

# *Hinduism in Kashmir*



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# *Hinduism in Kashmir*

First Edition, *August 2002*



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1



## **1 Introduction**

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**The** religious practices of Hindus of Kashmir (popularly known as Kashmiri Pandits) revolve around the worship of Shiva and Shakti. All other deities (gods and goddesses) of the traditional Hindu pantheon are worshipped as various manifestations of Shiva and Shakti. Shiva is the Supreme Lord of the universe and Shakti, the Universal Mother Goddess, is his eternal companion. Bhairavas and Ganas are also his divine companions and they are also worshipped with him on important festivals, such as Shivaratri. There are numerous Shiva shrines in Kashmir, such as Amareshvara, Vijayeshvara, Sureshvara, Harsheshvara, Mahaadeva, Bhuteshvara, Haramukheshvara. The shrines dedicated to Shakti are Tripurasundari, Trisandhyaa, Jvaalaamukhi, Shailaputri, Shaarika, Shaarada, Rajni, and Khirbhavaani.

The religious philosophy of Kashmiri Hindus is rooted in Kashmiri Shaivism, a school of Shiva philosophy that originated near Kailasha in Himalayas around 400 AD. The first teacher of this school was Tryambakaditya, a disciple of sage Durvasas. Sangamaditya, the sixteenth descendent in the line of Tryambakaditya, later settled in Kashmir valley around 800 AD. His fourth descendent, Somananda, extracted the principles of monistic Shiva philosophy from the scriptures and incorporated them in his own work, Shivadrishti, which is the first philosophical treatise on Kashmiri Shaivism. Later a galaxy of illumined sages, such as Vasugupta, Kallata, Utapaladeva, and Abinavagupta further refined this philosophy. The philosophy of Kashmiri Shaivism is generally called Trika Shastra, since it is a philosophy of the Triad: Shiva, Shakti, and Nara (the bound individual self). The literature of the Trika System of Kashmir comprises of three categories: the Agama Shastra, the Spanda Shastra, and the Pratyabhijna Shastra.

Kashmiri Shaivism, also known as Pratyabhijna (meaning "recognition") school of Shaivism, adopts a purely monistic metaphysical position. It considers the Supreme Lord, called Shiva or Maheshvara, as the Supreme Reality, which is innermost as well as transcendent. As a conscious and active principle, the individual self (atman) is identical with the Supreme Lord. Due to the influence of maya (ignorance) the individual self forgets its divine nature, becomes liable to limitation and bondage, and thinks itself to be different from the Supreme Lord. Thus one's mukti (spiritual freedom) lies in one's clear recognition (Pratyabhijna) of one's identity with the Supreme Lord. In Kashmiri Shaivism we find a type of religious thought which synthesizes pluralism, dualism, and the Buddhist doctrine of Shunya, and develops a nondualist philosophy which is sweet, sublime and constructive. This philosophy is closer to the theism of the Bhagvad Gita than to the nihilism of Buddha.

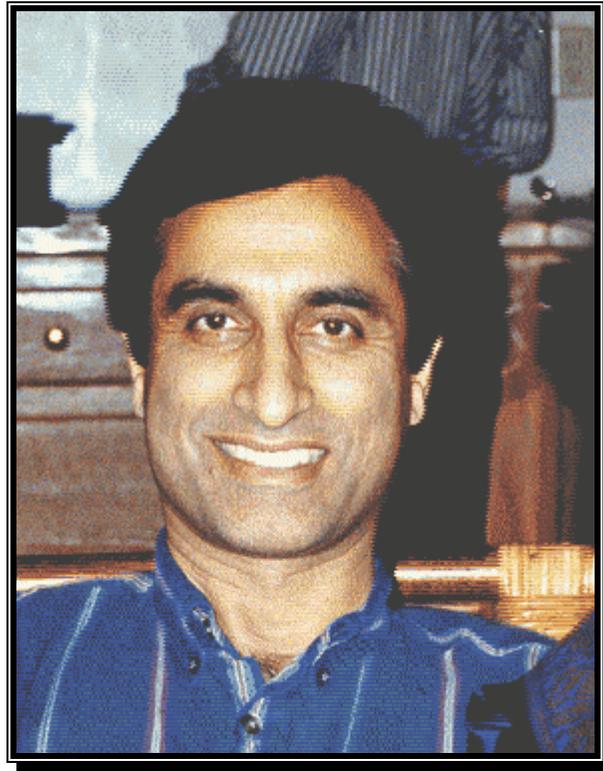
Kashmiri Shaivism is free from restrictions of caste, creed, and gender. Any devout aspirant can have access to both the theory and practice of this philosophy. In Kashmiri Shaivism, practice of religion is considered more important than theological debates and discussions. Kashmiri Shaivism does not advocate a life of renunciation (Sannyasahood) or profession of monks, but recommends an active householder's life with daily practice of worship, yoga and meditation. The use of outward symbols, such as yellow and orange robes, matted hair, and ashes are prohibited. Worldly enjoyment as a goal of worldly life is recognized and respected, but a spiritual path aimed at harmonizing bhukti (worldly enjoyment) and mukti (liberation) is advocated. Kashmiri Shaivism does not advocate suppression of one's emotions and instincts, but provides a spiritual path aimed at their sublimation towards the ultimate goal of spiritual freedom.

