

Impact of Buddhism on Muslim Society in District Mansehra, Hazara, KPK	
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Abstract

Mansehra is the district of Hazara Division and one of the most important regions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. As for the historical remains of Mansehra which have the most popular role in the Buddhism propagation and Gandharian trade. The geographical position of Mansehra is the gateway to Central Asian territories connecting through the Silk Route and it is the development of social, political, economic, cultural, and religious behavior. The present revitalization of the cultural road is in the shape of China Pakistan Economic Corridor which has historical importance. This was previously connected with Uttarapatha.

Asoka embraced Buddhism after the war of Kalinga and disseminated different groups for religious propagation. At the same time, the group of Mahantika was sent via Salatora (Swabi) to Manserha after 261 BC. The doorway of Mansehra connects China, Korea, and Tibet along with many designated link routes. The role of Mansehra was that it was considered a hub of trade and Buddhist religious meetings. The influence of Greek, Roman, Persian, and indigenes on sculptures and architecture is prominently visible in Mansehra due to historical remains. The same architectural impact is famous in Muslim architecture, most notably in Mosques (motifs, styles, colors, etc), which transferred from the Buddhist Stupa.

The impacts on cultural and artistic behaviors can be noticed in the costumes and decorative scenes of Buddhist art – Buddhist creative designs are still very common and liked locally and globally (Khalka or Roman Touga, Swabi Chapple or pair of shoes, turban, etc).

The Myths can be commonly seen as a part that relates to religion (Black Hen, Crow, Dream, Horn to the Top of the House, etc).

Folk and traditional games of Buddhist times are still observed in some areas (Archery or Mukha, Wrestling or Kushti, Horse riding, etc).

Some of the common teachings are i.e. not to hurt any living being, how to be good and be good for others, be devoted, humble, passionate, adequate, etc.

The historical significance of Mansehra can also be judged through the Buddhist remains including rock inscriptions found in Mansehra and Oghi. These inscriptions of Asoka are called the Laws of Piety. The rock inscription technique was first introduced by Achaemenid. The area of Shatiayle has many rock coverings which are the witness of different religions' unity and social behaviors.

Mansehra area is the hub of Buddhist Civilization and impacts are still noticeable in the Muslim community in different shapes and need scholarly research.

Keywords: Buddhist Impact, Myths, Buddhist Principles, Local Doctrines

Introduction

The city of Mansehra is situated in the Hazara division and it has a significantly historical background in terms of culture. Its historical background dates back to the prehistoric period and was called as Uruga, in the context of the great epic of India, the Mahabharata, meaning water pond. It was annexed by Alexander the Great in 326 BC and was afterwards given to the Raja of Poonch, Abhisara, after whom the name Abhisar was given to the area (Bashir 2019: 8).

The Maurya family started to claiming the rule of the area in 319 BC, the most influential among which was Ashoka the Great who reigned between 234 BC and 272 BC. Different invasions were felt in the region; one was the invasions by the Scythian, around 135 BC and dominated till about around 250 BC where it was dominated by the Sakas¹.

Historically, culturally, and geographically, Mansehra is a melting pot civilization of Greek, Romans, Persians, Sasanians and even Aryans etc, are close by. These factors give the people a diverse culture, which is evinced in the customs, traditions, religious beliefs and even language. Evidently, Asia has continuously demonstrated its' ability to assimilate and integrate the new waves of cultural and religious activities into its historical and cultural realm.²

For the next step in cultural fusion, people embraced Islam and the arrival of this new religion entailed also conversion with culture. One can mention that some of the pre-Islamic beliefs remained even after the region's Islamization, for example, the black cat superstition. In the area of Mansehra, social events made a place where various ethnic people were accommodated together so that they could discuss the various cultural, trade and religious affairs³

Since the Achaemenid period, the region has been significant for introducing the techniques such as rock inscriptions (Smart, 1999). The Kalinga War was the last of the major conquests of Ashoka's that he willing took part in, he soon converted to Buddhism and envoys were sent out to spread the teachings, this area was reached around 261 BCE. This area became involved in the missionary activities of Buddhism throughout the major commercial corridors to China, Korea, Tibet, and other parts of the world⁴

