

KASHMIR THE RISING LAND OF BUDDHISM

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Abstract:-

Kashmir the name given to the north most territory of India is a rich center of learning from the ancient times. The land was a great seat of learning for Buddhists shavite and vaishnavite scholars. The people who ever had visited Kashmir were openhandedly patronized by the kings and queens of the land, the rulers had build Agraharams for housing pundits and scholars. A mutt or monastery for students to study provides space for artists. In fact scholars came from different parts of the world in order to gain knowledge from ancient teachers and scholars. The valley has developed its cultural, economic and political links with world civilizations from early times.in this process of interaction the land of Kashmir developed a huge extent and also shapes its social menniu on the new line. The second period of Kashmir history belongs to Buddhism. Many monks and monasteries here, they practice both Mahayana and Hinayana located at the intersection of empires, the nexus of cultures, and the confluences of religious traditions, Kashmir was a place where established religious and artistic ideas circulated and intermingled , giving forth new ideas that were thus sent out into the world. The art of Kashmir, both Buddhist and Hindu, is evidence of these interactions and inventions,

Key words:- Yuchi-chi, Gobi, Kushan, archeology, doctrine, Nilmatapurna, Buddhism

Introduction:-

We are informed by the Chinese historians that the Kushans were a Clan of the “Yuch-Chi” race. We also learn from Ssu-ma-Chien who recorded the story of the travels of chang-K’ien, that in about 165.BCE the Youchi-Chi were dwelling between the Tsenn-Chan Range in Chinese Turkistan. At that date the Yuchi-Chi were defeated and expelled from their country by the Hiung-nu. The Yuchi-Chi were compelled to quit the lands which they occupied in the Province of Kan-Such in North-western China, and to migrate westwards in search of fresh Pastures-grounds. In the course of their westward migration in search of grazing grounds adequate for the substance of their vast number of horse, cattle and sheep, the Yuchi-Chi moving along the route Past Kucha, to the north of the desert of Taklamakan, the Gobi came into conflict with a smaller horde, named Wu-Sun.

In course of time, which may be estimated at one to two generations, the Yuchi-Chi last their nomadic habits and become a settled territorial nation, in actual occupation of Bactrian lands South of the river, as well as of Sogdiana to the north, and were divided into five Principalities. After the division of the nation into five territorial Principalities, situated to the north of the Hindu-Kush, The Chief of Kushan Section of horde K'ieou-Tsieou-Kie or Ch'iu-Chiu-Ch, uch (Kuzoulo" who is conventionally known to European writers as Kadphises-I, Succeeded in imposing his authority five tribes of Yuch-Chih as mentioned Yarbous, yabgous, viz Hieou-mi, Chaung-mi, Kouei-chauang, Hitouen and toumi and defeated his colleagues and establishing himself as sole monarch of the Yuchi-Chi nationⁱ. The monarch engages himself in the formidable task of subjugating the Provinces to the South of the Hindu-Kush Mountain. He made himself master of Ki-Pin (Kashmir? Kafiristan) as well as the Kabul territoryⁱⁱ. The empire of Kujula Kadphises included Bactria, Parts of eastern Iran, western and eastern Turkistan, as well as Pakistan. At the age of eighty Kadphises-I closed his victorious reign and was Succeeded by son Yen-Kao Chen or Vima Kadphises in 45-AD.

This Prince is believed to have conquered the Punjab and a considerable part of the Gangetic Plains, as far as Varanasi (Banaras). After the death of Vima Kadphises Kushan history passed into a phase of uncertainty to the extent that we have practically no knowledge about the period between the death of Vima Kadphises and the rise of Kanishka. A large number of coins without any name have been discovered in the North West bearing a particular symbol and the legend "Soter Mega" or the "King of Kings" 'The Saviour'. Dr. D.C. Sircar suggested that the Soter Mega refers to Kuljala Kara Kadphises and his father, who was semi-independent governors of the Indian Provinces of Vima Kadphises. After the death of Vima Kadphises they proclaimed their independence and issued these coins. The areas including Punjab, Gandhara and the Kabul valley were continuously ruled by them until they were taken over by Kanishka.

Kanishka was the greatest of all rulers of Kushan Empire. He was a great conqueror. The Provenance of his coins and literary evidence are the main sources to learn about the conquests of Kanishka. Both literary and Archaeological sources suggested that Kanishka ruled over U.P, Mathura, Varanasi, apart from these areas, Al-Beruni mentions that he conquest most area of Central Asia, including Afghanistan. Hiuen Tsang says that Gandhara, Purushapura (Peshawar) and the country to the east of Tsung-Ling Mountain. Kalhana in his account Rajatarangini suggests that Kashmir was the part included in the wide dominion of the great Kusana dynasty, is a fact amply attested by the combined evidence of the Buddhist records and the coins, copper pieces of Kanishka and Huviska being found to this day in remarkable abundance at many of the old sites of Kashmirⁱⁱⁱ. Kanishka may be credited with having completed the Subjugation and annexation of the secluded vale of Kashmir, He certainly showed a marked preference for that delightful country, and where he created numerous monuments and founded a town, which although now reduced to a petty village, still bears his honored name. This is mentioned in Rajatarangini as, "then there were in this land three kings called Huska, Juska and Kanishka, who built three towns named after them (Huskapura, Juskapura,

Kanishkapura^{iv}. During their reign the land Kashmir was to a great extent, in the possession of the Buddhism.

