

Kushans

- The Kushan Empire was a syncretic empire founded in the early 1st century by the Yuezhi in the Bactrian lands.
- Kujula Kadphises (Kadphises I) united these five states to become the Kushan Empire in the first century CE.
- The Kushans movement in India dates back to the first century CE, under the reign of Kadphises I

The Kushanas

- **Kushanas** are one of the five lineages of the Yuezhi tribe that resided near the **Chinese border** or in central Asia.
- In **Chinese**, they are referred to as Guishuang.
- They finally surpassed the other **Yuezhi tribes** in power.
- In the first century AD, they pushed eastward towards India, defeating the Parthians and the Sakas.
- The Kushans' dominion linked the Indian Ocean's seagoing trade with the Silk Road's commerce through the long-civilised **Indus Valley**.
- The **Kushans** governed a realm that stretched from the Aral Sea through present-day **Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan** into northern India at its peak.
- The loose unity and relative stability of such a broad area stimulated long-distance trade, bringing Chinese silks to Rome and establishing a string of wealthy urban centres.

Kushana Rulers

- Kujula Kadphises or Kadphises I (AD 30-AD 80)
- **Kujula Kadphises** was the first **Yuezhi** chief to build the groundwork for India's Kushan Empire.
- He consolidated his control over Kabul, Kandahar, and Afghanistan.
- His son Vima Taktu or **Sadashkana** (AD 80-AD 95) succeeded him and expanded the kingdom into northwest India.

Vima Kadphises (AD 95-AD 127)

- According to an inscription discovered at Rabatak, Afghanistan, he was the son of Vima Taktu and the father of Kanishka.
- He has produced a significant quantity of gold coins.
- He was a **Shiva enthusiast**, as evidenced by the coins he struck.
- A vast quantity of Roman gold coins discovered during this era attest to India's affluence at the time, as well as the rising commerce with the Romans.

Kanishka (127 AD – 150 AD)

- He was regarded as the greatest **Kushan ruler** as well as a renowned king of ancient India.
- Vima Kadphises' son.
- Afghanistan, sections of Sindhu, Parthia, Punjab, Kashmir, parts of Magadha (including Pataliputra), Malwa, Benaras, and maybe parts of Bengal, Khotan, Kashgar, and Yarkhand were all part of his realm (last three in modern China).
- **Gandhara, Peshawar, Oudh, Pataliputra, Kashmir, and Mathura** were all part of his dominion. His dominion comprised areas of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan as well.
- Peshawar, then called **Purushapura**, was his primary capital.
- He is reported to have brought the Buddhist monk Ashvaghosha with him to Peshawar after capturing Pataliputra.
- **Parsva, Ashvaghosha, Vasumitra, Nagarjuna, Charaka**, and Mathara were among the academics in his court. He was also a fan of the Greek engineer Agesilaus.
- **Kanishka** convened the fourth Buddhist Council in Kashmir at Kundalvana.
- Although he was religiously tolerant, he patronised Buddhism. His coins include deities from India, Greece, and Zoroastria.
- He was also an art and architectural patron. Under his leadership, the **Gandhara School of Art** prospered.
- He also promoted the **Mahayana school of Buddhism**, which he was greatly responsible for spreading throughout China.
- It's unclear how he died.

Kushanas and Buddhism

- The **Kushans inherited** the Indo - Greek Kingdom's **Greco - Buddhist traditions**, and their sponsorship of Buddhist institutions helped them to expand as a commercial force.
- **Buddhism**, patronised by the Kushans, spread to China and other **Asian countries** along the Silk Road between the mid-1st and mid-3rd centuries.
- **Kanishka** is well-known in Buddhist history for convening a large Buddhist council in Kashmir.
- **Kanishka**, along with his predecessors in the region, the **Indo-Greek** king Menander I (Milinda) and the Indian **kings Ashoka** and Harsha Vardhana, is regarded as one of Buddhism's greatest benefactors.

Art

The Kushan - Art

- At the crossroads of the Kushan dominion, the art and culture of Gandhara established the traditions of Greco-Buddhist art and are the best recognised manifestations of Kushan influences to Westerners.
- Several direct portrayals of Kushans are known from Gandhara, where they wear a tunic, belt, and pants and act as devotees to the Buddha, as well as the Bodhisattva and future **Buddha Maitreya**.
- Many pictures of **Gandhara** from the Kushan Empire have a striking similarity to **Greek, Syrian, Persian**, and Indian figures.
- Heavy drapes and curling hair are common **Western-looking style** trademarks.
- As the Kushans took control of Mathura, the **Art of Mathura** developed significantly, and free-standing statues of the Buddha began to be mass-produced around this time, possibly encouraged by doctrinal changes in **Buddhism** that allowed to depart from the aniconism that had prevailed in Buddhist sculptures at Mathura, Bharhut, or Sanchi since the end of the **2nd century BC**.

Kushan coinage

- **Kushan coinage** was plentiful and served as an essential propaganda weapon in supporting each **Kushan emperor**.
- **Dinara** was one of the titles given to Kushan coins, and it was derived from the Roman word Denarius aureus.
- Kushan coinage was replicated as far west as the **Kushano-Sasanians** as east as the kingdom of Samatata in Bengal.
- Following **Samudragupta's** conquests in the northwest, the **Gupta Empire's** currency was also drawn from the Kushan Empire's coinage, adopting its weight standard, procedures, and patterns.
- In comparison to prior dynasties, where **Greco-Roman** and **Persian styles** were primarily followed, the iconography on Gupta coins grew more Indian in both style and subject matter.

The decline of the Kushan Empire

- From the early third century CE, Kushana dominance progressively eroded.
- In the mid-third century CE, the Sassanian Empire (of Iran) superseded the Kushan empire in Afghanistan and the territory west of the Indus.
- However, Kushan principalities persisted in India for about a century.
- In the third and fourth centuries CE, some Kushanas remained in the Kabul valley, Kapisa, Bactria, Khorezm, and Sogdian (similar to Bukhara and Samarkand).
- Vasishka, Kanishka's son, succeeded him.
- Huvishka and Kanishka II came after Vasishka (son of Vasishka).
- Vasudeva I came after Kanishka II.
- Vasudeva I was the Kushanas' final great ruler.
- The empire dissolved after his death.
- He most likely died around 232 AD.