CHAPTER VIII

Contribution to Buddhist Art and Architecture in Central Asia and Tibet
As in other spheres of Buddhist lore, viz., the philosophy and literature, in the transmission of Buddhist artistic and architectural traditions to Central Asian territories, Kashmir played the conspicuous role. In Kashmir the foundations of Buddhist art and architecture were laid in the early Buddhist settlements during the first centuries of the Christian era. The excavated sites of this period at Uskur near Baramulla and Harwan near Srinagar represent the early phase of the Buddhist art and architecture of Kashmir betraying the influences of several Central Asian civilizations, viz., Parthian, Greek, Turkish, etc. as well. The next landmark is formed by the art remains of Parihasapura with Buddhist attribution. The following discussion purports to trace in brief Kashmir's role in the development of the Buddhist art and architecture in Central Asia.

ARCHITECTURE: To get an idea of the origin of the building art of Buddhist Kashmir the excavated sites at Uskur and Harwan, although bare foundations, are of great significance. These are the foundations of the
Buddhist stūpas, caityas, and vihāras. The foundations of the stūpas at both the sites are located at the centre of a large surrounding courtyard—similar to the stūpa courts of Gandhāra. The foundation of the caitya at Harwan has its similarities in plan and dimensions with a caitya unearthed at the Indo-Greek City of Sirkap in Taxila.

The plan and general arrangement of the early buildings of Kashmir were the manner of their construction from a mixture of mud and pebbles. The process was gradually improved by the insertion of irregular blocks of stone at intervals. With the passage of time the method was further improved by making constructions by large untrimmed stones and the spaces left between were filled up by smaller stones. Such rough construction needed a surface treatment. For this, the use was made of terracotta tiles or panels. It was a great development in the architecture of Kashmir. These tiles were used everywhere, to cover the walls and also the pavement of the courtyards. The uniqueness of the tiles is that they are moulded with a design in basrelief. The designs are significant in the manner of their representing a variety of alien civilizations, reference to which has been made above. It points to the impact of diverse cultures that met at this place in the past. The Harwan
excavations have also yielded a few terracotta plaques. These plaques bear in relief miniature stūpas. In the present context these reliefs are of great significance for they give an idea of the structure of stūpas that were built in Kashmir in the early centuries of the Christian era. The stūpa consisted of three component parts, viz., the base, the drum and the umbrella. The base was composed of three tiers. It was a square structure with stairs in the middle of four sides (mandala shape) to reach to the drum of the stūpa which enshrined the relic. It appears that the drum was ornamental as indicated by the terracotta plaques. Above the drum was an umbrella. The umbrella had thirteen tiers arranged in a diminishing size and placed on wooden poles. The thirteen tiers represent the thirteen heavens and it is said that on the thirteenth tier the Avalokiteśvara resides.

On the top of the stūpa there were also solar and lunar signs and two ribbons which indicates the Parthian influence. The tradition of colored ribbons on the top of monasteries is invariably found in Ladakh these days. Interesting point to note among earlier stūpas of Kashmir, is the presence of lion capital as indicated by the terracotta plaques from Hāywan. It seems that the stūpa encircled by wall was approachable on four sides. On each side was raised a lion capital. The pattern was
the same as seen at Sāñchi. According to H.Gotz the Harwan excavations represent the local variety of the Indo-Parthian style and that of Uskur represent earlier Gandhara style.

The Pandrethān (purāṇādhiṣṭhāna) excavation has revealed mounds of two Buddhist stūpas and the courtyard of a monastery.

The glorious period of Kashmiri architecture coincided with the rule of the great Kārkota ruler Lalitādityamuktapīda during the 8th century A.D. His empire covered a large part of India and also Eastern Turkistan. This powerful king dedicated a large Buddhist establishment at Parihasapura, fourteen miles northwest of Srinagar. The excavation at the site has revealed the ruins of a stūpa, a Vihāra, and a caitya-hall. The building art of this site is remarkably different from the earlier building art of Kashmir. These remains depict a decisive leap forward in the materialisation of its architectural ideals. The main feature of these buildings is that they are constructed of immense stones which are smoothly dressed. Their joints are exact and perfect. The stones were apparently joined together by gypsum mortar and iron dowels. The largest stone measured fourteen by twelve feet and formed the floor of the caitya. It points to the productions of experienced mind and hand and also the flourishing state of stone.
architecture of Kashmir.

