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Major Vehicles of cultural exchanges between Mathurā, Amarāvatī and Gandhara – The Role of Trade and Trade Routes, Artisans, Pilgrims and Education in spreading cultural and artistic influences from one region to another

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Abstract

During my research on an Amaravati Panel from Charg Pate in District Lower Dir of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province (Khattak & Sehrai 2019:61-72) and a Mathuran panel from Shaikhan Dheri in District Charsadda in the Peshawar Valley (Khattak & Sehrai 2021:582-612), I noted that there had been considerable influences on the art of Gandhara from both Amaravati and Mathura, but these influences have not yet been properly explored and documented by any scholar, though we find random references to such instances. I may admit that the influences from Gandhara on the art of Amaravati and Mathura are equally great and prominently noticed by scholars and researchers, but my concern here is to discuss the nature of influences from the two Schools of the Buddhist Art from mainland India on the art of Gandhara.

I am grateful to my Co-Supervisor, Prof. (Dr.) Luca Maria Olivieri and my Supervisor, Prof. (Dr.) Zakirullah Jan for encouraging me to undertake research for my PhD thesis on the topic entitled “Evidences of Amaravati and Mathura Schools in Gandhara”. The greater details on the current topic have been discussed in Chapter-IV of my PhD thesis, but a gist of the influences from Amaravati and Mathura witnessed in the Gandhara art has been reproduced here to give an idea about the nature of interactions between the three Buddhist

Schools of Art and the extent of influences recorded by scholars in the Gandhara School of Art that have either been attributed to Amaravati or Mathura.

Keywords: Amaravati, Mathura, Gandhara, Gandhara Art, Culture, Influences.

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Introduction:

In my PhD thesis I have discussed the events from proto-historic and historic periods that one way or the other shaped the destiny of the Indian Sub-Continent on one hand and which largely influenced the arts and cultures of different regions including Amaravati, Mahura and Gandhara. My research included all possible sources that were instrumental in transporting arts and cultures from one region to another and from one area to another or vice versa. While discussing all such sources, it transpired that the ancient routes played vital role in transmission and promotion activities such as trade, education, arts and cultures, religious tourists, etc. in the Indian Sub-continent that traversed these ancient routes and travelled as a two-way traffic and which were largely responsible for bringing evolutionary or revolutionary changes in the arts of different Buddhist Schools of Art including Amaravati, Mathura and Gandhara. It is here that an effort has been made to sum up my research spread over hundreds of pages in a short synopsis for the interest of scholars and researchers of the Buddhist Art and its schools, giving them an idea as to how the multidimensional Buddhist arts of the three Major Schools were influenced by the above factors.

Role of Ancient Routes in transportation of cultural and artistic influences from one place to another:

Thanks to the scholars and researchers interested in the history, events, art and culture of the Indian sub-continent, who traced the ancient routes that used to connect different regions of the sub-continent with the far-off regions around it. These ancient routes obviously facilitated invasions, commerce, trade and

cultural exchanges including transmission of different faiths within and outside the Indian subcontinent. These routes included both land and sea/river routes.

Prof. Ahmad Hasan Dani has described "Roads" as "channels of communication between one place and another, one region and another, one people and another, or one civilization and another" (Dani 2002:72-79). In the historic context, he identified three kinds of roads i.e. (i) terminal, (ii) transitory, and (iii) permanent. He suggested that the Silk road that had originated "in a definite period of Eurasian history in the early centuries of the Christian era for the specific purpose of trade between East and West in silk and other associated merchandise", but was subsequently "developed into a great source of contact between the peoples of the East and those of the West". Despite ups and downs throughout its existence leading to dislocations coupled with "political and other hindrances" that also resulted "in the diversification of roads", the journey of "human desire for communication and contact continued to dominate men's mind and they discovered different channels for establishing links between people of different regions".

Dr. Saifur Rahman Dar shared with us very interesting information in context of ancient routes (Dar 2006:160). He considered "the plains of the Punjab and the Gangetic Basin" as "two geographical regions, distinct from each other in their physical nature and their cultural milieu" from a remote antiquity and "the dividing point between the two has been the battlefield of Kurukshetra, later called Panipat" [….] - the gateway to the citadel of the Gangetic Basin which was the political epicenter of India. [….] Towards the north-west this gateway opens out into the plains of the Punjab and Peshawar valley, while towards the east it opens to the Gangetic Basin". On the other hand, T. Richard Blurton had earlier divided ancient India into four basic geographical units: (i) the mountain chains of the north; (ii) the great river valleys which extended southwards from the

mountains; (iii) the high central plateau of the Deccan; and (iv) the coastal plains of the far south (Blurton 1993:11-13). He traces the major passes in the Himalayas - the major chain in a series of mountains that marked the northern extent of the Indian subcontinent. According to him, these "major passes leading out of India both to the West and to China are situated in the northwestern sector of this mountain zone. It has been through these passes that armies have repeatedly entered India, and exports have left it".

Tracing the history of routes linking ancient India to different powers during the first millennium BCE, Prof. Dani informs that "many fields were developed in Gandhāra during the Achaemanian occupation, which included a land routes and postal system up to Taxila, which were later extended from Taxila eastward to Pataliputra (modern Patna in Behar) and onward upto the port town of Suvarnalipti on the Bay of Bengal during the reign of Ashoka Maurya" (Dani 1998:150-155). Talking about the imperial highways and inns during the time of Ashoka (3rd century BCE) Prof. Dani writes that "Imperial Highways and the inns [….] were built by the roadside" (Dani 1985:44). He particularly mentions the Silk Road - an overland trade route paved by the dawn of the current era "for promotion of silk trade from China via Central Asia and onward to Europe, Western Asia and South Asia". The Great Kushans extended this road to Gandhāra "as a main artery for promotion of international trade". Prof. Dani opines that on one hand, the trading activities through these roads surpassed in economic growth while on the other hand made Gandhāra as hub of knowledge, artistic activities and sciences attracting people from all walks of life and from far off regions. He further suggests that this road also proved instrumental in "propagation and promotion of Buddhism" bringing prosperity to Gandhāra "by attracting followers of Buddhism to its shrines and monasteries" (Dani 1998:150-155).

Talking about importance of Taxila as part of the Greater Gandhāra, Prof. Dani writes that historic Taxila was connected to the Silk Road (Dani 2001:182-184) and it "controlled the long distance trade and was a home of a number of foreign tribes" including "the Greeks, the Scythians, the Parthians, the Kushans, the Huns and the Turks". Being "a great link between the Indus land and trans-Oxiana", all movements of people from different walks of life passing "between these two regions, had to stop over Taxila. Similarly, any movement from India westward made Taxila as a strong centre of meeting point". When Buddhism reached here from its original home during the reign of Ashoka, "Taxila became a focal point" and the Greeks also made it "a point of gathering".

Huntington & Huntington referred to new trade routes during the Greek rule as a result of Alexander's conquests and subsequent Greek invasions in our region (Huntington & Huntington 2014:42). According to them it was not only Taxila, where Greek colony was established, but they suggest that Greek influence might have reached "as far east as Orissa". They particularly refer to "New trade routes and other channels of communication between the Indic regions, western Asia, and even the Greek world" that "were opened, and some that already existed were strengthened". They affirm that cultural contacts that existed since prehistoric times between South Asian subcontinent and the West "were renewed and intensified, paving the way for the extensive artistic and cultural influences of the Saka, Parthian, and Kusana periods several hundred years latter". They also believe that "there is some evidence that craftsmen left unemployed at the fall of the Achamenid Empire, which resulted from Alexander's campaigns, found new patrons at the Maurya court, thus instituting apparently dramatic changes in both techniques and art styles. This is particularly to be inferred from the highly developed stone-working methods that characterize much of Maurya period architecture and sculpture, and that seem to be partially based on Achaemenid

techniques". They also give credit to the Maurya kings for preserving "some information about ancient India's material culture", while the easily perishable materials such as wood – a longstanding tradition of art and architecture perished over the passage of time (Huntington & Huntington (2014:55).

Discussing the historic position of ancient Pakistan, James Wynbrandt recalls that the "ancient land of Pakistan occupied strategically important historic position in the northwest corner of the Indian subcontinent and its influence as a crossroads of political and religious ideologies kept it at the forefront of world events as a gateway between Eurasia and the subcontinent and between East and West. Its culture and history have been enriched by the countless invaders, traders, and settlers who have been a part of the region's past", which Wynbrandt termed as part of 'Gondwanaland' – an ancient super continent" (Wynbrandt 2009:1). Dilating upon the topography of Pakistan, James Wynbrandt writes that it was protected on its south, west, north, and northeast by natural barriers of mountain and sea, but on its "southeast, the land spills out into the Deccan, the vast peninsular homeland of India" (Wynbrandt 2009:2). He further states that "Historically the Himalayas and contiguous ranges have also formed a barrier protecting the region from the incursions of outsiders. Several passes along Pakistan's western and northern borders provide routes in and out of the nation and have been key transit points throughout recorded history" (Wynbrandt 2009:5).

Discussing the impacts of the interdependent network of roads and routes, Prof. Tansen traced their "tremendous impact on the intermediary states" and opines that "most of Asia, China, India, and their respective spheres of influence, were fully integrated into this network of religious and commercial intercourse between India and China" by the seventh century (Sen 2005:1-2), which

according to him subsequently influenced various neighboring societies of the Southeast Asian kingdoms and the oasis states of Central Asia, Korea and Japan. Jason Neelis recalls the traces left by travelers on or along different roads and routes in the form of "literary and epigraphic records, devotional images, and archaeological artificats" telling us as to "how and why various Buddhist traditions flourished outside the original homeland of the historical Buddha in ancient India" (Neelis 2011:1-2). He opines that the Buddhist missionaries followed different routes instead of opting for "a single Buddhist superhighway". The routes followed by these missionaries included "major arteries, minor capillary routes, and 'middle paths' to travel back and forth between destinations". Their ways frequently "overlapped and intertwined with those of merchant and traders in pursuit of both religious and economic goals" (Neelis 2011:1-2). He links "the dynamic growth of Buddhist institutions" including "residential monasteries" to donations and material support as a result of "surplus resources" generated through trades and commercial activities. Speaking in Buddhist context, he believes that "transformation of basic ideas and common practices" and their "interaction with local host cultures and other religious traditions, was symbolically related to parallel processes of commercial and cultural exchanges". (Neelis 2011:1-2)

Jason Neelis has interestingly traced the "Themes of mobility pervade Buddhist imagery" (Neelis 2011:4-5), interpreting the Great Departure as the beginning of the religious biography of Sakyamuni Buddha. Elaborating his point of view, he suggests that "Buddhist traditional terms related to movement on multiple worldly and supramundane paths reflect an institutional history of remarkable mobility, which can hardly be characterized as a straightforward process of gradual diffusion. A theory of diffusion from point-to-point along established routes does not account for rapid accelerations, sudden halts, and

periodic declines in the growth of the Saṇgha, or for the irregular travel patterns of Buddhist monks, merchants, and pilgrims who did not follow fixed itineraries". In this connection, he particularly quotes Erik Zürcher who according to him "labels the basic pattern of diffusion in which wandering Buddhist ascetics established residential monasteries near agricultural and commercial centers along trade and travel routes as 'contact expansion'. According to Zürcher, diffusion by contact expansion required adequate surpluses generated by lay donors (dānapatis) to support economically "parasitic" communities of monks and nuns" (Neelis 2011:4-5). He also promotes the idea of "surplus monks" in a monastery, who used "to wander away, in search of new hospitable localities", moving "along the main routes to places where new dānapatis are to be found: a prosperous agrarian region, or a big city. In this way a continuous process of outward movement and gradual expansion is set into motion—a process that must have started very early, and that forms the most basic, grass-roots level force behind the spread of Buddhism as a monastic system" (Neelis 2011:5). If we accept this notion of Neelis, it would be reasonable for us to believe that such monks while departing from their original abodes in search of new destinations also might have taken with them the portable images in their possession as their precious belongings and thus were instrumental in transportation of portable images from one place or region to another place or region. He is convinced to believe that the kind of networks facilitated "the movement or 'flow' of material and cultural goods as well as people and ideas through 'conduits' joined by variable 'nodes' of economic, political, and/or religious power. Just as trade networks accelerate commercial exchanges of commodities via multiple routes connected to 'hubs,' religious networks contribute to dynamic processes of conversion, migration, patronage, and institutional expansion, as well as the transfer and permutation of doctrines, practices, and artifacts" (Neelis 2011:10).

This suggestion is very interesting and thought provoking. Many major and minor influences notable in the art of one Buddhist School or another might have found their way as a two-way traffic through these means of communication.

Xinru Liu talked about the Kushan rule and its expansion over a vast area encompassing the western part of Central Asia – Soviet Central Asia and Afghanistan to north India and infers that the Kushans had inherited an important legacy from the Mauryans i.e. the trunk routes built for administrative and commercial purposes across north India. According to him, the routes from Taxila to Pataliputra continued to be used throughout the post-Mauryan period that subsequently formed part of the commercial arteries of the Kushan state with flourishing cities along these trade routes, testifying presence of a prosperous urban life with cultural and commercial links with outside regions from China to the Mediterranean (Liu 1988:1-4).