In summary, Mansehra possesses historical and cultural values due to its geographical location, overlays of multiculturalism, and constructive characteristics pertaining to tolerance. This has produced a special and layered history of culture that still impacts the current society's culture and religion⁵

¹ . Akira, H. A history of Indian Buddhism from Sakyamuni to early Mahayana (P. Groner, ed.). Delhi.1993 ,P 33

² . Bunner: The Forgotten Part of Gandhara. Karachi. 1997 . P . 5

³ ., Ihsan and Qazi, M.N. Gandharan Sculptures in the Peshawar Museum, Hazara University Mansehra Pakistan. 2008 , P. 84

⁴ . Ali, K. A new history of Indo-Pakistan (up to 1526 A.D.), Pakistan: Aziz book depot. Lahore.1998,P.66

⁵ . Bellew 1977. 26- Bellew, H.W. (1977) A general report on the Yusufzais. (Repr), Lahore: Sang-e-meel Publishers. Lahore.

Buddhism Rock Inscription Principals in Mansehra

The rock inscriptions in Mansehra provide a profound understanding of Buddhist teachings, emphasizing the following principles ⁶

Four Exertions

Effort to Control the Physical Body: Discipline over physical actions to maintain moral conduct.

Effort to Control Negative Feelings: Regulation of negative emotions to manifest and maintain mental clarity and tranquility.

Effort to Control Abstract Sin: Mastery over guilt imposing thoughts or unwanted mental burden.

Effort to Think about the Creator of the Universe: Contemplation to understand the nature of the universe and one's place within it

Four Conceptual Struggles

Struggle to Prevent Bad Behavior: Efforts to avoid immoral actions.

Struggle to Prevent Present Immodesty: Avoiding improper or indecent behavior.

Struggle to Locate High-Quality Deeds: Identifying and engaging in virtuous actions.

Struggle to Improve Good Deeds: Continuous improvement in virtuous actions and moral conduct ⁷.

Four Religious Fundamentals

Desire to be a Religious Person: Aspiration to lead a spiritual life.

Molding Heart to Become a Religious Figure: Cultivating inner qualities to embody religious ideals.

Struggle to Become a Religious Personality: Persistent effort to achieve spiritual growth.

Search for Ways to Become Religious: Exploration of various paths to deepen one's spirituality

Five Powerful Senses

Creed/Faith: Strong belief in Buddhist teachings.

Struggle Effort to maintain and grow in faith.

Intelligence: Wisdom and understanding of Buddhist principles.

Direction from God and Imagination: Spiritual guidance and creative contemplation.

Seven Wisdoms:

Supremacy

Rapture

Brainpower

Investigation

Concentration

Thoughts

Effort ⁸

⁶ . Marshall, John. A guide to Taxila, Superintendent Government Printing, (1918), India. P.8

⁷ . Forsgren K. and Benskin E. The Art of Buddhism: Smithsonian Institute, Washington DC , 2001.P.08

⁸ . Ibid: 09

Eight Noble Folds

Right Faith
Right Desire
Right Saying
Right Doing
Right Livelihood
Right Effort
Right Forgiveness
Right Thinking ⁹

Muslim Initial Beliefs

Muslim beliefs form the core of the Islamic faith, emphasizing the following principles:

Trust

Trust in One Allah (God)

عَلَيْهِ يَتَوَكَّلُ الْمُتَوَكِّلُونَ¹⁰

Bow Only to Allah: No other entity or grave should be worshipped.

لَعَنَ اللَّهُ الْيَهُودَ وَالنَّصَارَى، اتَّخَذُوا قُبُورَ أَنْبِيَائِهِمْ مَسْجِدًا¹¹

Ask for Needs Only from Allah: Whether in secret or aloud, supplications should be directed solely to Allah.

ادْعُوا رَبَّكُمْ تَضَرُّعًا وَخُفْيَةً¹²

وَادْعُوهُ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا¹³

Ask for Forgiveness Only from Allah

وَأَسْتَغْفِرُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ¹⁴

Devotion

Slaughter for Only Allah

قُلْ إِن صَلَّائِي وَنُكْحِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ¹⁵

Give Charity Only for Allah: Avoid giving charity at graves to prevent misunderstanding

Pray to Allah, Not to Graves: Supplications should be directed to Allah alone.

