



THE BUDDHIST CIVILIZATION
— OF —
GANDHARA



Arayanandso

THE BUDDHIST CIVILIZATION
— OF —
GANDHARA

By ARAYAWANGSO BHIKKU

The Buddhist Civilization of Gandhara

By Arayawangso Bhikku

2022

Published by
Afzaal Ahmad
Sang-e-Meel Publications, Lahore.

ISBN-10: 969-35-3457-3

ISBN-13: 978-969-35-3457-3

Second Edition: November 2022 - 2000 copies

Published for free distribution by ...

Buddhapojharipunchai Forest Monastery,
under Royal Patronage, Lamphun, Thailand

This book may have some mistakes or omissions since it was prepared under time constraint. We sincerely hope for your understanding.

If you have any question, suggestion, or would like to have this book printed for free distribution, not for sale, please contact: Dr. Nitinant Wisawesuan (+66) 89-7978988; email: nitinant@econ.tu.ac.th



Sang-e-Meel Publications

25-Lower Mall, Lahore 54000, Pakistan.

smp@sangemeel.com

www.sangemeel.com

Chenab River (Chandra River + Bhaga River) in Punjab, Pakistan



<http://himachalpradeshtravel.com/waterbodies-in-himachal-pradesh/>

Lord Buddha donned his robes, alms bowl and left Jetavana Mahavihara, Kosala state. He journeyed 120 yojana, to welcome King Mahākappina and his courtiers, who abdicated his throne and seek to dedicate his ordination to the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. The Buddha welcomed the king, like an emperor welcoming the village headman.

The Blessed One welcomed King Mahākappina and his courtiers by radiating his glory under the shade of Nikrodha tree on the bank of Chandrabhaga River.

Remarks:

The Chenab River is a major river that flows in India and Pakistan, and is one of the 5 major rivers of the Punjab region. It is formed by the union of two headwaters, Chandra and Bhaga, which rise in the upper Himalayas in the **Lahaul** and **Spiti** district of Himachal Pradesh state, India. Chenab flows through the Jammu region of Jammu and Kashmir, India into the plains of Punjab, Pakistan, before flowing into the Indus River near the city of **Uch Sharif**.

Foreword

The Historic Rains Retreat on the Civilization Land of Gandhara, Taxila

12 July – 12 October 2565 BE

MV Arayawangso

“What is the inspiration for this Dhamma Pilgrimage in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, and how does it come about?”

I believe the above question is on the mind of everyone who learns about my study trip on the traces of Buddhist civilization in the northern part of *Jambudvipa*, known as *Gandhara*, most of which now lies in Pakistan. Such curiosity is likely related to reports from international media about events at the Pakistan’s border with Afghanistan, where the Taliban has now regained control of its power.

It is normal for such question to arise regarding this mission for Dhamma study and practice in a country known for strict observance of religious rules, and many groups holding different ideas even within the same Islamic religion. Buddhists everywhere recognise Pakistan as the important Buddhist World Heritage, like India and Nepal, even without the presence of the four Holy Sites. It also has a distinction as being the cradle of *Gandhara* civilization that is much treasured after the *parinibbana* of the Buddha.

Further deliberation will reveal a hidden question:



“Would it be possible to study and practice Dhamma in an Islamic country?”

As a Buddhist monk, holding a status quite different from ordinary individuals, if I was trying to decide about visiting Pakistan in the earlier days, the question would have to be seriously considered. The answer is actually right there: it would indeed be difficult to undertake a pilgrimage for normal Dhamma study and practice, the way that could be conducted in India, Nepal, or any other non-Buddhist countries.

Almost a decade ago, during *H.E. Mr. Sohail Mahmood's* tenure as the Pakistan ambassador to Thailand, when I was contacted about an invitation to visit the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, I did not give any immediate response but took some time deliberating whether the visit should happen. I made inquiry to the Thai embassy in Pakistan about the possible invitation, and the response came with the request and a number of reasons that "... a trip to Pakistan should not proceed at this time."

While *H.E. Mr. Asim Ifthikhar Ahmad* was serving as the Pakistan ambassador to Thailand, another contact was made by *Mr. Imran Shauket* on behalf of the embassy, through the coordination of Mr. Faraz Zaidi, former DCM and Assistant Professor Dr. Nitinant Wisaweesuan. The first informal discussion was held at the reception room of Thammasat University in 2560 BE which later led to my visit to the Pakistan embassy in Bangkok.

From the conversation I had with *H.E. Mr. Asim Ifthikhar Ahmad*, and additional information through various forms of media about his intention to work constructively as a diplomat from an Islamic country, and his dedication to all aspects of his task to build a good image for the Islamic Republic of Pakistan – all of these have made a strongly positive impression on me. *H.E. Mr. Don Pramudwinai*, Thailand's Minister of Foreign Affairs also expressed his appreciation about him being not only a knowledgeable and capable diplomat but also highly devoted to his duty.

H.E. Mr. Asim Ifthikhar Ahmad's support played an important role that led to further consultation regarding the pilgrimage for Dhamma study and practice in Pakistan between me and *H.E. Mr. Don Pramudwinai*, who currently (2565 BE) holds the post of Deputy Prime Minister as well as Minister of Foreign Affairs. I finally decided to accept the invitation on the basis of bilateral relations between Pakistan and Thailand, according to what *H.E. Mr. Don Pramudwinai* called "**Dhamma Diplomacy**: the path of Diplomacy that is guided by Dhamma."

The itinerary for my first trip, 29 November – 2 October 2562 BE, was quickly drawn up. The journey via Thai airways went smoothly, with *Mr. Supanit Kanthavivorn*, one of my close disciples arranging his pilot schedule to coincide with my round-trip flights, in order to offer the best possible support.

That initial visit to Pakistan was truly impressive, with the opportunity for meetings with the country's President and several government ministers, and also sharing my vision at the World Bank Campus in Islamabad. The best experience of all was my trip to Peshawar, the former city of *Purushapura* during the *Kushana Dynasty* in 5th – 7th Buddhist century, the period that was the origin of the world famous Buddhist arts of *Gandhara*. I was well received by *Dr. Abdul Samad*, Director Archaeology and Museums of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, who facilitated all my study trips to ancient Buddhist World Heritage Sites (*Takht-e-Bahi, Bhamala*, etc.). A large number of artifacts of the *Gandhara* period from the 5th Buddhist century onward that are on display at the Peshawar Museum are truly valuable treasure of Buddhism.

A crucial mission of that first trip to Pakistan was the establishment of the Bell of Peace at Taxila and Peshawar which generated much interest from all forms of Pakistan mass media who recorded video and sounds for national broadcast. The purpose of the Peace Bell establishment was to serve as the symbol for sending the signal of peace from the land of *Gandhara* civilization, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, to all humanity.

The ceremony for establishment of the Bell of Peace was highly sacred, making reference to Dhamma power to spread throughout the entire world, with the essence of the *Ovadapatimokkha* in Buddhism, declaring the power of Dhamma that this is the **Heart of Dhamma Peace**, for the true peace and happiness

of humanity, with the Dhamma principles of:

Not doing any evil

Cultivate wholesomeness

Purify the mind, not to be under the influence of defilements – love, hate and delusion

The establishment ceremony at *Taxila Museum* was witnessed by ambassadors from nine countries while the ceremony at Peshawar museum was conducted among very important persons and several members of the Press who came to record the event for worldwide dissemination.

The Peshawar event led to the promise given to *Miangul Adnan Aurangzeb* of Swat who took part in the establishment of the Peace Bell at Peshawar museum, when he said:

“Next time I would like to invite *MV Arayawangso* to conduct the ceremony of establishing the Bell of Peace for Swat Valley, another significant source of *Gandhara* civilization, Buddhist World Heritage of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.”

Impressed by that sincere statement of *Miangul Adnan*, a man with an inherent compassion for the people especially in the Swat area, so I told him that ... “My next trip will include a visit to the people of Swat and an establishment of the Peace bell at the Swat Valley, as requested by *Miangul Adnan*”

The personal bond with *Miangul Adnan* led to the preparation for a second visit to Pakistan in 2563 BE, but the Covid-19 pandemic spreading rapidly throughout the world had put a brake on the plan.

With the alleviation of the crisis, coordination for my Pakistan visit was renewed, with the additional purpose. It would not just be for a normal trip but for a three months’ Buddhist Rains Retreat of 2565 BE – a historic occasion on the land of *Gandhara* Buddhist civilization, with the Sangha undertaking a journey to spend Rains Retreat for the first time in Pakistan.

The event would also be recorded in the history of Pakistan, clearly showing the world, and the 32 Buddhist countries that it is the land of true peace, friendly and open to everyone, regardless of nationality and religion. It is another glorious page for Pakistan that will light up the spiritual creativity of mankind, with love and understanding in the status of humanity, as friends and relatives who should not encroach, endanger and destroy one another, truly deserving to be appreciated by all nations.

The official document from the Pakistan Government was sent by *Mr. Ehsan Bhutta*, Secretary, Tourism Department, Government of the Punjab, to the Pakistan Embassy in Thailand, for coordination with Thailand’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding the invitation of *MV Arayawangso* to spend Rains Retreat at *Taxila*, former capital of *Gandhara*, presently located in Punjab, Pakistan. The official invitation and acceptance of the Rains Retreat in Pakistan was subsequently handled through diplomatic channel between Thailand and Pakistan and was considered to be a historic time for the return of Buddhist Rains Retreat at *Taxila*.

I have invited five monks and one novice to join me in this Rains Retreat, for the complete conduct of a formal act of the Sangha (*Sanghakamma*) in accordance with discipline prescribed by the Fully Enlightened One.

The declaration regarding *Kathina* robe offering on the land of *Gandhara* civilization, Buddhist World Heritage thus occurred right at the beginning of the Rains Retreat on 12 July 2565 BE.

I arrived in Islamabad on 10 July 2565 BE accompanied by a group of 15 disciples strongly determined to perform the duty of supporting Sangha activities as well as to study and practice Dhamma. **Mr. Imran Shauket** excellently fulfilled his task to the satisfaction of everyone, welcoming the group and coordinating with a variety of individuals and agencies, including the Pakistan Embassy in Thailand.

On Thailand's part, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the Director-General of the Department of South Asian, Middle East and African Affairs coordinated with the Thai ambassador in Islamabad, **H.E. Mr. Chakkrid Krachaiwong**, facilitating all aspects of the trip. **Colonel Adisak Showichen**, Thailand's Military and Defense Attaché to Pakistan has been connected to me since the first trip at the beginning of his post and my three months' Rains Retreat happened during the last period of his duty in Pakistan. Along with his spouse, **Miss Hathairat Wareesamankhun**, they had the chance to participate in religious activities, study trips, the visits, the first *Kathina* robe offering in more than 1000 years, and my return travel to Thailand. It was very rare opportunity and certainly not a coincidence for them to have such an active role in this Dhamma Diplomacy mission. They represented all Thai Buddhists in providing many forms of support to the Sangha, including arranging suitable transportation for the pilgrimage and Sangha missions throughout *Gandhara*. My appreciation goes to both of them.

This Rains Retreat that was conducted with the Pakistan Government's invitation through the Punjab Government's Tourism Department had been truly delightful for all concerned parties that such a historic event occurred on the land of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. However, the three months' Rains Retreat would not have any meaningful value without the sacredly constructive missions that are highly beneficial to the *Gandhara* civilization on the land of Pakistan.

That was the reason I accepted a number of invitations to conduct activities as proper with the Teaching and Discipline (*Dhamma-Vinaya*) of Buddhism, allowing monks to undertake the *sattaha karaniya* – traveling for up to seven days outside the area that they have made the solemn determination to spend the Rains Retreat, which in this case was the *Taxila* Museum. An example was the invitation from **Dr. Abdul Samad**, Director of Archaeology and Museums, *Khyber Pakhtunkhwa* to accept an offer of *Sanghadana* and to give a Dhamma discourse.

My trip to Peshawar, accompanied by the *Sangha* and a group of Thai Buddhist devotees was warmly welcomed by Dr. Abdul Samad. There were daily religious observation, morning and evening chantings, meditation teaching and Dhamma practice. A truly special experience was being able to cultivate meditation and Dhamma practice in the Peshawar Museum for three whole nights among ancient Buddhist artifacts of *Gandhara* period that hold great spiritual value, and still retain the full strength of Buddha's power.

The study trip to ancient Buddhist World Heritage sites in *Khyber Pakhtunkhwa*, *Kushana* Dynasty of King Kanishka the great where Northern Buddhism prospered, including *Takt-e-bahi* and the Buddha *Stupa* at Khyber Pass, was complete in every aspect, fulfilling the intention of the journey to revive traces of *Gandhara* civilization Buddhist World Heritage.

Another important event worthy of being recorded in this book is the opportunity to build the "*Sand Jetiya*" on the traces of the location of *Mahastupa* of the Great King Kanishka. Given the social and environment of that particular locality, it is a difficult thing to do, but my intention has been well accomplished.

My visit to the unique *Mahajetiya* at Khyber Pass, known by archaeologists as *Sphola* Stupa, should also be mentioned here. It is another indication of how much significance the great Kings *Asokha* and *Kanishka* had accorded to the construction of *Mahastupa-Jetiya* and which proved to be highly valuable for the traces and perpetuation of Buddhism.

I was really delighted to see how the Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, Government of *Khyber Pakhtunkhwa* (KP) has been devoting serious effort to the proper renovation of Buddhist Heritage sites, truly deserving of the support by the World Bank and other UN agencies.

The trip to Khyber Pass on 1 August 2565 BE gave me an opportunity to see the historical path in the valley connecting the land between Pakistan and Afghanistan. I felt honoured to be offered the symbol item as head of the *Afridis* Tribe, in the form of a yellow hat decorated with the tribal-signifying cloth. It made me feel a connection with KP tribal groups just like my other trips to *Peshawar* when I sensed the familiarity like visiting my relatives on the land that has long continued its civilization through many eras right up to the present.

Many people may have felt threatened by the possibility of terrorism when thinking of the World Civilization area of *Khyber Pakhtunkhwa*, but I did not experience any sense of danger during my whole trip. Furthermore, I even had sympathy for the *Pashtun* people who for many centuries have been risking their lives fighting for their own survival and that of the nation, so that we can all witness KP as it is today.

Actually, every visit that I made to important Buddhist world heritage sites in KP, I am most impressed that they have been given serious renovation and maintenance from the Pakistan Government. I cannot discuss them all in this preface but those who are interested can find out more in this book.

For this brief preface, I would simply tell some stories worth remembering for the benefits of later generations to learn about this mission to continue *Gandhara* civilization and perpetuate the spirit of Buddhism in this world.

To complete the feeling I have absorbed in this Rains Retreat, I cannot fail to refer to the official invitation from the National School of Public Policy (NSPP) by **Mrs. Humaira Zia Mufti**, directing staff of the National Management College (NMC), to give a discourse under the topic: “*Dhamma: The Teachings of Buddha and Pakistan’s Role as the Cradle of Gandhara Civilization*” It was the special lecture given to 53 high level officials from various agencies of Pakistan participating in the 116th National Management Course, which generated much enthusiasm that could lead to more specific discourses to several agencies.

The trip to Lahore, Punjab state is thus another page of benefit for Pakistan. There was also the chance to visit Lahore Museum, centre for rare and important artifacts from *Gandhara* period that have been selected to be kept there during British rule. Itinerary of the study tour for more than 150 Thai devotees had been adjusted to include this very interesting place.

My impression is complete when I was welcome warmly by **Mr. Ehsan Bhutta**, Secretary, Government of the Punjab’s Tourism Department, under whose direction I had the chance to visit the ancient sites, Buddhist arts and traces of civilization in Lahore.

The opportunity for me to spend a private time writing and practicing Dhamma in Lahore museum on 3 September 2565 BE has a great spiritual value and my thanks go directly to **Mr. Ijaz Ahmed Minhas**, Director, Lahore Museum, whose hospitality enabled the writing on civilization at Lahore as appears in part of this book.

During the last month of my Rains Retreat, the Sri Lankan High Commissioner to Pakistan, **H.E. Vice Admiral Mohan Wijewickrama** invited me to his residence for *Sanghadana* and to give a Dhamma discourse along with leading meditation practice. His spouse, Mrs. *Nishani Wijewickrama*, also joined in all activities. Both of them are worthy of appreciation for being good Buddhists, as evidenced in devoting two hours in mind cultivation. This is another story regarding the spiritual connection of Buddhist civilization on the land of Pakistan that is not a coincidence and need to be recorded

As for the three months of Rains Retreat in *Taxila* at this more than 100-years-old building that used to be the residence of Sir John Marshall, head of the Archaeological Department of British India, the entire experience was indeed peaceful and happy. The house that was built around 2456 BE was converted into Mahavihara for six monks and one novice, along with two male supporters – Major General *Wisit Dech-sakul* and Mr. *Niphan Ruamkulkit* – to use as a place for Rains Residence, observing religious duties as proper with the Teachings and Discipline in Buddhism (*Dhamma – Vinaya*) for the entire three months, without being deficient in any way in the observation of the monks' routines.

The rooms in that building were suitably allocated as my private quarter, joint accommodation for use by the monks, the novice and male supporters, with a separate room for performing activities such as chanting, Dhamma study and practice. There is also a rather large room for laypeople to take part in religious routines, listen to Dhamma and have Dhamma conversation after the evening chanting which begins at 1800 hr. and normally ends at 2000 hr. On some evenings when a special Dhamma discourse is conducted, the time is extended until 2100 or 2200 hr.

Every morning if there was no special invitation to perform any duty outside, there would be an alms-round in front of the building, followed by an offering of *Sanghadana*, and a morning Dhamma discourse that was broadcast LIVE worldwide. The afternoon was a personal time for individual meditation and Dhamma study –the normal routine for monks in monastery area.

The success of all activities in *Taxila* mentioned here would not have been possible without facilitation from **Mr. Muhammad Iqbal Khan Manj**, Director of *Taxila* museum, and policemen who excellently performed their security protection, day and night, as well as during the various study trips. I have found all of these to be truly impressive and would like to express my appreciation for the kindness and generosity of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

Lastly, I definitely have to mention all Thai devotees who traveled to Pakistan to offer their support to the Sangha, performing every necessary task without failure which led to success in all activities for the whole three months, particularly the *Kathina* (robe-offering) Ceremony on 12 October 2565 BE at *Taxila, Gandhara, Jambudvipa*, presently Punjab State in Pakistan. More than 150 Buddhists traveled from Thailand to demonstrate the forceful feeling of their love and confidence in Buddhism, and the meritorious atmosphere of this historic event will be remembered for a very long time.

May the power of the Triple Gem protect everyone from all harm and danger. May you find happiness and Dhamma prosperity, be continuously complete with wholesome Dhamma, for the realisation of nibbana.

**Blessing with Metta
MV Arayawangso**



Preface

This book is printed by my determination since I was invited to spend three-month rains retreat in Taxila, Gandhara (Punjab/ Pakistan) during the 14 July - 10 October 2565 BE to disseminate the treasure of the Buddhism civilisation to the public and global community.

All the work had to be impromptu. Besides the working team who steadfastly devoted their efforts to record stories and experiences of my visits on the traces of civilisation in Gandhara, very importantly, this book has been made possible thanks to strenuous efforts of the two devoted translators, Mrs. Kamolthip Evans (chapters 2-14) and Dr. Pawadee Tonguthai (chapter 1 and 15), along with the hardworking contribution of Ven. Piyathip Thanapisitikul, Ven. Werasak Katekum, Novice Phusana Ongpathomporn and the Piyakarnchana family who have finally assured that the book would be ready for despatch to Government of Pakistan and Department of Archaeology and Museums, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, so they can have copyrights for publication in the future.

Blessing
MV Arayawangso
4 October 2565 BE
Taxila

Invitation Letters

Invitation to Spend the Rains Retreat at Taxila (Thai)

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Thailand

Invitation to Spend the Rains Retreat at Taxila

Government of the Panjab Tourism Department

Acceptance Letter for Rains Retreat at Taxila

MV Arayawangso

Security Arrangement

Government of Pakistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs Islamabad

Letter to the Sangha Raja

Embassy of Pakistan, Bangkok

Invitation Letter to Visit Swat

Mrs. Zenab Adnan

Invitation Letter to Visit Peshawar Museum

Director Archaeology & Museums,

Dr. Abdul Samad

Invitation Letter to Give a Lecture at The National Management College, National School of Public Policy, Lahore

Mrs. Humaira Zia Mufti

on behalf of Dean, NMC, NSPP

Invitation Letter for Rains Retreat at Taxila



ที่ / ๓๒ ๑๑๑๓/๒๕๖๓

กระทรวงการต่างประเทศ
ถนนศรีอยุธยา แขวง ๑๐๑๑๐

มีเดียน ๒๕๖๓

เรื่อง หนังสืออาราธนานิมนต์พระครูภาวนาวิชัยวัฒน์เมืองสาธารณรัฐอิสลามปากีสถาน
เรียน คุณหญิงสุพัตรา มาศดิตถ์

สิ่งที่ส่งมาด้วย สำเนาหนังสือสถานเอกอัครราชทูตสาธารณรัฐอิสลามปากีสถานประจำประเทศไทย
ที่ POL/32/2022-065 ลงวันที่ ๓๔ มิถุนายน ค.ศ. ๒๐๒๒

ข้าพเจ้ากระทรวงการต่างประเทศได้รับหนังสือสถานเอกอัครราชทูตสาธารณรัฐอิสลามปากีสถาน
ประจำประเทศไทย นำส่งหนังสือจากนาย Ehsan Bhatta ตำแหน่ง Secretary กรมการท่องเที่ยว รัฐบัญญัติ
สาธารณรัฐอิสลามปากีสถาน อาราธนานิมนต์พระครูภาวนาวิชัยวัฒน์ (พระอาจารย์อารยวังโส) และผู้ติดตาม
เดินทางเมืองสาธารณรัฐอิสลามปากีสถานในช่วงเข้าพรรษา ระหว่างเดือนกรกฎาคม - กันยายน ๒๕๖๓
เพื่อเข้าพรรษา และเพื่อศึกษาโบราณสถานทางพุทธศาสนา ณ เมืองตักศิลา เมืองเบฆาห์ และเมืองสวิต
ด้วยความละเอียดปราณีตามสิ่งที่ส่งมาด้วย นั้น

กระทรวงการต่างประเทศขอแนะนำสำเนาหนังสือดังกล่าวมาเพื่อโปรดพิจารณา
และขอความอนุเคราะห์โปรดแจ้งผลการพิจารณาให้กระทรวงการต่างประเทศทราบด้วย จักขอบพระคุณ
จึงเรียนมาเพื่อโปรดพิจารณา

ขอแสดงความนับถือ

(นายเอก นพโอสถ)

รองอธิบดีกรมเอเชียใต้ วิชาการและการแทน
อธิบดีกรมเอเชียใต้ ตะวันออกกลางและแอฟริกา

กรมเอเชียใต้ ตะวันออกกลางและแอฟริกา
กองเอเชียใต้และเอเชียกลาง
โทร. ๐ ๒๒๐๓ ๕๐๐๐ (ข) ๒๒๐๑๓
โทรสาร ๐ ๒๒๑๓ ๕๐๕๕

Invitation Letter for

PH 000000 07-18 +6622000098

RECEIVED 15/06/2022 02:47
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

PAGE 000001



RECEIVED	15/06/2022
TITLE	44/008

EMBASSY OF PAKISTAN
BANGKOK

No. 21 An Nam Alley, Silom Road S.
Bangkok, Bangkok 10110, THAILAND
Tel. 0-2261-0000 Fax. 0-2261-0000

No.Pol.32/2022-065

The Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan presents its compliments to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand and has the honour to enclose herewith a copy of invitation letter dated 30th May 2022 from Mr. Ehsan Shuja, Secretary, Tourism Department, Government of the Punjab, Lahore, addressed to Most Venerable Arayawangso, inviting him to visit Pakistan for the annual "Rain Retreat" at Taxila.

The Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand the assurances of its highest consideration.


Bangkok, 14 June 2022

Department of South Asian, Middle East and African Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand
Bangkok





Rains Retreat at Taxila



No. SO(Dev)8-42/2021

GOVERNMENT OF THE PUNJAB
TOURISM DEPARTMENT

Dated: 30th May, 2022.

Most Venerable Arayawangso,

Vide Embassy of Pakistan, Thailand letter No.Pol-32/2022 dated 6th April, 2022 addressed to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Islamabad, we are very pleased to know of your keen interest to visit Pakistan for the rains retreat from July to September, 2022 and to inter-alia conduct study of the Buddhist heritage sites in Taxila, Peshawar and Swat.

We deeply appreciate and value the love and kindness of the Most Venerable towards Pakistan and fondly remember your previous visit in 2019 during which you called on the leadership of Pakistan and inaugurated the 'Bell of Peace' at Taxila and Peshawar Museum and really appreciate and value the interest and involvement of the Most Venerable towards the people of Pakistan.

We look forward for your visit to Pakistan for annual 'Rains Retreat' this year accompanied by your 'Sangha', personal assistants and the followers and your continued interest in the projects related to promote Buddhist heritage. We also look forward to strengthen people-to-people contacts between the two countries.

In the same context, we have the great honour and pleasure to extend to the Most Venerable invitation to visit Pakistan for the annual 'Rains Retreat' at Taxila. We will make all efforts in coordination with your staff and the Embassy of Pakistan to make you feel at home and have a comfortable, productive and memorable stay in Pakistan. The Rest House at Taxila Museum will be made available during the intended stay of the Most Venerable Arayawangso.


(EHSAN BHUTTA)
SECRETARY

GOVERNMENT OF THE PUNJAB
TOURISM DEPARTMENT

Most Venerable Arayawangso
Buddhapojhariphunchai Forest Monastery
226 Moo 2 Lamphun-Pasang Road
Tambol Tonthong, Amphur Muang
Lamphun Province 51000
Thailand

Acceptance Letter for Rains Retreat at Taxila



No. BFM 019/2565

23 June 2565 BE (2022)

Blessing to His Excellency Mr. Sahebzada A. Khan
Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to the Kingdom of Thailand

With reference to the letter no. SO(Dev)8-42/2021 dated 30 May 2022, I am pleased to accept the invitation extended by the Government of the Punjab Tourism Department for me, accompanied by Sangha, personal assistants and the followers, to visit Pakistan for the annual "Rains Retreat" at Taxila, Punjab, during July - October 2022, to *inter alia* conduct study of the ancient Buddhist sites in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, designated as the World Heritage.

During my throughout three months' Rains Retreat, short documentary videos as well as written stories relating to the Buddhist World Heritage Sites will be regularly made, so that we can disseminate the long history of the well-preserved Buddhist ancient sites in the country for worldwide audience. My genuine experiences along with research study and Dhamma practice conducted on the actual sites will be of great spiritual value for all Buddhists. The English version will be offered as a gift to the Pakistani people, through the Punjab Government and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

The visit will benefit the promotion of tourism in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan since it will generate a great deal of interest for foreign visitors, particularly from 32 Buddhist countries around the world.

I hereby assign Dr. Nitinant Wisaweisuan to coordinate with the Pakistan Embassy regarding further details, including the Rains Retreat Schedule. Enclosed herewith, please find the draft schedule and the list of accompanying persons for your kind consideration and coordination with concerned parties.

Finally, let me express my highest appreciation for the true friendship shown by Your Excellency in various coordination efforts, which allows objectives of all parties to be accomplished. Your sincere and full support has truly led to the strengthening of cordial and sustainable relationship between people of Thailand and Pakistan, and the benefit and happiness of mankind.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Blessing with metta

MV Arayawangso

Encl: 1. Rains Retreat Schedule 2022 at Taxila, Punjab, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan
2. List of persons accompanying MV Arayawangso

Cc: 1. Mr. Darm Boontham, Director General of the Department of South Asian, Middle East and African Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kingdom of Thailand
2. Mr. Imran Shauket, Host Coordinator in Pakistan
3. Dr. Nitinant Wisaweisuan, Thammasat University

Security Arrangement

Most Immediate!

Government of Pakistan
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Islamabad

Subject: Visit of Most Venerable Arayawangso to Pakistan for the Annual "Rain Retreat" from July to September


This is with reference to our earlier communication dated 05th July, 2022 on the subject noted above.

2. It is to bring to your kind attention that a highly distinguished Monk, the Most Venerable Arayawangso from Thailand is visiting Pakistan for the annual "Rains Retreat" from July to September 2022. The invitation for the visit was extended by the Tourism Department, Government of the Punjab.

3. The venerated Thai Monk also visited Pakistan in 2019 and chronicled his journey as "Onward to Gandhara" which received an enormous response in Thai civil society and created awareness about Pakistan's Buddhist heritage. This visit will benefit the promotion of tourism in Pakistan since it will generate interest of foreign visitors, particularly from 32 Buddhist countries around the world.

4. Keeping in view the special status of the Most Venerable in Thailand, Ministry of Interior is kindly requested to make security arrangements for the stay and movements of the Most Venerable Arayawangso. The programme of the visit of the Most Venerable is enclosed for further necessary action.

Encls: (As above)


(Aamer Ahmed Atozai)
Director General (EAP)

Secretary, Ministry of Interior, Islamabad.

M/o Foreign Affairs U.O. No. SEAP-I (THAI)-23-20/2022 dated 07th July 2022

Copy to:

- i. Chief Secretary, Punjab.
- ii. Chief Secretary, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
- iii. Inspector General of Police, Punjab.
- iv. Inspector General of Police, KPK.
- v. Secretary, Home Department, Punjab.
- vi. Secretary, Home Department, KPK.
- vii. Secretary, Tourism Department, Government of the Punjab.
- viii. Secretary, Department of Culture, Sports, Tourism, Archaeology and Youth Affairs, Government of KPK.

Letter to Sangha Raja



EMBASSY OF PAKISTAN
BANGKOK

27 June 2022

Your Holiness,

As the Ambassador of Pakistan to the Kingdom of Thailand, it gives me an extreme pleasure in enclosing a copy of invitation letter dated 30th May 2022 from Department of Tourism, Government of Pakistan, addressed to Most Venerable Arayuwangso, inviting him to visit Pakistan for the annual 'Rains Retreat' in Taxila.

The socio-cultural linkages between Pakistan and Thailand can be traced back to ancient times of the Buddhist Gandhara heritage of Pakistan - with Taxila at its heart. Pakistan is home of some of the most prominent and well-known Buddhist heritage sites in the world. We have a UNESCO world heritage site located there. Also, another Buddhist world heritage site is located in an area called Gandhara, as "Takht-i-Bahi Monastery".

This is a great honour for Pakistan. Furthermore, it provides us to further our religious tourism.

Most Venerable's Rains Retreat will be the first time ever for Buddhist monks to pursue the historic mission on the land of 'World Buddhist Heritages' in Pakistan, formerly known as Gandhara in Jambudvipa. This will definitely allow him and his disciples to perform monastic practices, as well as conducting in-depth study of the world civilization, which will be disseminated to world communities via various channels of media.


Most importantly, his visit will represent the expression of love, understanding and friendship between the people of the Kingdom of Thailand and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, who are celebrating the 70th anniversary of diplomatic relations in 2022.

As stated by His Excellency Mr. Don Pramudwinai, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, such missions are considered as "Dhamma Diplomacy". We, hence, are honoured that Most Venerable Arayawangso will take a lead, as the first Dhamma Ambassador in this endeavour and assure that global communities will have better understanding about the world heritages long and well conserved by Pakistanis.

I hereby humbly request Your Holiness to disseminate this information to the Sangha to join in appreciation, of Most Venerable Arayawangso's determination and mission.

May I take this opportunity to appreciate the efforts of Dr. Nitinant Wisaweesuan, Dean of Puey Ungphakorn School of Development Studies, Thammasat University and Mr. Imran Shaukat, a Pakistani entrepreneur and a great admirer of Buddhist heritage.

Most Reverend Reverend


(Sahebzada A. Khan)
Ambassador

Respected His Holiness
Somdet Phra Ariyawongsagatimana,
Supreme Patriarch of the Kingdom of Thailand

Invitation Letter to Swat

July 18, 2022

Most Venerable Arayawangso
Taxila Museum Guest House
Taxila

Subject: Invitation for a Sattahakaraniya to Swat between 23rd – 28th July, 2022

Dear MV Arayawangso,

I am honored to invite you to visit Swat for a Sattahakaraniya between July 23 – 28, 2022. Your schedule for the trip is proposed in the attachment.

I am so thankful that you will be bringing a "Bell of Peace" to be installed at the Swat Museum as you had promised my late husband, Prince Adnan Aurangzeb. This would be a fitting memory and legacy for the Prince and our family, and the people of Swat.

Most Venerable, you will be welcomed to our home in Swat by the brothers of the Prince and myself on the evening of the 23rd.

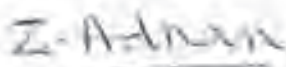
During the trip, we look forward to taking you to the historic Buddhist stupas and sites of Jahanabad, Amluk Dara, Butkhara (City of Lord Asoka), Bazira. All these sites date back to the reign of Lord Asoka.

My co-host during this trip will be our family friend, and the closest friend to the Prince, Mr. Imran Shauket.

We look forward to your acceptance to this humble request, and look forward to welcoming you.

Thanking you.

Sincerely yours



Zenab Adnan

Proposed Itinerary of Swat for MV Arayawangso

23-Jul	<i>Islamabad - Swat</i>	08:00 - 12:00	Travel to Swat for a Sattahakaraniya on invitation of Prince Adnan's family and Imran Shaukat to install Bell of Peace	HE Ambassador of Thailand, Military Attache of Thailand, and other members of Thai Embassy
Saturday		12:00 - 14:00	Visit the house of Prince Adnan Aurangzeb and MV and monks to stay overnight	Mrs. Rajkumari Roy and Sols also to accompany
		15:00 - 19:00	Daily routine of field visit, meditation and study	Light tea at the house of Prince Adnan
24-Jul	<i>Swat</i>	08:00 - 09:00	Breakfast chanting and offer merits in dedication to late Prince Adnan	Prince Adnan's family
Sunday		09:00 - 11:00	Visit the ancient site of Butkhara, City of Asoka	
		11:00 - 12:00	Tea and light lunch at Prince Adnan's house	Prince Adnan's family
		12:00 - 18:00	MV and Sangha shift to Police Guest House of government and continue meditation and	
25-Jul	<i>Swat</i>	08:00 - 18:00	Daily routine of meditation, study and field visit	
Monday			Visit to the Jahanabad Buddha site	
			Visit to Swat Museum	
26-Jul	<i>Swat</i>	08:00 - 18:00	Daily routine of meditation, study and field visit	
Tuesday			Visit to Amlik Dara site	
			Other sites TBD	
27-Jul	<i>Swat</i>	08:00 - 18:00	Daily routine of meditation, study and field visit	
Wednesday			Visit Budra	
			Other sites TBD	
28-Jul	<i>Swat - Islamabad</i>	08:00 - 10:00	Breakfast and meditation	
Thursday		10:00 - 12:00	Installation of the Bell of Peace at Swat Museum and visit to the Museum	
		13:00 - 15:00	Travel to Tardil Guest House	

Z. Adnan

Invitation Letter to Peshawar



**GOVERNMENT OF KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA
DIRECTORATE OF ARCHAEOLOGY & MUSEUMS
C/O PESHAWAR MUSEUM PESHAWAR**

TEL: 091-9211194, 9211488 FAX # 091-9210690 EMAIL: - info.archaeology@kpn.gov.pk


No.A-39/Vol-III/Visitors/Archymus/
Dated: 18th July, 2022

The Most Venerable Arayawangso,

It is a great honour and highest privilege for Pakistan that Most Venerable has kindly accepted invitation of Government of Punjab to spend three-month rains retreat at Taxila, which we all trust that it will be a significantly blessed moment for Islamic Republic of Pakistan — the former Gandhara state of Jambudvipa.

In this regard, I wish to extend my warmest invitation to Most Venerable to visit Peshawar to conduct further in-depth study of Gandhara civilization, perform blessing chanting, lead conversation on dhamma discourses, and kindly give guidance for development of Peshawar Museum as well as other Buddhist Heritage sites in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Most Venerable, accompanied by the Sangha and followers, are welcome to visit Peshawar as frequently as you may find appropriate in these three months, please.

Yours Faithfully,


(Dr. Abdel Samad)
DIRECTOR ARCHAEOLOGY
& MUSEUMS

Most Venerable Arayawangso
Buddhapojhariphunchai Forest Monastery,
226 Moo 2 Lamphun-Pasang Road,
Tambol Tonthong, Amphur Muang,
Lamphun Province Thailand 51000.

Invitation Letter to Lahore National School of Public Policy



Directing Staff

GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN
National School of Public Policy
National Management College

Telegram: PASCOL
Fax: 042-99201294
Telephone(s): 99202905
PABX: 99202943-44

Shahrah -e-Quaid-e-Azam,
Lahore 54000
No. DS/116 NMC-MOD-1/1/2021

Dated: 19-08-2022

Subject: Address of the Most Celebrated Chief Monk of Thailand the Most Venerable Arayawangso to the participants of 116th NMC Monday, 2nd September, 2022 at 1000-1130 Hours;

The Most Venerable Arayawangso,

The NSPP is the premier training institution for the senior civil servants of Pakistan. The 116th National Management Course commenced from Monday, 9th May 2022 and will conclude on Friday, 9th September 2022 at the National Management College, National School of Public Policy, Lahore. Officers of BS-20, who are within promotion zone of BS-21, from various occupational groups are participating in the Course.

The NSPP has learnt about your esteemed visit to Pakistan for a 3-month rain retreat which is indeed a matter of honour and blessings for all of us. Taking the advantage of your holy presence in Pakistan, it is a matter of privilege to extend an invitation to address the participants of 116th NMC on the theme of "Dhamma- the teachings of Buddha and Pakistan's role as cradle of Gandhara civilisation" on "2nd September 2022 at 1000-1130 Hours" at National School of Public Policy, Lahore. The invitation is being extended on behalf of Dean, National Management College, NSPP.

For all correspondence on the subject, the undersigned can be contacted on the telephone numbers: Off: 042-99202918, PABX: 042-99202943-44 (Extn.310), Cell: 0348-7864444 and e-mail address: humairaziamufti@gmail.com

Yours sincerely,

(Humaira Zia Mufti)

The Most Venerable Arayawangso,
C/O Dr. Nitinant Wisaweisuan,
Dean
Puey Ungphakorn School of Development
Thammasat University
99 Moo 18 kalong 1, Klong Luang,
Pathumthani 12120
Thailand

Contents

Foreword	I
Preface	II
Invitation Letters	III
From Suvarnabhumi To Gandhara (Pakistan)	
The Historic Rains Retreat, 2565 BE	
Taxila, Punjab, The Islamic Republic of Pakistan	
<i>Chapter 1</i> <i>Towards the meaning of “Taxila”</i>	3
<i>... the area of determination for Rains Retreat 2565 BE</i>	
<i>Chapter 2</i> <i>Historic Rains Retreat Vows, Taxila Museum</i>	15
<i>Chapter 3</i> <i>Re-awakening the Asalha Puja Celebration</i>	37
<i>in Gandhara, dormant for a thousand years</i>	
<i>Chapter 4</i> <i>The first Sattahaya in 2022 - a field trip to the Swat Valley,</i>	49
<i>following an invitation from the Aurangzeb Family,</i>	
<i>Swat’s last ruling dynasty</i>	
<i>Chapter 5</i> <i>A field trip to pay homage to the Buddhist Heritage</i>	69
<i>in the Swat Valley (25th July 2022)</i>	
<i>Chapter 6</i> <i>Field trip to the Swat Valley’s heritage sites</i>	77
<i>... to pay homage to the Triple Gem (26th July 2022)</i>	
<i>Chapter 7</i> <i>The inauguration of the 3rd Bell of Peace in the Swat Valley</i>	99
<i>On His Majesty’s Brithday, 28th July 2022</i>	
<i>Chapter 8</i> <i>Traces of Buddhist Civilization in the Kushan Empire</i>	117
<i>(Peshawar/Purushapura)</i>	

Chapter 9	<i>A field trip to Gor Khatri, the Maha-Vihara ... that used to house the Buddha's alms bowl. A visit to a rich man's mansion from the past ... and an ancient community in Peshawar.</i>	133
Chapter 10	<i>The Miracle of Buddhist Civilization in Pakistan</i>	149
Chapter 11	<i>A Summary : what to know in the Khyber Pass</i>	159
Chapter 12	<i>Learning the Variation of Buddhism in Jambudvipa ... from World Buddhist Heritage Sites</i>	171
Chapter 13	<i>Roles of Lay and Monastic Individuals in Gandhara After Buddhism disappeared from Jambudvipa</i>	183
Chapter 14	<i>Individuals/Monks from Northern Kingdoms (Gandhara, Kamboja,Matcha, Kuru) and Traces of Buddhist Civilization</i>	195
Chapter 15	<i>Religious activities at Lahore, Punjab State ...another step of the relationship for Dhamma benefit of mankind.</i>	205

Episode of Dhamma

<i>Sound of Dhamma from Gandhara</i>	234
<i>Offering Alms and Dhamma Discourse</i>	238
<i>Merits for all beings</i>	240
<i>At Royal Thai Embassy, Islamabad, Pakistan</i>	243
<i>Dhamma Discourse at Sri Lanka Embassy</i>	245
<i>Raja Tridiv Roy Roy ... from Chittagong Hill Tracts</i>	249
<i>The Sound of Peace For Dr.Tetsu</i>	252

Impressions

<i>Meeting with His Excellency Mr. Asim Iftikhar Ahmad</i>	257
<i>... Additional Secretary, UN, and Spokesperson, MOFA</i>	
<i>Words from His Excellency Mr. Chakkrid Krachaiwong</i>	263
<i>... Ambassador of the Kingdom of Thailand to Pakistan</i>	
<i>Words from Colonel Adisak Showichen</i>	264
<i>... Defense Attache, Royal Thai Embassy, Islamabad</i>	
<i>Most Venerable Father – A man of Vision, Honour and Miracles</i>	265
<i>... by Mr. A Imran Shauket</i>	
<i>Legacy of Dhamma Diplomacy</i>	271
<i>... Perspectives of a Former Diplomat</i>	
<i>The Power of Dhamma</i>	276
<i>... by Dr. Nitinant Wisaweisuan, Dean, School of Development Studies, Thammasat University</i>	
<i>From the Heart, Through the eyes of ...</i>	277
<i>... Sangha and Lay Devotees</i>	

Gallery of Media Release	281
---------------------------------	------------

Translator's Note	293
--------------------------	------------



From Suvarnabhumi ... To Gandhara (Pakistan)
The Historic Rains Retreat, 2565 BE
Taxila, Punjab, The Islamic Republic of Pakistan

Love, true understanding

*Well-honed loving kindness
and compassion – united as one*

Transmitted to and received by one another

Without saying a word nor taking any action

*Race, language, dimension, or different realms
prove no barrier to love and kindness*

Corresponding to the Dhamma principle:

*Mind language can reach to infinity
far beyond the verbal or physical*

*Conveying love and understanding
for those who cannot express it verbally*

*See how animals can communicate
such feelings in the absence of words*

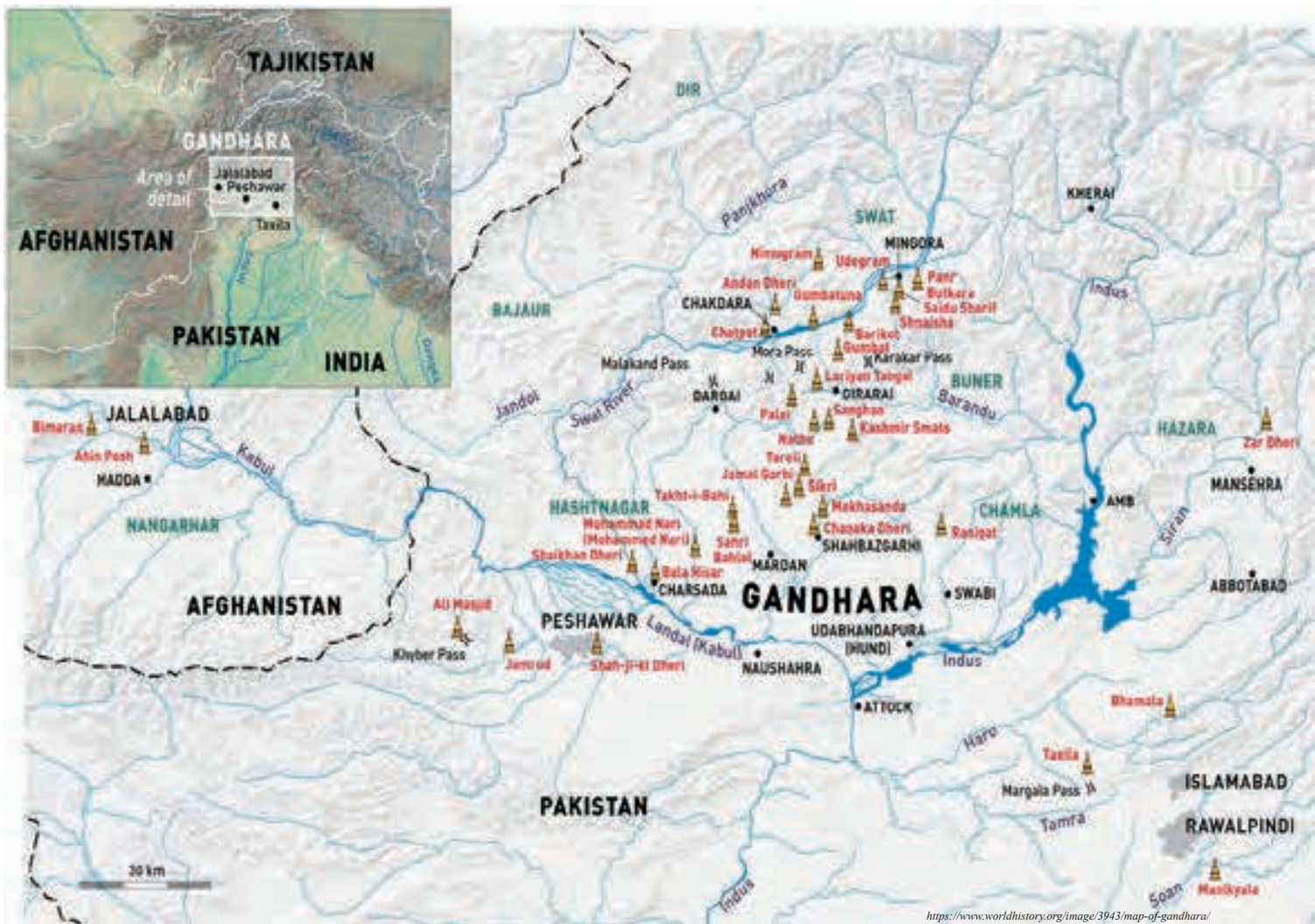
*While humans can sometimes express them
without meaning them*

*As in the Urdu saying:
unspoken love may be far truer than when spoken.*

*MV Arayawangso
Taxila, Gandhara
17th August 2022*

Chapter I

**Towards ... the meaning of “Taxila” ...
the area of determination for Rains Retreat 2565 BE.**



Map of Gandhara



Buddha and Bodhisattva, Taxila Museum



I, MV Arayawangso, have been invited to spend my rains-retreat at *the Islamic Republic of Pakistan*, the land that has long played a prominent and valuable role in Buddhist civilization, ever since the time it was the seat of **Gandhara**, with **Taxila** as the capital city. The name *Gandhara* is well known to any Buddhist who are familiar with Buddhist Jataka or the Sutta. They would have read many stories related to this land, one of *Jambudvīpa*'s sixteen most important states (Mahajana-pada) that greatly prospered during the time of Lord Buddha.