Avadh Narayan while tracing the travel routes and their use by the Indians infers that the Buddhist literature throws a lot of light on the information regarding these route (Narayan 2023:294-297). He further suggests that the "traders used to describe their travel experiences in the cities after returning from their journeys. Vinayavastu found from Gilgit throws light on the inner path of India. First of all, light is thrown on the route related to the journey of Mahatma Buddha in Kashmir region. Information is available about Buddha's visit to Bhashtala, Kantha, Dhanyapur and Naitari"(Narayan 2023:294-297).

Important Routes Emerging from Mathurā, Amarāvatī and Gandhāra

The large body of research on these routes in the Indian Sub-Continent included a few major roads and numerous arteries:

Ancient Routes emerging from Mathurā and leading in different directions

Vinay Kumar Gupta has discussed various ancient routes from Mathurā leading towards different destinations, which I have discussed in detail in my thesis. I

have no intention of reproducing the same here but would like to refer to only such routes that connected Mathura with Gandhara (Gupta 2014:27-34). He mentions the Grant Trunk Road and the main Uttarapatha that linked the areas of Mathurā and Takshasila as the main trade route. The details of routes given by Gupta tell us about position of multiple routes branching from Mathurā in different directions which speak loud of the accessibility of Mathurā on one hand and its access to other parts of ancient India through these multiple routes on the other hand. Resultantly, Vinay Kumar Gupta & Hari Singh have mentioned a large number of important archaeological sites of Mathurā (Gupta & Singh 2015:189-209), because of such convenience of access to and from the surroundings.

On the authority of Rhys Davids and Buddhist literature, Romila Thapar identified a route from Tamralipti to Sravasti via Gaya and Kasi. This route also involved some parts of the river for commercial transportation, as suggested by the Arthasastra. He assumed that some of the large towns along the Ganges, such as Campa, Pataliputra, and Kasi had been used as river-ports. Similarly, on the authority of Bose, Thapar referred to the "east-west route from Pataliputra via Magadha and Sovira across the Indus delta to Iran. References to travelling across the desert in the Jatakas would suggest that there may also have been a south-west to north-west route from Bharukaccha to Gandhāra" (Thapar 1958:288-89). Romila Thapar also mentioned a network of small road system (Thapar 1958:289-92): (a) A road from Pataliputra to the border of Nepal via Lauriya-Nandangarh, Lauriya-Araraj and Rampurva; (b) Routes leading outside the border eastern sea-route from Tamluk to the north Burma coast. Similarly, citing Tarn, Thapar referred to the west-ward routes from India and classified them into three main groups: (i) The northern route running "from India, presumably from Taxila to Kabul, thence to Bactria, the region of the Oxus, the area of the Caspian sea,

Phasis and from there to the Black Sea"; (ii) There were three routes in this group that were frequently used during the third century BCE. These included "one from India to Ecbatana, via Kandahar and Herat". The second "branched off at Kandahar and followed the direction of Persepolis and Susa", and the third - more southerly ran from India to Seleucia, via the Persian Gulf and the Tigris River. The Taxila-Kabul-Bactria route was the main highway from India.

According to Paul Wilson Taxila and Mathurā had become homes to a multicultural milieu under the Mauryans and both centres grew in strength and influence as the trading counterparts on the main routes in and out of the Mauryan Empire. He further states that "communication between the capital and the provinces was maintained by the river waterways and a system of roads, the principal of which was the royal highway leading from Pataliputra to the Indus through Taxila" – "the forerunner of Lord Dalhousie's Grand Trunk Road" (Wilson 2020:26).

According to R.C. Sharma Mathurā rose "to the eminence of a metropolis of Northern India in ancient time" due to "its ideal geographical situation". Being located on the junction of many important land routes, several roads radiated from Mathurā ultimately joining "the two important highways of early India viz. Daksinapatha (the Southern Highway) and Uttarapatha (the Northern Highway)" (Sharma 1984:4-5). Describing Uttarapatha that connected Mthu these two roads, Dr. Sharma writes that "Uttarapatha which connected "Mathurā with the northern and north-western regions of India or the upper India", he writes that "it ultimately linked the north-western regions with Bactria or Balkhika. The Uttarapatha had several important branches and at least three roads proceeded from Mathurā to connect northern, north-western and western regions. One ran almost parallel to the Yamuna leading to Rohi (Rohataka), Udumbara (Pathankot) and Sakala (Sialkot). The Gilgit manuscripts inform that after completion of his

education at Taksasila Jivaka Kumarabhrtya reached Mathurā by the same route and from here he proceeded further to reach Rajgarh via Vaisali. Thus, Mathurā's geographical position was unique as it was connected with all important towns of ancient India through main highways or subsidiary land routes which finally joined the main Daksinapatha or Uttarapatha. [….] Beside the land routes the city also flourished as an important centre of navigation activities. The Yamuna has been a major river and in ancient times its stream had adequate flow of water to allow even large boats required for maritime trade" (Sharma 1984:5).

Discussing Uttarāpatha (the Northern Route) Jason Neelis writes that it "was the main artery of commercial and cultural exchange between the northwestern borderlands of South Asia and the Ganga-Yamuna doāb in northern India (**Fig.1**) (Neelis 2011: 186). Rather than a single road, the Uttarāpatha was a network of constantly shifting itineraries consisting of 'multiple feeder routes [….] intertwined with the major axis' (Lahiri 1992:401). Uttarāpatha commonly designates the 'North Country' or 'Northern Region', encompassing territories from the Gangetic basin in northern India to Mathurā, Taxila, and Bactria in northern Afghanistan and western Central Asia" (Neelis 2011: 186).

Fig.1. Routes and Nodes of Uttarapatha (Sources: Chakrabarti 2001, 2005, 2007; Errington and Cribb 1992; Lahiri 1992; Schwartzberg 1992 & Neelis 2011)

According to Neelis the Western classical literature mentioned the northern route "from the northwestern frontier to the mouth of the Ganges", while Megasthenes and Strabo also referred to "a royal road with pillars to mark distances and junctions". According to him, "Pliny the Elder seems to have followed Megasthenes. Pliny, however, "also included contemporary first century CE sources of information about stations on the main artery from Puskalāvatī to Pātaliputra: (1) Peucolatis (Sanskrit Puskalāvatī, identified with modern Charsada), (2) Hydaspes (Jhelum) River, (3) Hypasis (Beas) River, (4) Sydrus (Sutlej) River, (5) Yamuna River, (6) Ganges River, (7) Rhodopha (identification uncertain), (8) Callinipaza (Kanyākubjā or Kanauj?), (9) Confluence of the Ganges and Yamuna, (10) Palibothra (ancient Pātaliputra, modern Patna), and (11) Mouth of the Ganges" (Neelis 2011:189-190).

Jason Neelis further writes that "An overview of major arteries and nodes belonging to this network illustrates connections between northeastern and northwestern nodes, with an emphasis on links between the cities of Mathurā and Taxila. Since these arteries were interconnected, travelers were able to choose different itineraries depending on their purposes and conditions along the overland routes, which were probably linked with navigable rivers in earlier periods. The Uttarāpatha split into at least three branches along an axis from the northeastern to northwestern Indian subcontinent, with numerous North-South and East-West transversal connections: (1) The northernmost route followed the foothills of the Himalayas through ancient Hastināpura, Ahicchatra, Śrāvastī, and Vaiśālī to the ancient capital of Magadha at Rājagrha (modern Rajgir in south Bihar). This artery continued from Rajgir to Campā (5 km west of modern

Bhagalpur) and through the lower Ganges to the port of Tamralipti in the Bengal delta; (2) A middle route in the Ganges-Yamuna doāb passed through Samkāsya (Pāli Samkassa), Kauśāmbī (near the confluence of the two rivers at Prayāga), Banaras (ancient Kāśi, modern Vārānasī), and Pātaliputra (modern Patna); (3) A more southerly route followed the Yamuna River through Mathurā to Kauśāmbī, where it joined the middle route along the Ganges River. This route was probably more widely used during the first to third centuries CE than in earlier periods due to the growing importance of Mathurā as a political and commercial center of the Sakas and Kusānas". According to him, "Mathurā linked East-West itineraries of the Northern Route to North-South feeder routes of the Southern Route (Daksināpatha)" (Neelis 2011:198).

According to Neelis, Uttarāpatha – the Northern Route emerging from Mathurā "continued through the Punjab via several possible itineraries. Excavations at Sanghol in Indian Punjab between Chandigarh and Ludhiana have revealed an impressive Buddhist sacred complex with Kusāna period sculptures and architectural elements from Mathurā. Another significant node on the Uttarāpatha was the city of Śākala, the capital of King Milinda (Menander) [….] and later Mihirakula". He further opines that "the immense stūpa at Mānikyāla [….] probably marked an important stage on the Uttarāpatha close to Taxila" (Neelis 2011:200-201). He further infers that "Archaeological and epigraphic sources expose significant material connections, long-distance trade contacts, and patterns of Buddhist transmission between northern and southern India" (Neelis 2011:205-209).

Discussing the active trade links between northern, central and southern India on the strength of Aśokan inscriptions of third century BCE, Jason Neelis suggests (Neelis 2011:205-209) that trade continued "from administrative centers in northern and central India to key areas of the Deccan peninsula, "Sāñcī,

Rupnath and Panguraria in the Narmada valley", which "belong to the intermediate zone between the Northern and Southern Routes". He also discussed routes with Brahmi inscriptions "during the last two centuries BCE, [….] from Vidiśā, Bharhut, and Sāñcī in central India" providing "evidence for the development of networks for transregional movement". He also mentions over 800 Buddhist donative inscriptions from Bharhut which according to him show that apart from Pātalipura, Kauśāmbī, Vidiśā, Nāsik, Karhād, and other cities in northern and central India, donors "traveled from locations on the Southern Route and from Gandhāra and Kāmboja in the Northwest. Thus, toponyms in Buddhist donative inscriptions illustrate of longdistance travel and religious mobility between northwestern and central India and the Deccan plateau in the first-second centuries BCE".

Dr. Saifur Rahman Dar while adding to our knowledge about Uttarapatha, writes that "One of the most astonishing phenomena of the trade along the Uttarapatha is that despite the political disunity and rapidly changing scenario of dynastic histories, the long distance trade was not affected to any great extent – at least there was never a complete disruption for a long time" (Dar 2006:33-34). He opines that it was probably because of "some sort of international guarantees and assurances" that "always existed" and which were honoured by all those who "held the control over different segments of the routes" (Dar 2006:33-34).

Similarly, discussing the route from Mathurā to Rajagriha in Bihar and subsequent destinations, Chandra Moti writes that "from Mathurā this route proceeded to Beranja, Soreyya, Sankissa, Kannakujja and finally reached Payagatittha. Here crossing the Ganga it reached Varanasi. […] Beranja has not been properly identified but this place was probably situated in the district of Dhaulpur near Bari. […] Soreyya is identified with Soren in the Etah district which is still an important place of pilgramage. This city had commercial

relations with Taxila. [….] Kausambi was the chief encampment of caravans and the routes from here to Kosala and Magadha were largely frequented by merchants and travelers. [….] On the Grant Route between the east and west Varanasi was a great commercial city. Commercially the city was connected with Gandhāra and Taxila" (Moti 1977:16-17).

Discussing the positive effects of long-distance trade, Jason Neelis writes that "it contributed to the cosmopolitan environment of Mathurā, where religious and artistic traditions flourished with the patronage of wealthy donors and powerful rulers" and it emerged as "one of the most important administrative, commercial, religious, and artistic urban centers in northern India" during the Saka and Kusāna periods. In this connection, he also does not discount the role of "military and political factors" in shaping Mathurā into "a major metropolis" providing "a base for Indo-Greek expansion from the Northwest into the Ganga-Yamuna valleys and diplomatic and cultural ties between the Ksatrapa rulers of Mathurā and the Saka Ksatrapas of Punjab, Taxila, Gandhāra, and Bajaur" (Neelis 2011:199-200). He further opines that "Mathurā also played a significant role in the administration of the Kusāna empire, which 'further helped transform Mathurā into a base for absorption of men and ideas from outside its orbit' (Chattopadhyaya 1989: 24). […] The impact of Mathurān art on the development of iconographic, stylistic and technical conventions for a wide range of religious imagery extended throughout northern India and probably into the Northwest" (Neelis 2011:199-200).

Talking about trade benefits in ancient Mathurā, Dinesh Chandra Varshney recounted the economic importance of Mathurā as an important factor in close relationship between the Kushanas and the Roman emperors. According to him "Trade in silk, when temporarily distributed on the Central Asian route, was diverted to the eastern part of the Roman empire via Broach through Uttarapatha

which touched Mathurā and from where goods went to the Western coast Via Vidisha and Ujjain. We hear of horse dealers from Taxila passing through Mathurā. Mathurā was certainly situated at the centre of four cross-roads, and the merchants undoubtedly played a significant role in the economic life of the city" (Varshney 1991:170-173).

