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Kauśāmbī: A Cultural Centre of Ancient India

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Abstract

Kauśāmbī is an ancient city of Indian Subcontinent which has a historical identity. It was famous as 'Kośāmbī' or 'Vatsapattana' in ancient times. It was the capital of 'Vatsa' Mahājanapada which located at modern Allāhābād on the banks of river Yamunā in the Uttarpradesh State. Now-a-days this region is identified with the village of 'Kosām' at Allāhābād. Numerous literary and archaeological sources mention about this region. Brāhmaṇya texts, 'Aṣṭyādhoyī' of Pāṇini, 'Mahābhāṣya' of Patañjali, many Buddhist texts, 'Rāmāyaṇa', 'Mahābhārata', 'Meghdūtam' of Kālidāsa, descriptions of Chinese pilgrims Fa-Hien and Hiuen-Tsang, 'Vṛhatkathāmañjarī' etc many texts clearly depict the various aspects of Kauśāmbī.

This city was ruled by famous king Udayana. His political power and love for Buddhism made this place famous in ancient India. Nandas, Mauryas, Śuṅga, Kāṇvas, Mitra, Kuśāṇa, Magha, Vākāṭaka, Gupta and Pratihāras ruled here. Kauśāmbī became a prosperous economic zone for its perfect geographical location. It was connected with Vārāṇasī, Śrāvastī, Ujjayinī, Pāṭaliputra, Vidiśā, Rājgrha and with many places by trade routes. The merchants and rich people used this place as a mediator zone because this place was connected with many ports, places and Burmā.

Kauśāmbī was famous as Buddhist and Jain *tīrtha*. Gautama Buddha himself came here. Many Buddhist monks i.e. 'Mahākācchyaṇa', 'Ānanda', 'Moggoliputta' etc resided here. King Udayana and many rich people of Kauśāmbī patronized Buddhism. Ghoṣitārāma, Kukkuṭārāma, Pāvārika-Āmṛvana and Badarikārāma were built by accordingly by Ghoṣita, Kukkuṭa, Pāvāriya and Mauryan king Aśoka. Jain Tīrthaṅkara 'Padmaprabha' born here and 'Mahāvīra' also completed his 'Abhigraha' here. From early-medieval times it became a Brāhmaṇical 'Puṇyakhetra' which is corroborated from *Purāṇas* and inscriptions. Images and sculptures of Bodhisattvas, Tīrthaṅkaras and Brāhmaṇya deities clearly proof the sanctity of this place. Big temples of Śiva, Śakti, Tīrthaṅkaras and other deities are situated at Kauśāmbī. Also a big fort was discovered from here which bears the sign of royalty. From Kauśāmbī we find numerous terracotta, pottery, coin, seal, pillar, semiprecious bead, iron object etc are unearthed from this place. These things help to know the history of evolution of Kauśāmbī.

So, Kauśāmbī was the place which grew as a cultural centre of India. According to 'Rāmāyaṇa' a Cedi prince 'Kusambha' founded this city. 'Mahābhārata' says that Nichakṣu, a great great grandson of Janmejaya shifted the capital from Hastināpura to Kauśāmbī. From 600 BCE to early-medieval period even also now-a-days Kauśāmbī glorify our History. This place was called 'Vividhatīrthakalpa'. The 'Vatsapattana' or Kauśāmbī of our country is still highlighting our culture.

Keywords

Abhayamudrā- It is a gesture of Buddha which gives assurance and safety to the devotees. The right hand is held upright and the palm facing towards in this *mudrā*

Abhigraha- Jain Tīrthankara Mahāvīra took a promise that he only take food from her who actually a princess but by a curse she would be a slave, her head would be shaved, hands and feet would be bounded by bands and would be cry for fasting. This concept is called '*Abhigraha*' in Jainism.

Āmalaka stūpa- It is a feature of '*Nagara*' style of architecture. It is a stone disc like structure which seen at the top of the temple.

Bodhisattva- They are in the early stage of Buddha hood who going to be a Buddha for the benefits of all sentient beings. Literally it means 'One who has enlightenment as his/her essence from 'Bodhi' (Awakening or Enlightenment) and 'Sattva' (Essence).

Bodhisattāvadānakalpalatā- This book was written by Khemendra which is a collection of 108 legends. They are narrating the noble deeds of the past and present life of Buddha.

BRW Ware- It is a Black and Red ware which was an archaeological culture of northern and central India from ca. 1450 to ca. 1200 BCE.

Dakṣiṇāpatha- This was a route since early Iron Age in India which lay from Pāṭalipura to Pratiṣṭān. But in some Buddhist texts it is described as 'Janapada'.

Dīghanikāya- It is the part of '*Sūttapiṭaka*' which has total 34 discourses of Buddha. It is the collection of 'Long Discourses' of Buddha.

Firepit- It is a pit which dug into ground or sometimes made from stone. It was used in ancient times in which a fire for cooking food was made.

Kalyāṇaka- It is believed that five *Kalyāṇakas* were appeared in every Tīrthankara's lives. They are- 'Jaṇma', 'Chyavana', 'Dīkṣā', 'Kevalajñān' and 'Nirvāṇa'.

Kārṣāpaṇa- It is the weight standard which was used in ancient Indian coins especially in punch marked coins. It was 3.4 grams for one Kārṣāpaṇa coin.