The stūpa at Parīhasapura attributed to Cankuna—a Tokharian minister of Lalitāditya, occupied a square of 128 feet side with projecting stairways at the quarters making a cross-shaped design. The stūpa originally had two platforms which provided passages for circumambulation on two levels. The influence of this architecture in its plan and elevation is also represented by the Brāhmaṇic monumental buildings of Kashmir, viz., Martand, Avantipur etc. etc.

Parīhasapura monastery is the only surviving example of Buddhist monasteries of Kashmir. It was a quadrangle of twenty-six cells enclosing a square courtyard. There was a broad varandah in front of the cells. In the middle of one side i.e., to the east, was the flight of steps. The central cell on this side served as a vestibule. On the western side was also a flight of steps leading down to the courtyard. On a plinth projected into the courtyard were built three cells which were probably the private apartments of the abbot of the monastery. Nearby in a corner is a large stone reservoir. It may have served as a water reservoir. There was also a proper drainage system to carry off the surplus water from the courtyard.

The examples of these forms of Buddhist architecture can be found in the monasteries and stūpas of Tibet. Credit goes to the great Tibetan scholar Rin chen bzan pa
(11th century A.D.) who was mainly responsible for the foundation of most of the monasteries and stūpas in western Tibet, in collaboration with Kashmiri artists. According to The Blue Annals Ratnavajra (11th century A.D.), a Kashmiri scholar, besides his literary activities also supervised five hundred workers and artisans including sculptors and goldsmiths in rebuilding the circular terrace of Bsam-yas (Central Tibet) which was burnt in 986 A.D.¹²

The large choten (stūpa) at Samde in Tsang region¹³ and the doorway of Sumtsek (Alchi) are magnificent examples of Kashmiri architecture. The figure of Avalokiteśvara in Alchi (Ladakh) also gives a glimpse of Kashmiri Buddhist architecture. The lower garment of the figure is painted with pictorial art. It depicts various scenes including multi-storied wooden palaces, stūpas, etc. According to Snellgrove they represent Buddhist sites in Kashmir.¹⁴ Again, Kalhana makes mention of multi-storied buildings of Kashmir during 11th century A.D. The existence of wooden architecture in Kashmir during this period is confirmed by the inscription in śāradā script found at Ārigom (1197 A.D.) in Kashmir.¹⁶ It records the construction of a brick vihāra at the place, where there was previously a vihāra constructed of wood and which was set to fire by certain kings named Simha.

The above discussion points to the geographical
location of Kashmir at a crossroad of various civilizations from all sides. The great Buddhist movement which spread farther to Central Asian territories started from Kashmir. In the field of architecture Kashmiri artists definitely received help from outside as far as the technique was concerned. But it was their high ideology which characterises the uniqueness of their work. Again, in the field of architecture local material has played a big part. In the above discussion it has been seen that the material used for building purposes was stone (Parihasapura), wood (Arigom, Alchi) and brick (Arigom). There is no brick building of the Buddhist period in Kashmir that has survived. These buildings were probably demolished and the material was used for the construction of other buildings. However, the evidence of the construction of brick vihāras is recorded on Arigom inscription. In Tibet and particularly in Ladakh there are a number of examples of wood work accomplished by Kashmiri artists. But there is only the Arigom inscription left to confirm the existence of wooden vihāras in Kashmir. For the stone work use was made beautiful grey limestone. It was easy to carve and it presented a very smooth surface when properly dressed. The main characteristic of Buddhist architecture of Kashmir was the use of better material and the modes of decoration. The examples are still present in the monasteries and stūpas of Ladakh and Tibet.
The geographical location and religious calamities have left almost nothing in Kashmir to represent its rich art style. However, outside Kashmir, in the monasteries of Central Asia and Tibet, a large number of examples have been traced which bear Kashmiri influences. Again, the existence of Kashmiri art style is proved by literary evidences from Kashmir and Tibet.

The *Nilamatapurāṇa* (6th-7th century A.D.) dealing with the sacred places, rituals and ceremonials of Kashmir, refers to decoration of the walls of the caityas with paintings on the occasion of Buddha's birthday. In his introduction to Kṣemendra's *Avadānakalpalatā* (11th century A.D.) Somadeva makes mention of the monasteries adorned with pleasing pictures which had perished with the passage of time. There are a number of references to be found in Kalhana's *Rājatarangini* (12th century A.D.) of consecration of the Buddhist images by the kings, queens or ministers particularly during the 7th-8th century A.D. and the 11th century A.D. The Tibetan historian Tārānātha (16th century A.D.) refers to a Kashmiri art style of painting and sculpture established by Hamarāja during the 8th-9th century A.D.