Looking into the background of *Gandhara* to learn how it has been absorbing the histories of humanity, the general image can be grouped into three major periods, as follow:

First Period: Before the time of Lord Buddha

Although we cannot identify the exact number of years for the age of *Taxila*, if we search into the *Jataka* stories in the *Pali Canon (Tipitaka)* we will discover the path of the *Mahabodhisatta* who went on to be our present Lord Buddha. He was born and lived His many lives on that land to nurture Dhamma perfections according to the determination that had been steadfastly maintained through all those times.

Evidence discovered in the **Citta-Sambhuta Jataka** tell the following story:

“In his life as an outcaste (candala), living in a village at the outskirts of *Ujjeni City*, the *Mahabodhisatta* was known as *Cittakumara*, with a friend of similar age, *Sambhutakumara*, who was also the son of his aunt. Having suffered from being born into a chandala caste, they made a pact to hide the truth about their caste and disguised themselves as brahmins. The two friends travelled to **Taxila** to study many arts and sciences in various schools of famous teachers (*Disapamokkha*) of Taxila until their secret was finally discovered.” This kind of story proceeding on the land of spiritual civilization named **Taxila city** is really worthwhile studying.

Other stories of the *Bodhisatta's* path before attaining Supreme Enlightenment and became the Blessed Holy One that are related to the land of *Taxila* appeared in several periods, one of which is specifically related to the name of this city. **Why is it called Taxila?**

One jataka story recounted the path of accumulating perfections (*parami*) at the time He was born a brahmin in **the village of Daliddi** when He devoted His effort to accumulate the *Bodhisatta* perfections (*parami*) by **giving His own head to a man**. The city then came to be called “**Taxila**” and was translated in a book by the Chinese monk Fa Xien’s as “**The cut-off head.**”

Gathering from these stories, with the name “**Taxila city**” constantly appeared in the *jataka*, we can reasonably assume that Taxila City existed long before the Buddha’s Period, although no reference was made to its approximate age, that could be in the thousand or even ten thousands of years.

Another *jataka* tells the story about His time as a *Bhodhisatta*, **sacrificing His body to a starving tigress**. It was a supreme *dana parami*, leading to the realization of the complete buddhakarana dhamma, attaining Self-Enlightenment as He had long intended.

Taxila is thus recognized as the city that the *Mahabodhisatta* passed through to accumulate His *parami* and truly worthy of researching into the reason **why this land is deemed worthy of such dedication**.





MV Arayawangso visit Taxila Museum



Second Period: During the Buddha's Time

The name appeared distinctly as “*Taxila, the capital city of Gandhara state*”. At one time there was a Righteous King, named ***Pukkusatiraja*** who had found faith in Lord Buddha and His well-expounded Dhamma, leading to his abdication of the throne and joined the ascetic life, being ordained into Buddhism.

Dhatu-vibhanga sutta tells the story of his ordination that he had the chance to listen to Dhamma from Lord Buddha at the home of *Bhaggava*, a potter in *Rajagaha* city and attained the third stage of holiness, or a non-returner (*anagami*). As a result of his previous *kamma*, he was subsequently gored to death by a mad cow possessed by the spirit of a demon.

Apart from King *Pukkusatiraja* of *Gandhara*, in the Northern region of *Jambudvipa*, there was also stories about ***King Mahakappina*** who ruled the nearby ***region of Kukkutavadi***, his Queen *Anochadevi*, Queen *Khemavdevi*, the wife of King *Bimbisara*, as well as *Tapussa* and *Bhallika* from *Ukkala Janapada*. These stories, particularly that of King *Mahakappina*, later known as ***Mahakappina Thera***, will be mentioned in the later parts of this book.

Significantly, as recorded during Lord Buddha's time, several prominent persons had been connected with Taxila – kings and brahmins undertook their journeys to study a variety of academic fields, such as public administration, military science, medicine, and all kinds of knowledge in the *Brahmanic Canon (Tiveda)*. These people include ***King Pasenadi of Kosala, Prince Mahali of Licchavi, Minister Bandula of the Malla Clan, Jivaka Komarabhaj, and Ahimsaka (Angulimala)***, and even Prince *Siddhatta* of *Sakya* Clan, *Sakka* country who later became our Lord Buddha.

Although in the life's story before His Great Renunciation, there was no record confirming this, it was speculated that He must have traveled to this city study the various fields of knowledge. Given the context of culture and tradition of that time, it was indeed probable and an indication of its prosperity as a true world-class university.

The Third Period: After the Buddha's Time

Taxila was occupied by King Alexander the Great of Greece. A book by a Greek author mentioned the context of *Taxila's* culture and tradition that: "The people of *Taxila* who are too poor to find partners for their daughters will bring them to the market, blowing conches and beating drums as a signal for interested people to come and inspect. If they find the girls to their liking, the price is settled for taking them as their wives. Having become part of a family, if the husband dies, the wife is forced to commit suicide."

Around the 2nd - 3rd Buddhist century, during the reign of King Ashoka the Great of *Mauriya Dynasty*, monks were invited to serve as Buddhist missionaries in the propagation of Buddhism in distant regions. There were nine missions altogether, one of which is *Majjhantika thera* who traveled to *Kasmira* and *Gandhara States*.

This resulted in the expansion of territories under the rule of King Ashoka all over *Jambudvipa*, including *Gandhara's* *Taxila* city, as evidenced in the construction of the stupa for the establishment of Lord Buddha's Holy Relics, known as *Dhammarajika Stupa of Taxila*.

Regarding this *Taxila stupa*, opinions differ among archaeologists, with some arguing that it is not likely to occur during the time of King Ashoka because Indo-Greek Coins that can be traced into the 2nd century BCE were discovered in the area. However, since there has not been a clear resolution, we cannot rule out the existing evidence and opinion referring to the shape of Sanchi stupa, a popular style during King Ashoka's period which was subsequently demolished by the White Huns in the 5th century CE and abandoned as ruins. At that time, over a thousand Buddhist monasteries, shrines, and stupas were destroyed throughout **Gandhara** region.

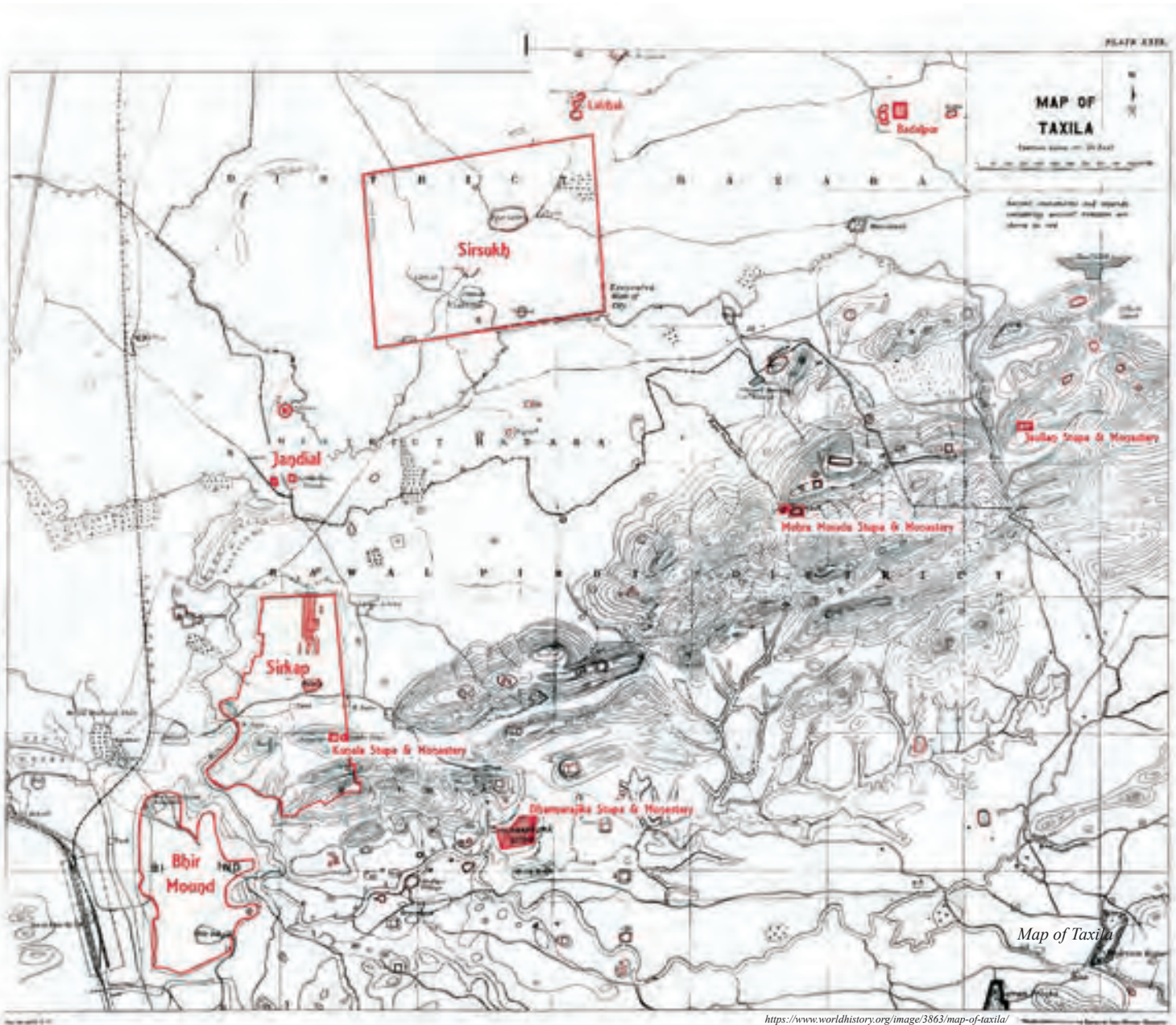


Emperor Ashoka the Great



Dhammarajika Stupa of Taxila. Stupa for the establishment of Buddha's Holy Relics





Map of Taxila

<https://www.worldhistory.org/image/3863/map-of-taxila/>

Map of Taxila

In 1913 CE (2456 BE), **Sir John Marshall** began his archaeological excavation in Buddhist ancient sites around *Taxila* and discovered the damaged and plundered *stupa* in a dilapidated state. There was evidence of the construction of a large canal to bring valuable objects from the *stupa*, and remains of human skeletons were found in the open area on the *stupa*'s southern side, along with items identified as belonging to monks who were murdered during the invasion of the White Huns.

Archaeological evidence is a reflection of the great value and significance of Buddhist sites of *Gandhara* civilization in *Taxila*, presently in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Located 35.40 kilometers north of Rawalpindi, this main center of *Gandhara* State had prospered for more than 3,000 years and ended in 10th Buddhist Century (1008 BE) by the White Huns' invasion.

Sir John Marshall, the British archaeologist who undertook the 21 years' excavation in *Taxila* from 1913-1934 CE (2456-2477 BE) had discovered **three ancient cities in *Taxila*, more than 24 stupas and Buddhist sites**, dated back to about 6th Century BCE. **The three ancient cities are: *Bhir mound*, *Sirkap* and *Sirsukh*.**

At *Sirkap*, there was the inscription in Aramaic letters describing the establishment of the pillar, as an honour for "***Piyadarshi***" **Prince Ashoka, the Viceroy ruler of *Taxila***. The indication that it definitely occurred during the lifetime of King Ashoka the Great made this evidence a crucial one for the research on the age of Buddhist ancient sites on that land.



<https://taxilamuseum.punjab.gov.pk/node/77>
Bhir mound



Sirkap



Sirsukh



*Most venerable Arayawangso
in Sir John Marshall room
at Taxila Museum*

Today, 12 July 2565 BE, I made a journey to spend three months' rains-retreat with five monks and one novice at Taxila, staying in the 100 -year-old building that the Government of Pakistan offered to me as a place of residence for the entire period. ***The building*** which is located in *Taxila* Museum previously belonged to ***Sir John Marshall, a British archaeologist*** who directed the excavation efforts more than 100 years ago.

It is such a great delight being close to the true legend in charge of excavating Buddhist ancient sites in *Taxila*, particularly having a chance to be inside the bedroom that was well maintained by the Punjab Archaeology Department.

I am grateful for his initiative and discovery of Buddhist ancient sites so that they were so well preserved up to the present time that they were deemed worthy of being named ***Buddhist World Heritage by UNESCO***. The people of Pakistan and all Buddhists should be proud of the great history of this land of civilization, *Gandhara* Region at *Taxila*, the name that has long been in existence right up to the present time.

*Blessing with metta.
MV Arayawangso*

English translation: Dr. Pawadee Tonguthai



Sir John Marshall residence, Taxila Museum



Suvarnabhumi International Airport, Thailand

Mrs. Faisal Hazeeb, Deputy Head of Mission (DHM), and Mr. Tanvir Ahmad, Counsellor, on behalf of H.E. the Ambassador of Pakistan to Thailand, bade farewell to MV Arayawangso at Suvarnabhumi International Airport upon his departure to spend the rains retreat in Taxila, Islamic Republic of Pakistan.



Islamabad International Airport, Pakistan

On July 11, MV Arayawangso arrived at Islamabad International Airport, Pakistan, at 10.00 pm. And proceeded to overnight at the residence of Mr. Imran Shauket.



Dhamma Talk at Islamabad, Pakistan

On the morning of July 12, Mr Imran Masood, Chancellor of University of South Asia, Lahore, former Punjabi minister and currently President of Gandhara Art and Culture Association, came to any respect to MV Arayawangso and to invite Most Venerable to give a Dhamma Talk to students at a time convenient to him. He was accompanied by Dr Esther Park, Secretary -General, who is a Korean Doctorate graduate in Gandharan history, and Mrs Troya Roy, a Bangladeshi Buddhist from Islamabad. MV Arayawangso kindly gave a brief Dhamma talk to the visitors before they made an offering to the Sangha.





Bhallar Stupa

Taxila, Punjab

On 22 August 2565 BE, MV Arayawangso accompanied by the Sangha who had been observing the rains retreat in Taxila, Gandhara, Pakistan, and lay followers, went on a study tour to **Bhallar Stupa** to pay homage to the Triple Gem.

One problem with Taxila today is that the road leading to the stupa is narrow and in a bad condition. The traffic is also bad during rush hours when people go to work or return home, or when school children travel to and from their schools at the same time. When we arrived at the entrance to the stupa, which is near a railway, we had to get off our cars and walk on a very narrow dirt road.

Director of the Department of Archaeology and Museums of Punjab was waiting to welcome me and my party to facilitate our visit. He explained about the history of Bhallar Stupa himself amidst tight police protection. It seems very normal to have the local police following our group and providing a lead car the whole way to and from our residence during the historic 2565 BE rains retreat in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. This is the first rains retreat since Buddhism was gone from Jambudvipa and, thus, will have to be recorded officially.

When we reached the top of the cement steps leading to the small hill upon which rested the stupa, it was possible to see clearly the half circular form of the tall monument. Something like a Chetiya split in half. It was very tall. It is said that this stupa was the tallest stupa in Taxila, located on top of Sarada Hill, near Haro river, the main river of Taxila. Although this was the rainy season, the river was very dry, just like Neranjara river in India.

To relate the importance of Bhallar Stupa, it is necessary to refer to Fa-Hien's Record of Buddhist Kingdoms in 942-957 BE as follows:

"It took Fa-Hien and fellow monks 7 days to travel eastward to reach the Kingdom of Taxila. This name means in Chinese "the cut off head". meaning.

Here, during the time when Buddha was a Bodhisattva, he gave his head to a man. And from this story, the kingdom got its name with the above-mentioned

After walking further to the east for 2 days, Fa-Hien and other monks arrived at a hamlet where the Buddha as a Bodhisattva gave his body to feed a hungry lioness. At both places, Maha stupas were erected to commemorate the sacrifices by Bodhisattava. The stupas were beautifully decorated on every level. Kings and Ministers from surrounding kingdoms would bring presents to pay homage at the stupas. Ordinary people would also come regularly to pay homage so much so that the whole areas were overflowing with flowers and brightened with lamps. People called these 4 stupas (the other 2 were already mentioned in an earlier chapter) the four Maha Stupas.

The Department of Archeology and Museums also recorded the story of Bhallar Stupa along similar line as follows:

"Bhallar stupa is situated on a route from Mechanical complex to Haripur, having a commanding position at the top of Sarada Hill, a little beyond the Haro River. This is the tallest stupa in Taxila. It was visited by Chinese pilgrims, Fa Hien and Hiuen Tsang, and they identify it with the spot where Buddha offered his head. This was built in the "Medieval period" i.e. post-Hun period. It consists of a tall stupa, surrounded by votive stupas, other shrines, and a monastery. Here the Buddhist monk Kumaralabha composed his treatise. The main stupa, which is broken on the northern face, stood on a lofty oblong base, approached by a flight of steps on the east. It consists of a plinth base, a drum, a dome, and originally umbrellas. The drum is divided into six or seven tiers and divided into six or seven tiers and is decorated with Corinthian pilasters, freezes, and dental cornices."

A note by MV Arayawangso

Chapter II

Historic Rains Retreat Vows, Taxila Museum



Taxila Museum



The 16 Mahajanapadas map, 500 BCE

Most of *Gandhara* encompasses the present-day *Peshawar* in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa State and Taxila, Rawalpindi in Punjab State, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

If we look at an ancient map of Jambudvīpa, *Gandhara* and *Kamboja* are on the northern or northwestern borders. *Jambudvīpa* had 16 kingdoms, known as the Mahā-janapadas¹. Its *northern region* or *Uttarapata* was part of the Paccantima-janapada². Taxila was the capital city of Gandhara for many years. During the Pre Buddha era, arts and sciences, including the Triple Vedas - with its 18 sub-divisions flourished here. Taxila was most renowned for being the education centre for over three thousand years; it was the world's (Jambudvīpa) first university town. Ancient artefacts have been unearthed from the sites in Taxila, Rawalpindi, Punjab, especially near Sarabkala train station, thirty-five kilometres west or northwest of Rawalpindi, Pakistan.

¹Meaning the 'great realm'

²Distant realm or border kingdoms of Jambudvīpa. The middle realm or Majjhima-janapada, on the other hand, includes kingdoms such as Magadha, Kosala, Vajji, Kashi, Anga, Vamsa



In 2022, a group of Thai monks came to spend their Vassa (monastic three-month annual rains retreat) in Taxila. Attama (MV) was most delighted to visit its Gandharan Buddhist World Heritage sites which are well preserved by the Department of Archaeology and Museums of Pakistan.

An official welcome, made by Pakistan high ranking officers, took place *on the 14th of July 2022, at 16:00, at Taxila Museum*. Objectives of the rains retreat were also announced. This was broadcast live on numerous social media platforms and well-received by Pakistani people. Those who came to welcome us were:

- 1) **H.E. Mr. Asim Iftikhar Ahmad**
Additional Secretary, UN, and Spokesperson
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- 2) **H.E. Mr. Chakkrid Krachaiwong**
Ambassador of Thailand to Pakistan
- 3) **Mr. Aamer Ahmed Atozai**
Director General East Asia Pacific, Ministry
of Foreign Affairs
- 4) **Mr. Muhammad Iqbal Khan Manj**
Director of Taxila Museum



H.E. Mr. Asim Iftikhar Ahmad



Mr. Muhammad Iqbal Khan Manj
Director of Taxila Museum



H.E. Mr. Chakkrid Krachaiwong



Mr. Aamer Ahmed Atozai

On behalf of the monks and Thai disciples present, Attama (MV) thanked them and informed them of the objectives for my three-month rains retreat in Taxila:

- To study the ruins and artefacts of Gandhara civilization at the Buddhist World Heritage sites.
- To publish a book and distribute its translated version (from Thai to English) in Thailand and elsewhere.
- To complete this within the three months of the rains retreat - from July to October.





Most Venerable Arayawangso's speech.

The content of *my speech* is as follows:

“Blessing to H.E. Mr. Asim Iftikhar Ahmad ...

First of all, I (MV) want to express my delight about my second visit to Taxila museum. I appreciate the warm welcome from you, and from everyone in this museum.

My return visit is facilitated by the invitation from the Government of Pakistan – through *diplomatic channel*. Despite its formal nature, *I am just visiting my close friends*.

The three months' stay during *the rainy season of 2022, from July to October*, will be the period for *an intensive study from archaeological traces in Buddhist World Heritage sites in Pakistan*. The book “*Buddhist Heritage of Pakistan/Taxila*” will be of great help to me. The monks who accompany me here, have already begun the translation into Thai language.

This is *at the request to Thammasat University*, several years ago, by *His Excellency Mr. Asim Iftikhar Ahmad*, former Pakistan ambassador to Thailand, who is now *the Additional Secretary, United Nations, and Spokesperson, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Islamabad, Pakistan*.

Once the Thai translation is finished, I will use it for my own research for another book, by investigation from the **Pali Canon (Tipitaka)** and history of Northern Buddhism (Mahayana). The English version, along with updated photographs will be presented to the Pakistan Government, the World Bank Campus in Pakistan, the related museums, and everyone who are involved in the research.

In addition to the book, I am confident that *my writings*, which will be **regularly available** through social *media network*, will provide great *publicity* for the perfect worth of the Buddhist World Heritage in Pakistan. It will be much better known to Buddhists in thirty-two countries, and the world community. In particular, Thai people who have been following my column for more than 15 years, in Thailand's popular newspaper, *will be very eager to make the journey, and witness the treasure with their own eyes*.

Therefore, this three months' Rains Retreat at Taxila Museum is most beneficial for our *bilateral academic research*. I will need your support in many aspects so that I can conduct this research carefully, in all dimensions. This will require *further coordination, by setting up a joint working group*. The treasure of Buddhist World Heritage, and that of other related religions, will then be revealed to the entire world community who are keen on these issues. This includes *universities with archaeological study courses*, and with interest in the Gandhara period.

Let me again express my appreciation for your kindness and interest, especially from personnel of this museum, who *Attama (MV) look forward to working together, as part of my study team*.

Thank you for your invitation to visit this museum. It has always held such great spiritual value for me.

Blessing to all of you ...”



H.E. Mr. Asim Iftikhar Ahmad

H.E. Mr. Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, a former Pakistan ambassador to Thailand, gave the following *welcoming speech on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs*:

“Good afternoon, This is my great pleasure and honour, and I recall that when Most Ven. Arayawangso was first coming to Thailand, I had the honour of seeing him off at the airport in Bangkok...and *today when Most Venerable is here - to officially commence what we have been waiting for years to come to Pakistan, the rains retreat.* It is a great pleasure and honour, I would say, not only on my own behalf, but on the behalf of the government and the entire people of Pakistan to welcome Most Venerable to Pakistan.

This is your home, and we know the very brief interaction and visit that you had to Pakistan previously. That the kind of love and affection that you have developed towards my country and my people, we really and greatly appreciate that. And the message, the hope for peace and harmony that Most Venerable, you kindly brought to Pakistan during your last visit...and this message that you wish to continue to propagate. This is what we really appreciate in your kind presence in Pakistan, and this is what we would like to see continuing through your interaction.

I think, speaking a little bit about Pakistan and Thailand, last year we celebrate its 70 years of establishment of diplomatic relations between our two countries but as we always say: our relations which are based on relations between our two peoples, they go back centuries. And these are linked, they are etched in memories, in history and linked very closely to the very rich Buddhist Heritage of Pakistan, which is exhibited not only in this museum but all over Pakistan, especially in the Gandhara region that you couldn't be, you know, a bigger expert - obviously in the history of Buddhism and Gandhara - as Most Venerable, you yourself, are. So, what we are looking forward through the kind engagement of yourself, Most Venerable, is that you know you're already working on the political and defence and security and economic relations between our two countries.

And let me recall that King Rama IX, King Bhumibol the Great, and Queen Sirikit, they were in Pakistan in 1962. King Rama X has been to Pakistan 3 times. Princess Sirindhorn, these flowers are gifts from her for the museum. She has been to Pakistan, and this is the kind of linkage that is there between the people of Pakistan and people of Thailand. This is what we want to further strengthen, through the engagement of Most Venerable. These are the people-to-people linkages, and we see Pakistan being the cradle of civilization and home to rich Buddhist heritage. This is something that links our two people together, so we know that your stay here and your last visit, the kind of talks that you give to your disciples, to your followers and these are followers, we know, they are not only in Thailand but throughout the world, especially in Southeast Asia and Asean. So, there are millions of people who are following you and we hope that this message about Pakistan, this word about Taxila, which our Thai friends call Takkasila or Taksasila, and many of them previously were not even aware that this is in Pakistan.

So, this is the information, this is the awareness that *we look forward through the presence of Most Venerable in Pakistan* and I'm sure this is going to contribute a lot to the promotion of friendly relations between our two countries and people to people linkages between our two countries. So *let me once again welcome Most Venerable to Pakistan to your home* and we would be very honoured to listen to you now.

Thank you so much ...”

Other guests on the list were then invited to give their welcome and thank you speeches, showing the close diplomatic bonds between the two countries and specifically in relation to the Thai Sangha group at the rains retreat.

This was a very good start - to establish a good understanding about the historic rains retreat at the Buddhist World Heritage Site in Gandhara, Taxila, Punjab, Pakistan. The press conference went well, with a warm atmosphere and much media interest





***Making a Formal
Determination** to enter the rains
retreat at Taxila, Punjab, The Islamic Republic
of Pakistan.*

14th July 2565









On 16th July 2022, we visited *Jaulian*, a Buddhist archaeological site in Gandhara, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, but close to Taxila, Punjab. It only took less than half an hour to get there.

Dr. Abdul Samad, Director of Archaeology and Museums in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and the officers from the Department of Archaeology, Peshawar Museum gave us a warm welcome. We walked up the stony steps to *Jaulian ancient site*, on top of a small hill. It was a delight to see the remains of the Buddha images and the stupas – the beauty of which is praiseworthy of Gandharan ancient art, and which hold great spiritual meaning to Buddhists around the world.

Buddhist Heritage in Jaulian was established in the later period of the Kushan dynasty. Jaulian site is no more than one hundred metres above the ground, comprising ancient viharas and Sanchi stupa - dated back to the King Ashoka period. Jaulian is about 10 kilometres from the ancient site of Sirkap, Taxila.

Archaeological record shows that the excavation at Jaulian was led by Sir John Marshall. There are three entrances and three stupa courtyards. On the south side, the stupa courtyard is on a raised mound. On the north side, the stupa is in a lower courtyard. The third courtyard in the west is smaller than the other two, linking the first and the second.

Jaulian

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa



The lower courtyard is used as the main entrance, there are five stupas but only their bases remain, decorated with relief sculptures. The base of one of the stupas was engraved with v, featuring the name of its donor. On the lower part of the courtyard, there are rows of narrow caves/ cells where Buddha and Bodhisattva statues were kept. The statues are now relocated to the museum of Taxila.



The main stupa is situated in the upper section. Only the base remains. It was used to house the relics of the Buddha and significant disciples, built during the Kushan period around the seventh-eighth Buddhist Centuries . The decorated reliefs might come later.





Most notable is the **Buddha statue with a hole in his navel**. Those who come to pay homage to the Buddha can insert their finger in the hole and make a wish for their safety and freedom from suffering, illness, and disaster. On the base there is some **Kharosthi script**, saying ‘gift of one **Budhamitra**’. There are also small stupas, with relics of the Buddha inside, decorated with precious stones.

On the east side of the room, on the lower ground floor, there are steps leading to a small, open space, surrounded by small huts for the monks, for their Dhamma practice.

Jaulian ancient monastery, built in the Kushan period (around the 8th Buddhist century and completed in the 11th Buddhist Century), is in reasonably good condition. The remains of the classrooms, accommodations, and places to perform religious activities are still evident for further research. Jaulian sculptures were made from plaster - similar to the ones found in Bhamala in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, KP (See pictures).





Sirkap | Taxila



Apisadal Temple - Sirkap, Taxila's ancient metropolis



Sirkap

Taxila

On 17th July 2022,

I (MV) visited *Sirkap ancient site*, close to Taxila museum, Punjab, Pakistan. *Sirkap* was established around the first half of the second century BC by Bactrian Greeks. Evidence from the excavation shows that it was a big city, accommodating a big settlement – with proper town planning, similar to that of the Greek grid system. The main road ran from the entrance of the city, north to south, dividing the city into east and west, with smaller roads intersecting at

right angles. On the south side of the ancient city, perched on a small hill, was *Sirkap - Kunala palace*

On the west side there were community areas, markets and shops, many selling gold and jewellery, with residential areas behind them. On the east side were located worship places, including Buddhist, Jain, Hindu and Christian. This showed a multicultural society where people had freedom of faith and worship, which was a delight to discover.



There were invaluable sculptures, narrative reliefs, telling the stories of the Buddha, and buildings that were plastered over and painted white. The excavations in Sirkap also found pillar edicts in *Aramaic language*, attributed to “*Priyadarshi*”, a title associated with Ashoka, who was then prince and Governor of Taxila. They also revealed how *Aramaic scripts* had evolved to become *Kharosthi alphabets* in a later period.

Sirkap continued to be occupied for over three hundred years, under the rule of the Greeks, then the Scythians, Parthians, and the Kushans. Its architectural remains are still in good condition and show a complex influence of different cultures and from different periods. The Double Headed Eagle Stupa and buildings that resemble ancient Indian, Greek and Scythian architecture are such examples.

Blessing with metta,



Remains of Kunala palace





Jain Temple



Sun Dial Temple



Jain Stupa

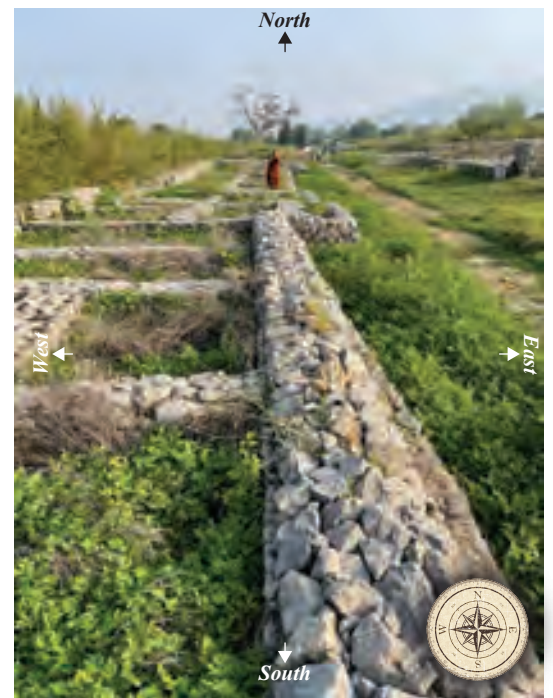


Double Headed Eagle Stupa



Round stupa





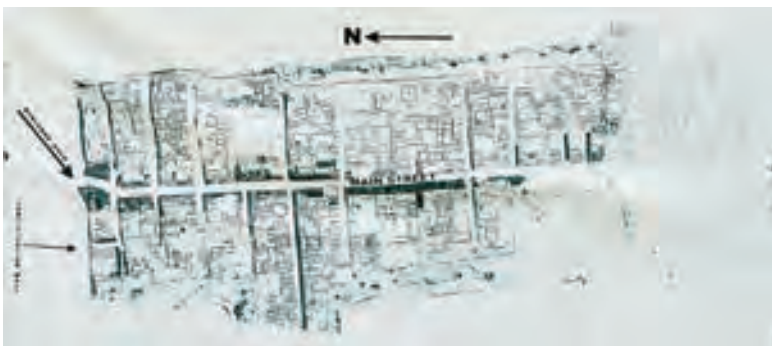
The ancient city of Sirkap layout

Market and urban community buildings are build on the right side of the city, facing west.

Archeological sites of mahaviharas, monasteries and stupas from Buddhist, Jain, and Bhramin are found on the left side of the city, facing east.

King Kunala palace and a buddhist mahastupa is located at the end of the city, facing south.

The entrance gate to Srikap ancient city is located in the north.





Buthkara Stupa | Swat

The 2,000-year-old Buthkara stupa is an important Buddhist site near Mingora, in Swat. It is also called by its local name, Gulkada (gool-ka-da). It may have been built by the Mauryan emperor Ashoka, however it is generally dated slightly later to the 2nd century BCE. Considered sacred, the Buddhist precinct of Buthkara has been identified as the monastery of "Ta-Lo" mentioned by Sung Yun (520 CE). This monastery lies at the eastern end of the ancient capital of Udyana Meng-Chich-Li aka Mingora. It was visited and described by the Chinese Buddhist pilgrims of the 5th, 6th and 7th centuries CE.

The main stupa stands in the middle. Around it are crowded other monuments: stupas, viharas and columns. On the northern side stands a great building and further to the north and west the inhabited area. The main Great Stupa has been built over five times, and each time this has seen new construction encasing the older one from the 3rd century BCE, up to the 10th century CE.

This site has yielded one of Swat's richest harvests of artefacts, all now in museums. The enormous main stupa was probably built by Ashoka in the 3rd century BC, but by the 10th century it had been rebuilt five times, each new version enclosing the last.

An Italian mission led by the archaeologist Domenico Faccenna excavated the stupa from 1956 onwards to clarify the various steps of its construction and enlargements. The mission established that the stupa was "monumentalized" by the addition of Hellenistic architectural decorations during the 2nd century BCE. This suggested direct involvement of the Indo-Greek rulers of North-Western India during that period in the development of Greco-Buddhist architecture.

The nearby Hellenistic fortifications of Barikot are also thought to be contemporary. A coin of Chandragupta Maurya was found in the oldest core strata which therefore dates to the Ashokan period. A coin of Menander I was found in the second oldest stratum, and a coin of Azes II was found under a plinth of the third stratum which therefore dates to the end of the 1st century BCE or the beginning of the 1st century CE. The fourth stratum contained late coins of Azes II and coins of the Kushan Kujula Kadphises.

The in-situ Buddha (or Bodhisattva) statue at Buthkara is considered as one of the earliest, if not the earliest, known iconographic statues of the Buddha in North-Western India. Professor JE van Lohuizen-de Leeuw believes the statue dates to the late-1st century BCE to the early-1st century CE as it was discovered in the third stratum that contained a coin of Azes II. More conservative estimates date it to the 1st or 2nd century CE, roughly the same time that the first known statues of the Buddha were made in Mathura. This makes the creation of the Buddha image an approximately simultaneous phenomenon occurring between the two geographical areas.



Chapter III

Re-Awakening the Asalha Puja Celebration in Gandhara, dormant for a thousand years



*Dharmarajika Stupa
Taxila, Pakistan*



*Sir John Marshall
British archaeologist*

It is important to view the overall picture: how civilization has developed over time. Sirkap was the second capital city in Taxila Valley, built by King Alexander's Bactria army in 190 BC. The city planning followed the Greek principles (grid pattern). Hence the name: Acropolis of Taxila. It is rectangular in shape with the main road running from north to south. Houses, shops, community areas and worship places are lined up on both sides of the road. The big, tall walls are made of rubble masonry.

Our field trip took us to ancient Sirkap in Taxila Valley. Walking past the community area, heading north leads to the king's palace, exquisitely perched on a small hill, overlooking the whole of Sirkap. It was thought that the King of Sirkap at the time was Kunala and he used to live there. Archaeologists, therefore, named this ancient place the Royal Palace of King Kunala. He was also the governor of Magadha and son of King Ashoka the Great.

To relate the above information to the reign of King Ashoka of Taxila, Gandhara¹, we need to look back to the 2nd-3rd Buddhist Centuries when the Maurya dynasty ruled Maghada and other kingdoms in Jambudvipa. Ashoka was the third Mauryan king² who governed between 268 - 311 BE.



*Palace at Sirkap,
Taxila's ancient metropolis*

¹One of the 16 kingdoms in Jambudvipa

²Mauryan or Moriya dynasty of Patlibutra, Maghada

During his reign, he extended his empire to its greatest extent in the history of ancient India. Now, the areas under his control would include the Republic of India, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, some parts of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Republic of the Peoples of Bangladesh put together.

He was also one of the greatest patrons of Buddhism, an Upāsaka who developed firm confidence in the Triple Gem and was considered one of the world's true spiritual leaders.

Evidence from Buddhist records shows that King Ashoka organised the Third Buddhist Council either in 234 BE (according to Mahawong source) or 290 BE (according to Tiwayawadana source), on the request of Moggaliputta Tissa Thera. He invited Buddhist monks to the Third Council and then despatched teams of missionaries to promote Buddhism in Jambudvipa and beyond. The Council took place at the Asokarama Monastery in Pataliputra, Magadha, led by Moggaliputta Tissa Thera and sponsored by King Ashoka. It lasted 9 months. 10,000 monks who took part were all arahants.



Aramic Inscription

This inscription found from the masonry of a wall at Sirkap(Taxila) is the only example of the use of aramic (from which Kharoshti Orginated) In the north west region of Pakistan. It mentions the ruler Priyadarsi and his queen and sons from which it seems that it was used in the first half of the 3rd century B.C. by the Mauryan Emperor Ahsoka who ruled over Taxila at that time.

The Sangha at the third Buddhist Council, under the leadership of Moggaliputta Tissa Thera unanimously agreed to send forth nine groups of missionary monks to nine distant lands to spread the Buddha's sublime Dhamma and Vinaya.

- *First group*: under the leadership of **Majjhantika Thera** - to propagate Buddhism in the northwest of the Republic of India (Maghada) such as **Gandhara and Kashmir**
- *Second group*: under the leadership of **Mahadeva Thera** - to propagate Buddhism in the south of the Republic of India (Maghada) in **Mahismandala and Mysore**
- *Third group*: under the leadership of **Rakkhita Thera** to promote Buddhism in **the southeast of the Republic of India (Maghada) Vanavasi (Mumbai/ or present Bombay)**
- *Fourth group*: under the leadership of **Yona Dhammarakkhita Thera** – to promote Buddhism near the coastal area in the west, in **Aparantakajanaka (by the Arab sea, north of Mumbai)**
- *Fifth group*: under the leadership of **Maha Dhammarakkhita Thera** – to propagate Buddhism in **Maharattha /Maharashtra (northeast of Mumbai)**
- *Sixth group*: under the leadership of **Maharakkhita Thera** – to promote Buddhism in **Yona, Persia (now the Islamic Republic of Iran)**
- *Seventh group*: under the leadership of **Majjhima Thera** – to promote Buddhism in **Himavanta /Himalayan Region (Nepal)**
- *Eighth group*: under the leadership of **Sona Thera and Uttara Thera** – to promote Buddhism in **Suvarnabhumi which includes part of Burma and Thailand (Nakornpathom)**
- *Ninth group*: under the leadership of **Mahindra Thera and Sanghamitra Thera** – to promote Buddhism in **Lankadvipa**

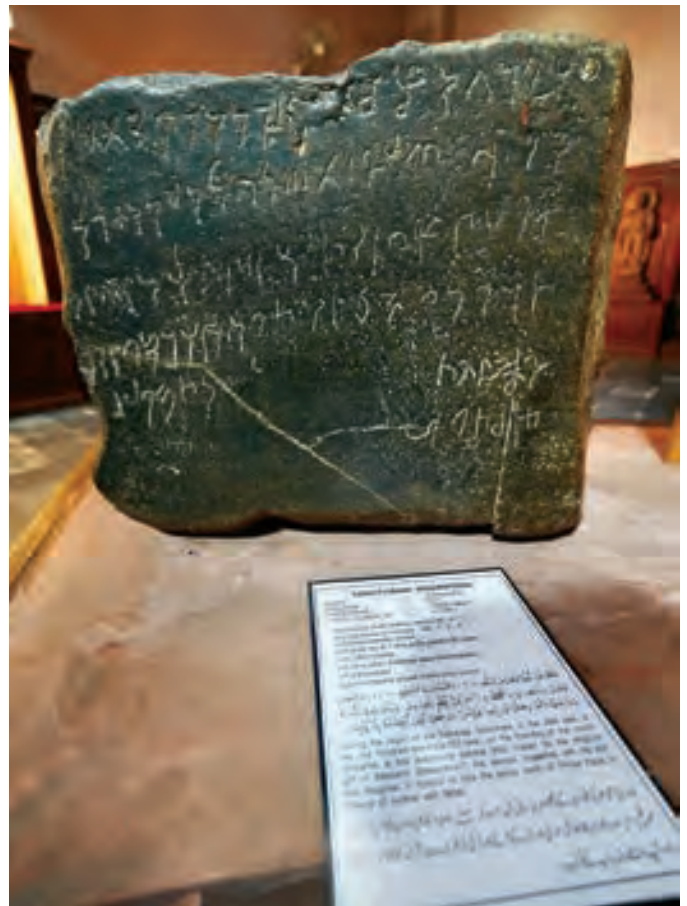
During his reign, Buddhism thrived and spread in Jambudvipa and further a field. He also paid particular attention to bringing together the Buddha's relics that were given earlier to eight different towns – from Rajgir to Varanasi, Kapilavastu, and Kushinagar. King Ashoka gave orders for the stupas to be built across Jambudvipa and distributed the relics of the Buddha to those towns with the stupas, so people could pay homage to the Buddha. The architectural style of Sanchi stupa, therefore, spread to Suvarnabhumi (Nakornpathom). This was due to the belief that building a stupa or a great pagoda to house the relics of the Buddha was to honour him and would bring great merit. We also see the stone pillars, indicating Buddhist sacred locations such as: in Lumbini where the Buddha was born, Bodhgaya where he was enlightened, and in many other places.

This showed how Buddhism flourished during the time of King Ashoka. Great pagodas and pillar edicts can still be seen in Kosambi, Sanchi, Kesari, Vaishali in the Republic of India. The Dharmarajika Stupa in Taxila, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, confirms that Buddhism was prevalent at the time of Ashoka.

In 290 BE, following the Third Buddhist Council, King Ashoka sent missionary monks to propagate the Dhamma Vinaya in 9 different regions. One of these was Taxila, Gandhara which was under his administration. According to Mahawong and Tiwayawadana sources: in 308 BC, he sent Prince Kulana to become the governor of Taxila, before his passing in 311 BE. (It was his 38th year on the throne. But if we count from when he succeeded the throne at the age of 21, it would be his 42nd year on the throne.

The excavation of Taxila by a British archaeologist, Sir John Marshall in 2456 BE-2477BE (1913 AD -1934AD) found three ancient settlements. One of which was in Sirkap. This settlement continued for three hundred years under the rules of the Greeks, Sitan, Patian and Kushan consecutively. Their influences can be seen in the artefacts that were found. It is estimated that Sirkap must have existed around the second century BC.

Important events during the time of King Ashoka have led us to believe that the Dharmarajika Stupa or Maha Stupa of Taxila in Gandhara was built when Buddhism spread to Gandhara after the Third Buddhist Council in 290 BE (or 234 BE) to house the relics of the Buddha. The shape of the stupas corresponded to that of the Sanchi Stupa. Afterwards, big monasteries were built to accommodate many monks in Gandhara. Buddhism flourished most circa the sixth and seventh Buddhist Centuries during the reign of King Kanishka the Great of the Kushan dynasty and disappeared in the seventeenth Buddhist Century.





It was possible that Dhammarajika Stupa might have been built in two different periods:

1. During the time of King Ashoka, judging from the architectural style of the Sanchi stupa (prevalent in the third century BC)
2. During the reign of King Kanishka, it was rebuilt on top of the old stratum – that of King Ashoka's. Later, it was destroyed by the white Huns in the fifth century and then left deserted.

Sir John Marshall began the excavation in 2456 BE and found that the stupa was ransacked and in a bad state. What's more, a big tunnel was dug up to extract valuables from it. Corpses and monks' provisions were also found in the open space on the south side of the stupa. Those monks might have been killed during the invasion of the white Huns (What a pity!)

Before that, circa 943 BE, a Chinese monk, Faxian, came to pay homage to the Maha Stupa of Taxila (Dhammarajika Stupa). He noted that Taxila and its stupa, and monasteries were all in good condition. Around 1050 BE, the Huns came to attack and destroyed Buddhist places for worship in Taxila.

Faxian Zang (Tan Sanzang), a Chinese missionary monk to India in 1186 BE noted that: Taxila was in a state of decay; it was a small, insignificant town, belonging to the Kashmir Kingdom. Temples, shrines, schools, and sacred places were all destroyed. From then on, there was no information on Taxila.





Asalha Puja, 13th July 2022, At Dhammarajika Stupa, Taxila

In 2022, MV Arayawangso and a group of Thai monks came to spend a vassa in Taxila, Gandhara where the ancient Dhammarajika Stupa, is located. The Buddhist Asalha Puja celebration, which had disappeared for over a thousand years, took place at this stupa on 13th July 2022, signifying the rekindling of the spirits of Buddhism. It was a historic event that Buddhists rejoiced and shared their delight with the people of Pakistan who continuously sent in their kind comments via social media. This shows that regardless of differences in faith, the people of Pakistan have a positive perception of other faiths, which was heartening.

The rains retreat journey of MV Arayawangso, four of his monk disciples and a novice from Thailand sent a signal to Buddhists and those around the world that:

Peace and happiness come from love and understanding of mankind – who are all equal in dhamma

Differences in faiths, beliefs and opinions cannot divide us. Nor can they create enmity between those who have respect for humanity





The true nature of the Pakistani people does not differ from that of Thais or people in the rest of the world.

From Taxila, Gandhara, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Bell of Peace was ringing, to let the international community of every faith know that:

Nothing is greater than peace

*Peace is happiness and has true
benefits for humanity*

If only we are one in kindness and compassion







Buddhism's Highly Significant and Historic Event on the Land of Jambudvipa !!!

The First Rains Retreat has returned to the civilized land of Buddhist World Heritage at Taxila, Gandhara, Jambudvipa, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for the three month's period in 2565 BE/2022

This historic event is occurring under the leadership of MV Arayawangso, Chief Abbot, Buddhapojhariphunchai Forest Monastery, Lamphun, Thailand, facilitated by the diplomatic invitation from the Pakistan Government to celebrate and further strengthen the cordial relation between the people of Thailand and Pakistan.

On the occasion of Asalha Puja, 13 July 2565 BE, Buddhist devotees will be able to participate in the Historic Turning of the Dhamma Wheel at Dhammarajika Stupa that was constructed under the

auspices of King Ashoka the Great at Taxila, Gandhara, one of the sixteen Great States.

This commemoration of Lord Buddha's First Sermon and the foundation of the Buddhist order will be broadcast live on YouTube Arayawangso Channel on 13 July 2022 at 20.00 hr. (Thailand time), and 18.00 hr. (Pakistan time).

You are all invited to take part in the historic Turning of the Dhamma Wheel, to humbly pay homage to the Supremely Enlightened One, His Dhamma, and His Sangha disciples, for the perpetuation of the Dhamma Wheel in this world, for the benefits and happiness of all beings who are ready to receive the Teaching of Lord Buddha.





“ Lokopathambhikā Mettā ”

*Loving-kindness bonds
the people of the world*

Chapter IV

*The first sattahaya in 2022
and a field trip to the Swat Valley,
following an invitation from the Aurangzeb family,
Swat's last ruling dynasty.*



Shingardara Stupa, Swat

The first sattahaya¹ in 2022 was a field trip to Swat Valley an invitation from the Aurangzeb family, Swat's last ruling dynasty.



23rd - 29th July 2022, I took a dispensation, under the Buddhist Vinaya (discipline). Sattahaya is permissible under certain reasonable circumstances. On this occasion, it was to accept the official invitation, signed by *Mrs. Zenab Adnan*, wife of *Miangul Adnan Aurangzeb*. 2019 was the first time I visited the Buddhist World Heritage Site of the Kushan Empire in Gandhara. Miangul Aurangzeb invited me to install the *Bell of Peace*, perform a religious ceremony, and pray for peace and happiness for Swat – his beloved land. Having decided to undertake the monastic rains retreat here, I thought of *Miangul Adnan Aurangzeb*.