Kosammarūkkha- It means Neem tree. According to a tradition numerous Neem tree are grown at Kauśāmbī and surrounding regions and for this reason this place was famous as 'Kosammarūkkha'.

Mahāvamśa- This is an Epic poem was written in 500 CE at Śrīlaṅkā. It tells the story of Śrīlaṅkā from ancient times to the reign of Mahāsena of Anurādhapura.

Mahāvastu- It is a text of Lokottaravāda branch of early Buddhism which contains earlier lives of Buddha and Bodhisattvas. This Sanskrit *Vinaya* text compiled between 200 BCE to 400CE.

Mahāyāna Buddhism- It is a popular branch of Buddhism which popular in China and Japan. They believed in Idol worship and the concept of Bodhisattvas.

NBPW Ware- This culture is a proper Iron Age culture which coinciding with the 'Ṣoḍaśa Mahājanapada'. The timeframe of spreading this culture is ca. 700 to ca. 200 BCE. They are Black polished ware.

PGW Ware- This is an Iron Age culture of western Gangetic plain and Sarasvatī river valley which lasting from ca. 1200 to ca. 600 BCE. They were painted grey ware.

Ṣoḍaśa Mahājanapada- They were sixteen great kingdoms of ancient India which existed from 600 to 400 BCE. They are- 'Aṅga', 'Asmaka', 'Avantī', 'Cedī',

‘Gāndhāra’, ‘Kamboja’, ‘Kāśī’, ‘Kosala’, ‘Kurū’, ‘Magadh’, ‘Pāñchāla’, ‘Malla’, ‘Matsya’, ‘Śūrasena’, ‘Vajji’ and ‘Vatsa’.

Tīrthaṅkara- Literally it means ‘Ford Maker’. In Jainism there are total twenty four Tīrthaṅkaras who are savior and spiritual teacher of Jaina religion.

Tripitaka- It is the Buddhist scriptures which divided into three *Piṭakas* i.e. ‘*Sūttapiṭaka*’, ‘*Vinayapiṭaka*’ and ‘*Abhidhammapiṭaka*’.

Vatsapattana- Somedeva’s ‘*Kathāsaritasāgara*’ describes Kauśāmbī as ‘Vatsapattana’ because it was situated in the centre of Vatsa kingdom.

Introduction

Some cities of ancient India are famous in Indian Subcontinent for their historical identities. Kauśāmbī is one of them. Kośāmbī (Pāli literature) or Kauśāmbī (Sanskrit Literature) is one of the richest regions of northern India which flows with history. Kauśāmbī was located on the bank of Yamunā River which is about 56 K.M. southwest of its confluence with the Gaṅgā. Ancient Kauśāmbī was situated in today’s Allāhābād state and surrounding areas. This city was actually make its place in history for its love or affection to Buddhism. It was the capital of Vatsa or Vamsa Mahājanapada which was set up in 600-500 BCE in Uttarpradesh region.¹ Now-a-days we find the ruins of Kauśāmbī at the modern village of ‘Kosām’ which is located 38 miles from Allāhābād. Kosām as a district entered in Uttarpradesh state in 4th April, 1997. It is bounded by Chitrakūṭa in south, Fatehpura in west, Allāhābād in east and Pratābgarh in north. Alexander Cunningham tried to identify the geographical location of ancient Kauśāmbī. Historian Hardy says about the legend of ‘Bakkula’ who became a Buddhist monk.² Following this legend Cunningham clearly proved that the old village Kosām on the river Jummā which is located 30 miles above from Allāhābād was ancient Kauśāmbī.³ He followed the description of Hiuen-Tsang and many folk stories. A pillar inscription of Mughal emperor Akbar is still standing in the midst of the ruins of Kauśāmbī city which mentions it as ‘Kauśāmbīpura’. So today’s Kosām is ancient Kauśāmbī which was actually famous as Buddhist *tīrtha*.

Kauśāmbī was a famous political centre which was ruled by many great dynasties from Purāṇic times. It was flourished as an economic, religious and cultural zone of ancient India. Many literary sources like ‘*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*’, ‘*Gopatha Brāhmaṇa*’, ‘*Mahāvastu*’, ‘*Bodhisattvāvadānakalpalatā*’, ‘*Dīghanikāyā*’, Pāli canon, ‘*Mahābhāṣya*’ of Patañjali, ‘*Aṣṭyādhoyī*’ of Pāṇini, ‘*Rāmāyaṇa*’, ‘*Mahābhārata*’, ‘*Meghdūtam*’ of Kālidāsa, descriptions of Fa-Hien, ‘*Ratnāvalī*’, ‘*Si-Yu-Ki*’ of Hiuen-Tsang, ‘*Vṛhathāmañjarī*’ etc describe about Kauśāmbī. Also many inscriptions, coins and architectural artifacts proof the historical importance of this place.

