

SILK ROAD AND BUDDHISM IN CENTRAL ASIA

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Abstract- The Silk Route is the 'Ancient International Trade Road' that spread from China to Italy existed from second century BC to fifteenth century AD. Although it was known for trade which carried silk, paper and other goods between East and West through India, China and Central Asia. It also became a channel of transmission of art, architecture, culture, religion, philosophy, literature, technology etc to different countries in Asia and beyond. One of the important religions that transmitted through Silk Road was Buddhism which developed in India. It is interesting to note that Silk Road turned as the springboard of Buddhism to spread it from India to Central Asia. The Buddhist Religion originated in India. Through Buddha's enlightenment and with his teachings, it became one of the most important "World Religions" in past. It was the first religious philosophy which transmitted along this trade route from India to China through Gandhara which is recognized in modern time northern Pakistan and southern Afghanistan. After long Centuries Islam began and it followed the same Silk route and replace Buddhism from some places. Judaism and Christianity also followed the Silk route for spread their ideology & philosophy. The proposed Article intends to examine the role of Silk Road in the spread of Buddhism from India to Central Asia. The transmission of culture as a soft power has great significance for maintaining peace and stability in the region, as it happened in the past. Besides culture is a tool for strengthening cooperation and international relations. Therefore, this article tries to explore the transmission of Buddhism to Central Asia, the significance of Silk Road in this process and the influence of Buddhism in the Central Asian Societies.

Keywords- Silk route, Buddhism, Transmission, Enlightenment, Spread.

I. INTRODUCTION

Ferdinand Freiherr von Richthofen was German Baron, who coined the term "Silk Road" in the 1877 toward describes the dynamic trade connections in region and the best trade road connecting east to West. It was not just a solo road it was connections of many routes. Rather, it involves a network of relationships extending from south to north and from East Asia to as far west as Europe (UNCTAD 2014). Silk Road carried silk, paper and other goods between East and West through India, China and Central Asia but also carried different cultures, traditions and religions to several countries of the world. Spread of Buddhism was begin from north-west India to present-day Afghanistan, Pakistan, Central Asia, Xinjiang (Chinese Turkestan), Korea, China and Japan. Buddhism does not only affect the life and culture in the regions, but also left us with the world of wonders in the field of literature and art (Silk Road foundation, 2002).

The Silk Road had played a historical role in spreading Buddhism beyond the territory of India. Buddhism reached in Central Asia different ways. But the history of Buddhism in Central Asia is closely related to the 'Silk Road' transmission of Buddhism during the first millennium of the Common Era (1,000 A.D). Buddhism origin in India in fifth century B.C, there was so many factors to originate this religion and after that it's spread also. The spread of Buddhism was started from north-west India to Pakistan then Afghanistan to Central Asia after this Chinese Turkistan (modern Xinjiang region) from china its gone Korea and Japan. They adopted

Buddhism and presented this religion with world's marvels art, scripture and literature. Soon Buddhism Become as a world religion with Buddhist teaching and traveling monks (Silk Road foundation, 2002). The socio-cultural background of Buddhism thought in which a strong lasting cultural relation was built - up between India and Central Asia. The role and contribution of Buddhist thought and culture had been very important and distinct in shaping the socio-cultural life of Central Asian peoples. Buddhist scholars and missionaries work was to promote mutual religious and cultural understanding between the people of India and Central Asia.

A number of causes make possible the transmission of Buddhism over all worlds after originate in the Gangetic province of northern India in the 15th century B.C. First, reorganization of Buddha, support of monks work, as the result of traveler missioner by the dangerous sea and land routes in the regions. Second, the close relationship between Buddhist communities and merchants made a symbolic union that helped to spread of Buddhist ideas far and far way and also formed a method by that religious thing easily gone to the new rising centers of Buddhism. Third, kings or rulers and their politics in different parts of Asia carried the transmission of Buddhism by their patronage. When Mauryan ruler king Asoka put effort to fast transmission of Buddhism in Asia around third century BCE, after him in southeast Asia and east Asian use Buddhist policies to decriminalize their political control and power, as result support for Buddhist activities and exchanges.

Transmission of Buddhism in Central Asia:

Here are two major divisions of Buddhism. Hinayana and Mahayana; Hinayana spread through Kashmir, Pakistan, Afghanistan, eastern and coastal Iran and through Iran its spread Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan from that time to till days. In the early 3rd century B.C, time of the Ashoka we started to find exact information about Buddhism spreads. Asoka organized third council (Mahasangeeti) in pataliputra after 236 years of Buddha's death (Mahaparinirvana) so that saved and preserved in its original form. In this council about 1000 learned Buddhist monk took part which continued for nine months. this council decided to send Buddhist missionaries in different parts of the world to talk Buddhism and by this decision a learned Buddhist monk his named Maha Asthvir Majjhantika was gone to Gandhar (now in Afghanistan) (N.A Jayawikrama, 1994).