Kashmir A Cradle of Buddhism:-

The land of Kashmir and its inhabitants had played a key role in the development and promotion of Buddhism, mostly the Mahayana Philosophy of Buddhism. The devotee of Buddhism in Kashmir had carried the message of Lord Buddha in various parts of Asia. Kashmir came within the shadow of Buddhism long before the beginning of Christian era. The ruler Haryanka dynasty Ajatasatru that Madhyantika came to Kashmir along with thousands of disciples and settles for good in Kashmir. He converted hosts of people, belonging to various tribes and races in Kashmir and its adjoining areas to Buddhism. According the Tibetan sources Buddhism reached Kashmir before Ashoka's time. Asokavadana a treatise of 2nd century B.C records that Lord Buddha along with Ananda himself paid a visit to Kashmir and predicted that it will be at the hands of Madhyantika that Kashmir will come in the fold of Buddhism under Ashoka Buddhism attained the status of a state religion. Kashmir was one of the first regions to receive his attention. Ashoka visited Kashmir twice and founded the city of Srinagar. He brought with him 500 monks and built numerous viharas for them there. When he left Kashmir, he says this land is the best place for the study and Propagation of the Buddhist Doctrine. The literary sources of Kashmir, Nilmatapurna and Kalhana's Rajatarangini reflected that Buddhism was an important part of the classical Kashmir culture.

With the coming of the Kushans, Buddhism in Kashmir received a tremendous impetus. There is no denying the fact that during their rule Buddhism enjoyed real patronage coins of Kushan rulers have been located in Kashmir^v. The various archaeological sites of Buddhist period in Kashmir belonging to Kushan ruler was a unique work done in the sphere of architecture. During the ages, Sculptures of various Buddhist deities have been recovered from valley lands and are well preserved in world famous museums. The Kushan rulers covered the Kashmir with the monasteries, Chaityas and other Buddhist foundations. A clear idea of the great impact that Buddhism had made on the people of Kashmir in Kushan time is available from the fact that when, following, them the traditional mode of worship was restored; worship of the Buddha is enjoined upon the Hindus of Kashmir in the Nilmatapurna.

Buddhist Council in Kashmir:-

The valley of Kashmir from remote times was distinguished for learning and its priests were all of high religious merit and conspicuous virtues, as well as of manner, talent and power of exposition of doctrine, and though the Priest, of other nations were in their own way distinguished yet they could not be compared with these so different were they from the ordinary class. The Buddhist conference was held at Kundalvan in Kashmir in the period of Kanishka in first century A.D. The council is said to have sat for six months and collected scattered sayings, therein and dictums of various doctrines of the law. The council is believed to

have compared of 100,000 stanzas of Papadesh Shastra explanatory of the canonical Sutras; 100,000 stanzas of Vinayas Vibhasa Sastra, explanatory of the Vinayas; and 100,000 Stanzas of Abhidharma Vibhasas Sastra, explanatory of the Abhidharma.

The commentaries of the Council are said were written in Sanskrit on Copper Plates which were enclosed in stone boxes. These boxes were then deposited in a Stupa specially built for the purpose. Kanishka's council gave a fresh impetus to the faith. Tibet, South Central Asia and China lay along the great missionary routes of Northern Buddhism. The Council was important also for the fact that it marks the point of separation between northern and southern Buddhism, from now onwards Mahayanists gained a position superior to that of the Hinayanists. The council was attended by great scholar Vasumitra and who acted as President, and Asvaghosha, the famous author, who according to story, was appointed vice President. The members 500 in number devoted themselves to a thorough examination of theological literature from the most remote antiquity, and elaborated huge commentaries on the main divisions of the canon^{vi}.

Later the Buddhist missionaries used Gandhara and Kashmir as a base to spread their religion to Parthia, Sogdiana, Khotan, and Kucha in central Asia^{vii}. Therefore Buddhism emerged first world religion like Christianity and Islam centuries later, its message is for everyone.

Conclusion:-

The paper tells us fascinating story of what may be called "Kashmir the land of Buddhism". During the progress of years huge viharas were constructed in Kashmir; remains of a few still exist. It is a commonplace of history that Buddhism is no longer alive in the land of its birth. But that is not quite correct. Buddhism continues to be a living faith in some areas along the northern boundary of India. Among these is the extensive Ladakh district of Kashmir state. Now such a religion have gone missing from Kashmir with leaving any behind any significant cultural traces, contrary to the later Hindu period the religion and other historical monuments and ruins of which are still scattered all over Kashmir, strengthens the belief that the Buddhist cultural was wiped out by the rulers of the faith taking over from those of the previous one.

Reference:-

ⁱ The Yuezhi is commonly known as the Kushan, because it was to the particular Kushan tribe that their kings belonged.

ⁱⁱ Smith, Vincent A., "The Early History Of India", from 600B.C. to the Muhammadan conquest, Oxford University Press, London, 1914, P.250.

ⁱⁱⁱ Bhattacharjee, Arun, "History of ancient India", Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, P.243.

^{iv} Stein, M.A., {trans.} 'Kalhana's Rajatarangini', A chronicle of kings of Kashmir, book I, Motilal Banarsidas, Delhi, 1900, PP.168-72.

^v Hand Book, SPS, Museum, Srinagar, PP.131, 132,153.

^{vi} Smith, Vincent A., "Op., Cit., P.268.

^{vii} Kenneth Ch'en. Buddhism in China: a historical survey, Princeton University Press, 1964, PP. 18.