Archaeological Findings

The archaeological materials of Kauśāmbī give a comprehensive picture of the culture of Vatsa people. In the year of 1949 this site was scientifically excavated by G.R. Sharma of Allāhābād University. The most important thing which discovered is the big fort of the time of king Udayana. It is 23,000 ft. in circuit or exactly 4 miles or 3 furlongs formed by earthen ramparts and bastions.⁴ The ramparts are high about 30 to 35 ft. and the bastions are much higher. The three sides of the ramparts marked by a series of towers and pierced by gateways. The length of north, south, east and west

gates are successively 4500 ft., 6000 ft., 7500 ft. and 5100 ft.⁵ The eastern and western gateways run parallel to the Yamunā river. There was an ecological cause for which the differences of length occurred. Some watch towers are seen in this fort. The most is the eastern gate which has a passage of 25 ft. wide. Also a tower measuring 140 x 9 ft. and two towers at the top of the rampart in eastern gateway are found.⁶ This fort was encircled by a moat which is still now present in ruin condition on the north side of the fort. There are total five ramparts in this fortress area.⁷ Some roads are discovered which surrounded by the ramparts. They made by small brickbats, gritty materials, limestone, shreds and clay.⁸ This fort of Kauśāmbī has many ramparts, bastions, watch towers, gates, sub-gates and roads which were enlarged by time to time. The water of Yamunā destructed this fort many times.

We find remains of houses in ancient Kauśāmbī and large sizes bricks are discovered. Some of them measured 20” x 2” x 2/1.2”. Large bricks were used for large building constructions. Sometimes potsherds and minor antiquities are unearthed.⁹ The excavation yielded numerous iron objects, arrow-heads, spears, javelins, axes, knives, nails, chisels and etc many objects. ‘*Arthaśāstra*’ of Kauṭilya also defines about many arrow-heads which were made by iron, metal, ivory and stone.¹⁰ Nude female goddess standing amidst honey suckle motifs are seen on the inner side of many circular discs. Motifs like human faced lion, Crocodiles and many etc were very popular which are found on discs. Numerous beads made by semiprecious stones, crystals and artificial material are unearthed and the designs are very important which were engraved on them. The animal shaped beads are unique archaeological material of Kauśāmbī. Many objects of Mauryan times from Kauśāmbī which made by reddish stone are displayed in Allāhābād museum. Miscellaneous objects like bangles, weight measures, inlay objects, fire-pit, bones, shells of tortoise, playing objects etc are found.

Beside these the most important material is pottery which is found in large quantity from Kauśāmbī. The finding potteries are divided into four periods.¹¹

Period	Group	Pottery
I	1A	Wheel made Red Ware
	1B	Grey Ware with a black slip on smooth surface. Sometimes painted potteries also found
	2	Black Ware and BRW Ware
II	Nil	PGW Ware, bowls, dishes made by fine clay and fabric. Sometimes painted grey motifs are found. Coarse Black and Red Ware also present side by side in this phase
III	Nil	NBPW Ware. Motifs were drawn by chocolate, reddish yellow and steel black colours
IV	Nil	Complete absence of NBPW Ware. The Red potteries of this phase are found in Gangetic valley

A monolithic pillar of the time of Aśoka is discovered from this site. The upper portion of this pillar is missing and the shaft is in ruin condition. This Kośāmbī pillar was moved to Allāhābād fort. Inscriptions of Mauryan emperor Aśoka, Gupta king Samudragupta and Mughal ruler Jāhāngīra are found. The inscription of Aśoka clearly gives some instructions to the Mahāmātras of Kauśāmbī and it mentions about Baudha Saṅgha or Buddhist church.¹² Another two inscriptions are discovered. They are Pābhosā and Kara inscriptions. Pābhosā rock inscription is discovered about two miles west from Kosām and dated 1889 Saṁvat or 1832 AD. It tells about Āśāḍasena, material uncle of king Bahasatimitra and son of Gopāli made a residence for Arhats.¹³ According to Buhler either these Arhats belonged to Jainism or Buddhism. This also says about Pābhosā which was situated just outside the city of Kauśāmbī. Another inscription Kara is found from Kara fort and it is dated 1092 Saṁvat or 1035 AD.¹⁴ It tells that Pratihāra king Yaśapāla grant a village Payalasa of Kauśāmbīmaṇḍala to Māthurvikāta of Pābhosā. Kara is located 41 miles from Allāhābād. Payalasa was present village Prās which is 5 miles of Kara and 30 miles northwest of Kosām. These two inscriptions help to identify the present location of ancient Kauśāmbī.

It was a Buddhist place from where many Buddhist monasteries are discovered. Ghoṣitārāma monastery is one of them. A banker of Kauśāmbī Ghoṣita made this for Buddha. It is located in southwestern part of Kauśāmbī near Yamunā. In this monastery area some railings and pillars belonged to 100 BCE are found which follow the motifs of Sāñchī stūpa. It is no doubt that the fame of this monastery spread beyond Kauśāmbī.

We find much terracotta from the excavation of Kauśāmbī. They divided into three groups i.e. early handmade, mould made and handmade figurines of the later days.¹⁵ From all of these groups most important is mother goddess figurines which made by grey, red or etc colours. In these female figurines we find a mark of contemporary art in dress and decorations which are conceptual rather than realistic.¹⁶ Foreign influence is very clear from these terracottas. Human heads, Mithuna plaque, headless female figurine, female head, male head, seals and potteries are discovered from this region. Human heads are found massively. Also many designs or scenes are reflected on terracotta plaques. Scenes of Śūkakṛḍā are used by Kauśāmbī potters as symbol of aristocracy. Sometimes we find scenes of chained or free elephants uprooting the tree in plaques. These elephants represent the tradition of 'Nalagiri'. Some inscribed terracotta plaques are also unearthed. In one plaque we have seen a lady, a banyan tree and an inscription- "Gaṇikā, U (?) Dayasya". The script belonged to early Gupta period.