**Bansi Pandit**

Chicago, USA

## 2 Kashmiri Hindus and the Caste System

Subhash Kak



Subhash Kak

It is generally accepted that all the Kashmiri Hindus belong to the same community or jati. Is that because they belong to a single caste or varna resulting from the conversion of the other castes to Islam? Or does this represent a variant of Hindu religion where the caste system does not exist?

Let me first deal with the designation Pandit that is applied to Kashmiri Hindus. According to Henny Sender in her book **The Kashmiri Pandits** (1988), this designation was requested by Jai Ram Bhan, a Kashmiri courtier in the Mughal court, in Delhi, of the Emperor Muhammad Shah (1719-1749), and it was granted. Apparently, before this period both Kashmiri Hindus and Muslims were addressed as **khuajah** in the Mughal court.

Kashmiri Hindus call themselves **Batta**, from the Sanskrit **bhartri** meaning master. Such an appellation may be a reflection of the community's self-image that emphasizes success and excellence and it need not have any sociological implications. Two subgroups, that were sometimes considered to be separate, are Buher, and Purib: Buher (from the Kashmiri word for grocer) and Purib (for easterner). It appears most likely that these subgroupings, that have all but disappeared now, reflected the profession of business in the case of Buher and ancestry that could be traced to an immigrant from east India.

Kashmiri Hindus have other names that indicate ancestry outside India; for example, the name Turki. Evidently, the category of Kashmiri Hindu has been fluid and it has admitted those that wished to belong to it.

The dominant philosophical and religious system current in Kashmir is that of Shaivism. According to the texts of the Shaivites all those who accept the Kula (Shaivite) dharma become Kauls, irrespective of their background. The Shaivite initiation has always been open to everyone - and that includes women. There are accounts of how Abhinavagupta, the great Shaivite philosopher who lived about a thousand years ago,

had several women disciples. Later, Kashmir had great women sages such as Lalleshvari and Rupa Bhavani.

The fact that Kashmiri Hinduism is universal does not mean that social inequity did not exist in Kashmir. Such inequity reflected the social and political ideas of its times and it did not spring from any fundamental religious considerations.

So is Kashmiri Hinduism different from Hinduism elsewhere? The surprising answer is no! There is evidence that there was no caste system in the Vedic times. The BrahmaPurana says that during the golden age (Satya Yuga) everyone was a Brahmana. The famous Purushasukta hymn of the Rigveda (10.90) speaks of the Brahmana, Rajanya (Kshatriya), Vaishya, and Shudra as having sprung from the head, the arms, the thighs, and the feet of Purusha, the primal man. This mention of varnas has been taken to indicate that a caste system existed in the Vedic times. But it is repeatedly mentioned elsewhere that each human is in the image of the Purusha which would indicate that each human internalizes aspects of all the varnas. So the label of a specific varna applied to a person may have implied a certain personality type. Later texts speak of how everyone is a shudra when born, implying that the yajnopavit (mekhala) ceremony was open to everyone. A girdle was also tied in a ceremony to girls.

Many texts proclaim that one's nature alone, and not birth, determines to which varna one belongs. In the famous dialogue between Yudhishtira and Yaksha in the Mahabharata Yudhishtira is asked whether a person is a brahmin based on "birth, learning, or conduct" and his answer is only "conduct" makes a person a brahmin and not birth. In the ancient Aryan society the varnas were functional groupings and not closed endogamous birth-descent groups. Basham in his book **The Wonder That Was India** suggests that the jati system in its modern form developed very late perhaps not before 1000 A.D. The Chinese scholar Hsuan Tsang in the seventh century was not aware of it. As a response to historical events one might then credit the emergence of the modern jati system to the next fundamental change in the Indian polity that occurred with the invasions of the Turks.