Ancient Routes emerging from Amarāvatī and leading in different directions

According to Sreyashi Ray Chowdhuri, Amarāvatī is a recent name. Its ancient name was Dhānyakaṭaka with and its variants Dharanikoṭa, Dhanyakata, Dhanyaghata or Dhanyagataka appear in numerous inscriptions. The earliest reference to Dhānyakaṭaka appears on a pillar with several narratives, now in the Amarāvatī Site Museum, which has been dated to the first century BCE (Chowdhuri 2018; no pagination).

Sreyashi Ray Chowdhuri identified Amarāvatī with "a strategic point in the communication of early Andhra. She opines "that the suitability of communication and transport networks linking the coast to the interior and exterior zones helped in the easier movement of commodities" (Chowdhuri 2018;no pagination). Quoting Jouveau-Dubreuil she writes that "there were five main routes leading to and from the Andhra region. These are: (1) Routes to Kalinga (North East), (2) Routes to Kosala (North), (3) Routes to Mahārashtra (North-West), (4) Routes to Karnāṭakā (South-West), and (5) Routes to Drāviḍa (South)". She further states that "almost all the Buddhist sites are located along these routes" and "Dhānyakaṭaka was well connected to some of these Buddhist sites".

Sreyashi Ray Chowdhuri located Amarāvatī on the southern bank of the river Krsna. This river "played a significant role in the brisk maritime traffic" due to its "easy access to the Bay of Bengal. [….] The river played its part in transporting goods to the inland regions. Sea going vessels could enter the river

and sailed upstream to docks and wharfs to Dhānyakaṭaka" (Chowdhuri 2018;no pagination). According to her the Roman contacts with Andhra region through sea route "prompted Roman objects to enter the Andhra region. The Roman objects were accepted and assimilated in the life of the people. [….] Roman artistic element also percolated in the sculptural art of Andhra. Amarāvatī being a prime art centre of the region, distinct Roman features were clearly visible in the iconoplastic antiquities. [….] Amarāvatī developed a distinct art style which percolated to the neighbouring sites leading to the formation of the Amarāvatī School of Art".

Sreyashi Ray Chowdhuri while discussing the position of Ancient Andhra Pradesh and "a plethora of Buddhist establishments in the centuries immediately preceding and following the Christian era" there states that "coastal Andhra became the hub of this culture" and in this context mentions "various cognate sites like Bhaṭṭiprolu, Amarāvatī, Nāgārjunakoṇḍa, Goli, Guḍivāḍa, Ghaṇṭaśālā, Garikapāḍu, Jaggayyapeṭa, Ramireddipalli, Chezārla, Alluru, Bezwāḍa, Peḍḍamadur, Chiṇṇaganjam, Kanuparṭi etc." which have revealed precious relics of the Buddhist art.

Ancient Routes emerging from Gandhāra and leading in different directions and their role in spread of cultural and artistic influences

According to Saifur Rahman Dar "Gandhāra acted as a bridge between India, Central Asia, and China for the transfer of Buddhist religion, art and culture in the same way as Mathurā did between Gandhāra and Amarāvatī in the same period". He refers to "network of lines of communication" that were used by "men of letters and soldiers in arms" and through which travelled ideas and ideals, art pieces and art traditions" (Dar 2006:31-33). On the authority of Robertson, Dar refers to the roles of the Indus and River Oxus in transportation of Indian goods to the Mediterranean Sea after Egypt was torn away by the Greeks from

the Roman Empire. According to Dar, "there is no single easy highway between" the Indus and the Oxus due to "some of the most difficult mountains of the world". Dar quotes one theory, according to which there were "six routes between Gandhāra and Eastern Afghanistan that are believed to be trade routes" and "were used in search of the luxuries of life". He writes that routes and roads in ancient times "not only connected various people but also helped transport ideas, faiths, customs, and habits etc. of one region to another, and in this process helped evolve new cultures and civilizations, new art and crafts. When these routes turned into arteries of commerce and trade, the economic conditions of the regions falling on these routes were also affected. The commodities and products of one region were purchased in its marts and were sold in bazaars of other countries and vice versa" (Dar 2006:31-33).

Dr. Dar informs us that "all routes from the highlands of Afghanistan and Chinese Turkestan used to converge at Ohind on the Indus and at Taxila respectively. From here, traffic used to move in two directions: one road going straight to Pataliputra in an east-south-easterly direction, and the other going to Barbaricon, a port near Karachi [….] across the rivers of the Punjab, but after the Great Divide at Kurukshetic its course was laid in two branches, a northern and a southern one, both running in the Gangetic Basin till they reached Tamralipti near Koltata in the Bay of Bengal" (Dar 2006:87). Discussing the situation during the closing and opening centuries of the current era, Dr. Dar infers that "the Afghan highlands were connected to Gandhāra through this northern rather than southern route through two alternate routes namely the Kapisa – Pushkalavati – Taxila or through Kapisa-Bajaur-Swat-Taxila route. The southern route connected Kapisa/Begram with Taxila through the Khyber Pass and Purushupura/Peshawar. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, Raverty described at least twenty-seven major and minor routes emanating from Kabul Valley connecting it to

Kandhar, Ghazni, Bannu and Derajat on one end and Kohat, Chitral, Bajaur, Kunr, Pushkalavati, Purushupura, and Swat, Gilgit and China on the other end. According to him, "the road to northern India through Taxila, Mathurā and Pataliputra was actually an extension of the Kapisa-Khyber-Peshawar (Kapisa-Pushkalavati routes)" (Dar 2006:82).

Dr. Dar writes that "for our purpose, the road to Gandhāra started from Bactria – the city of three roads" (Dar 2006:41). According to him, "Uttarapatha that started from Bactria, traversing the difficult passes and mountain tops of Hindu Kush and Gandhāra, and reaching Pushkalavati and Taxila before going to the Gngetic Doab. Touching Mathurā and Pataliputra on the way, it ended at the port of Tamralipti in the Bay of Bengal" (Dar 2006:150). About the southern road from Bactria, Dr. Dar writes that it "went across the Hindukush, reaching Kapisa while passing through a number of parallel routes in the Gandhāra region and, after crossing the Indus reached Taxila" for "its onward journey to Mathurā on one end and the port of Barbarican near Karachi on the other end" (Dar 2006:41). Discussing the route between Gandhāra and Northern India, Dr. Dar states that "a high road used to run between Pushkalavati and Pataliputra via Taxila and Mathurā. With some slight deviations in its alignment here and then it changed its name from time to time – Uttarapatha, Hairnavatamar Shahrah-i-Azam, Sarrak-i-Azam, [….] and finally the modern Grand Trunk Road" (Dar 2006:87). He mentions frequent references in ancient literature to this highway but admits that the related "information is always sketchy and lacks details regarding the number and names of intermediary stations" (Dar 2006:87). Apart from the highways, Dr. Dar also mentioned (i) Military Roads through which invaders and merchants traveled; (ii) The Caravan or Trade Routes that were used by regular caravans for transporting their merchandize; and (iii) The Pilgrims Routes. He concedes that in the present time, it is difficult "to retrace old paths that once

connected different regions on either sides of Gandhāra". He mentions "three major routes that criss-cross the country" of which the Uttarapatha took route from Taxila via Sagala to "Mathurā-Pataliputra-Tamralipti near Kolkatta i.e. Calcutta" (Dar 2006:63-68).

Dr. Dar also mentions "Uttarapatha or the Grand Northern Route" that used to run from "the Bay of Bengal and the eastern shores of the Meditarranean Sea". This route survived "in fragments in different countries, particularly in Pakistan and India in the name of the Grant Trunk Road popularly known as G.T. Road". He affirms that "The road between Gandhāra and Northern India is part of the ancient grand route that connected the Mediterranean countries with the Far East from 200 BC to AD 200, but the Gandhāra segment of this international route was the most significant one as the gateway to Asia" (Dar 2006:37).

Moti Chandra also discussed numerous roads and routes connecting different regions, provinces and cities within ancient India and those connecting surrounding regions through both land and river/sea routes, but some of the routes have been ambiguously described and at times difficult to understand them (Chandra 1977). He mentions parts of the Grand Route from Balk: (i) Skirting from Balkh towards the "east reached Badakshan, Wakhan and the valley of Pamirs and finally reached Kashgar and then proceeded to China", (ii) From the "southern gate of the city of Balkh the Grand Route proceeded to India" crossing the Hindukush and the Indus joining at Taxila – "now known as the Grand Trunk Road". According to Moti Chandra, "The sector of the Grand Route from Balkh to Taxila was known to Kautilya as Haimavatapatha". He also mentioned two routes from Kandhar to the Indian sub-continent one striking to the east via Dera Ghazi Khan and Multan and the other striking south-east via Bolan Pass (Moti Chandra (1977:5). He considers the later as the "more direct route from Herat to Indian sub-continent".

Moti Chandra had divided the Haimavatapatha of Kautilya into three sectors, i.e. "the Bactrian sector, the Hindukush sector and the Indian sector". He admits that "due to many geographical difficulties it is difficult to distinguish these routes from one another" (Chandra 1977:5). While admitting that it is not easy to trace the course of the Grand Route, he mentions its three historical stages: (i) the route taken by Alexander and his successors to reach Pushkalavati, (ii) the route taken by the Chinese pilgrims that passed by Peshawar to cross the Indus at Udabhanda, and (iii) the modern route which goes directly to Attock (Moti Chandra 1977:9). He also mentions the route from Jalalabad striking to the east taking Khyber Route crossing "two kotals to reach Michni thence following the left or southern bank of Kabul river reaching the confluence of the Kabul and the Swat rivers to reach Charsada". From Charsada "the Grand Route striking directly to the east reaches Hoti Mardan" thence "proceeding to south-west reached Und. After crossing the Indus it entered the domain of Taxila and passing Hasan Abdal it reached the city of Taxila".

Moti Chandra also refers to "a distinguishing feature of the ancient routes" i.e. "they connected ancient capitals with one another. When these capitals changed the routes also changed their directions. The change of capitals was due to reason of commerce, politics, religion, change in the course of the rivers, and also due to the whims of the rulers as is the case of two Bamyans, two Kabuls and three Taxilas the capitals were situated in the same valleys. Sometimes after the decay of old cities, new cities sprang up in their neighbourhoods as Mazar-e-Sharif took the place of the ancient Balkh, Kabul came into being in place of Kapisi, Peshawar sprang up I the place of Pushkaravati, Attock came up in the place of Und and Rawalpindi in the place of Taxila" (Chandra 1977:10).

Similarly, discussing the routes of the Hindukush, Moti Chandra writes that "in the different periods of history of the sub-continent, we come to know that the

routes did not follow the same courses in all the periods. There has been very little change in the mountainous regions through which the route passes but that was not the case in the plains. For example the route between Balkh, Bamyan, Kapisi, Pushkaravati and Udabhanda with its final goal at Taxila was used by Alexander, his successors and many nomadic tribes. The same route starting from Mazar-e-Sharif or Khanabad and passing Bamyan or Salang, Kabul, Peshawar and Attock reaches Rawalpindi. The route in medieval times passed in between the modern and ancient routes. After the foundation of Purushpura, the ancient Grand Route changed its direction and gradually the Pushkaravati sector became less frequented" (Chandra 1977:10). He also tells us that "Kapisi, Lampaka, Nagarahara and Pushkaravati were situated on the Kabul river flowing from the west to east.

Moti Chandra infers that "history is a witness to the fact that the Grand Route from Taxila proceeded towards Kasi and then to Mithila. The Jatakas tell us that the Grand Route between Varanasi and Taxila passed through very dense forests which were infested with highwaymen and wild beasts. Taxila was in those days the meeting point of Indian and foreign commerce. The Buddhist literature informs us that merchants of Varanasi, Sravasti and Soreyya (Soren) went to Taxila for trade". He also compared the ancient routes from Peshawar to the Gangetic Plain with the railway line from Peshawar to Saharanpur and then proceeding to Lucknow, which according to him "is indicative of the northern route" (Chandra 1977:12).

A UNESCO website[1] gives interesting information about overland routes network of ancient India as a principal trade and commerce partner: "To exploit the resources of various cities and towns of India including their hinterland, these

[1] **https://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/5492/**

were linked through series of routes to West Asia and Europe, Central Asia and China, South- East Asia and China [….] Mathurā, which was a major trade and commerce centre, located on the junction of Uttarapatha and Daksinapatha, was connected with Central Asia and China through a route which passed through Indraprastha (modern Delhi). This route, in fact, connected Indraprastha with Taxila, Puskalavati, Purusapura, Kapisa, and Bactria to the Tarim basin where they joined both the branches of the 'Silk-Route' traversing along its southern and northern edges meeting "at Yu-men-kuan or the Jade Gate near Tun-hueng before entering the mainland Chinese. [….] Indraprastha (modern Delhi) enjoyed strategic geographical position and network of movements, situated on the western periphery of the Gangetic plain, almost on the cross-roads of the principal geo-political and cultural divisions of India. The township was located on the main communication artery leading to the gateway to the rich regions of Gangetic plain and central and southern India as well as to the western sea front. [….] It was well connected with Uttara-patha (northern or north-western highway) and the Dakshinapatha (southern highway)".

