BUDDHISM IN KASHMIR AS DEPICTED IN
KALHANA’S RĀJATARAṆGĪNĪ

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ABSTRACT
Kalhana’s Rājatarāṅgīnī and its Sanskrit continuations are usually regarded as exclusively, unique historical compositions in an otherwise barren landscape of historical production in Kashmir and South Asia. Kalhana’s Rājatarāṅgīnī occupies an iconic place in the literary history of the Indian subcontinent, in part because of its designation by nineteenth-century Indologists as the sole Sanskrit text that was worthy of being considered a history. Rājatarāṅgīnī has not only come to stand in for India’s past perception, although it has also served as a base to make the tale of Indian history. This has had the effect of rendering it into a single and singular text not just within the Indian narrative tradition but also within Kashmir’s literary tradition, thereby effectively deracinating the text from its regional moorings as well as rendering invisible its Sanskrit continuations and the Kashmiri Persian historical tradition that followed. Kalhana displays a beautiful account of Buddhism throughout the whole of his Chronicle. A long series of kings, from Surrender down to his own time, also gave detailed information of development, patronage to Buddhism and decline of Buddhism by different Kings who built Vihāras and Stūpas for the benefit of the Buddhist creed and similar foundations by private individuals were recorded with the same attention.

Key Words: Buddhism, Kashmir, Rājatarāṅgīnī.

INTRODUCTION
Kalhana’s Rājatarāṅgīnī occupies an iconic place in the literary history of the Indian subcontinent, in part because of its description by the Indologists of 19th century as the sole Sanskrit text that was worthy of being considered a history. Since then, Rājatarāṅgīnī has not only come to stand in for India’s historical consciousness, but it has also served as a source to construct the narrative of Indian history. It is considered as a single and singular text not just within the Indian narrative tradition but also within Kashmir’s literary tradition. Authored by the great Kashmiri poet Kalhana, the Rājatarāṅgīnī, a primary treatise on the past of ancient Kashmir mandala also details the history, development and decline of the Buddhism in the Valley. Kalhana, a contemporary of Raja Jaya Simha (1128-55 CE), commenced writing of Rājatarāṅgīnī, his magnum opus in 1148 CE and concluded in 1149 CE.1

In his introduction of the Rājatarāṅgīnī, Kalhana says about the Kashmir Valley that the things which are rare in heaven are common here and further praises it by saying that Kailaśa is the best place in the three Worlds, Himalaya the best part of Kailaśa and Kashmir the best place in Himalaya.
Kashmir as a geo-political area enjoyed great importance as it lay near the trade routes which connected it with its neighbours in the north and the north-west. Some of these routes actually passed through the Kashmir valley. It is also pertinent to note that the Tathagata (the Buddha) also bade his disciples: “Go into all lands and preach this gospel. Tell them that the poor and the lowly, the rich and the high, are all one and that all castes unite in this religion as do the rivers in the sea.” Since Kashmir had intimate relations with Magadha and other States in mid-India from remote antiquity it is only reasonable to assume that a number of Buddhist monks had round their way into Kashmir long before the arrival of Aśoka and his missionaries had succeeded in establishing Buddhism as one of the living faiths in the Valley.

**KING SUREN德拉'S REIGN**

It is generally supposed that Buddhism appeared to Kashmir during the reign of King Aśoka. But Kalhana’s Rājataranginī has mentioned Surendra was the foremost Buddhist monarch of Kashmir. He was son of Khagendra and the first royal patron and propagator of the new faith of Buddhism in the Valley before Aśoka. Surendra erected two vihāras in Kashmir. One of these vihāra or monastery was known as Narendrabhavana in the city of Sauraka/Soraka (corresponding to Suru beyond the Zojila) which he built near the country of the Darada/Dards. The other one vihāra erected by him was called Saurasa, which was distinguished by religious merit parallel to the village Sowur situated to the north of Srinagar on the coast of Lake Anchar.

But it is untoward that both the vihāras and towns have not been identified so far. Kalhana pays a high tribute to Surendra’s personal character that the King remained to have been a bachelor all his life which confirms that he was a strong follower of the Buddha and his way of life was wondrous and he ‘kept himself from sinfulness’.

**KING JANAKA**

Another vihāra called as Jāloravihāra was erected by the King Janka son of Surrendra. Jālora is identified as the village Zōhu r in Zaingir paragana by the Stein.

