



Pilgrims and Prominent Personalities of Taxila

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Abstract

This research paper outlays the prominent personalities and their contribution in raising the bar of historical significance of Taxila. "Taxila" a small city of Punjab province in Pakistan is known as an ancient seat of learning due to the contributions of people highlighted in this paper. The archaeological excavations in Taxila have revealed that the city served as a central point of knowledge sharing to almost every religion culture and scholars. The research also explains that the North-west Indian (modern day Pakistan) was a tolerant and peaceful place where people came to learn knowledge and wisdom. The visit of these prominent personalities of the past also shows that the knowledge spread throughout the world through Taxila because it was an ancient seat of Learning in the Past.

Keywords: Taxila, Gandhara, Bharata, Vishnu Sharma, Panini, Pushkalavati, Dharmarajika.

Introduction

Since the first appearance of Gandhara *RigVeda* denoting a certain geographical unit, it has been a subject of controversy as to what part of South Asia it precisely refers to. Chinese travelers identified Peshawar Valley and Gandhara, which is made up of two words, "Gand" and "hara" which are translated as scent or fragrance and land. Persian inscriptions of Behistun, Persepolis and *Naksh-e-Rustam* also include Gandhara (Gadra) in the list of Persian satrapies. In the *Vedic* and *Puranic* literature, Gandhara is often alluded as "Uttara" (northern) nation, possessed by *Gandharavas*. Moreover, *Kien-to-lo* is also identified as Gandhara by the Chinese pilgrim. The estimation of its limits is anyway out of the blue portrayed just by Xuan Zang. Along these lines, the nation of *Kien-to-lo* estimated 1000 *li* east to west and 800 *li* for north to west. It appears that the term Gandhara is not bizarre in the locale as there are different names following a similar example. These are *Nagarahara*, *Pothohara*, *Vanahara* and *Nirahara* etc. From where did these

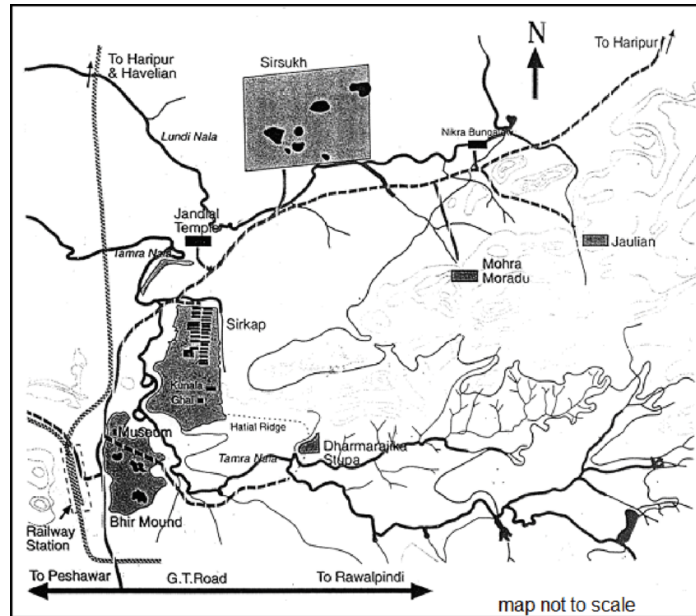
regions get their nomenclature is a question that needs to be addressed. The appropriate response might be searched for, in the land highlights of every area. As Nagarahara or Na-kie-lo-ho (meaning “land marked by a city”) has given its name to the entire surrounding region, the level like tract toward the east of stream Indus appears to have gotten its name from its mound like land arrangement. In fact, the word *Potho* is a *Prakrit* form of the word *Pusht*, i.e., “back.” As this region occupies back of high hills, it naturally came to be known as ‘*Pothohara*’, ‘the land at the back.’ This example of classification might be seen even toward the south of the Salt Range where a huge tract of land is as yet known as ‘*Vanahara*’, i.e., “wood land” and the country behind Margalla (correctly *Mar-i-Qila*) is referred to as *Nihara* (meaning land marked by the river or rivers). In this way, it appears to be sure that everyone of these districts took their names by virtue of the geological highlights of the land they speak to. If the use of the term Gandhara had been confined merely to Buddhist period, its alleged meaning (purporting fragrance) would certainly make some sense. One could undoubtedly discover a reference to the otherworldly scent of Buddhism, yet the name is substantially more seasoned than the Buddhist time frame and first occurred in the *Rigveda* around one thousand years before Buddhism. The engraving originating from Hamdan discards Ghandhara and specifies just the name of ‘Hindu’ Satrapy Achaemenian Empire. It might be derived that by the execution of Hamadan epigraph *Ganj Nameh* entire *Sindu* Valley including Gandhara was compositely spoken to by the term Hindu as the Achaemenid Satrapy. The Achaemenians kept the control over Ghandhara nearly for two centuries, yet lamentably that long traverse of occupation is in no place recorded with the exception of in stray references.