This is very interesting that any Buddhist or Jain terracottas of deities are not found from Kauśāmbī. Only a figure is discovered who holds a bowl in left hand and his right hand upraised in *Abhayamudrā*. Probably it is Bodhisattva Maitreya. But in large quantity representations of Śiva, Lakṣmī and Gaṇeśa are seen on plaques. Two Nāga heads are discovered from here. Also female attendants as flywhisk bearer, dwarfish women holding fans or mirrors, ladies holding toilet boxes or big fans etc portrayed on plaques. Finding torsos without heads probably represent people of some martial race. Being a commercial city Kauśāmbī situated at a strategic point and for its immense health and prosperity the population of this city comprised many people of

different nationalities. In this connection we find various things like conical caps, wrapped turbans, round peak chins, short beards, aquiline nose and diamond shaped eyes from Kauśāmbī.

Four type coins are discovered from here. They are- punch marked coins, uninscribed cast coins, inscribed cast coins and miscellaneous coins.¹⁷ The punch marked coins carry many symbols like sun, arched hill, tree in railing, elephant, bull, crescent on hill, taurine, svastika etc. The uninscribed cast coins have four variants i.e. round, square, mythical animal and tiny cast types. Mythical animal means a representation of an animal who partly horse and partly bull. Sometimes it is called 'Lanky Bull'. These all uninscribed coins are same as silver punch marked and for this reason some numismatists think that these cast coins are superior in use before punch marked coins at Kauśāmbī.¹⁸ Also in earlier levels of Kauśāmbī we don't find any silver issues. But it is debatable to say about their exact starting point of circulation at here. These copper coins remained in circulation along with silver and copper punch marked coins. Coins of Sotermegas, Kuśāṇas and other dynasties are found from Kauśāmbī.

In inscribed cast coins category we find the coins of 'Mitra' and 'Magha' rulers. We find many copper coins of Rādhāmitra, Agnimitra, Bṛhaspatimitra II, Prausthamitra, Jyeṣṭhamitra I, Prajāpatimitra, Sarpamitra, Varuṇamitra, Phālgunimitra and Śatamitra. From the evidences of coins we find total 25 rulers of Mitra dynasty.¹⁹ Maximum coins bear the Brāhmī legend of the names of kings such as 'Sapamitasa', 'Agnimitasa' etc. Magha kings issued copper coins which also bear Brāhmī legends. Coins of Bhadrāmāgha, Vijayāmāgha, Śivāmāgha etc are discovered. Symbols of humped bull, railed tree, arch etc are seen on them.

Also some miscellaneous coins are found which belong to some post Aśokan Kauśāmbī rulers like Vavaghosh, Aśvaghosh, Jyeṣṭhagupta, Parvata, Indradeva, Viṣṇudeva, Dhanadeva, Śuṅgavarmā etc. All of coins maintained 'Kāṛṣāṇa', 'Māṣa', 'Kākiṇī', 'Ardhakākiṇī' and 'Pāda' weight standards. Presence of such above coins proof that Kauśāmbī was a rich economic zone and the rulers always issued coins.

Some seal and sealing are unearthed from Kauśāmbī. They are made by clay, ivory, bones and metal. Some of them bear inscriptions. They belonged to the time period of 200 BCE to 100 AD. A seal from Ghoṣitārāma monastery is discovered which bears an inscription- "Budhāvāse Ghoṣitārāme Savabudhānaṁ Pujāye Śilakapitā".²⁰ It means Buddha lived and also worshipped here. Mr. Vyas discovered two seals from here. One is private seal with the name of private individual contains an inscription of Aśokan times. The second terracotta seal has motifs of tree and male or female figure. Also a seal of ruler Dhanabhūti is found.²¹ Indradhvaja, taurine and svastika symbols are presented on this seal. Brāhmī legend 'Dhanabhūtisa' is inscribed. Beside these seals a sealing belonging to the period of Kaṇiṣka is found. All these seal and sealing have historical importance.

Political History

According to *Rāmāyaṇa* this city was constructed by 'Kusambha', a Cedi prince.²² *Mahābhārata* says that Nichakṣu a great great grandson of Janmejaya shifted his capital to Kauśāmbī after the destruction of capital city Hastināpura by the flood of Ganges river.²³ But this city made its strong presence in history from the times of

Ṣoḍośa Mahājanapadas. It became the capital of Vatsa or Vamsa Janapada. According to a Purāṇic tradition the royal dynasty of Kauśāmbī actually originated from Purus and they lost their freedom under Kuru kingdom.²⁴ In later times Vatsa janapada split into two branches between Kurus and Vatsas. Their capitals were successively Mathurā and Kauśāmbī which is corroborated from ‘*Svapnavāsavadattā*’ and ‘*Pratijñā-Yaugandharāyana*’.

The great ruler of Kauśāmbī was Udayana. In his and Buddha’s times this city was one of the six principal cities of north India.²⁵ It is said by ‘*Mahāparinibbāṇsūttanipāta*’ and other Buddhist texts. He was the son of ŚatanikaParāntapa and Videha princess Mṛgavatī. He was contemporary of the king of Avantī Pradyota and also Gautama Buddha. We come to know from ‘*Svapnavāsavadattā*’ that he made escape Vāsavadattā or Vāsuladattā who was the daughter of king Pradyota. Udayana was also a great conqueror and after defeating Kaliṅga ruler he restored Dṛḍhavarmana to the throne of Aṅga. ‘*Mahāvamsa*’ describes that he fled from Vaiśālī to Kauśāmbī just before the assembly of second Buddhist council.²⁶ He was converted to Buddhism and Buddha visited this holy place several times in his times.²⁷ Udayana erected an image of Buddha which made by sandalwood being 5 ft. in height.²⁸ He was the fond of music, art and literature. In his times Kauśāmbī was the main centre of cultural activity. Vaihinara, Daṇḍapāṇi, Niramitra and Khemaka were the successors of Udayana who ruled here after him. Then the Vatsa Mahājanapada was absorbed into Magadha Empire.

