

STUPA AND ITS ARCHITECTURE ALONG ANCIENT SILK ROUTES

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Religion Buddhism have their scared place of worship known as Stūpa, Pagoda, Chorten, Chaitya. Stūpa becomes symbol of Buddhism. Stūpa were earliest then Buddhism but after the *Mahaparinirvana* of Buddha, Stūpa were constructed to enshrine relics of Buddha and become scared symbol of Buddhism and Dhamma. Symbolic interpretation of the meaning of Stūpa changes according to the transformation and adaptation of Buddhism in different geographical locations. Stūpa derived from the Sanskrit word “*Stū*” meaning “to heap”. Stūpa is aepiphany, psycho cosmogramic, metaphysical representation of *Buddhadhamma*. Literal translation of Stūpa means “a knot” or “tuft of hair”, a hemispherical dome shaped mound structure that symbolizes the five elements and their relationship to enlightened mind.

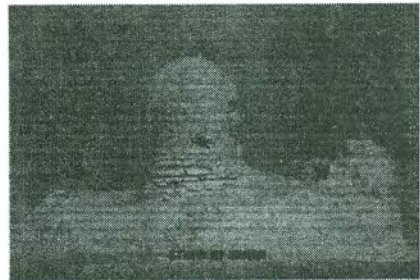
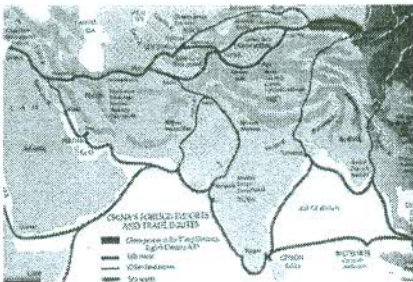
This paper aims to analyse the Stūpa construction and its unique architecture along Silk routes. Buddhism was migrated to Eastern and western World in due course of time. In the first century AD Buddhism was travelled to China along the Silk routes, World first transcontinental trade highway. Gradually Stūpa worship becomes important part of ritual of Silk route Buddhism. And because of the high scale trade and migration, large number of Stūpa s were constructed in Niya, Khotan, Kuchha, Keriya and other places along Silk routes. Mahayana Buddhism as well as Gandhara artefacts were at its zenith during Kushana period. The Gandhara Stūpa was the further well developed from the earliest Buddhist Stūpa s with its carved base, circular drum and spherical dome. Today remains of Buddhist architect reflect the movement of Buddhism across Central Asia along Silk routes. Long Silk routes, northwest Indian style architecture of Stūpa were constructed, depicting cosmic order, were axial pillar and hemisphere shaped dome were the main components of the construction. The original form was a dome on a circular base. As Buddhism spread along Silk routes the structure of Stūpa developed into new forms. The base became square and stepped, with staircases on one or all four sides. The dome became elongated and

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more tower-like. Kushana period Stūpa at Hadda, Nagaraha, Sirkap, Termez, Ayrtaam, Dilberjin and SurkhKotal were different in structure from Indian Stūpa architecture. From time to time and dynasty to dynasty conceptual Stūpa architecture from regular structure were changed according to the geographical locations as transformation of Buddhism took place along Silk routes. The most important change during Kushana period, was the decorative and scripture representation in the architecture of Stupas. As Buddhism reached in arid and difficult climate conditions, a new form of Stūpa architecture emerged. This new form of Stūpa structure can be seen in the geographical areas of Taklamakan at Miran, Niya, Endere and Rawak. A large numbers of Buddhist centre developed along trade routes which become artistic centre, one of great example of ancient Buddhist Stūpa architecture was at *Miran*, (Located on the southern part of Silk routes) Xingjing.

This paper illustrate the artistic sophistication of Silk routes Stūpa architecture, Gandharan stupas, primarily along southern Silk route, Niya-Miran route, in the Tarim Basin and along Karakoram Highway. Stūpas along Silk routes has great manifestation of Buddhist migration. These Stūpas also represent the impression of local and migrated artistic work.

Keywords - BUDDHISM, SILK ROUTES, ARCHITECTURE, STUPA



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