Various political dynasties played an important role in Gandhara, like Achaemenians, Greeks, Indo Greeks, Mauryans, Scythians, Parthians, Kushans and Sassanians, White Huns also known as Ephthalites, Turkh Shahis and Ghaznavid period have additionally assumed a vital part in the political history of Gandhara.

Sometimes the Peshawar valley and Taxila are collectively known to be Gandhara; even the Swat valley was also included in it. The heart of Ghandhara was Peshawar valley. The kingdom of Gandhara was ruled from many capitals such as Pushkalavati (Charsadda), Taxila Takshashila or Takashila, Purushapura (Peshawar) and its final days from Udabhandapura (Hund) on the Indus. In early Buddhist literature, particularly in the Jatakas, Taxila is often said as a college focus where understudies could get direction in any subject, whether religious or common, from Vedas to arithmetic and solution, even to soothsaying and arrow-based weaponry. This pre-distinction of the city as a seat of scholastic and useful educating was a result of her geological position at the north-western portal of the sub-landmass. Students came to Taxila to complete their education in three Vedas and the eighteen Silpa. The history of Taxila was forgotten and in local traditions and folklore. The city was forgotten, and its location was lost but this did not happen in the West. The memory of this city was kept alive through the teaching and reading of the classical literature where the city of Taxila is figured prominently and persistently. The University of Takshashila produced many great teachers and scholars in past including Brahmadata, Panini and Ghosa, another credit which goes to this university was that the earliest Upanishads was also originated here. The thoughts of Pre-Islamic mysticism, theo-sophic doctrines of the Neo-Platonists and the Alexandrian Christians, and Sotic Philosophy of Zeno were significantly different from the ideas presented in the Upanishads (Chaturvedi 1985:77). This city of Taxila was run by renowned teachers and these teachers were specialised and

expertise in their fields. Earliest part of *Rigveda*, few redactions of *Mahabharata*, the earliest parts of the *Bhagvat Gita* and the work of Panini *Ashtadhyayi* were originally written in Taxila.

Ancient Map of Gandhara



Map showing the Taxila archaeological sites
(Map Drawn by researchers)

Taxila- Seat of a Scientific Education System

Taxila has been referred to by different names such as *Takshasila* in Middle Indo-Aryan language as seen in the copper ladle inscription of Taxila, *Takkasila* in Pali, and *Taxiala* according to Ptolemy (Dar 1998:12). The city of Taxila was also called *Egrisilla* around 1375 (Barua 2016: 27). *Ashtadhyayi* of Panini depicts Taxila as an antiquated seat of learning and furthermore a notable focal point of exchange. The city of Taxila is clearly like Ninevah in estimate and strengthened like Greek city, and is capital of lord who managed Porus' space at the time. The city of Taxila is substantial and affluent and furthermore crowded amongst Indus and Hydaspes. Philostartus is more exact when he portrays the city of Taxila of the first century CE (Philostartus 1970: 119).

After the Alexander's interruption the academic legacy of Taxila was also upgraded with the Hellenistic effect. Numerous scholars and researchers going with troops of Alexander of Macedonia likewise remained here and in different parts of antiquated Gandhara. Contacts of Greeks occurred in numerous fields while remaining in Gandhara, for example, prescriptions, physical sciences, expressions, writing, cosmology, rationality and so forth. (Dar 1998:28, Marshall 1975:43).