Discussing the references to the route between Taxila and Mathurā in ancients texts including "the Ramayana and the Vinaya of the Mulasarastivadins", Moti Chandra enlighten us that "Jivakakumarabhritya, the great physician and a contemporary of the Buddha, proceeding from Taxila passed Bhadramkara, Udumbara, and Rohitaka to reach Mathurā. Przyluski has identified Bhadramkara with the Sialkot region, Udumbara with the region of Pathankot and Rohitaka with modern Rohtak in the Haryana State.[….] From Rohtak the route proceeded to Mathurā which in ancient times was a great emporium" (Chandra 1977:15-16).

Comparing "the northern and southern routes of the Gangetic plain", Moti Chandra has made an effort to "reconstruct their courses" from Taxila to Mathurā

and onward. According to him, from Taxila the Grand Route led to Sakala, Pathankot and Rohtak, from where it was divided in the northern and southern routes in the plain of Panipat. "The southern route passing through Thuna (Thanesar), Indraprastha, Mathurā, Soron, Kampila, Sankissa and Kannakujja reached Arwal. The route following the right bank of the Ganga crossed the river at Prayag and thence reached Banaras. Near Prayag one route starting from Kausambi proceeded to Sravasti, but the main route striking to north-east reached Ukkachcla (Sonpur) and from there it proceeded to Vaisali where it met the northern route. This northern route passing through Ambala reached Hastinapura. After that crossing the Ramganga it reached Saketa and then proceeding northward it reached Sravasti and from thence proceeded to Kapilavastu. From there striking south-east it passed Pava and Kusinara and reaching Vaisali it joined the southern route. From there taking south-eastern direction it passed Champa and Kajahgala and finally reached Tamralipti. The route from the south of Vaisali proceeding to Rajagriha passed Pataligrama, Uruvela and Gorathagiri (Barabar hills) reached Rajagriha. [….] According to Mahabharata this route starting from Kurukshetra passed through Kurujangala and then crossing the Saiavu river reached Purvakosala and then proceeded towards Mithila. Then crossing the confluence of the Ganga and Sone it reached Gorathagiri from where the city of Rjagriha was perfectly visible" (Chandra 1977:18-19).

Moti Chandra discussed the routes taken by the Chinese pilgrims "Fa-Hien (circa. 400 A.D.) and Sung-Yun (about 521 A.D.)" for their journey in northern India. He particularly discussed the itinerary of Hsuan Tsang, who "took the route directly from Balkh to Taxila but while on his way back he returned via Kandahar". According to him "Hsuan Tsang passing Balkh, Kapisi, Nagarahara, Purushapur, Pushkaravati and Udabhanda reached Taxila", while from Taxila he took "the route to Urasa (Hazra district)" to reach Kashmir thence to Poonch to

pass Rajori and reach "the south-western part of Kashmir. [….] Going south-east of Rajori Hsuan Tsang reached the country of the Takkas and after two days journey crossing the Beas he reached Sakala. From there he reached Chinabhukti or Chinapati where Kaushika had kept the Chinese hostages and which is now identified with Patti lying at a distance of twenty-seen miles north of Kasur. From here passing Tamasavana he reached Jullundur situated in the north-west. From here he took a journey to Kulu and reached Pariyatra which has not been identified yet. From here he returned to Kurukshetra and then proceeded to Mathurā. From the above description of the route between Taxila and Mathurā, it becomes evident that even in the seventh century the Grand Route took the same direction as in the Buddhist period though due to the passage of time many places had changed their names" (Chandra 1977:19-20).

Prof. Thapar also talked about the most important route i.e. "The Royal Highway from the north-west to Pataliputra" with a detailed account of it. The eastward extension of this route reached as far as Tamluk or even further to the mouth of the Ganges. It was the chief trade route connecting the west, particularly Taxila, before the development of sea-trade. Arthasastra let us know the frequent use of this inland trade that was instrumental in promotion of trade between the Ganges region and the north-west" (Thapar 1958:287).

According to Thapar, Rhys Davids compiled a list of different routes emerging from North-West that were in use during the pre-Mauryan India and which continuously remained in use during the Mauryan period as well. These important routes included: (i) Route from North to South-west i.e. route leading from Savatthi to Palithana, via Saketa, Kosambi, Vedissa, Gonaddha, Ujjain and Mahissati; (ii) Route from North to South-east that led from Savatthi to Rajagaha, via Setavya, Kapilavastu, Kusinara, Pava, Hatthi-gama, Bhandagama, Vesali, Pataliputra and Nalanda; (iii) Route from East to West that mainly ran along the

rivers up to Sahajati on the Ganges, and Kosambi on the Yamuna that further extended to the port of Bharukaccha (Broach) and thence to Baveru (Babylon) - a trading centre in the west, and the island of Ceylon (Tambapanni-dipa) in the south. Thapar further informed that these routes were frequently used by Buddhists in the fourth and fifth centuries BCE. Thapar termed them as "the nucleus of the communications". These roads were properly maintained during the rule of Ashoka not only to facilitate the Buddhist preachers and pilgrims to safely travel and spread the message of the Buddha, but also to "development of commerce both along the Ganges and in the western part of the country". Further, the Mauryans had to develop and maintain these routes from Pataliputra – their capital to extend them "as far as the frontiers or even further" to enable their "bureaucratic administration" outside the capital in the far off areas to constantly remain in tourch with the centre, the provincial capitals and other major cities. "Thus there were not only the main routes traversing the empire or radiating from Pataliputra, but the provinces had also to be served with their own smaller network of routes" (Thapar 1958:285-86).

Discussing the role of Taxila as the metropolitan city of the yore, Jason Neelis writes that it "was a major destination for military invaders, merchant caravans, students, teachers, and pilgrims coming to and from India on the Northern Route" (Neelis 2011:201-202). He assigns the emergence of Taxila "as the main center for political control and military administration in the northern Punjab" to the Achaemenid rule "due to its strategic location at the hub of routes from Gandhāra (**Fig.2**) to Central Asia, northern India and the Punjab, and the upper Indus and Kashmir". He asserts that "the growth of Taxila during subsequent periods can be attributed to a wide variety of factors. Literary references to merchants who traveled in caravans between northern India and Taxila underscore the role of Taxila as a commercial entrepot for long-distance

trade between India and Central Asia". He further asserts that major factor that attracted people of different walks of life was "the concentration of wealth in the city" and Taxila developed as centre for learning that "attracted teachers and students. [….] Archaeological and literary sources confirm Taxila's eminence as the most important political, economic, cultural, and religious center in the Northwest" (Neelis 2011:201-202).

Fig.2. Gandhāra Notes and Networks (based on John Huntington-2009 – Archaeological sites in Gandhāra, available online at http://Kaladrshan.arts.ohio-stte.edu/resources/map/fullsize/gandhara.jpg)

Recalling the importance of Taxila as a trading centre, Dr. Sharma writes that "the city also served as a transit trade centre extending all transport facilities for the movement of merchandise from one place to the other" (Sharma 1984:7).

Jason Neelis also elaborately discussed the multiple nodes and network of Buddhist transmission within Gandhāra. The major arteries within a complex network included the "feeder routes north of Gandhāra led to Swat, Buner, Bajaur, Chitral, and the valleys of the upper Indus and Gilgit rivers, where

capillary networks across the Karakorum range provided direct links to the southern silk routes of the Tarim Basin". He has also discussed "other paths leading south from Gandhāra criss-crossed the foothills and passes through the Suleiman mountains to reach Kandahar in south-eastern Afghanistan [….] and other itineraries connected Gandhāra with the southern Punjab and the lower Indus valley" (Neelis 2011:244).

Jason Neelis further states that Puskalāvatī as the ancient "urban centre in the Gandhāran core area of the Peshawar basin [….] probably functioned as an entrepôt for commercial traffic with Nagarāhāra and the upper Kabul valley (in eastern Afghanistan) via the Michni Pass or other passageways through the territories of modern Mohmand or Bajaur territories rather than the Khyber Pass, which is now the primary artery". Subsequently, Peshawar became "a major hub for exchanges between Gandhāra, Nagarahāra, and regions south of the Hindu Kush when itineraries on the southern side of the Kabul valley were more widely utilized". He also mentions other "urban centers of ancient Gandhāra, such as Varusapura near Takht-i- Bahi and Shahbazgarhi in the district of modern Mardan, occupied nodal positions where east-west arteries through the Peshawar basin intersected with multiple north-south feeder routes from Uddiyāna (Swat). Udabhanapura (modern Hund) in the eastern Peshawar plain at the crossing of the Indus River used to connect Taxila and the Punjab with Gandhāra" (Neelis 2011:244).

Jason Neelis quoting Marshall writes that several routes converged with the Uttarāpatha at Taxila: (a) routes coming from western Asia through Bactria, (b) from northeastern India, and (c) from Kashmir (Neelis 2011:202). Quoting renowned scholar Fussman, Neelis refers to "the hills to the North and the Salt Range to the South", which "are more difficult to traverse than the Potwar plateau, Gérard Fussman (1993c: 84) observes that 'Taxila is located on the

shortest possible way from the Doab to Central Asia if you want to travel on a flat and well-watered road". He also mentions "other routes branching off from the Uttarāpatha at Taxila" that led "north towards Mansehra, where another set of Aśokan rock edicts in Kharosthī marked an important junction of routes to Kashmir (following the Jhelum valley), Chilas (via the Kagan valley and Babusar Pass, [….] and through the Indus River gorge (following the same path as the Karakorum Highway). The location of Taxila at the 'main gate to India' (Chakraborti 1966: 159) on a network of routes connected to Central Asia, Iran and the western China was largely responsible for its development into a political, economic and cultural hub of the Uttarāpatha" (Neelis 2011:202).

Jason Neelis also dealt at length with the "Seaports and Maritime Routes across the Indian Ocean" (Neelis 2011:217-222), but I am not inclined to discuss these routes, which had obviously no substantial affects on the North-West region of ancient India, though their importance cannot be overruled because Barbaricon was a port at the mouth of the Indus River near the "metropolis of Scythia" named Minnagara" and "most of the exported commodities were brought down the Indus River from or through the mountain areas of northern Pakistan, Afghanistan and Kashmir. Barbaricon functioned as a major outlet for long-distance trade items from the Northwest". It is important to mention in this context that Ancient Gandhāra obviously in the North-West of ancient India "was a pivotal contact zone for movement into and out of South Asia" (Neelis 2011:228-229) and "the entire region forme(d) a transit zone between the highland massif of Central Asia and the Indian plains" (Zwalf 1996: 14)".

S. Kuwayama also talked about the Karakorum routes to have been secured "under the successive rules of the nomadic kingdoms such as the Kushans and the Hephthalites" (Kuwayama 2002:20). According to him, "this opportunity had long since caused Gandhāra to prosper as a commercial station, which had

supported the Buddhist activities". The trading routes only drastically declined in Gandhāra around the middle of the sixth century CE. He also discussed the interesting shift of trading routes from Gandhāra to "westwards, leading to Kapisi - entrepot at the southern foot of the Hindukush and Bamiyan as a transit point in the mountains and contributed to their prosperity. The kingdom of Kapisi almost suddenly took the role of Gandhāra, as did Takkadesa in the Punjab" (Kuwayama 2002:20).

Cultural Exchanges through Trade between Gandhāra, Mathurā and Amarāvatī.

Trade has largely been discussed while discussing the trade routes above. J. Harmatta et al. talked about spread of Indian religions under Graeco-Bactrian rulers during the rule of Ashoka Marya in the 3rd century BCE and wrote that "the spread of Buddhism and Brahmanism was due to Indian merchants and craftsmen emigrating to the great centres of Graeco-Bactria" testifying also Kushan rule in Bactria. As such, "the spread of Indian religions, scripts and languages to Bactria presupposes the migration there of Indian merchants and craftsmen. They were attracted by the quickly developing new Graeco-Bactrian cities and the favourable prospects of long-distance trade opened up by the Greek kingdom of Bactria and later by the Kushans" (Harmatta et al 1994:313-330).

According to Muhammad Ishtiaq Khan, "Mathurā or Muttra of today [….] derived its importance mainly from its favourable geographical situation, as it was not only located on the river Jumna, but was also the meeting place of important commercial routes from Central Asia via Taxila, from the Indus Valley via Minnagar and from the gulf of Gujrat via Ujjain and Madhyamika" (Khan 1966:41-50).