As all conditioned things follow the three universal characteristics: impermanence, dissatisfaction, and non-selfhood, sadly, I found out that Miangul Aurangzeb passed away on 30th May 2022, before my arrival. Due to his strong intention to invite me to inaugurate the Bell of Peace at the Swat Museum, I accepted his wife's and the Aurangzeb family's invitation.

23rd July 2565, I took a Sattahaya and aimed to return within seven days to the place where I vowed to undertake the retreat. Failing to return within the given time, I would have broken the vow, and this will be an offence (considered misconduct according to the Dhamma Vinaya).



Aurangzeb family, Swat's last ruling dynasty

¹errands, allowing monks to leave the temple during rains retreat for 7 days





We started from Taxila², heading towards Swat³. The Thai Embassy provided a van transport. *Col. Adisak Showichien and his wife (Ms Hathairat Warisamarnkhun)* accompanied us on the trip. It took just over 3 hours but not quite 4 hours to get there, along the new express highway – making the journey a lot more comfortable than in the past.

As we approached the Swat Valley, the scenery on both sides of the road changed. The road leading through the tunnels, into the valleys, and along the mountain range has its charm. There are more mountains and tunnels than anywhere else I have ever been to. An interesting new experience!

When travelling through a red alert area, thoughts of past terrorism flashed through my mind, but were replaced by beautiful scenery instead. What's more, the warm welcome we received made us feel very happy to visit the Swat Valley – said to be the Switzerland of Asia. For, it has the most breathtaking beauty in Pakistan.

Judging from what meets the eyes, the *Swat Valley* is vast, with high mountains, similar to those in Betong, Yala – the southernmost area of Thailand. Official information mentions that the Swat Valley is in the northwest of *KP (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa)* and covers an area of 10,000 square kilometres. Pakistan people are very proud of their rich, fertile land, suitable for farming and agriculture. We spotted a poster on the road, feathering a name and direction to a *university of agriculture*.

²the old capital of Gandhara in Taxila Valley

³also in Gandhara



The scenery in the valley of Swat was amazingly stunning, with cliffs, and villages dotted along the hills.

Swat has varied landscapes: the plains, the valleys, the plateau, all year-round snow-capped mountains – like Pokhara in Nepal, except for the scent of civilization which is completely different. We stopped several times to look and pay respect to numerous ancient stupas and Buddha carvings on rock cliffs, which is historical evidence to suggest that Buddhism must have flourished to its zenith here and that Gandhara was a great Buddhist kingdom–no less than Maghada in Majjhima-desa (the Middle Land).



We were asked to take a break by the bank of the Swat River. The stream running from the mountain was cold, clean, and clear. Then we went to pay respect to the *Shingardara Stupa* in a small village – about a kilometre on a very narrow, winding road through a small farm village, away from the main road. It must be difficult to reach here if one doesn't have a guide who knows the local area well.





Shingardara Stupa reminded me of the Dhammekha Stupa. They share similar architectural structures but of different sizes - suggesting that the art influence during King Ashoka's period did spread across Jambudvipa.

The stupa was recently renovated in 1972. It is approximately 300 feet tall and 97 feet wide at the top. The circumference of the base is about 4,400 feet. The historical archives mentioned that *King Uttara* brought the Buddha's relics on an elephant, heading off somewhere. When the elephant got here, it collapsed and died for no apparent reason. Its body turned into a big rock sitting right at that very spot. King Uttara built a pagoda and placed the Buddha's relics inside this stupa.

That same day (23rd July 2565), as the van approached the area, the bright, clear sky broke into a drizzle without any warning. The rain was one of the auspicious signs. This tends to happen every time we pay respect to the Triple Gem, the sacred stupas, and Buddha statues.

The stupa stood exposed to all elements. It had been ransacked and destroyed by those who could not understand nor appreciate its value. It is a miracle that structures dating from over 2000 years ago still exist – enough for us to identify from the ruins of the mound-like structure that this is a Buddhist ancient site.



I couldn't help uttering to myself: how could this be possible? Archaeologically, it is still in a reasonable condition, partly because the Pakistan government, and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Archaeological department, have rescued it just in time, preventing it from being demolished by villagers – like in many other places.

If the Shingadara stupa can be preserved by archaeology experts to match its original period art form, it would be very beautiful and of great spiritual value to all Buddhist worldwide.

Before leaving Shingadara Stupa, we stopped to have our pictures taken with northern Pakistani children. They have a similar complexion to those in Central Asia or Europe – possibly the descendants of the Greeks who ruled this region during the time of Alexander the Great. He left some of his army and commanders to look after this area during his absence. On his return, Alexander passed away in the Bamiyan Valley, now in Afghanistan.

En route we paid homage to the *Ghaligai Buddha*, a carved gigantic Buddha in a sitting meditation pose, at the foot of a cliff. As in many places, the sculpture was defaced, with the head damaged, but Buddhist Gandharan art can still be observed from the details of the pleats on his robe.

Ghaligai Buddha





Before 2 pm, we arrived at Miangul Adnan Aurangzeb's residence, a traditional Swat governor's palace. His wife, brothers, and relatives came to greet us. They had rooms prepared for us. The two brothers stayed with us, to take care of us. Miangul's wife and daughter stayed in another building – almost like an inner palace and completely separated. This reflects the way of life and Muslim traditions that are very strict: men and women are kept apart. If there are no male relatives around, it would be inappropriate for women to welcome a stranger into their home, let alone stay. This is very similar to the Buddhist Vinaya (discipline for the Sangha). There are guidelines regarding the places where monks can or cannot stay. Jambudvipa's culture, ethics, and moral values, regardless of faith or schools of belief, have long been observed. And even though some may have faced a decline, especially in the cities, Muslim cultures remain intact, which is worthy of praise.

That evening, there was a Dhamma discussion and a short religious activity – to celebrate the Bell of Peace in the courtyard, in front of our residence. We exchanged our greetings and thanks. During the Dhamma discussion, there was a minor distraction. It was the religious activity time for Swat's locals, who are nearly all Muslim. Buddhism may have flourished here, with maha-viharas, Sangharamas, and communities, but it has been absent from Jambudvipa for over a thousand years (just after 1700 BE).





Due to a miscommunication, our MC did not make a prior request for the locals to delay the start of their prayers for a few minutes. Happily, the Dhamma talk and the ceremony were almost finished. Peace, calm, and mindfulness session resumed, allowing the event to continue with no more than a minor disruption. It should be noted that one needs to understand social conventions and cultures. If we were to live in harmony with each other, we need to learn to understand each other - so as not to create conflict in a multicultural society. Diversity can bring beauty and balance to a community when there is understanding, in accordance with the dhamma.

As visitors, we were able to continue with our religious activities without causing our hosts any uneasy feelings, despite our faith differences.





*Aurangzeb family
offering morning alms*

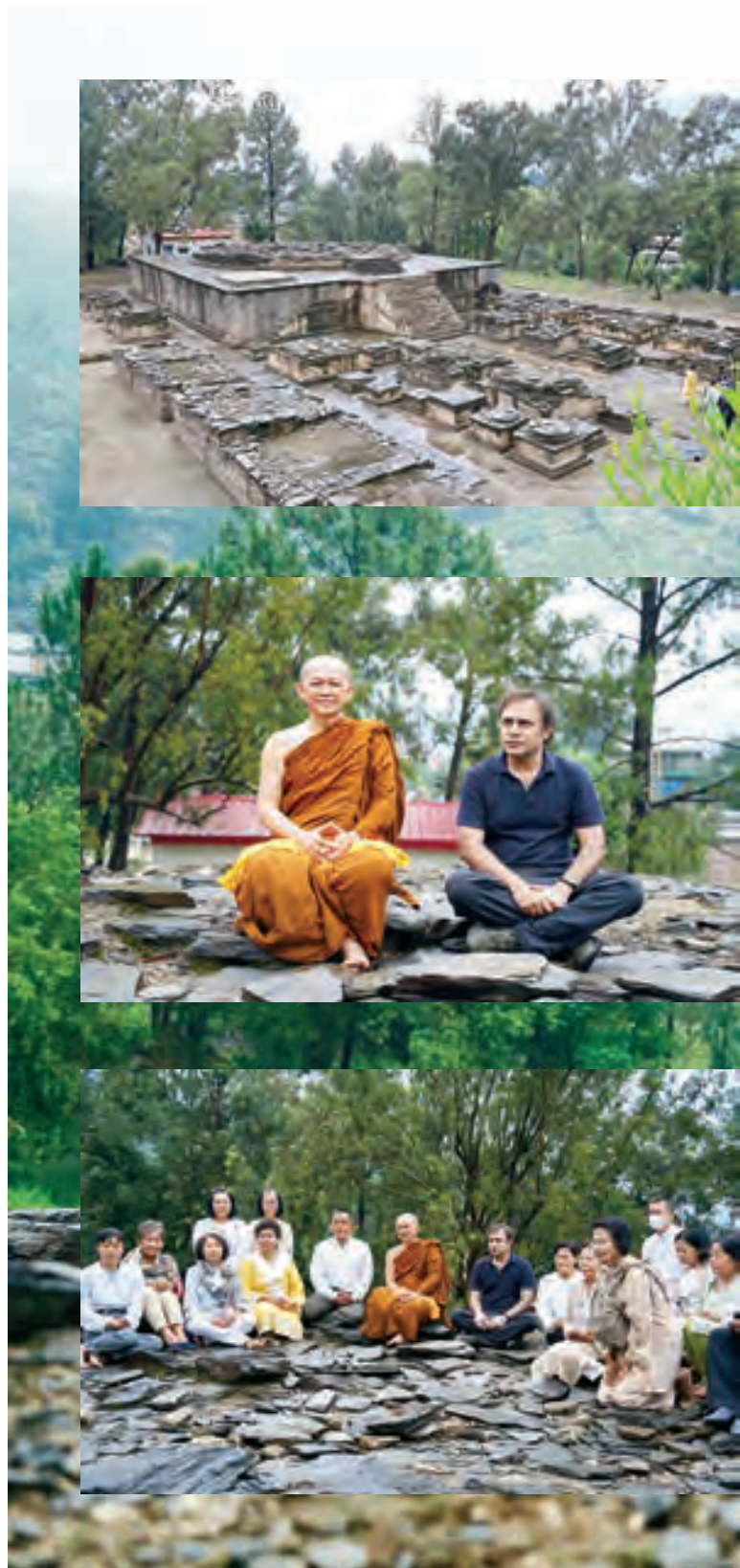
All people are equal. If we can create a society that differs in faith, and views, lives with love and respect for each other, and honours and appreciates each other, the world will have found peace and happiness.

I have received alms food from Nepalese Muslims, Hindus, and Muslims in Pakistan. We need to have respect for one another. ***My three-month rains retreat in Pakistan will show the world that this is now a peaceful country, in its Islamic way.*** Images of terrorism are fading away. Pakistan awaits to welcome tourists. Buddhists from 32 countries worldwide can take their pilgrimage to the Buddhist World Heritage Sites which hold great spiritual value.



The first night in the Swat Valley was a blissfully happy one. The atmosphere was very conducive to the practice of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, taught by Buddha.

Light showers came on and off, freshening the earth, forest, mountains, and villages. This was not a surprise. It rained in the middle of the night and continued for almost half a day the following morning when we visited Swat Museum and Buddhist World Heritage sites in Swat. The *Saidu Sharif Stupa* and *Butkara Monastery* are well worth a field trip to pay homage. Ashoka's Sanchi shape stupa sat, surrounded by big and small pagodas from different periods. Kanishka of the Kushan dynasty renovated the stupa and placed the Buddha's relics in it, as a place of reverence and to bring auspiciousness to his kingdom in the Swat Valley. This suggests that Buddhist civilization spread here 200 years after the passing away of Lord Buddha. Buddhism continued to flourish to its zenith circa 6th-7th Buddhist Centuries (600-700 BE) after the Buddha's nirvana. At the time, Kanishka ruled all the Northern Buddhist regions, including Gandhara and surrounding areas. Afterwards, he extended the land right across Jambudvipa, very similar to the reign of Ashoka.



Saidu Sharif Stupa

Saidu Sharif Stupa is a sacred area of Buddhist located near the city of Saidu Sharif, at the foot of the mountains that separate the river valley Saidu from that of the river Jambil, in the Swat District of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The sacred area consists of two terraces built on the slope of the hill, through a cut in the rock on the north side. Artificial terracing includes one stūpa, surrounded by smaller monuments, and a monastery.



Butkara stupa



Evidence suggested that between the 9th-10th Buddhist Centuries, there were no less than 500 large monasteries in the Swat Valley. Chinese monk, Faxian (Fâ-Hien), wrote "A Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms," detailing 15 years of his journey in Jambudvîpa, from 942 to 957 BE. When he reached northern India, he said that...

He and the group arrived at the Indus River. After crossing the river, they continued to Wu Chang (North India). People who lived there used the same language as those in Majjimapradesh (Magadha/ Pali language)

The area of *Wu Chang* that he mentioned was the Udhayana Kingdom, north of Punjab. It stretched along the *Subhavastu* or *Swat River*, famous for its abundance of flowers and fruits. Faxian arrived in the north of Jambudvîpa circa 900-1000 BE and witnessed the flourishing of Buddhist Dhamma and Vinaya. There were many monasteries (about 500 of them) and monk's lodgings. This corresponds with another piece of evidence from Tang Sanzang, a Chinese monk, who journeyed to the Swat Valley in the 12th Buddhist Century. He mentioned that there were more than 1,400 temples and monasteries, many of which were left deserted.

Faxian mentioned a story, told through generations, that when the Buddha travelled to *North India*, he came to a city in the Swat Valley and imprinted his **left footprint** somewhere there. For those who had seen it, some said it was a long footprint; some said short - depending on how they chose to perceive it. The footprint was observed in the 9th to 10th Buddhist Centuries, and it still exists. There is also a rock, said to be where the Buddha hung up his robe and the place where he subdued the bully Naga named *Apalâla* who ruled Subhavastu River (Swat River) and taught him to live according to the Dhamma.

The rock is 40 cubits in height and 20 cubits in width. One side of the rock was smooth.

Faxian's record in 942-957 BE indicated that Buddhism was thriving. It is not surprising that Gandharan Buddhist civilizations were everywhere in the Swat Valley. Formerly known as Udhayana, meaning garden, Swat is now in the northwest of Pakistan, northeast, and west of the Himalayas, Karakoram, Hindu Kush, and Pamir. It was one of the Mahayana Buddhist sacred cities in the past. Before the spread of global terrorism, Buddhist pilgrims from China and Tibet used to come here. There were many temples, monasteries, stupas, viharas, and carved Buddha statues. In 1183 BE, Tang Sanzang noted that there were more than 1,400 monasteries. Their ruins can be seen at the World Buddhist Heritage Site in the Swat Valley. Another important archaeological site is:

Butkara – a large religious place, comprising:

- 1) **The residential area** on the west side shows proper town planning and a good water drainage system
- 2) **The sacred site** on the east side of the residential area. The floor was made of black schist stone. The main stupa is surrounded by small ones, viharas, and pillars

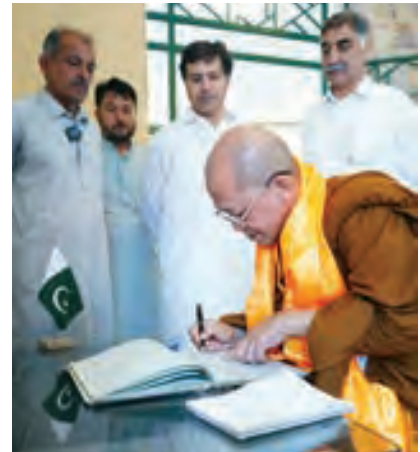
The excavation done by an Italian archaeologist between 1956-1958 AD found several strata built on top of the old ones. There are sculptures and carvings on more than 7,000 pieces of schist stones, portraying the story of the Buddha, most of which are now in the Swat Museum



The Butkara Stupa is an important Buddhist stupa near Mingora, in the area of Swat, Pakistan. It may have been built by the Mauryan emperor Ashoka, but it is generally dated slightly later to the 2nd century BCE.



Swat Museum





On the evening of 24th July 2022, after the field trip and paying homage to the Butkara Stupa, I am writing a document in the Swat Museum. We received special permission to stay here where many invaluable Buddhist artefacts are kept.

I did an evening chanting next to the *Buddha's Footprint* embedded on a beautiful ancient rock. The chakra in the middle of the sole fits the description of the Buddha's footprint – very much worthy of a visit and to pay homage. It was a blessed night, to be in touch with the auspicious dhamma from the ancient footprint in the Swat Museum.

Blessing with metta.





Saidu Sharif | Swat

Saidu Sharif is sacred ground for Buddhists, located at the foot of the mountains separating the river valleys of Saidu from that of River Jambil. Situated in the Swat District of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Saidu Sharif is only 3km away from Mingora City.

The Italian Archaeological Mission started excavating this site in 1963-68 and again from 1977-1982. The first excavation campaign investigated the lower terrace with the main stupa. The second campaign brought to light the upper terrace with the monastery. The upper terrace is just 3m higher from the lower terrace.

The lower terrace is called the "Terrace of the Stupas", It has the larger main stupa that is surrounded by smaller stupas, viharas and columns. Only the main structure of the central stupa is preserved. It has a square plan up to the first cylindrical body, with a stairway on the north side of the harmika and the umbrellas. Remains are well preserved near the stupa. One of the two cylindrical bodies of the monument was adorned with a frieze figured in green schist while four columns on a pedestal supported a lion figure crouched on top.

The main stupa is square in plan, 420m² (21x20m), with a staircase on the northern side. Several votive stupas and viharas have been placed in rows in the free area in front of monastery. Columns were placed at the either side of the stupa.

The monastery on the upper terrace is connected to the lower terrace through a flight of steps. It is rectangular in plan with a total area of 1152m² (36x32m) with two rows of ten cells each, paved with stone slabs.

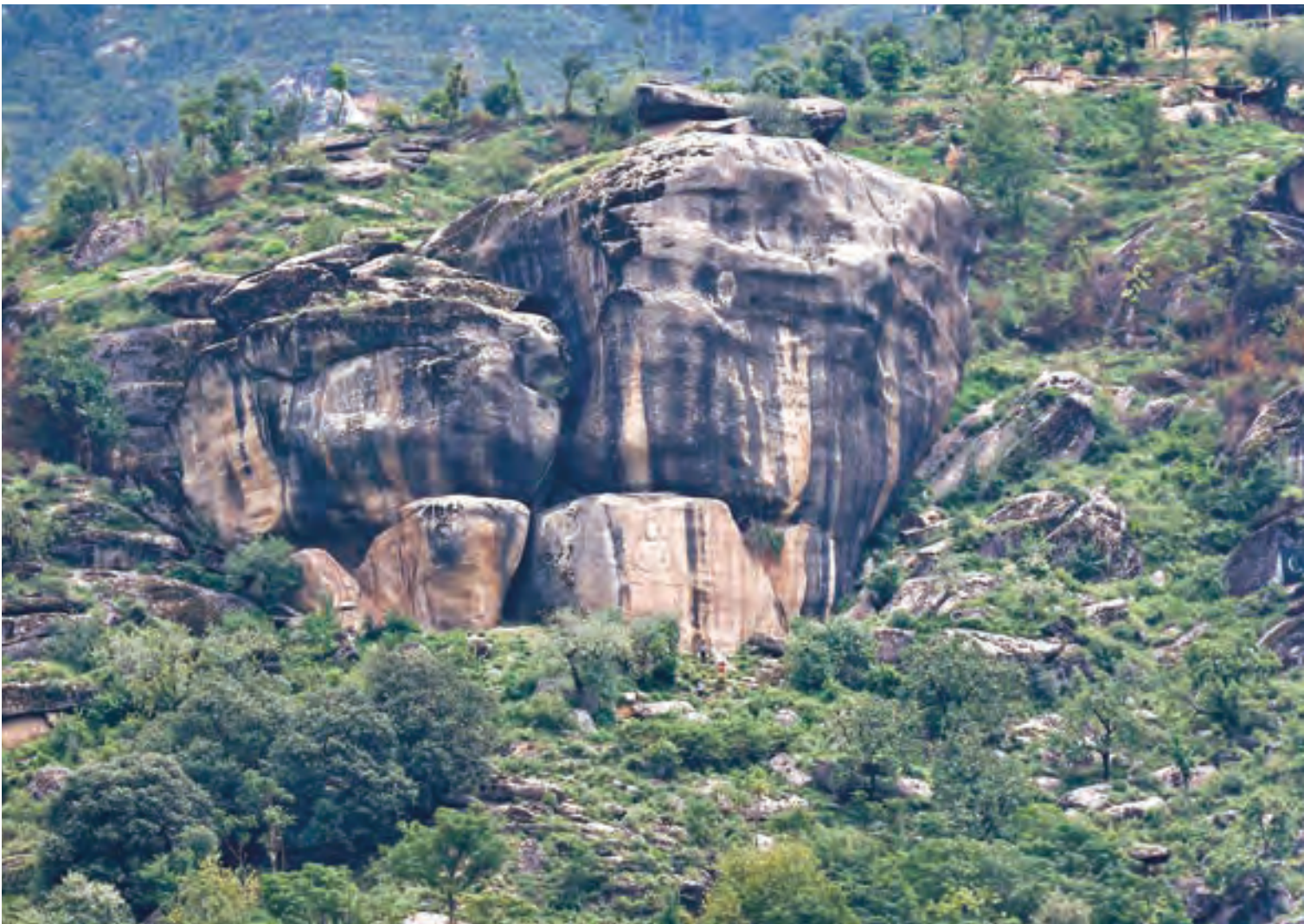
Archaeologists divide the life of the Saidu Sharif sanctuary into three periods. During the first period between 25 BCE and 100 CE, a symmetrical arrangement of the monuments was seen. This progressively crowded the stupa terrace in the second and was followed by an extension of the terrace itself in the third period. These periods respectively date to the 2nd, 3rd and 4th to 5th centuries CE. These three construction periods are also prominent on the upper terrace. The monastery first expanded and then contracted back to its original dimensions in the third period, a fact that testifies to the decline of the entire sacred area.

Swat museum houses a considerable quantity of stone sculptures discovered during the scientific excavations at Saidu Sharif. These include schist sculptures of Buddha, Bodhisattavas and Vajrapani (Holder of Thunderbolt). Many narrative panels depicting Jataka tales or pre-birth and birth stories of Buddha, coins, pottery and tools are also on display.



Chapter V

*A Field trip to pay homage
to the Buddhist heritage
in the Swat Valley (25th July 2022)*



*Jahanabad Buddha
Swat Valley*

Jahanabad

Buddha

Swat Valley

This was the third of the seventh satahaya¹ day away from the Taxila Museum² where I vowed to undertake my rains retreat. It was also the second night that we were allowed to stay in the Swat Museum – to pay respect to the Buddha’s footprints, embedded in the sandstone. The beautiful patterns and the chakra in the middle of each sole fit the description of the Buddha’s footprint. These footprints have lasted hundreds of years. Hence the cracks on both sides but nonetheless complete when put together.

Chinese monk, Faxian, noted in “*A Record of Buddhist Kingdoms*” that the left footprint was found imprinted in the Swat Valley in the territory of Wu-Chang, meaning **Udyāna** or **garden**, located in the north of **Punjab**, stretching alongside **Suvastu River** or Swat River in Swat Valley.

We can see how Buddhism prospered in parallel with Swat itself, together with **Peshawar Valley** and **Taxila Valley**, all under the administration of **Gandhara** at the time.



bank of Sair Khwar (Sair River)

¹Dispensation - errands allowing monks to leave the temple for 7 days during rains retreat

²Taxila, ancient Gandhara, Punjab, Pakistan



25th July 2022, we went to pay homage to the Buddha, carved on the sandstone cliff, in Jahanabad Village. Hence the name ***Jahanabad Buddha!*** The car journey took less than an hour, from the residence of Miangul Aurangzeb. We walked up the mountain along a narrow ancient path. The locals were collecting peaches and packing them in boxes to sell in the market. **Each box cost 90 baht or 500 Pakistan rupees.**

We also saw a square-shaped pond, two meters in width and three-four metres in length. The mountain running stream flows into this ancient manmade pond, built to collect clean water. Several herbal remedy properties are detected in the water, making it popular for the locals to and fetch it for drinking. It was thought that when the monks came to live and practice their Dhamma in the vihara on the mountain, they bathed in and drink from this pond. That's how they found out that the water was naturally infused with herbal remedies.

There is also a carved Buddha on a sand rock cliff, decorated with rocks, big and small, looking neat and secure.

The walk up the high mountain, to pay homage to the Buddha, was not difficult; it took about 20-30 minutes. There were some stony steps to support the feet of those who went to do religious practices in the mountain monastery. The remarkable sculpted Buddha on the sand rock cliff is of perfect proportion, and measurement – with a perfect view from all angles and *perspectives* we are looking from, suggesting the skilful knowledge in drawing and carving. The Buddha is still in good condition though some parts, especially the face was disfigured by the **Taliban**, now fully restored by the ***Archaeology and Museums of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.***





Jahanabad Buddha was estimated to be built in the *7th century AD*, corresponding to the 2nd-3rd Buddhist Centuries. He is six metres in height. The location of the Buddha is just right, at the right height of the mountain. When we got to the mountaintop, we felt even better. Not only that we were able to recollect the virtue of the Buddha, but we could see the panoramic view, beauty of nature, and the communities on both sides of the Swat River. The area is abundant in a variety of crops, suggesting a rich and fertile agricultural landscape.

The building of monasteries, *Buddhist* places, and stupas on the mountain has always been very popular. It requires a lot of effort, mindfulness and wisdom. Thus, it seemed like a customary practice to develop a high level of parami, and this was the case during the time of King Kanishka of the Kushan kingdom.

I led the monks and lay disciples to pay respect to the Buddha of Jahanabad. We did the chanting. I gave a Dhamma talk. We all practised meditation and chanted the important suttas, suitable for mind development practice and appropriate for the location, such as the *Anattalakkhana*, *Satipatthana* (a short version), *Ānāpānasati* (a full version).



I led them in sending loving-kindness and we finished off with chanting to pay respect to the virtues of the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha. This was witnessed by the staff of Swat Museum and the security police who continued to look after us while visiting this land of Gandharan civilization.

The Swat Valley remains very conducive to the Dhamma practice. My field trip to the Buddhist Heritage site there was a blissfully happy one. I was writing about my Dhamma path journey during the rains retreat in Taxila, Gandhara, from the Swat Museum. It was my first visit to the Buddhist Heritage sites in the Swat Valley and I'm sure it will not be the last. I firmly believe in wholesome actions: what I truly have learnt, and the Dhamma practised I have done on this land. May the power of the Dhamma encompass all beings in every dimension and may they be truly happy and at peace.



Blessing and Metta

Jahanabad Buddha | Swat

A massive, seated Buddha is carved into a high rock face of the reddish boulder rising on the hillside to the southwest of Jahanabad aka Shakhorai village, situated 5km northeast of the Manglawar town. This huge image of the Buddha is also visible from the road, on the right-hand side when going to Malam Jabba in Swat.

Sir Aurel Stein arrived in Jahanabad in 1926. There were no roads. He had to ride his horse through the Swat River to see a huge Buddha carved on a cliff, dominating the path approaching the valley.

The seated Buddha is certainly the most impressive piece of sculpture to be seen in all of the Gandhara region. The 7m-high figure of the Buddha is seated on a high throne in a pose of mediation, which is rendered excellently. The snail shell curls of Lord Buddha have been carefully rendered above his head. The eyes are open only to tiny slits and there is a prominent topknot (ushnisha) with long ear lobes. The folds of the robe are stringy, with a planned alteration of high and low ridges. Although the figure exhibits Gandhara style drapery with pleats and hair, it goes for a rather solemn, powerful form of the torso. The representation of the folds of the robe is in agreement with the usual form adopted in the area for other Buddha figures.

Padmasambhava - founder of tantric yoga and a seminal figure in Tibetan Buddhism - is said to have been born in the valley shortly after the construction of this statue. Some scholars point out a strong Western influence but such similarities, if any, are not very obvious. That is why the Buddha image carved on the rock at Jehanabad is dated to the 7th or the 8th century CE which corresponds to the Tang Dynasty of Central Asia. Many other rock-carvings of similar workmanship in Swat are dated to later centuries.

Jahanabad Buddha is the second biggest statue of Buddha after that of Bamiyan in Afghanistan. The later Buddhist art developed into an important hub for education, where local Buddhist devotees applied their stone - cutting and carving skills to make the anthropomorphic representations of the Buddha. This connection to Bamiyan would prove to be regrettably apt in other more unfortunate ways.

Swat witnessed years of militant uprisings, peaking between 2007 and 2009 when nearly 2 million people were displaced from the district. It was around that time that militants destroyed the Jahanabad Buddha in broad daylight in 2007, drilling explosives into its face and shoulders. In 2012, the Italian Archeological Mission in Pakistan undertook the project of restoration. Thanks to its high position above the narrow stone terrace, it is now well preserved. It is also protected under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Antiquities Act, 2016.

*Reference: Land of Gandhara : A photographic Journey.
Directorate of Archaeology and Museums : Lahore, 2021, pp 334*





Chapter VI

*Field trip to the Swat Valley's
heritage sites (north of Pakistan)
to pay homage to the Triple Gem*



*Amluk-Dara Stupa
Swat Valley*

Field trip to Swat Valley's

heritage sites
4th day (26th July 2022)

There's a saying about the Buddhist World Heritage sites in Gandhara, or the Northern school of Buddhism (dating from the 4th to the 6th Buddhist centuries onwards) that needs further pondering:

“It will be incomplete to talk about world-renowned *Gandharan Buddhist art* without mentioning *Buddhist civilization in the valleys of Swat*, Taxila and Peshawar.

Swat encompasses an area of over five thousand square kilometres – from the mountain range down to the rivers and tributaries that flow into the Suvastu River (later known as Swat River). It is rich with Gandharan Buddhist heritage sites, be they: stupas, monasteries or sangharas and viharas (temples).”

People in the Swat Valley have, for a long time, been familiar with Buddhism though they are not Buddhists. They are happy to see Buddhist tourists on their field trips to pay respect to these sacred sites – the treasures of Pakistan.

We experienced no intrusions from the locals or the children! Elsewhere, pilgrims are often swarmed, often by beggars, contributing to unruly behaviour that has deterred some people from returning.



There is something charming about a local community and its lovely people that comprise different ethnicities. Pakistan has a population of two hundred million, with ethnic groups such as Punjabis, Pathans, Sindhis, Baluchi, Muhajirs (Muslims who migrated from India) and others. 97% of Pakistanis are Muslim (77% Sunnis, 21% Shia), and the rest 3% are Christian and Hindu. Urdu is their national language.

I took a dispensation (between 23rd-29th July 2022) from the rains retreat location in Taxila Museum (Punjab) to perform a religious ceremony and *install the Bell of Peace at the Swat Museum*. *Miangul Adnan Aurangzeb* invited me to do this in 2019, but I had to postpone my trip to Pakistan due to Covid 19.

The inauguration of the Bell of Peace took place on 28th July 2022 at 8 am. It was also *Thai King Vajiraklaochaoyuhua's birthday*, making this *a very auspicious day indeed*.

Apart from the inauguration of the Bell of Peace at such time and date, another important mission was a field trip to some of Swat Valley's Buddhist civilization locations, listed by UNESCO as World Heritage sites. Hence our visit to the *Amluk-Dara* on 26th July 2022.

A Swat Museum curator explained that *'amluk' is a kind of fruit, a persimmon*. People in this valley grow a lot of them. Everywhere you look, you will see amluk trees and orchards.





Amluk Dara

Swat Valley

Amluk-Dara valley is abundant with trees, vegetation and running streams all year round. The word ‘*amluk*’ sound similar to ‘*amla*’ (*Indian gooseberry*). In Jambudvipa, the Hindu pronunciation would be A-M-LA. Amla is one of the *silane (medicine)* fruits that Buddha allows monks to eat at any time of day due to its medicinal properties. Indian gooseberry and myrobalan plum are two such permitted fruits. There was no mention of the fruit called Amluk in Jambudvipa. If we were to associate it with the peach that was abundant in Persia and the favourite fruit of King Alexander¹ that he took it back to grow in Greece, that will not be right either. It is possible that the area where the monastery, now known as Amluk-Dara, might have grown a lot of Indian gooseberries in the past.

The word ‘dara’ means star. It might also come from ‘tara,’ meaning stream - the stream that flows into this valley. This seems to fit in with the location of the monastery. (Note: when I searched for the words Amluk/Amlok/Amlook, it says Persian fruit. That will be a peach, not a persimmon, and ‘dara’ or ‘darra’ is a Persian word, meaning stream.

I have noticed the language used in different areas of Pakistan: how some words were adopted and become part of the local dialect over time. Their meanings, however, still resemble those of the original in Pali and Sanskrit – another way to understand how civilization developed. Chinese monk, Faxian, noted that though *Gandhara* was in the *north of Jambudvipa*, Gandharan people used the same language (*Maghada/Pali language*) as those in *Majjhima Janapada*.

¹King Alexander liked the peach so much that he took it back and had it planted in Greece.



During the reign of King Kanishka, the Northern School of Buddhism² changed the original Buddhist language from Pali to Sanskrit, which was the language of Brahminism. Some traces of the Pali language, however, can still be found.

It should also be noted that the meaning of *Taxila* has also changed over the years, diverging from the original meaning completely. This is something that one can contemplate on. *What's so important about the name?*

Swat in *Swat Valley* is another example. Its original name was *Udyana* meaning 'garden or park,' implying a fertile land with vegetation of various kinds and a river running through it all year round. This river was formerly called *Subhavastu* or *Suvastu*. It is now the *Swat River*. If we understand Pali or Sanskrit, the word 'subha' means beautiful or peaceful. This may correspond with 'swasati' in Sanskrit. Thai people change it to 'sawasdee.' In Pali, it corresponds with 'sothi' or 'suwatthi.' All in all, 'subhavastu' means 'that which has good or auspicious qualities.' (This is to establish a mutual understanding of how important names are - another aspect of civilization...)



²Later known as Mahayana Buddhism





Another interesting name on this field trip is *Butkara*. Located in *Saidu Sharif city* of Swat valley, Butkara Sangharama or Butkara Monastery has a large stupa in the centre of the monastery. The name must have come from the word '*Buddha-kara*' which corresponds to a Pali village name. Hindus now call a Buddhist community or a Buddhist village '*Buddhakarae*' (pronounced bud-dha-ka-rae).



The above is meant to add a bit of fun to the study of civilization. There is no attempt to try to alter the names of Buddhist ancient sites whatsoever. It is simply an observation that words and their meanings tend to change over time, making it difficult to investigate the histories of the ancient places, religions, and humanity of each period. Therefore, it is very important to preserve the names and their meanings rather than allowing them to change with social trends. We should refer to their ancient names - where possible. Those who are researching or are responsible for conservation work on the ancient sites should take note before choosing or establishing a name. Let's preserve those original names so our future generations can learn from them.



The large Amluk-Dara stupa is restored and very well looked after by KP Museum. Its spiritual value is worthy of visits. Buddhist pilgrims can pay respect and show appreciation to their Buddhist ancestors who dedicated their energy to the building of the stupa, for educational benefits and the prolonging of Buddhism.





Lady Supatra Masdit who accompanied us on the trip wrote:

This morning (26th July 2022) MV Arayawangso took the monks, a novice, and a group of Thai people to pay homage to the *Amluk-Dara Stupa* in the Swat Valley. It was the birthplace of Vajrayana Buddhism, built in the 3rd century AD (Circa 3rd Buddhist Century or 201-300 BE). During the Gandharan period, Buddhism flourished in the north of Jambudvipa. However, due to social and political changes, and governance that was linked to religion, Buddhism finally disappeared from Jambudvipa from the 17 Buddhist Century onwards.

The northern kingdoms, be they: Kamboja, Gandhara, Panchala, and Kuru were divided into different countries and afterwards became republics – such as India, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The areas in the valleys of Swat, Peshawar and Taxila have become the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. More than 90% of the population are Muslims. Only remnants of Buddhist glory remain in the form of ancient sites, listed as Buddhist World Heritage – a spiritual value that the world, and especially Buddhist countries, should be proud of.





*Sir Aurel Stein, a Hungarian-British archaeologist, surveyed the area in 1962. Restoration of the ancient Buddhist sites, especially the one at **Amluk-Dara**, followed under the responsibility of the Peshawar Archaeological Museum in KP. Its completion is expected in six months, starting in July 2022. Rocks were specially selected and delivered straight from the **Swat Valley** for the restoration process.*

***Amluk-Dara Stupa** is surrounded by Mount Elum (Illum). The scenery is very similar to the northernmost part of Thailand, with clouds hanging at the top of the mountain all year round. In winter, the clouds turn into snow and descend to the valley, looking very beautiful.*

MV Arayawangso said that the Amluk-Dara is surrounded by smaller stupas. There is a vihara for religious practice and residences for monks to stay, practice and learn the Dhamma. It is possible to assume that Amluk-Dara could have been a large monastery with a large Order of Sangha – just like other monasteries located in the forest or mountain areas. According to the Chinese monk's record, the caves in the mountain around the Amluk-Dara might have been used as the monks' residences at the time.

We arrived almost at midday. The sun was shining brightly over the valley of the Amluk Dara Stupa, revealing a former large stream, which is now just a trace stretching down into the valley. We can see the beauty of nature and fertile land, suitable for agriculture and growing crops, especially fruits. The locals grow persimmons in abundance, and these have now become an economic plant for the KP region.

Miraculously when MV Arayawangso and the group began their religious practice by chanting and meditating, the bright midday sky suddenly changed. The cool mist started to descend the mountain, almost as if winter was coming. With a sporadic cool breeze, the whole place became very sappāya (perfect, agreeable, conducive); we felt the urge to get on with our meditation practice.









Barikot - Swat Valley, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Barikot

Swat Valley

After the religious practice, MV Arayawangso discussed with the archaeology team from Peshawar Museum. Dr. Abdul Samad, Director, Archaeology and Museum, gave us a personal welcome, followed by a live media interview and group photography. On the way back, MV Arayawangso requested to visit *an ancient site of Bazira*, now known as ***Barikot***. Alexander the Great and his army used to stay here, as recorded in the archaeological archive as follows:

“This archaeological site dated back to the Bronze Age, 1600 BC. King Alexander and his army settled in Bazira in 327 BC. Afterwards, it fell into the hands of the Greeks in 120BC, then the ***Kushan dynasty***, followed by Muslim settlement.”

That day, MV Arayawangso and the group arrived in ***Barikot*** just after 1 pm. The weather was hot but bearable for our field trip. The excavations there were carried out by Italian archaeologists and unearthed artefacts are now kept in the ***Swat Museum***.

The interesting thing about this heritage site is the identification of strata of earth dated back over many years – to find referential evidence of each period.



When this was done correctly, according to the archaeological method, it will unfold fascinating traces of the history of mankind. We can see the flourishing of Buddhism during the *Maurya dynasty* (King Ashoka the Great, 2nd -3rd Buddhist Centuries) and the *Kushan dynasty* (King Kanishka, 6th-7th Buddhist Centuries). As the Italian archaeologist noted:

“Buddhism first arrived here in 200 BC during the time of *King Ashoka*, and the second time during the reign of *King Kanishka* of Kushan dynasty in 100 AD. Both periods were the *golden age of Buddhism*. We can see a layer of construction from one period built on top of the previous ones. The *Barikot* excavation by the Italian archaeologists shows distinctive changes in architectural style in each period. It also suggests how this area has been intensely used successively for thousands of years.”

The lower ground of the excavation reveals a large town planning and basic public utility, to accommodate many people. After having a look at the lower ground level, MV Arayawangso and the archaeological team moved to the upper level where the land, once occupied by local people, has been expropriated by the Pakistan Government. An archaeological investigation found the remains of Buddhist stupas and viharas in the lower ground after digging down 3-4 metres – in accordance with the archaeological rule. The estimated age of the remains was over 2000 years. If that is the case, Barikot Buddhist heritage must have been *one of the oldest Buddhist maha-vihara, among those discovered in the Swat Valley*. Italian and Pakistan archaeology teams concluded from the evidence that *the Barikot maha-vihara must have been built 200 - 300 years after the present Buddha passed away (200 – 300 BE) or around mid-2nd century AD.*”





After looking around Barikot, we had a group photo taken as evidence of our visit – to *learn how Buddhism fared following the Buddha’s passing and finally disappearing from Jambudvipa*. We have learnt from archaeological and historical heritage aspects, allowing us to piece together all the evidence, revealing *how the ‘Buddhist vessel’ was able to withstand the elements of wind and storm to the present*. Buddhist devotees, therefore, will be able to understand and appreciate the value of Buddhism. Keep this firmly in our mind. How can we pay back our debt of gratitude to Buddhism? ... And to our ancestors who dedicated their life to Buddhism and risked their lives to prolong it? They have passed these treasures to us. We would never have known about any of these if Buddhism hadn’t appeared on earth in the first place. Traces of civilization reveal the Ariya (noble) truth. The Islamic Republic of Pakistan have preserved the sites so well - so that they will continue to be World Heritage locations!

Blessing with metta



A field trip for Dhamma investigation

The path to the ruins tells over a thousand years of history – showing the spirits of people in the past: their ideas, the things they built, what they wanted to tell and pass on to later generations. This conceptual heritage reveals their driving force, comprising of faith and confidence in the Truth, expressed with effort, mindfulness and wisdom through the various ages. It is very rare indeed for ordinary people to accomplish what they did.

With each step towards our destination, we saw and learned about their history - left among the rubble. No need to complain, nor submit to exhaustion or boredom – like a person who lacks spiritual and humanitarian values. Humankind is meant to pass on the heritage – the treasures of our ancestors.

When tired, discouraged and bored to carry on, think of our forefathers who took those steps to build invaluable places of spiritual values. They were a hundred or a thousand times more tired than we are, carrying the rocks and sand. They used knowledge, physical and mental labour to build their heritage on earth, allowing us to appreciate the value of the Truth. We can thus learn, investigate and practice - to fathom such Truth that will bring indefinite benefits to other sentient beings.

We must not give up, but to continue to strive, regardless of how difficult or how uncomfortable the paths may be.

For they are not as hard as those which our ancestors experienced. We don't have to walk with the burden of rocks, sand, and baggage on our backs - to create spiritual heritage and spread the Truth.

Their ethics, virtues and the Dhamma heritage suggest that they found precious spiritual treasures. They had complete faith and confidence in the Dhamma. We can see the indefinite power of the triple gem that inspired them. They sacrificed their lives, amongst the rubble and the piles of sand. Therefore, we need to bow and pay our respects to them.

First bow, we pay respect to the Buddha

Second bow, we pay respect to the Dhamma

Third bow, we pay respect to the Sangha

Forth bow - to honour our parents and teachers more than our lives

Fifth bow – to show appreciation to our ancestors and their efforts to pass on Buddhism, ethics and virtue through the ages

All the five bows are to pay homage to the Dhamma

No fear of danger, with an unwavering mind

To nirvana.

MV Arayawangso
Swat, Gandhara 26th July 2565 BE



*Whatever we give our mind to
Stays with us
To thoughts good or bad
Wholesome or unwholesome
Happy or sad
All depends on our mind
And what we give it to.*

*MV Arayawangso
6th September 2565 BE*







Barikot | Swat

Barikot in Swat is a landmark of unique archeological importance, the ancient Bazira of Alexander the Great. Visible archaeological ruins are extant examples of different eras through the region's ancient history. Fortifications from the Achaemenian, the Indo Greek, the Kushans, the Sasanians, the Hindu Shahi, the Turk-i-Shahi and the Ghaznavid are scattered all around here.

The Hungarian-British archeologist Sir Aurel Stein was the first to visit this site in 1926. Following his visit, it was hastily excavated by Burger and Wright.

A unique Turk-i-Shahi era temple built in the 7th century was discovered on the top of Ghwandai mount at Bazira in Barikot Swat. The Italian Archaeological Mission in Pakistan discovered this temple in collaboration with the Directorate of Archaeology, Khyber Pashtunkwa. It was built around 700 CE. At that time Uddiyana (Swat) was ruled by a king known as From Kesar, son of Tegin Shah Khurasan, a well-known Turk-i-Shahi king from Kabul.

The temple was re-established and maintained till the Hindu Shahi time around the first half of the 11th century. The temple is also mentioned in a Hindu Shahi inscription found in Barikot in the late 19th century and conserved in the Lahore Museum.

The ancient Bazira is also known as the city of Alexander the Great. The discovery was made during the recent excavations in Barikot-Swat. It is believed that Alexander the Great came to Swat along with his army in 326 BCE and defeated his opponents in a battle at Odigram area. He then constructed a walled city named Bazeera and a fort. Traces of a small urban settlement and a citadel were found at Barikot, which had been inhabited from the 4th century till the Ghaznavid time. Scattered evidence of the Ghaznavid period has also been found, along with that of a medieval Dardic village that sat on this site from the 12th to 15th century CE. These were ultimately occupied by the Yousafzai tribe that now populate the Swat, Swabi and Mardan districts.

Chapter VII

*The Inauguration of the 3rd Bell of Peace in the Swat Valley
On His Majesty's Birthday Anniversary, 28th July 2022*





*Most Venerable Arayawangso
with Miangul Adnan Aurangzeb at Takht-i-Bahi*

As mentioned earlier, Miangul Aurangzeb invited me to install the Bell of Peace for the auspiciousness of Swat in 2019. This took me to the Swat Valley, one of the Buddhist World Heritage sites in Pakistan.

When I came to spend a vassa in taxila¹ in 2022, I intended to take sattahaya, in line with the Buddhist Vinaya, to install the *Bell of Peace*, built in 2019.

The original invitation was made by *Miangul Adnan Aurangzeb*, who passed away on 30th May 2022 in a car accident. We contacted his family, and they reconfirmed the invitation by sending a signed invitation by *Miangul Aurangzeb's wife*.

Hence the Bell of Peace Celebration on the land of ancient Buddhist civilization, to request for Dhamma power to bring peace on earth. 28th July 2022 was an auspicious day; it was also the birthday of the King of Thailand. The third Bell of Peace, awaited by the Swat people (*and the Aurangzeb family*) for the last 2-3 years was finally inaugurated. Miangul Adnan may have passed away, but the heart-to-heart bindings continue and need to be honoured – to fulfil his wish. Such Sacca-Dhamma² needs to be passed on to the subsequent generations in the *Swat Valley* so that Pakistani people will continue to nurture it in their spirit. *Peace is most important to mankind. Peace can only happen by the power of Dhamma³ which, in turn, comes from those who respect⁴, observe, and worship the Dhamma. They need to observe moral principles – the fundamental virtues shared by all faiths. There will be no conflict if all faiths are to create peace for people, who are all equal under the law of karma and the power of the Dhamma.*

¹Part of the ancient Gandhara, Punjab State, Pakistan

²Sacca-Dhamma means Truth about life. Here it refers to peace that comes from the true understanding of things as they are, according to nature. Peace has different meanings and different levels, depending on how one perceives it. We are not talking about peace in its ordinary or conventional sense but 'peace within'. Inner peace requires an understanding of the Truth of life, allowing loving kindness and compassion to arise in the mind. It is a result of an understanding of things as they are.