سَمِعَ وَأَنَّ الْمَسْجِدَ لِلَّهِ فَلَا تَدْعُوا مَعَ اللَّهِ أَحَدًا¹⁶

Abstain from Prohibited Acts in the Quran and Hadith.

أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تُحَرِّمُوا طَيِّبَاتِ مَا أَحَلَّ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ¹⁷

⁹ . Ali, K. A new history of Indo-Pakistan (up to 1526 A.D.), Pakistan: Aziz book depot. Lahore 1998 , P.38

¹⁰ . Al-Quran 39 : 38

¹¹ Mūḥammad bīn Ism‘aīl Al-Būkhārī, Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī (Al-Jāmi‘uṣṣaḥīḥ), 1st ed. (Dār Ṭouq Al-Najāt, 1422). Hadith No. 1265. V.1, p447

¹² . Al-Quran 7 : 55

¹³ Al-Quran 7 : 56

¹⁴ . Al-Quran 2 : 199

¹⁵ .. Al-Quran 6 : 162

¹⁶ .. Al-Quran 72 : 18

¹⁷ .. Al-Quran 5 : 87

Faith

Faith in One Allah: Belief that Allah alone has the power over all aspects of life.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا آمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ¹⁸

Faith in Allah's Acquired Names: Belief in the attributes and names of Allah.

قُلْ أَدْعُوا اللَّهَ أَوْ ادْعُوا الرَّحْمَنَ أَيًّا مَا تَدْعُوا فَلَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَى¹⁹

Acceptance of Allah's Commands: Submission to Allah's will.

وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ ابْتِغَاءَ مَرْضَاتِ اللَّهِ فَسَوْفَ نُؤْتِيهِ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا²⁰

Oral Acceptance of Allah's Greatness: Verbal affirmation of faith

لُتَكْبِرُوا اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ مَا هَدَىٰكُمْ²¹

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ ذِكْرًا كَثِيرًا²²

The myths and beliefs prevalent in the Mansehra region are deeply rooted in the cultural and traditional practices passed down through generations. These beliefs, which often intersect with folklore and superstitions, reflect the community's attempt to make sense of natural phenomena, human behavior, and social norms. Here's an analysis of these common myths.²³

Animals and Omens:

Hollering animals are seen as harbingers of death.

Certain animals are considered unlucky to keep at home.

Owls are believed to bring bad luck if they enter a house.

The presence of a banana tree is seen as a symbol of death.

These beliefs likely stem from historical observations and stories where such occurrences coincided with unfortunate events.

Body Movements and Signals:

The blinking of specific eyes is associated with good or bad luck.

Scratching of the palms is linked to wealth or travel.

Sneezing before someone leaves is seen as a bad omen for their task.

These superstitions are attempts to predict or control the future based on immediate physical signs.

Actions and Their Consequences:

Mentioning pigs or snakes is considered unpleasant.

Touching someone with a broom while sweeping is thought to cause bodily harm, and spitting on the broom is a way to counteract this.

Cleaning the house in the evening is believed to drive blessings away.

Such beliefs are often about maintaining purity, respect, and ritual cleanliness in daily life.

¹⁸ .Al-Quran 4 :136

¹⁹ . Al-Quran 17 : 110

²⁰ -Al-Quran 4 :114

²¹ - Al-Quran 22:37

²² -Al-Quran 33 :41

²³ .Thanvi, M. Ashrif Ali. Aghlat-Ul-Aawam, Ganj-Shakar Printers Lahore 2012, P.43

Animal Behavior and Predictions:

Dogs crying at night are thought to bring sickness.

Hens or roosters crowing at unusual times are seen as omens of bad events.

These beliefs reflect an attempt to interpret animal behavior as messages or warnings about future events.

Social and Ritual Practices:

Newlyweds and childbirth have specific rituals, such as lighting a lamp at the well or breaking the roof for a baby boy.