The Kashmiri art of painting is represented by the paintings of the wooden covers of the Gilgit manuscripts. Among the two covers published by P. Banerjee, the painting of manuscript no. 2 represents the Kashmiri
art style. On these paintings the Gandhāra influence is noticed by the broad muscular treatment of chest and body. Same features are also found on certain paintings at Bamiyan and western Tibet.

The most significant specimens of Kashmiri art are preserved in western Tibet. According to Tibetan sources it was at the instance of the great Tibetan scholar Rin-chen bzan pa (958-1055 A.D.) that the foundations of most of the Tibetan monasteries were laid. The king Ye-ses-od sent him to Kashmir to receive initiation in Buddhist lore. On his return journey Rin-chen bzan pa took with him a group of thirty-two skilled artists. The group comprised skilled painters and sculptors. They helped Rin-chen bzan pa in laying the foundation of monasteries and decorating them with their excellent workmanship. Incidentally the name of one of these Kashmiri artists is found as Bhiṭaka. Rin chen bzan pa while in Kashmir got made by Bhiṭaka the bronze Šākya of Avalokiteśvara which he dedicated to the memory of his father. A large number of Kashmiri bronzes with Buddhist themes have survived in Tibet. Similar bronzes have also been discovered in the Kirghiz area of Soviet Russia.

Some sculptures found at the site of Adzhi-tepe in western Turkistan bear a striking resemblance to
the sculptures of Akhnur and Uskur in Kashmir. Buddhist images found at Pandrethan in Kashmir have their relation with the sculptures of Hadda (Fondukistan). These images can also be compared in their features to the sculptures from the cave No. xxi at Tsien Lung sehan (Tang period 678-906 A.D.). It is important to note here that the seated Buddha image carved on a high rock at Shaikrai in Swat valley (7th-8th century A.D.) has its affinities with the 7th-8th century A.D. Tang sculptures in Central Asia. Also, the Buddhist images found at Soura in Kashmir have close affinity with the sculptures found at Ming-ic sharchuk (6th century A.D.) in Chinese Turkestan.

The Buddhist art of Kashmir is further represented by the art of Alchi (Ladakh). The Tibetan sources state that the Kashmiri monks while on their way to Tibet, first settled at Samid in Zanskar. Here, they built Kanika monastery. Some paint, which remained unutilized was utilized in other two monasteries at Sumba (Zanskar) and Alchi. Here, some paint was saved again which was utilized in the Manggy monastery. At Alchi, Du-khang (assembly hall) and Sumtsek (three storyed temple) are the earliest buildings. The uniqueness of Sumtsek is represented by its wooden doorway supported by beautifully carved wooden pillars. These pillars bear the traces of Kashmiri workmanship. An old wooden image, four armed and holding a vessel in her only surviving hand was found by the state department of Archaeology in the upper gallery of Sumtsek. The image bears profound
Kashmiri influence. Again, in the huge stūpa of Sumtsek there are three massive clay images of Avalokiteśvara, Maitreya and Mañjuśrī. The robes of these images are decorated with paintings which bear Kashmiri influence to a great degree. The fourway chorten near Sumtsek has a portrait of Rin chen bzan po and two Kashmiri artists. The male figure with a turban on one of the images in the temple of Mañjuśrī, close to Sumtsek, possibly bears its origin from Kashmir. The wooden figure of a goddess from Alchi also represents the work of Kashmiri artists.

There have been found the iconographic affinities among the paintings of Alchi, Dandan Uilik (Central Asia) and Tun huang (China). For example the two figures of eleven headed Avalokiteśvara in Sumtsek, holding the sun and the moon in their raised hands. Same symbols (sun and moon) are also found on mural paintings at Pengikened, Balawasti panel (National Museum, New Delhi), Dandan Ulik panel (British Museum, London) and on a few banners from Tun huang. The Nilamatapurāṇa of Kashmir describes Śiva's upholding sun and moon in his two hands to enable Viṣṇu to kill Jalodbhava—a water demon. Very recently a stone sculpture of Śiva (7th century A.D.) holding sun and moon has been located at Baramulla in Kashmir.

