

BUDDHISM
IN CENTRAL ASIA

B. N. Puri

MOTILAL BANARSIDASS PUBLISHERS
PRIVATE LIMITED • DELHI

First Edition : Delhi, 1987

Reprint : Delhi, 1993

© MOTILAL BANARSIDASS PUBLISHERS PRIVATE LIMITED
All rights reserved

ISBN: 81-208-0372-8

Also available at:

MOTILAL BANARSIDASS

41 U.A. Bungalow Road, Jawahar Nagar, Delhi 110 007

120 Royapettah High Road, Mylapore, Madras 600 004

16 St. Mark's Road, Bangalore 560 001

Ashok Rajpath, Patna 800 004

Chowk, Varanasi 221 001

This publication has been financially supported by the Indian Council of Historical Research, New Delhi. The responsibility for the facts stated, opinions expressed or conclusions reached is entirely that of the author and Indian Council of Historical Research accepts no responsibility for them.

PRINTED IN INDIA

BY JAINENDRA PRAKASH JAIN AT SHRI JAINENDRA PRESS,
A-45 NARAINA, PHASE I, NEW DELHI 110 028
AND PUBLISHED BY NARENDRA PRAKASH JAIN FOR
MOTILAL BANARSIDASS PUBLISHERS PVT. LTD.,
BUNGALOW ROAD, DELHI 110 007

FOREWORD

Central Asia is still an enormously important area of the world in a political sense, its vitality unabated. Buddhist texts were certainly disseminated into the Khotan area during the time of the 'Old Silk Road' (100 B.C. – A.D. 200). This road went from China to the Oriental Roman empire through Central Asia and had a branch extending down into Northwest India. A variety of dialects and dialect mixtures were current in Central Asia. Buddhism spread from India by way of the trade routes, in China starting with Tunhuang at the Western gateway. After the downfall of the Han in A.D. 220 Buddhism rapidly advanced and from about A.D. 300 had penetrated the high gentry clans in Northern China. When the Tibetan king Sroñ-btsan sgam-po (b. A.D. 569) was converted to Buddhism by two Buddhist princesses, one Nepalese, the other Chinese, whom he married, he sent a mission to India (possibly Kashmir) to create a Tibetan alphabet. Then translations were begun in the seventh century, at first from both Sanskrit and Chinese, by end of that century just from Sanskrit.

B. N. Puri's work on Buddhism in Central Asia recounts these fascinating events. He has spared no inspection of previous scholarly work for his coverage of the main facts. Whether it be the history, the literature, realities of life, or the art, Puri maintains a firm control of the relevant supporting treatises. Students of Central Asia should welcome this addition to the topic and the bibliographical introduction. There are of course many specialized works on particular aspects of Central Asia but Puri's broad coverage is probably unique. Sixteen tastefully chosen plates add an artistic touch to this valuable addition for the Buddhist Traditions series.

ALEX WAYMAN

CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION	1
Role of Central Asian Peoples	7
Ancient Routes	17
Buddhist Finds—Literary Texts and Monuments	24
II. EARLY HISTORY OF CENTRAL ASIA	30
The Political States of Central Asia	45
Kashgar	46
Khotan	52
Northern Route States	68
Kucha	69
Agnideśa or Karasahr	74
Kao-chang or Turfan	77
The Regality and Buddhism in the Northern States	80
III. BUDDHISM AND BUDDHIST SAVANTS OF CENTRAL ASIA	86
Buddhism in Afghanistan, Bactria and Parthia	89
Buddhism and the Southern States	104
Buddhism and Buddhist Scholars in the Northern States	114
Kumārajīva—His Life and Contributions	116
Kumārajīva and His Contemporaries	121
Later Buddhist Savants	125
Buddhism and Other Religions in Central Asia	129
Brahmanism	130
Manichaeism, Nestorian Christianity and Buddhism	136
Some New Trends in Buddhism	141
Tibetan Buddhism	147
Buddhism in Mongolia and Tibet	157