After them the Nandas started to rule here. Also Mauryan emperor Aśoka enriched this place by his political activities which are clear from Kosām pillar.²⁹ Also the queen of Aśoka, Cāruvākī or Kāruvākī lived here for some days. According to *Purāṇas* after the decline of Mauryan kingdom the power of Kauśāmbī was transformed to the hands of Śuṅga and Kāṇvas. It is believed that Puṣyamitra Śuṅga shifted his capital from Pāṭaliputra to Kauśāmbī. After the death of Puṣyamitra some rulers whose names are ending by ‘Mitra’ ruled here which proved by numismatic evidences. Probably they were ‘Mitra’ rulers and ruled up to ca. 70 AD. They are Rādhāmitra, Prajāpatimitra, Rājāmitra, Śuramitra and Sarpamitra. The earliest rulers of this dynasty were Vavaghosh and Aśvaghosh.

In 75 AD this region was passed to the Kuṣāṇas but they ruled for very short time. After them the ‘Magha’ kings came here in ca. 155 AD. From their coins we come to know about nine Magha rulers. They are Bhadramagha, Vijayamagha and so on. The Maghas used the weakness of Kuṣāṇa king Vāsudeva I and took advantage. But Magha dynasty disappeared from the picture in about 300 AD. Then we find two kings Nava and Puṣpaśrī who ruled at Kauśāmbī as independent kings. In the subsequent centuries this region passed to Vākāṭakas and Guptas. Chandragupta I and Samudragupta ruled over this place. Chinese pilgrim Fa-Hien visited this place during the reign of Chandragupta II in ca. 500 AD. This time this place started to lose its glory. Another Chinese Buddhist monk Hiuen-Tsang came in India in ca. 700 AD. He visited this region in the times of king Harṣavardhana. ‘*Ratnāvalī*’, a drama was written by Harṣavardhana which tells the glory of ‘Vatsarāja’.³⁰ This ‘Vatsarāja’ is identified as king Udayana and Kauśāmbī was called as ‘Vatsapattana’.³¹ Gurjara-Pratihāras in early-medieval times conquest this region as a part of their political

territories which is clear from Kara inscription of Yaśapāla.³² So, Kauśāmbī is not only famous for indigenous rulers but also foreign power likes Kuṣāṇas.

Economic History

Kauśāmbī became an urban and rich economic zone of ancient India from the time of Buddha. It was connected with many trade routes which made this place unique.³³ In Buddha's times there were six principal cities flourished i.e. 'Chāmpā', 'Rājagṛha', 'Vārāṇasī', 'Sāketa', 'Śrāvastī' and 'Kauśāmbī'. The conversation of Buddha with his disciple Ānanda is found in 'Mahāparinibbāṇsūta' of 'Dīghanikāya' which clearly mentions about Kauśāmbī's economic prosperity. In his times many millionaire, lesser and middle men resided here. 'Sumaṅgalavilāsinī' of Buddhaghosh says about rich people of Kauśāmbī. Ghoṣita or Ghoṣika, Kākodā and Pāvāriya were the millionaire who made monasteries or *Ārāmas* there. From the Buddhist texts we come to know that Bāvari in order to interpret a curse of the Brāhmaṇas dispatched his disciples to meet Buddha towards Kauśāmbī. They proceeded to Patīṭhān, Mahissatī, Ujjayinī, Gonadha, Bedasa and Setavya and finally reached to Kauśāmbī.³⁴ This route indicates that Kauśāmbī was connected with many regions.

Pāṇini's 'Aṣṭyādhyāyī' also mentions about this region. Patañjali tells in his 'Mahābhāṣya' that 'Yamadhva Pāṭaliputrada Gantavyastasya Yātrām Sāketādī'. It means Kauśāmbī was located nearby of Sāketa and Pāṭaliputra. Patañjali tells about a route which was between Sāketa and Pāṭaliputra. Kauśāmbī and Vārāṇasī were the two intermediate stations in above route. Nichakṣu went to Kauśāmbī by this route. Roads coming from southwest and northwest also converged on Kauśāmbī for import and export of goods.³⁵ It was situated in Dakṣiṇāpatha route which spread from Pāṭaliputra to Patīṭhān or Pratiṣṭhān.³⁶ From Kauśāmbī two routes were preceded towards Rājagṛha and Śrāvastī. A route starting from Vidiśā crossed Betwā valley and end up to Kauśāmbī.³⁷ The southern route of Gangetic valley starting from Indraprastha and passing Mathurā reached Kauśāmbī and then proceeded to Chunār. It was located at the south grand route of Gaṅgā valley. 'Aśvaśyakachūrṇī', a text says that a trader was looted in a route which lay between Vārāṇasī and Kauśāmbī.³⁸ It is believed that Indo-Greek ruler Appolodotus extended up to Bhārukaccha.³⁹ We know that 'Barygāzā' or 'Bhārukaccha' was linked with western countries.