Rulers and Brahmans dwelled in Taxila to ponder three vedas and nineteen *silpas* (expressions and artworks). According to Greek records and Jatakas, Taxila was a renowned place for students and travelers from distant regions, including Greece, as evidenced by the tale of Appolonius of Tyana. The Greeks referred to Taxila as "Asmiki Hellada" or "mini Greece" than normal (Dar 1998:28). Amid the rule of Constantine Roman nationals additionally examined science and rationality (Vassiliades 2000:77). Showering tanks and water plants were additionally developed by Metrodotus (Mookerji 1995:510). Austere information and scholars

of Taxila awed Alexander (Sen 1998:127) and his agent Iarchas additionally conceded that the self-denial were considerably more learned than him. He asserted that the Egyptians took in information of soul from Taxila (Vassiliades 2000:45). Wary teaching of Pyrm additionally framed premise of Stoicism and Epicurean schools participated in the Alexander's crusade in Gandhara and maybe, held incessant gathering with Gymophists here. Al-Beruni, the renowned Muslim historian, wrote in his historical account that Alexander of Macedonia dispatched a group of Brahmans to meet with Aristotle and engage in philosophical discussions (Chaturvedi 1985:76, Sachau 1971:24). Megasthenes who was minister in the court of Chandragupta Maurya for very nearly fifteen years from 300 to 285 BCE separated the rationalists (Semnoi) into a few classes basically *Hylobioi*, Physicians and *Semnoi*. He additionally clarified that the scholars and self-denial were few in numbers yet they were positioned high in the public eye. The *hylobioi* were held in amazing privilege by the ruler; doctors carried on with a basic life, considered the idea of man made expectations. Holy person Jerome likewise specified that tranquility of the kingdom relied on supplications of semnoi. That is why they were highly esteemed by the monarch (Dar 1998: 184, Sen 1998: 135, Vassiliades 2000:51).

Religions in Taxila

Several archaeological and historical accounts have shown that the religions of ancient Taxila were Hinduism, Jainism Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, while we also found Abrahamic faiths in Taxila valley like Judaism and Christianity. But we also find out some Greek and other western cult practices in this valley; this also shows that foreigners were free to worship whatever they believed. Bronze statue of Harpocrates, the headless statue of Nike, a head of Dionysus or Silenus in silver repouses, the stucco head of a Satyre, the goddess Demeter with the Horn of Plenty a reclining figure of Fluvial or the river god and numerous scenes of Greek mythology on toilet trays are the clear indication of western cults and beliefs (Dar 2006:204).

Takshashila as a University Center in the History

Students from different areas came here to complete their education in three *vedas* and the eighteen *silpa*. It is not easy to provide a clear explanation as to why the fourth Veda, particularly the Atharvaveda, was not included in the list. One possibility is that the content of Atharvaveda is primarily secular in nature. Another possibility is that the minister of religious affairs, known as the Purohita according to Manu Smrti, was an expert in Atharvaveda. Moreover, a range of humanities and sciences courses were incorporated, such as law, medicine, military, education, elephant lore, hunting, animal cries, archery, music, singing, drama, and magic. Number of occasions was four out of multi month at an interim of seven days as indicated by the new and full moon days and the eighth day of every fortnight. At the age of 5 children were sent to the Patshalas after consulting the Astrologer where they read and write arithmetic. The chief aim of education was character building, development of personality and most important the preservation of ancient culture (Srivastava 2016:13). Teaching was carried out through riddles, parables, and the teachers also taught at night to their students (Cowell 2002:61). Kausitaki Brahmana VII explains, Brahmans moved towards north for their studies. Teachers had five hundred students at a time and the teachers were known as *disapamokko acharya*, rich students paid their fee (*achariyabhaga*) to the teachers in advance and the poor students paid their fee by serving their teachers or collected fee generally through alms. Princes also supported to poor students finically (Gen'ichi 2005:23).



Dharmarajika stupa
(Picture taken by researchers)



Julian Buddhist monastery in Taxila
(Picture taken by researchers)



A beautiful view of Sirkap City Taxila
(Picture taken by researchers)

Many prominent personalities in the past have visited Taxila who plays an important role in the past. Few of them are mentioned in this research.

Bharata (Son of Rama)

Rama's son Bharata, brother of Rama built Lahore which is one of the most fascinating cities of Punjab while Taxila or in Sanskrit called *Takshashila* was built by Bharata's for his son Taksha. Bharata was the son of Dasaratha and Kaikeyi. Dasaratha, the father of Bharata was the ruler of Ayodhya and had a place with the Suryavansha or Solar administration while his mom was the girl of Kekeya Kingdom, numerous pundits and researchers says that after Rama, Bharata was the image of dharma and vision. He was additionally the spouse of Mandavi, little girl of King Janaka's sibling Kushadhvaja and cousin of Sita who was wife of Rama (Rajagopalachari. C, 2003: 57-60). History likewise reveals to us that Bharata vanquished Gandhara and made the kingdom of Takshasila involving present day Punjab (Pakistan), Afghanistan and couple of territories of Central Asia. Taxila is additionally set apart of his govern, there is another city name Pushkalavati, current Charsadda, is likewise named after his second son Pushkal (Krishna 2017: 7-14).