³Dhamma power is the power of the three characteristics: impermanent, stressful and not-self. It refers to that which is 'right' according to nature. An understanding of this leads to wisdom. When one has the right understanding, one does not live in conflict with the nature of things.

⁴One who respects the Dhamma is the one who respects the law of nature – that things arise, continue and cease. The arising and cessation of things show that they are impermanent, stressful and not-self.



Swat River

As already mentioned, the third inauguration of the Bell of Peace was the day the Thais celebrated their King's birthday on 28th July 2022. It was also the Uposatha Observance Day whereby every 15 days, four or more monks assemble in a monastery to recite the 227 Patimokkhas (rules). Three events in one day - that had never happened in the Swat Valley, the land of a Buddhist civilization for more than 2000 years.

On 27th July, I had permission to stay in the Swat Museum and continue for three nights. I had been there for two nights. I prayed for a successful ceremony on the morning of 28th July 2022, without any disruption, especially from the weather. At the time, ***there was some rainfall in the Swat valley because it was a rainy season. Suvastu (Swat) river's current was also strong.***

(Note: a month later, after finishing this manuscript, there was severe flooding in the Swat River Valley on 27th August 2022. Torrents of water ran down the mountain, bursting banks and flooding people's homes and lands in the valley, causing catastrophic damage and tragic loss of life).

Swat valley during that time is usually wet and very fertile for crops. Villagers laid down their fruits for sale on both sides of the roads we passed. Such a delightful sight! Faxian wrote that Swat Valley was famous for its bounty of flowers and fruits.





The gathering of the monks to renew their dedication to the Dhamma practice at Swat Museum

On the morning of 28th July 2022, we agreed to declare the open-air courtyard in the centre of the Swat Museum, where we can see both sky and earth in the one room, as an Uposatha area. A monk recited the training rules, and all the monks said their sadhu (approvals). It was the first time in a thousand years that there was a revival of such practice. The names of the four monks are as follows:

- | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. MV Arayawangso | Chairing of the Sangha meeting |
| 2. Ven. Nikhom Nitidhammo | Taking part |
| 3. Ven. Warintorn Apasaro | Reciting of the Patimokkha |
| 4. Ven. Piyatip Piyadhammo | Taking part |

And Samanera (novice) Phusana was looking after all the monks, taking photos to be distributed on social media and we can all anumodhana⁵.

The gathering of the monks to listen to the 227 Patimokkha rules went successfully amidst a bit of drizzle. It felt almost like the sprinkling of sacred water, cool and refreshing. The whole religious ceremony took an hour and finished just before 6.30 am. Then all the monks returned to their accommodation at Miangul Aurangzeb's residence, 15 minutes from the Swat Museum - to receive alms and sanghathana.

⁵Rejoice in such action

After the meal at the residence, we all gathered before the Bell of Peace at the Swat Museum. *It was joyous to see the Thai and Pakistani flags standing side by side. In front of the magnificent photo of King Vajiraklaochaoyuhua*, there were a set of small tables with flowers and incense sticks. Strings of yellow and white buntings were all around. A group of Thai people and Thai Embassy staff prepared all the decorations. *The Army Defence Attaché, Col. Adisak Showichen, on behalf of the Thai Ambassador*, led the group of Thai people to pledge their loyalty to the King.

After that, they played Thai and Pakistan national anthems, and people sang along to their anthems. They treated each other like their kins - such a beautiful and peaceful sight. Faith differences proved to be no barrier to the love, care, and well-wishes they held for each other.





MV Arayawangso read the speech from the Supreme Patriarch of Thailand, Somdet Phra Ariyavongsagatanana (Amborn Mahathera) to bless King Vajiraklaochaoyuhua on his birthday, in presence of the Pakistani people and the media who took part in the ceremony.

8.30 am - Time to ring the Bell of Peace that the Swat people had been waiting for. MV Arayawangso made an introduction speech to send out peace messages from Swat, Pakistan - to all dimensions. This was broadcast live around the world. It was a very auspicious event.

A chanting for peace has the following message:

May all beings be happy
May they be free from suffering
May they be free from enmity
May they be free from hurtfulness and ill will
May they be free from mental suffering
May they be happy in the body and mind,
and free from stress, ill health, and danger



Most venerable Arayawangso read out the speech



Most Venerable Arayawangso ring the Bell of Peace sending out peace messages from Swat, Pakistan - to all dimensions



It ended with the sound of the bell ringing loud and clear. I let **Imran Shauket** ring the Bell of Peace three more times. At the closing of the ceremony, we said thank you to all those involved in the organising of the event, and especially to the Aurangzeb family. This was followed by group photos. Big smiles and happiness all around. Everybody, including the Pakistan media, seemed joyful because this was an auspicious ceremony in Pakistan's homeland. It sent the signal to the world that Pakistan is ready to welcome visitors, especially Buddhist from 32 countries to the renowned Buddhist World Heritage sites in Gandhara which hold spiritual value for Buddhists as well as those around the world.

The Bell of Peace declared to the world that:

There is peace in the land of Gandhara civilization. Pakistan's Buddhist World Heritage sites are waiting to welcome everybody, from whichever country, as if they were their kin.



After the ceremony, all the monks returned to Taxila where they vowed to do their rains retreat and prepare for the next trip to Peshawar in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Peshawar is the capital and the biggest city in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It is the 5th biggest city in Pakistan, located in the Peshawar valley on the east of ancient Khyber Pass at the border of Afghanistan. Peshawar, formerly known as *Purushapura*⁶, encompasses the regions in the north of Jambudvipa. It later changed the name to *پشاور* and then *Peshawar*. Records by a Chinese monk, Faxian, mentioned that the journey with his fellow monks from south of Gandhara to Purushapura took 4 days. He also said that the Buddha came here with his disciples. The Blessed One said to Ven. Ananda that after he had passed away a king by the name of *Kanishka* would build a stupa there to pay reverence to the Buddha.

Blessing with metta



⁶of Kushan Empire, Gandhara



*Window of the mind is the eyes that can talk.
So many revelations are suppressed inside my heart,
Too profound, too difficult to convey.
So many times, things have been spoken,
Yet remain so hard to understand.*

MV Arayawangso
Peshawar, Kushan Empire
2 August 2565 BE

A Dhamma Peace Declaration The Swat Valley 28 July 2565 BE

MV Arayawangso

I offer the **highest homage** to the Supremely Enlightened One, the Dhamma and the Sangha. I pay my **greatest respect** to those who seek **Dhamma liberation**. I recollect all the ancestors of the *Kushan* Dynasty, *Gandhara* Region who devoted their lives to create peace and happiness for the people and all beings by the **propagation of Buddhist Teachings**. **And** I recall the memory of *Miangul Adnan Aurangzeb* who extended his friendship / invited me to visit the beautiful Swat Valley. Most importantly, he asked me to make a determination to put the **Bell of Peace** on this land of civilization, a Buddhist World Heritage.

The wish of *Miangul Adnan* to have **peace by Dhamma power** to be established in the Swat Valley, **has now become a reality**. Therefore with a mind filled with respect for Dhamma Truth, well-expounded by Lord Buddha, **I now make a determination that:**

“If mankind can use the common virtue in their minds to surmount the obstacles of nationality, race and belief those minds can indeed be blended to achieve unity.”

Traces of civilization in the Swat Valley clearly indicate humanity’s virtuous spirit that has prevailed for ages. The **revival of civilization** for peace and welfare can really happen when the moral spirit of mankind returns to this sacred land once again.

The “**Land of Dhamma Peace for all mankind**” should arise at **Swat Valley** with cooperation from everyone. They can proceed toward the **Supreme Lord of Peace, that is, Dhamma Power** which exists as **The Truth** (*sacca-dhamma*) to give an insightful wisdom leading mankind to peace and happiness.

Together, we can push forward the course of peace along the **noble pathway of Dhamma**. That goal can be possible when the **peace-loving people on this land (Pakistan)** and those around the world endorse the idea.

Their minds will be united, by the connection to the ancient civilization of the *Gandhara* region and **Peace with Dhamma** will be fully realized. This is why we should make a firm **determination to establish the Bell of Peace**.

Now all of us who wish for a peaceful existence make a **mindful determination** and send it through the **sound of the Peace Bell to everyone, everywhere** in the world that:

*May all beings be happy.
May all beings be free from enmity.
May all beings be free from ill-treatment.
May all beings be free from trouble.
May all beings look after themselves with ease.
May all beings be happy, free from suffering, disease and harm.*

The **auspicious time** has arrived to **ring the Bell of Peace** sending the sound from Swat Valley to the entire world.

With body, speech, and mind, firmly settled in **wholesome Dhamma**, I am ready to send the **signal of the Peace Bell** to every spiritual beings with the **Dhamma of loving-kindness**, the **sublime virtue of humanity** to **support** and **strengthen** the world toward peace and happiness **from this moment on**.

First ringing:	<i>sabbe satta avera hontu</i>
Second ringing:	<i>sabbe satta abyapajjha hontu</i>
Third ringing:	<i>sabbe satta anigha hontu</i>
Fourth ringing:	<i>sabbe satta sukhi attanam pariharantu</i>
Fifth ringing:	<i>sabbe satta sada hontu, avera sukha-jivino</i> <i>Katam punna-phalam mayham, sabbe bhagi bhavantu te.</i>

Blessing with Metta

English translation: Dr.Pawadee Tonguthai

Message of Condolence for Miangul Adnan Aurangzeb



I was informed at 22.34 hr. on 30 May 2565 BE of the unexpected death from traffic accident of Miangul Adnan Aurangzeb while resting after my evening Dhamma Discourse at Buddhapojhariphunchai Forest Monastery under Royal Patronage, Lamphun, in the North of Thailand. The message was conveyed to me by Mr. Imran Shauket via Dr. Nitinant Wisawesuan of Thailand's Thammasat University and I was truly shocked by the sudden nature of his death.

A few days ago, I have just been thinking of Miangul Adnan as I was about to send the "Bell of Peace" to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan with the courtesy of the Royal Thai Embassy, to be established at Swat. This is in accordance with Miangul Adnan's request during my previous visit to Pakistan's Buddhist Heritage Sites in Taxila and Peshawar where the ceremonies to establish the Peace Bell were graciously conducted. It was meant to be the symbol of sending the sound of peace to the world from Pakistan, a significant land of civilization for the global community, particularly followers of Buddhism.

In preparation for my Rains Retreat 2565 BE in Pakistan, I have made travel plans to continue my mission as discussed with several key figures particularly Miangul Adnan who kindly welcomed me and my mission team. It is my intention that the beautiful Pakistani blanket he presented to me at Takht-i-Bahi will be put to good use during my three months' Rains Retreat.

I am therefore deeply saddened by his untimely passing away, even though birth, ageing, sickness, and death are natural occurrences that are difficult for all beings to avoid. The sudden nature of his passing compelled me to adjust my feelings to understand that for world beings – whether it is we, they, or anyone at all – it is normal that in the end everything must be left behind, including the bodies. This demonstrates the natural truth that there is nothing we can take as our possession, even the body and life that we once presumed to be our own.



*Miangul Adnan Aurangzeb receive bell of peace
from Most Venerable Arayawangso
at Peshwar on 30 October 2562*



“Anicca vata sankhara

All conditioned things are indeed impermanent,

Once arisen, they naturally become extinct.

What arises will also pass away,

To extinguish all conditioned things is true happiness.”

May the power of merit and wholesomeness that Miangul Adnan Aurangzeb had performed during his lifetime become the force that ushers him toward the blissful states.

It is my assurance that the Bell of Peace, to be engraved with the name of Miangul Adnan Aurangzeb will definitely be established on the land of Swat, fulfilling his wish to return Pakistan as the land of peace for the people of Pakistan and the entire world.

May Dhamma Power protect Miangul Adnan Aurangzeb to find peace and happiness in his future existence.

With profound condolence and sympathy

Most Venerable Arayawangso

30 May 2565 BE at 23.09 hr.(Thailand time)
Buddhapojhariphunchai Forest Monastery
Lamphun, Thailand





Most Venerable Arayawangso ,

I do not have the words to describe the love, affection and honour you have bestowed upon the soul of my late husband Miangul Adnan Aurangzeb, myself and our family.

For this I shall always be indebted to you. In this hour of grief, your touching words , your prayers and gestures have meant the world to me.

It has helped in the healing process. I am sure that my husband's soul would be honoured for the prayers you have offered.

Your gesture of presenting me with your pen , placing a shawl on Prince Adnan's grave and then asking for his permission in taking it with you is a memory that my family and I shall always cherish.

Prince Adnan respected you tremendously and was looking forward to hosting you & your entourage in Swat but fate had planned something else . You were able to visit Swat and I only wish that he were present to show you the beauty of Swat himself.

Kindly do remember my late husband Adnan in your prayers and please consider that Adnan's home is your home.

My family and I shall always cherish your memories and look forward to your next visit.

Kind regards,
Zenab Adnan Aurangzeb
28th July, 2022





Chapter VIII

Traces of Buddhist Civilization in the Kushan Empire (Peshawar/Purushapura)



Khyber Agency, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa



*Vestiges of severe pains
have now come alive,
All in full bloom, ready to bear fruits.
Awaiting the right time for reverting
to the owner of the deed,
Under the Law of Kamma
that never vary with time.*

MV Arayawangso

From Khyber Pass, Afghanistan-Pakistan
Peshawar, Purushapura of the Kushan Empire
1 August 2565 BE

The journey of the Chinese monk, Faxian, in search of the Tipitaka in Jambudvipa (India-Pakistan), between 942-957 BE, took 15 years. We have learnt many things about the Buddha period from Faxian's account in "A Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms" that we can reflect on. The book talks about what he encountered in Gandhara at the time. He and his fellow monks arrived in Purushapura of the Kushan Empire, where Buddhism flourished most in northern Jambudvipa after the Ashoka period. Scholars have categorised the development of Buddhism into four different periods.

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| 1. Between 100 BE- 400 BE | The Reformed Hinnayana |
| 2. Between 400 BE – 700 BE | The Early stage of Mahayana |
| 3. Between 700 BE – 1200 BE | The Middle stage of Mahayana |
| 4. Between 1200 BE – 1700BE | The Later stage of Mahayana and the disappearance of Buddhism from Jambudvipa |

The four periods indicate the variation of Buddhism that took place because the way the *Buddhaparisa* (the Buddhist assembly comprising Bhikkhu, Bhikkhuni, Upasaka, Upasika) passed on the teachings from their personal views which finally led to the disappearance of Buddhism. This corresponds with the Truth: "*sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā, sabbe dhammā anattāti!*"

Buddhism was then divided into two major sects and eighteen different *nikaya*, reflecting failure of self-adaptation driven by both internal and external pressures. In this regard, Buddhist organisations should review and examine what causes the disappearance of Buddhism from its homeland in *Jambudvipa*.

Phraya Surindhararuechai “A Record of Buddhist Kingdoms by Bhikkhu Faxian ” *jod - mai - hed - hang - buddha - arn ajak - kong - phra - bhikkhu - faxian* (in Thai), Sripanya Publishing House, 2018

All conditioned things are impermanent. All dhammas are non-self.

Faxian’s journey revealed very useful eye-witness events. However, the realisation of information should be taken with caution. In particular, when it was mixed with personal views from the **Reformed School of Buddhism** which may deviate from the **Ultimate Truth** or the **Four Noble Truths** - the essence of Buddhism, discovered and well-expounded by the Buddha. The Buddha has given us guidelines of how to find the **Truths**, with **goals, principles, and rules**. These are nothing like the **Truths that have been adapted** by many teachers since then!

Therefore, we should look carefully at opinions presented to us, especially if they refer to the Buddhist teachings or the Dhamma, as seen in ‘A Record of Buddhist Kingdoms’ which incline toward *divinities*. We need to take precautions and use “*yonisomanasikara*” (analytical reflection). At the same time, we should keep in mind the **Kalama Sutta**, taught by the Buddha that “*one should not believe in anything until one has analysed and investigated to see whether it’s true (saccadhamma), beneficial, and appropriate ...*” He advised that we should not believe simply because:

- ... they are repeatedly reported,
- ... they are traditions,
- ... they are rumours,
- ... they refer to textbooks or scriptures,
- ... they are guesses,
- ... they are estimation,
- ... they seem logical
- ... they resonate with our views,
- ... the speaker seems reliable,
- ... the ascetic is our teacher.



<https://www.drshikone.com/chinese-monk-faxians-captivating-account-of-ancient-india/>

Chinese Monk, Faxian



These ten principles concerning beliefs are useful to contemplate, especially in modern times where social media and IT are prevalent.

What Faxian wrote was very useful in terms of the place names that existed at that time (9th-10th Buddhist Centuries onwards). They help us to see traces of the truths from every aspect. Archaeology, in particular, often refers to the writing of the Chinese monks: Faxian and Tang Sanzang.

During the sabbhaya (dispensation), I was invited to do religious activities in Peshawar. I left Taxila, the rains-retreat residence, on 31st July 2565 BE and took a field trip to the Buddhist heritage sites in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Besides the religious site in *Takht-i-Bahi* or Takht Bhai, I also visited a remarkable *Buddhist Stupa* on top of a small hill near the Khyber Pass on 1st August 2565 BE. The locals call it '*Khyber Top*.' It is the only Gandharan Buddhist stupa, built during the Kushan dynasty, now situated next to a railway line which connects Afghanistan and Pakistan. The railway was built when this area was under British rule, but no longer in use at present. What a shame! World politics gave rise to terrorism along the borders between the two countries.

It's not surprising to find the renovation work on the *Buddhist Stupa*, guarded by the Pakistani military, based on the top of the mountain. People and tourists are prohibited to enter. There are several security checkpoints all along the road that leads to valleys after valleys.

Through the liaison of *Dr. Abdul Samad*, Director of Archaeology & Museums in KP, we were permitted to go there and witness the renovation of the stupa next to the border of Afghanistan, the Khyber Pass side. They are using granite rocks to mend the stupa and have almost completed the whole outer structure. According to Dr Samad, it's a three-year renovation plan to completion. They have worked on it for a year and hope to finish it in 2567 BE (2 years from now).

Judging from the renovation, we can appreciate Dr. Samad and his team. Regardless of many difficulties, the work is progressing and taking good shape.

I suggested to my Thai disciples to lend support with funding from the Arayawangso Foundation.



Buddhists have donated to the Foundation and I can request expenditure, where appropriate for a monk, from my disciple in charge. It was not a large amount, but it has a spiritual value. This was to support the work of the Archaeology & Museums, under the directorship of Dr Samad who kindly looked after us and provided us with information. Hopefully, we will be able to visit the area of Khyber Pass and pay respect to the Maha Stupa after its completion.



I was then invited to visit a topographical checkpoint unit on the Khyber Pass, the road that links Afghanistan and Pakistan and one with a long and at times dark history. This takes us to the *Peshawar Valley* next.



To learn about the World Buddhist civilization in the *Peshawar Valley*, we need to know the importance of Peshawar and why Kanishka chose it as the capital city of the Kushan Empire. Here's brief information about Peshawar.

The word *Peshawar* comes from Sanskrit Purushapura, meaning city of a great man. In Buddhism, purisa means a person of virtue. Peshawar is an important city in the north of Jambudvipa, near the *Khyber Pass*. This pass holds many histories. It is the only gateway in the north of Jambudvipa and has long been used by those who travel from central and south Asia. People, carriages, horses, elephants, trade products, utilities and whole armies all went through this pass.



Hiuen Tsang (Tang Sam-chaung), a Chinese monk,

Historians agreed that Alexander the Great and his army proceeded through the Khyber Pass. Tribal armies, traders, migrants, workers and invaders such as the Aryans, Kushan, Huns, Turks, Mongols and Mughals who came to attack, capture, steal and rob also used the pass.

Peshawar is a city strategically sited to control this historic path, becoming a capital city on a par with Taxila, which had been the capital of Gandhara for a long time. When the Kushan dynasty extended its territory to northern Jambudvīpa, Majjhima janapada, Maghada and Vamsa, King Kanishka moved the capital from *Pushkalavati*, now Charsadda, to Peshawar. He recognised the significance of the Khyber Pass, a strategic point, that needed to be kept under control.

Buddhism thrived under Kanishka's reign. Between 400BE -700BE marked the beginning of Mahayana Buddhism. Sarvastivadin and Shunyavada were the driving forces of Mahayana Buddhism. **King Kanishka's dedicated faith in Buddhism** led to the flourishing of the northern School of **Buddhism in the north of Jambudvīpa**.

This was recorded by *Hiuen Tsang (Tang Sam-chaung)*, a Chinese monk, who came to Jambudvīpa circa the 12th Buddhist Century. He described **King Kanishka** in such an interesting way as follows:

King Kanishka of the Kushan dynasty came from a nomadic, **Yuen-Chi**, tribe. These nomads settled down in **Bactria** and gave up their roaming lifestyles. Mid-5th Buddhist Century, they invaded India. There were 5 groups of Yuen-Chi. Kushan was one of them. The Kushan leader, **Kujula Kara Kadphises**, was the most powerful of the four. He formed the **Kushan dynasty** in India and was known in Indian history as **Kadphises I**. He built a large empire in India between 591 BE - 763 BE. Kadphises introduced **Saka Era** in 621 BE.

Kanishka the great or **Kanishka III** came to the throne. He was a great worrier and a patron of Achariyavada or Sarvastivadin School of Buddhism (Sachchidananda Bhattacharya).

The court of **King Kanishka kept relocating the residence depending on the seasons**. For example, in winter they could move to different states in India. In the summer, they relocated to Kapisa, south of the Himalayas.

In **Spring and Autumn**, they moved to **Gandhara**. Everywhere he stayed, he built a **Buddha Vihara as a memorial**. He **supported Buddhism in many ways by building stupas** and pagodas and making offerings to the monks. In his free time, he **studied the Dhamma-Vinaya**. He **invited a scholar monk** who was well versed in the Tipitaka to teach him in the palace daily. Eventually, he became **sceptical because each monk who taught him came from a different school**. Whatever Dhamma they taught would be in line with their school of belief thus their views would differ.

Which would be the best to choose? One of his teachers, **Parsva**, was a monk from Sarvastivadin School. King Kanishka had high respect for him and discussed this matter with him.

He wanted to hold a Buddhist Council to clarify the dhamma Vinaya. *Ven Parsva rejoiced at the thought. Hence the Buddhist Council*, but it was mainly for *the Sarvastivadin School*.

Sarvastivadin claimed to be Theravada or Hinayana played a very important role in King Kanhiska's period. This gave rise to the early period of Mahayana (400 BE- 700 BE), according to 'Learn Buddhism Like an Intellectual', as follows:

Second Period: Early Mahayana (incubation period) after 400BE-700BE

The school of Buddhism that flows with the world (Lokottaravadins) called itself *Mahasanghika*. They tried to win over people by agreeing with whatever the local people believed. *Whatever the Brahminism believed, Mahasanghika would write stories to fit in with them*, using names that would relate to the *original Buddhism*. Two scholars who formed Mahasanghika Mahayana Buddhism were *Asvaghosa* and *Nagarjuna*. They might have departed from the original Buddhism, but they did not try to condemn it. There were no such terms as the Hinayana or Mahayana at that time.

Asvaghosa was a famous poet, born just after 500 BE to a Brahmin family. He left Brahminism to become a monk in the *Sarvastivadin* School (where minor changes were made to the original). Being a poet and a scholar, he injected excitement into the Buddha stories. The first poetry book he wrote was in Sanskrit, with the title: *Buddhacharita* (Acts of the Buddha). The second book was *Saundarananda*, written in a *kāvya poetry*, telling a love story with Dhamma teaching in it. It's about a handsome man called Nanda, Buddha's younger brother, and his beautiful fiancé, Saundara. They were in love but had to be separated. The Buddha took Nanda away on their wedding day, to become a monk. The two lovers were very sad, they couldn't sleep or eat.

The Buddha took Nanda to see the celestial-beings in heaven who were far more beautiful than his fiancé. Nanda didn't suffer too much from missing his fiancé. He carried on with his practice, observing morality and developing concentration and wisdom, hoping that in his next life he would meet a celestial-being. Ven. Ananda told him that going to heaven is not as happy as reaching nirvana. Nanda finally came to his senses and went to practise in the forest and attained arahantship. As he was preparing for his nirvana (at his death), the Buddha asked him not to do so but to become a Bodhisattva instead and teach people until the whole world could be happy. Nanda accepted. Mahayana gives importance to *Bodhisattva*; it is also called *Bodhisattva-yana*.

His third book, *Sutralankara*, persuades women to take the nirvana path, quoting Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī, Buddha's aunt as an example. The book refers to the scriptures of the Jaina faith and Brahminism and invites the followers of the two faiths to join Buddhism. It worked and got support from many people. A new form of Buddhism or the reformed Mahayana Buddhism thus continued safely in India. When women had faith in it, getting alms food became easy.

Apart from those three famous books, Asvaghosa also wrote the suttas and scriptures which became guidelines for Mahayana and branched out even further. Regardless of how they tried to get along with Brahminism, they still condemned its caste system.

Many semi-fiction stories based on Buddhism came out around this time and were translated into different languages such as German. One of the stories was Kamanita-Vasitthi which we read in Thai. It is entertaining and many believe it to be true.

Nagarjuna was born in southern India to the Brahmin caste, about a hundred years after Asvaghosa. After completing his Vedas study, he had to join the Buddhist Order. Before that, he was a playboy. Apparently, he could do magic or play tricks, making himself invisible, and sneaking into a harem. He was caught. The king wanted to give him a harsh punishment. Nagarjuna begged for a softer one,

promising that he would never do it again. What's more, he would give up his high Brahmin status and ordain as a Buddhist monk, shave off his head, wearing a yellow robe – as a sorry. The kind king who had respect for Buddhism agreed to his request. *Nagarjuna's reason for becoming a monk without having faith in it was bizarre and never happened before.* Once he had joined the Order, he worked hard at it. *Being an intelligent man, he was able to pick up the outstanding point in Buddhism: the anatta or non-self.*

This anatta means that *atta (self) exists by nature* but one needs to look at it with wisdom - that *it is impermanent, not us, not ours. If we hold on to atta as permanent, we will suffer.* It would be difficult to explain to people who cling to the atta and help them to understand it. *Nagarjuna came up with a new name 'Sunyata' and set up a school of Buddhism called Shunayavada.* He taught that *all things would come to shunaya* (nothingness/ emptiness), *rejecting the concept of self completely.* If we take it apart, there is no such thing as self. What we see as 'self' is merely our mental formations that arise due to cause and effect. Without mental formations, cause and effect also cease, returning to nothingness/ emptiness. *The principle of Shunayavada can be applied to both levels: Loka-dhamma and Lokuttara-dhamma.*

His declaration caused *quite a stir because it contradicted* the Brahminism *concept of permanent atta* which continues through the process of reincarnation. For Buddhists who understand 'anatta,' we can apply this principle if *'sunyata' refers to the ceasing of the ego (I, me, my, mine).* *With the ceasing of the ego, the clinging to the five aggregates also ceases. That's what the Pali word sunyata means.*

At that time in India, perhaps not many Buddhist monks could fathom the concept of anatta. Initially, people got excited about Shunayavada but it was heavily criticised by Brahminism. *Nagarjuna thus changed the name to Madhyamika* to make it sound more neutral. He also referred to the *Noble Eightfold Path* and came up with a new explanation that when people die, their spirit or the atta will become one with the world's *great-sunyata*. This is similar to the teachings of *the Jaina faith which says that the spirit or the atta will join the world's barom-atta (world great atta).* The reason for establishing *great-sunyata* was to tone down the concept of voidness after death. Therefore, the atta will join worldly *great-sunyata* after death. At least this would help with the *teachings about good and bad karma, and it won't be a lost cause.*

Initially, the Brahmins protested the concept of the Shunayavada School. Nagarjuna fought back by writing a story explaining that the Buddha already expounded the *Shunayavada philosophy* to a naga (Serpent King). The naga has a long-life span, able to keep the Buddha's teachings (possibly memorising them) until Nagarjuna, the deity, is reincarnated on earth 500 years later, *according to the Buddha's prophesy.* (He copied the concept of Brahminism, so they no longer challenged him and probably fell for his story for a while).

For intelligent people, if you look at the name Nagarjuna, it's a combination of nag-agara-arajuna. Arjuna is the name of a tree in India. His father named him 'the naga who was born at home, under arjuna tree'. Nagarjuna was a wise and witty man. He wove the story about a powerful naga, so people would be scared and look up to him. *When people challenged the story and asked why the naga did not teach people* in those 500 years. Nagarjuna explained that *nagas may be very powerful, but they were not good at teaching or explaining;* they could only remember and parrot it. They had to wait for his reincarnation, commanded by the king of gods. Brahmins did not dare to challenge any further why the god had to give a command. With his indefinite power, God can do whatever he wants anyway.

Changing the name to *Madhyamika*, however, did not help it to last long in India because it could not compete with Brahminism. *Shunayavada/ Madhyamika gradually disappeared from India but flourished in China, Japan, Korea and elsewhere.*

The name ‘*Madhyamika*,’ has a good meaning. It *connects the traditional Theravadin Buddhism with the new Mahasanghika*. The good thing about Nagarjuna was that when he became a Buddhist monk, he was *well-mannered, calm, and followed the Vinaya*. He did not try to put down other faiths. He simply wanted to propagate Buddhism according to his understanding – to help people develop faith in it, despite diverging from the original. At least *there was no such thing as Hinayana or Mahayana at the time.*

Nagarjuna’s students, however, were different. Some boasted that they were better than others, due to their defilements and tendencies. *Deva*, his best student, was a good debater who won many debates against the Brahmins. People began to shift their attention to *Madhyamika*. Eventually, *he was murdered by a jealous Brahmin. Deva’s famous book was Satasastra*. Other famous disciples of Nagarjuna were *Aryadeva* and *Amaraindra*, both of whom authored many new doctrines, in addition to Nagarjuna’s philosophy. This will be discussed in greater details when we talk about the flourishing period of Mahayana.”

During 400BE- 700BE Buddhism prospered and it was the beginning of Mahayana. Gandharan art, stupas, and buddha images for Buddhists to pay respect became prevalent.

While being a guest to Peshawar, I was able to study the *Gandharan art* in the Peshawar Museum and take a trip to the Buddhist World Heritage sites that flourished during the King Kanishka of the Kushan dynasty. My second visit to the *Takht-i-Bahi* was on 2nd August 2565 BE. I appreciate that the site has been developed in all aspects impressively, so reflecting the great value of the *Takht-i-Bahi*, the world Buddhist Heritage Site. Here’s some interesting information about the site.





Takht-i-Bahi is a huge monastery complex. It must have been a very important place for teaching and practising the Dhamma for Buddhists in those days. A large number of monks' residences that are scattering around the mountain could also indicate that the site also served monks who travelled from other places.

My field trip to the *Takht-i-Bahi* today was therefore of high worth, allowing me to appreciate the well-conserved Buddhist heritage site, which was the centre of Gandharan Buddhism in Kushana Dynasty. In particular, it took me to build the sand pagoda (*maha stupa cetiya*) as a reverence to the Buddha who had travelled to all places over Jambudpiva, including Peshawar, as mentioned by Faxian Bhikkhu. This great merit was made possible thanks to Dr. Abdul Samad, Director of Archaeology & Museum, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa who helped coordinate and facilitate, making this a seamless visit.

Building a sand pagoda to pay homage to the *maha stupa* formerly built by King Kanishka in reverence to the Buddha on the 2nd August 2565 BE., 9:30am before the visit to *Takht-i-Bahi* was hence a great merit. It is an important evidence for the existence of the biggest and the most beautiful stupa in *Jambudvipa* in the old days on the site, which is now the graveyard for Pakistanis, as the only trait we can see from old photos is the bayan tree situated at where I built the sand pagoda in reverence to the Buddha. May we all rejoice in appreciation.

Blessing with Metta







Re-establish the spirit of Gandhara Civilization

King Kanishka's Maha-Cetiya



Upon the traces of Gandhara civilization

*King Kanishka spread the Buddhist faith
and foundation*

*With glorious pagodas and monasteries
To pass on the Gandharan Dhamma spirit*

Now, building a Ratna pagoda

In front of Kanishka's Maha-Cetiya

Steadfast is the mind

To pass on the Triratna

So difficult to do, given the situation

So difficult even thinking about it

So difficult, yet with determination

We did it, even in the face of danger

Hence the Ratna sand pagoda

My two hands putting together in reverence

May the Buddha power protect from harm

*Let us bow to the Lord,
with my heart left.... in Buddha Land*

2nd August 2022, 9.30 am



With my two hands, I built a sand pagoda - on the land where, according to Faxian's record, stood the most beautiful pagoda in Jambudvipa, built by *King Kanishka* in the 6th Buddhist Century.

At present the area is a Muslim cemetery.

On the day I arrived, the smell of corpses filled the air. It can be dangerous for a foreigner from a different faith to enter, thus security officers (with guns) were on guard.

The mission to re-establish the spirit of Gandhara civilization went well and was successful, thanks to the help of *Dr Abdul Samad*, Director of the Archaeology & Museum in KP.

MV Arayawangso
8th August 2022



*Most Venerable Arayawangso with ►
Dr Abdul Samad, Director of the
Archaeology & Museum in KP*



Chapter IX

**A field trip to Gor Khatri,
the Maha-Vihara that used to house the Buddha's alms bowl.**

**A visit to a rich man's mansion from the past
and an ancient community in Peshawar.**



Gor Khatri, Peshawar



MV Arayawangso Meditate on the chair until dawn at Peshawar Museum



MV Arayawangso plant a tree as a remembrance in front of Peshawar Museum



Visiting Mahabat Khan Mosque, Peshawar

As mentioned earlier, between 31st July – 4th August 2565 BE, I was staying in the office of the Director of Archaeology & Museums in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa instead of the government guest house in the military area. Dr. Abdul Samad kindly organised this residence for me which was very helpful for my work and religious practices because it was sappaya (conducive to resting, meditation and work purposes).

The work I needed to do daily included a field trip to and pay homage to the ancient Buddhist sites. At 19.30hrs, I taught Dhamma and basic meditation to those who wished to learn. Then it was the time for evening chanting in the **Peshawar Museum** where many of the Buddhist Gandharan art and artifacts from the heritage sites in KP (Swat Valley and Peshawar Valley) are kept. I requested to spend all night at the Museum to write a summary of what I had seen and learnt during the day. The atmosphere in the beautiful museum was sacred, and auspicious, especially at night. I sat alone at a table, specifically arranged for me, in the middle of a large hall.

After finishing my writing, I took a rest, meditating on that chair until dawn. Then I left the building of Peshawar Museum and returned to the office of the Director of Archaeology & Museums. I did this routinely every night, from the first (31st July 2565 BE) to the third night (2nd August 2565 BE). I omitted the writing on the last night (3rd August 2565 BE) and returned to Taxila my rains retreat residence on 4th August 2565 BE.

On 3rd August, at 9.00 am, Dr Samad invited me to plant a tree as a remembrance in front of the Peshawar Museum, before visiting another ancient site in Peshawar, about 20-min drive from the museum. There are dwellings over hundred years old, as well as a Hindu Vihara, and an Islamic Mosque – both of which are still in use and located at the ancient site. The excavation reveals the original base of the Buddhist Maha-Vihara, said to **house the Buddha's alms bowl**, which is presumably kept in the Kabul Museum in Afghanistan. Recall the Buddha's alms bowl that was brought from Pataliputra to Purushpura during the reign of King Kanishka to be placed in a large Maha-Vihara on the east side of Purushpura. When Faxian visited the city, he made a note about the alms-bowl which suggested that it existed, a thousand years after the Buddha's passing. Faxian's record was written in the 9th Buddhist Century, 300-400 years after the Kanishka period (6th Buddhist century).

It is delightful to know, as mentioned by Faxian, the sacredness of the bowl, but the information was not clear. To prevent any confusion about the Buddha alms-bowl and how it came to be in Purushpura, I have found the following information.

“When the Magadha Kingdom went to war with the Yueh-chi tribe, King Kanishka who was from Yueh-chi invaded Pataliputra, Magadha Kingdom. Pataliputra was defeated and asked for a compromise.

King Kanishka demanded three kotis of gold as compensation.

Pataliputra could not comply with his demand.

King Kanishka therefore asked for the most valuable assets in Pataliputra:

the Buddha’s bowl and a scholarly monk named Asvaghosa.

Pataliputra had to hand over both.

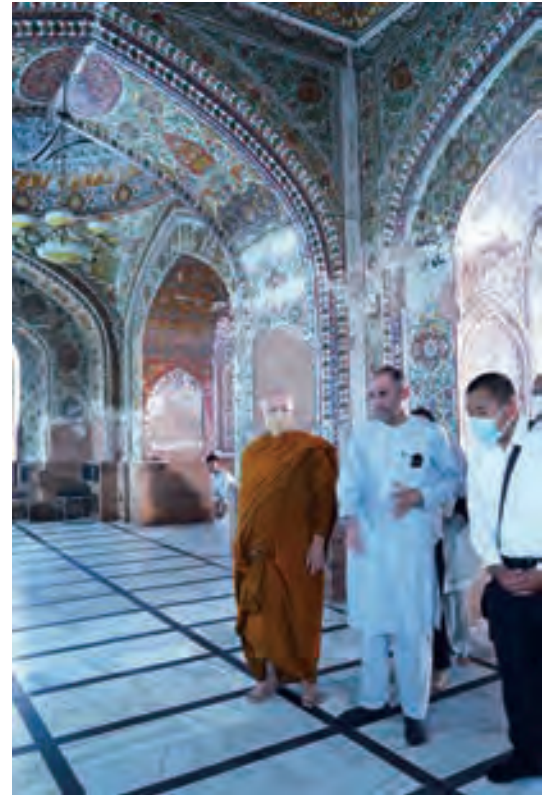
When King Kanishka brought the bowl and Asvaghosa back, his ministers were wondering “*how a monk could be an invaluable asset*”.

King Kanishka ordered seven horses to be unfed for 6 days. He then called for the monks, his ministers, servants, and people to a meeting. Those seven horses were brought before them, and the king asked Ven. Asvaghosa to give a dhamma talk.

Ven. Asvaghosa gave a beautiful dhamma talk. The king asked his soldier to bring food to the horses, but they refused to eat. They stood listening to the Dhamma with tears in their eyes.

Ven. Asavaghosa became famous for his Dhamma teaching; even animals such as horses stayed tranquil and absorbed in his teaching. He was thus called Ven. Asvaghosa from then on. (Buddhist History by Satien Bhodinanda).”

The Buddha’s bowl, associated with Ven. Asavaghosa confirms that it did exist and was brought to the kingdom of the Kushan dynasty. Ven. Asavaghosa played a very important role in Buddhism in the second period between 400 BE and 700 BE. This makes an interesting study, and we will talk about it later.



Visiting Mahabat Khan Mosque, Peshawar



*Aerial photo of Gor Khatri quadrangle
(Photographer: William hanry Charles Pulling, -RAF 1920s)*



Archeological Excavation at Gor Khatri



City Museum, Gor Khatri Peshawar

For now, we will focus on the Buddha’s bowl, as recorded by Faxian and his fellow monks which proves of its existence in Purushpura.

When I heard from the Director of Peshawar Archaeology & Museums that the Maha-Vihara (the 5th – the 6th Buddhist Centuries) which housed the Buddha’s alms bowl is in Gor Khatri, I was most delighted to visit on a field trip to the monastery, even though only traces of it remained.

Lady Supatra Masdit who followed me at the time wrote:

“... 3 August 2022 Pakistani people often called Most Venerable Arayawangso ‘MV’ or ‘MV Father,’ a revered term. After his meal in the office of the Director of Archaeology & Museums in Peshawar/KP, where he was staying, at 8.00 am, he planted a tree as a remembrance. This was suggested by Dr Abdul Samad. The prepared tree was said to be a *Bodhi tree*, but it bore no resemblance to the Bodhi tree. In my country, it would be called a Java cotton tree. After that, we left in the van, provided by the Thai Embassy in Pakistan, which Colonel Adisak Showichen, Military and Defense Attaché, and his wife Ms. Hathairath Wareesamankhun organized for looking after MV throughout the three months. A great merit worthy of rejoicing!

Within 15-20 minutes, we arrived in Gor Khatri, an ancient community in Peshawar, well preserved by the Archaeology and Museums of KP. Inside the area of the ancient site, there is a former government office (used as a local government office of Peshawar). In the front, there is an ancient wall with a tower. Inside the tower, was a governor’s office, now preserved as a national treasure. 30 metres from the entrance, the ancient site was blocked off. There were excavations, renovations, and the preservation of the structure of the site – just like everywhere else. According to Peshawar’s archaeological evidence, this was the place where the Buddha’s bowl was kept, referring to Faxian’s record.”

However, there is no agreement on what happened to the Buddha's bowl as it journeyed through time. Nobody knows the whereabouts of the bowl. Some said it's in the museum in Kabul, Afghanistan. Some said that the celestial beings have taken it to the Chulamanee Chedi in heaven; others said it is in Dusasa Chedi in the Brahman realm. Some said that it is in an ancient Buddhist site in the Republic of India. But there is no evidence to support any of these.

No one knows. The only confirmation we have is from Faxian's record. He had seen the bowl in Peshawar. He also talked about the sacred power of the bowl. On 3rd August 2565 BE, I, MV Arayawangso, went to the Maha-Vihara where the Buddha's bowl was once kept, according to Faxian's record, during 942BE - 957BE. According to the archaeology & Museum of KP, the Maha-Vihara is at Gor Khatri in Peshawar.

To conclude the story of the Buddha bowl, we need to refer to the Theravada source. The history recorded after the Buddha's nirvana states that the bowl was kept in the Kesariya Stupa in Paisali or Vaishali in the Vajji Kingdom. The Bihar Archaeology unit in India has renovated the stupa back to its original structure but no information about the bowl. What can be concluded about the bowl is that:

“In the second century, King Kanishka took this bowl from Vaishali to Purushapura, his capital city.”

After that, it was taken to Kandahar in Afghanistan. Recently, or about ten years ago, it was kept in the Museum of Kabul. Pakistani archaeologists said that this claim is not reliable. All of the above, the object, location and social geography show the truth that can be found in the traces of civilization in each period and how they relate to Buddhist history. They existed and we can trace back to find out the facts even though time had passed a thousand years. Gor Khatri in Peshawar is one such example. I, MV Arayawangso and his team went on a field trip to find out for themselves.





*Sethi House, Peshawar
old days as a rich man or a wealthy Brahmin's castle*

We were invited by the Director of Archaeology and Museums of KP to visit an old market in an ancient community of **Gor Khatri**, Pakistan's cultural treasures, now under the preservation of the Archaeology & Museum. There was a mansion, possibly known in the old days as a rich man or a wealthy Brahmin's castle. The Museum of Peshawar is preserving it to its original condition, including the ancient market community. They reflect the traditional community lifestyle, and are worth visiting. We can find out what a rich man's mansion in Jambudvipa was like. The rich man's seven-story ancient castle: each room, every nook and cranny, reflects the lifestyle of a person, an ancient community and a way of life in traditional Jambudvipa. It is very useful in learning about Buddhism or any other religion in Jambudvipa.



4th August 2022, we were due to return to Taxila, I, MV Arayawangso was invited to ring the Bell of Peace which was installed in October 2019. The ceremony was to send the Dhamma sounds of Peace to all beings in every realm, for peace in Pakistan and elsewhere in the world. Before ringing the bell, I read out the heart of the Dhamma peace or the essence of Buddhism that one needs to practice as a puja - to bring peace to oneself, others and the nation.

The heart of the Dhamma Peace is to:

- 1. Abstain from all evils*
- 2. Cultivate wholesomeness*
- 3. Purify one's mind*

This was followed by loving-kindness chanting for the benefits and happiness of the people.



Installed and Rang the Peace Bell in 30th October 2019



Rang the Peace Bell in 15th September 2022

I, MV Arayawangso also said the following declaration:

“To Peshawar, I travelled to ring the Peace Bell and tell humanity to have confidence in Peace with Dhamma.

A signal resonated far and wide, sending Dhamma Peace from my heart and mind.

Humbly I paid my homage, respectful for loving-kindness Dhamma.

A bold determination was declared, to return peacefulness to Peshawar, former Purusapura of the Kushan dynasty, where Buddha-Dhamma reigned supreme.

The sound of homage to Dhamma was uttered while ringing the Bell of Peace, inviting the world to visit Lord Buddha's civilized land.

The admiration of World Heritage in Peshawar will soon spread to all mankind.

From Thailand, I travelled to Peshawar, with complete reverence for the mighty power of Dhamma...”





Jamal Garhi

After the official ceremony to ring the Bell of Peace for the second time at the Museum of Peshawar, Dr Abdul Samad, the Director of Archaeology & Museums of KP made an announcement and *a request for MV Arayawangso to be the Goodwill Ambassador and to spread the knowledge of Gandhara civilization, treasures of world history, to the outside world.*

After that, we went on another field trip to a grand, beautiful Buddhist Maha-Vihara, an ancient art that is invaluable. There was a sign directing to the **Jamal Garhi** Maha-Vihara. As the car approached the foot of the hill, we could see that the Jamal Garhi was no smaller than the Takht-i-Bahi. The height of the mountain was also similar, about 150 metres. The ambience is probably not as conducive as the Takht-i-Bahi. Jamal Garhi Maha-Vihara is close to a large community and has easy access. It is located in Mardan so it is called the Jamal Garhi Mardan.

On the 4th August 2565 BE, around noon, MV led the group to walk up the flight of stone steps to the Mahavihara. Despite the blazing heat, the mind was somehow, cool and calm. This Sangharama is surrounded by stupas and viharas, signifying the Maha-Vihara, a great Buddhist monastery of the past, from the time of Ashoka to the reign of Kanishka of the Kushan dynasty- when Buddhism reached its zenith.



In the heat of the midday sun, we witnessed MV doing his religious practice with peace and calm by the Sanchi stupa. The stupa is in the middle of the Maha-vihara of Jamal Gashi. We walked around it and heard MV saying that this stupa must have housed the Buddha's relics because the energy there remains complete. It's possible that the relics might still be there deep down – just a guess, he said. Then it was time to return to Taxila, the rains retreat residence.

Blessing with Metta







The Symbolic Alms-Bowl of Lord Buddha

Mahavihara of King Kanishka, located in Gor Khatri, Peshawar

26 September 2565...

Most Ven. Arayawango brought the Symbolic Alms-Bowl of Lord Buddha handmade by a specialist in Thailand, to the Mahavihara of King Kanishka, located in Gor Khatri, Peshawar, 3 kilometers from Peshawar Museum. MV pay his homage to Lord Buddha by chanting, and declaring his offering of the Symbolic Alms-Bowl.

The homage was done as a symbol, to recollect that Lord Buddha's Original Alms-Bowl was once enshrined here during King Kanishka reign. It was recorded during 9th-10th Buddhist Century, by Fa Xian Bhikkhu, when he came here to pay homage along with other Chinese monks.

After paying his homage, MV returned to Peshawar Museum, where the Symbolic Alms-Bowl will be enshrined, and received alms of flowers from faithful Thai Buddhist whom were waiting, a tradition practiced in the ancient time.











Sethi House | Peshwar

Sethi house is one of twelve houses of note inside Peshawar's old walled city. Situated within the Sethi Mohallah - an epic architectural showcase from the 19th century with beguiling specimens of spatial imagination and definition - the Sethi House is located near the city's socio-cultural landmarks of Ghanta Ghar (clock tower) and Bazaar-e-Kalan near Gor Khatri.