It is known that Kauśāmbī also a riverside port which was located on the bank of Yamunā River. Many boats going up the Ganges to Sahajāti (Now-a-days Bhiṭā) and end up to Yamunā went to Kauśāmbī. 'Vinaya' texts also claim that Kauśāmbī was the main terminus of the main river route from east to west. Also Sahajāti was the nearer river station from it. It was the famous river port for the whole of north and mid-India and also connected with Burmā.⁴⁰ Also just below Kauśāmbī the Gaṅgā and Yamunā were navigable which helped it to flourish as a riverside port.⁴¹ It was the chief encampment of caravans and the routes from here to Kosala and Magadh were largely frequented by merchants and travelers.⁴²

Kauśāmbī was an important economic zone which flourished from Buddha's times. Also from Mauryan to Gupta period we find its glorious presence in economic history of ancient India. We know that Samudragupta started his conquest in central India from Kauśāmbī and proceeded to Dāhala and other states of eastern Madhyapradesh. The suitable geographical location and stable political environment made this place a

prosperous zone. It was connected with many trade and riverside routes. Also indirectly some ports linked with it. Linked with north-west, north, west, central and eastern India it became a middle zone which was famous among traders and merchants.

Religious History

Kauśāmbī is famous in Indian history as a Buddhist pilgrimage centre. Many Buddhist texts, inscriptions and ruins of monasteries proof the religious importance of this place. Mainly Vatsa king Udayana patronized Buddhism here. There are some myths about converting to Buddhism of Udayana. A '*Jātaka*' tells that king Udayana was preparing his troops for military expedition and at that time looking Buddha he was flew an arrow to him but hearing a message from air he obliged and took Buddhism.⁴³ But some legend say that he went for a picnic excursion in a forest but hearing the voice of Buddhist monk Piṇḍola Bharadvāj he influenced and took Buddhism. It is debatable to decide who the actual teacher of Udayana was. But maximum historians believe that Piṇḍola was his actual teacher not Buddha.⁴⁴ It is also possible to think that Piṇḍola started to spread Buddhism here before Buddha. Probably Buddha visited Kauśāmbī twice in the reign of Udayana. He preached '*Yñhosambiyasūta*' at Kauśāmbī. According to '*Majjhimnikāya*' Bodhi a son of Udayana converted to Buddhism by Buddha himself.⁴⁵

After the death of Udayana and Bodhi this place was famous among Buddhists. Many monks started to reside here. Ghoṣita was the banker of Kauśāmbī who made a monastery for Buddha. Buddha told him three *Sūttas* i.e. '*Kosāmbiya*', '*Śaṇḍaka*' and '*Upakkilesa*'. Ghoṣitārāma monastery is located in southwestern part of Kauśāmbī on the banks of river Yamunā. In Buddha's times there were four monasteries. Kukkuṭārāma, Ghoṣitārāma, Pāvārika-Āmvavana were built respectively by Kukkuṭa, Ghoṣita and Pāvārika. Another monastery is Badarikārāma. This particular *Ārāma* was erected by Aśoka and a '*Āmalaka stūpa*' was constructed outside this. '*Aśokāvadāna*' says that Puṣyamitra Śuṅga tried to destroy it but saved by a miracle.⁴⁶ In the ways of Kauśāmbī Buddha rejected the proposal of marriage to Māgandiyā, a daughter of a Brāhmiṇ. After being a queen of Udayana she created problems for him. Also Buddhists were divided into many groups in the time of Buddha for which he left this place. He went to Bālakalonakāragāma and Pācīnavamsadaya. But these disciples of Kauśāmbī shot out their problems and went to Sāvithī (Śrāvastī) to meet with Buddha and get pardon from him. Many people of Kauśāmbī converted to Buddhism such as Bakkula, a Nāga king, Rūjā (a banker), Cittapaṇḍita etc. Not only common people but also rich sections of society accepted this religion which helped to uplift their social status in society. Mahākāchāyana a founder of Theravāda Buddhism lived in woodland near Kauśāmbī after holding first Buddhist council of Pāṭaliputra. It is also believed that Kaṇiṣka carried away Buddhist scholar Aśvaghosh for fourth Buddhist council who lived at Kauśāmbī.

We know about Fa-Hien a Buddhist Chinese pilgrim who came India in ca. 500 AD. He tells that 13 yojanas to northwest of the shrine of Vārāṇasī is a country called Kauśāmbī.⁴⁷ He mentions about 'Gardens of Assembly' or monasteries of Kauśāmbī where five hundred monks of Hīnayāna Buddhism lived. Ghoṣitārāma monastery was in well condition in his times. A stone where Buddha used to dry his clothes is 14 ft.

in height and 20 ft. in breadth. This stone and also many things which used by Buddha were worshipped by the monks in those times according to Fa-Hien.⁴⁸