Uddalaka Aruni (8 Century BCE)

He was a classical teacher, student and an amazing Philosopher of Upanishads; he also represents the true spirit of rational enquiry of Upanishads (Warder 2009:15). He was the foremost Brahmin scholar at the time of Brahmins and Upanishadis; he became a renowned scholar when he had a contest with his native Kuru-Panchala. Few literal evidences tell us that he had students from Kausambi and far away from Taxila where he also visited. Yajnavalakya was his student (*BrihadaranyakaUapnishads* 6:37) but the best known lesson Aruni had given to his son Shvetaketu (Setaketu) is also mentioned in *Chandogoya Upanishad*.

Setaketu (Son of UddalakaAruni)

Setaketu which is also spelt Shvetaketu is also a character of Upanishads who also lived here in Taxila. It is believed that he now resides in Tushita. Setaketu is also credited for creating the "women being confined to one husband for life" after observing Brahmana catching his mother hand. He learnt the concept "the rule of transformation" he also communicated with his father and asked for more information (Glucklich Ariel 2008: 65-69).

Janamejaya

According to Mahabharata, there was a king of the Kuru dynasty, called Janamejaya, who ruled during the Middle Vedic era from 12th to the 9th century BCE. Janamejaya's father and mother's name was Parikshit and Queen Madravati (Brodbeck 2009:247-249). According to the Mahabharata, Janamejaya had six additional brothers who were named Kakshasena, Ugrasena, Chitrasena, Indrasena, Sushena, and Nakhaysena (Harihar 2009:148-149). The Parikshita dynasty of the Kuru Kingdom has been dated by scholars to the period between the 12th and 11th centuries BCE (Olivelle 2009: 214-216). The initial chapters of Mahabharata epic narrates about the life of including conquest at *Takshasila* where he encountered with Naga Takshaka. Janamejaya want to exterminate the Naga's race because they were responsible of his father's death. (Pratap 2015:56)

Chanakya (also called Kutilya) 350-283 BCE

Centuries came and passed in Indian history but also recorded many legendary characters and great persons who shaped time of them, but one brilliant person who has been accepted by western and eastern scholars is Kutilya. Researchers call him Chanakya yet his name Chanakya is derived from his father's name Rishi. "Chanak" and Kutilya is gotten from his gotra "Kotil", the word Kutilya is gotten from word "Kutila" which implies vakra or slanted. He was additionally called Vishnugupta due to the most seasoned Sanskrit writing which plainly distinguish Chanakya with Vishnugupta. This also shows history know him by three names Chanakya, Kutilya and Vishnugupta (Chaturvedi 2009:23). Kutilya was multi-identity; he was an incredible educator, clever, statesman, dedicated loyalist, profound mastermind, merciless head, acestragiest, magnanimous parsimonious, perfect scholar and genuine holy person. Knowledge without wisdom is incomplete and Kutilya had all these two abilities. Kutilya was key advisor and councilor of Chandragupta Maurya. As a faculty member of Takshashila University, he conceptualized the unification of various small kingdoms in the Indian subcontinent to form the Indian Empire. His real works contain Nitshastra, ChanakyaNiti and Arthasastra. His life and date of birth isn't solid since we need to rely upon conventions. The Buddhist conventions say his origin is Takshashila while Jaina sacred texts say his origination as Chanak in Gola area of South India. It is trusted that Kutilya lived from 350-283 BCE. Kutilya acquired intelligence about the Greek invaders through his network of spies. He also had to leave Takshashila University due to political unrest in western India (Shamasastri 2012:63).