**KING AŚOKA**

After Surendra, the propagation of Buddhism in Kashmir region got a fillip during the Mauryan ruler Aśoka in 3rd Century BCE. Who after the conclusion of third Buddhist
Council at Pattliputta, sent Buddhist missionaries on the instruction of Mogullaputta Tissa, Majihantika Thera and his team to Kashmir which was already under the influence of Naga cult. It was not an easy task for Majjahantika to convince the people of Kashmir, however after tough resistance from Nāgas they succeeded and thus Buddhism was able to assume a status of strong faith in Kashmir and adjacent territories. Aśoka built several mathas and vihāras and gifted the Valley to the Sangha. According to Kalhana’s Rājataraṅgīṇī, Aśoka built Buddhist stūpas and caityas in Kashmir. A lofty and high ‘Dharmaranya Vihāra’ was built by King Aśoka in the town of Vitastatra. Stūpas are also built by Aśoka at Suskaletra. Both the towns have been identified as Vethavutur and Hukalitar, situated in Verinag and Badgam. The Gatha runs as follows:

यः शान्तवृजिनो राजा प्रपन्नो जिनशानसनम्।
शुष्कलेत्रचित्तस्थानों तस्तार श्यूपमण्डले।।
धर्माईविहारान्तविन्तस्थान पुरेश्वत।
यत्कृत वैतमुत्त्तस्थापिताप्तस्थाय्यसमाधानम।।
स णपन्त्या गेहानां लस्त्स्थाप्तसमुज्जवलेः।
गरीयसी पुरीं श्रीमान्यच्छे श्रीनगारीं नृप:।।

KING JALAUKA REIGN
After Aśoka his son Jalauka became king. He built the Krtyāśramavihāra and worshipped there the divine sorceress (Krtyā) who had been freed from the darkness. It was known as Krtyāśrama. This village has been identified with the village Kitsahm, near Baramulla in Kashmir.

कृतप्रतिश्रवे राजि विहारकृतमे पुनः।
प्रहर्षकुलनयाना कृत्यादेवी तिरोदधे।।
अथ कृत्याश्रवे कृत्वा विहारं वसुधाधिपः।
तत्रैव क्षीणातन्तसं कृत्यादेवीमंसंधयत।।

Ou-Kong also mentioned this Vihāra. He mentioned it as Ki-tche. It was identified by M.A Stein, who opined thatthe name of the Vihāra survives in the name of the village Kitshom situated on the left bank of the Vitasta.

KING HUSKA, JUSKA AND KANISKA REIGN
Kalhana in his Rājataraṅgīṇī narrates that Juskapura Vihāra was built by the king Juska at Juskapur modern Zukur, a large village to the north of Srinagar nearly four miles from Hari Parbat. King Huska has been considered by the Kalhana as to have constructed a vihāra at Huskapura. It is also mention as Hu-Se-Kia-lo by Huen Tsang. It is now known as Uskur and isin located near Baramulla. Huska, Juska and Kanishka also built mathaschaityas and similar structure at Suskaletra.

Buddhism in Kashmir entered its golden stage under the royal patronage of the Kuṣāṇas kingdom especially by the great King Kaniska. As a result, Kashmir became one of the most significant centers of Buddhist conviction and practice. Several eminent Buddhist Scholars also resided in Kashmir during the Kuṣāṇa period. Of
these Kalhana mentioned the name of Nagarjuna (founder of the Mādhyamika School of Buddhism) who dwelled at Sadarhadvana.