Another Chinese traveler Hiuen-Tsang also came India in ca. 700 AD. From his book 'Si-Yu-Ki' we come to know about Kauśāmbī which he called 'Kiau-Shang-Mi'.⁴⁹ He tells that it was a fertile country with hot climate which famous for rice and sugarcane cultivation. It was 6000 li in circuit and the capital was 30 li.⁵⁰ He saw ten monasteries and three hundred monks of Hīnayāna Buddhism lived there.⁵¹ Then he tells about an image of 60 ft. of Buddha which was established by Udayana. The Ghoṣitārāma monastery was in decline stage in his times. He saw a Buddhist temple, a relic *stūpa* made by hair and nail of Buddha and remains of Buddha's bath house.⁵² In this two storied building 'Vasuvandhu' a Buddhist scholar composed his book 'Abhidharmasūtra'. Then Hiuen-Tsang came in the southeast of Ghoṣitārāma monastery where in mango-wood some old Buddhist foundations are found. 'Asaṅga', brother of Vasuvandhu composed 'Prakaraṇāryavāchāsāstrakārikā' here.⁵³ Also a 200 ft. height *stūpa* was seen by him which was built by Aśoka. Also fifty Deva temples were observed by him beside these Buddhist *stūpa* or monasteries. So, all this descriptions proof that Kauśāmbī became a pilgrim centre for Buddhists.

Jainism was also worshipped at Kauśāmbī because it is the place where sixth Jain Tīrthānkara Padmaprabha born. According to Jain tradition he was born to king Śrīdhara and queen Susimādevī in the Ikṣāku dynasty of Kauśāmbī.⁵⁴ A red image of Padmaprabha is established in a temple of Kauśāmbī which situated on the bank of Yamunā River. Four *Kalyāṇakas* of Jainism were achieved by him at this place i.e. 'Janma', 'Chyavan', 'Dīkṣā' and 'Kevalagyān'. Many legends of Mahāvīra are also attached with this place. Udayana's mother and Śatanika's wife Mṛgavatī entrusting the heavy responsibility of the kingdom to his son Udayana had taken Dīkṣā from Mahāvīra at Kauśāmbī. Mahāvīra took 'Abhigraha' here. He took a promise that he would only accepted food only from the hands of one who was a princess had her head shaven, had shackles on her feet, had stream in her eyes and standing with a basket full of Bākala. Chandaivālā a princess by curse being a poor woman lived in this condition. Seeing Mahāvīra in her door she was started to cry and finally Vardhamāna accepted meal from her. After this she got her royalty back and free from curse. Chandaivālā is the first woman disciple of Mahāvīra. Muni 'Śrī Kapila Kevali' of Jainism was also born here.

God Kuvera constructed the first 'Samavasāraṇa' here. Also two idols of Padmaprabha, many Jina heads etc are discovered from here. A temple of Mahāvīra is also located at Kauśāmbī. Jīnaprabha Suri's work 'Trisastīśalākāpurūṣacharita' describes this place as an auspicious centre. It is mentioned as 'Vividhatīrthakalpa'.

In early-medieval times Kauśāmbī lost its importance as a Buddhist and Jain *tīrtha*. It started to develop as Brāhmaṇya *tīrtha*. People started to make donations of villages or lands to the brāhmaṇas for earn merits. Concept of *tīrthayātrā* became very popular among the pilgrims in early-medieval times. Codification of the *Purāṇas* also helped the places being *tīrthas*. All these made Kauśāmbī a Brāhmaṇya *tīrtha*. 'Matsyapurāṇa' clearly depicts the sanctity of Kauśāmbī. Also many inscriptions tell about this place.

According to Gohārṡwā plates of Karṡadeva dated 1047 AD king offered a village named ‘Candapatrā’ in ‘Kośāmbapattala’.⁵⁵ Lucknow Museum plate of Gāhaḡavāla king Vijayachandra dated 1167 AD calls Kauśāmbī as ‘Macchusa’.⁵⁶ This inscription mentions that after bathing in Yamunā near Macchusa king donated a village named ‘Kāṡhavaṡa’ to a brāhṡaṡa ‘Ṡhākura Narasimhavarma’. He belonged to Vaśiṡṡha Gotra. Mālhār Stone inscription belonged to Tummana Cedī ruler Jājalladeva clearly states that this king also gifted a village to a brāhṡaṡa. He did a ritual of pouring out of water and offered gifts to the villagers of Kauśāmbī.⁵⁷ This region in early-medieval times transformed in a Śaiva and Śākta ‘*puṡyakhetra*’. All of three inscriptions, Purāṡas and especially the presence of lots of temple clearly indicate that it is a Brāhṡaṡical *tīrtha* also in today. It basically was famous for Buddhists and Jains but from early-medieval period it transformed in a Brāhṡaṡa pilgrim centre.

Art and Architecture

Many architectural specimens are discovered from Kauśāmbī. The earliest example belonged to Śuṡga period. Railing and pillars containing male and female figurines, cross bars depicting lotus, bull or lion, big door lintel carrying the representation of Goddess Lakṡmī along with animals are discovered. Also fragment of Toroṡa, Doorway of a Sūrya temple, Lion carts, Animal figures, Bust of Viṡṡu, Lintel of Māṡṡkā panel, Standing Yakṡa, Kāṡṡikeya image, Navagṡha panel, Gaṡa-Lakṡmī and etc many things are found from here. An inscribed image of Śiva and Pārvaṡī is found from this place which belonged to the reign of Mahārāja Bhīmavarmana of Gupta period. Many types of Śivaliṡgas are discovered which indicate this place as a Śaiva *tīrtha*.