Apart from Alchi there are many other examples of Kashmiri art found in other parts of Tibet. The wall paintings in the monasteries of Mangnang are
ascribed to eminent Kashmiri artists. Also, the doorways of Tsaparang, Tholing, Tabo show their connections with the art of Kashmir. The small temple at Lhatse, which was dedicated to Kashmiri teacher Gayādhara, the construction of its doorway is also attributed to Kashmiri artists.

The statue from Luk, which was regarded as one of the country's leading artistic centres, is of Kashmiri origin. At Tholing, the statue of Vajrapāṇi is also from Kashmir. The Manjuśrī of Śākya monastery is also of Kashmiri origin and it is said to have been a gift from Śākyaśrībhadra (13th century A.D.) from Kashmir.

The influence of Kashmiri tradition is seen on one of the clay tablets (tsa lng s) from Tibet which were used to be deposited in chortens, show the Buddha between two Bodhisattvas wearing a crown. Also on the thangkas (pata), particularly of western Tibet, it was the style of Kashmiri paintings which predominated in the beginning.

It is very difficult to draw a line of relationship between the art of Kashmir and the various Central Asian traditions. Because of its geographical situation, Kashmir nurtured a special relationship with the numerous kingdoms of Central Asia. Central Asian civilization itself was an amalgam of varied cultures. It is beyond doubt that there were direct cultural contacts between Kashmiri and the neighbouring states in north Kashmir.
as a principal source of Buddhism, its art also must have considerably influenced the Buddhist art of Central Asia. In this context a legend as given by Yuan Chwăng about the miraculous transfer of the Buddha figure from Kashmir to P'o-ch' i sh i—a province of Chinese Turkestan near Khotan, is of great interest. It points to the supply of the Buddha statues from Kashmir to Khotan very early. The story also indicates that Kashmir was one of the channels through which the Buddhist art of Khotan received its relation with the Graeco-Buddhist art of Gandhara.

Like a large number of Buddhist monks and scholars who took along with them, Buddhist literature and also the Buddha images, Kashmiri artists also travelled to far-flung areas of Central Asia to work there. Also, the Central Asian and Chinese pilgrims who came here took along with them many objects of art.

During the beginning of the Christian era the art-style of Kashmir seems to have great affinity with that of the neighbouring areas of Gandhara and Central Asia. It was particularly up till the 4th century A.D. that the art-style of Kashmir was greatly affected by the Hellenistic and Sassano-Iranian styles, through Gandhara. About the 6th century A.D. the art of Kashmir and Central Asia was mainly affected by the art of Gandhara. The Buddhist sculptures found at Uskur in Kashmir are the examples of this fact. From the 4th century onwards the Gupta art also
had its repercussions on the art of Kashmir and further its effect is seen in the Buddhist monasteries of Gandhara and Central Asia. Hence the sculptures and paintings found in the monasteries of Central Asia, Bamiyan and Fondukistan (Afghanistan) and also the ruins of sculptures found in Kashmir are affected by both the Gandhara and Gupta styles. According to J. Haokin the Indian influence found on the paintings of Buddhist monasteries of Khotan, Dandan Uilik and Kashgar with Kashmirian elements was introduced through Kashmir. During the medieval times i.e. 8th century A.D. onwards and especially in the reign of powerful Lalitāditya the artists of the far-flung areas were attracted towards Kashmir with the result the art of Kashmir during this period received influences of various art styles. Thus the art of Kashmir during and after the reign of Lalitāditya represents a wonderful admixture of the art styles of the Gupta, Gandhara, Chinese, Central Asian, Iranian, etc.

From the 7th century onwards Kashmir played a very significant role in the dissemination of Buddhist art to Central Asia, western Himalayas and Tibet. During this period Kashmir filled the vacuum occurred from the destruction of the Buddhist establishments in Gandhara. Tibet mainly borrowed its religion from Kashmir. It is obvious that Kashmiri art styles also provided
the Tibetan artists with the first models of Buddhist art.

5. The umbrella shape can be still seen on early mosques of Kashmir.


32. Tucci, *op. cit.*, pp. 92-93, Pl. 150.

33. cf. Bhan, pp. 54, 65.


38. cf. *ibid.*, p. 143; Pl. 137.

40. cf. ibid., p. 143, Pl. 127.

41. ibid., p. 138.


43. ibid., p. 177.
