**FOREWORD**

Buddhism has left its imprints on the land of Sapta Sindhu (Punjab) with the expressions of its religious, social and cultural heritage. The hidden treasure of which was traced through chance, surface exploration and archaeological excavation of rare quality and higher aesthetic forms. Sanghol remarkably has emerged as an artistic place in the panorama of archaeological sites in Punjab (Pañcanada). The Archaeological Cultural Affairs Deptt. carried out excavations at different sites of Punjab. Among these historical and cultural sites such as Ropar, Sunet, Nagar, Rohira, Ghuram, Bras and Sanghol were excavated from time to time.

Sanghol, usually known as Uchapind has provided a considerable place to Punjab in the archaeological atlas of India. Eminent archaeologist Mr. Madho Sarup Vats brought forth the site of Sanghol in 1933, when he forwarded a Buddha head (form) to Central Museum, Lahore during surface exploration. In between the excavation and surface exploration was continued but not yielded any significant finding. In the year 1985 it was placed on the archaeological map of the artistic world with the considerable finding of 117 aesthetically richly carved Vedika pillars of Sanghol Mahastupa dating back to the mid 1st century A.D. to IIIrd century A.D., valuable in importance and of higher aesthetic degree and of the Kushana period.

Sanghol site yielded different cultural, artistic and sculptural material ranging from late Harappan to the medieval times. It shows that Sanghol was well connected with the different parts of Āryāvarta (India), politically, culturally and religiously via Uttarapatha. Sanghol was an important center of Buddhism, well recorded as She-to-t'u-lo (Śatadru) in the records of Hiuen Tsiang during the period between C 629-645 A.D.

Apart from the discovery of a Dharmachakra Buddhist Stupa, the site has yielded the masterly carved Vedika stambhas, suchis, ushnishas along with beautiful terracotta statuette, seals, sealing and coins of Indo-Sassanian, Gupta and Huns as well as numismatic proofs of Hindūśahi, Balban and of Mughal (Shajahan) period.

The present thesis attempts to delineate the history, socio-cultural and artistic expression of Sanghol during the Kushana era predominantly the 2nd century A.D. The art of Sanghol is inspired by the art of Mathura idiom with well-maintained record of Buddhist sect and of socio-cultural life under Kushana rulers. The vast and valuable artistic antiquities excavated here in the form of stone sculptures, terracotta
The Si-Yu-Ki refers to the metropolis of Sanghol, which was prosperous, large and full of artistic and aesthetically rich forms of arts. Sanghol sculptural art had its indigenous origin in the great Kushana Age. The Sanghol art tradition was beautifully enriched with Buddhist ideology and stylistic traits created by talented carvers that reached its zenith during the period of Kanishka-The Great.

The Buddhist art of Sanghol brings out the artistic reliefs, the expressions of contemporary values from the history of Indian culture and art. I tried my best to account all available artistic archaeological material of Sanghol to prove certain facts; those enriched the socio-religious concepts in a more mature and meaningful way, either in style or rendering of material. Sanghol art artistically and stylistically belonged to Kushana period, because material is of Sikri (Mathura) site and well rendered in buff technique, free from Mauryan glass polish methodology and scroll like interpretation of an episode as well as size of the Vedika. The artistic material at my disposal helped me to establish the conceptual origin and critical analysis to fix its period and expression in the grace of Kushana era at Sanghol. I go through the travel accounts, Buddhist literary philosophy and Indological studies to confirm its origin and development as an enter port of Buddhist art on the way Uttarapatha from Mathura to Gandhara.

My research thesis consists of six chapters with subparts. The first chapter consists Introduction and deals with the geographical, historical and religious aspects about the situation of Punjab in that period and in the present political map. Further it includes an analytical discussion on the ancient trade route to define the causes behind Kushana supremacy over the Pañcanada. In this regard a map has been prepared, which is based on the relevant conclusions appended to this part of chapter first. Furthermore I undertake the development of Sanghol site as a center of Kushana art. It deals with the concept of its dating as Kushana period site of Buddhist art, on the basis of available archaeological materials.

Second chapter deals with the detailed analysis and study of Sanghol art in the pretext of Dharmachakra Mahastupa Vedika imagery. It further deals with the conceptual reality behind the forms, material rendering and individual figurative composition art, which is woven around the traditional concept of Dohada, Śalabhañjika, Vrikshaka and mortal damsels.
Third chapter elaborately describes the critical study of forms and expression of Dharmachakra Stupa, its plan and structural concept and the mixing of Buddhist philosophy with Vedic philosophy at Sanghol. Further second part of the chapter third is woven around the stylistic appreciation of Sanghol art and its Kushana Mathura idiom. Each group of Vedika pillar imagery deals with its complete analysis & reason behind its creation. The ingenious conceptual reality and rendering of forms has been defined. There are further six parts, which expresses the critical analysis of the each form, either sacred in expression or mortal in values. These six parts are related with the stylistic appreciation of Vedika stambha imagery; suchi art: concept of lotus; ushnish art: metaphorical expression of coping stone art; detached heads and image of Buddha and Bodhisattvas, terracotta statuette, seals and sealings along with terracotta animal figurines. The third chapter's third part deals with the study of decorative elements adorned by the imagery to define their social stature.

Chapter four is woven around the Kushana period Buddhist concept of Sanghol Vedika art along with other artistic materials to define its nature and aesthetically rich character. The main concept deals with the subjective and objective nature of Sanghol sculptural art to discuss their artistic character that further justify, why Sanghol forms surpass, compare to other Kushana imagery.

Chapter fifth is devoted to the applied value of research, how Sanghol art emerged out of the contemporary Kushana Mathura and Gandharan conceptual imagery. It deals with the findings and their socio-cultural value on the grounds of their practical expressions. Further fifth chapter enhances the status of Sanghol as a metropolis on the Uttarapatha route and its artistic enrichment compare to Mathura, Gandhara and local (Pañcanada) archaeological sites in the present map of Punjab.

Sixth chapter deals with the conclusion of my project (Thesis). It concludes the metaphorical imagery of Sanghol and its spiritual experience in the context of Buddhist dominance over Uttarapatha during Kushana period. My study is divided into conceptual parts i.e. background behind the imagery, its meaning in the symbolic form and in naturalistic manner, its deep rooted Buddhist thought and philosophy that generated such a marvelous aesthetically rich art.

Further due to bigger perspective and conceptual realities of the present study, there are no limitations. Even then I tried a lot to go through my presentation with suitable references and enriched bibliography to justify my research topic: "Kushana art of Sanghol - A Critical Analysis".