Often dubbed as the jewel in Peshawar's crown, the Mohallah Sethian or Sethi Street stands as a testament to days gone by, when stories of distant lands were narrated over cups of green tea and caravans of traders stopped in the city, while travelling from the Central Asian steppes to the Indian plains. The Sethis are a family of traders. Back in the day, their business was spread from Central Asia to Europe. Their homes show filigreed wood carvings set in traditional oriental compositional style. They represent the best of what the house of a man of means, representing the nobility and aesthetics of its tradition, looked like in 19th century Peshawar.

The Haveli is a courtyard house, a predominant form used in the Indian sub-continent since antiquity. The courtyard form developed as a response to climate and cultural evolution of the city and its people, due to the region's proximity to India. The courtyard is an attempt to somehow control the forces of nature; its typology affords a comfortable building that allows constant interaction with the sun, fresh air and water.

It is no wonder that the unmistakable highlights of the Sethi House are bright ranks of its courtyard, woodwork with inscriptions and a huge resting place made of wood called Takht-e-Sulaimani (Solomon's throne) to rest in the daylight during winter, with delicate and delightful wooden jaalis used for ventilation and windows inclined for privacy. This street was where the Sethi family settled when they arrived in Peshawar in the 1730s. Historians such as the late Ahmed Hassan Dani noted that the Sethi family belonged to the trading class and "transacted international business, commerce and trade which passed from India to Afghanistan and Central Asia".

The house embodies techniques and aesthetic influence drawn from a diverse range of sources. The design resembles old houses in Baghdad whereas the decorative elements trace their origins to Samarkand and Bukhara, and even parts of Persia and India. The family may have scattered and moved to other places but they have left a rich heritage for people to admire for years to come.

A unique specimen of architectural art, one enters the Sethi House through a carved wooden doorway that leads to the central courtyard with a fountain in the center, and delicately embellished wooden arcades on all sides. From the central courtyard, the view is a blend of mesmerizing delicate mastery of woodwork with floral and geometric patterns carved into it. The balconies of the two upper floors open into the central courtyard. The living spaces have richly decorated "cheenee khanas" or reception rooms where decorative pieces are displayed. Safi states that various layers of crafts including "aina-kari" or mirror work, "manabat-kari" or wood work and "kashi-kari" or tile work were used for decoration. The second floor boasts painted designs and cut glass encrusting the walls and basements, embellished with wooden carvings. A large amount of wood with brick fillings was used in the construction of the house.

In 2006, the provincial government purchased the Sethi House and handed it over to the archaeology department for conservation. It has been open to tourists since.

Chapter X

The miracle of Buddhist civilization in Pakistan



Takht-i-Bahi, Mardan, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa



4th August 2022, my body finally had time to rest after the journey to Peshawar. This evening I'm back at the rains retreat residence in Taxila. Earlier, my daily routines after breakfast would be taking a field trip and performing a religious ceremony at various Buddhist heritage sites, most of which date back to the 3rd Buddhist Centuries (Maurya dynasty) and from the 5th- 8th Buddhist Centuries onwards (Kushan dynasty). Evidently, traces of Buddhist heritage from those two periods, linking the previous one to the next, are still prevalent, suggesting a remarkable unity of faith!



A clear example is the Maha-Vihara in Butkara. This large monastery was excavated from 1956 AD – 1958 AD by the Italian archaeologists and the PK archaeology and Museums team. They found that it had been extended at least five times. The archaeologists estimated that the Maha-Stupa, in the middle of the smaller ones, must have been built and rebuilt, each time on top of the old structure, between the 3rd -16th Buddhist Centuries, before the disappearance of Buddhism in the 17th Buddhist Century.

Takht-i-Bahi maha-Vihara is another example. Judging from the overall appearance, it must have been in use from an early period of Mahayana (circa the 4th Buddhist Century), lasting through to Kanishka's time and the middle period of Mahayana. The flourishing of Buddhism is reflected in this ancient site, corresponding with the official estimation that this must have been in use between the 4th -11th Buddhist Centuries. It can be said that the Takht-i-Bahi complex must have been the centre of the Northern School of Buddhism (Mahayana). With its beauty and most complete layout, compared to other Maha-Viharas, Takht-i-Bahi is rated as the most beautiful in Gandhara, and is listed as one of the World Heritage sites by UNESCO.



photo taken at Takht-i-bahi, Mardan



Takht-i-Bahi

Mardan, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa





The visit to *Takht-i-Bahi* (on 2nd August 2022), through the invitation from Dr Abdul Samad, Director of Archaeology and Museums, KP, has completed my mission of both study and religious practice at the sacred sites. Amazingly, despite the blazing sun, the mind remains cool and at peace.

Many believe that the Dhamma powers remain intact because this religious place used to house the relics of the Buddha. The dhamma energy that could be felt suggested that the relics might still be there, under the great Maha-Stupa, surrounded by smaller ones. The Viharas, meditation rooms and the remains of monks' lodgings enhanced the majestic main stupa which stands approximately 150 metres above the ground, embraced by the valley. From the front opening, there is a flight of steps stretching down to the ground level, with a small adjacent stream to keep the plants and trees fresh. The scenery was charming and conducive to the meditation practice. The orchestra sounds of the birds, singing their songs as if to welcome devotee visitors, motivated us to keep going up the steps.





Jamal Garhi

Mardan, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa

4th August 2022 we visited another Buddhist site, *Jamal Garhi* in *Mardan*, a contemporary of the *Takht-i-Bahi* complex. This reconfirms that the flourishing of Buddhist civilization can be seen in its sacred sites. Jamal Garhi is not much smaller than Takht-i-Bahi. The base, the raised mound, and the round shape of the main stupa suggest that it must be from the Ashoka period (around the third Buddhist Century). The guhas (caves, cubicles) all around it indicate that these could be rooms where Buddha images were kept or places for meditation – all of which help to enhance the beauty of the Maha Vihara. Looking around, there are more remains of Viharas and Stupas, big and small. The *Jamal Garhi* is now under the preservation of the Archaeology and Museums of *KP*.

The more that excavations and restoration by the Pakistan government organisation proceed, the more ready these places will be to welcome Buddhists from across the world, who will come with peace, respect and a desire to practice the Dhamma here.

In addition, had they learnt more about the Buddhist heritage sites, they would have developed more faith, and respect for their predecessors who tried to preserve and pass on Buddhism to the present.

Everywhere we went in Pakistan, be they: Taxila, Swat, or Peshawar, we were warmly welcomed like relatives, making us forget all about the terrorism that used to be.

Most importantly, after my return from Peshawar, the inner feeling in my mind uttered: **Buddhism is still here; it's everywhere. It hasn't disappeared.** If we still have faith and observe the Dhamma Vinaya, Buddhism will always be there.

Place and time cannot make Buddhism disappear, if only we keep it firmly in our minds.



Blessing with metta



Jamal Garhi

The extensive Buddhist remains of Jamal Garhi are located between the villages of Jamal Garhi and Sahr-i-Bahlol, on top of a hill at an elevation of 144m, about 12.8km north of Mardan city. This site is also situated in between the two historical Buddhist centers of Takht-i-Bhai and Shahbaz Garhi. No less striking is the Buddhist site of Therelli (Sawal Dher) 4.8km south-east, situated in precisely the same relative position that Sahri-i-Bahlol bears to Takht-i-Bhai. They occupy the crest of the hill and a commanding view of the fine landscape. The remains at the site are traced back from 1st to 5th century AD.

The site of Jamal Garhi was first discovered by Alexander the Great Cunningham in 1848 but excavated first by Lt. Lumsden and then by Lt. Stroke in 1852. The site was then excavated in 1872 by Cunningham and in 1873 by sappers and miners of the native royal engineering corp of the British army. Most of the antiques recovered during excavations were sent to the British Museum, Calcutta and Peshawar Museum.

According to Sir John Marshall, Jamal Garhi is one of the earliest Buddhist establishments in the Gandhara region. Judging from its religious character and the fame which it undoubtedly enjoyed among the Buddhist community at that time, it is disappointing that Chinese pilgrims who frequented the region through its Buddhist history failed to mention it in their manuals.

The Directorate of Archaeology and Museums Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa resumed the excavation at the site in 2012-13. A total of 134 antiquities were unearthed, now on display at the museum in Mardan. The structural remains of the site represent a complete Buddhist settlement.

The most promising structural remains of this monastic complex are the main stupa, middle and lower votive stupa courts surrounded by chapels, the assembly hall, vaulted cells and the block of accommodations with an open courtyard.

The site is believed to have witnessed the successive rise and fall of three dynasties. The Indo-Parthian, the Kushans and later Kushans were finally destroyed by the invasion of White Huns.

*Reference: Land of Gandhara : A photographic Journey.
Directorate of Archaeology and Museums : Lahore, 2021, pp 294*



Chapter XI

A summary: what to know in the Khyber Pass



Sphola Stupa, Khyber pass

1st August 2022 was a field trip to Khyber Pass, led by *Dr. Abdul Samad, Director of Archaeology & Museums, KP*. If I remember correctly, the journey took 2 hours. We passed villages on both sides of the road – very similar to the most northern part of Thailand, along the Thai-Burmese border. The only difference is the dry landscape, with fewer trees than in Thailand. Villages in the mountains have high earthen walls, encompassing small communities. Some are houses of powerful persons, associated with the local ethnic groups and largely self-governing. Their houses have long, high walls, stretching along the road, more like those of a military base than a mansion.



Formerly used as a caravan track, the pass stretches alongside the railway, which was built by the British army, connecting Jamrud to Landi Kotal, near the border of Afghanistan. The railway was opened for use in 2468 BE but is now closed. The Pass goes through 34 mountain tunnels and over 94 bridges, with drainage structure and the railway adjacent to it, suggesting a well-planned transport system. The Pass facilitates the journey through the *Khyber* and connects the north of *Jamrud* to *Torkham*.



The ***Khyber Pass*** is a strategic area geopolitically and has a long history involving Persian, Greek, Mughal, Afghan and British imperialism. It is Jambudvipa's gateway to the outside world – to Europe in the west and China in the east.

5th century BC (44BE), Darius the Great of Persia led his troops through the Khyber Pass and conquered the region by the Kabul River then expanded his power to the Indus area. Alexander the Great did the same thing. In the 3rd Buddhist Century, during the reign of Ashoka, Buddhism flourished around the Khyber area. When the Maurya dynasty from Maajjhima-desa in Jambudvipa (Magadha janapada) extended their power to the Kabul River area, their army also used the Khyber Pass. Buddhism also spread through this Pass. The ruins of the stupas: the ***Kafir Kot*** (Citadel of the Kafirs), ***Sphola Stupa (Khyber Top)*** and Stupa near Ali Masjid are the evidence.

We stopped and paid homage to the ***Sphola Stupa***, now guarded by the Pakistani army. It's not open to the public. If not for an official trip, we would not be allowed there.

The army, police, local government officers and KP archaeology staff welcomed us and said ***“MV Arayawangso was the first monk to visit the Khyber Top”***.





We witnessed the enthusiastic renovation work on the large stupa, situated on top of a small hill and easy to get to by car, as the train line is no longer in use. If you travel to the Khyber Pass, you will come across this stupa. Dr Samad said that they are working hard to reconstruct it to the original Sanchi shape, implying that it was built in the Ashoka period. The time estimated for the completion is 3 years, starting from 2564 BE. Two more years to finish. This is possible, judging from the progress and enthusiasm of the people.



I would like to contribute to the renovation of the Khyber Top (*Sphola Stupa*). I asked my disciples who accompanied me to donate 100,000 baht (600,000 Pakistan rupees) towards the stupa renovation and to sponsor the construction of a Gandharan Buddha statue, in a meditation posture. The Buddha will be placed on a platform in front of the stupa, in line with the KP museum's original plan. We paid respect to the Triple Gem at the *Sphola stupa* and prayed for the renovation success. May the stupa continue to represent a crucial piece of evidence of the civilization that used to flourish in the Khyber.

It took 20 mins from *Sphola to Michni Check post*, a military topographical assessment building in a perfect location, where we stopped. The leader of the Afridis tribe gave us a customary Pashtun welcome. I was the first Buddhist monk to visit there officially and was offered a tribal leader hat as an honour. They wanted to put it on me but were told by the Thai followers that, as a monk, I would not be able to wear it. Instead, there was a ceremony to present me with the hat. I accepted it conventionally and rejoiced in the kindness and respect they gave me. When we entered the topographical assessment building, they handed me binoculars to look at the landscape of the Khyber Pass. Their officers gave a talk about the history of the Khyber Pass – its significance, representing the civilization of many periods, and how it related to the Silk Road and religion.



Here is a summary of the talk:

Sphola or *Shopla Stupa* is a Buddhist monument in Khyber Pass, looked after by the Afridi Tribe under the central administration of the Pakistan government. It is about 25 km from Jamrud, built on a raised rock platform - with layers of rocks to support the base of the stupa, overlooking the valley below and a mountain as a backdrop.

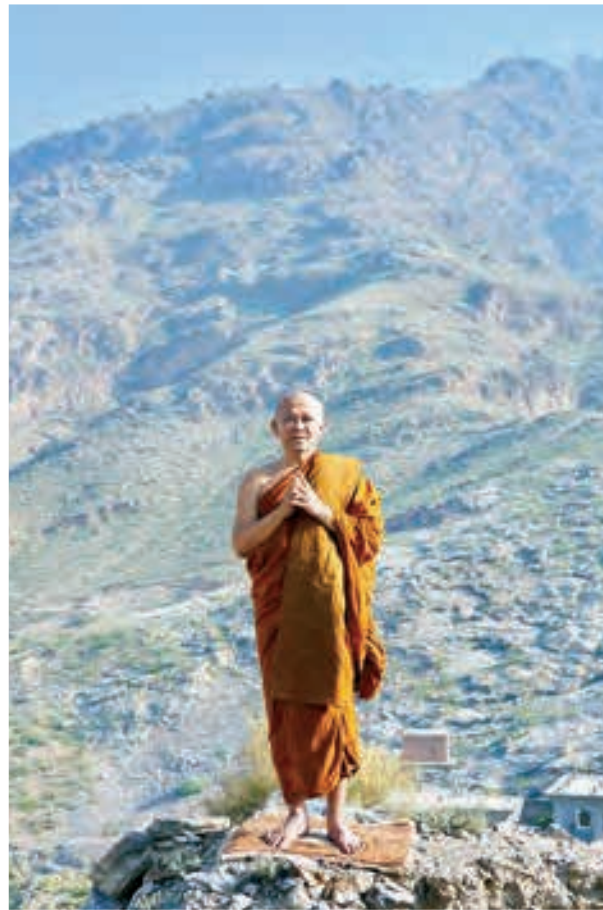
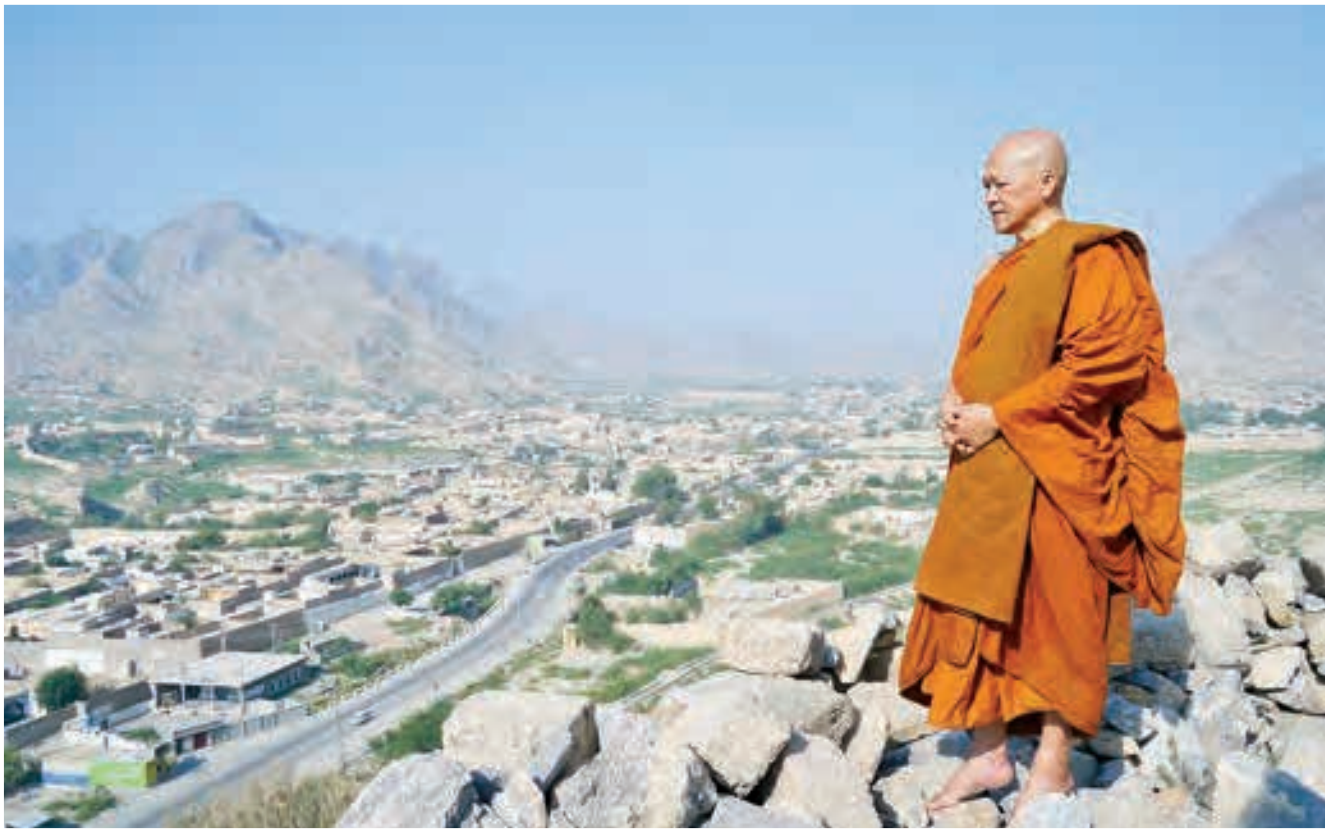
The stupa may be associated with the Ashoka and the Kushan periods. Gandharan Buddhist artefacts and invaluable sculptures from the *Sphola stupa* are now kept in Peshawar Museum.

Shopla Stupa is the only Buddhist monument in the Khyber Pass, and thus deserves to be preserved and renovated for its spiritual value on this historic route.

Thanks to KP Archaeological Museum for their excavation and reconstruction work and for not leaving it to become a mere military checkpoint like in the past.

Blessing with Metta





Sphola Stupa

Khyber Pass, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa



MV Arayawango travelled to *Khyber Pass* for the second time to pay homage at the *Sphola Stupa*. This Maha-Stupa is the only one remaining in *Khyber Pass* that was built during the reign of *King Ashoka*. It marks the spread of Buddhism up to this territory, showing the link to *Kabul Basin* and *Central Asia* in the *3rd Buddhist Century*.

The aim of this trip was to perform an important religious activity for peace and happiness of the people and all beings. *MV Arayawangso* had sought permission from the Archaeology and Museum Division, *Khyber Pakhtunkhwa* Province, for him to carry out such activity alone at the top of the stupa. Consequently, it is possible to see photos of Most Venerable chanting the Paritta, meditating and spreading merit on top of the great stupa.

There was also another special event. After descending, Most Venerable went on alms round around the stupa. A group of devout Buddhists from Thailand, led by *Mr. Abdul Samad*, Director of Archaeological and Museum, *Khyber Pakhtunkhwa*, offered alms mainly consisting of local Pashtun food.

After that, MV gave his blessings by chanting the *Anumodhanarambha -gatha* at the stupa for the merit of everyone, for the benefit and happiness of all beings and to show the fact that .. ***“religious activities can be performed at any location in the land of Buddhist Civilisation.*”**

It is not just a place for tourists to come for a study tour of ancient Buddhist art. This is a confirmation that Buddhists from around the world can conduct religious activities at any Buddhist sites in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.”

Sincere appreciation is hence extended to the concerned authorities of the Government of Pakistan, especially to *Dr. Abdul Samad*, Director of Archaeology and Museum Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and all staff, including the police officers who have taken care of security everywhere *MV Arayawangso* has travelled to.

*Blessing with Metta
27 September 2565 BE*







Sphola Stupa | Khyber pass

The sphola stupa is a stone mound supported by a tiered base on a high rocky ledge, 40km from Peshawar on the road through the Khyber Agency. Built of stones, the stupa features a dome resting on a three-tiered base. This 2nd century stupa is said to have been constructed towards the end of the Kushan Empire. Some sources claim it dates to a period soon after the 3rd to 5th centuries. A memento of the nexus between the great Kushan Empire and Buddhism, this is the most complete Buddhist monument on the famous Khyber Pass.

British military officers have noted the location of the sphola Stupa, albeit not always by name. They have mentioned the massive structure in their reports since the first half of the 19th century. G.P. Gerard was first to make this reference. During the Sikh ascendancy over Punjab, French General Claude Auguste Court also made some archaeological contributions by exploring the Buddhist site of Takht-i-Bhai, Kashmir Smast, Banamari and Shahbaz Garhi. Of the ancient remains along the Khyber Pass, he pointed out that the ruins were to a considerable extent to be found in Jalalabad, and near the Khyber Pass. The latter are situated on the northern side of Safid-koh mountain range and are called Pishboulak. James Fergusson has opined that Pishboulak is the Shpola Stupa of Khyber. Captain Alexander the Great Burnes of the Bombay Army and his companion Mr. Gonsalves visited these sites in 1837 and he drew its first sketch drawing and sent it to Mr. James Prinsep, then secretary of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, along with a letter explaining that the stupa was located near "Lal Baig Kagarhi" in the pass and had not yet been opened by treasure seekers.

William Simson referred to the Shpola Stupa at the Royal Institute of British Architects in London, a few years later. James Ferguson discussed the plan and architectural details in his monumental volume on the History of Indian and Eastern Architecture. After the formation of the Frontier Circle of the Archaeological Survey of India, the first official tour to Shpola Stupa was made in 1916 to inspect its structure, prepare its plan and sectional drawings, and to photograph the surviving remains.

The stupa is raised on a plinth supported at the bottom by a massive retaining wall founded on solid rock. The plinth is built in three slightly receding tiers and decorated with moldings. The uppermost tier is divided into bays flanked by pilasters with Corinthian capitals. The dome of the stupa springs from a cylindrical drum ornamented with a modillion cornice. The dome of the stupa is 30.4m in diameter and 13.7m height. The stairs leading to the top of the base are on the northern side.

The general plan, and the magnitude and strength of construction of the Shpola Stupa, bears a striking resemblance to the stupas of Taxila valley. It apparently also harks back to the same period, 3rd to 4th century CE.



Chapter XII

Learning the Variation of Buddhism in Jambudvipa from World Buddhist Heritage Sites



Mohra Moradu, Taxila



During the rains retreat in Taxila in 2565 BE, I intended to study the traces of Buddhist civilization, from the Buddha time to the Post-Buddha era until the time when it disappeared from Jambudvipa in the 17th Buddhist century.

The disappearance of Buddhism is an interesting subject of study especially for Buddhist countries. There are a lot of lessons that need to be learnt to understand the co-existence of different sects, beliefs and practices in Buddhism that is hard to realise *what the original Buddhism was, and what the true teachings are.*



Mohra Moradu, Taxila

The teachings of the Buddha never disappear. The teachings of the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path still remain in existence. However, *the Truths from Buddhist Dhamma* are not the essence of teachings, so those who became Buddhists cannot penetrate into the insights and understand thoroughly. On the contrary, we have seen a lot of nonsense that has poured in and tarnished what was well expounded by the Blessed One.

Most importantly, the attempt to alter the original teachings by adding beliefs from other schools of thought and the teachings from other faiths to it until it becomes Buddhism with a tumour.



Hence many Reformed Schools of Buddhism, pertaining to Ācariyavāda (schools set up by teachers) on top of the original teachings! The real original Buddha-dhamma is fading away. People observe wrong things, develop wrong views, and destabilise Buddhism even further. Buddhist organisations in each society and country may have tried to bring attention to the problem but with limited success.

If we look at the path of Buddhism from past to present, it has withstood the winds of sensual pleasures and worldly defilements. The Buddhist vessel has not stood still in the sea of human cravings.

It all depends on the degree to which the Four Groups of Buddhists live their life without being heedless, practice accordingly and give the utmost respect to the Buddha, the Dhamma, the Sangha and the Trisikkha.

The true cause of the disappearance of Buddhism in many places, especially from its homeland in Jambudvipa - from the most flourishing period to the declining and then disappearing – comes from nothing but the decay of the Four Groups of Buddhists. The Buddha said that the conditions that led to the decay of Buddhism are due to the distortion of the Dhamma:

1. Monks learn the suttas that are distorted in meanings
2. Monks are stubborn, impatient, do not listen to reprimands and lack respect
3. Knowledgeable monks, well versed in the teaching of the Buddha, the Dhamma and Vinaya are not interested in passing on their knowledge. When they pass away, all is lost.
4. Senior bhikkhus seek worldly gains and status, thus lacking in their Threefold Training (Trisikkhas).

They may be spiritual leaders in the Dhamma practice but are not interested in seeking solitude, lacking the effort in their practice to penetrate the Truth and attain liberation.

With subsequent ordinations, new monks followed the example of those before them.

Whether Buddhism will flourish or disappear, the Buddha had already warned us. He stressed that the main reason for this decline is the weakness within the Four Assemblies of Buddhists. More importantly, monks who do not observe the Dhamma-Vinaya.



Hence many Reformed Schools of Buddhism, pertaining to Ācariyavāda (schools set up by teachers) on top of the original teachings! The real original Buddha-dhamma is fading away. People observe wrong things, develop wrong views, and destabilise Buddhism even further. Buddhist organisations in each society and country may have tried to bring attention to the problem but with limited success.

If we look at the path of Buddhism from past to present, it has withstood the winds of sensual pleasures and worldly defilements. The Buddhist vessel has not stood still in the sea of human cravings.

It all depends on the degree to which the Four Groups of Buddhists live their life without being heedless, practice accordingly and give the utmost respect to the Buddha, the Dhamma, the Sangha and the Trisikkha.

The true cause of the disappearance of Buddhism in many places, especially from its homeland in Jambudvipa - from the most flourishing period to the declining and then disappearing – comes from nothing but the decay of the Four Groups of Buddhists.



The Buddha said that the conditions that led to the decay of Buddhism are due to the distortion of the Dhamma:

1. Monks learn the suttas that are distorted in meanings
2. Monks are stubborn, impatient, do not listen to reprimands and lack respect
3. Knowledgeable monks, well versed in the teaching of the Buddha, the Dhamma and Vinaya are not interested in passing on their knowledge. When they pass away, all is lost.
4. Senior bhikkhus seek worldly gains and status, thus lacking in their Threefold Training (Trisikkhas).

They may be spiritual leaders in the Dhamma practice but are not interested in seeking solitude, lacking the effort in their practice to penetrate the Truth and attain liberation.

With subsequent ordinations, new monks followed the example of those before them.

Whether Buddhism will flourish or disappear, the Buddha had already warned us. He stressed that the main reason for this decline is the weakness within the Four Assemblies of Buddhists. More importantly, monks who do not observe the Dhamma-Vinaya.

We can see that this is true when we study the traces of Buddhist history during different periods where the Saddhamma (true Dhamma) started to shift:

- First stage: The Reformed Hinayana between 100 BE – 400 BE
- Second stage: Early Mahayana period 400 BE- 700 BE
- Third stage: Middle Mahayana period 700BE- 1200 BE
- Fourth stage: The late Mahayana Period (the complete transformation – nothing of the Saddhamma or true doctrine left) 1200 BE – 1700 BE

After my trip to Peshawar, formerly known as Purushapura of the Kushan Empire, now in **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa** – Pakistan, I looked deeper into the history of Buddhist civilization, particularly of the Northern Buddhism, alongside my field trips to Buddhist world heritage sites in Taxila, **Mohra Moradu** and ancient **Sirsuk**. Morah Moradu is a large monastery complex, contemporary of the Jaulian monastery (6 km from Taxila but under the KP administration).

I returned to the Jaulian monastery for the second time – to feel the spiritual energy of the Buddhist civilization which remained intact. On 18th August 2565 BE, I chanted *Anattalakkhana sutta* and other important suttas and dedicated the practice to the Buddha, the Dhamma, the Sangha, my parents and my teachers. It was on the same date that Ven. Suang Parisuttho, one of the Thai ariya (noble) monks, passed away. He taught me the complete *samatha* and *vipassana* meditation practice, especially the ‘three dimensions of the dhamma and the anatta’. He kindly gave me a one-to-one teaching and planted the ideology of how to propagate Buddhism in my mind.

My trip to the Jaulian monastery on 18th August 2565 BE had a significant meaning – to perform religious practices rather than just a field trip as usual. The day before that (17th August 2565 BE), I visited **Mohra Moradu** monastery – a contemporary of the Jaulian.

Here’s a summary of the Jaulian Monastery, a World Buddhist Heritage site:

Jaulian was built in the late Kushan period and is about 10 kilometres from Sirkap. Located on a hill, approximately 90 metres above the ground. There are stupa and viharas, excavated by Mr. Natesa Aitar in 1916-1917 under the supervision of Sir John Marshall.

It has three entrances and three courtyards. On the south side, there is a stupa on a raised ground whereas, on the north side, the stupa is on a lower level. On the west, there is a smaller courtyard linking the first and second.

The lower courtyard is now used as the main entrance, comprising 5 stupas (only their bases remain), once adorned with sculptures. At the base of one of the stupas, there is a Kharosthi inscription with the names of the persons who commissioned them. Next to the courtyard, there are rows of small cells where Buddha and Bodhisattva images were kept.

The main stupa on the upper courtyard was built in the Kushan dynasty around the 2nd AD Century. The decorations must have been added to it later. The interesting thing here is the sitting Buddha with a hole in his belly for the pilgrims to insert their finger and wish for freedom from ill health. (This reminds me of the concept of the Buddha as a physician at a later date). At the bottom, there was a Kharosthi inscription, saying donated by **Budhamitra**. There are also small stupas housing the Buddha's relics. The artwork may not be the best, but they are decorated with many precious stones.

The archaeological remains of the Mohra Moradu Monastery are very similar. *See pictures of the two sites below for comparison.*

Buddhist heritage in the northern region of Jambudvīpa is enriched with Gandharan Buddhist art dating back to the 6th-7th Buddhist Centuries during the reign of Kanishka of the Kushan dynasty. This was preceded by Ashoka of the Maurya dynasty between the 2nd-3rd Buddhist Centuries.

Between those 2 periods, there was **King Menander** (Milinda in Pali-Sanskrit, or Milin in Thai).

King Menander was Greek who lived in a different period from Alexander. Alexander was king of Yonok (Greece) who

Jaulian



Mohra Moradu



invaded the northern region of Jambudvipa in 217 BE and left. From 221BE – 359 BE King Chandragupta founded the Maurya dynasty and extended his territory to most of Jambudvipa, with the capital city at Patliputra in Magadha.

Maurya dynasty thrived most during King Ashoka who extended his power to cover the whole of northern Jambudvipa to Gandhara and Kamboja. This can be seen from the archaeological evidence related to Buddhism which started to flourish there.

King Menander came to the throne circa 400 BE. Buddhism flourished even more. Some archaeological records mentioned that ***Gandharan Buddha statues were built for the first time during his reign.*** The flourishing of Buddhism was more prominent in the reign of Kanishka who ruled around 620 BE. Like Ashoka, Kanishka was the patron of Buddhism.

Some texts said that King Kanishka came to the throne in the 5th Buddhist Century, around 553BE. If that is the case, the timing would fit perfectly with how Buddhist civilization was passed on in the northern region.

King Menander was said to be as great as Alexander. He was king of ***Bactria*** and related to King Apollodorus of Artemita.

Menander established ***Sagala*** (of Madda Kingdom) as a capital city and extended his empire to the northeast of Jambudvipa, including Bengal (Magadha) and Vajji, the north and central Jambudvipa.

Menander was knowledgeable in all kinds of subjects and considered a great scholar whom no one could compete with. The turning point came when he met Nāgasena who could answer all his questions, according to the book ***“The Questions of King Milinda”***. As a result, he converted to Buddhism and became a



Stupa at Mohra Moradu



Mohra Moradu Kitchen well



Sangha at Mohra Moradu



Mr. Muhammad Iqbal Khan Manj
Director of Taxila Museum

patron of Buddhism like other Buddhist kings before him. The evidence is the metal coins with his face turning to one side and a bit of his shoulder. The writing above and below says: “*Saviour King Menander*”.

The other side of the coin is *a Buddhist wheel*. There’s also a lion, similar to that which stands on Ashoka’s pillar.

Most importantly in his reign, it was the first time that Buddha statues, known as *Gandharan Buddha Images*, were built as a symbol of Buddhism. The statues became a standard model in building the Buddha statues in later periods. The principal guidelines are that the statue needs to include 32 characteristics of the Buddha which convey his great compassion, allowing people develop faith in him. Gandharan Buddhas are unique. They look like real persons and their robes have beautiful pleats (Greek influence).

Towards the end of Menander’s life, there seem to be conflicting conclusions:

- 1.He continued on the throne and passed away in a tent.
- 2.He left to become a Buddhist monk, seeking mokkhadhamma (salvation), handing over the reign to his queen. His son, Strato, would succeed to the throne after that.

As for Nagasena who converted *King Menander* to Buddhism, *The Milinda Pañha* says that:

Nagasena was born in Sangala in the Himalayas. His father was a Brahmin named Sonuttara. At the age of 7, he completed the Vedas and other sciences. He asked his father whether there were any other things that he needed to study. His father said that would be all. One day he met Ven. Rohana who came for alms round at his father’s house. Nagasena had admiration for Ven Rohana, thinking that he had a lot of knowledge and asked his father to invite him to a meal at his house. He requested to learn from him. The senior monk said that he couldn’t teach a person who was not yet ordained. So Nagasena asked permission from his father to be ordained and learn Buddhism from Ven Rohana.

At the age of 20, he became a monk. One day, he thought that his teacher must be stupid for making him learn the Abhidhamma before anything else. Ven. Rohana, his preceptor could read his mind and said that what he was thinking was not right. Nagasena knew that his teacher knew what he was thinking. He was alarmed and begged for forgiveness. The senior monk said that he would forgive him under one condition: he needed to teach King Menander in Sakala to



have faith in the Triple Gem. Only then, would his teacher forgive him. Ven. Rohana sent him to learn from Ven. Assakutta at Wattniyasaenasana Vihara in Sakorn. Nagasena stayed there for 7 days before he was accepted as a student. One day, he taught the Dhamma to a wealthy man and that man became a Sotapanna. Nagasena came back and contemplated on what he taught, he also attained Sotapanna. After that, he journeyed from Sakala to Pataliputra, stayed at Sokarama, learned from Ven. Dhammarakkitta and completed it in 6 months. Nagasena went to practice at Rakkhittaguha for a long while and attained enlightenment. The Sangha anumodhana and asked him to debate with Menander. Nagasena went to Sakala and answered all the questions asked. King Menander finally had faith in Buddhism and vowed to take the Triple Gem as his refuge for the rest of his life.

Blessing with Metta





Amlukdara Stupa | Swat

The Amlukdara stupa is a Buddhist Stupa that can be seen standing in all its ancient majesty from the surrounding high mountains in the Swat district. The historic site is sheltered by the great Mount Ilam located 11km from the Barikot Bazar. It takes its name from the nearby village of Amlukdara, a Pashto language compound word comprising of Amluk and Dara. Amluk is the Pashto word for the "wild persimmon" fruit and Dara is a mountain pass into a valley.

Amlukdara is not a new discovery. Sir Aurel Stein reported the stupa in 1926 and observed that the main stupa was possibly one of the best-preserved sites of Buddhist architecture he had ever seen in Gandhara. Recent archaeological excavations have dated the main stupa and its sacred area to the 2nd century CE. The site was abandoned around the 9th century CE.

It was among the first sites to be documented by Italian archeologist Tucci in 1956 when the Italian Mission first started excavation in Swat. Small-scale restoration work was initiated by the Department of Archaeology, Government of Pakistan, subsequently in 1958-59. The upper circumambulatory and the frontal part of the main stupa was partially restored. Domenico Faccenna studied it in the 1960s and 70s. The site has been recorded and re-studied since 1990 by the Italian Archaeological Mission working in Swat.

Luca Maria Olivieri started new scientific excavations at the site in 2012. This round of excavations uncovered many new finds. Parts of the main stupa with other associated standing votive stupas, temple and shrines are among the new discoveries. The excavation also uncovered the floor level of a sacred precinct, intact with a few votive stupas.

DoAM initiated a second season of archaeological excavations Amlukdara in November 2019. These excavations revealed several votive stupas, floor levels, Buddhist shrines and an enclosure wall of the sacred precinct.

The sacred structures were coated with stucco plaster, painted in red and ochre color. Few stucco figures of Buddha can be seen on the base of the main stupa and the votive stupas. The dome of the main stupa and its circumambulatory was also partially restored during these excavations.

Sculptures of Buddha, stucco Buddha heads, stucco decorations, gold-gilded relief panels (pre-birth and after-birth stories), brackets, pilasters, beads, ceramics, bangles, arrowheads, fishhooks, metallic nails, potsherds and painted Shah Period pottery have been recovered from the site.

Chapter XIII

Roles of Lay and Monastic Individuals in Gandhara after Buddhism Disappeared from Jambudvipa



<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ashoka>

Ashoka carving



*Bodhisattva Mathriya
at Peshawar Museum*

The 2022 historic rains retreat in Taxila, Pakistan allowed me to research the Gandharan Buddhist civilization between the 2nd and 10th Buddhist Centuries, after the Buddha's passing.

As mentioned earlier, Buddhist civilization flourished most in the northern regions in two different periods, one of which was during the time of Ashoka the Great. He was the 3rd king of the Maurya dynasty who succeeded the throne circa 269-311 BE.

During his reign, he extended the empire to cover the largest territory in the history of ancient India, comprising the present Republic of India, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, and the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

In 237 BE he shifted his focus and converted to Buddhism – as suggested by his nephew, a novice monk named Nigrodha.

Between 237 BE- 289 BE, King Ashoka built viharas and stupas all over his kingdom in Jambudvipa – as reverence to the Triple Gem. 290 BE King Ashoka hosted the Third Buddhist Council, led by Ven. Moggaliputta Tissa. Ashoka sent Buddhist missionaries to propagate Buddhism on nine different routes, in and out of Jambudvipa. They were:



¹Maurya Empire, Pataliputra, Magadha-janapada



MV in the midnight writing at Peshwar Museum

- *First group*: under the leadership of ***Majjhantika Thera*** - to propagate Buddhism in the northwest of the Republic of India (Maghada) such as ***Gandhara and Kashmir***
- *Second group*: under the leadership of ***Mahadeva Thera*** - to propagate Buddhism in the south of the Republic of India (Maghada) in ***Mahismandala and Mysore***
- *Third group*: under the leadership of ***Rakkhita Thera*** - to promote Buddhism in ***the southeast of the Republic of India (Maghada) Vanavasi (Mumbai/ or present Bombay)***
- *Fourth group*: under the leadership of ***Yona Dhammarakkhita Thera*** – to promote Buddhism near the coastal area in the west, in ***Aparantakajanaka (by the Arab sea, north of Mumbai)***
- *Fifth group*: under the leadership of ***Maha Dhammarakkhita Thera*** – to propagate Buddhism in ***Maharattha /Maharashtra (northeast of Mumbai)***
- *Sixth group*: under the leadership of ***Maharakkhita Thera*** – to promote Buddhism in ***Yona, Persiat*** . (It was at the time under the rule of Greece and Persia, now the Islamic Republic of Iran)
- *Seventh group*: under the leadership of ***Majjhima Thera*** – to promote Buddhism in ***Himavanta /Himalayan Region (now Nepal)***
- *Eighth group*: under the leadership of ***Sona Thera and Uttara Thera*** – to promote Buddhism in ***Suvarnabhumi***
- *Ninth group*: under the leadership of ***Mahindra Thera and Sanghamitra Thera*** – to promote Buddhism in ***Lankadvipa (Sri Lanka)***



MV homage to the Buddha statue at Peshawar Museum



The propagation of Buddhism in the north (northwest) of Jambudvīpa continued to flourish afterwards. Therefore, we need to note down the names of *Majjhantika Thera* and *Maharakkhita Thera*, who led the first and sixth groups, for our study on Buddhist civilization in Gandhara.

At the same time, we need to note down the name: *Dhammarakkhita Thera* or *Yona Dhammarakkhita Thera*, a Greek monk from Yona (or Yonok). He was the main driving force in promoting Buddhism in the north of Jambudvīpa. This shows that Buddhism had flourished in the north of Jambudvīpa for a long time.

Buddhism continued to thrive from the time of King Ashoka to the time of King Menander² – 400 years after the passing of the Buddha.

According to "The Questions of King Milinda" in the Pali Canon, Menander or Milinda was king of Yonok (Greece). *Dhammarakkhita Thera*, a contemporary of King Ashoka – just over 200 years after the passing of the Buddha, also came from Yonok.

This suggests that Gandhara Buddhist civilization had penetrated the character and spirit of the Greeks long before Menander's time, and continued after Menander had converted to Buddhism, following his dialogue with Ven. Nagasena.

Milindapañha, or "*The Questions of King Milinda*," a well-known Buddhist text in the Theravada circle for about 400 years after the Buddha's nirvana, stated that King Milinda was born in Kalasi in Alasandā or Alexandria, now Kandahar in Afghanistan.

He ruled a kingdom with the capital city at *Sagala* or *Euthymedia* (or *Euthydemia of Ptolemy*). It is now known as *Sialkot in Punjab*. His kingdom encompassed *Peshawar* and the upper area of the Kabul river (*Kathiawar*) and the west of Uttar Pradesh. Buddhist viharas and monasteries were built around this time. *Milinda vihara* was built and offered to *Nagasena Thera*. Thus, we should add the name of *Nagasena Thera* to the Buddhist civilization during *King Milinda's* period.

Nagasena was born in the village of *Kajangala* in the Himalayas. His father, *Sonuttara*, was a brahmin. *Nagasena* was very wise and witty. He started learning the Three Vedas and other subjects at the age of 7 and completed them at the age of 10.

²Buddhists call him King Milinda

Nagasena became a novice monk and studied Dhamma Vinaya under **Ven. Rohana**, at the Rakkhita Cave. At the age of 20, he was ordained as a monk by Ven. Rohana. Afterwards, he was sent to learn from **Ven. Assagutta** at the Vattaniya Monastery in **Sagala**. Not long after that, he went to **Pataliputta** to learn Dhamma from **Ven. Dhammarakkhita** for 6 months. He went **Rakkhita Guha** to carry on with his practice and attained arahantship. The monastic communities rejoiced in his attainment and asked him to have a debate with **King Milinda** in **Sagala**. The king converted to Buddhism and vowed to **take refuge in the Triple Gem for the rest of his life**. King Milinda was fully dedicated to the promotion and prolonging of Buddhism. Buddhist civilization, thus, was passed on to the period of **Kanishka the Great of the Kushan dynasty who ruled Gandhara in the 6th Buddhist Century**.

Kanishka, a world-renown king, converted to Buddhism and dedicated himself to the propagation of Buddhism – just like his predecessor, King Ashoka the Great. He was thus known as **the Second Ashoka the Great of Jambudvipa**.

Though he declared himself a Buddhist, **Kanishka** was open-minded and had respect for other religions. He allowed others the freedom to practice their faiths. Hence the worship of divinities in many parts of his kingdom, including Yona, Sumeria, Elamite and India, etc.

A Chinese monk, Hiuen Tsang, wrote that **Kanishka hosted the Fourth Buddhist Council** in Kasmira³. Five hundred virtuous and scholarly monks took part, led by **Parsva Thera** and **Vasumitra Thera** as his deputy.

This Council was completely different from the first one, especially in **their use of the Sanskrit language**. They recited the following three main atthakathas:

- Vinaya Pitaka
- Sutta Pitaka
- Abhidhamma Pitaka

All were recorded in writing and verified by the **Sarvastivadin school**. After that, **King Kanishka** sent out missionaries to propagate Buddhism in central and East Asia.

The archaeological excavation found a casket belonging to the Kanishka's period with the inscription:

“Welcome Sarvastivadin Buddhist Sangha”

³ Kasmira(Sanskrit) or Kashmir(Pali)





Casket of Lord Buddha relics in Kushan Empire period
at Peshawar Museum



This is evidence of the Fourth Buddhist Council, suggested that Kanishka worshipped *Sarvastivadin* – one of the *Theravada (Hinayana)* schools of Buddhism. For those who thought that Kanishka was a supporter of the *Mahayana* or *Ajarivada* Buddhism, this will not be entirely correct.

Attempts had been made to modify the teaching method, to avoid too many conflicts with Brahminism. Jataka stories, written by Asvaghosa, were added to the Text, diverging further from the original Theravada. It is said that Kanishka's reign marked the beginning of Mahayana Buddhism because the original Theravada is different from Sarvastivadin in many ways.

According to the commentaries, the Fourth Buddhist Council in 643 BE⁴ was a combination of Mahayana and Theravada schools of Buddhism. The *Sabbatthikavada* school differed from that of Mahisasakavada. Afterwards, Sabbatthikavada became Kassapikavada and branched out into Samkantikavada and Suttavada. The fourth Council thus was known as the Buddhist Council of the *Uttara Nikaya* (the Northern school) which paved the way for Mahayana in the following period. It was concluded that when the Maurya dynasty disappeared from Jambudvīpa circa 359 BE, Theravada or Hinayana Buddhism did as well. Such a conclusion is no surprise. The remaining school of Buddhism, though claimed to be Theravada, had diverged from its original - to survive alongside Brahminism which was going strong during the reign of King Pushyamitra of the Sunga Dynasty.

Sarvastivadin school was no exception. Stories had been added to the Buddha's life, making it more, as seen in *Lalitavistara*. This marks the beginning of Mahayana between *400 BE-700 BE*. (Early stage of Mahayana)

Monks who played important roles in prolonging the Buddhist Order during the reign of Kanishka were from the Sarvastivadin school. *Parsva Thera, Asvaghosa, Nagarjuna, Asanga, Vasubandhu* and some others produced outstanding Buddhist literature. The narration was in Sanskrit instead of Pali.

Some significant findings from the traces of Buddhist civilization are the Gandharan art and Buddha images that appeared in the world for the very first time during the reign of King Kanishka – and they have lasted until today!

⁴ in Kashmir, north of India, held in Kanishka time

From *the 10th Buddhist Century* onwards, Buddhism gradually transformed, moving away from the original and eventually disappearing due to political situations, war, and weakness within the Buddhist organization. Monks were confused, not knowing which Dhamma Vinaya was true to the original and which was reformed.

