disintegration of Hun power their empire fell apart into small local states so that we do not learn anything about the country of Gandhara except that the capital of Gandhara was Po-lu-sha-pu-lo (=or Peshawar), its royal family was extinct and that it was being governed by deputies from Kapisa or Kia-pi-Shi (Beal 1964:92-93).

According to Al-Biruni Barhatigin was the founder of the Turk Shahi dynasty of Gandhara. The history of this Turkish family can be traced back to at least A.D. 666 (Abdur Raman 1979:47). But the history of Turk Shahis is not well documented in the early Muslim histories as they are only marginally treated

with reference to Muslim governors of Sistan. According to Alberuni Lagaturman was dethroned by his Brahman minister Kallar who laid the foundation of the so-called Hindu Sahi dynasty (Abdur Rahman 1979:46). However, inscriptional evidence now clearly shows that Kallar was probably a chief of the Odi tribe (Bailey 1980:21-29). The dynasty he founded came to be known as the Hindu Sahi dynasty. Ethnically the Hindu Sahis were Odis whose settlements can still be found in Gandhara (Rahman 2003:8-9). This dynastic change probably took place about AD 821 (Rahman 1993:31). This Hindu Sahi or Odi Sahi dynasty ruled over Gandhara for about two hundred years and stood guard against Muslim inroads spearheaded by the Arab governors of Sistan and then the Ghaznavid Turks of Central Asia. The most outstanding rulers among the Odi Shahi were Kallar (the founder of the dynasty), Samantdeva, Toramana, Bhimadeva, Jayapaladeva, Anandapala. After the battle of the Indus, in which the Sahi suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of Mahmud, Gandhara slipped out of his hands. (Rahman 1979:148-149).

This brief review of the history of Gandhara shows that out of two thousand and five hundred years during the rule of the Mauryans and the Odi Sahi. For the rest of the period Gandhara had been changing masters one after the other. These foreign invaders left deep cultural impressions on the art, architecture, language, trade commerce and economy of Gandhara. It goes to the credit of Gandhara that it assimilated all these cultural diversities and in the course of time gave them its own colour. This synthesis of many different cultural norms may be termed as 'Gandharta culture'.

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