अथाबिन्तिनाभाङ्कऩुयत्रमविधानमन्।
हुष्कजुष्ककननष्का
ख्मातत्रमतत्रैि
ऩाचथलिा्।।
सविहायतम
ननभालता
जुष्को
जुष्कऩुयतम
म्।
ऩाभभऩुयतमा
वऩ
शुद्धधी्
संविधामक्।।
ते
turṣkā
नमो
˜
ू
ता
अवऩ
ऩुण्माश्रमा
नृऩा्।
शुष्करेिा
हददेशेषु
भटचैत्माहद
चक्रक्रये।।
प्राज्जमे
याज्जमऺणे
तेषां
प्राम्
कश्भीयभण्डरभ्।।
बोज्जमभातते
तभ
फौद्धानां
प्रव्रज्जमो
स्जलततेजसाभ्।।
तदा
बगित्
शाकमभसंहतम
ऩयननिृलत्ते्।
अस्तभन्भहीरोकधातौ
साधं
िषलशतं
ह्मगात्।।
फोचधसत्त्िश्च
देशेस्तभन्नेको
ब भी
श्ियोबित्।
स
च
नागाजुलन्
श्रीभान्षडहलद्िन
संश्रमी।।
8
DURING THE REIGN OF KING NARA
It was King Nara who started the process which resulted in the extinction of Buddhism in Kashmir. Kalhana’sRājatarāṇī also mention that a Buddhist ascetic who was living alone in a Vihāra, situated at Kimnaragrama, seduced the king’s wife through his supernatural supremacy. The king Naragot burnt thousands of vihāras of Kashmir in this act of anger over it and bestowed the villages which were belonged to the Buddhists to Brahmans residing in Madhyamatha region.

vihāraye
ततम
मोगफरात्को
श्रभणो
ऩाहयस्त्प्रमाभ्।।
विहायाणां
सहतत्राणण
tatko
ऩास्न्नदलदाह
स्।
अस्जग्रहच्च
tadgab
divanjai
भलध्मभठाश्रमै्।।
9
KING MEGHAYAHANA REIGN (438 CE)
King Meghavahana who came to the throne of Kashmir in 438 CE was a follower of Buddhist philosophy. Not only the Kusāna kings but local monarchs of Kashmir also seem to have patronized the Buddhism in the early centuries of the Christian era. One of the most celebrated kings, Meghavahana prohibited in his kingdom the slaughter of animals. He also stopped the killing of animals in the name of sacrifices. Amṛtraprabha, the wife of the king erected a vihāra for Buddhist monks, which was called Amṛtabhavana. It has to be constructed for the benefit of foreign Bhikshus. It is mentioned by Ou-Kong as Ngo-mi-to-po-wan. It has been identified at Antabhavana, Vicārṇag, which is 5 miles to the north of Srinagar. Remains of a vihāra have been found at this place. The guru of queen’s father also built the stūpa called as the Lo-Stonpā. Another structure at Nandavana, a wonderful appearance of renowned vihāra was built by Yukadevi, another queen of the king. Another wife of the king called...
Indradevi, built a vihāra called as Indradevihavana, together with a quadrangle and a Stūpa. Many vihāras of renown were built by other queens of King, such as Khadana and Samma under their own names. Kalhana compares the king with Jina i.e.; Buddha and also with Bodhisattvas. All these probably indicate Meghavahan’s attachment to the faith of the Śakya Prince.

**DURING THE REIGN OF PRAVARASENA II**

In 6th century CE during the reign of Pravarasena II there is mention of the construction of a big vihāra, his maternal uncle Jayendra constructed a famous vihāra known as Jayendravihāra and housed a very big statue of the Gautama Buddha. It is also mentioned as Che-Ye-in-to-lo by Hiuen Tsang who on his arrival to Kashmir in 631 CE, had stayed in that very same vihāra.

**DURING THE REIGN OF YUDHISTRA II**

Great historian Kalhana also mentions in his Rajtarangini that King Pravarasena was succeeded by his son Yudhistra II. Several ministers of the King who bore the names likeSarvaranta, Jaya and Skandagupta obtained divergent status by erecting vihāra and caityas like Skandavhana vihāra. Its location has been determined as somewhere in the modern mohalla of Khandabhavan at Srinagar in Kashmir. The son of his uncle Jayendra,named as Vajendra who was also a minister in his reign made the village of Bhavaccheda famous by constructed caityas and other sacred buildings. The same conclusion can be derived from the statement of Hiuen-Tsang: who visited the capital in 631 CE founded by Pravarasena, and who speaks of it as ‘the new city’ in distinction from the earlier capital (Puranadhisthana).
KING RANĀDITYA REIGN
Queen Amritaprahba wife of King Ranaditya’s installed a beautiful and fine statue of Buddha in a vihāra which was built by Meghavahana’s wife Bhinna.

भेघिाहनब बतृलऩत्न्मा भबन्नाख्ममा कृते।
विहारेपि तया बुद्धबिम्बं साधु निवेशितम्।।
\[13\]

KING VIKRAMADITIYA RÉGIN
The great poet Kalhana also narrates about the reign of King Vikramaditya, whose minister Galūna also built a Vihāra and named it as after the name of his wife Ratnavali.