Porcupine thorns are used symbolically to cause discord.

These practices are likely rooted in attempts to secure good fortune or avert misfortune through symbolic actions.

Everyday Actions and Superstitions:

Hiccups are believed to be a sign of someone remembering the person.

Not lending groceries in the morning or cleaning quilts with brooms are actions linked to bad luck or theft.

Such beliefs govern everyday behavior and ensure adherence to societal norms and caution in daily activities.

Environmental and Natural Phenomena:

The crying of peacocks or sparrows cleaning themselves indicates rain.

Meteor showers are seen as signs of conflict.

These beliefs may have originated from observations of natural patterns and their correlation with weather changes.

Childbirth and Gender:

The birth of a baby boy after three girls requires a purification ritual.

Breaking the house of a hornet leads to eye pimples.

These reflect societal attitudes towards gender and the significance of maintaining harmony with nature.

General Social Beliefs:

Various actions like moving legs on a bed, having spider webs, or fixing bed ropes at night are linked to financial and familial outcomes.

These superstitions serve to instill discipline and caution in everyday tasks and relationships.

These myths and beliefs provide a window into the collective psyche of the Mansehra region, revealing how historical, cultural, and environmental factors have shaped the community's understanding of the world. They highlight a blend of ancient traditions, religious influences, and local customs that continue to influence behavior and social practices today.²⁴

The myths and beliefs regarding guests, specific days, eating limitations, and common societal practices in the Mansehra region reflect deeply ingrained cultural values and traditions. Here's a detailed analysis:

Beliefs About Guests

Crows on the Roof:

A crow landing on the roof signifies that guests are coming.

Increased Water While Mixing Flour:

²⁴ . ibid : 27-31

If water accidentally increases while mixing flour, it indicates upcoming guests.

Slipping Hand While Grinding Grains:

In the past, women believed that if their hands slipped while grinding grains, it meant guests were on their way.

Spilled Flour:

Spilling flour while mixing it is seen as a sign of guests arriving.

Breaking Bread:

If bread breaks in hand while being made, it is taken as a sign that guests will come. These beliefs likely emerged from a time when unexpected visitors were more common, and such signs were interpreted as natural indicators of social interaction.

Beliefs About Specific Days

Wednesday:

Considered an awful day by some men and women.

Conversely, students believe starting their studies on Wednesday brings success.

Tuesday:

Regarded as a bad day by many.

The negative connotations associated with certain days may be rooted in historical or religious events that took place on these days, creating a lasting cultural impact.

Eating Limitations

Proper Feeding at Invites: One should not leave an invitee's home until properly fed.

Buying Meat with Bone: Meat should include bone; otherwise, it is considered unpleasant.

Eclipse Eating: Eating or drinking during a sun or moon eclipse is avoided.

Shared Bowl for Milk: Husbands and wives should not drink milk from the same bowl to avoid becoming "Dood Shreek" (milk siblings).

Women Eating Before Men: Some women consider it unpleasant to eat before men. These limitations reflect deep-seated social norms about hospitality, purity, and gender roles. The eclipse-related belief likely stems from ancient superstitions about celestial events.

Common Societal Practices

Widowhood and Remarriage: Widows are not expected to remarry, and remarriage is considered awkward.

Breaking Bangles Upon Husband's Death: Widows break their bangles instead of merely taking them off.

Dowry Neglect: Women traditionally do not receive dowry, reflecting long-standing gender inequality.

Pregnancy and Death: Deceased pregnant women must wear steel chains to prevent becoming a witch.

First Childbirth: A woman should deliver her first child at her parent's house, a practice dating back to Buddhist times.

These societal practices highlight the patriarchal structure and the importance of ritual purity and protection in the community. The breaking of bangles symbolizes the end of a marital relationship, while the dowry practice underscores gender disparities.

