



Gandhara Art and Culture Association – who are we & what are we trying to achieve–

Gandhara region comprises of Swat, Peshawar and Taxila in the North West Frontier Province of Pakistan.

It is the name of an ancient province and kingdom.

Ancient Gandhara was core of the silk route, which was very highly developed in every sense such as economic, culture, education and religion.

General concept is that it was a trade route between east and west, besides the commercial activities they also exchanged cultures, religions, customs, languages, ideas, philosophies and spiritual yearnings.

Hence they were very closely knit and well developed.

Gandhara art, culture and religion tradition was blooming during the Kushan dynasty between 1st and 4th centuries A.D

This led to the birth of Mahayana Buddhism and subsequently a new art form emerged currently known as Gandhara art.

Mahayana Buddhism and Gandhara art have not only contributed to the world art and architecture but also to its philosophy, literature and science.

‘Emptiness’ is a key concept in Buddhist philosophy or more precisely it is the ontology of Mahayana Buddhism.

This ‘emptiness’ theory is same as the ‘quantum dynamics’ theory which the modern scientists are pursuing.

Gandhara art traveled along silk route to China, Korea and Japan where it fully bloomed into Buddhism art. The traditional culture of China, Korea and Japan is Buddhist culture.

Therefore Gandhara was the connecting point between eastern and western cultures.

But look where it stands now?

Instead of being hub of cultural, religious and peaceful activities it has become hub of terrorists activities and classified as the most dangerous place in the world.

What is the reason?

According to Buddhism all suffering for living beings has a cause and if the cause can be clearly identified then a proper solution can be found.

Should we ignore it and leave it to self destruct? or should we address it positively and find a proper solution by getting down to the root of the problem?

At this time we Gandhara art and culture association would like to put these question to everyone.

For Gandhara being

- birth place of Buddhism art
- home town of Mahayana Buddhism
- first university town in the world



We have two options

- either have Gandhara Renaissance or let it be destroyed by terror.

Which option we choose has to be decided now

Let us all join hand and make a collective effort to help this region to regain its excellence.

Pakistan is an ideal place

- for interfaith dialogue
- for best Gandhara art and culture research center
- for Buddhist Mecca

It will create awareness among the people and

It will attract the people from all over the world.

Achieving our ultimate objective – Gandhara Renaissance-

Gandhara Art & Culture Association is a non-political, non-profit and non-government association with the following objectives:

- Preservation and conservation of Gandhara sites
- Survey and full documentation of sites in Gandhara and adjacent territory
- Setting up of post graduate institute for the study of Gandhara Civilization
- To arrange seminars, symposia and conferences to promote public awareness and research on the subject
- To train manpower to handle this gigantic project and to help the Government in identifying new sites and assist them in their excavation
- To publish guide books, periodicals, brochures, research articles and books on Gandhara and other related academic activities
- To promote Religious tourism and inter-faith dialogue

Our targets are no doubt very high but our resolve and spirits are high too. We know that such an effort will not only promote tourism but will also bring foreign investment. It will create jobs at many different levels and requisite skill to guide foreign tourists.

Our founder members consist of eminent people from all walks of life who all share the above state idea. We invite people to share the same vision with us to join us and also ask for their support in donations for transforming our vision into a reality.



July 7th to October 10th 1999

During first Gandhara Exhibition played major role by delivering lectures in main temples and universities.

Published “Hometown of Buddhism in Gandhara” and launched. Co authored Dr. Min and Esther Park.



2000,

Established through intensive research that monk Maranatha the founder of Buddhism in China, Korea and Japan was born in Gandhara.

Thus opening the door for religious tourism to Pakistan from Korea.

Following the announcement Korea developed a resort / holy site in the memory of Maranatha at the place where Maranatha supposedly first arrived namely Bob Sung Po Young Gwang province, they have also erected replicas of the important Gandhara monuments.



April 2000,

GACA invited Governor of Young Gwang province and other official and took them on a tour around Chota-Lahore (The considered birth place of Monk Maranatha) and other important places in Gandhara and arranged meeting with related Government officials also held press conference and lecture on the historical routes of Maranatha.

2001,

Made a documentary film about Maranatha and important Gandhara sites. This film was later shown on Buddhist television in Korea.



June 2001,

Brought over 90 Korean Buddhism Chogye order Monks, artistes, tour operators and reporters to take part in Tourism Conference organized by PTDC in Hunza.

September 2001,

GACA members and Government officials were invited to Korea by Korean Buddhism Cheontae order to see how Buddhism developed after it was influenced from Gandhara.



March 2002:

Invited Korean Buddhism Cheontae order Chief Monk along with other Monks and followers, had press conference about Korean Buddhism and Gandhara, and arranged their meeting with high rank Government officials.

April 2002:

Korean artists were invited to paint Gandhara monuments and the scenic valleys of Swat and Hunza by GACA.



August 2003:

Organized a painting exhibition of Pakistan artists in Seoul Korea titled “Spirit of Asia”.