Charaka (Famous Physician)

Although there is disagreement about the period which Charaka lived but there is agreement of this matter that he came and lived here in *Takshashila*. According to scholars, his existence spans from 500 BCE to 200 CE, as evident from references made to him in the writings of renowned Sanskrit grammarians Panini (520-460 BCE) and Patanjali (circa 250 BCE). Furthermore, Chinese Buddhist records suggest that he served as a royal physician to King Kanishka during the 1st and 2nd centuries CE (Sushruta 2002:46-49). It is said that he played a

role in revising and editing the text of Agnivesha, while Charaka's text was revised by Dridhabala (in Kashmir, during the 8th century CE). The resulting document is now known as Charaka Samhita, and it comprises of 120 chapters divided into eight sections (Dhanvantari 2003:52-57). Charaka's notable contributions include his introduction of concepts such as digestion, immunity, metabolism, and genetics. He was also of the opinion that genetic defects could be transmitted through either the sperm or the ovum. Charaka also provided information on the number of bones in the human body, stating that it contained 360 bones, including the teeth (Sigerist 1961:351-352).

Jivak (An Expert in Pulse Reading and Personal Physician of Buddha)

The Indian region has produced many great Physicians like Ashvini twins (mythological), Bharadwaja (mythological), Dhanvantari (mythological) and the most important is Jivak also known as Jivaka and was born in Rajgriha (Rajgir, Bihar) near Nalanda and Gaya and become world's famous Physician of his time (Asvins 2003: 50-53). He earned great respect by becoming the Physician, he also travelled along with the trade route. He arrived at Taxila to study medicine under the guidance of the renowned teacher Atreya. During his seven-year stay in Taxila, he displayed exceptional powers of observation and dedication similar to that of the legendary Sherlock Holmes (Jivak 2002: 43-47).

Vishnu Sharma (Author of Pancha Tantra)

Takshashila University has delivered numerous masterminds and incredible understudies of now is the ideal time; one of them is Vishnu Sharma who is likewise the writer of the considerable book which educates the craft of Political Science as lovely stories called Pancha Tantra (five techniques). Researchers likewise recommend that Vishnu Sharma has composed these stories keeping in mind the end goal to change over three moronic rulers of a lord into capable political executives inside a traverse of a half year (Chowdhury 2017:14-40).

Panini (The Greatest Grammarian of Sanskrit Language)

Traditions tell us that the birthplace of Panini was in the famous village Shalatur near Taxila town, on the west bank of Indus River, now this village is in Near-East Pakistan. Hiuen-Tsang famous traveller found one statue of Panini; he further stated that the people of Shalatur used to learn the work of Panini. There is a possibility that his work may have been taught or studied in Taxila. Patanjali quoted in his writings that Panini was more erudite scholar and also the poet of outstanding intelligence, not only that but also he is addressed with different titles like Bhagwan, *pramanbhut acharya* (authentic scholar), and *suhridbhut acharya* (friendly scholar). His period was considered as 7th century BCE while other scholars claim his period started from 10th or 24th century BCE. Later on he settled in Patliputra (Mahavir 1978:34). One of the most outstanding works of Panini was that he has given shape to Sanskrit language which has a true and ever lasting effect on all later works in Sanskrit, one of the marvelous works of Panini was the writing of "*Ashtadhyayi*" the book is extremely important, if one wants to understand cultural facts of Indian Civilization and also this book contains information on different aspects like economics, agriculture, commerce, industry, coins, weaving, measure, sports, arts, philosophy and religion. Numerous commentaries have been written on this book. "*Astadhyayi*", *Vartikof* Katyayana and *Mahabhashya* of Patanjali are the most important commentaries (Dinkar, Yogesh 2006: 49-50).

Prasenajit (Mentioned in Pali Texts)

It is believed that he was the king of Kosala (6th century BCE) and belonged to Aiksvaka dynasty, Savatthi was its capital and was also the lay follower of Gautama Buddha and built

many monasteries. Huge numbers of the Buddhist conventions trusted that the Mahayana branch of Buddhism additionally occurred here in Taxila while Prasenajit which is likewise said in Pali writings. (Schomp 2005:89).