According to Devangana Desai Mathurā was an important commercial town with a central position that used to connect Gandhāra with all significant towns

in the Ganga basin and those on Ujjain-Bharuch route. During the Kushan rule, Mathurā transformed into a cosmopolitan city, hub of extensive international trade, and centre of artistic activity. The extent of contacts between Mathurā and other near and far off regions can be gauged from the fact that the Kushan empire stretched from the Ganga basin to the Aral Sea in Central Asia and this expanded rule also speaks of the volume of trade and commerce between ancient India, Rome, Iran and China, apart from this trade with different provinces and regions of the Indian subcontinent. Desai further asserted that Mathurā was a of paramount centre of production of images of the Buddha and Bodhisattva in appreciably large number of which some were produced for exporting them to other important sites in the surrounding areas such as Sanchi, Sarnath, Sravasti and Taxila. Researchers believe that the images of Mathurān School "show the continuity of indigenous tradition of the massive Yaksha forms. Interesstingly, some of the Mathurān sculptures were inscribed as contrary to the Gandhāran sculptures and some also contained "Indian names of artists", such as sculptor Sivamitra who had carved out "a life-size image of the Buddha for the Jetavana monastery of Sravasti" (Desai 1990:3-32). According to Desai "the improved position of the stone-carvers of Mathurā made possible for them to donate images" (Desai 1990:3-32).

Jason Neelis wrote in context of "retracing routes and identifying nodes" for understanding trade networks that "shaped patterns of Buddhist transmission and how Buddhist ideologies provided an impetus to cross-cultural mobility and material exchanges" (Neelis 2011:183-184). He infers that "Trade can be broadly understood as a form of exchange involving the movement of commodities with fluctuating values conditioned by a wide range of economic, environmental, geographical, social, cultural, and religious factors". He opines that "distance affects the value of both economic and religious goods", as such "traders who

acquire and carry goods between destinations can be compared with religious specialists" (Neelis 2011:183-184). He thus combined both trade and religiosity in traders who not only traded in good but also in sacred images. Earlier, Devangana Desai had also expressed similarly opinion when he wrote that "The foreign royalty enlisted the support of religion, mainly Buddhism, and to some extent Jainism and Brahmanism, promoted the interest of the mercantile community and enhanced the activity of trade and commerce on which the prosperity of the empire depended. Buddhism in its turn underwent changes in its behavioural and doctrinal aspects and catered to the needs of the mixed population of different geographical areas along with trade routes" (Desai 1990:3-32).

Dr. Ashraf Khan while discussing the importance of Taxila, as an integral part of the Greater Gandhāra writes that Taxila enjoyed a unique geographic location "on the crossroads of civilizations, cultures, and trade routes. The Silk Road from China to the heartland of the Punjab and onward to mainland India and the Arabian Sea passed through the Taxila Valley", which greatly enhanced its importance. He places this important city in the "transitional area between the highlands of Central Asia and Afghanistan on one side and alluvial plains of the Indus and Ganga river systems on the other", where the three great trade routes of ancient times converged, which brought cultural influences here "from both the west and also southern India" (Khan 2019:18-24).

Xinru Liu also talked about trade. According to him "the significance of the trade may be one of the reasons why, in spite of its cultural ties to India, the political centre of the Kushan empire remained within the north-west and the west Ganges area, and also why the political centre of the earlier Mauryan kingdom on the middle Ganges plain fell into relative oblivion during this period". According to him, "For our purposes, however, the early first century AD is an accurate

enough date to correlate the heightened Roman trade with urban development in north and central India" (Liu 1988:1-2).

Talking about Indian and Roman trade, Xinru Liu while explaining the importance of sea-routes in promotion of trade between Rome and India writes that "Egyptian-Greek ships crossed the Arabian Sea after leaving the Red Sea, then reached the seaports along the coast of India, from the mouth of the Indus to the Malabar coast. Port Barbaricon on the mouth of the Indus was connected with Punjab and Gandhāra through the routes along the Indus. Barygaza, the most important port for Roman trade, was linked via Ujjain with Mathurā, which controlled the trade on the Ganges plain and north-west India, and with the Deccan via the ancient routes passing through Sopara and Kaliyana along the coast, and which led south-east along the Godavari and Bhima valleys. From ports along the Malabar coast Roman ships often departed for South-East Asia" (Liu 1988:7-8).

Xinru Liu traced land routes that were instrumental in trade between Northern India, North-west (Greater Gandhāra including Afghanistan) and Central Asia. In this connection he stated that "Bactra, as Wheeler (1954:156) suggested, was the node for the international trade. From the city, which stretched seven miles in circumference, a route ran through Kapisi and the Kabul valley to the core region of the Kushan empire, namely Purushapura, Pushkaravati and Taxila. From Taxila the Mauryan highway connected the north-west to Mathurā and the Ganges plain, or to Ujjain and the Deccan. From Kashgar another route leading to the Kushan core region and north India passed through Gilgit in Kashmir. Kharoshthi inscriptions along the route are dated from the first century BC (Dani 1983:92), and this route gained significance in a later period" (Liu 1988:26).

B. A. Litvinsky has elaborately discussed trade and commerce within cities and between the different provinces of the Kushan state that had led to high rate of marketable output of urban production. Indian sources have mentioned two types of merchants: the vanik (those who had regular shops) and the sdrthavdha (caravan traders). According to him "the Milindapanha mentions a merchant who travelled to Pataliputra with a train of 500 wagons". Similarly, during the Kushan period "merchant vessels also sailed the high seas and, taking advantage of the monsoon winds, crossed the Indian Ocean" (Litvinsky 1994:291-312). He further affirms that "articles imported from the Indian provinces included ivory ware, precious stones, jewellery and other ornamental objects. But trade was not confined to the provinces as its maritime and overland routes linked the Kushan Empire to the Mediterranean, the Far East, the wooded steppes and South-East Asia. The movement of goods and cultural treasures was a two-way process, creating opportunities for cultural cross-fertilization in the areas of thought, art, architecture and material production". Warwick Ball also writes that "The spread of art is always a two-way flow, and Gandhāran art transmitted as well as received" (Ball 2020:1-28).

Stanislaw Czuma infers that "From early times Mathurã enjoyed great importance because of its favorable position on the ancient trade routes. Merchants stopping in Mathurã for extended periods often commissioned works of art such as shrines, votive objects, and even official buildings" (Czuma 1985:54-57).

Peter Wick et al. in preface to the book titled "Religions and Trade - Dynamics in the History of Religions" (Peter Wick and Volker Rabens Ed. 2014:xi) write that "Trade is a prominent generator of intercultural contact and is thus one of the most important triggers of religious contact. Through trade-based interactions, not only is merchandise traded but sooner or later religious goods

are also 'traded' and interchanged. Whether it would be appropriate or not to say, but to my mind, they also believe that trade and religion were like 'hand in glove'. Writing in the context of donation of images (probably including both sacred and secular), Jason Neelis writes that the inscribed Buddhist images "from Mathurā reflect the role of merchants, traders, their wives, and their relatives as significant patrons" and at the same time he also refers to such images in the Jain context and adds that "it is important to note that Jain monasteries in Mathurā also received gifts of images and other items from similar groups of commercial donors" (Neelis 2011:25-26). Similarly talking about situation in the North-West region of the Indian sub-continent, Neelis writes that "Although occupational titles are not very common in inscriptions from further Northwest in the Indian subcontinent, graffiti of itinerant merchants in the upper Indus region of northern Pakistan show that they were engaged in Buddhist patronage and long-distance trade" (Neelis 2011:25-26).

V.K. Verma states that "Trade activities through the ages have promoted interactions between distant lands connected by the networks of routes" (Verma 2022:83-98). He further writes that "Trade is an important economic activity that has great bearings on political, social and cultural spheres within and beyond the region of its origin. Its significance can be noticed in the links such as silk route and cinnamon route named after the commodities of exchange during ancient period. Trade networks also serve as the channels for the interactions at various levels" (Verma 2022:83-98). He further states that "Travel routes have held importance in the journey of human evolution since prehistoric times. [….] Ancient literary texts refer to uttarapatha (northern route) and dakshinapatha (southern route) along with networks of roads connecting southern India to different parts of the subcontinent. (Shamasastry: 1913: 367-8, Dutt 2001:171)". According to him "The dakshinapatha of the literary accounts was the major route

in the north-south direction connected Pataliputra to the peninsular India passing through the Deccan. Its branches linked the centres such as Tiruchirappalli, Kanchipuram, Kaveripattinam, Rameshwaram and Kanyakumari in Tamil region. Kanyakumari was also connected to the north-western part of the subcontinent and the Bengal region through the routes running parallel to the west and east coasts respectively". (Verma: 2021: 178-9).

Dinesh Chandra Varshney also talked about economic importance of Mathurā as an important factor in close relationship between the Kushanas and the Roman emperors. According to him "Trade in silk, when temporarily distributed on the Central Asian route, was diverted to the eastern part of the Roman empire via Broach through Uttarapatha which touched Mathurā and from where goods went to the Western coast Via Vidisha and Ujjain. We hear of horse dealers from Taxila passing through Mathurā. Mathurā was certainly situated at the centre of four cross-roads, and the merchants undoubtedly played a significant role in the economic life of the city" (Varshney 1991:170-173).

Cultural Exchanges through Religious Tours and Pilgrimage

Sarita Khettry has reviewed the portable images from Gandhāra in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, already discussed by Kurt A. Behrendt. One of such kind has been designated as hinged 'pocket' shrines by Behrendt (Khettry 2011:204-211). According to her, "A close examination of the above images leads us to several observations: There were two types of portable images: (1) those made up of brass, and (2) those made up of schist. These were small images of varied sizes ranging from 2 9/16 in. to 13 in. [….] the first images were the personal possessions of monks for veneration while the second one was used by the lay followers, travelers and merchants moving along the Silk Road. This is evident from the fact that a part of portable image is found at the Central Asian site of Khotan. This image is very similar to Gandhāran portable image. [….] The

discovery of such portable images from places situated along the Silk Road trading routes confirms that these images were moving great distances through the mediation of merchants, travelers, and lay followers and probably also monks. The manufacturing area was undoubtedly the region of Gandhāra" (Khettry 2011:204-211).

According to G. A. Pugachenkova et al. "the Kushan art of Gandhāra was a living art open to influence from within and without. It absorbed the earlier Graeco-Bactrian traditions current in the area and was also receptive to ideas and trends of the contemporary West through international trade and commerce. Gandhāra acted as the hub from which Kushan art spread in many directions to places such as Mathurā, Devnamori and Amarāvatī in India and towns in Afghanistan and Central Asia. [….] As a result of recent discoveries at Khalchayan, Ay Khanum and Surkh Kotal, there is now no doubt that some form of Hellenistic school lay behind Gandhāra art, but it is wrong to call it an example of Western art. It has its own individuality, reflecting the socio-religious aspirations of its people. Economic prosperity and peace remained the basis of its popularity and development, and when that was no longer the case the art could not sustain itself: it languished and then disappeared" (Pugachenkova et al.1994:323-385).

J.E. Van Lohuizen-de leeuw testified that "In the second quarter of the 2nd century the artists of Mathurā started to copy certain stylistic elements from the Gandhāra images such as the covering of both shoulders and the wavy hair which by a misinterpretation they depicted as snail-shell curls. In the course of time Gandhāra, in its turn, copied certain details from the Mathurā Buddhas such as the snail-shell curls of the hair. From the very beginning of the iconic period and throughout the following centuries it was, therefore, a continual process of give

and take. As a result of this mutual exchange both schools of art enriched each other" (leeuw 1981:377-400).

According to Monika Zin "The earliest representations of the preaching Buddha in Gandhāra show him with the right hand lying upon the wheel, or with the wheel represented on the pedestal. It becomes apparent that this gesture was conceived in the South". She, however, infers that "Hardly anything is known about the reciprocal influences between Gandhāra and Andhra, even when artefacts from Andhra have been found in Gandhāra". However, at the same time she opines that "Despite many similarities between the schools, both of them seem to have developed independently; each of them conceiving their own pictorial ways of illustrating literary sources. The similarities could be found in the image of the anthropomorphic Buddha, in the arrangement of some scenes" (Zin 2018:6-17). Discussing "the known Gandhāran representations of the hymn of the Nāgarāja Kālika", Zin refers to a relief that "shows the Nāga kneeling in front of the Buddha and birds flying in pradakṣiṇā on the edge of the mandorla". She states that this "representation of the Nāgarāja Kālika [….] is so much different from all other depictions of the episode that - if it is genuine - the Gandhāran artisans must have been inspired by the depictions from Andhra". Then she refers to "the example of the dharmacakramudrā (in Gandhāran panels), the influences from the Amarāvatī School on Gandhāra should be taken under consideration" (Zin 2018:6-17).