The cultural and traditional practices of the Mansehra region offer a fascinating glimpse into how the community has evolved while retaining significant elements from various historical influences, notably the Buddhist era. These practices do not

conflict with religious beliefs but rather serve as social symbols, crucial for the survival and identity of the community .²⁵

Cultural and Traditional Impact

Construction

Architectural Style: The construction in the Mansehra region exhibits a distinct style, heavily influenced by Buddhist architecture. The domes of mosques, for instance, are inspired by Buddhist stupas, showcasing a blend of religious and cultural heritage .²⁶

Footwear: Shoes of Gandhara

Gandhara Influence: The traditional shoes depicted in Gandhara sculptures often feature geometric or animal designs. Modern Peshawari chappals still reflect these ancient design elements, demonstrating a continuity of cultural expression.²⁷

Clothing

Traditional Attire: Clothing styles in the region remain consistent with historical practices. Men wearing shawls and the intricate jewelry designs seen in Buddhist sculptures are still prevalent, indicating a strong connection to the past .²⁸

Games and Competitions

Traditional Sports: Games such as archery, wrestling, and dog fights have deep cultural roots. While some are discouraged by religious authorities due to their gambling aspects, other sports like wrestling and soccer are widely practiced, fostering community spirit and continuity of tradition .

Artistic Motifs

Lotus Rattle: The lotus flower, significant in Buddhist art, appears in jewelry and turban designs, symbolizing purity and beauty.

Pipal Leaf: The heart-shaped pipal leaf, associated with the sacred Bodhi tree, features prominently in local motifs, representing nature and spirituality.

Scroll Work: Acanthus leaves and other scroll decorations from the Gandhara period are seen in local art, often adorning friezes and other decorative elements.

Cupids and Turbans: Cupids, popular in Greco-Buddhist art, and the use of turbans as religious symbols continue to influence local customs and attire .

Traditional Games

Wrestling (Parzawal)

Cultural Significance: Wrestling is a beloved pastime, particularly among Pukhtoon boys. It teaches competition, tenacity, and sportsmanship, integral qualities for community cohesion.²⁹

Mukha

²⁵ . Filigenzi, A. Non-Buddhist Customs of Buddhist People: Visual and Archaeological Evidence from North-West Pakistan 2019 , P.57
<https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110413083>

²⁶ . Ingholt, H. Gandharan Art in Pakistan, New York , (1957).P.315

²⁷ . Faccenna and Filigenzi 2007: 150). Faccenna, D. and A. Filigenzi (2007) Repertory of Terms for Cataloging Gandharan Sculptures Based on Materials from the ISIAO Italian Archaeological Mission In Swat. Pakistan ISIAO Reports and Memories, Vol V, Rome

²⁸ . ibid: 151

²⁹ . Taddei, M. On a Hellenistic Model used in Some Gandharan Reliefs in Swat: West and West 1965, Vol 15 No ¾. ISIAO .P .90

Swabi Identity: This bow-and-arrow game is unique to the Swabi area and serves as a cultural identifier, with tournaments held regularly to maintain the tradition **Mazaray or Sein Bakri**

Strategic Indoor Game: Resembling chess, this game involves the strategic movement of pebbles and stones, played mostly by elders, showcasing traditional leisure activities.³⁰ **Pat Patorhay (Hide and Seek)**

Children's Game: Known by different names in various areas, this game is a common childhood pastime, fostering social interaction and playful competition among boys.³¹

Broader Cultural Practices

Symbolism in Daily Life

Lotus and Pipal Motifs: These motifs from Buddhist times continue to appear in everyday objects and rituals, underscoring their enduring significance.

Scroll and Geometric Patterns: The intricate designs from the Gandhara period are still evident in local art and architecture, illustrating the region's rich artistic heritage.³²

Social Norms and Practices

Widowhood and Marriage

Marriage Customs: Widows traditionally do not remarry, reflecting deep-rooted social norms. The breaking of bangles upon a husband's death symbolizes the end of marital status.

Dowry and Inheritance

Gender Inequality: Women traditionally do not receive dowry from their parents or husbands, highlighting longstanding gender disparities.

Pregnancy and Death Rituals

Protective Practices: Pregnant women who die are adorned with steel chains to prevent them from becoming witches, a practice rooted in superstition.