There is no synonym for caste in any Indian language. The Indian words that caste supposedly translates are jati, which means a large kin-community or descent-group, and varna, which implies a classification based on function. The dynamics between the jatis has been influenced a great deal by historical and political factors. During the periods of economic growth, the jatis have been relatively open-ended; during periods of hardships the jatis have tended to draw in for the sake of survival. The word 'caste' comes from the Portugese casta, a word that was meant to describe the jati system, but slowly it has come to have a much broader connotation.

Megasthenes, the Greek ambassador to India about 2,300 years ago, noted the existence of seven classes, namely that of philosophers, peasants, herdsmen, craftsmen and traders, soldiers, government officials and councillors. These classes were apparently jatis.

In its long history India has had diverse social and religious currents. It is only in the exception that the reality has conformed to the theory of the conservative Dharma Shastras. The Vaishnavas emphatically define varna based on one's actions. This is repeated by the Bhagavad Gita and the Bhagavata Purana.

Although jatis may pay lip service to the Brahmin as an intermediary to the gods when it comes to ritual, each caste considers itself to be the highest. If the Brahmins were to be accepted as the highest caste then other castes would have no hesitation in giving their daughters to the Brahmins. But in reality they do not. The Rajputs consider the Brahmins to be other-wordly or plain beggars; the traders consider the Brahmins to be impractical; and so on. In classical Sanskrit plays the fool is always a Brahmin. In other words, each different community has internalized a different outlook on life but these outlooks cannot be placed in any hierarchical ordering. The internalized images of the other must, by its very nature, be a gross simplification and it will never conform exactly to reality.

The French sociologist Louis Dumont claims that the castes are separate but interdependent hereditary groups of occupational specialists. He postulates that the principle of purity-impurity keeps the segments separate from one another. In this system each jati closes its boundaries to lower jatis, refusing them the privileges of intermarriage and other contacts defined to be polluting. Facts belie the Dumont theory:

Indian Muslims and Christians also have castes. The eighteenth century German society was divided into princes, nobles, burghers, peasants and serfs between whom no marriage other than morganatic was possible. Korea and Japan also had the practice of untouchability. The Buddhist dogma about non-killing appears to have led to the ostracization of those people whose trades involved hunting, slaughtering animals and so on.

One might wonder why the caste system developed in certain parts of India. It has been argued that European and Western traditions, owing to their exclusivist nature, set out to obtain uniform belief and practices. The inclusivist nature of the Indian religions, on the other hand, places each group in a larger system.

The famed Indian scholar M.N. Srinivas pointed out that the process of Sanskritization is responsible for movement within the jati system. Sanskritization implies emulating a dominant caste of any high varna. One should add that there also exists the dynamic of fragmentation.

The social structure of India reflects no single ideology which is why no single theory has proved to be rich enough to describe the system. The system represents several symbiotic ideologies. These ideologies are balanced by political and economic forces. The ideologies of the brahmin, the aristocrat, the trader, and the commoner were all proclaimed to be equivalent in their effectiveness in obtaining knowledge: this was reflected in the paths of jnana yoga, karma yoga, raja yoga, and bhakti yoga. Even festivals like Sarasvati puja, Dassera, Divali, and Holi celebrate the different attitudes.

The Vedas do not sanction the notion of caste as it has been understood in recent times. New technology, science, and political organization is changing the social institutions of India. In many ways the modern Indian castes are no more than the ethnic communities in the West.

To return to the question I posed in the beginning of this note, do Kashmiri Hindus have a caste system. The answer is an emphatic no. Kashmiris are brahmin in the sense of Brahma Purana, according to which every human, being desirous of knowledge, is a brahmin.

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### 3 *Henzae: A Folk Genre Viewed Afresh*

P. N. Pushp



**P. N. Pushp**

[We are indebted to the renowned author and scholar, Professor Pushp, for sending us this learned article on a subject with which all of us are so closely involved but about which we know so little - **Editor**]

**Henzae** seems to be the oldest extant folk genre of Kashmiri verse. Alongside the proverb and the riddle it certainly is one of the earliest items of folklore in the Kashmiri language. It signifies a conventional type of the ceremony chant called vanavun, sessions of which cover, in toto or in part, series of socio-cultural concomitants of ritual associated with various stages or steps in the ceremony concerned, particularly zarakaasay (tonsure), maekhal (sacred thread-investiture) and khaandar (wedding).