Discussing deities, their trade and export, Izak Cornelius writes that "Religious symbol systems can make a religion visible, and these visual symbols are communicated through the medium of iconography. Such symbols (as icons and emblems) could be exchanged between different cultures, travelling along international routes of communication that were used not only by traders, but also by conquering armies. As the icons of a specific region, these deities were literally

'exported'" (Cornelius 2014:141-166). He further discussed as to how "gods could 'travel' and be 'exported' along the trade routes (including maritime trade)". According to him, "Religions developed over long periods of time and were influenced by political, social, and cultural factors (and many others, even economic conditions). Religions influenced each other; this is also true of the symbols of religions in their visual forms (iconography). The spread of ancient religions could have been brought about by trade and traders functioning as the bearers of these beliefs". He further elaborates that "Merchants and commodities travelled along the trade routes of the ancient world, but so too did ideas and art objects. Ideas and religious beliefs are also reflected in visual symbols. In this way certain gods were carried along, gods travelled, were exchanged between different cultures, and some became "global players." He specifically quotes two examples i.e. (i) The symbol of the winged disk (or sun disk) that travelled from Egypt, perhaps along the trade routes; and (ii) The symbol (emblem) of the moon god of Harran which was brought by the Assyrian armies to the West although they (like the Egyptians) never enforced their religion on other peoples. These armies used the same routes as merchants and traders". He infers that "utilizing the trade metaphor, the deities were 'traded' and 'exported'" (Cornelius 2014:141-166). This researcher also believes that Buddhist sculptures both religious and secular were similarly traded in the Indian subcontinent.

According to Vasudeva S Agrawala Mathurā was a sacred place for Hindus as the birthplace of Krishna and seat of the Bhagavata religion from around second century BCE to fifth century CE, while simultaneously it also emerged as a flourishing centre of Buddhist and Jain religions (Agrawala 1965:1-2). According to him, "the religious zeal of these three communities found its concrete expression in the creation of a great school of art which for its vitality and assimilative character has seldom been surpassed". The earliest stone

sculptures of Mathurā in the form of colossal Yaksha images are dated to the fourth-third century BCE. The rule of the great Kushans (Kanishka, Havishka and Vasudeva) was the golden age of Mathurā School of Art that excelled due to its several qualitative features including "art, culture and religious history" (Agrawala 1965:1-2). It is obvious from this explanation that Mathurān art assimilated the broader characteristics of the Jain and Hindu arts which originated, developed and existed alongside Buddhist art of Mathurā and thus it would be wrong to assume that the art of these two faiths could not have influenced the Buddhist art of Mathurā.

If we have to believe Devangana Desai Mathurā was a great manufactory and production of Buddhist sculptures including Buddha and Bodisattva (Desai 1990:3-32). We also know that some of the sculptures were exclusively made for export to the great Buddhist centres of Sanchi, Sarnath, Sravasti and Taxila. Desai also tells us that the stone-carvers of Mathurā used to make images of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas that they used to donate as well, obviously to the Buddhist sanctuaries or probably to the Buddhist pilgrims intending to visit the Buddhist sancturies throughout the regions within and outside India. This position clearly explains that the sculptures made as donations mostly must have been portable so that they could be easily carried even by individuals with them wherever they liked. We may reasonably assume that donations and religious tourism might have been instrumental in transporting portable sacred images from Mathurā to other places including Gandhāra and Amarāvatī and vice versa as well. To my mind the portable Buddhist sculptures both religious and secular travelled in all directions without distinction. It was thus certain that Buddhist pilgrims of Mathurā, Amarāvatī and Gandhāra were equally involved in this practice or trade (Desai 1990:3-32). Which of the three schools emerged dominant and to what extent it influenced the art of the remaining two schools is through a mystery yet

to be resolved through. This piece of research is part of the great efforts of many researchers to give at least some clue to this unresolved mystery.

Stanislaw Czuma has termed most of the Mathurān sculpture of the Kushan period as religious which were governed by iconographic restrictions (Czuma 1985:54-57). According to Prudence R. Myer "Mathurā was a flourishing commercial and religious center [….] which once formed the focus of the southern part of the Kushana empire" (Myer 1986:107-142). John S. Strong also seeks parallels between Mathurā and Gandhāra in term of spread of Sarvastivadins sect of Buddhism – an important and close connection between the two regions (Strong 2008:36).

Huntington & Huntington also made interesting comparison between Mathurā and Bactro-Gandhāra styles and state that "the iconographic similarity among the Mathurā-style Buddha images and those of an approximately similar date from the Bactro-Gandhāran region is a strong argument for the existence of widely disseminated textual descriptions of Buddhas, and perhaps even earlier images, upon which these works were modeled" (Huntington & Huntington 2014:123). Even in the context of Buddhist art of Greater Gandhāra, they opined that "it is likely that each of the major kingdoms, including Bactria, Kapisa, and Gandhāra along with others like Swat, had distinct and rcognizable schools of art, within which may have been many sub-schools, though they may never be fully known. In general, sculptures are characterized by naturalism in body form, drappery, and pictorial scale, revealing a debt to Hellenistic, Roman, and other eastern art modes" (Huntington & Huntington 2014:133-134).

According to Dr. Saifur Rahman Dar the Northern Route began during the Achaemenid rule and ran "through the Gangetic Basin and the passes running through the territory of Gandhāra to distant western Asia as a royal trade route", while this route "reached its height during the Mauryan and post-Mauryan

periods" (Dar 2006:162-165). He also opined that Pilgrims and Craftsmen were the Bearers of New Ideas, but according to him the real bearers of change in the region "were not the conquerors but pilgrims, artists, artisans and the tradesmen. Quite often, all these categories combined in one person. Since most arts in antiquity were religious, the pilgrims played a great role in the dissemination of new art forms, iconographic texts, and new art idioms. Craftsmen stopped at any unscheduled station provided some wealthy patron was ready to commission them for some work devised by a master craftsman. He further stated that "merchants picked up one art object in one locality and disposed it off in another" (Dar 2006:162-165).

Sreyashi Ray Chowdhuri opines that "all the early centres of Andhra culture took a definite shape due to the Buddhist activities in the region. However, prior to Buddhism traces of other religious practices were visible in various archaeological centres of early Andhradesa". She refers to the opinion of some scholars who believed that it was "due to the untiring efforts of Asoka" that "Buddhism entered Andhra and enjoyed the position of state religion" (Chowdhuri 2018:no pagination). However, she further mentions that "The 13th Rock Edict of Aśoka mentions that the Andhras were within the Raja Visava and already following Dhamma. But later excavations at Amarāvatī suggest the antiquity of Buddhism to pre-Aśokan period. Similarly the paleography of the inscriptions on the relic casket and solid brick stupa of Bhaṭṭiprolu is pre-Aśokan". Referring to the literary and the traditional accounts regarding the rise and spread of Buddhism in Andhra, she writes that "mention may be made of Hiuen Tsang's account which gives information of Buddha's visit to Andhra. […] From literary and archaeological sources, it can be surmised that local kings or chieftains of *Andhradeśa* patronized Buddhism much before the time of Aśoka. But Aśoka was primarily instrumental in propagating the religion on a large scale

as a part of his missionary expedition". According to her, "Archaeological antiquities reveal that *Andhradeśa* witnessed three phases of Buddhism that is, *Theravada, Mahāyāna* and *Vajrayana*" (Chowdhuri 2018:no pagination).

Exchange of Arts and Artisans between Mathurā, Amarāvatī and Gandhāra:

Discussing literary and epigraphic sources or evidences, Kameswar Prasad writes that "Taxila, Mathurā and Benaras flourished as industrial centres in northern India" during the Kushan period. He further writes that artisans and craftsmen in these cities generally "worked as individual entrepreneurs, but side by side entrepreneurship also existed. Although guilds of artisans and crafts men are seldom mentioned in Kušana inscriptions, epigraphic evidence from western India and the law books suggest by the existence of a large number of guilds which acted as a stimulus to the growth of crafts and industries during the Kušana period" (Prasad 1977:107-117).

An important aspect pointed out by G. A. Pugachenkova et al. referred to an important aspect i.e. absence of uniformity "in style throughout the vast possessions of the Kushans". In this connection he cites "several local centres and distinctive schools" and divided the Kushan Empire into "four principal artistic regions" (Pugachenkova et al. 1994:323-385): (i) Bactria, (ii) Arachosia and Nagarahara, (iii) Gandhāra in Pakistan, and (iv) Mathurā in India. According to them, "Bactria is rooted in the Graeco-Bactrian traditions and Mathurā in the Indian ones, while both geographically and in terms of history and culture, the second and third regions, each of which had its own independent origins, held the middle ground". Another important aspect to which they refer is that "Despite regional differences and variations [….] these areas were politically united under a single state, and this helped the pooling of ideas in various fields of artistic culture, which finally led to the shared stock of themes, images and attitudes that

make it possible to view the arts of the Kushans as a single entity" (Pugachenkova et al. 1994:323-385).

The study of Dietrich Seckel appears very interesting. According to him "The style of Amarāvatī and Nagarjunakonda sculpture may be derived in part from Mathurā and in part from Sanchi, but it has clearly marked individual features. [….] By comparison with Sanchi and Mathurā a considerable step forward has been taken towards the high classic age of Indian Buddhist art. Amarāvatī art exerted a strong influence upon southern Asia, thereby effectively fulfilling a historical function with far-reaching consequences. Evidence of this may be seen in Ceylon, Sumatra, Borneo, Java, Celebes, Thailand and Annam, particularly in the type of the Buddha figure. But once this task had been accomplished, no further worth-while progress was made in the area from which it sprang, where already after the end of the Andhra period (320 A.D.) Buddhism began to weaken and give way to Hinduism" (Seckel 1968:41-42).

D. K. Chakravarty tells us that Mathurā became the place of contact of several schools of art and architecture in the early centuries of the Christian era (Chakravarty 1966:24-31). Pugachenkova et al. have talked in a different perspective while discussing the religious aspects of Mathurā art (Pugachenkova et al. 1994:323-385). According to them Mathurā had not obliterated its secular spirit and "the spirit of secularism is seen in the depiction of decorative motifs, social and folk scenes common to all sects. The assimilation of different artistic forms and their fusion into a distinctive style were the important features of the Mathurā school". The important aspect to which they referred is the "natural reflection of contemporary social, religious and political movements" that needed "to be evaluated in proper perspective". They further infer that "Mathurā art actually served as a bridge to correlate and unite indigenous and alien elements and successfully accomplished this through its adaptability and its process of

fusion, amalgamation and interaction". They also refer to pedestals of sculptures inscribed with the names of artists of the Mathurā school, who included "Rama, Dharma, Sanghadeva, Jotisa, Dasa, Sivara (ksita), Sihgha, Nayasa, Deyahu, Vishnu and Jayakula" (Pugachenkova et al. 1994:323-385).

G. A. Pugachenkova et al. have also discussed the demand of Mathurān sculptures. According to them, opined that "The sculptural art of Mathurā in the Kushan period was extremely creative and its products were in heavy demand throughout ancient northern India. Mathurā borrowed several features from Gandhāra, but contributed much in return. The Jataka narration, the lotus seat, the drapery covering one shoulder of the Buddha and the lion throne were some of the important Mathurā features later adopted in Gandhāra. The second phase of development at Amarāvatī owes much to Mathurā, notably the change from the aniconic to the anthromorphic representation of the Buddha; the impact of Gandhāra at Amarāvatī came through the Mathurā school; and the Sarnath school, which flourished in the Gupta period, developed from the Late Kushan art of Mathurā" (Pugachenkova et al.1994:323-385).

Discussing the art of Mathurā, Vasudeva S Agrawala states that "the gographical position of the city on the highway leading from the Madhyadesa towards Madra-Gandhāra contributed in a large measure to the eclectic nature of its culture. Mathurā became the meeting ground of the traditions of the early Indian art of Bharhut and Sanchi together with strong influences of the Iranian and the Indo-Bactrian or the Gandhāra art from the North-West. The Persepolitan capitals with human-headed animal figures and volutes as well as the presence of the battlement motif as a decorative element point to Iranian affinities. These influences came partly as a result of the general saturation of foreign motifs in early Indian sculpture as found in the Stupas of Bharhut and Sanchi also" (Agrawala 1965:2-3).

Prof. Ahmad Hasan Dani has discussed the links between Mathurā and Pushkalavati (Gandhāra) on the basis of his excavations at Shaikhan Dheri and discovery of a Mathurān sculpture informed that "our sculpture from Shaikhan Dheri was an 'import' from Mathurā. In the long and rich history of Mathurā, the Kushan period was the golden period for the development of Indian sculptural art and Mathurā emerged as a prominent centre of Buddhism and Buddhist art. The most notable aspect about sculptural specimen of Mathurā is that they have been found from different important Buddhist establishments in the Greater Gandhāra country including Taxila and Pushkalavati (Charsadda) in Pakistan in the west, Chandraketugarh in West Bengal and Mahasthan (Bangladesh) in the east, Shravasti and Kasia in Uttar Pradesh in the south. The chance discovery of a stone railing at Sanghol, between Punjab's Chandigarh and Ludhiana in 1885 also indicates that Mathurā's art products were exported over long distances (Dani 1965:7-214). According to Vinay Kumar Gupta, "Mathurā was also a great centre of sculpture carving for Brāhmanical and Jaina sects but their proportion was much less in comparison to Buddhist sculptures, possibly because of the demand of such sculptures. It can be well anticipated that the demand for stone sculptures grew out of the foreign influence. We have confirmed evidence of the supply of Mathurā Buddhist sculptures as far as Kaushambi, Sarnath, Sanchi and Gandhāra, but for Brāhmanical or Jaina images such evidence is still lacking" (Gupta 2015:189-209).