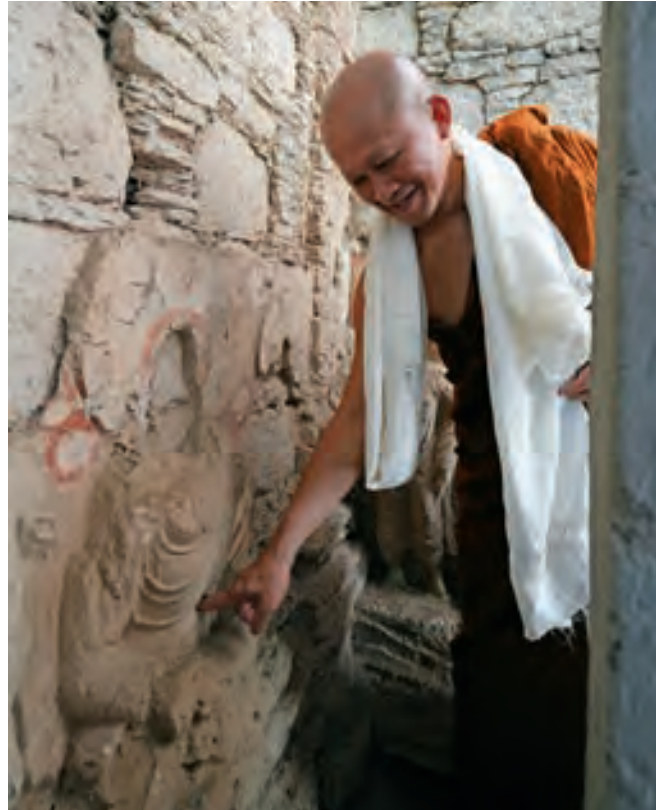
The passing on of Buddhism, following the death of the Buddha, and how it relates to the Buddhist World Heritage Sites, makes for a very interesting study. This will help us to appreciate the Buddhist heritage in northern Jambudvipa (Gandhara, Kamboja, Pancala, Kuru, and Surasena), contributing to an in-depth understanding of the complexity of society in each period.

Buddhist events in Jambudvipa, after the passing away of the Buddha, can be categorised into 4 different periods:

- Post-100 BE - 400 BE, Buddhism started to separate into two main schools: Theravada (Hinayana) and Mahayana
- Post-400 BE - 700 BE, Beginning of Mahayana (ending of Theravada)
- Post-700 BE - 1200 BE, The Golden Age of Mahayana
- Post-1200 BE - 1700 BE, The decline and disappearance of Buddhism in Jambudvipa

The 3rd and 4th periods are very worthy of study, with regards to Buddhist civilization in the northern regions. They show distinctive changes in relation to social, political and governance - how the Monastery and the Kingdom worked together. For example, the roles of **King Kanishka of the Kushan Empire and Buddhist monks: Parsva Thera, Asvaghosa, and Nagarjuna**. The two Buddhist sages, **Asvaghosa and Nagarjuna**, helped to form Mahayana Buddhism in the second period (400BE - 700 BE).

The 3rd and 4th periods took us to various kingdoms and kings, such as **Harshavardhana, Samudragupta and Vikramaditya**, all of whom **worshipped and established a strong relationship with Buddhism**.



We can see how Buddhism progressed and passed on. An eminent monk at the time was **Ven. Asanga**, a Gandharan, who founded the Yogachara or **Vijnanavada**.

The birth of Yogachara brought a new dimension to Buddhism which was completely different from the original.

Meanwhile, Sunyavada, established by **Nagarjuna** after 1000 BE completely disappeared. It flourished in China, Korea and Japan instead. In Korea, it is known as **Chanzong**; in Japan, it is **Zen** (Dhyana, Chan Jana).

The philosophy of Vijnanavada or Yogachara school, established by Ven. Asanga became widespread. Mahayana school adopted it as their main Scripture, even though it was written by a scholar post-Buddha time, but it was widely received. They worshipped Bodhisattvas, believing that they would help them to reach the Kasetra (Buddha Land) and attain nirvana after



death. This was a return to the belief in the power and sacredness of gods and Brahman who could change everything on earth including humanity.

who could change everything on earth including humanity.

Vijnanavada school was based in Gandhara. Asanga and Vasubandhu were brothers, and they were very well-known at the time. Both came from Purushpura (Peshawar in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) and were born to a Brahmin family of Kausika.

Asanga abandoned Brahminism and took his younger brother, Vasubandhu, to join the Sarvastivadin school of Theravada Buddhism which was undergoing some form of change but not too much. They were absorbed in the Mahayana study. Vasubandhu wrote a miracle story to show how Asanga visited the Bodhisattva Sri Ariya Maitreya in Tusita Heaven. Sri Ariya Maitreya was prophesied by the Buddha that he

would be born in Mahabhaddakappa and become the future Buddha.

To attain enlightenment, according to Mahayana beliefs, one needs to rely on two things: oneself and the power of others (external factor). The two factors to attain liberation include:

1. The power of morality, concentration and wisdom – self-reliance, and Dhamma reliance (known in Chinese as Zi Li (*Mandarin*))
2. The power of the Buddha and Bodhisattva (Known in Chinese as Ta Li (*Mandarin*))

With each passing period, the true understanding of the Dhamma Vinaya, expounded by the Buddha, had shifted, straying from the Path - the Ariyamagga or the Noble Eightfold Path.

The original Buddhism finally disappeared from Jambudvipa **between 1200 BE -1700 BE.**



Then came the Tantra or Vajrayana school of Mahayana Buddhism. Though Buddhism may have disappeared from Jambudvipa, both Theravada and Mahayana continue to flourish in other countries around the world. *Vajrayana* continues to flourish in *Tibet, Bhutan, and Nepal*. Their scriptures remain intact, not damaged by war.

In Jambudvipa (India, Pakistan), Buddhism was destroyed; Mahayana monasteries were demolished, and monks were killed. Temples, maha-viharas and stupas were ransacked and burnt down, like what happened in Nalanda just after 1700 BE.

In Gandhara, *Taxila was one of the four leading Buddhist universities in Jambudvipa* (700BE-1200BE). This, too, was destroyed.

Archaeological records suggest that civilization in the Taxila Valley flourished for 3,000 years before

being destroyed by *the white Huns in 1008 BE (465AD)*.

This corresponds with “The Great Tang Records on the Western Regions,” written by Xuanzang or Hiuen Tsang in 1189 BE (646 AD). During his two years of living there, he noted:

Takṣaśilā encompasses an area of approximately 2,000 lis⁵. The capital city covers an area of over 10 lis. Tribe leaders and generals fight with each other to gain power. Ruling clans have disappeared. Taksasila, formerly under the rule of Kapisa, now belongs to Kashmir.

Traditionally, the inhabitants don’t like cruel, aggressive people. Many Buddhist temples and monasteries are now empty and deserted. There are a few monks, all are from Mahayana school.

Blessing and metta.

⁵ Traditional Chinese measurement of distance





Peshawar Museum

The Peshawar Museum is famous all over the world for its Gandhara period (200 BC to 600 CE) Buddhist sculptures. Made of red brick, the museum building consists of a spacious hall, with two side galleries on the ground and two on the upper floor. The main hall and three galleries are reserved for the exhibition of Gandhara sculptures, terracotta figurines, lithic inscriptions, toilets, trays, household objects, etc. The pièce de résistance of the museum is the colossal, standing Buddha in the main hall, one of several, and a large number of stone and stucco Buddha heads are also on display here.

The main hall was built in 1906-07 in memory of Queen Victoria. The building was completed in November 1907 to house the Gandharan sculptures excavated from the main Gandharan sites of Shah-Ji-Ki-Dheri Peshawar, Serai Bahlol, Takht-i-Bahi in the Mardan District and later from Jamal Garhi and other Gandharan sites excavated by leading British archeologists of the time.

The two-story building is a mixture of British and Mughal architecture. It initially consisted of a main hall and two side aisles on the ground and first level, surmounted on all corners by four graceful cupolas and miniature pinnacles. Two halls were added in similar fashion on the east and west side of the building in 1969-70. The second floor was added to these side halls in 1974-75.

The primary assortment of Peshawar Museum comprises 14,168 artefacts altogether to date. These incorporate Gandharan models, coins, manuscripts and old manuscripts of the Holy Quran, inscriptions, weapons, dresses, jewelry, Kalash effigies, miniature paintings from the Mughal era and later, antiquities including household items from the region and Persian handiworks.

Chapter XIV

Individuals/ Monks from Northern Kingdoms (Gandhara Kamboja Matcha, Kuru) and Traces of Buddhist Civilization



River Ravi, Indus river system

During the rains retreat in Taxil¹, I was able to research deeper into Buddhist history and traces of civilization in the Northern regions of Jambudvīpa, especially in **Gandhara**.

Two eminent members of the royal clans who joined the Buddhist Order during the Buddha time were King Pukkusati of Taxila and King Mahakappina of Kukkutavati.

According to the Pali scriptures, Mahakappina's father was the King of **Kukkutavati** in Paccanta-janapada. He succeeded to the throne after his father's passing and changed his name from **Kappina** to **Mahakappina**. His wife, **Anoja-Devi**, was the daughter of the King of **Sāgala, Madra Kingdom**.

Mahakappina had an inquisitive mind. He was keen on renunciation and following the Path to Liberation. One day, while he and his 1,000 ministers were visiting a park, he met a group of traders from Savatthi. He asked to see them and enquired about the news from Savatthi. They told him that ...

“the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha had appeared on earth”

Upon hearing this, Mahakappina was **momentarily overwhelmed by bliss**. Once he regained his **mindful awareness**, he asked the traders again three times. Twice, they repeated their answers. The king told his court official to draft a letter to his queen, asking her to reward the traders with three hundred thousand kaphananas (coins). He renounced the throne, leaving it to the queen. The king and his ministers decided to join the Order. The ministers sent their wives the same message and set off on horseback for Savatthi, Kosala Kingdom.

The horse journey was tough, through the jungle, over the mountains and across three rivers: the **Aravaccha**, the **Nilavahana** and the **Chandrabhaga**

Looking at the geographical location, from northern Gandhara to Kosala, we may conclude that:

The Aravaccha river could be the Subhavastu (Swat River in Pakistan)

The Nilavahana river could be the Indus in Pakistan

The Chandrabhaga river could be the Chenab river in Punjab, Pakistan.

All three rivers were deep and wide and would require a huge raft which would be difficult to find.

“King Mahakappina prayed to the Triple Gem, renouncing the world to dedicate his life to it and, with its power, rendering a river not to be like a river.”

He and his 1000 ministers were able to ride over the surface of the river, as if on a road, without the horses' hoofs getting wet. He did likewise when crossing the other two rivers.



¹ Taxila is in Gandhara, ancient Jambudvīpa, now in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan



13 narrative panels of the Sikiri Stupa that tell the story of Buddha. (Lahore Museum)

Early in the morning, the Blessed One surveyed the sentient beings with his divine vision. Out of kindness, he took an alms bowl and robe and travelled 120 yojanas (16 X 120 = 1920 km) by himself to meet Mahakapina and his 1,000 ministers. He sat under a big banyan tree by the bank of the Chandrabhaga river, radiating the Buddha aura - like an emperor welcoming a village chief and his men.

Mahakappina and his ministers prostrated themselves before the Buddha and sat down to one side. The Blessed One delivered the *ānupubbikathā* (Gradual Discourse). They all attained *Sotapatti Fruition* and requested to join the Order. The Blessed One conferred their ordination by saying: *Ehi bhikkhu upasampada*.

Meanwhile, upon receiving the news from the Savatthi traders, Queen Anoja and the 1,000 ministers' wives wanted to do likewise. They crossed the rivers the same way their husbands did. They paid

homage to the Buddha under the banyan tree by the *Chandrabhaga river*² and the Buddha delivered the *ānupubbikathā discourse*. At the end of the discourse, they all attained Sotapatti Fruition. Ven. Mahakappina and 1,000 bhikkhus who were present at the time, listened to the same Dhamma and attained Arahantship.

The Buddha declared Mahakappina as the foremost among those who instructed the monks (*Bhikkhuvadakanam*³).

Research into stories of the bhikkhus who lived in the north of Jambudvīpa during the Buddha's time showed evidence that Buddhism spread across Jambudvīpa. The Buddha may have never been to all those places⁴, but the stories of him, his Dhamma and the Sangha were spread by monks and lay devotees, especially by merchants using inter-kingdom trade routes, for example *the silk road* that linked China and southeast Asia to Europe.

² Now known as Chenab river in Pakistan

³ See Kappina Sutta, Tipitaka Volume 16, Suttapitaka Volume 8, Samyutta Nikaya, Nidana Vagga

⁴ According to the book: "45 Years of the Buddha's Rains Retreat"



The Chinese government has now re-established the silk road, linking many countries under the policy of *One Belt One Road (OBOR)*, as seen in present Pakistan.

Besides the story of Mahakappina, King Pukkusati's name was mentioned in the Tripitaka. According to the Dhātuvibhaṅga sutta, *King Pukkusati ruled Taxila*⁵. His story was similar to that of *Mahakappina*.

The story of Pukkusati was also linked to *King Bimbisara of Rajagaha*⁶. The two kings became *Adittha-sahāya* - friends who have never met each other in person. Their alliance was established through the traders from Taxila.



The Tripitaka's *Dhātuvibhaṅga-sutta* refers to the story of *Pukkusati* and the Dhamma teachings for the development of a higher level of insight meditation practice. It is a popular choice of study amongst Buddhists. It talks about an analysis of the properties - that a person has *six elements, twelve sense bases (āyatana), eighteen mental investigations (manopavicāra), and four determinations (adhittana)*. (For more information, see Vibhaṅga Sutta, Tripitaka Volume 16, Suttapitaka Volume 8, Samyutta Nikaya, Nidana Vagga.)

This Dhamma essence is essential for practitioners who seek to understand the Four Noble Truths and attain liberation (nirvana).

According to Dhātuvibhaṅga-sutta, *King Pukkusati* left Taxila after reading *King Bimbisara's message*, sent via the traders. The Blessed One could see with his divine eye that Pukkusati *had renounced his royal estates expanding over 100 yojanas in Taxila*, dedicated his monkhood to the Buddha and travelled 192 yojanas from Taxila to Rajagaha. This was great merit. The Buddha thought that if he did not go to teach Pukkusati, he would die without any refuge and he would not be able to attain *the third stage of samannaphala or Anagami Fruition*. What's more, Pukkusati only had one night to live because his past karma would finish him off.



The Blessed One left Jetavana⁷ that morning for Rājagaha⁸. After his alms round and a meal, he travelled 45 yojanas by himself (from Savatthi to Rajagaha). At sunset, he arrived at the shed of a potter named Bhaggava where Pukkusati had taken up residence.

Pukkusati, who had become a renunciate, thought that the Buddha was in Rajagaha. He only found out later that the Blessed One was in Savatthi. It was getting dark, and he was exhausted from the long journey so he decided to stay in the potter's shed – a lodging for travellers who couldn't find any place to stay.

⁵ In Gandhara, Paccanta Pradesh, north of Jambudvipa

⁶ Magadha kingdom, Majjhima-padesa

⁷ In Savatthi, Kosala Kingdom

⁸ The Magadha Kingdom

When the Blessed One arrived, he stayed in the same shed, to help *Pukkusati* before he passed away. Pukkusati was able to hear the Dhamma after midnight. When the teaching finished, Pukkusati was delighted in the Dhamma⁹ and attained Anagami Fruition. The Buddha said to him: “*Now monk, you should remember my brief Dhatuvibhanga (Analysis of the Properties)*”

At the end of the sutta, Pukkusati bowed down at the feet of the Blessed One and asked for forgiveness for a verbal offence he had caused earlier, not knowing who the Buddha was. He requested to be ordained by the Buddha. The Blessed One was delighted. However, Pukkusati needed to find an alms bowl and a robe before he could be ordained as a bhikkhu in the Buddhist Order.

Pukkusati didn't have any of these items. He bid *farewell to the Buddha, set off to search for them, and was attacked to death by a cow*. At the time he had already attained Anagami Fruition.

The two stories are pieces of evidence that Buddhism was linked to civilization in the northern regions of Jambudvipa and spread across it, including the areas that there have been no records of *the Buddha's visit*.

Two important things we have learnt from these two stories are the governing roles of the kings and how they established diplomatic relationships by using traders as a mechanism to carry out their foreign policies. At the time, this was very beneficial for the governance, development, and security of the country. Some of the traders were court officials, sent to search for news from other kingdoms. Very interesting diplomacy that is worth studying!

Another crucial piece of evidence was that *the Buddha did come to the bank of the Chandrabhaga river, now Chenab river in Punjab, Pakistan*. This is delightful to know.

Jambudvipa covers a vast area, with people from many ethnic groups, and complex layers of civilization. One needs to study in greater depth to understand how important each heritage site is – to gain the right knowledge to apply to the present. For example, the influence of the Aryan and Indo-European people spread across the northern regions, the gateway to Jambudvipa. This contributed to intermarriage, a multi-racial population, and reform schools of beliefs, cultures, and traditions.



MV visit Lahore Museum



⁹ For further information on the teachings, please read Vibhanga Sutta, Tipitaka Volume 14, Suttanta Piṭaka Volume 6, Majjhimanikaya, Uparipannāsaka, Vibhaṅgavagga



The stories of *Ven. Mahakappina*, *Ven. Pukkusati*, *Queen Khema* and *Queen Anoja* confirmed the link of Buddhism to the northern region whose inhabitants were of a different race from the southern one. It is interesting to study the history of the people, their communities, ethnic cultures and traditions, occupations, ways of life and geographic locations - all the aspects of civilization that have been passed on and learn to appreciate them.

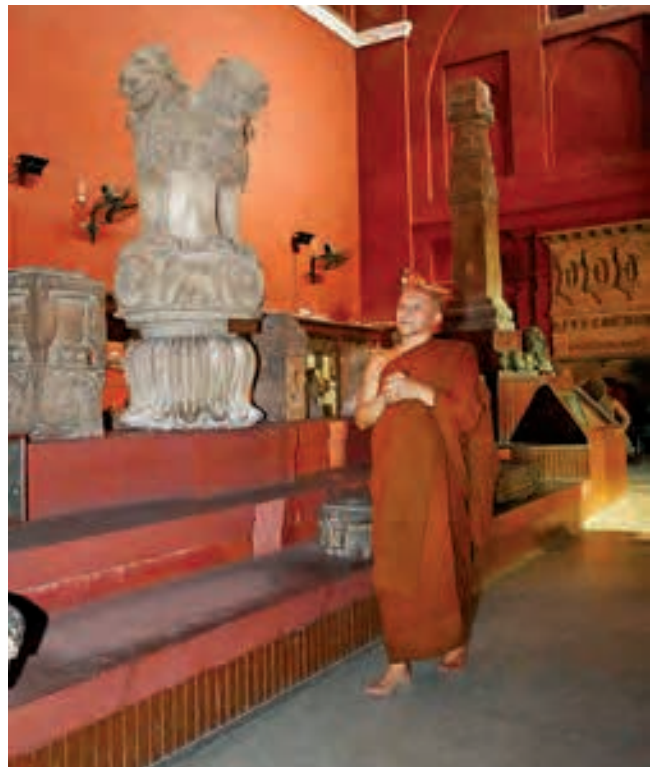
Recall the story of Mahakappina who ruled the kingdom, with the capital city at Kukkutavati, covering an area of 300 yojanas, which was located at the border of Jambudvīpa, known as Aparanta-janapada, near Himavanta-padesa. His wife, *Anoja Devi*, came from *Sāgala, Madra* Kingdom. *Khema Devi*, wife of King Bimbisara also came from Sāgala, Madra Kingdom.

Both were daughters of the King of Madra whose capital city was *Sagala*.

It is thus assumed that *Khema Devi* and *Anoja Devi* must have been sisters or relatives!

The story of King Pukkusati of Taxila, Gandhara Kingdom who had gone forth, travelled to Magadha, and listened to the Dhamma talk from the Buddha is very interesting to study. Pay attention to the social environment at the time: how Gandhara established relationships with other kingdoms, especially the northern regions: their ethnicities, languages, cultures, traditions, faiths, keeping in mind that Gandhara had close links with Kamboja, Pancala and Kuru and further west with Bactria in Persia. Hence the mixed influence that exists in their character and spirit and passed on to people of different ethnicities in both Pakistan and Afghanistan, and especially Pakistan! We need to look closely at every detail through the traces of civilization to the present.

Blessing and metta





Bhamala | Khanpur

Bhamala is one of the most important Buddhist archaeological sites in the taxila region near Khanpur Dam, in district Haripur of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province. The stupa is in the Kashmiri cruciform architecture and the United Nations Economic and Social Council (UNESCO) declared it a World Heritage site in 1980, along with other famous monuments in the historic valley of Taxila.

Sir John Marshall was the first archaeologist to excavate the Bhamala stupa in 1930-31. However, the site was not excavated fully as Sir Marshall concentrated his research resources at the famous site of Sirkap.

It was almost 80 years later when scientific archaeological excavations resumed at the Bhamala stupa site in 2012-13. The excavation was led by a team of the Hazara University (HU) working in collaboration with the University of Wisconsin (UoW), USA. Owing to the archaeological potential of the site, the Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, carried out further field excavations and investigations at the Bhamala stupa site from 2014 to 2016. Both research efforts were led by Director Archaeology KP, Dr. Abdul Samad, who was earlier an Assistant Professor at the Department of Archaeology at the HU in Mansehra. He worked closely with Professor Jonathan Mark Kenoyer, the world-famous authority on Gandhara and Harappa, on the excavation at Bhamala.

The excavations have brought to light many important archaeological artefacts and important structural remains. Finds from the excavation include terracotta and stucco sculptures, coins and iron and copper objects. The second main cruciform stupa was also discovered surrounded by a subsidiary stupa and chapels adorned with many stucco sculptures.

The most remarkable discovery made was a 14m-long reclining Buddha (Parinirvana), said to be the largest in the world. Many terracotta images were also discovered from inside the Parinirvana chamber showing worshipers and mourners. Made of dressed Kanjur stone blocks, the colossal Buddha statue is seated on a stone platform inside a long mourning chamber and, like other monumental images of reclining Buddha reported from Afghanistan and Tajikistan, the Bhamala Buddha also faces the main stupa.

Radiocarbon dating was carried out on charred wood and charcoal taken from inside the terracotta sculpture placed around the monumental Parinirvana image. Laboratory reports estimate the Parinirvana was made during the 3rd century CE. This means the monumental image from Bhamala is the earliest representation of Parinirvana Buddha. Evidence suggests it predates all known colossal Parinirvana images reported to date. Thus the Bhamala site is older than Ajanta in India, Tappa Sardar and Bamiyan in Afghanistan, Adzhina Tepe in Tajikistan, Daungshuang in China and the Chui Valley in Kirghizstan. Furthermore, it is the only example of Parinirvana Buddha in Kanjur stone to date.

*Reference: Land of Gandhara : A photographic Journey.
Directorate of Archaeology and Museums : Lahore, 2021, pp 2*



Chapter XV

*Religious activities at Lahore, Punjab State
...another step of the relationship
for Dhamma benefit of mankind*



Sikri stupa, Lahore Museum



The National School of Public Policy (NSPP), Lahore city, Punjab State, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, invited me to deliver a special address to participants of the “116th National Management Course”, under the topic: “Dhamma: The Teachings of Buddha and Pakistan’s Role as the Cradle of Gandhara Civilization.” (Script of the address appears at the end of this chapter.)

The objective of NSPP is enhancing the capability of high government officials in the planning and implementation of policies and strategies. It is a requirement that they undergo this training before taking up top level positions in their respective agencies.

This lecture created much anticipation and excitement for the audience, as it is the first time in the history of this honorable institution of the Pakistan Government to extend an invitation to “*A Buddhist Monk.*”

As the speaker, I was truly delighted for the opportunity to meet high level government personnel, all of whom are devotees of the Islamic religion, particularly to discuss the Dhamma principle well-expounded by the Buddha



It is considered to be the first time that the government sector of this Islamic country opens its mind to listen to all concepts of teachings, to enlarge the body of knowledge, expand its vision, to be well aware of every dimension of the world.

The audience will benefit from knowing “what they are thinking; what we are thinking” in accordance with the principle of “knowing others and knowing ourselves” – a strategy that leads to planning excellence.

Acquiring knowledge of every arts and sciences is the scope of intellectuals, worthy of appreciation.

It is gracious for the National School of Public Policy to demonstrate its wide and modern vision, providing an opportunity for participants to listen to a discourse from a Buddhist monk, respectfully known by the people of Pakistan as MV *Arayawangso* from Thailand. My appreciation goes to management NSPP’s management, particularly the Directing Staff, *Ms. Humaira Zia Mufti*.

On the day of the special lecture discourse (2 September 2565 BE), *NSPP’s Seminar Room* was filled with high level officials from various agencies and members of the management board, with the Dean of national management collage giving his thanks and offering souvenir to the speaker. His kind words of thanks were full of praise, referring to the wide open and in-depth nature of the discourse, indicating creative vision in presenting Dhamma principle without an attachment to the word “*religion*,” but with an emphasis on the natural law (Dhamma) existing in nature, leading towards mankind’s civilized way of life.

The seminar room that day was thus filled with an academic atmosphere of the Truth that is hard to deny, regardless of one’s nationality and religion. It subsequently led to participants’ questions during the open period following the lecture, in order to learn about Dhamma concepts leading to their solutions.

Due to the time constraint, only three questions could be taken:

The first question was related to existing differences among religions leading to conflict and war between the people. What are the possible solutions?



Ms. Humaira Zia Mufti
Directing Staff, NSPP





The second question asked for guidance and support, to encourage people from various countries, especially from Thailand, to undertake a study trip, visiting Buddhist World Heritage in Pakistan.

The third question referred to development of *Taxila*, the former Center of Education in *Jambudvipa*, with its ancient civilizations particularly in Buddhist ancient sites. The Government of Pakistan should be better informed so they will support further excavation and its findings can be displayed to the whole world. There are many more sites of importance in terms of civilization but have not been seriously developed in archaeology, deserving of *Taxila* city.



The three questions raised in that seminar room were very useful and should be deliberated in details, to realize the concrete conditions of each phenomenon, for further contemplation in order to clearly recognize its causes and conditions. This will lead to the correct understanding that can be realistically used to prescribe appropriate national development strategy. The interests of participants and the questions that follow are much appreciated and I must apologize if there was any discrepancy in the essence of the question.



Both the Thai and English versions of the answers will be included in the book on recollection of the rains-retreat at *Taxila* city, *Gandhara*, Pakistan. The book will be offered as a Dhamma gift to Buddhists around the world, and to be the property of the Archaeological Department of Pakistan, for worldwide dissemination of stories about the traces of *Gandhara* civilization, Buddhist World Heritage.



In the afternoon of 3 September 2565 BE, I sat down in the *Lahore Museum*, Punjab State, Pakistan, to write these stories with the intention to absorb the valuable spiritual civilization of Buddhism in this museum, which has such a magnificent display of *Gandhara* Buddhist arts that it is hard to imagine the existence of its equal anywhere in the world.

Today is my second visit to *Lahore Museum*, after the first one on 1 September when I was welcomed by *the Tourism Secretary, the Director of Lahore Museum*, and his team, along with members of the mass media, the press and television.

As mentioned earlier, my request for a return to this place was to become more fully absorbed in the spirit of *Gandhara* civilization, Buddhist World Heritage. The writing table was set up in front of the ancient *MahaStupa* known as *Sikri Stupa*, a figure of the Buddha in the self-mortification posture, commonly known as the “*Fasting Buddha*,” and beautiful Buddha images of the *Gandhara* period that are unmatched anywhere, even in Pakistan’s other museums.

The main reason was because during the British rule and the archaeological excavation was conducted, the best Buddhist artifacts were brought for keeping in the capital city of *Lahore, Punjab* state. No mention need to be made here about the disappearance of a great number of Buddha images and ancient items during that time, as often discussed in news report about evidence in Western museums.



In addition to the *Sikri Stupa* that I find to be so sublime, another item that made me turn back to look over and over is the Buddha image in the self-mortification posture.

I was particularly fascinated by the miraculous details of this sculpture of inestimable spiritual value for Buddhists, as I have been to a cave on the hillside of *Uruvela Senanigama*, *Magadha State*, *Jambudvipa*, at present in the *Gaya* area.



On the hill of *Dongkasiri*, in a small cave under the supervision of a Tibetan Monastery, a Buddha image in the self-mortification posture was constructed and established there. It signifies the cave as the place where the *Mahabodhisatta Siddhattha* practiced extreme austerities (*dukkarakiriya*) for six years before discovering the Middle Path subsequently known as *Majjima patipada*, leading to His Supreme Enlightenment on the full moon day of the sixth lunar month “*Visakha Puja Day*” under the Great Bodhi Tree, on the bank of *Neranjara River*, *Uruvela Senanigama*.



My very strong spiritual bond with the Buddha image of the self-mortification posture went back to my first rains-retreat in the Republic of India in 2549 BE, when I made a solemn determination to stay at that cave of the *Mahabodhisatta Siddhattha*’s self-mortification.



The First rains-retreat at *Dongkasiri* was conducted with great hardship, in a place rife with disease among villagers who were mostly of the lowest caste or outcaste, while some of the Brahmin caste lived further away. All of them coexisted in peace, accepting each other. When Hindus from other villages travelled to the cave to see me, I could instantly tell their castes from the way they spoke and conducted themselves.

The old saying that “speech reveals your language, and action reveals your lineage” is not an overstatement. But it may not be certain in this age of information technology, when the varied civilization of mankind’s contemporary lifestyle in the materialistic world makes it hard to judge them simply from their speeches and manners.

So we probably have to rely on the Buddhist principle of *Kalama Sutta*, which is the truth that does not vary with time. Lord Buddha teaches us not to believe simply from the things we see, hear, and think. Only when we investigate analytically and find out their causes and conditions, and realize the benefit and suitability, then we can believe.

The ten principles of *Kalama Sutta* are:

- Do not be led by report,
- Do not be led by tradition,
- Do not be led by hearsay,
- Do not be led by the authority of texts,
- Do not be led by mere logic,
- Do not be led by inference,
- Do not be led by considering appearances,
- Do not be led by agreement with a considered and approved theory,
- Do not be led by seeming possibilities, and
- Do not be led by the idea “this is our teacher.”



Today, 3rd September 2565 BE, as I view the Buddha image of the self-mortification posture, I recollect the time of my rains-retreat at the cave where the *Mahabodhisatta Siddhattha* practiced His extreme austerities on the hill of *Uruvela Senanigama, Magadha Janapada*, presently in *Gaya, Bihar State, India*.

At the end of the three months' rains retreat, the “*Devo alms-offering*” was conducted for the first time, with Hindus from surrounding villages of all castes: *Khattiya, brahmin, vessa, sudda, and candala*, waiting to give alms to a monk who spent rains-retreat on *Dongkasiri* at the cave of the *Bodhisatta*, with faith and confidence accumulated throughout the three months. It was another page of history on the motherland of Buddhism that was well recognized by Hindus of all groups, including Brahmins who called themselves “*bhava*.”

News about Hindus taking part in the “*Devo alms offering*” at *Dongkasiri* spread to *Bodhgaya*, causing the late *Thongyod thera, abbot of Thai Bodhgaya Temple* to express his appreciation that “...*Arayawangso* managed to take over the heart of Hindu people by extreme dedication to his practice, that is difficult for anyone to do. Even I have never spent my rains-retreat there.”

The figure of the *MahaBodhisatt Siddhattha*, or what Buddhists call “*The Buddha image in the self-mortification posture*” at Lahore Museum, Punjab, from Gandhara period is approximately two thousand years old – a unique artifact complete with the delicate and refined *Gandhara artistic style*. It was indeed a miracle piece of sculpture and would be most difficult to replicate, particularly the spirit emanated from the sculpture.

The deeply sunken eyes have such a realistic expression, the tendons extend all over the body that is tightly enclosed by the transparent skin revealing the whole skeleton underneath – all of these would immediately capture everyone’s mind, keep them completely focused, to remember each single trace on that Buddha image, and bring them back to the time of the *Mahabodhisatt Siddhattha’s* self-mortification in the cave on *Dongkasiri, Uruvela Senanigama, Magadha State, Jambudvipa*.

In addition to the *Sikri Stupa* and *Fasting Buddha*, there are several more Buddha images in various postures which are in much better conditions than in other museums. With the exception of *Peshawar* museum, *Khyber Pakhtunkhwa* which is recognized for its significance as the center of *Gandhara* Buddhist arts, it would be difficult to compare items in any museum with such beautiful artifacts in their perfect condition, worthy of being selected and kept here.

That makes it interesting to find out more about *Lahore* Museum currently under the direction of *Mr. Ijaz Ahmed Minhas* who I was acquainted with since the first meeting during my first trip to Pakistan (2562 BE). At that time, I was taking a study trip of *Gandhara* Buddhist arts at *Taxila* Museum which *Mr. Ijaz Ahmed Minhas* was the director. That acquaintance led to his warm welcome for this visit, especially the permission to spend private time in the room of *Gandhara Buddhist arts*, so I can write stories and absorb spiritual experiences from the ancient treasures.





Mr. Ijaz Ahmed Minhas,
Director, Lahore Museum



Mr. *Ijaz Ahmed Minhas* kindly presented me with an album containing photos taken on the day of my visit, which he, his wife (Mrs. *Rehanu Kausus*), and daughter (Ms. *Fiza Ijaz*) spent the previous night making sure it would be ready for me.

My blessing to Mr. *Ijaz Ahmed Minhas* and family, may they find happiness and prosperity, be free from all harms.

Let us get back to the history of Lahore Museum in Punjab, Pakistan, and the reason it has so many magnificent *Gandhara* Buddhist arts.

Lahore is “the cultural capital city of Pakistan”, or “the heart of Pakistan.” Everyone will agree that the above statement is not too far from the truth if they have a chance to witness the vast variety of ancient artifacts in this museum that can reveal the stories of the traces of Indus Civilization, especially *Gandhara* Buddhist arts.

By linking it to the *Peshawar* museum in *Khyber Pakhtunkhwa*, we will get a clear image of *Kushan* Empire, make us realize the greatness of Buddhism in the period 5th - 6th -7th Buddhist century to the 10th -11th -12th Buddhist century – the periods when Buddhism was highly prosperous on that land. Buddhists around the world should make a journey here to personally experience and study the real spirit through *Gandhara* Buddhist arts that retain their completeness in every aspect, whether they are in *Peshawar*, *Lahore* or *Taxila*, in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

Lahore museum was founded in 1865 CE and opened in 1894 CE during the time of British Colonial rule, becoming famous for its large collection of *Gandhara* ancient Buddhist arts, as well as ancient artifacts of the Indo-Greek, Moghul and the Sikh Empires.

The *Lahore* Museum is the real pride of *Punjab* State. Apart from the collection of precious items in each period, even the museum building is famous for its beauty in terms of architectural arts in the *Indo-Saracenic* style, designed by the renowned architect *Sir Gangaram*, who was born in *Lahore*, in the town of *Mangtanwal*, *Nankana* District, *Punjab*, Pakistan. This visit to *Lahore* Museum is truly worthwhile as being the largest museum in Pakistan displaying important ancient artifacts,

Regarding the connection of the Punjab Region with Buddhism, there are two periods worth recording for the study of the traces of Buddhism:

1. During the life time of Lord Buddha (The Buddha's Period)

Evidence from *Kappina Sutta* in the *Tipitaka*, recording stories of King *Mahakappina*, ruler of *Kukkatavati* city, the kingdom that stretched for 300 *yojana*, located in *Aparantaka Janapada*, a region in the north-northwest of *Jambudvipa*, near *Himavanta Padesa (Himalaya)*. His queen, *Anojadevi*, was a princess from *Sakala* city of *Maddha State*, which was located near *Kamboja State*.

Upon learning the news from merchants traveling from *Savatthi, Kosala State*, that “**The Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha**” had appeared in this world, King *Mahakappina* renounced his throne to be ordained in Buddhism. Along with 1000 of his ministers and courtiers, they left *Kukkatavati*, declaring the “Act of Truth” (*saccakiriya*), requesting for the safe crossing of the three large rivers – *Aravaccpaccha, Nilavahana, and Chandrabhaga Rivers*. With the *saccakiriya, Mahakappina* and his followers were able to undertake their journey across all three rivers without even wetting the hoof of their horses.

It is significant that the Buddha made His journey from *Jetavana Mahavihara*, in *Savatthi, Kosala State*, to the river bank of *Chandrabhaga*, the distance of 120 *yojana* or about 2000 kilometers, to expound Dhamma for *Mahakappina* and his courtiers along with Queen *Anojadevi* and her followers. After listening to Lord Buddha's exposition of Dhamma, all of them attained arahatship and requested full ordination as *bhikkhu* in Buddhism.

Further research into the story and making a geographic connection to the present based on the map showing the development of *Jambudvipa* in each period, reveals that:

1. **Chandrabhaga River** was formed by two small ones, *Chandra* and *Bhaga*, and is presently known as *Chenab River*, near *Jhelum River*, both of which are located in *Punjab, Pakistan*.
2. **Nilavahana River** is now known as *Indus River*, the main artery of *Pakistan* that has accumulated traces of civilization in all periods, and is one of the three most important world civilizations.
3. **Aravaccpaccha River** is the route travelled by *Mahakappina* from *Kukkatavati* city, which according to the map is likely to be *Suvastu* or *Swat River*



2. After the Buddha's Period

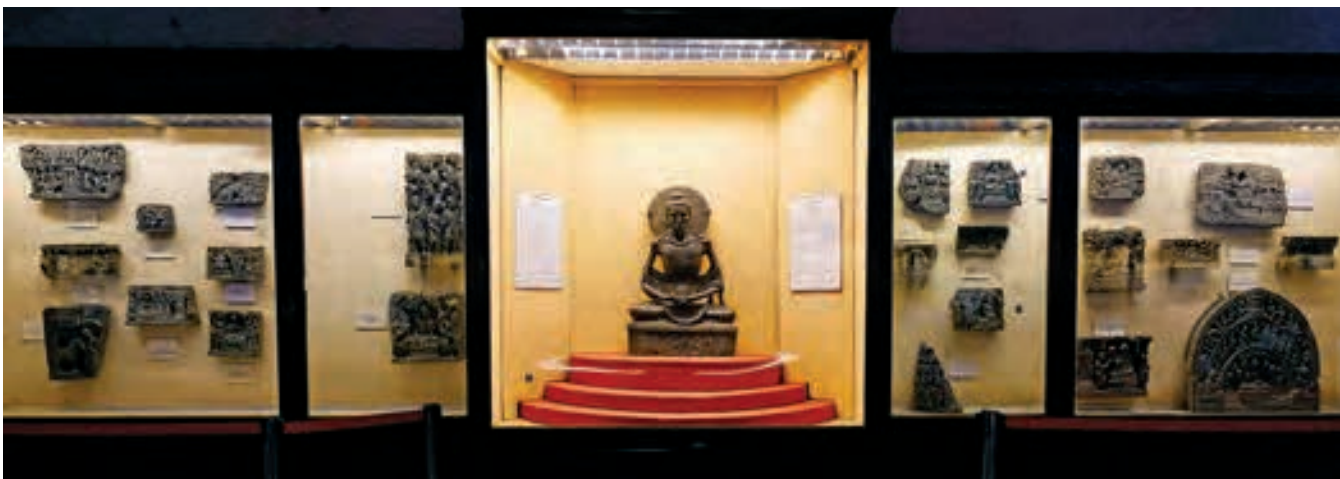
Punjab State has a long relationship with Buddhism both during the time when King *Ashoka* spreading his power and Buddhism throughout *Jambudvipa* up to around 400 BE, during the time of King *Menander* or *Milinda*, the Greek King ruling over *Sakala* in Bactria (*Gandhara* and *Punjab* at the Northwest of *Jambudvipa*). It was presumed to be the first time Buddha images were constructed, which later became the model for ***Gandhara Buddhist Arts***.

Punjab enjoyed prosperity once again from 5th - 7th Buddhist century during the *Kushan* Dynasty, especially at the time of *Kanishka* the Great, a Buddhist King who ruled over the empire that extended to Afghanistan, Pakistan, *Kasmira*, *Punjab*, to *Khasi*, *Varanasi*.

Initially, the capital of *Kushan* Empire was located at *Kabul*, later moved to *Purushapura*, then to *Madhura*. It was even said that *Kushan* Empire had three capital cities, where the King resided in different seasons of the year.

For more than 200 years, the prosperous *Kushan*-Empire served as a bridge linking civilizations of India and China with the Roman, or between East and West, then collapsed at the beginning of the 8th Buddhist century (320 CE), replaced by the Brahmin *Gupta* Dynasty, ruling part of *Punjab* and most of *Uttara padesa*.

In 1000 BE, the *Huna* tribe or ***the White Huns***, headed by ***Mihirakula*** invaded several regions of *Jambudvipa*, taking control of *Gandhara* and *Kasmira*. *Taxila* was heavily damaged, along with Buddhist monasteries, ending the long prosperity of *Taxila*, as the capital of *Gandhara*.



The *Huna* people or the White Huns ruled for about 50 years then suffered defeat by a *Gupta* king. During those times, there was no record of any destruction in *Punjab*.

After 1100 BE, King *Harsha* of *Vardhana* Dynasty, rising from the *Vessa* caste, overcame the power of the *Gupta* king, declaring himself to be the great King and majestically took over the throne. His empire extended to most of Northern *Jambudvipa*, with *Punjab* as one of the five most important states. The era was the time when India civilization prospered once again, for a brief period. King *Harsha* had much faith in *Mahayana Buddhism*, and Buddhism during that period transformed into *Tantra religious system*, blending in well with Hinduism. There was also much use of the Sanskrit literature.

This was the time of the famous Chinese monk named *Huien Tsang*, who later resided in *Nalanda Mahavihara*.

After 1700 BE, Buddhism in *Jambudvipa* disappeared, replaced by the *Tantra* belief that transformed Buddhism towards *Brahmanism* (Hinduism), with obsession with black magic, superstition, and sensual pleasure, almost blending into one with *Shakti Tantra* system of Hinduism. Such form of teachings has been spreading to Tibet and Nepal, as can be seen today.

Blessing with Metta

MV Arayawangso

English translation: Dr. Pawadee Tonguthai

Dhamma: The Teachings of Buddha
and Pakistan's Role as the Cradle of Gandhara
Civilization

MV Arayawangso

A special discourse addressed to participants of **116th National Management Course**, at The National School of Public Policy, Lahore, Islamic Republic of Pakistan, on Friday 2 September 2022

Blessing to all participants of the 116th National Management Course, the National School of Public Policy.

Before we begin, let me introduce myself. I have been invited by the Pakistan government through diplomatic channel between Foreign Affairs Ministries of Pakistan and Thailand. The purpose is to spend my Rains Retreat 2565 BE at *Taxila, Gandhara, Punjab* Province, in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. It is being conducted according to Buddhist discipline.

During the three months' rainy season, monks have to remain at a place suitable for *Dhamma* study and practice, and fitting with their status. This year, it is the period between July to October, ending on October 10.

With proper invitation, they are allowed to attend certain business but have to be back at the residence within seven days. That is why I am able to travel from *Taxila* and be here at the National School of Public Policy.

I appreciate the vision of the Directing Staff, *Mrs. Humaira Zia Mufti*, who went to see me at *Taxila* Museum, the place offered by the Punjab government as my residence. We had a good conversation on several topics which led to the invitation to come here and tell you about my experiences in investigating the traces of *Gandhara* civilization relating to Buddhist World Heritage Site – from the perspective of Buddhism.

Today, I will share with you those experiences and the lessons I have learned. But please do not expect me to be much of an expert.

The topic you have suggested is “*Dhamma: the teachings of Buddha and Pakistan’s Role as the Cradle of Gandhara Civilization*.”

Some of you may be thinking of a course on “Comparative Religion, but you can relax, this is not going to be a lecture on the teachings of Buddhism.

I will, however, raise *Dhamma* principle of the TRUTH existing in nature that can be proven by yourself, and will be useful for building the body of intellectual knowledge, to guide your thinking about the pattern of work. So you can clearly determine: “What should be the role of Pakistan in this global society, as the cradle of *Gandhara* civilization.”

Before we can consider our role in anything, we need to study and understand the essence of that matter. Today’s topic begins with the words: “*Dhamma: the teachings of Buddha*.” Many of you are already aware of the principle of Buddha’s *Dhamma* teachings, but that is not going to be our focus to-day.

I can tell you briefly, in words of *Dhamma*, that: Mankind’s true religion is the one with principles that make us understand the nature of life to develop our life to have quality of a noble being. We can then conduct life with wisdom in order to bring our life, our society and environment to attain true peace and happiness by *Dhamma*.

Dhamma peace and happiness is the aim of all humanity with religion being highly essential. That religion must have teachings that guide people toward peace and happiness of all mankind.

A person may wish for peace and happiness but it should happen for everyone – for society, nation, and the global community.

This is the beauty of every religion that hopes to proclaim the principles of *Dhamma* teaching for mankind’s true peace and happiness. So it is most necessary that all of us understand the principle of *Dhamma*.

What is *Dhamma*? A Buddhist will quickly tell you that *Dhamma* refers to teachings of the Buddha. That answer is not wrong, but it is not the direct answer.

So what really is *Dhamma*?

I will give you a universal meaning of the word *Dhamma*. It is the truth that exists normally in nature such as birth, ageing, sickness and death. Everyone and everything arising in this world will have to face that truth. It cannot be avoided.

Dhamma is the law of truth that gives the same justice to everyone and everything – equally. What is most significant about this natural truth is the Law of *Kamma* (or Law of Action). The heart of *Dhamma* is the principle displaying the truth of Natural Law that is important for every group of people in this world. It demonstrates the truth which can be proven, as follows:

All beings are the owners of their actions. They must bear the results of their actions.

All beings are born of their actions, related to their actions, supported by their actions.

Whatever actions they perform, good or evil, they must bear the results.

This is *Dhamma* Principle that is THE TRUTH

Dhamma is the teaching principle for creation of knowledge and understanding that is proper with the truth of nature. It enables mankind to coexist with society and environment without being distorted from the truth which could cause failure in the actions of body, speech or mind.

Dhamma is about merit, goodness, and creative prosperity for peace and happiness of everyone.

When we combine the *Pali* word “*araya*” (which means noble), with the word “*Dhamma*,” we have a new word *arayadhamma*, translated as “civilization.”

The meaning implies great beauty which mankind should perceive the true meaning. With such beauty in their hearts, they have a noble mind, worthy of the noble status as “human”.

Civilization has been defined as: “cultural prosperity of mankind in each period.” Civilization reflects every aspect of society’s progress in each period, so we use the words “traces of civilization.”

We have to study civilization to utilize its value effectively by looking at the relationship to our present society, and integrating it with the modern life. Education cannot step over each period's civilization especially when it has hidden energy strong enough to have impact on mankind in each particular period.

Now, let us focus on the Indus or *Sindhu* civilization, one of the three early civilizations of the world along with Mesopotamia and Ancient Egypt. They are very important for the study of mankind's history in all dimensions.

Indus Civilization has played such a significant part in Pakistan's World Heritage, most of its area is now in Pakistan with a small part in Afghanistan and India. The Indus River flows through the length of Pakistan with traces of civilization found in two large cities, *Mohenjo-Daro* and *Harappa*. They include historical traces of Buddhist World Heritage that prospered immensely around 269 BE under the rule of King *Ashoka*.

After this great king became a devoted follower of Buddhism, numerous *jetiyas* and *mahaviharas* were constructed throughout his empire – their traces can be clearly witnessed today.

King *Ashoka* was a prominent patron for the spread of Buddhism within and outside *Jambudvipa*. In 290 BE, he invited *Majjhantika thera* to lead a group of Buddhist monks to propagate Buddhism in the territories of Indus River Basin, with *Gandhara* and nearby regions as the main destination.

In 308 BE, King *Ashoka* assigned his son Prince *Kunala*, the viceroy of *Magadha*, to rule over *Taxila*, *Gandhara*. The evidence of this period is still present at *Sirkap* World Heritage site.

During the third Buddhist century the flourishing of Indus Civilization related to Buddhism can be confirmed by a great number of archaeological evidences in the Valleys of *Taxila*, *Peshawar*, and *Swat*.