Alexander of Macedonia

He is commonly referred to as Alexander the Great, who ruled the ancient Greek kingdom of Macedonia in the northern region. Researchers guarantee that he was conceived in Pella in 356 BCE. He was mentored by the considerable Philosopher of his chance; name Aristotle at 16 years old. His dad's name was Philip, Philip passed on in 335 BCE and Alexander was only 20 years of age, later on he turned into the leader of "Macedonia", Alexander's main goal was to win the whole world and to overcome the world so he began winning every one of the kingdoms in the Middle East (Rufus 1809: 52). He established the largest empire in the ancient world at the age of thirty, which spanned from the Ionian Sea to the Himalayas Range. It was believed that he was the most exceptional commander in the history of the ancient world. After his dad's passing he was granted the generalship of Greece. Alexander's powers likewise attacked Persia and Asia Minor additionally started arrangement of battles that endured just about ten years. He is widely known for his military prowess, particularly for defeating the Persians in several decisive battles such as Issus and Gaugamela, which led to the downfall of King Darius III and the expansion of his empire from the Adriatic Sea to the Indus River. In the 4th century BCE, there was a struggle between the Greeks and Persians for global dominance. From 334 BCE to 330 BCE he kept on battling in Persia for enhancing his soldiery and quality. He likewise won Afghanistan and Iran that as well as he led in the Middle East (Paul 1997:9-10). One of his desires was that he needed to assault India so he began walk to India from Iran through Khyber Pass in 326 BCE and vanquished every single little kingdom one by one. Ambhi, who was the ruler of Taxila, and Porus, whose kingdom was located between the Jhelum and Chenab rivers, were important figures during the invasion by Alexander the Great. Despite being enemies, Ambhi submitted to the conqueror and was able to expand and renew his wealth. At the point when Alexander achieved Jhelum he confronted most grounded opposition against overcome King Porus. However, Alexander emerged victorious in the Battle of Hydaspes against the valiant King of Punjab in 326 BCE (Paul 1997:10-11). In any case, soon Alexander reestablished the kingdom of Prou on the grounds that he was awed by his dauntlessness and strength. Outsiders pulled in Taxila in light of its grandness. Amid that time when Alexander of Macodonia came in India, this place where India was separated into different kingdoms. There was absence of solidarity among the Indian rulers so they battled with each other. There were several small kingdoms in the northwestern region, such as Aspasian, Gureeans, Assakenos, Nysa, Peukelaotis, Taxila, Arsakes, Abhsara, Glauganikai, Elder Poras, Gandaris, Adraistai, Kathaioi, Kingdom of Sophytes, Phegelas, Aagalssoi, Siboi, Oxydrakai, Malloi, Xathroy, and Ossadioi (Tarn 1966:71-128).

Calanus

He was also a great philosopher of Taxila many historians claim he came to Taxila to teach philosophy. It is still unclear whether he was a Brahman. He was also the advisor of Alexander during his Indian campaigns. He also thought about the anti-Macedonian campaigns against Brahmins organised in 325 BCE (Qureshi 2003:52).

Megasthenes

He was born in Greece 350- 290 B.C.E; he was a diplomat, historian, ethnographer and explorer in the Hellenistic Period. He has written book *Indika* in which he has described Indian region, but this book is now lost and has been written by the practically reconstructed by the later authors. He also came to Taxila (Solomon 1992:48).

Strabo (63 BCE – 24 CE)

Strabo hailed from Asia Minor and was a philosopher, historian, and geographer of Greek origin. He was a person who was born in an affluent family from Amaseia in Pontus (Modern Turkey). His life is characterised by extensive travels, he also visited Taxila (Dani 1917:374) and due to water courses and springs Strabo called Taxila as extremely fertile soil (Curtis, Plutarch, Justin 2003: 343).

Apollonius of Tyana

He also visited Taxila. His biographer described Taxila as a fortified city and had systematic plan and also compared it with Ninvah when talk about its size (J.K Elliott 1993:440).

Fa-Hien (405 CE)

He visited Taxila in 405 CE and mentions the Kingdom of *Takshashila* as (Chu-cha-shi-lo) means “the severed Head” (Barua 2016:6).

Hsuan Tsang (630- 643 CE)

He was a Chinese monk who visited Taxila and used to call it as (Ta-Cha-Shi-Lo). He travelled from 630–643 CE (Barua 2016:6).

Conclusion

Taxila was the ancient seat of learning and Indian is attraction to world at that time. This also shows India has many prominent institutions at that time and Taxila was one of those Institutions. This is also a time that we can revive our pre-Islamic History and attracts the International world through this heritage and also attracts the international community to come and visit this Historic City. Many scientist and Physicians have also visited Taxila we also need to revive our educational legacy through Taxila. Today as well we need to make Museum of these prominent personalities and promote tourism and built strong relationship with the other countries. Also we also need to promote tourism through our cultural heritage and portray the positive image of Pakistan in all around the world.

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