According to Ishtiaq Khan Mathurān objects found from Taxila were made in Mathurā and transported to Taxila as finished products (Khan 1966:41-50). He also refers to the close political relations that existed between Taxila and Mathurā since the fourth and third century BCE, when both Taxila and Mathurā were under a single political authority. He further talked about mutual borrowing in the wake of these relations to which Marshall (1951;Vol.I:22) had also referred. Khan

talked about a number of Gandhāran objects including a lovely statue of a female at Mathurā and stated that the presence of these sculptures from Taxila in Mathurā provide an ample proof of a brisk trade between these two important centres of art. He visualizes the relations between the two regions much stronger than considered so far and further that these were never one-sided as frequently stressed by the orientalists (Khan 1966:41-50).

Recalling the history of relations between Gandhāra and Mathurā, Louzen-de Leeuw writes that "Relations of one kind or another between North-west India and the Doab possibly existed already in the prehistoric period and almost certainly in protohistoric times. During the second half of the first millennium B.C. the cultural expansion of Buddhism into Gandhāra and the political expansion of the Mauryan empire undoubtedly contributed to more contacts between this part of India and the Gangetic plains" (Leeuw 1995:27-43). Discussing the evidence of material culture transmitted from the Gangetic plains to the North-West of the Indian sub-continent, she writes that "In the last few centuries B.C. material traces of these relations gradually became more frequent. As example we mention certain types of terracotta figurines which have been found in North-west India but which were undoubtedly made in the Ganges valley. It is also possible that their moulds were brought to Gandhāra where the figurines were then manufactured locally, but in the end the result was the same. Among these terracottas those representing the Great Mother Goddess dressed in the sophisticated fashion well known from the early figurines of the plains are fairly numerous" (Leeuw 1995:27-43).

On the authority of Alexander Cunningham, Muhammad Ishtiaq Khan further states that "the old Buddhist statues are made of Sikri sand-stone, from which it would appear that Mathurā must have been the great manufactory for the supply of Buddhist sculptures in Northern India [……] and Taxila, naturally, was

no exception" (Khan 1966:41-50). According to Hermann Goetz, the Mathurā sculptures and sculptors found their way into Ghandara region (Goetz 1959:77). Stanislaw Czuma opined that "both Gandhāra and Mathurā, and their artistic schools, were parts of the same political empire under the strong rule of an ardent proponent of Buddhism, it is likely that Gandhāran artists very quickly adapted the ideas formed in Mathurā (Czuma 1985:54-57)."

Devangana Desai "The Mathurā workshops produced a large number of the Buddha and Bodhisattva images, some for exporting to sites like Sanchi, Sarnath, Sravasti and Taxila. The images show the continuity of indigenous tradition of the massive Yaksha forms. The inscriptions of Mathurā, unlike at Gandhāra, indicate Indian names of artists. The sculptor Sivamitra made a life-size image of the Buddha for the Jetavana monastery of Sravasti. The improved posi tion of the stone-carvers of Mathurā made possible for them to donate images" (Desai 1990:3-32).

G. A. Pugachenkova et al. also talked about Kushan art in Mathurā, which according to them "both precedes and post-dates Kushan art over a total span of about 1,000 years, but the Mathurā workshops were most active and productive during the rule of the Kushan emperors, especially Kanishka, Huvishka and Vasudeva (second and third centuries A.D.), which represent the golden age of Mathurā sculpture". They also talked about Gandhāran influence on Mathurā art and wrote that "Mathurā artists, by their central geographical position, were open to influences from both Gandhāra and Amarāvatī, and they sent their images to a wide range of sacred sites. Typical Mathurā sculptures of Kushan date have been discovered at Varanasi, Gaya, Sravasti, Taxila and Puskalavati" (Pugachenkova et al.1994:323-385).

Prof. Olivieri (2022:35-36) while referring to "the early sculptural endeavours found at both Taxila and Butkara I" and "to the subsequent production

attested in both sites the advance in terms of formal elements is as distinct as it is abrupt", states "the period in question showed a proliferation of technical innovations and possibly also of transfer of expert craftsmen (indicative, here, are the loom weights). The sudden burgeoning of artistic productions already showing maturity and yet apparently unrelated to the earlier traditions may have had to do with immigration of artists and craftsmen to a certain region".

Cultural Exchanges through Education:

Prof. Ahmad Hasan Dani has elaborately dealt with Taxila as the capital of Gandhāra and its role in promotion of education, culture and commerce. According to him, "Buddha Prakash gives the detail in the following way: 'A significant result of the rise of Gandhāra was the growth of her capital Takshasilã as a seat of learning and education and a centre of culture and commerce. The age of [the] Buddha saw the spread of the fame of Takshaísilã throughout the whole Uttarãpatha [a region situated along the northern route as opposed to the Deccan, south of the Narmada river]. Students from Magadha traversed the vast distances of northern India in order to join the schools and colleges of Takshasilã. We learn from Pali texts that Brahmana youths, Khattiya princes and sons of setthis [rich merchants] from Rãjagriha, Kãsi, Kosala and other places went to Takshasilã for learning the Vedas and eighteen sciences and arts. Jotipãla, son of the purohita [court Brahmin] of the king of Benares, returned from Takshaíilã with great proficiency in archery or military science and was later appointed commander-in-chief of Benares. Likewise, Jrvaka, the famous physician of Bimbisãra who cured (the) Buddha, learnt the science of medicine under a far-famed teacher at and on his return was appointed court-physician at Magadha. Illustrious product of Takshaíilã was the enlightened ruler of Kosala, who is intimately associated with the events of the time of [the] Panini and Kautilya, two masterminds of

ancient times, were also brought up in the academic traditions of Takshasilã" (Dani 1986:42-43).

Ahmad Hasan Dani also talked about Taxila as the regional capital and "seat of a famous university where astronomy, mathematics, medicine, Sanskrit and Prakrit grammar were taught" (Dani 1986:151). Prof. Dani further opined that "Taxila continued to be a seat of learning even during the time of the Achaemenians. It is at this time that the famous grammarian Panini and the political scientist Kautilya taught here. Taxila became a part of the Achaemenian empire, at least from the time of Darius I (r. 521-486 B.C.), as it was included in Gandhāra" (Dani 1986:43).

Prof. Dani opined that "though there was no organised university at Takshasilã", but "there was a cluster of schools managed, maintained and presided over by eminent teachers, who partly drew upon the contributions of the local people and partly depended on the fees and presents of rich pupils. Most of these schools were centres of higher studies, rather than elementary education, for students of the age of 16, were admitted there. There was a special academy for the Princes which had on its rolls 101 scholars. Another centre of royal scions was the institute of military science with a strength of 103 princes and that at one time rose to 500. Besides these institutions, there were many other colleges, where instruction in archery, hunting, elephant-lore, political economy, law and other arts, humanities and sciences was imparted to students of high rank and calibre from the whole of North India. After finishing the courses of studies in these schools and colleges students wandered far and wide to acquire practical experience and develop the faculty of personal observation. As a result of its fame for education, Takshasilã grew into a cosmopolitan city" (Dani 1986:43).

Dr. Saifur Rahman Dar describes Taxila as "one of the two great educational centres in South Asia – the other being Nalinda in Bihar province. The University

of Takshasila, however, was famous for its teaching in science subjects, particularly the science of medicine. This university produced some of the greatest names in the ancient history of the country. Among them Jivaka, the great physician of Rajagriha, was educated at Taxila. Jivaka, the son of Raja Bimbisara, was a contemporary and great companion of Buddha. He donated the famous Jetavana Garden in Rajagriha to Buddha. [….] Among other names associated with Taxila are Kumaralabhda – the founder of Sautrantika School, Ghosha – a contemporary o Asoka and a great physician and an oculist or a specialist in eye-surgery. Brahmadatta, Setaketu, etc. it is also believed that the famous grammarian Panini and scholar Patanjali used to teach at Taxila in the 6th or 5th cent BC, the illustrious Viyas lived in this city and composed his renowned epic poem Mahabharta here. Uddalika Aruni – the narrator of Upanishda and his son Suvita Keeto were educated at Taxila, and Jotipala son of Purohit of Raja of Kashi obtained his military education in the same city and later became the commander-in-chief of the king. Even Chandra Gupta Maurya and his Minister Kautilya – the author of Arthashastra, and Prasenajit, the enlightened Raja of Koshala, are believed to have been educated in the university of the same city. Prasenajit was also a contemporary of Buddha" (Dar 1998:9-10).

According to Alia Jawad Mahabharata and Ramayana (Dar 1998) have mentioned Taxila as the oldest University centre in South Asia, while Panini's Ashtadhyayi "described Taxila as an ancient seat of learning" (Jawad 2012:39-54). She infers that "several philosophers and scientists accompanying Alexander's troops possibly settled down here and other parts of ancient Gandhāra. Gandhāra and Greek contacts took place in several fields, such as medicines, physical sciences, arts, literature, astronomy, philosophy, etc. (Dar 1998:28; Marshall 1975:43)" (Jawad 2012:39-54). Ashraf Khan also writes that Taxila "remained the centre of learning and contained many famous universities

including the famous Jaulian Monastic Complex. It rose to prominence as the seat of many regional powers and was the abode of many famous scholars and specialists of different disciplines including medicine, surgery, mathematics, and chemistry" (Khan 2019:18-24).

Dr. Muhammad Ilyas Bhatti quoting Buddha Prakash writes that famous grammarian Panini and famous scholar Patanjali used to teach at Taxila. According to him, "The illustrious Viyas lived in this city and composed his renowned epic poem Mahabharta here, the narrator of Upanishda and his son Suvita Keeto were educated at Taxila. Jotipala son of Purohit of Raja of Kashi obtained his military education in the same city and later became the commander-in-chief of the king. Even Chandra Gupta Maurya and his Minister Kautilya – the author of Arthashastra, and Prasenjit, the enlightened Raja of Koshala, are believed to have been educated in the university of the same city" (Bhatti 2017:154-165).

It is generally believed that universities were established at Taxila and Nalanda around 500 BCE and are considered to be the oldest universities in the world. Taxila as a noted centre of higher education attracted since then students from around the old world until it was devastated in the 5th century CE. It is also believed that Taxila surpassed all other centres of learning in India. The diverse subjects taught by eminent scholars of the time included Arts (archery, hunting, and elephant lore), law, medicians & surgery, and military science.

Conclusion:

From the above details it becomes easy for us to precisely identify the different means and modes that played vital role in promoting reciprocal, unilateral and multilateral influences from the Mathurā and Amarāvatī Schools of Art on the Gandhāra art and similarly vice versa. But to be very honest, it would be misleading to pinpoint any single mean, mode or factor to be responsible or

instrumental in transmission or carrying influences exclusively from one school of art to another. Unless we glance through a holistic approach and take into account all facets of the complex issue, we shall wandering in futility and shall face a chaotic situation that will lead us astray from our precise destination.

Having said that in my firm belief, I would express my considered view to include the roads, routes, arteries and nodes as the paramount vehicles of bring entire ancient India to be accessible from within on one hand and bringing ancient India in contact with the far off lands, regions and countries on its all directions through both land and sea routes on the other hand. Navigable rivers had their own contribution to this end. These routes were either called trade or caravan routes which served the purpose of everyone (including individuals, groups, invaders, crusades, merchants and traders); scholars (including teachers and students); artisans (including craftsmen, engineers, architects, masons, and laymen); patrons (including rulers, elites, philanthropists and even ordinary people) of Buddha, Buddhism and their physical manifestations; monks and nuns; religions and religious zealots (including religious tourists and preachers); Cities, capitals and urban cenres and religious establishments (including Buddhist monasteries, Buddhist temples and shrines), to count some. As already mentioned Sreyashi Ray Chowdhuri talked about different categories of rich people and institutions testified by donations indicated in innumerable epigraphs from Amarāvatī (Chowdhuri 2018;no pagination).

Access routes opened throughout the year between Taxila and Pataliputra (modern Patna in Behar) and onward upto the port town of Suvarnalipti on the Bay of Bengal were frequented by people from all walks of life during the first millennium BCE (Dani 1998:150-155). Prof. Dani also refers to the Silk Road - an overland trade route from the dawn of the current era “for promotion of silk

trade from China via Central Asia and onward to Europe, Western Asia and South Asia" and the Great Kushans had extended this road to Gandhāra "as a main artery for promotion of international trade" (Dani 1985:44). Prof. Dani affirms that these roads not only promoted trading activities, but also played a very vital role in the economic growth of Gandhāra on one hand and made it hub of knowledge social and physical sciences, military skills and artistic activities thus attracted people from all walks of life from near and far off lands and regions to excel in their choice of subjects. He also affirms that these roads and routes were also instrumental in "propagation and promotion of Buddhism" (Dani 1998:150-155) because these routes facilitated to visit the Buddhist monasteries throughout ancient India to receive knowledge from learned teachers and scholars of their time staying there and pay homage to the sacred Buddhist shrines spread throughout length and breadth of the Indian subcontinent.