The progress of Buddhist civilization continued into the period of *Kushan* Empire in the time of King *Kanishka*, a Buddhist devotee, becoming even more prosperous especially during 5th to 7th Buddhist Century. In the Tenth Buddhist century, it began to decline and ultimately disappeared in the Seventeenth Buddhist Century.

Traces of Buddhist civilization overlapping each period of Indus civilization were discovered during the excavation conducted by the Indian Archaeological Survey more than 100 years ago.

It was headed by *Sir John Marshall* whose former house I am now spending my rains retreat. Every evening as I sit down to write the manuscript for my book, I can feel the real spirit of Indus civilization particularly the prosperous period of Buddhism.

The large number of artifacts in the wonderful museums of *Taxila, Peshawar* and *Swat* contain great value for people's spiritual awareness especially Buddhists from more than 30 countries who wish to come and visit these sources of Buddhist civilization. This World Heritage is mankind's precious spiritual treasure and it belongs to the land of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

Some of the questions are: What can be done about the linkage to that World Heritage civilization, and how should we define the role of Pakistan regarding the precious treasure of Indus Civilization.

It is the issue for all of you to deliberate as owner of the country with World Heritage sites that have such spiritual value for the world. You have to consider the benefits that will lead to development of life, society, and the nation – benefits to be derived from the knowledge and understanding of World Heritage civilization on this land of Pakistan.

The suitable role in preserving the cradle of civilization can be laid out with knowledge and understanding of the following benefits of civilization:

- 1) facilitate decision-making in matters related to communities and societies in Pakistan
- 2) provide perspective on the value of the ancient land with the complexities of civilization handed down to us which retains energy that can impact the current movement.
- 3) build up knowledge and understanding of civilization in each period connected to society and the nation to analyse problems of those periods. This body of knowledge will be of great use in the movement of the present society.

- 4) Able to lay out guideline for the role and duty to proceed effectively conforming with benefits from the cradle of civilization on this land which will enhance the potentials of national development in all aspects.

However, these four benefits cannot be realized unless we truly understand the value of the cradle of civilization that has been declared “World Heritage.” most of which are ancient sites related to Buddhism.

I began today’s talk with “*Buddhist Dhamma principle*,” followed by “*the significance of World Heritage civilization*.”

A real appreciation of these two topics will be a key to open up your treasure of world heritage with *Dhamma* knowledge and understanding which do not conflict with any religion, because ... everyone respects *Dhamma* peace.

Dhamma knowledge and understanding will encourage cultural tourism that does not pollute local societies and communities.

Dhamma knowledge and understanding will guide systematic arrangement of relationship, not causing damage to each other especially on the spiritual or religious aspect.

Dhamma knowledge and understanding will lead toward building peace with happiness for humanity – with unity – when every party understand one another, respect each other, do not encroach, endanger, or bear any ill - will toward each other.

Dhamma knowledge and understanding will lead to familiarity as good friends regardless of nationality and religion, leading to exchanging of visits and loving-kindness for one another.

It is said that: **Nothing but knowledge and understanding can help us create the World of True Peace.”**

Let us look at Nepal, as one example:

Going back 30-40 years ago when political conflict was causing much unrest in the country, *Lumbini* area – birthplace of the Buddha – looked just like any rural farm land. But in the past decade, efforts by the government have led to a great deal of

progress in the development of Buddhist civilization's ancient sites, with *Lumbini* being declared as UNESCO World Heritage in 2540 BE.

Construction of international monasteries within the specified boundary was permitted, so we see rapid development and new communities rising up in the surrounding areas. Today, the safe and peaceful environment has brought in several million tourists for pilgrimage or sight-seeing. The largest number is from Thailand, with more than one million tourists per year.

Tourism business quickly grew with new jobs and income created, making the neighborhoods richer and more vibrant. Quite importantly, it does not affect culture, tradition, and religious belief of the local people because the aim of these tourists is to pay homage to the Buddha's birthplace, not to walk around local communities for religious propagation.

The growth rate of tourism business in India is even higher, with the large number of people traveling to major Buddhist Holy Sites, leading to expansion in a variety of sectors. The Indian government gave priority to the promotion of tourism related to Buddhist civilization without relying on UNESCO funding that usually comes with several conditions.

The country initially received financial support from Japan for infrastructure connecting Buddhist ancient sites. Today, the expansion of the Indian campaign for Buddhist civilization is currently directed at the entire world, through every form of media, and usually with diplomatic support.

Pakistan has already shown increasing awareness to develop Buddhist civilization World Heritage sites to open up as destination for study tour and "religious tourism" of global Buddhists. This should be an urgent agenda with properly high standard and with emphasis on quality tourism.

Impact on local communities and society must be given top consideration since the character of Islamic society is different from societies of India and Nepal.

Tourism should be directed toward the cradle of civilization aiming to preserve and continue culture and tradition, carefully avoiding any conflict with religious practice in the communities. The suitable form and pattern of tourism should be openly and clearly identified to proceed along *Dhamma* path, right with *Dhamma*.

It will be possible if the government encourages all groups of Pakistan people particularly government officials to know the value of World Heritage Civilization on the land of Pakistan, properly with *Dhamma*.

This will lead to cooperation, with a correct understanding about “*the purpose of developing this cradle of civilization that has become World Heritage.*”

It is most imperative that we study and understand the significance of the cradle of civilization which is the national and global treasure. This will lead to the full and effective utilization for the systematic and orderly benefit in keeping with the practice of local culture toward mutual benefit.

We will then be able to lay out pattern of tourism conforming with the cultural path of the present society and preserving the identity of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

It is important that Pakistan people play a role in getting to know and understand the tremendous value existing in their own cradle of civilization which has such influence on the spirit of humanity and global society as the cradle of *Indus* Civilization, in the *Gandhara* Region.

This still exists as the truth of *Dhamma* that has never been extinguished from the consciousness of mankind.

Blessing with Metta

English translation: Dr. Pawadee Tonguthai

2 September 2565 BE

Dhamma Diary





The Buddha said ..

Where there is no loving kindness...

Where there is no relatives

Any place without respect

Any place without education, learning

*At that place, the wise should not dwell.
should not be involved!!!”*

*MV... Arayawangso
Lahore /Punjab Pakistan
4 September 2565 BE*



Dhamma Diary

After four days and three nights, 1-4 September 2565 BE, MV Arayawangso has fulfilled one more of his many religious duties with perfection.

Like the rainwater diffusing into the roots of various plants, refreshing them to be alive and joyful in the spiritual stream of Gandhara, the civilization that has never disappeared from the consciousness of mankind.

It lies there awaiting the one true leader who will awake and revive the spirit of Gandhara one more time.

Today, the time has come to rise up and shine the light of Gandhara civilization, for its re-emergence amid the sound of the Peace Bell, sending out a signal to arouse every dimension of the spirits of all beings who are in quest of peace, to lead them to the peaceful state of Nibbana.

Each valley, each river basin of civilization is now reverberating with the musical sound of Peace with Dhamma.

*A Dhamma Diary by MV Arayawangso
On the road from Lahore to Taxila
4 September 2565 BE*





Key Concepts for the Development of Buddhist Civilization World Heritage Sites in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan

MV Arayawangso

I have been officially invited by the Government of Pakistan to spend my three months' Rains Retreat (of 2565 Buddhist Era) at *Taxila, Punjab* State. This is another page in the history of the relation between the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and Buddhist countries, especially Thailand.

On many previous occasions, I have mentioned that my journey to spend the Rains Retreat during 11 July – 10 October 2565 BE is according to “*Dhamma Diplomacy*,” coordinated through diplomatic channel between Foreign Affairs Ministries of Thailand and Pakistan.

The main objectives of this Rains Retreat in Pakistan are:

1. Dhamma study and practice on the land that has great spiritual value for mankind, being the cradle of the ***third most important*** civilization in the world, that is, the ***Indus civilization***.
2. Study and practice along the traces of Buddhist civilization in the Northern region of *Jambudvipa*, where Buddhism used to prosper immensely after the *parinibbana* (death) of Lord Buddha. This is particularly so during the time of King *Kanishka the Great* of *Kushan* Dynasty, *Gandhara*.
3. Experiences from my pilgrimage for Dhamma study and practice in various Buddhist civilization World Heritage Sites – especially the Valleys of *Taxila, Peshawar*, and *Swat*, and from taking part in many activities, have been recorded as analytical notes related to the cradle of Buddhist civilization.

This will be published as a book and distributed worldwide, especially in the 32 Buddhist countries. The book's title is “***The Buddhist Civilization of Gandhara***.” Its copyright will be owned by the Directorate of Archaeology and Museum, *Khyber Pakhtunkhwa*, and become the property of the Pakistan Government.

Everything I said on the day of my travel to spend Rains Retreat in *Taxila* have been completed as promised.

I refer particularly to the *Kathina* (robe-offering) ceremony which is the ancient tradition of *Jambudvipa* over one thousand years ago. More than 150 people are coming from Thailand to take part in this historic ceremony that has returned once again to the land of *Gandhara* civilization, Buddhist World Heritage.

The *Kathina* Ceremony will be held on 12th October at *Taxila* Museum, at the former residence of Sir John Marshall, where the *Sangha* have been spending their Rains Retreat.

This Rains Retreat has made me more familiar with this land of civilization, the land that the people of Pakistan and all Buddhists should take pride in the civilization aspect of its value. This value is beyond any measure and is related to the global human society, especially Buddhists.

We can find evidence of the prosperity of Buddhism on this land of civilization, both during and after the time of the Buddha, in the *Tipitaka* (The Pali Canon), in the stories of key figures of Buddhism, and their connections with places in the Northern region: *Gandhara*, *Maddha*, *Kamboja*, and *Kukkuttavadi*.

This is particularly so in the case of King *Pukkusatiraj*, ruler of *Taxila*, *Gandhara*, whose faith in Buddhism led him to abdicate and become a Buddhist monk.

King *Mahakappina*, ruler of *Kukkuttavadi* city, located near the States of *Maddha* and *Kamboja*, also abdicated. The King, his Queen *Anoja devi* and 2,000 followers left the city and became ordained in Buddhism.

From the stories of King *Mahakappina* in the *Tipitaka*, it should be recorded in the history of Pakistan that Lord Buddha, the World's Master Teacher, used to spend time in *Punjab* State, at the Banyan Tree, on the bank of *Jandhabhaka* River, now known as *Jenab* River.

Therefore, the trip to *Lahore*, *Punjab* has a very special meaning, spiritually, for all Buddhists, in addition to the experience of a study trip to see *Gandhara* Buddhist Arts at the *Lahore* Museum.

My trips to various places of Buddhist World Heritage Sites have given me much knowledge and understanding of the reality of the efforts by responsible persons and agencies of the Pakistan Government, to develop, preserve, and maintain those civilization sites.

In order to welcome cultural and religious tourists, a key matter for deliberation is the opening up of these heritage areas of Buddhist civilization so that Buddhists around the world can have a chance to express themselves freely. However, this should be within a suitable framework and proper limit, in terms of the relationship with local culture, tradition and religion.

It is important to give attention to studying the historical and archaeological aspects. This will support the spiritual significance, which is the true objective of Buddhists from other countries.

Organizing festivals or events in promotion of Buddhist civilization World Heritage should be conducted, in cooperation with individuals, Buddhist organizations and countries. This is to find a proper model for promoting cultural and religious tourism.

This Rains Retreat will end on 10th October. On the following day, 11th October, there will be a special ceremony known as the “**Devo Alms-Offering**” at **Dhamarajika Stupa**, built by King *Asokha* the Great at *Taxila*.

It is the first time in more than 1000 years that the “**Devo Alms-Offering**” ceremony will be revived, on the land of civilization World Heritage of *Gandhara*, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

On that day, people from Thailand and important personalities of Pakistan will take part in the “**Devo Alms-Offering**,” that was the traditional culture in *Jambudvipa* when Buddhism prospered in *Gandhara*.

After the completion of the “**Devo Alms-Offering**” and the “**Kathina Ceremony**” at *Taxila* Museum, all Thai people, including the *Sangha* will take a study tour of various Buddhist ancient sites in *Taxila*, *Peshawar*, and *Lahore*, until 15th October, when they return to Thailand.

Spending the three months Rains Retreat at *Taxila*, *Gandhara*, in Pakistan, has been of great benefits for me. I have the opportunity to study and practice Dhamma in ancient Buddhist sites, witness the traces of *Gandhara* civilization, and learn about the culture and tradition of communities and societies in various areas of Pakistan. It is a truly valuable experience, leading to the correct understanding and good relation with the people of Pakistan, like being friends or relatives.

I have therefore laid out the work plan to help promote “**Cultural-Religious Tourism in the Civilization World Heritage Sites in Pakistan.**” A key event will be organized once a year, in the first week of November, under the title:

“**Tourism Week to explore Gandhara Civilization, Buddhist World Heritage in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.**” The opening day will be a recollection of the “**Ringing of the Peace Bell**” in *Peshawar*.

In any case, this work plan will be further consulted with all concerned parties, so that it will be perfect and beneficial, as is our objective.

Blessing with Metta.

English translation: Dr. Pawadee Tonguthai



Episode of Dhamma

Sound of Dhamma from Gandhara

by Most Ven. Arayawangso
17th July 2022



After hoisting the flags of Pakistan and Thailand, Mr. Imran Shauket and Thai followers of the Most Venerable have joined in singing national anthems of Pakistan and Thailand, respectively. Then, Most Venerable Arayawangso gave a dhamma talk, as follows.

The dhamma is essentially the truth – the noble truth that the Lord Buddha had expounded. One of the great dhamma teachings in Buddhism is *katannu*, meaning ‘gratitude’. Whenever you can realise the virtues of whichever you have been given, or whichever you have given to, you would appreciate and feel being grateful to.

Gratitude is an expression of how one realises the virtues of the done favour. It is a foundation to grow faithful confidence in the virtues embedded in such the object or person of favour.

Buddhism teaches us: *when one lives in the shelter or by shadow of any trees, he/she shall not get rid of leaves or branches of the tree.* The teaching applies to society and countries at large.

It indicates that when we are living our life on the land of any countries, we shall realise the virtues and be grateful to that respective land. This principle is not contradictory to the teaching of Islam at all. Islam also teaches everyone to realise the virtues of the land where they stay.

The teaching of ‘*katannu*’ hence leads to the harmonious living. And, truly, teaching of all respective religions shall lead to neither conflicts nor divisions at all levels, from individuals to societies and nations. In other words, we may have different faiths in different religions. But we have freedom to observe and learn. We can compose all the hearts with diversity to live together in coherence by the tie of *katannukatavedita* – the quality of gratitude and reciprocating the done favour. This is like different kinds of flowers that are put together to a beautiful bouquet.



All in all, this is about peaceful and harmonious living. When each person is respectful and grateful to whichever they have been given, they can live together with peace and harmony.

We are now staying on the land of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. We shall be grateful to this land, for it allows us to live our lives, to learn and practice dhamma.

This is possible thanks to the kindness of Government of Pakistan as well as their population of different religions.

These understandings will guide us to live in fraternity with friendship and love. Human being should live with love to each other. *Love* in Buddhism means *loving-kindness* – loving kindness that sustains the world; loving-kindness that makes the world go round. The people can be cemented together by loving-kindness.

‘Loving-kindness sustains the world’ is highly significant. It expresses the truth that even though the world changes by variation of several conditioned factors, such as weather, society, and others, what can lead us stay in harmony with happiness and peace is the loving-kindness that we can extend to each other.

Loving-kindness shall cease all the terrorism.

Loving-kindness shall end all the wars.

Loving-kindness shall lead to harmonious and supportive living.

Who has fuel offers fuel; who has rice offers rice; everyone can offer whatsoever they have in exchange for something else he/she doesn't have. This is how societies, countries, and states were connected in the old days.

During the Buddha time, people from Taxila, Gandhara, had engaged in commerce and trading along the 200-*yojana* journeys to Maghada via Kosala. *Yojana* was a measure of length – a distance of about 16 kilometres. So you may convert the distance of *yojana* to kilometres by having the number of *yojana* times 16.

Trading took place by caravans that brought various kinds of merchandise such as ivory and silk from northwestern region of the *jambudvipa* to Maghada which was called Majjhimadesa – the middle country. Kosala and Maghada were about 50 *yojana* in distance. So the distance from Gandhara to Kosala would be approximately 150 *yojana*. And if we travelled to Sakkka, from kabilvasatu to Gandhara, it would take about 200 *yojanas*.

This was the journey of merchandise, which was later called the Silk Road. When we talk about the silk road, we have to refer to the mainland China. Chinese traded a lot of silk which was highly valued especially those from Xinjiang and other provinces in China. It was the journey through the Himalaya from the north of southern Asia to Iran, Bactria of Central Asia or Asia Minor, Turkistan.

Trading in the old days took place at the connecting point in Taxila or Gandhara.

Gandhara was therefore the gateway to *jambudvipa* and the connecting station to other regions. It was very prosperous. Several trading routes were destined to Taxila. In this regard, Taxila was flourishing, rich of knowledge, arts, and science as well as commerce. Taxila must have been exceptionally magnificent. Taxila could be considered the suburb of *jambudvipa* but prospering and well-connected with the northern Buddhism.

Whereas commerce flourished, the land of Gandhara had to face with the war and conflicts from other countries. Whoever wished to invade *Jambudvipa* and acquire Maghada or Kosala must pass through the Gandhara. This has engendered Gandhara to transform over time, from the pre-Buddha period to the era of the King Alexander that brought the army from Central Asia to be established in Taxila and later expanded to the Sindhu River, and other kings such as King Menander that is well-known among many Thai Buddhists.

I am talking about this briefly so that you can understand the evolution of this land of Gandhara. You may observe that this land is indifferent from other cities worldwide, including those in India, which were prosperous, but subsequently declined.

What we should essentially learn is there are massive spiritual values that had been accumulated pain and tears over generations, each of which are awaiting me or others to come to learn and to remove all those conditioned factors so that they can proceed on the wholesome path, which will become merits dedicating to all spirits in every realm.

Arrival to Taxila, the former Gandhara which is presently located in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan gives me duties. Besides my own dhamma practice, I have to contemplate all kinds of dhamma phenomena that are engaging spirits in every realm. I wish I can finally reflect the findings and present them as the gift to Pakistan government so they can make it publicly known. I am contemplating although at the moment I do not know how good it will be.

Besides, I will provide Government of Pakistan with guidance on how to utilise these areas in the most beneficial way so they can have economic and social development and simultaneously, global communities can learn about the world civilisation and perpetuate these values to young generations. If we don't conserve these heritages, there will be no trails for further study. That will be the big loss of civilisation particularly in the country where spiritual values are immensely high.

Therefore, our arrival and stay reflects that we appreciate and are grateful to the Government of Pakistan as well as Mr. Imran Shauket for their determination to bring benefits to Pakistani population.

Here, we are not talking about religion. Religion is merely a matter of an individual; rather we are referring to spiritual values which all of us have shared, which is respect and love as a mankind. We are good friends to each other who associate with the virtuous. We appreciate and respect the virtues. We will behave on the path of good deeds alike.





Based on these qualities, we are good friends. Good friends in Buddhism are those who have morality, who are wise, who are regarded as ‘*pandit*’ as appeared in the *mangala sutta* (the discourse of 38 blessings), which begins with *Asevana ca balanam, Panditanan ca sevana*, meaning, not associating with fools, associating with the wise. In this regard, all of us should behave ourselves as wise men.

That we pay respect to the flags of Pakistan and Thailand today express our respects to both respective countries. While Pakistani people were singing Pakistan national anthem, all of us paid respect to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. After that, we, as Thais, paid respect to our homeland country that we proudly brought to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

Now the flags of the two countries are hoisted here in front of the Guest House in Taxila Museum. We shall have determination together:

“May I wish the two countries be in peace, for the happiness of all people.

May all disasters or terrorism not occur on these lands, from now on.”

Wherever we go, we think good. Wherever we go, we speak right. Wherever we go, we act correct. Doing, speaking, thinking correctly by dhamma will surely bring immense benefits to the persons who perform good deeds, and can transform the fruition of their performance to be the power of dhamma for the benefits to every land where we go.

Persons who think right, speak right, act right will be loved by human, non-human, devas, and all living creatures. Wherever they are, they will be free from danger.

As Buddha says, *dhamma will protect those who practice dhamma.*

This is the message from MV Arayawangso and his followers who have traveled to Pakistan to all Pakistani people via the invitation of Government of Pakistan.

Blessings

(Translation by Dr. Nitinant
Wisaweisuan)



Routine of Merits

Marshall House, Taxila

Most Ven. Arayawango has performed daily routines of dhamma, beginning the day by leading Sangha walking for morning alms in front of the *Marshall House*, a designated rains-retreat residence, and giving opportunity for the lay devotees to offer Sangha dana, and learn the dhamma.

With his loving-kindness and compassion, all the Dhamma discourses are also broadcast live on youtube channel “Arayawangso” for Buddhists and those interested in Buddhism can learn and practice dhamma together. *From Taxila, Mertis and blessing are spreading throughout.*







Merits for all beings in Pakistan

Merits in Dedication to All Beings in Pakistan

For seven consecutive days, between 24-30 August 2022, Most Ven Arayawangso hosted the Sangha-dana to dedicate merits to ancestors and all beings in Taxila, Gandhara, the Kushan and all dynasties in every period of former time, for those who are in sufferings shall be relieved and liberated from sufferings.

“All beings in every realm, who had lived and are living here, who are considered my relatives, I shall offer the dana on behalf of their relatives from all realms, at all times. May all attain and enjoy the merits fully realised from my rains-retreat stay in Taxila.”

A fine drizzle soon follows, marking a blessed sign for all beings who well received merits from the Dana dedicated by MV Arayawangso.





Dhamma Diary

Several times, hope inspires us to strive toward our destination.

Several times, hope makes us tired and discouraged, as we are still far away from reaching that destination.

Sometimes we appreciate hope, and sometimes we are weary of it.

Actually, hope is not the cause of pleasure or displeasure. The real cause is the unrealistic need and desire that can become an unbearable pressure when expectations remain unfulfilled.

Suffering is one reality arising from disappointment, being separated from loved ones, and coming into contact with the undesirables.

Understanding as such, a wise man should make a realistic determination that can be realized by his own knowledge and ability.

Hope does not corrupt anyone, if it does not arise from thoughts that are distorted from Dhamma.

Hope is a virtue when it transforms into satisfaction and encouragement to take a proper step, with the right effort and focused mindfulness.

We will pay deliberate attention, with wisdom, leading to the creation of Dhamma power for life development, build up courage to progress steadily along the path, ready to sacrifice everything including our lives.

Just like our Perfectly Self-Enlightened One who devoted His time in quest of victory as long intended for one hundred thousand eons (kappa) and four incalculables (asankheyya) , until hope is realized, forming into precious aspiration.

As in the discovery of traces of evidence from several periods that almost every Bhodhisatta had stepped on this land of Taxila.

*Most Ven. Arayawangso
Written at 15:36 hrs, 11 July 2565 BE
on the way to Suvarnabhumi Airport
for departure to Islamabad*

Royal Thai Embassy Islamabad, Pakistan

Saturday morning 6th August 2565 BE/ 2022

His Excellency Mr. Chakkidrid Krachaiwong, Ambassador of Thailand to Pakistan, invited Most Venerable Arayawango and the Sangha, of six monks along with one novices, to receives alms, sangha-dana and give dhamma discourse at the Royal Thai Embassy, Islamabad, Pakistan. The morning was full of blessing for all who attended.





A Blessed visit to High Commissioner of Sri Lanka To Pakistan

His Excellency Vice Admiral Mohan Wijewickrama



On Saturday morning of 17th September 2565 BE at 8am, Most Venerable Arayawangso visited the Sri Lankan residence by the invitation of His Excellency Vice Admiral Mohan Wijewickrama, High Commissioner of Sri Lanka in Pakistan, and his spouse, Mrs. Nishani Wijewickrama, to perform chanting, to give Dhamma discourse, and to receive Sangha-Dana offering so it would be blessings to Sri Lankan community in Pakistan. On this occasion, H.E. Mr. Chakkrid Krachaiwong, the Thai Ambassador to Pakistan, and his spouse, as well as officers of Sri Lankan Embassy and Thai followers were also in the audience.



During the two-hour session, Most Venerable Arayawangso gave a dhamma discourse leading to the practice of the foundation of mindfulness (Satipattana). The High Commissioner later expressed that the dhamma discourse similar to the one given today has not happened here, which is the land of the Islamic country, before.





This event was made possible when H.E. Vice Adm Mohan and spouse firstly met Most Venerable on the 7th September 2565 BE, they invited Most Venerable to their residence to receive the sangha-dana offering. And with high faith and strong determination of Mrs. Nishani to learn the Dhamma, she humbly extended the invitation to Most Venerable to also give a dhamma discourse so it would be highly blessed for the Embassy and the people of Sri Lanka.

His Excellency and Mrs. Nishani listened to and practiced Dhamma with determination and experienced deep joy and delight (*piti*). When the dhamma discourse ended, H.E. Vice Adm Mohan was still seen in concentration (*samadhi*) for an extended period of time.





Mrs. Nishani reflected her impression that she actually started learning dhamma about 15 years ago. Yet, she has never had opportunities to meet any true experienced masters and learn dhamma like she was learning from Most Ven which is very profound and insightful teaching, leading her to have detailed step-by-step practice. Besides, due to a lot of duties occupying her routines, it is difficult for her to develop progress in the practice. This is the first time she learned and practiced the true dhamma. For her, it was amazing. She was learning the Lord Buddha's Dhamma on the land of Islamic country, which is a rare opportunity. This encourages her to remind herself that she would have to pay more attention to the practice and to recollect the final remark given by MV, saying "do not expect any results from the practice; keep practicing steadfastly. When the cause is right; the fruition will bear."





The Dhamma discourse was concluded with high blessings. Most Venerable Arayawangso led everyone in the audience to share and spread their merits widely and thoroughly to all mankind, to the deceased, to the victims from disasters and crises in Pakistan, and to the people of Sri Lanka, to be free from sufferings, diseases, and harm. May everyone have happiness and peace.

From this auspicious moment of time, I would like to invite all of you to join in the blessing and appreciation of merits together.

(Noted by Nitinant Wisaweisuan)



Raja Tridiv Roy

A Buddhist Raja in Pakistan from Gandhara

Rajkumari Troya Roy



It was a most auspicious occasion for me, Rajkumari Troya Roy and my family when Most Venerable Arayawangso accepted my invitation to receive an alms offering at my house in Islamabad on 8 August 2022.

In Buddhism, nothing happens by chance. So was my meeting with Most Venerable at Mr Imran Schauket's house earlier led to this particular happy occasion.



At that time, I got the chance from Most Venerable to include the story of my late father, Raja Tridiv Roy in to his book. Raja Tridiv Roy is a Buddhist from Chittagong Hill Tracts who became a Federal Minister in Pakistani government and founded the only Buddhist temple in Islamabad. It was, therefore, with honour and pride that I offer the following brief personal account about the late Raja, his life and work for Buddhism.



Most Venerable Arayawangso with Rajkumari Troya Roy



Raj Tridiv Roy: Wedding photo with Rani Atari Roy
2 March 1953



In full form: Raja Tridiv Roy at the annual Durbar
(Punyah ceremony), circa 1962



Raja Tridiv Roy: With F.M. Ayub Khan (President) and the
other two Chiefs, Mong (left) and Bohmong (right) at
Foundation Stone Laying Ceremony of New Rangamati
Town (Capital of Chittagong Hill Tracts) in 1961

Raja Tridiv Roy was born on 14th May 1933. His Father Raja Nalinaksha was the 49th king of the Chakmas in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and his mother Rani Benita Roy was the granddaughter of Keshab Chandra Sen who was a religious reformer and joined the Brahmo Samaj. Her father, Saral Chandra Sen, was a barrister from Lincoln's Inn.

Raja Tridiv Roy did his studies in Kurseong, West Bengal, where he did his senior Cambridge. Later he got accepted in Lincoln's Inn to study law but, due to the demise of his father, he had to *ascend to the throne to become the 50th Chakma Raja* to serve his people.

As a young Raja at the age of 18, his contributions to the Chakma community will never be forgotten. All his life he has contributed towards his people and Buddhism until his death in 2012.

As a young Raja, he tirelessly worked to promote Buddhism in his community: when he saw that the people were not practicing Buddhism in a right path, he himself went to Myanmar and learn about Buddhism and came back with a Monk to Chittagong Hill tracts and made a Buddha Statue which was made by an expert craftsmen from Myanmar. Raja Tridiv Roy started the first Pali college in Rangamati.

Chittagong Hill tracts is home to the indigenous people of Bangladesh with the majority being Buddhists. There are two theories about the Chakma people. First one, the history says they are the direct descendant of the Sakyas. The other theory which some historians say is that there was a King whose name was Bijoy Giri and his kingdom was called Champak Nagar. He came to conquer the Hill Tracts and during his conquest he received the news that His younger brother had taken over the kingdom back home. So he decided to make his own Kingdom at Chittagong Hill Tracts (British India).

In 1971, Prime Minister Zulifkar Ali Bhutto made Raja Tridiv Roy Minister of Tourism and later Minorities Minister. He was later appointed Pakistan's Ambassador to Argentina with concurrent accreditation to Chile, Uruguay, Peru and Ecuador for 14 years.

When Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was the Prime Minister of Pakistan, he had offered Raja Tridiv Roy to become the President of Pakistan to which Raja Tridiv Roy had respectfully declined the offer because as per the constitution he had to convert to Islam to become the President.

In the year 2005, Raja Tridiv Roy was awarded the Sri Lanka Ranjana by the President of Sri Lanka for his contributions to Buddhism. He founded the Buddhist Society in Pakistan and worked towards the development of the Buddhist community in Pakistan. According to National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) the total number of Buddhists living in Pakistan is around 16000. Raja Tridiv Roy helped the Buddhists in Pakistan to acquire cremation grounds. In 2002 when Pakistan and Japan signed for a Gandhara exhibition, he led the Pakistani delegation to Tokyo, to exhibit the priceless artifacts of the Gandhara civilization.

Along with the help of the Sri Lankan Embassy, he established a temple situated in the diplomatic enclave for Buddhist diplomats and local Buddhists to have a place for meditation and pay respects to Buddha. Every year Buddha Purnima would be celebrated in the temple in which the whole temple would be decorated with lights and Buddhist from around Pakistan would join to celebrate it along with foreign dignitaries.

Raja Tridiv Roy has written books about Buddhism (Buddhist lectures) and has arranged a number of Buddhist conferences in Islamabad where delegations came from Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand and other countries to participate. His main objective was always to make the world a peaceful place and to send a message to the world that every religion says the same thing “To be a good human being”.

Raja Tridiv Roy was also a writer. Apart from his autobiography ‘The Departed Melody’, he also wrote ‘South American Dairies’ and ‘The Windswept Wahini’ which is a collection of short stories. One of the stories had become a part of the syllabus for literature in the 10th grade in Pakistan.

Raja Tridiv Roy passed away peacefully at his home in Islamabad on 17 September 2012.

May his spirit be blessed by the Triple Gem.

*Rajkumari Troya Roy
16 September 2022*



Raja Tridiv Roy: Being received by President Bhutto on return from leading Pakistan Delegation at UN General Assembly Session at Chaklala Airport Rawalpindi on 19 December 1972



President Menem of Argentina, Ambassador of Egypt (Centre) and Raja Tridiv Roy May 1994



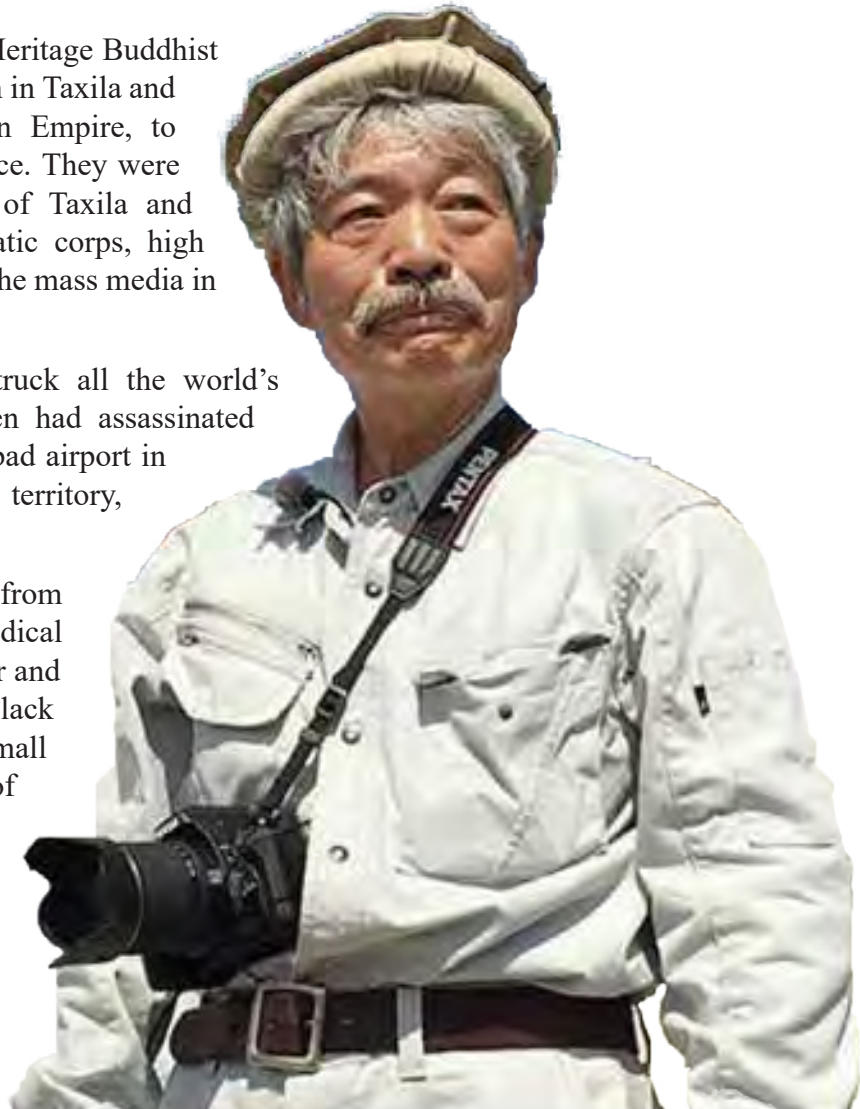
Cabinet Members of the Caretaker Government of the Prime Minister of Pakistan Mr. Mohammadmian Soomro 16-11-2007 - 24-3-2008

The Sound of Dhamma Peace... for Dr. Tetsu Nakamura

I was writing about my visit to the land of World Heritage Buddhist civilisation in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, both in Taxila and Peshawar or Purushapura of the ancient Kushan Empire, to recount the ringing ceremonies of the Bells of Peace. They were installed as Dhamma Chetiya in the Museums of Taxila and Peshawar, witnessed by members of the diplomatic corps, high ranking Pakistani government representatives, and the mass media in Pakistan on 30th - 31st October 2019.

When on 4th December 2019, a tragic news struck all the world's peace-loving people: unidentified terrorist gunmen had assassinated Dr. Tetsu Nakamura and his aids. He died at Jalalabad airport in Afghanistan next to Khyber Pass in Pakistan territory, connecting to Peshawar in Pakistan.

I later learned that in 1984 Dr. Tetsu had traveled from Japan to Peshawar in the north of Pakistan as a medical volunteer to care for patients. At the time, Peshawar and Swat were suffering from many hardships due to the lack of resources and medical supplies. Peshawar had a small 16 bed hospital to accommodate thousands of patients. Dr. Tetsu appealed for financial contributions from Japanese people and set up Peace Japan Medical Service - to provide health services for Pakistan and Afghanistan refugees who fled from the Soviet- Afghan War. As the war became more intense, the help eventually extended into Afghanistan. A hospital in Nangarhar Province in Jalalabad was set up.



With his virtuous heart, Dr. Tetsu set up a project to provide clean water by building wells and an irrigation canal to bring adequate water supplies to the local people. The irrigation project was completed in 2014. It provides irrigated water from Kunar River covering water supplies for 60,000 acres of land. The strong current of Kunar River which flows into the steep of the mountain helped turn the dry, desert land into a lush, green and abundant agricultural land with rice fields and fruit garden.

Both the government and the Taliban hailed Dr. Tetsu for his dedication to improve the lives of Afghan people.

Dr. Tetsu also received much international recognition for his dedicated work for the development and well-being of the public which reflected his Tendai Buddhism philosophy, “Ichigu Wo Terasu,” meaning “Light up your own corner and radiate it to the world.”

Therefore, on this occasion, I wish to pay tribute to Dr. Tetsu Nakamura for his virtuous deeds. May the power of Dhamma accumulated from my good deeds - installing the Bell of Peace, now a Dhamma chetiya, in Peshawar and Taxila, the land of Buddhist civilisation, on which is inscribed the heart of the Dhamma - bring release to Dr. Tetsu’s *patisandhi citta* (relinking consciousness) from this world forever.

As for me, I will have more opportunities to travel to Peshawar again - to cooperate with the archeological unit of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This has to do with the restoration of the Gandharan art, a 15-meter-long Parinibbana Buddha image - the longest ever discovered and excavated from a Buddhist World Heritage site in Pakistan. I will also have to liaise with the authorities in Taxila on matters concerning the building of a meditation hall to welcome pilgrims from all over the world.

These projects must continue with firm confidence in the power of Dhamma Peace inscribed on the Bells of Peace with the heart of the Buddhist teachings: to abstain from all evils, to cultivate wholesomeness and to purify one’s mind. These are the teachings of all Buddhas for peacefulness of humanity. With confidence in the Truth that the “Dhamma will protect those who practice it”, all the plans will certainly continue whether in Pakistan or Afghanistan.

With Metta, Arayawangso Bhikku



photo from :
<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/special/episode/202107040910/D>
<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2019/12/05/national/famed-japanese-doctor-killed-of-afghanistan-spent-life-helping-poor/>
<https://flaapr.org/news/inspiring-stories-dr-nakamura-and-afghan-people>
<https://www.japanpolicyforum.jp/diplomacy/jp2020033119184310299.html>



Impressions

Dhamma Diary

Wherever you know, abandon it right there.

Wherever you abandon, that is where you know.

*Knowing, followed by abandoning, will make you pure.
And purity leads to illumination.*

*Once illuminated,
You can quench the flames of defilements and sufferings.*

*There will be no more going, coming, arising, passing
away, fabricating, and conditioning.*

*This is the nature of nibbana, not being conditioned by any
cause (visankhara).*

***“Ayuna sankhara
Anayuna nibbanam***

*Kamma accumulation is conditioning,
Non-accumulation of kamma is nibbana.”*

***MV Arayawangso, Taxila
7 September 2565 BE***

Meeting with His Excellency Mr. Asim Iftikhar Ahmad



2 years ago, Mr Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, then Ambassador of Pakistan to Thailand, said to Most Venerable Arayawangso that: “We all hope to welcome Most Venerable to spend his rains retreat in Pakistan. Although it was not possible this year due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we hope that it will happen in the future, and not only once, but the first of many”

Today, Most Venerable is spending the BE2565 rains retreat in Taxila, Pakistan. It is proceeding perfectly with full blessings. Furthermore, he has completed his research study on Gandharan civilization with a view to incorporating the findings in a book soon to be published. The book can be usefully studied by Buddhists and those interested around the world to learn and to understand about the way of Buddhist wisdom of Gandharan civilization in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

Dr. Nitinant Wisaweesuan, who accompanied Most Venerable Arayawangso on the visit to H.E. Mr. Asim Iftikhar Ahmed and family at Pakistan house on 25 August 2020, recorded her privileged experiences and posted on her Facebook page (original text in Thai) as follows:

It was a privileged morning for me (Ms. Nitinant Wisaweesuan) to accompany Most Venerable Arayawangso on his visit to His Excellency Mr. Asim Iftikhar Ahmad and family at Pakistan House on 25/08/20. Also joined by Faraz Zaidi, A Imran Shauket, Sadaqat First Secretary, and MV followers. We were so blessed by MV's words of wisdom and loving-kindness.

Most Venerable Arayawangso received Pakistani style alms offering before sitting down to a lively discussion on various topics in a joyous atmosphere.

Most Venerable began by explaining the procedure for Sattahakaraniya as allowed by Dhamma-Vinaya and his on-going projects.

Most Venerable recounted a story from over 20 years ago when he was sitting with a group of Thai Muslims in the South of Thailand. He was asked “How do Buddhism and Islam differ?”.

Before answering, MV looked at the questioner briefly, and said “Buddhism and Islam are like the left and right eyes; they both look at the same spot. If you close one eye, left, or right, it will still see the same object.” Hearing the answer, the inquirer exclaimed “inshallah”.

Most Venerable further explained the lesson he learnt from that experience. “It is natural that there are differences in the world. Pakistanis would not be Pakistani if they wore Thai

clothing; and the Thais would not be Thai if they wore Pakistani clothing. In reality, there is no Pakistani or Thai. If we remove those labels, Pakistani and Thai, clothing is something that everyone needs. This means everyone needs spiritual support and life’s principles that accord with his particular social environment.

Thus, peace can arise when we understand the difference. That is finding similarity in the difference. If we can understand similarity in the difference, peace will arise. You will not see the difference as a source of division. You see the difference as one having a similarity that will not lead to division.

This means that peace arises from understanding and understanding arises from mindfulness and wisdom. Hence, Buddhism is not a religion like any others but it is a religion of mindfulness and wisdom. Islam also aims at developing mindfulness and wisdom, and so does Christianity. How deeply mindfulness and wisdom are cultivated depends on their respective teachings. But regardless of that, as long as we have mindfulness and wisdom, peace will arise.

There cannot be Peace in a society that lacks mindfulness and wisdom. Irrational belief will never lead to true peace, because once a new belief is formed, the person will change his mind.

That is why we are witnessing western superpower countries trying to destroy the social structure of other countries by introducing distortions in existing beliefs. Even in the modern IT era, new beliefs are permeating into existing beliefs.

We cannot force the masse of people to believe in what we want, but we can make them understand the same thing for the sake of peaceful co-existence. Regrettably, had I been able to spend this year’s rains retreat in Gandhara, you (Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad) would have been able to listen to more Dhamma discourses. It would have been the Dhamma pertained to Pakistani people with true spiritual understanding arisen from mind cultivation.



Mind cultivation enables us to understand all beings, even vicious poisonous snakes. To give as an example, once, there was a peculiar looking snake in a forest in Thailand. In this forest, there are a lot of snakes, but this one does not look like any others. Some are black and some are green, but this one in particular is both black and green, a cross breed.

When I saw it, I smiled and thought this was quite a peculiar snake. It would slither back and forth playing around in the forest while I meditated. One day I left the forest and returned after a few months. While meditating in a small room, similar to a tiny cave, I thought about that snake. Around 2 to 3 pm, there was this “fu fu” sound, like something slithering on the floor. In that moment while meditating, I thought it was probably that snake. Slowly opening my eyes, I saw the snake rearing its head and opening its red maw, looking straight at me. I then told him, it is ok, no need to come and visit me, you may leave now. The snake slowly lowered itself and went back outside.

This shows that peace can be achieved with mindfulness and wisdom. That day, if either of us had been startled, (if I by him, or he by me,) he would have bitten me. It was also important that I spoke to him with loving kindness. Loving kindness is truly a tool for achieving peace. This shows also that Loving kindness arises from the basic level of mindfulness and wisdom of humankind.

I could sense from my first visit that Loving-kindness is a natural quality inherent in Pakistani people. They are endearing indeed. I earnestly feel this way. Even behind their back, I will still say the same thing. If we are able to improve Pakistan’s economy and reduce the poverty gap, I believe that terrorism will stop and many problems will slowly subside because Pakistanis are basically a peaceful people..

When I meditate, I can sense peaceful and positive natural conditions all around. That was the reason for my daring decision to spend a rains retreat there. The further north, towards Peshawar area,

the clearer these conditions became. One day, I will spend my rains retreat there. I will write a book on peace in the land of Buddhist Heritage in Pakistan and share the merits with you, Ambassador. Blessing to you.” to Pakistan.

Most Venerable praised the Ambassador that his time in Thailand had been very beneficial to Pakistan. MV had also mentioned this to the President of Pakistan because the Thai Foreign Minister once said that the Ambassador was a capable person and had opened the eyes of Thai people to understand Pakistan better.

MV further said that “It is regrettable that Ambassador will no longer be working in Thailand. Things have been developing well. But we have to move on. Ambassador Asim will now have the opportunity to help Pakistan even more. We hope that the next Ambassador will carry on the work you have started in Thailand.

I believe that what you have accomplished here have surely been followed by everyone around the world and recognized by the Pakistani government. These achievements will guarantee future prosperity in your career.





I believe that what you have accomplished here have surely been followed by everyone around the world and recognized by the Pakistani government. These achievements will guarantee future prosperity in your career.

There are many ambassadors from one country to another. Most of them focus on their job in that country and confine themselves to that region and its people, so much so that we are unsure what is the job of an Ambassador. But you have opened up the role of an ambassador from an Islamic republic so that Thai people now know what you are doing. You have extended your ties with the Islamic religion, local Islamic community and people from other religions through educational, economic and social activities for the benefit of everyone. It must be admitted that you have been successful as a true ambassador.

This is one of the reasons why I have accepted the invitation to come to Pakistan when asked every time. In future, there will be many more projects awaiting you, because Pakistan still needs an ambassador just like you, especially one who can promote Pakistan as an international country, not being confined to just one religion.

Most Islamic countries are defined by their religion in the eyes of the world that has consequentially limited their role. However, you have broadened that perspective and propagate the true Islamic nature, a Muslim who views everyone as brothers and sisters.

As a grand blessing from stating this truth, may you be more and more successful in your future endeavors.

For a blessing to be sacred or not depends on whether it is based on the truth or not. A blessing will be great and sacred if it is built upon the Dhamma truth that is in line with the truth in nature, the truth in our life. The truth that reflects back to our action. What we do, we will receive the fruit of our action. No god can give you more than the truth. If you do not read, nor pay attention in class, god cannot give you anything. But, if you are studious, god will bless you; for you are diligent, and fulfill your role, you will be successful, and god is there cheering you on.

Therefore, god is the force of nature, the greatest truth that surpasses the world. Islam's god and the Dhamma in Buddhism do not differ in meaning. If we understand this, it is up to us what how shall we approach the topic.

With the power of stating this truth, may the blessing be upon you and your family. May you all find peace, prosperity, success and growth in your future.” After listening to Most Venerable, Ambassador Asim responded that “There was nothing I could add, only the thankful feeling for MV’s blessing, and all the goodwill that MV has extended to me, his family and Pakistan. Importantly, 3 important lessons were learnt today.

Firstly, we must find the similarity in our differences. Secondly, we need to cultivate understanding by encouraging communication and cooperation between Pakistan and other different societies and religions. Such is the policy of the Pakistani Government. And thirdly, I am very thankful and appreciative that Most Venerable have described Pakistanis as being full of loving-kindness. We all hope to welcome MV for this rains retreat, even if it is not possible this year due to the Covid-19 pandemic, but in the future, and not only once, but the first of many.”

Most Venerable concluded by saying that he wished to see all ambassadors around the world follow Ambassador Asim’s example. If every ambassador did so, every country will flourish, and most importantly, friendship will certainly be fostered in the world.





MV Arayawangso with Chakkrid Krachaiwong

Words from Ambassador of the Kingdom of Thailand to Pakistan

Thailand and Pakistan celebrated the 70th year Anniversary of diplomatic relations on 10 October 2021, but the ties between the two peoples were bonded long before through the Gandhara civilisation which had flourished for more than 2,000 years. This tie has been particularly realised by Most Venerable Arayawangso who can see the importance of this connection.