A headless image of Bodhisattva is discovered which made by red spotted sandstone and it is inscribed. The inscribed pedestal of this image measured 16” x 3”. This image was donated by a nun ‘Buddhamitrā’ in the reign of second year of Kaṡiṡka at the place where Buddha used to walk. This nun was well versed in ‘*Tripīṡakas*’. This is the earliest inscribed image belongs to the reign of Kaṡiṡka. In Sārṡāṡh Museum another inscribed image of red stone Bodhisattva is installed and this inscription clearly mentions Kaṡiṡka conquest Kauśāmbī after Vārāṡasī.

A beautiful image of Jain Tīrthaṡkara Chandraprabha is found from here which installed in a temple. A Jain temple of Mahāvīra is also situated at Pābhosā. Many Jina heads and pieces of Jaina Tīrthaṡkaras in sitting posture in various *mudrās* are found. Two railing pillars of Kuṡāṡa times and four pieces of stone contain the image of Jain Tīrthaṡkaras. A 3 ft. long, 2 ft. wide and 4 inch thick stone piece is incised by twenty four Tīrthaṡkaras. Unfortunately the heads of every single image had been chopped off. A head of Pārśvanāṡh is discovered from this region. Two important Jain temples are situated here. One is Śvetāmvara temple where a 30 cm high coloured idol of Padmaprabha worshipped. The other is Digamvara temple where the same idol as above is installed.

Beside these religious specimens some pillars and inscriptions are also discovered from here. Aśoka pillar is most important among them. Also Pābhosā and Kara inscriptions are found successively from Pābhosā rock and Kara fort. They tell about Kauśāmbī. Jhansi copperplate of Trilochanapāla refers Kauśāmbī as a ‘Maṡḡala’.

These inscriptions help to identify the location of ancient Kauśāmbī and its political importance. Many temples of Śiva and Śakti were built in early-medieval times here. Some of them are 'Śitalāmātā' temple, 'Durgādevī' temple, 'Bhairava temple, 'Kāleśvar' temple and so on.

Kauśāmbī had many architectural specimens and sculptures. Sculptures of Buddhism, Jainism and Brāhmaṇism are discovered. But the art tradition of this area highly influenced by Buddhism. The art of Kauśāmbī compared with 'Mathurā' and 'Sārnāth' schools and in later times it was mixed with other art traditions. But the art of Kauśāmbī maintained its uniqueness and individuality.

Conclusion After a long discussion about various aspects of Kauśāmbī it is clear that this region was very important historical zone. Many early texts such as '*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*' and '*Taittiriyaśāṁhitā*' refer about this region. '*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*' mentions about 'Protikausurabindi' who was a famous philosopher of Kauśāmbī.⁵⁸ '*Gopatha Brāhmaṇa*' tells about 'Predikausurabindi' who was same as in '*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*'.⁵⁹ Ancient grammarian Pāṇini tells 'Kusumvena Nivr̥tta' that means 'Kauśāmbī Nagarī'.⁶⁰ '*Meghdūtam*' of Kālidāsa is a major work where he tells about some well versed people of Avantī who aware of the tale of Udayana.⁶¹ Early-medieval text '*Vṛhatkathāmañjarī*' mentions that-

“Asti Vatsa Iti Khyātodeśaḥ”/

Kauśāmbī Nāma Tatrāsti Madhyabhāge Mahāpurī”//

It means Kauśāmbī was situated at Madhyadeśa and sometimes it was called as 'Vatsapattana'.

So many sources state about this glorious city but it is very debatable to decide from where the name Kauśāmbī came. Our epics mention that Cedi prince 'Kusambha' founded it. But Buddhist canonical *Sūttas* describe that 'Kusambha' was a Buddhist sage. Also some explanations say that this place was named Kauśāmbī because of the presence of 'Kosammarūkkhā' or Neem trees.

From many literary and archaeological sources we come to know that Kauśāmbī was a cultural centre of ancient India. It was the part of Śoḍośa Mahājanapadas and the Nanda, Mauryan, Śuṅga, Kāṇva, Mitra, Kuśāṇa, Magha, Vākāṭaka, Guptas and Pratihāras ruled here. Connecting with many trade routes and riverside ports this region converted a prosperous economic zone. Kauśāmbī was mainly famous as a Buddhist *tīrtha*. Gautama Buddha came this city and also many Buddhist monks such as 'Ānanda', 'Mahāmoggalāyana', 'Śāriputra', 'Musila', 'Nārada', 'Piṇḍola' etc stayed here. Patronization of king Udayana and especially the rich section of society to Buddhism made this place famous. Also Jain Tīrthaṅkara 'Padmaprabha' was born here. Mahāvīra preached his dharma at Kauśāmbī. But in early-medieval times it was converted to a Brāhmaṇical pilgrim centre. Sculptures of Bodhisattvas, Tīrthaṅkaras and Brāhmaṇya deities proof the religious sanctity of this place. Numerous terracotta, pottery, coin, seal and especially the fort of Kauśāmbī tell the archaeological importance of this region.

Kauśāmbī was the cultural heartthrob of Indian Subcontinent and also in today it contains its heritage. From 600 BCE to early-medieval times this region was evaluated with power and royalty. This political, economic, religious and cultural zone flows with many aspects of History from ancient to present times. Rāmāyaṇa

tells, “Kusāmvastu Mahātejah Kausāmvimakarota Purīm”. That means it was an urban centre or Purī. In Buddha’s times Kausāmbī was one of the principal cities among six cities. It glorifies our History and culture also in today which is beyond doubt.

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