In history this point proved turning point of Silk Road Buddhism for next some centuries. Asoka invented a new method to propagate Buddhism through edicts or inscription different language beyond the territory of present India. Apart from brahmi, Asoka's bilingual inscriptions are in Greek, Khorosthi, and Aramic which were found during excavation near Kandahar (Afghanistan) in April 1957. Silk Road as springboard of Buddhism in Central Asia particularly after Kaniska had become the ruler of India in the 1st century A.D. The international foundation of Buddhism which was laid down by Asoka was further strengthened and expanded by Kaniska along with the Silk Road in Central Asia (Tulsiram, 2004). Even they began by attacking Buddhism, they later became dedicated patrons of the religion and enthusiastic builders of monasteries and stupas. Thus between 1st and 3rd centuries A.D. Buddhism blossomed in the vital part of the world. Its greatest patron was Kanishka (78-101 AD).

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century researchers and archaeologists have found success in its various centers along the old Silk Road. It was useful for the comprehensive study of Buddhism and its art and literature. They Finds Hundreds of inscriptions added the cultural aspects of the research (B.N.puri, 1987).

Hiuen-tsiang reached Bamiyan in 629 A.D and described about merchants coming and going there. It is broadly believed that the Kushan period during Second and Third century A.D was the golden era of Bamiyan. During those days, every day caravan from India passing through Bamiyan to Samarkand and China. In the same way, the caravan returning from Samarkand and China made it a point to stay at Bamiyan to break their journey before reaching India. Kushan dynasty last king was prince Nepki in Kabul who ruled in Bamiyan. Yet, when the Greek occupied Alexander as Termez and also Amu Darya (Oxus) river, then Buddhism was spread in fact also in west. Asoka when called first Buddhist council in 247 B.C in pataliputra under the

chairmanship of a monk Tissa. Later on, he sends his son and younger brother along with many other Buddhist missionaries in this Bamiyan region. The monk who was send to Kandahar and Kashmir was Majjhantika. Apart from him Dhammarakshita and Malarakshita were also sent in that region. Majjhantiks went to Peshawar and Kabul while two others visited all part of Aryana (Afghanistan) and western part of Iran. Later on, Buddhism spread in entire Central Asia (Tulsiram, 2004).

There was found a large number of original Sanskrit, Prakrit and brahmi literary and religious documents destroyed in India due to the climatic conditions but preserved in sand covered ancient towns of Central Asia. Scholars have acquired many unique manuscripts, dating back to the 6 to 8th centuries A.D. The publication of these texts by P. Pelliot, K. Otani, L. Finot, S. Levi, E. Waldschmidt and others has allowed us to reconsider many traditional views concerning the domain of Indian culture and historical influence, as well as the history and development of Buddhism, its schools and main trends (G. M. Bongard Levin 1981).

As well as the languages of India has adopted a number of Central Asian Ararat words such widespread, experts and Manipur in Mangolia and Tibet. Bokhara is a Buddhist Vihara word derived from the SART or the West Turkestan comes from Bihara and Sartha. The results of Bell Gangadhar tilrak has established the fact that Indo- Iranian payments river valleys of the Oxus and Jaxartes before they migrated to South India and Iran, while he was also the original home of the Aryan certification was in the Arctic region. Based on the words such as 'Pinda' and 'Pandita', scholars such as Burroughs and Emeneau concluded the primary occupants of the Indian Dravinians and Aria had moved from outside India. They have proven drawn from the Sanskrit word Dravinian language. They listed a number of Sanskrit words borrowed from languages recognized Dravinian. The Central Asian scholar Lord Buddha 'Turkey' is 'Turushka' in the Sanskrit word for Kanishka Yu Chi language.14 know the same syllable 'Shka' is Sanskrit and 'youngest' of the weak suffix 'Kanishka' claims that the findings . Turkestan is the suffix "stan" is the former name of the Central Asia comes from the Sanskrit word 'Sthan'. In the word 'chest armor "has been in Sanskrit (B. A. Litvinsky, 1964).

Gandhara arts influence in Central Asia. To talk about Buddhism without mentioning a great influence on the development of Central Asian art is impossible. That art is a fusion of Eastern and Western cultures through the operation has been demonstrated. Left the most powerful and lasting monument to the art world of Buddhism along the Silk Road, of those, the most important Buddhist sculpture and mural painting (murals) part of. In addition, the Hellenic (ancient Greek culture), the results of the development of a new art form called

Buddha contact with Gandharan culture is sometimes a Buddha image. Gandhara style was representative trade unions throughout most of the second millennium of the first until the end of the eighth century, continuing the classic elements India, Iran, Afghanistan and the surrounding region. The Gandhara became a center of Buddhist sculpture was developed mostly as a result of Greek influence; it was the Indian Buddhist architecture-based development. Along the Silk Road, the development of Buddhism monasteries, caves and spread throughout the entire Buddhist stupa result of social (Silk Road Foundation, 2002).

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