Routes were instrumental in transmission and exchange of cultural influences from one region to another or for that matter the cultural influences between the three major Buddhist Schools of Art i.e. Mathurā, Amarāvatī and Gandhāra as a result of two-way or perhaps three-way or tripartite traffic through these routes. Ahmad Hasan Dani particularly cites Taxila, a capital and an integral part of the Greater Gandhāra that was connected to different roads (including the Silk Road) and routes and also "controlled the long distance trade" (Dani 2001:182-184). He believed that being "a great link between the Indus land and trans-Oxiana", all people passing "between these two regions, had to stop over Taxila" and it was at Taxila that any movement from India westward made had to halt due to its strong position as a meeting point" (Dani 2001:182-184).

Huntington & Huntington referred to new trade routes and other channels of communication between the Indic regions, western Asia, and even the Greek world and strengthening of the earlier existing routes during the Greek, Saka,

Parthian and the Kushan rules, paving the way for the extensive artistic and cultural influences travelling within the Indian subcontinent and also coming from outside and vice versa (Huntington & Huntington 2014:42). They also enlighten us that some evidence confirms that some craftsmen who had become jobless at the fall of Achamenid Empire in the fourth century BCE found new patrons at the Maurya court, that led to dramatic changes in their techniques and art styles under their new masters. This new development was particularly noticed in the stoneworking methods of Maurya period architecture and sculpture – obviously combination of the Achaemenid and Mauryan techniques (Huntington & Huntington 2014:55).

Prof. Tansen tells us transportation of the sacred portable images by the Chinese pilgrims on their return journey home from ancient Mathurā via ancient Gandhāra and the possibility of taking such portable images by them from Gandhāra also cannot be excluded (Tansen 2005:9). It is equally possible that they might have donated some images from Mathurā to the religious establishments of Gandhāra. Jason Neelis also recalls the traces left by ancient travelers including Buddhist missionaries in the form of "literary and epigraphic records, devotional images, and archaeological artificats" on or along different roads and routes. In this connection, he particularly mentions "merchants and traders in pursuit of both religious and economic goals". Similarly discussing "transformation of basic ideas and common practices" and their "interaction with local host cultures and other religious traditions", he emphatically states that the two were "symbolically related to parallel processes of commercial and cultural exchanges" (Neelis 2011:1-2).

Talking in context of religious mobility and cultural, material and economic exchanges, Jason Neelis writes that the road networks facilitated the movement of material and cultural goods as well as people and ideas. He further mentions

that "trade networks accelerated commercial exchanges of commodities via multiple routes connected to hubs of religious networks" (Neelis 2011:10). This is obvious that Gandhāra received cultural influences both from Central Asia and mainland India, but speaking of religious currents, the role of Mathurā and Amarāvatī appears greater.

Xinru Liu talked about the expanded rule of the Kushans "over a vast area from the western part of Central Asia – Soviet Central Asia and Afghanistan to north India" (Liu 1988:4). Avadh Narayan testifies that Indians had detailed information about the travel routes (Narayan 2023:294-297). Prof. Thapar states that "the Taxila-Kabul-Bactria route was the main highway from India" (Thapar 1958:289-92). Paul Wilson also supported the views of Thapar. According to him the royal highway led "from Pataliputra to the Indus through Taxila (Wilson 2020:26)"

R.C. Sharma inferred that Mathurā was located on the junction of many important land routes and several roads radiated from Mathurā ultimately joining "the two important highways of early India viz. Daksinapatha (the Southern Highway) and Uttarapatha (the Northern Highway)" (Sharma 1984:4-5). He testified that "the Daksinapatha joined Mathurā to the commercially rich central India and particularly Malwa and Deccan plateaus and continued upto the western sea coast." This facility confirms that the influence of Mathurā transmitted uninterruptedly towards different states of central, south-eastern and southern India. On the other hand Uttarapatha "connected Mathurā with the northern and north-western regions of India or the upper India. It ultimately linked the north-western regions with Bactria" (Sharma 1984:4-5). Sharma further affirms that several important branches of the Uttarapatha and "atleast three roads proceeded from Mathurā to connect northern, north-western and western regions. One ran almost parallel to the Yamuna leading to Rohi (Rohataka), Udumbara (Pathankot)

and Sakala (Sialkot)". Thus Mathurā "was connected with all important towns of ancient India through main highways or subsidiary land routes which finally joined the main Daksinapatha or Uttarapatha" (Sharma 1984:4-5).

Jason Neelis also considered Uttarāpatha as "the main artery of commercial and cultural exchange between the northwestern borderlands of South Asia and the Ganga-Yamuna doāb in northern India" (Neelis 2011: 186). According to him, Uttarāpatha was not a single road, but "a network of constantly shifting itineraries consisting of 'multiple feeder routes [….]. intertwined with the major axis' (Lahiri 1992:401)" (Neelis 2011: 186). Jason Neelis further writes that "Mathurā linked East-West itineraries of the Northern Route to North-South feeder routes of the Southern Route (Daksināpatha)" (Neelis 2011:198). About Uttarāpatha, Neelis writes that the Northern Route emerging from Mathurā "continued through the Punjab via several possible itineraries" (Neelis 2011:200-201). He mentions Sanghol in Indian Punjab, Śākala (Sialkot) and Taxila on this route.

Dr. Dar added to our knowledge about Uttarapatha. According to him, "despite the political disunity and rapidly changing scenario of dynastic histories, the long distance trade was not affected to any great extent – at least there was never a complete disruption for a long time" because of "some sort of international guarantees and assurences" that "always existed" and which were honoured by all those who "held the control over different segments of the routes" (Dar 2006:33-34). Moti Chandra also affirmed that Mathurā had commercial relations with Taxila, Kausambi, Kosala and Magadha. He mentioned Varanasi on the Grant Route as a great commercial city, which was connected with Taxila and Gandhāra" (Chandra 1977:16-17).

Stanislaw Czuma talked about a very important phenomenon i.e. "merchants following different religions of the time such as Buddhism, Jainism

and Hinduism used to stop at Mathurã for extended periods of time and they also used to commission "works of art such as shrines, votive objects, and even official buildings" (Czuma 1985:54-57). We may reasonably assume that the same position might have prevailed in Amarāvatī and Gandhāra as well.

Amarāvatī has been less discussed by scholars with regard to its cultural and artistic influences on Mathurā and Gandhāra. Discussing Amarāvatī, Sreyashi Ray Chowdhuri identified it with "a strategic point in the communication of early Andhra. She opines "that the suitability of communication and transport networks linking the coast to the interior and exterior zones helped in the easier movement of commodities" (Chowdhuri 2018;no pagination). She mentioned five main routes leading to and from the Andhra region linking destinations on north, south, north-east, north-west, and south-west. She further affirmed that "Amarāvatī developed a distinct art style which percolated to the neighbouring sites leading to the formation of the Amarāvatī School of Art" (Chowdhuri 2018;no pagination).

Saifur Rahman Dar has rightly claimed that "Gandhāra acted as a bridge between India, Central Asia, and China for the transfer of Buddhist religion, art and culture in the same way as Mathurā did between Gandhāra and Amarāvatī in the same period" (Dar 2006:31-33). Dar mentioned "six routes between Gandhāra and Eastern Afghanistan that are believed to be trade routes" and "were used in search of the luxuries of life". He mentioned "all routes from the highlands of Afghanistan and Chinese Turkestan" that "used to converge at Ohind on the Indus and at Taxila respectively" (Dar 2006:87). According to him, from Taxila, "traffic used to move in two directions: one road going straight to Pataliputra in an east-south-easterly direction, and the other going to Barbaricon, a port near Karachi" (Dar 2006:87).

Dr. Dar also inferred that "the Afghan highlands were connected to Gandhāra through this northern rather than southern route through two alternate routes namely the Kapisa – Pushkalavati – Taxila or through Kapisa-Bajaur-Swat-Taxila route. The southern route connected Kapisa/Begram with Taxila through the Khyber Pass and Purushupura/Peshawar" (Dar 2006:82). According to him, "the road to northern India through Taxila, Mathurā and Pataliputra was actually an extension of the Kapisa-Khyber-Peshawar (Kapisa-Pushkalavati routes)" (Dar 2006:82).

Dr. Dar identified the starting point of Uttarapatha in Bactria from where it crossed and "Uttarapatha that started from Bactria, crossed the difficult passes and mountain of Hindu Kush and Gandhāra, to reach Taxila via Pushkalavati and thence to the Gngetic Doab, touching Mathurā and Pataliputra on the way to reach the port of Tamralipti in the Bay of Bengal (Dar 2006:150). He also identified the origin of the southern road in Bactria, from where it reached Kapisa via the Hindukush after passing through a number of parallel routes in the Gandhāra region to cross the Indus to reach Taxila" for "its onward journey to Mathurā on one end and the port of Barbarican near Karachi on the other end" (Dar 2006:41). Pugachenkova et al. defined the Kushan art of Gandhāra as "a living art open to influence from within and without", which not only "absorbed the earlier Graeco-Bactrian traditions", but also received and absorbed "ideas and trends of the contemporary West through international trade and commerce". They opined that Gandhāra proved as hub of the Kushan art, from where it spread in many directions and places including "Mathurā, Devnamori and Amarāvatī in India and towns in Afghanistan and Central Asia" (Pugachenkova et al. 1994:323-385).While discussing the demand of Mathurān sculptures they writes that Mathurān sculptural were "extremely creative" and "were in heavy demand throughout ancient northern India. Mathurā borrowed several features from

Gandhāra, but contributed much in return" Pugachenkova et al. (1994:323-385). They precisely mentioned "the Jataka narration, the lotus seat, the drapery covering one shoulder of the Buddha and the lion throne" as "some of the important Mathurā features later adopted in Gandhāra". The further added that "the second phase of development at Amarāvatī owes much to Mathurā, notably the change from the aniconic to the anthromorphic representation of the Buddha; the impact of Gandhāra at Amarāvatī came through the Mathurā school". According to Vinay Kumar Gupta, "We have confirmed evidence of the supply of Mathurā Buddhist sculptures as far as Kaushambi, Sarnath, Sanchi and Gandhāra" (Gupta 2015:189-209).

According to Ishtiaq Khan talked about mutual borrowing in the wake of these relations to which Marshall (1951;Vol.I:22) had also referred. Khan talked about a number of Gandhāran objects including a lovely statue of a female at Mathurā and stated that the presence of these sculptures from Taxila in Mathurā provide an ample proof of a brisk trade between these two important centres of art. He visualizes the relations between the two regions much stronger than considered so far and further that these were never one-sided as frequently stressed by the orientalists (Khan 1966:41-50).

Prof. leeuw testified evidences of bilateral influences between Mathurā and Gandhāra from the second century CE onward and in this connection clearly refer to certain stylistic elements from Gandhāra having been copied by Mathurān artists. She particularly cites Buddha images from Mathurā covering both shoulders and displaying the wavy hair in Gandhāran styles" (Leeuw 1981:377-400). Then she refers to the left shoulders having been covered and the right left bare in the Buddha images from Mathurā and snail-shell curls of the Buddha's hair also typical to Mathurā, in images of the Gandhāran Buddha, obviously copied by Gandhāran artists from Mathurā. From these and many other examples,

she affirms that "a continual process of give and take" existed between Mathurā and Gandhāra for centuries and "as a result of this mutual exchange both schools of art enriched each other". Monika Zin writes that "despite many similarities between Amarāvatī and Gandhāra schools, both seem to have developed independently". She has ably discussed the mutual influences between Amarāvatī and Gandhāra and cites a few examples: (i) The earliest preaching Buddha images in Gandhāra with their right hands upon the wheel – a gesture that was conceived in the South; (ii) She mentions influences from Amarāvatī School on "the dharmacakramudrā" in Gandhāran panels and in this connection identified some similarities "in the image of the anthropomorphic Buddha" of Gandhāra and those from Amarāvatī; (iii). Further, she identified some of "the known Gandhāran representations of the hymn of the Nāgarāja Kālika", one of which depicts "the Nāga kneeling before the Buddha and birds flying in pradakṣiṇā on the edge". She states that this "representation of the Nāgarāja Kālika [….] must have been inspired by the depictions from Andhra" (Zin 2018:6-17). Dietrich Seckel suggested influences from Mathurā and Sanchi on the art of Amaraati and Sanchi and wrote that the style of sculptures from Amarāvatī and Nagarjunakonda might have been partly derived from Mathurā and partly from Sanchi" (Seckel 1968:41-42). According to him, "Amarāvatī art exerted a strong influence upon southern Asia, thereby effectively fulfilling a historical function with far-reaching consequences". Thus we observe that all the three schools influenced each other to different extents, but Mathurā and to some extent Gandhāra played prominent roles in this process.

The above brief discussions about the ancient roads, routes and their numerous arteries and nodes provide enough food for thoughts that the role of connectivity through these was of paramount importance for transmitting cultural, religious, and artistic influences from one place to another. No other

vehicle could have played any effective role in spreading one culture or art from one region to another without existence of these roads and routes. Without these lifelines in the lives of the people of the Indian subcontinent living in different and diverse regions, far away from each other could never have thought for creating such unique cultures and arts.

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