

THE BUDDHIST CULTURAL LANDSCAPE OF GANDHARA: AN ANALYSIS OF THE SACRED ESTABLISHMENT ALONG THE ROUTES

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Gandhara is generally known as the melting-pot and crossroads. It has, no doubt played such a role in history. The area connects China, Tibet, Central Asia and South Asia. Obviously this connection is reflected in the rout-end- path network which distributes through Gandhara. For understanding the communication system of Gandhara one has to know about the geography of Gandhara. The geographical distribution of Gandhara is constructed in two contexts namely Gandhara proper and cultural or Greater Gandhara.

Gandhara proper is the historic Peshawar valley in the KP province of Pakistan. Its modern importance urban centers are Peshawar, Naushehra and Mardan. Its cultural centres are Peshawar, Naushehra, Charsadda & Pushkalavati, Swabi and Mardan. All these places in ancient times have played significant role in the development of Gandhara Buddhist culture. Cultural or Greater Gandhara consists of areas, or cultural centres, beyond Gandhara proper. They are Taxila valley in the East, Hadda- Jalalabad- Bamian (Afghanistan) in the west, Bannu in the South and Uddiyana (modern Swat, Buner, Dir and Chitral) in the north. Through this extended developed the Buddhist culture of Gandhara.

The landscape of this culture is given to us by the extant remains which are scatters through Greater Gandhara. This study explores the Buddhist cultural landscape of Gandhara within Pakistan. It is maintained here that Buddhist Stūpas and monasteries in Gandhara were largely constructed in the valleys which also served as routes. These valley-cum routes great attractive of the Buddhist community throughout the Gandhara

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period and hence the established of sacred monuments. The reasons seem to be two-fold:

1. To make good use of such establishments in the promotion and propagation of Buddhism and in turn.
2. To get donation from the merchants and traders who were busy in long- distanced trade between Indian Sub-continent, China and Central Asia.

This paper explores this intricate liaison between the Buddhist sacred establishments along the valleys-cum-routes of Gandhara and development & promotion of Buddhist culture.