चक्रे ब्रह्ममन्थ ब्रह्मा गलुनो लूनदुष्कृतः।
रतनावल्याख्याया बध्या विहारं निरमाणयत्।।
\[14\]

KING LALITADITYA MUKTAPIDA RÉGIN
The next ruler of Kashmir was Lalitaditya Muktapida (725-753 CE), one of the powerful rulers of Kashmir founded Rajvihāra with a large quadrangle and a large Caitya at Parihaspura. A beautiful statue of Buddha was also housed in that Caitya with other relics of gold and silver. Rajavihāra was a quadrangle (Catuhsla) of 26 cells around a square courtyard paved with stones. These cells were used by the monks. These cells are located on the bases of other Vihāras. Parihaspura was the new capital built by the king. The capital and the Rajavihāra are now in ruins. At Huskapura, the noble minded king built another large vihāra with a stūpa. A colossal copper image of Buddha was made by him. Archaeological excavations carried on at Parihaspura, the city founded by Lalitaditya, have brought to light Buddhist structures, a stupa, a monastery and a caitya. Among the sculptures discovered at Parihaspura, there are two images of Bodhisattva and one of Buddha. All these prove to the hilt the popularity of Buddhism in the days of the Karkotas. Kridarama vihāra was constructed by Lalitaditya but position of the Vihāra is unknown.

फलं गृहणंकलपुरं पण्डसं पर्यन्तमादत।
क्रीडारामविहारं च क्रीडन्नाजा विनिमाभे।।
तेन हुष्कपुरे श्रीमान्मुक्तस्वामी वध्यीयत।
बुद्धविहारो भूरेन सस्त्रूपंचं महात्मा।।
चक्रे बुह्चचतुःशालावृहृध्युल्युजिनैः।
राजा राजविहारं स किरजं सततीतितम्।।
रीतिप्रस्थसहस्सतु तेन ताव विरेव सः।।
व्योमव्यापिपु: श्रीमान्नबुहदुष्कं वध्यीयत।।
चतु: शालां च चैत्यं च तावश्च तावश्च वध्यात्।
धनेनैवितितस्यास्त्र्पश्च निम्मित्त तय: समा:।।
\[15\]

The king of Lāta known as Kayya also built Kayyavihāra where Bhikshu Sarvajnamitra lived there and had attained the purity of Buddha. The Tukkarar Cankuna chief minister of King Lalitaditya founded the Cankunavihāra and a stūpa.
loftier even than the mind of the king, and golden images of the Buddha (Jinas). Cankuna also built a vihāra in Srinagar together with a Caitya. The physician Isanacandra a son-in-law of the Cankuna built a vihāra after obtaining wealth through the favor of Taksaka. Cankuna built a Vihāra in which he placed golden statues of Buddha.

The thriving state of Buddhism during the reign of the Karkotas (7th and 8th) centuries CE is also attested to by the evidence of the Chinese traveler Ou-Kong, who came to Kashmir in 759 CE. He spent four years in the valley in pilgrimages to holy sites and in studying Sanskrit. He learnt the silas and the Vinayas of the Mulasarvastivadins at the Moung-ti-vihara. The other Vihāras referred by him are Ngo-mi-to-po-wan, Ngo-nan-i, Ki-tche, Nago-ye-le, je-je, ye-li-te-le and ko-toan. While Hiuen Tsang saw about one hundred vihāras, Ou-Kong noticed more than three hundred vihāras in Kashmir and innumerable stūpas and sacred images.

KING JIYADIPA

Jiyapida vihāra was built by King Jiyadipa. The virtuous King setup three Buddha images and a large vihāra was placed in the town named as Jayādevī by him. This place has been identified as Anderkots near Sumbal in Kashmir.

DURING THE REIGN OF KING KSEMA GUPTA (950-958 CE)

The King Ksema Gupta burnt the most magnificent Buddhist vihāra of Jayendravihāra. He also collected stones blocks too from the vihāra and erected a Shiva temple. The brass statue of Sugata (Buddha) was melted down by him to make a statue of Shiva. The generous king Ksemagupta tookaway thirty-six village attached to the burnt Vihāra and gave them over into the tenure of Khaśa ruler.
DURING THE REIGN OF HARSA (1089-1101 CE)

Among colossal images, two statues of Buddha were saved through requests addressed by chance to the king at a time when he was free with his favors, namely the one at Parihāsapura by the singer Kanaka, who was born there, and the other in the City by the Shramana Kuśalasri.