The term henzae has wrongly been regarded as a derivative of the word Hindu, interpreting it, accordingly, as a call to the Hindu women to join a session of the traditional wedding chant. The word, in fact, preserves a Kashmiri variant of the Prakrit vocative hanje meaning 'O lady or ladies'. It, obviously, connotes a significant reference to the mode of starting a session of ceremony chant, by addressing a worthy equal or a band of worthy equals. In course of time, however, the word came to signify a specific type of ceremony chant rendered by a select group of Kashmiri women of the Pandit community, joined by other women sitting around. The elderly lady who leads the group is held in high esteem as vanavangar (a competent lady specialising in ceremony chant.)

The conventional rendering of the chant known as henzae is surprisingly reminiscent of the Sama Vedic legacy which seems to have lingered on in the Valley of Kashmir as an interplay of the traditional tones: the uddata (accented), anuddata (unaccented) and svarita (circumflex). i.e. the high pitch, the low pitch and the even pitch peculiar to Sama recitation. Obviously the old Sama chant underwent a series of transformation during its transmission at the folk level, and reached us as an echo of the ancient convention trans-shaped by various pressures of innovation in tune with the changing times. The echo thus preserved in the henzae has become a vital link of the flexible present with the stratified past.

In form, the henzae snatch is just a vanavun piece, a snatch of a ceremony song framed within a couplet the second line of which is invariably shorter than the first, at least by two syllables, roughly corresponding to the following beat pattern:

na na na      na na na      na na      na naa na  
na na na      na na na      naa na      na

The couplet may or may not rhyme the end of the first line with the penultimate of the second line, but it is generally crisscrossed by internal rhyme rich in alliterative rhythm as is borne out by the apt placement of vena and vena; vaaj and laaj;. hiyi- tharae, ranga-tsarae, and shaama svandaras; vuchhmay and prutshmay; kraanis and laanis; koo ree and komaaree; dakha chhuy and nakha chhuy; phaerae and shaerae; raaza and vaaza in the following chants offering revealing peeps into the creative stamina of everfresh articulation:

**1. Yena tar vena tay vana vaaj maadal  
asi laaj kalashes poozaayae.**

*(Mentha-herbs we brought from across the water- course and maadal flowers from the woods; and both we used in worship of the kalasha.)*

**2. Path hiyi-tharae brontha ranga-tsarae  
shaama-svandare kor monen gachh.**

*(Jasmine-shrubs in the background, colourful sparrows in the forefront; thus did Shyama-Sundari decorate walls with gypsum dye. )*

**3. Vuchhmay na zaatakas, prutshmay na kraanis  
kooree laanis namaskaar.**

*(I didn't get your horoscope examined, nor did I enquire about your family ties; daughter dear, let us bow to destiny.)*

**4. Kooree komaaree maamajuv dakha chhuy  
nakha chhuy tsoturbvaz naaraayan.**

*(Daughter innocent, your uncle (maternal) is supporting you up; the four-armed Narayana is by your side.)*

**5. Broentha broentha Shivnath sabaayi phaerae  
raazan kyut vaaza-bata shaerae.**

*(Ahead moves Shivanatha inspecting rows of seated guests, ensuring that dishes specially cooked for them by cooks are duly served.)*

*The traditional vanavun formally starts with the exclamation henzae followed by the proto-verse thus:*

**h e n z a e...**

**Sh o k lam ka rith hy o tmay va na voe nuy  
r u t ph a l dyu tay maa ji Bh a vaa nae.**

**Shoklam karith hyotay vanavoenuy  
rut phal dyutay maa ji Bh a vaa nae**

*(With a recitation of the shuklam have we started chanting the vanavun; Mother Bhavani has bestowed upon us a boon benign.)*

The shuklam here refers to the popular mangala- sloka, the hymn of auspicious inauguration without reciting which no ritualistic performance would normally be undertaken by a devout Pandit. The sloka referred to, starts with the line

**Shuklambaradharam devam shashivarnam  
caturbhujam**

which, of course, is conjured up by the key word shuklam pronounced as shoklam in the Kashmiri accent. Every session of vanavun, accordingly, that begins with the word shuklam is expected to be rendered in the vilambita (leisurely tone) rather than the druta (the quick tempo).