IV. LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE	174
Languages	179
Scripts	185
Canonical Literature	189
Local Translations	210
Tibetan Buddhist Literature	216
V. MATERIAL CULTURE	225
Cultural Integration	227
Family Life	232
Food and Food Habits	236
Dress and Ornaments	237
Pastime and Recreations	241
Agricultural Economy	243
Handicrafts and other Industries	246
National Economy and Medium of Exchange and Barter	248
Labour and Transport	250
Administration & Rural Economy	252
VI. THE ART OF CENTRAL ASIA	255
Miran	260
The Khotan Complex	268
The Northern Schools	274
Kara-shahr	282
The Turfan Group	284
Tun-huang	290
Soviet Central Asia	292
Afghanistan	297
Fondukistan	302
Begram	303
Hadda	304
Gandhāra Region	305
Tibetan Art	307

Buddhism in Central Asia is a saga of peaceful pursuit by Buddhist scholars from Kashmir and Kabul to propagate the message of the Buddha. This vast region between the Tien-Shan and the Kunlun ranges was the centre of activities of these Buddhist savants. Here people of different races and professions, speaking many languages, were finally blended into a cosmopolitan culture. This created an intellectual climate of high order. In this context, the famous silk trade route was helpful in adding to the material prosperity of the people in this region.

The present study, therefore, is not one of Buddhism in isolation. It equally provides an account of the political forces confronting each other during the course of history of this region for well over a thousand years.

For centuries the drifting desert sand of Central Asia enveloped this civilization and the religion connected with it. The late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century explorers and archaeologists successfully uncovered it at different centres along the old Silk Route. This has been helpful for a comprehensive study of Buddhism with its literature and art. The finds of hundreds of inscriptions have added to the cultural dimensions of the study.



Buddhist Tradition Series

Edited by Alex Wayman

(ISBN: 81-208-0287-x)

- 1 **Indian Buddhism: A Survey with Bibliographical Notes**—Hajime Nakamura
- 2 **Nagarjuniana: Studies in the Writings and Philosophy of Nagarjuna**—Chr. Lindtner
- 3 **Chinese Monks in India**—Latika Lahiri
- 4 **Buddhism in Central Asia**—B.N. Puri
- 5 **Dharmakirti's Theory of Hetu-Centricity of Anumana**—Mangala R. Chinchore
- 6 **The Legend of King Asoka: A Study and Translation of the Asokavadana**—John S. Strong
- 7 **Buddhist Insight**—George R. Elder
- 8 **Buddhism Transformed: Religious Change in Sri Lanka**—Richard Gombrich and Gananath Obeyesekere
- 9 **The Buddhist Tantras: Light on Indo-Tibetan Esotericism**—Alex Wayman
- 10 **The Lion's Roar of Queen Srimala**—Alex Wayman and Hideko Wayman
- 11 **The Buddha Nature: A Study of the Tathagatagarbha and Alayavijnana**—Brian E. Brown
- 12 **Evolution of Stupas in Burma**—Sujata Soni
- 13 **Buddhist Parables**—Eugene Watson Burlingame
- 14 **The Debate of King Milinda**—Bhikkhu Pesala
- 15 **The Chinese Madhyama Agama and the Pali Majjhima Nikaya**—Bhiksu Thich Minh Chau
- 16 **Sudden and Gradual**—Peter Gregory
- 17 **Yoga of the Guhyasamajatantra: The Arcane Lore of Forty Verses**—Alex Wayman
- 18 **The Enlightenment of Vairocana**—Alex Wayman and R. Tajima
- 19 **A History of Indian Buddhism**—Hirakawa Akira, Tr. and Ed. by Paul Groner
- 20 **Introduction to the Buddhist Tantric Systems**—F.D. Lessing and Alex Wayman (Tr.)
- 21 **Anagatavamsa Desana**—U. Meddegama (Tr.) and John C. Holt (Ed.)

MOTILAL BANARSIDASS PUBLISHERS PRIVATE LIMITED