Comparative Analysis of Gandhara Fashion

The Gandhara region, known for its rich cultural heritage, presents a fascinating blend of artistic and stylistic influences, primarily from Greek and Hellenistic traditions. This fusion is vividly reflected in the fashion elements depicted in Gandhara sculptures.³³

Hairstyles

Variety in Styles: Gandhara sculptures showcase a diverse range of hairstyles. These include:

Knotted Hair: Hair tied in intricate knots.

Wavy Hair: Soft, flowing waves.

Curly Hair: Tight, well-defined curls.

³⁰ . Bashir and Wahab 2019: 99).

³¹ . ibid: 100

³² . Wali Ud Din, Mir (2006) *Roohan-illaj*. 2017 ,Lahore . P . 78

³³ . Bruhn, W. and Tilke, M. A Pictorial History of Costume, London. 1955.P.20

Greek Influence: The hairstyles predominantly reflect Greek fashion, suggesting a significant Hellenistic influence in the region's artistic expressions.³⁴

Turbans

Greek Inspiration: The turbans in Gandhara sculptures are often adorned with beads and made from fine materials, indicating a luxurious aesthetic.

Religious Significance: Initially, turban motifs were used in Gandhara art for religious purposes, highlighting their cultural and spiritual importance.³⁵

Earrings

Eclectic Influences: The earring designs in Gandhara art draw from both Eastern and Western traditions, resulting in a unique blend.

Naturalistic Forms: Designs inspired by natural elements.

Geometric Patterns: Symmetrical and structured shapes.

Floral Motifs: Patterns inspired by flowers and plants.

Consistency in Patterns: While the designs are varied, the basic patterns remain consistent, differing only in the formation and arrangement.³⁶

Jewellery

Naturalistic and Hellenistic: Gandhara jewelry combines naturalistic themes with Hellenistic influences.

Geometric Designs: Regular, repeating shapes and forms.

Floral and Figurative Motifs: Inspired by flowers and mythical figures.

Iconic Motifs: Notably, the lotus flower appears frequently in stylized forms.

Animal Imagery: Necklace designs often incorporate monster heads and dog horns, adding a unique mythological element.³⁷

Armbands

Decorative Patterns: Gandhara armbands feature geometric and floral decorations.

Repetition in Design: Patterns, especially papal leaves and lotus flowers, are often repeated to create a cohesive and stylized look.

Geometric and Floral Motifs: These elements are intricately combined to adorn the borders of armbands, highlighting the detailed craftsmanship.³⁸

Conclusion

The myths and beliefs in the Mansehra region encapsulate a mixture of social norms, superstitions, and cultural practices that have been passed down through generations. They reflect the community's efforts to navigate life's uncertainties, maintain social harmony, and uphold tradition. Understanding these beliefs provides valuable insight into the region's cultural heritage and how historical practices continue to influence contemporary life.

The cultural and traditional practices in the Mansehra region provide a rich tapestry of historical influences, social norms, and artistic expressions. These practices, while

³⁴ . *ibid*: 21

³⁵ .Faccenna, D.and A.Filigenzi, *Repertory of Terms for Cataloging Gandharan Sculptures Based on Materials from the IsIAO Italian Archaeological Mission In Swat. Pakistan IsIAO Reports and Memories, 2007 Vol V, Rome.P.165*

³⁶ . *ibid*: 180

³⁷ . Bruhn, W. and Tilke, M. *A Pictorial History of Costume, London. 1955. P 20*

³⁸ . Ingholt, H. (1957) *Gandharan Art in Pakistan, New York 1957,P.355*

evolving, continue to shape the community's identity, ensuring that the legacy of their ancestors remains alive. The blend of Buddhist heritage with local customs and Islamic influences creates a unique cultural milieu that defines the region and its people.

The fashion elements depicted in Gandhara sculptures illustrate a remarkable fusion of Greek and Hellenistic influences with local artistic traditions. This blend is evident in the variety of hairstyles, the ornate turbans, the diverse earring designs, the naturalistic and figurative jewelry, and the intricately decorated armbands. The consistent patterns and motifs, such as the lotus flower and geometric designs, underscore the cultural continuity and artistic sophistication of the Gandhara region. This comparative analysis highlights the region's unique contribution to the broader tapestry of ancient art and fashion.



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