May 24th 2004:

Registered Gandhara Art and Culture Association, as a non-profit, non-political organization.



September 2004:

Organized launching ceremony of Gandhara Art culture association at Avari Hotel Lahore.

January 2005:

Organized a painting exhibition titled “Art of Korea” in Lahore and Islamabad.

March 2005:

Had audience with President Musharraf, discussed the importance of Gandhara Monuments why we need to preserve and restore them



September 2005:

Organized the “First International Symposium on Cultural Heritage of Ancient Gandhara”, in collaboration with Peshawar University in Swat.



November 2005:

GACA Korea chapter Korean Buddhism cheontea order organized Buddhist prayer ceremony for peace and stability of Pakistan in Seoul Korea during this ceremony donated \$ 30,000/- for the earthquake victims. Our member Saeed Akhtar donated his painting of Buddha to Korean Kwan Mun Sa temple Korea.

August 2006:

Invited two artists and took 20 paintings for exhibition and International Art Camp in Pyung Taek Korea.



March 2007:

Organized Gandhara week in collaboration with Ministry of Tourism. Invited head monks from Korea, China and Japan to hold Buddhist prayer ceremony for the first time in 1500 years since Buddhism disappeared from this region, at Dharmarajika Stupa in Taxila. Arranged audience with President Musharraf for the entire delegation from Korea, China and Japan. During the audience there was discussion to make Gandhara a Mecca for the Buddhists.



May 2007:

Revised text exemption, status.

August 2007:

Invited one artist and took 15 paintings for exhibition at international Art Camp in Pyung Taek Korea.



September 2007:

Chairman of GACA Anwar Saifullah Khan donated 10 acres of land for Gandhara institute for post graduate studies.

June 2008:

Presentation on restoration of Takth-e-Bhai Monastery at Marriott Hotel arranged visit of the delegation to the Mohabat Khan Mosque and arranged meeting with the Imam as a step towards interfaith harmony during the meeting the Imam and monk exchanged their Rosaries (Tasbis).



Saeed Akhter donated a painting worth 15 Lacs to GACA.

December 2008:

Arranged audience of senior monk of Korean Buddhism Cheon Tae order with President Zardari. During this audience it was proposed to revive the oldest university in the world at Taxila and restoration of Takth-e-Bhai Monastery, other proposal discussed was “21 Century Peace Cravan” starting from Pakistan traveling through China, North & South Korea and ending in Japan which in fact was the route taken by Monk Maranatha when he spread Buddhism in those countries peacefully this will help the cause of Gandhara by bringing peace and harmony in this region and make Gandhara center of world Buddhism.



Senior Monk was invited by Rotary club to give a lecture on “How we can bring peace and harmony to this region” through interfaith dialog in Gandhara.

Revival of the first university in the world at Taxila

Taxila was the home to the first university in the world.

Around 2500 years ago Taxila was the junction where people of different origins mingled with each other and exchanged knowledge of their countries.

At that time many great people in different fields graduated from Taxila university. The most prominent among them was Chandra Gupta Maurya (between 4th to 3rd B.C) the founder of Maurya Dynasty. He was the first person to unite the sub- continent.

Another important person was Jivaka who was the Physician of Buddha. He also performed the first brain surgery in the world at Taxila.

Most of the students after graduating from Taxila university went back to their countries and became leaders in their respective fields.

We hope that history will repeat itself and once again in this modern age of 21st century, this institute would gradually develop into a great seat of learning that will again produce world leaders in different fields.

- It will be the center of research on Gandhara art
Gandhara is here and instead of our students and scholars going abroad for study and research, we should provide them all the facilities here and rather attract scholars and students from all over the world to Taxila.
- We should help our young students to develop into leading scholars in the world in this subject

Restoration of Takth-i-Bhai

Takth-I-Bhai is one of the most important Buddhist monastery in Gandhara.

Since all the great ancient monuments are built on the location where the universal energy converge. Takth-I-Bhai according to the chief monk of Korea is located at one such location.

According to him it's location is even better than the great Pyramids of Egypt where people from all over the world come to see them. He said that proper restoration of the monastery will make it even more popular than the Pyramids. It will be considered a great historic step towards bringing peace and harmony in this region.

This will greatly improve the image of Pakistan especially among those countries who view Pakistan to be extremist.

The prevailing thought that Pakistan being an Islamic state is not doing enough to preserve the ancient Buddhist heritage will change.

This will set an example for the rest of the world to see that two major religions of the world are working side by side in harmony.

As the news of restoration of Takth –I –Bhai spreads among the Buddhist nations they will start appreciating initiative taken by Pakistan and the Buddhists from around the world will start traveling to Pakistan.

When Takth –I Bhai is fully restored it will become a symbol for Pakistan. Hence the two most important objectives for Pakistan will be achieved.

- 1) The tourism will flourish boosting the economy of Pakistan
- 2) Peace and harmony will prevail in Pakistan

The success of this project will depend upon it being initiated by Pakistan Government because the Buddhist community of Korea, China and Japan along with UNESCO will automatically give their full support.