Most Venerable Arayawangso visited Pakistan for the first time in 2019 as per the invitation of Pakistani government. On that occasion, there was a ceremony to ring the Bell of Peace at Taxila Museum which is considered a declaration of peace and well wishes from people of Thailand spreading throughout Pakistan. This time in 2022, Most Venerable Arayawangso was invited by the Governor of Punjab to stay at the Taxila Museum during the 3 months Buddhist rain retreat.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Government for Pakistan for giving great honour to the Most Venerable that inviting him to call on the President and high-ranked officers of Pakistan with warm welcome by people of Pakistan.

In return, the arrival of Most Venerable to this great land has brought many virtues.

At the government level, his visit coincides with Pakistan's policy to promote tourism in many historic and Buddhist sites throughout the country to be more widely known to the world. The success of this mission will also contribute to the development of local economy. At the academic and senior official level, MV has exchanged knowledge through various meetings during his stay. By combining local information with Most Venerable's knowledge of history and Buddhism, we can project a more comprehensive and clearer picture of the social condition, civilisation, and related history of Buddhism.

Another outstanding aspect of his visit to Pakistan is at the public level. From the visits and interactions with local communities, he has extended his kindness and benevolence to the people around him through his speech, gestures, and mind that has fostered the bond of relationship, creating understanding among people, leading to the promotion of peaceful coexistence between people of different faiths with respect of local beliefs and traditions.

In addition, MV has seen the hardships of Pakistani people who suffered from the severe floods. He has taken the lead in organising swift donations bridging well wishes from people of Thailand to support the flood victims in Pakistan. The kind action was well received both by the government and the people of Pakistan.

I strongly believe that we will benefit greatly from this historic book. Even if one did not travel with Most Venerable, we will touch his kindness and his attention to even the smallest details that many people may overlook including his good wishes. We will be led into one of the most memorable journeys to the great land of ancient civilisation that many of us have never been to. *We will*

*learn a history that may have been forgotten;
see the connection between people in distant lands; and
enjoy the friendship that you may not have experienced before.*

Chakkrid Krachaiwong
Ambassador of the Kingdom of Thailand to Pakistan

Words from Colonel, Military and Defense Attaché, Royal Thai Embassy, Islamabad



*Colonel Adisak Showichen,
Military and Defense Attaché, Royal Thai Embassy, Islamabad*

I was so glad and highly honoured to have been given an opportunity to write something in this book. I was also very lucky to have a chance to follow and support M.V. Arayawangso and his followers. They came to stay in Pakistan during the Rains Retreat 2022, which was the first time in around 2,000 years, at the present day – Pakistan where Buddhism was prosperous. In this trip, M.V. Arayawangso has used all available time preciously. Not only did he conduct his daily routines, such as praying/chanting, offering for a sermon, etc., he has also allocated his time to write this book, which has consumed his sleeping/rest times considerably.

As part of the group travelling to various places in Pakistan, I have witnessed some of the world heritages, where locals in the past and present, including Pakistanis, have tried to take

care of as much as they can. I am really proud to be able to see from my own eyes, the archaeological evidences of Buddhism prosperity, including the Buddha's relics, Buddha's footprint, Buddha's statues, pagodas, artifacts, etc., which are in lines with the recorded history. These have confirmed that, Buddhism was here and prospered in the Indian Subcontinent. Even though, the majority of people in the present day - Pakistan are Muslims, these heritages have been taken good care of. There are some areas that have not been excavated yet. I would like to invite readers and others to visit these world heritage sites and would like to kindly request the Government of Pakistan to continue to look after them as best as possible. May I also kindly request any relevant International Organizations/foundations to provide more supports to the conservation efforts, which will ultimately be beneficials to the world.

This trip has been gratefully supported by the Government of Pakistan, the provincial governments of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, law enforcement officers, Inter – Services Intelligence, and all Pakistanis, who have always given us very sincere hospitality and helps, which contributed to the success of the trip. I am very impressed and have felt that Thais and Pakistani are very similar and are like relatives. If everybody gives loves and compassions to each other, there will be less conflicts in the world. Finally, I am deeply grateful to M.V. Arayawangso, who have been very compassion to me and my wife, such that we were able to be part of his team to provide supports to him in completing this invaluable works. Please allow me to rejoice your merits.

Colonel Adisak Showichen,
Military and Defense Attaché, Royal Thai Embassy, Islamabad

Most Venerable Father

(I) A Man of Vision

*“I believe you are my former son from Ghandara State in JambuDvipa!!
You have strong aspiration and very sincere intention to help conserve your
motherland. I trust you were and will be happy every time I visit Pakistan.”*

*MV Arayawangso
Message to Imran Shauket
Dec 12, 2019*

After more than 2000 years, father and son are reunited!

The wisdom and knowledge of the father is leading to transformational initiatives coordinated by the son and MVs many devoted disciples and well-wishers in Pakistan!

I met Most Venerable Arayawangso at Thammasat University on 25th May, 2017. A dear friend and Secretary of MV, Vice Rector Nitinant, organized the meeting. Earlier, the Ambassador of Pakistan to Thailand had asked me to facilitate the trip on behalf of the Government of Pakistan and the meeting was the culmination of 2 years of seemingly failed efforts to bring MV to Pakistan. MV wanted to meet to discuss making the trip a reality.

Meeting MV was a life changing experience. His smile is contagious and his intellect is profound, yet simple and direct. His company puts you at ease immediately and one starts gaining wisdom as if by osmosis.

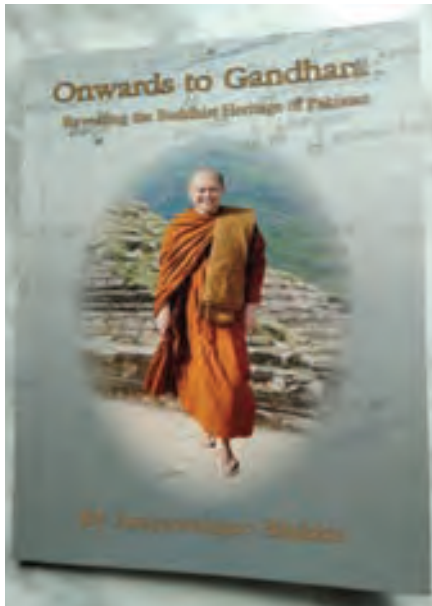
MV started the conversation by asking two simple questions, “Imran, can you tell me why do some people keep stopping me from going to Pakistan saying that it is a dangerous country? And, what is your agenda for me to come to Pakistan?”

I answered simply by saying, “MV, Pakistan is the 5th largest country in Pakistan with 240 million people. Being such a large country, of course there are areas of insecurity in Pakistan. Which large country doesn’t have some dangerous areas. However, overall, Pakistan is a very safe place.

For instance, more people are targeted in New York city in a month, than all of Pakistan in a year. And as to your second question, Pakistan has forgotten its Buddhist roots and when you come, people will see you, meet you and realize what a wonderful and peaceful philosophy Buddhism is. Furthermore, more people will follow you to explore Pakistan which will lead to awareness of Gandhara as well as creating economic opportunity for the people of Pakistan”.



*2017 - Meeting MV Father at
Thammasat University, Thailand*



2019 - *Onwards to Gandhara*

MV took a moment to respond, “Imran, I will come to Pakistan, I will promote the message of wisdom and peace which started from Pakistan 2300 years ago, and after I come, many of my disciples and other Buddhists will follow which will increase tourism to Pakistan and help Pakistan economically”. I realized then that MV’s vision for Pakistan was much larger than I ever imagined.

MV came to Pakistan in October 2019 for nine days. He brought “Bells of Peace” to be installed at Taxila as well as Peshawar museums. MV met and impressed the President, ministers, diplomats and most importantly, the common people that he encountered. He amazed people with his depth of knowledge and understanding. His quick understanding of the people of Pakistan has been nothing less than remarkable. He told me on his 2nd day in Pakistan after visiting Takht-e-Bahi World Heritage site, where children as well as a group of women met him, “Imran, I strongly see that the people of Pakistan have a depth of love that I have not felt elsewhere, but they are also divided and want someone to unite them”.

I witnessed that MV never simply “visits” a place. Any place he visits, something visionary comes from it. He visited Pakistan for a short duration and to recap his trip, he published a book “Onwards to Pakistan”. He visited the Dharmarajika stupa, and set forth his vision to set up a meditation center near the site. He visited Bhamala and subsequently put forth a design to restore the “Sleeping Buddha” of Bhamala.

He visited Pakistan for a short duration in 2019 and his vision evolved into him coming back for a Rains Retreat with hundreds of disciples. And, he is here! He is perhaps the first monk in 2000 years in this region to be conducting this event and bringing with him the largest group of Buddhists to ever come to Pakistan in over a thousand years.

In 2019, MV set out with a vision to promote the Buddhist heritage of Pakistan, and to introduce the historic and loving side of Pakistan that has eluded the world. This Rains Retreat is a result of that, and this book will be a major landmark in fulfilling his vision. With his guidance, this book is destined to be translated into many languages for Buddhists to learn about Gandhara as well as Pakistan, through the eyes of MV. This book will also capture some of the most iconic visions of his trip such as his visit to Shpola stupa - in the middle of the Khyber pass (some 10 km from the Afghan border and a site that has not been visited by monks in 2000 years). It will also speak to his vision of Pakistan opening up to Buddhists from India, who witnessed him sitting at the flag lowering ceremony at Wagah border between India and Pakistan. Moreover, there is already discussion underway to make series of episodes from chapters of this book. MV has become the founder of Buddhist pilgrimage tourism to Pakistan. I can unequivocally state that MV has done more to promote Pakistan and its heritage than any other single person – and that was his stated vision in 2017!



2022 – *Wagah Border between Pakistan-India*

(II) *A Man of Honour*

“I will be back again and I will bring a Bell of Peace to be installed at the Swat Museum. This is my promise to you”

*MV Arayawangso
To Prince Miangul Adnan of Swat
October 2019*

In my many years since I had the pleasure to meet MV, I find him to be the epitome of honour. As a former diplomat, I have lived in five continents, visited more than 70 countries and met thousands of people. Yet, rarely have I met a sage who is so true to his word. A word from him, let alone a promise, is tantamount to something etched in stone. It is everlasting!

In 2019, MV brought two Bells of Peace and Prince Adnan Aurangzeb of Swat, my friend of 45 years, participated in the ceremonies of the installation of the Bells of Peace in Taxila and Peshawar. He humbly requested MV to visit Swat to see the Buddhist sites and to bring a Bell of Peace for installation at the Swat museum.



*2019 - Most Venerable Arayawangso
and Prince Miangul Adnan*

MV informed Adnan that his schedule was full during his current trip, but that he would visit Swat and bring a Bell of Peace on his next trip. Covid shut down the world soon thereafter and MV could not come back to Pakistan. Prince Adnan died an un-timely death due to an accident on May 30th, 2022 and never could host MV in Swat.



2022 – MV and the Princess

A man of honor, MV visited Swat in the last week of July 2022 to pay homage to the Prince, and to install a Bell of Peace in his name at the Swat Museum. He prayed at the house of Prince Adnan, consoled his brothers, wife, family and friends, and visited the grave of the Prince. He visited the sites that Prince wanted him to see spent every night at the museum of Swat meditating and writing.

MV’s solace and strength helped the Prince’s wife, Princess Zenab Adnan, go through this difficult time of her life. She confided in me “MV has been a source of amazing strength for me and I feel that I can move on”.

During his trip to Swat, MV stated that Swat had become very dear to him and he would like to visit again. He also committed to helping the people of Swat as well as to assist in the preservation of the heritage of Swat. It might have been prophetic that he was still in Pakistan when Swat needed his help soon thereafter.



Donation of THB 1 M handed by Gen. Jiradech to HE Sahebzada

Floods hit Swat and Pakistan in August 2022. They devastated more than a 40% of the country and more than 34 million people were left homeless. Swat was very hard hit.

True to his word, MV asked his disciples for help for Swat and Pakistan, and within a few days, THB 1 million (PKR 6 million) was raised and given to the government of Pakistan for flood assistance. Shortly thereafter, he also contributed THB 200,000 (PKR 1.2 million) for the children of Swat.

MV's word truly is his bond!

(III) A Man of Miracles

“Don’t worry. I have prayed for her and she will be fine in 3 days”

MV Arayawangso

Message to Imran, March 2021

In March 2021, I received news that my mother had contracted Covid and that she was on a ventilator. I had arrived Thailand for a two week trip in March 2020 and the world went into Covid shutdown soon thereafter. My two week trip went on for months and by the time I got this news, I had been away for a year, with no hope of perhaps ever getting back in time to see her alive. After all, she is in her 80s with asthma and many other high risk ailments, and in the group of people who are least likely to survive Covid. In a resigned state, I conveyed to MV that my mother was probably on her deathbed, and I cannot be there. I asked if he could please pray for her!

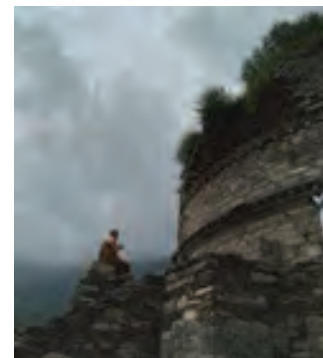


MV visiting mother in August 2022

I immediately got a message back giving directions for her to perform some simple exercises of concentration and other tasks and convey to him when she had accomplished them. The next day, I informed him that she had accomplished the tasks assigned to her. MV responded in the most simple and most reassuring manner “Don’t worry. I have prayed for her and she will be fine in 3 days”.

Within 3 days, the miracle happened and she was on the road to full recovery.

The forces and energies around MV are strong as witnessed by me during my affiliation with him. During the past few months, the weather in Pakistan has been unpredictable varying between extreme heat and untimely rain.



Swat: Clouds came to cool, but not to rain



MV helping a friend

has advanced stage cancer. I asked MV to meet and pray for him since he has been in pain for a long time. MV, despite his tight schedule, took him aside, asked him to hold a bottle of water and held it with him. MV prayed and asked him to drink the water. MV did the same with 2 other bottles and asked him to take them home and drink them. Not surprisingly for me, my friend's condition has improved drastically and he is enjoying life a lot more in the past months.

MV continues to do acts that are nothing short of miracles. It is not that he does things himself necessarily, but miracles seem to happen around him as he performs the tasks that he has set out to perform. It is almost as if the cosmic energies are there to support him!

*Imran Shauket
Son of MV Arayawangso (BCE 2000)
Former USAID Diplomat
Advisor to GOP
And member of family of nobles and founders of Pakistan*

... Peace blossoms in the midst of friendship

With honesty and understanding of the minds

This geranium symbolises friendship

*Surpassing nationality, language,
culture, tradition, even faith ...*



*Picture taken at the rains
retreat residence, Taxila
by MV Arayawangso
6th September 2022*

Legacy of Dhamma Diplomacy: Perspectives of a Former Diplomat July – October 2565BE/2022CE

Accomplished Dhamma Diplomacy in Taxila, Pakistan



It has been a great privilege for me to accompany my revered spiritual teacher, Venerable Phra Ajahn Arayawangso, in his Dhamma Mission to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in July 2022. This is my second visit to this ancient land, the first one being in October 2019¹, also as a member of the Phra Ajahn Arayawangso's party.

As this visit was at the invitation of the Pakistan government through the Ministry of Tourism of Punjab for him to spend a three-month rains retreat in Taxila, Phra Ajahn Arayawangso made it clear from the very beginning that monks and lay disciples always conduct themselves with meticulous circumspect and utmost sensitivity at all times.

Led by Venerable Phra Ajahn Arayawangso, the delegation of 5 monks and a novice settled in the guest residence of Taxila Museum which was celebrated for this occasion with a flurry of historic activities under his spiritual guidance. The residence was transformed into a monastic compound with the Dhammachaka flag hoisted alongside the Thai and Pakistani flags in the front yard.

For the first time in centuries, Thai, Sri Lankan and Korean Buddhists celebrated the Asalha Pucha day at Dhamma Rajika Stupa, ushering in the BE2565 rains retreat on the following day, the ceremony of which was performed according to the Dhamma Vinaiya in the inner hall of the monastic residence.

These events were welcome by our hosts in Taxila, once the important centre of Gandharan civilisation. They have in effect awakened the spirituality of the ruins of Buddhist World Heritage once again. Phra Ajahn Arayawangso often said that it was the lack of spirituality that Buddhist World Heritage sites had become mere bricks and stones to most people in Pakistan.

Observing Luang Por Arayawangso's conduct of his activities during the rains retreat, I was reminded of a term used by Mr Don Pramudwinai, Thai Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, to define Luang Por's first visit to Pakistan: **Dhamma Diplomacy**.



¹ MV Arayawangso's first visit, at the invitation of the Embassy of Pakistan in Bangkok, took place from 28 October - 2 November 2019.

Diplomacy is generally understood to be performed by government officials for the mutual benefits of respective countries.

But what is **Dhamma Diplomacy**?

Phra Ajahn Arayawangso has given a clear definition to this term in Thai that I would like to quote the English translation:

“Dhamma Diplomacy is the application and integration of the Dhamma principles which are universal truth that exists in nature to the spirit of all mankind. Realising this truth will benefit our own lives, society and countries without being stuck in the framework of local traditions, cultures, creeds, beliefs or religions.

The conduct of Dhamma Diplomacy should lead to concrete results benefitting equally and justly all concerned. It needs to be applied with loving kindness, compassion, goodwill and equanimity that will create spiritual ties through Dhamma principles of respective religions with common aspiration for peace. This means Spiritual equality is the aim of Dhamma Diplomacy rather than materialistic gains or following stringent conventional religious beliefs.

Upholding the Dhamma will give us an opportunity to create universal, or international religions for the benefit of humanity. And that will let all human beings walk together hand-in-hand towards the ultimate goal of Peace.”

The term Dhamma has often been misunderstood to be related to religion. To this, Phra Ajahn Arayawangso emphatically maintains that:

“Dhamma is not religion. Dhamma exists in all religions. Dhamma binds all religions together”.

I have found that such definition and understanding form the basis upon which Venerable Phra Ajahn Arayawangso has conducted his Dhamma activities in Pakistan. As a consequence, they have been well appreciated by the local people as can be gauged from the reactions of Pakistanis concerned, press interviews and reports. Phra Ajahn often maintained that the reason his activities had been well received was because they were pursued with “intent, understanding and sincerity”.

Phra Ajahn Arayawangso is a Buddhist monk who strictly observes the Discipline and has full confidence in the virtues of the Triple Gem. This confidence is amplified in his close involvement with Buddhist World Heritage in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan from his first visit in 2019 until today.

In his article in the Bangkokbiznews dated 10th November 2019, Phra Ajahn Arayawangso wrote that his main objective in visiting Pakistan was:

“to create religious ties through Buddhist World Heritage in Pakistan. Buddhist countries can be linked constructively to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan as they share the same objective of developing these World Heritage sites for the common interest of mankind.

As a former diplomat, it has been gratifying for me to observe Venerable Luang Por Arayawangso practicing his unique way of extending goodwill and empathy, offering advice and comments when

sought. From my perspective, his approach to any of his work, the local authorities and people he met has been taken with natural diplomatic finesse and sincere inter-faith respect to our hosts.

He has combined both his devotion to the Triple Gem, which has inspired him to revisit this country, and his sense of history that is apparent in his approach to Buddhist World Heritage in the context of today's Pakistan.

At the time of this writing, two months have lapsed and soon the rains retreat would be over. They have been two months of unique and amazing activities undertaken by Phra Ajahn Arayawangso in his mission to create spiritual ties with the people of Pakistan in pursuance of the common goal of peace.

The followings are highlights of the aforementioned activities that have contributed to the accomplishments of his Dhamma mission:

Visits to Buddhist World Heritage sites in Taxila, Swat, Peshawar

At the invitation of the Directorates of Archaeology and Museums of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Luang Por Arayawangso and his party visited a number of important Buddhist World Heritage sites. At every place, he would pay homage to the Triple Gem and meditate to spread loving kindness to all beings. Why? According to Luang Por, this was done to reinstate the spirituality of the once holy sites, which had been lost these thousand years. Indirectly, he wanted to show the local people that these stupas and monasteries were not just ruins of bricks and stones, but living treasures that have been passed down to them. Furthermore, monks and lay people were living in those places, hence, the spreading of loving kindness all around. This, in turn, is a blessing to the people in the neighbourhood.

Visit to Swat Valley and Installation of the 3rd Bell of Peace²

Luang Por Arayawangso's main objective in visiting Swat Valley was to keep a promise that he had made to the late Miangul Adnan Aurangzeb, Wahi of Swat, at his first visit to Pakistan. That was to install a 3rd Bell of Peace at the Museum of Swat. It was a touching visit to the Aurangzeb family who bonded spiritually with Luang Por. He and the monks were invited to stay at the Residence and performed a blessing ceremony for the family. Subsequently, he was invited to stay overnight in the Museum where the Patimokkha³ ceremony by four Buddhist monks took place for the first time in probably over a thousand years in Swat.



The installation ceremony of the Bell of Peace took place on 28th July 2022, which coincided with the Birthday Anniversary of HM the King of Thailand. So, it was a happily arranged celebration, with participation of the Aurangzeb family, museum representatives, the mass media and the Thai party. Venerable Phra Ajahn Arayawangso deftly played a diplomatic role of Dhamma Peace conveyor by having a Bell of Peace installed on this land with the symbolic ringing of the Bell.

² The 1st Bell of Peace was installed at Peshawar Museum on 30 October 2019; the 2nd Bell of Peace was installed at Taxila Museum on 31 October 2019.

³ In Theravada Buddhism, the Patimokkha is the basic code of monastic discipline consisting of 227 rules for fully ordained monks. The entire Patimokkha is recited during the Uposatha or fortnights assembly of at least 4 monks.

Visit to Kanishka Vihara (Shah-ji-ki-Dheri), the tallest Buddhist stupa in the 2nd CE, presently located in a community cemetery.

To get to the site of the ruins, Venerable Phra Ajahn Arayawangso, escorted by the Director of Archaeology and Museums of KPK, and his party had to take a long walk passing through a Muslim community cemetery. Our intrusion into the compound seemed not to have caused any problem for the local people who gradually formed a big group quietly watching Luang Por build a small sand stupa underneath a big Bodhi tree on the ground where the old stupa used to stand. On his part, Phra Ajahn also quietly went about working on the sand stupa, meditative like. There was no chanting, just praying and paying homage to the Triple Gem at the completion. Later, Phra Ajahn said to us that as we were in a Muslim cemetery, we should display proper respect to their traditions. It was generous of the local people to have let us go through. The people, particularly, school children, were friendly, courteous and curious to meet Phra Ajahn and take photographs with him. Such expression of friendly welcome had greeted Venerable Phra Ajahn Arayawangso everywhere he went.

Visit to Khyber Pass

This visit was really a unique occasion as the region is still restricted to the general foreign tourists. The Director of Archaeology and Museums of KPK arranged for Venerable Phra Ajahn Arayawangso to climb up the Sphola Stupa, the only Buddhist monument remaining in the Khyber Pass which was being used as a frontier guard post. The stupa was under restoration. According to the Director, there had not been a Buddhist monk visiting the stupa for over a thousand years! It was a visit welcomed by the local authorities, including a frontier tribe who presented Venerable Phra Ajahn with a Chieftain hat as an expression of friendship and respect.

Lecture at the National School of Public Policy

The National Management College of the National School of Public Policy, Lahore, had invited Venerable Phra Ajahn Arayawangso to give a lecture to its 116th Class of 53 high ranking officers on the subject “Dhamma: Buddhist Teachings and Pakistan’s Role as Cradle of Civilisation”. This, I believe, was the first of such an invitation to a Buddhist monk. The lecture provided an opportunity for Luang Por Arayawangso to share his thoughts on what is Dhamma and how Pakistan could develop its Buddhist World Heritage to promote cultural tourism. Although the title of the talk set by the School refers to the Teachings of Buddha, Venerable Luang Por avoided wherever possible the use of the terms “religion” “Buddhism” or “Buddhist civilisation” in his lecture. Instead, with his usual sense of history, Luang Por pointed to the Indus Valley Civilisation as the root of all subsequent civilisations of Pakistan. His objective was to raise the awareness and interest of the students to the spiritual values of the ruins from past Civilisations, including the Buddhist World Heritage, so that appropriate strategies would be formulated at the high level to implement cultural/religious tourism aspired by Pakistani government. His lecture was well received by the students and faculty of the college.

Donation to Disaster Relief

At the first instant of learning about the flooding in Pakistan, particularly, the dire situation in Swat, Luang Por Arayawangso decided to do something to help relieve the plight of people there. Within 24 hours, his disciples in Thailand raised an amount of one million Thai Baht or 6 million Pakistani Rupees for disaster relief, to collaborate, among others, with the Miangul Adnan Aurangzeb Fund established by the Aurangzeb family and friends. The donation was passed on to the Pakistani Foreign Ministry through diplomatic channels. This humanitarian relief was a sincere act of friendship and kindness towards Pakistani victims affected by the disastrous flooding.

Writing a book on Gandhara

As part of his Dhamma Mission in Pakistan, Venerable Phra Ajahn Arayawangso has been preoccupied with writing his book on Gandharan civilisation, including the spiritual significance of places he has visited. The book is intended as a gift to the Pakistani government and people. According to Phra Ajahn, he wants to share with the people of Pakistan correct knowledge of the spiritual value of those ruins of bricks and stones which were, thousands of years ago, very much spiritually vibrant. Only then will they appreciate their ancient heritage and want to give it due attention and protection.

Organisation of Kathina Ceremony (offering of the Rope) to mark the end of rains retreat in Taxila on 12 October 2022

In Thailand, according to the Dhamma Vinaiya, a monastery can receive a Robe offering from lay donors within one month after the end of the rains retreat. It is a normal tradition. But to organise one in Pakistan was indeed historic. This event had been planned by Venerable Phra Ajahn Arayawangso even prior to his coming to Pakistan! Over 150+ of Buddhist followers from Thailand will participate in this ceremony at the monastic compound in Taxila. As part of their trip to Gandhara, they will also enjoy visiting Buddhist World Heritage sites and museums in Taxila, Peshawar and Lahore. This will be the first group of religious tourists coming to see for themselves what Pakistan has to offer to Buddhists all over the world. The expected successful outcomes of this pilgrimage are attributable seamlessly to the Venerable Phra Ajahn Arayawangso's "Initiative to Preserve the Cultural Legacies of Gandharan Civilisation" that has been in the forefront of his Dhamma mission all along.

Conclusion

The Dhamma Diplomacy being conducted by Venerable Phra Ajahn Arayawangso in Pakistan has created a strong momentum for the existing close diplomatic relationship between Pakistani and Thailand in mutually beneficial ways, particularly, in the field of religious /cultural tourism. It remains for Governmental authorities of both countries to take advantage of his Dhamma mission to deepen even closer bilateral relations and understanding between our two peoples.

With my deepest respect and gratitude to my most revered spiritual teacher for giving me the opportunity to share the wondrous experience of living amongst precious Buddhist treasures in this land of ancient civilisations.

Suchitra Hiranprueck

Former Ambassador of Thailand to the Netherlands

19 September 2022

The Power of Dhamma

I started learning and practicing dhamma with Most Ven Arayawangso since 2010, and have continuously appreciated that every single breath of his life is dedicating to Buddhism. He learns, he practices, he teaches. He works steadfastly with loving-kindness and aspiration of helping everyone to be free from sufferings. Above all, he contributes to bring the teachings of Lord Buddha to mankind. Buddhism is not a matter of religion, it is indeed the truth of life - the truth of the natural law of action that everyone can learn to understand and apply to attain the ultimate happiness.

It is my great honour to accompany Most Venerable Arayawangso on his trips to Pakistan, both during the 5-day visit in 2019, and this 3-month rains retreat, 2022, in Taxila.

From the very first day when MV Arayawangso and his Sangha arrived Taxila, I can see his routine of steadfast practice, beginning the day with walking for morning alms, receiving Sangha-dana, and teaching dhamma both in the morning and evening. He performs all required Sangha duties as prescribed by the monastic codes. He writes article series of the visit entitled “*From Suvarnabhumi ... to Gandhara*” published in the ThaiPost, which now comprises 12 parts. And very importantly, he authors *this* book “the Buddhist Civilisation of Gandhara”, which will walk you to appreciate the spiritual treasures of this land.

He kindly extended opportunities to senior officers and local communities to learn the teachings of Buddhism, via the invited lectures and several informal conversations. He visited Buddhist heritage sites nationwide including Taxila, Peshawar, Swat, Lahore, and those along the Khyber Pass.

As a coordinator, the occurrence of several events is far beyond explanation and expectation. That the Most Venerable Arayawangso is spending the three-month rains retreat in 2022 in Taxila by the invitation of the Tourism Department, Government of Punjab, Pakistan, is truly *the fruition of the power of dhamma*.

Although the rains retreat was planned to take place in 2020 and coronavirus pandemic delayed the trip, it then happened through great support of respective individuals and authorities in Pakistan. Thanks to every diplomat of the Pakistan Embassy and the Government of Pakistan, including H.E. Mr. Sohail Mamood, Foreign Secretary, a former Ambassador of Pakistan to Thailand and his successor, H.E. Mr. Asim Iftikhar Ahmad who did magnificent jobs in continuing and fostering our relationship. H.E. Mr. Sahebzada Khan then actively facilitates the following trips. I am wholeheartedly grateful to his kind assistance which extended to all the Thais who will join the Katina Civara ceremony as the conclusion of the Rains retreat in Taxila.

Special thanks to my counterpart coordinator, Mr. Imran Shauket, for best and sincerest efforts in making the 2022 rains retreat a historic phenomenon.

Insightful experiences of Most Venerable Arayawangso’s rains retreat and visit to Buddhist heritage sites as appeared in this book would be constructive resources for Pakistan to promote tourism as the engine for economic development, and of course, to perserve the Buddhist heritage sites in Gandhara, the civilisation of global community.

*Dr. Nitinant Wisaweisuan
Dean, School of Development Studies,
Thammasat University*

From the HEART, Through the EYES of ...

The Sangha and lay devotees have expressed their gratitude on this opportunity to accompany MV Arayawangso to Taxila, for his rains retreat between the 11 July - 17 October 2565 BE, as invited by the Pakistan government. Some of these passages are shared, dividing into two groups of sangha and laypeople.



Phra Nikom Nitidhammo

The inauguration of the Bell of Peace at the 3 museums in Taxila, Peshawar, and Swat, also implant the heart of Buddhism into Pakistan, bringing true peace, in the form of Dhamma of peace, to these lands. During the ringing of the bell, MV announced that: The sound from the Bell of Peace is a statement to the world, “peace have arises on this ancient civilization land of Ghandara, the Buddhist world heritage site, on the land of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, whom readily welcome everyone around the world like cousins to come visit”

Phra Warintorn Apasaro

“Helping other, is the same as helping oneself”. I was very touched by this saying. Many people suffered from the flooding disaster in Swat. MV Arayawangso did not stay still, he gathered funds to help aid those Pakistani people in need. “To give others, is the same as giving yourself”. The others are Pakistani people, if they are happy, we will also be happy. To give without wanting anything in return, is what MV teaches us, “keep doing good deeds, but do not expect anything in return.”

Phra Weerasak Sriladharo

MV Arayawangso used this historical land, filled with ancient civilization, and educated us. He described the important of each site, and imparted all of us, along with Pakistan’s people, with new views, and various Dhamma associated with it. This deeper understanding of the ancient civilization let us see the values of the buried history and the stories of unity from different cultures. Love and appreciation for these national treasured sites were imparted to everyone with perfection.



Niphon Ruamkulkit

Before I came to Pakistan, I thought that it is a land of terrorists, and Islam has a restriction on people of different religions. But, once I talked to the Pakistani people, they will always ask how do you think of Pakistan, and I would replied that it is a very beautiful and interesting country, filled with important historical sites that are worth studying. Pakistani people are good-natured, gentle, polite, and love photography.

Somsak Suriyacharearn

I want the success of this book, written by MV Arayawangso, to become a part of education. Become a pilot project for the ancient sites, having students apply their knowledge and become a guide for tourist, providing knowledge and correct understanding. It will be beneficial to revive and care for these ancient sites for the future.



Nichada Suriyacharearn

MV clearly expressed his desire to see peace and happiness happen here when he inaugurated the Bell of Peace in 2019. Having leaders from different organizations traveled to meet with MV, and being invited to give an academic lecture to senior leaders, shows great acceptance of MV in Pakistan. This is proof the MV's effort to create create peace among all mankind can bridge across all races and religions.



AVM, Roongthip Maethasiri, WRTAF

MV shows loving kindness to everyone that faces suffering. MV gathered funding to help people, especially students, who were effected by the flooding in Swat Valley. He helped everyone who came and asked for help, be it physical illness or any issues. Most importantly, MV restored the spirit of Buddhism in these land of Pakistan. He is a great example, a great representative, of a Buddhist monk, for people of all religion to see; to witness his determination, and his Dhamma practice.

Major General Wisit Dechsakul

In this occasion, a monk from Thailand, bought his lay devotees to Pakistan to study and investigate the ancient spiritual traces left on these land. Thought analyzation, and reconnecting the historical events, the spirit of Buddhism in Northern Jambudvīpa is revived. It is an announcement to Pakistan and the world, that on these Islamic land, once stood a prosperous Buddhist civilization, build by the ancestors of those who live here, as shown in the traces of history. These great civilization of World Heritage Sites is something Pakistan people should be very proud of.





Gallery of Media Release

[PAPER](#) [LIVE TV](#) [DAWNNEWS URDU](#) [IMAGES](#) [HERALD](#) [AURORA](#) [CITYRAY](#) [TELE](#) [ADVERTISE](#) [EVENTS / SUPPLEMENTS](#) [CLASSIFIEDS](#) [OBITUARIES](#)

DAWN

MONDAY'S RIVER (FLOOD DONATIONS) | SEPTEMBER 29, 2022

[HOME](#) [LATEST](#) [PAKISTAN](#) [BLOOD HUNGER](#) [BUSINESS](#) [OPINION](#) [CULTURE](#) [SPORT](#) [MAGAZINES](#) [WORLD](#) [TECH](#) [PRISM](#) [POPULAR](#) [MULTIMEDIA](#)

DAWN

New rain retreat at Taxila stupa after 2000



TAXILA: For the first time in Pakistan's history, a group of Buddhist monks along with their disciples gathered at Dharmarajika stupa in Taxila for the annual 'rain retreat' (vassa).

According to Britannica Encyclopedia, vassa is the monastic retreat observed primarily in Buddhist communities in Southeast Asia during the three-month monsoon period each year.

A 26-member group led by Mr Arayawongso, chief monk of Thailand, and comprising six monks and 20 disciples performed the ritual at the stupa in Taxila. The Dharmarajika stupa is the largest and most sacred of all the stupas constructed by Kadian dynasty in the 2nd century. It also contained fragments of Buddha's bones.

DAWN

Leading Thai monk leads heritage site in Harina



PHOTO: Mr. Arayawongso, the celebrated Buddhist monk of Thailand, along with his six disciples visited the world heritage site of Taxila in Harina on September 28.

DAWN

Thai monk gives 'Bell of peace' to host



DAWN

Buddhist monk visits Lahore Museum

PHOTO: Most Venerable Arayawongso, a distinguished Buddhist monk from Thailand, along with a delegation from his country, visited the Lahore Museum on Thursday.

DAWN

Thai monk visits Buddhist sites in host



PHOTO: The most venerated monks from Thailand, Arayawongso, and their Buddhist sites in host were an important part of Buddhist history in Pakistan and must be studied by followers of the religion all around the world.

DAWN

Monk visits Peshawar Museum



PHOTO: A Buddhist Monk Arayawongso from Thailand on Monday visited the Peshawar Museum along with his followers.

World
ASIA

GULF NEWS 

India **Pakistan** Philippines



Pakistan: Buddhist chief monk, disciples arrive in Taxila for 3-month 'rain retreat'

Ancient Buddhist civilisation offers huge potential for religious tourism in Pakistan

15th Jul 2022

Zubair Qureshi, Correspondent

ISLAMABAD: The Arayawangso monk of Thailand, Arayawangso, along with a delegation of monks and disciples started a three-month 'rain retreat' or vassa (from mid-July to mid-October) at Dharmarajika stupa in Taxila, home to ancient Buddhist civilization.

The delegation comprises five monks, one novice (a trainee monk) and 15 disciples.



Monks in make a queue while heading to the Dharmarajika Stupa

Once in a millennium event

Imran Shaukat who has been actively pursuing the cause of interfaith harmony in the country by promoting religious tourism and was instrumental in organizing the previous as well as the current visit of His Holiness, said for the first time in a millennium a monk of his stature is spending Rain Retreat in Taxila. This would help introduce these Buddhist sites to the outer world and showcase Pakistan's soft image to the world, he said.



Arayawangso asks Buddhists to visit religious, heritage sites in Swat



(File Photo)

The most celebrated monk from Thailand, Arayawangso has asked the Buddhists across the globe to visit the religious and heritage sites in Swat, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

This he stated after visiting the Buddhist sites in Swat along with his twenty disciples.

The Buddhist monks' delegation, which is on visit to Pakistan for a three-month Rain Retreat Program, visited Swat Museum, Saidu Sharif Stupa and Birkata Buddhist Monastery where they worshipped.

Monk Arayawangso and his disciples will be doing meditation and research in Taxila, Swat, Takht Bahi and Peshwar valley during their stay in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.



Buddhist Monk from Thailand visits Peshawar Museum



A renowned Buddhist Monk of Thailand Arayawangso along with his twenty disciples visited the Swat Museum, Peshawar.

The Thai Monk visited the museum in view of Swat's rich Buddhist heritage.

During all the research, he will be following the path of 12 disciples who were sent to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to carry Buddhist visit of Pakistan.



Home • Culture

Swat – home to Ghandhara civilization, archeological wonders attract foreign tourists

FEATURED CULTURE GENERAL NEWS NATIONAL NEWS KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA By Saif Ur Rehman

July 30, 2022 | 07 |



Swat- home to Ghandhara civilization, archeological wonders attract foreign tourists

MINSORA - Home of Swat, Government has received an historical award. Swat is known as the "Swat Valley" where Swat Valley (Swat) and Swat Valley (Swat) are the most beautiful and lush green valleys of the world.

Swat Valley is the most beautiful natural beauty. Cultural heritage and historical sites are the most beautiful and lush green valleys of the world.

Swat Valley is the most beautiful natural beauty. Cultural heritage and historical sites are the most beautiful and lush green valleys of the world.

To explore Swat's archeological treasures, a 20-member delegation of Thailand led by the celebrated Thai monk Ariyawangso had recently visited Swat museum, Saidu stupa and Butkara Buddhist site along with his 20 disciples and took keen interest in it.

Jose Prince of Swat, Mianqal Aam Aurangzeb had invited Ariyawangso two years ago to visit the archeological-rich Swat valley. Ariyawangso has written a detailed book on significance and placement of Ghandhara in Buddhist world, calling it the land of wisdom and enlightenment. With his disciples, Ariyawangso visited different heritage Buddhist sites where he paid his respects.

Praising the rich multi-cultural heritage of Pakistan, he encouraged people to visit Swat to promote religious tourism and lauded the untiring efforts of KP Government and Directorate of Archaeology & Museums KP for preserving and maintaining of these sites.

Daily Times

HOME | LATEST | PAKISTAN | WORLD | INTERNATIONAL & OPINION | BUSINESS | SPORTS | ARTS, CULTURE & OPINION | LIFESTYLE | LOGIN

PAKISTAN

Thai Buddhist monk visits Peshawar Museum

APP

MONDAY, 10 OCTOBER 2023

[f](#)
[t](#)
[in](#)
[v](#)
[e](#)
[p](#)
[s](#)
[s](#)
0 Shares



PESHAWAR: A Buddhist Monk Arayawangso from Thailand on Sunday visited the Peshawar Museum along with 20 followers.

"I want to tell the world that the smiles of the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Thailand match each other," Arayawangso said.

He expressed his interest in Gandhara and various relics of Buddhist civilisation kept in the museum.

Arayawangso said that he would write a book by researching the Buddhist relics in Taxila, Havelian, Swat and Peshawar.

He added that the book would also be translated into different languages.

The book, he said, would be used as a reference for research papers in the world.

"Buddha followers living in 32 countries have been coming to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as there is complete peace here," he said.

"There are many opportunities for religious tourism in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, besides natural scenery tourism," Dr Abdul Samad, the director of archaeology and museums, told this news agency.

He said that in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, there were holy places of six religions of the world. "Like the people of Peshawar, the food of Peshawar is also of high quality," Dr Samad said while briefing the delegation.



URDU VIDEOS SHOWS LIVE



Home Pakistan World Cricket Entertainment Business Crime Sports World Technology Health Features Fake News

In-focus

Dollar vs Rupee

Audio leaks

PAK-ENG Series

Coronavirus

Archeological wonders, Gandhara civilization's remains attract foreign tourists to Swat



Archeological wonders, Gandhara civilization's remains attract foreign tourists to Swat



Listen to this article

Read Article

20 August 2022 10:04 AM

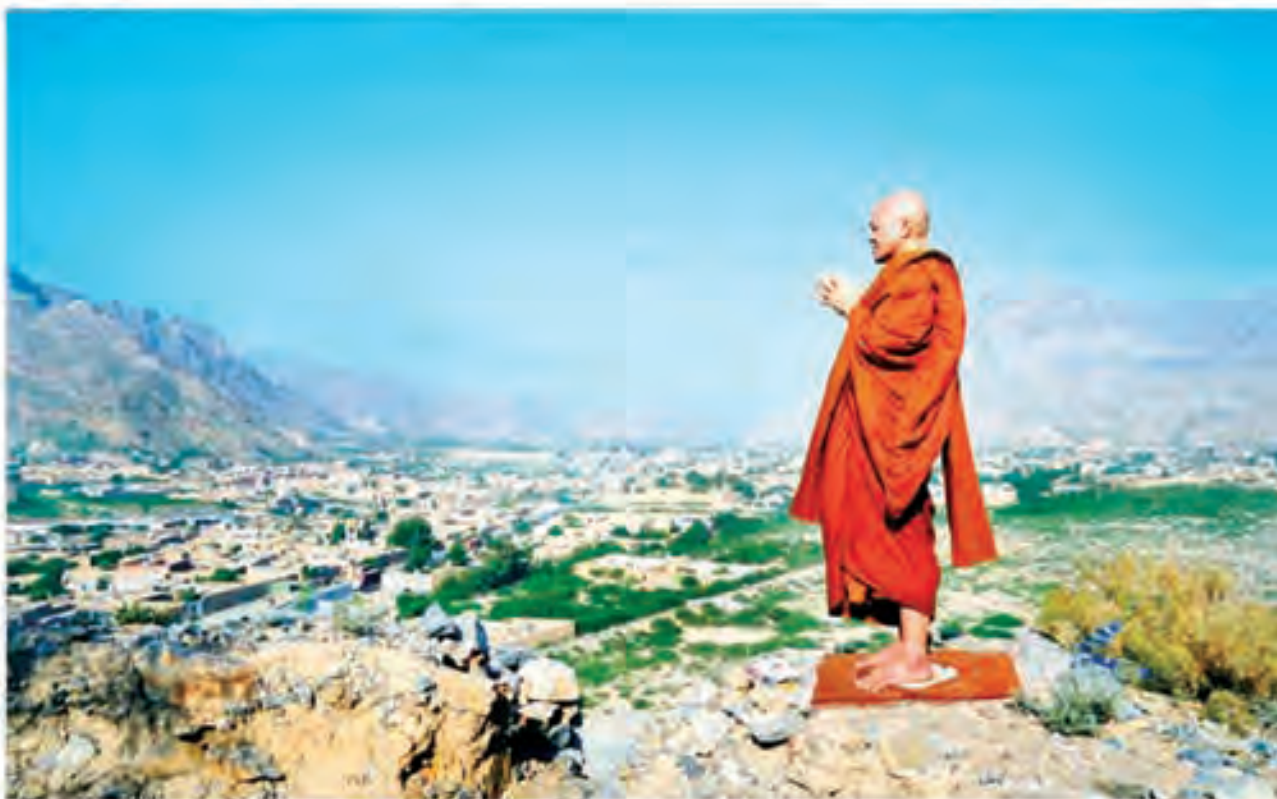
MINGORA - Known as the land of Gandhara civilization and archeological wonders, Swat – previous known as Uddyana Kingdom where every stupa and carved stone has its own story – attracts domestic and foreign tourists in droves every year.

Besides the mesmerizing natural beauty, cultural heritage, and primitive architecture, Swat's unique features, including snowfall, rivers, birds chanting valleys, skiing, trout fish and lakes, draw tourists, monks and Buddhists from across the world to explore.

To explore Swat's archaeological treasures, a 20-member delegation of Thailand, led by the celebrated Thai monk Arayawangso, had recently visited Swat museum, Saidu stupa and Birkara Buddhists site along with his 20 disciples.

Late Prince of Swat, Mangul Adnan Aurangzeb had invited Arayawangso two years ago to visit the archaeological rich Swat valley. Arayawangso has written a detailed book on significance and placement of Gandhara in Buddhist world, calling it the land of wisdom and enlightenment. With his disciples, Arayawangso visited different heritage Buddhist sites where he paid his respects.

Praising rich and multi-cultural heritage of Pakistan, he encouraged people to visit Swat to promote religious tourism and lauded the untiring efforts of the KP government and Directorate of Archeology & Museums, KP for preserving and maintaining these sites.



THE celebrated Buddhist monk from Thailand, most venerable Arayawangso, offers prayers for peace and prosperity of the region at the ancient Buddhist stupa of Ishpola in Khyber tribal district. This is the second time in last two months that the monk along with his 20 followers visited the stupa. He appreciated the directorate of archaeology and museums to preserve this important Buddhist landmark. — Photo by Ibrahim Shinwari



Translator's Note

Translator's Note



Mrs. Kamontip Evans

This book is a big learning curve for me, not just only about the Dhamma and the ancient Buddhist civilization in Gandhara, but also about ‘self’ and what was going on in my mind during the translation.

Throughout the years, MV Arayawangso has set many examples for his students to follow. His ways of looking at things are very subtle. As I went through each part of the translation, I began to see the beauty, the depth of the Dhamma he was trying to get across, and his kindness to all beings. When I reached Part 6 of the translation, tears welled up in my eyes.

There were times when frustration set in, particularly when it comes to the descriptions of the places I have never been to and could not quite picture them well enough to get across the message, MV Arayawangso kindly clarified them.

I have learnt to appreciate the Buddhist heritage sites in Pakistan and the Buddhist ancestors who created them and passed on the Dhamma. I also hope that one day I would be able to take a pilgrimage trip to those Buddhist World Heritage sites in Gandhara.

I would like to express my gratitude to MV Arayawangso for giving me the opportunity to translate Parts 2-14 of the book and for all his explanations. I also owe a lot of thanks to my husband and son who helped with words and occasional proofreading. Should any of the translations prove misleading or hindering your understanding, I would like to ask for forgiveness from the Triple Gem, MV Arayawangso and all readers. Should any merits be accrued from my translation, I would like to dedicate them as a ‘puja’ and, with deepest respect, to the Triple Gem, MV Arayawangso, my parents and my Dhamma teachers.

Mrs. Kamontip Evans

*Spiritual Traces of Buddhism
in Gandhara Civilization*



*Puja Kanishka Stupa
Purushpura, Kushan Dynasty*

02 August 2565 BE