DURING THE REIGN OF JAYASIMHA (1228-49)

Ratnade Vihāra was built by Queen Ratnadevi. It was a magnificent vihāra at Ratanpur now it is known as Ratinpora.

In 12th century CE Buddhism received patronage from king Jayasimha who ascended the throne of Kashmir. Many Buddhist vihāras were built and also repaired during this period, like Sullavihara. It is almost definite that Buddha was held in high honor in Kashmir up to the last days of Hindu rule. A stone inscription generally taken to have been dated 1197 CE has been discovered at Arigon (ancient Hadigrama) about 15 miles South-West of Srinagar. The inscription opens with a salutation to Buddha, Avalokitesvara and exalts him with glorious title:

“NamoBhagvateAryavalokitesvarayaTrailokyalokabhutaya
LokabhavacuideJagadanandaCandrayaLokanathayatenamah”.

CONCLUSION

Buddhism seems to have been overshadowed by the growing Vaisnava and Śaiva faith which became predominant in the Valley in the centuries following the 9th century period of Karkotas who were staunch follower of Śiva and Viṣṇu, and the architectural remains which have been discovered from the site of Avantipura, the town founded by the monarch, include some images of Viṣṇu, Śiva and other Brahmanic Gods, but not a single figure of Buddha or Bodhisattva. Except Ksema Gupta (950-58 CE) and Harsa (1089-1101CE), no king of this period is known to have cherished any anti-Buddhist feeling in their heart. The instance of anger of a cruel unusual king against a single particular Buddhist monastery should not be taken
as an instance of systematic policy of religious discrimination adopted by the state against the Buddhists. A remarkably fine statue of the Bodhisattva Padmapāni is now preserved in the Pratap Singh Museum, Srinagar. An inscription engraved at the base mentions its dedication in the reign of Queen Didda (980-1003 CE). That Buddha was not looked with disapproval in the 11th century CE receives further corroboration from the writings of Ksemendra who says that during his time, birth day of Buddha was observed with great ceremony in the valley. A fairly reliable account of the condition of Buddhism in Kashmir from the 7th century onwards has been furnished by the accounts of the Chinese travellers Hiuene Tsang and Ou-Kong, the chronicle of Kalhana and some archaeological discoveries made at Gilgit, Pandrathan and Parihaspur. Several Buddhist manuscripts were found out from a stūpa at Gilgit and the script used in the manuscripts may be assigned to the 6th or 7th century CE. Buddhism was thus flourishing in the northern part of Kashmir sometime about the end of the 6th century CE or in the early part of the next under the patronage of Sahi rulers. To about the same period as the manuscripts of Gilgit, may probably be assigned also a large number of Buddhist sculptures hailing from the village of Pandrethan (ancient Puranadhisthana). Purunadhisthana was the capital of Kashmir from a very early date. From stylistic consideration, the sculptural remains discovered at Pandrethan seem to have belonged to a period when the old city was finally abandoned in favor of the new. Besides two Buddhist stūpas and the courtyard of a monastery the objects of Buddhist antiquities found at Pandrethan include two standing figures of Buddha, a seated statue of Buddha, one diademed and ornamented image of Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, another fragmentary sculptured relief of Buddha or Bodhisattva and lastly a relief representation of the birth of Siddhartha.

2. Ibid.I: vv. 42-43.
3. Ibid.I: vv. 93-94
4. Ibid. I: vv. 98.
5. Ibid.I: vv.102-104.
6. Ibid. I: vv.146-147.
7. Ibid. I:vv.168,p.30
10. Ibid. III: vv. 9-14 3rd book
11. Ibid. III: vv. 355 3rd book
12. Ibid. III: vv. 378,380,381 3rd book
13. Ibid. III: vv. 464
14. Ibid. III: vv.476
15. Ibid. IV: vv. 184,188,200,203,204
17. Ibid. IV: vv. 507.
18. Ibid. VI: vv.171-173, 175.
20. Ibid. VIII: vv. 2402, 2410-11, 2515.