Vanavun, of course, is the bed-rock on which henzae has stood for centuries, and it continues to be the generic name of the ceremony chant. Even poets of eminence have composed vanavun whenever it suited their context. Prakash Ram (c. 1840), for instance, sounds quite close to the henzae tradition when he writes (in the context of Sita's wedding):

***OEM shabda sootin shoklam karith  
vanavun hyotuy maaji Bhavaanae.***

***(Uttering the syllable OM along with shuklam Mother Bhavani has started the vanavun  
chant for you.)***

Among other poets influenced by the henzae tradition, Krishna Razdan deserves special mention for a number of popular chants in his Shiv-lagan particularly those in the contexts of the arrival of Shiva as the bridegroom and the subsequent floral worship (called Poeshi-poozaa) of the bride and the bridegroom. Some of these chants woven into vatsun lyrics are a must at the Shivaratri celebration, including the ones with the refrains:

***Maharaaza raazakomaarae aav  
(The bridegroom came to wed the princess-bride)***

and

***Shiva Shankarasay chhe poeshi-poozaa  
(It is, indeed, the floral worship of Shiva.)***

The vanavun has thus found its way not only into the leelaa (devotional lyric) hymns but also into the naat (verse tribute to the Prophet); and instances are available of poets who have sought to specialise in the vanavun though with doubtful success.

The inaugural chant of the vanavun, nevertheless, has all along carried with it rich possibilities of improvisation as and when the occasion demanded; and this improvisation has been mainly twofold: paradigmatic as well as substitutional. The paradigmatic covers syntactical modifications while the substitutional leaves the syntax untouched; it simply replaces a variable within the syntactical matrix. Here, for instance, are a few cases of such improvisation detected without much difficulty:

A. Substitutional (suiting intracultural demands):

1. The second line of the inaugural chant improvises the impression Bhavaaralae variously as Shivaayae, Shaarikaayae, Raagnyaayae, Zaalaaeye, Baalaaayae, Vomaayae, etc. putting in any of the Kashmiri names of the Goddess, corresponding to the classical Siva, Sa:rika, Ra:jni:, Jvaala:, Ba:la: and Uma:

2. The first line of the next chant refers to Vasudeva, the king, as the head of the family celebrating the event: Vasudeev raazanyev hyotay vanayoenuy; and it similarly, presses into service a number of relevant variations for the phrase Vasudeev raazanyev. Some of these are:

A.2.1 Dasharatha raazanyev (in the context of the bridegroom's paternal family);

A.2.2 Zanak raazanyev (in the context of the bride's paternal family.)

A.2.3 Raaghav Kaakanyev (in the context of the family of some parent of the bride or the bridegroom, name Raaghav varying from family to family. No lady, however, is on record as the head of the family, though the spouse of the head is invariably referred to as yezmanbaay i.e. the female counterpart of the yajama:na, the ritual performer.

In the early strata of the vanavun we find this type of improvisation mostly intracultural as it is intended to perpetuate a few cultural memories of the community as long as possible. But an encounter with quite a different tradition (particularly religion- oriented) led to a fundamental departure in basic perceptions. In due course of historical development, naturally, perceptions other than those reflected within the henzae

parametres also emerged. A new type of improvisation, essentially intercultural in nature, came into vogue by virtue of which the core form Shoklam was understandably improvised with the parallel register expression Bismillah, the key-note of the Kalima.

With the spread of Islam in Kashmir, the growing urge for sectional identity also encouraged departure from the traditional mannerism of the chant associated with the Sama legacy, the folk variation of the vanavun was taken over as the only style in which Muslim women could inaugurate their session of ceremonial chant despite their conversional inhibition. They would accordingly start their session of vanavun with the following snatch as suitably modified within the time-honoured traditional folk matrix:

***Bismillah karith hemav vanavoenuy  
Saahiban anjaam oenuyae.***

***(Uttering bismillah shall we start the vanavun chant; the Lord has brought it about for us.)***

Obviously the neo-converts took over the matrix of the vanavun from the old convention with appropriate improvisation reflecting thereby the archetypal change in the perception of faith. It was so because Shoklam echoed a different archetypal context that had by the time become associated with idol worship. As such it was not deemed fit to serve the immediate purpose of the neoconverts. An appropriate substitute for the term was, nevertheless, discerned in Bismillah that could insure the traditional vanavun against the risk of being dubbed as un-Islamic, without upsetting or undermining the socio-cultural continuity of collective participation. It is because of such a salutary development that both types of vanavun share a lot of common concern and cognate articulation.

The contours of these types are peculiar to the religious creed or cult inherited by a sizeable group within the Kashmiri society, as an ingredient of sub-cultural heritage; while the affinities shared by both the segments are significant components of common inheritance not only cherished but also promoted as interpersonal commemoration.

Viewed in such a historical perspective we find the Henzae covering a broad spectrum of socio-cultural preoccupation with festivity. Starting with a prayerful declaration of the resolve to celebrate, the conventionally stylized folk genre covers as already pointed out, a series of socio-cultural concomitants of ritual signifying various stages or steps in the ceremony concerned, particularly zarakaasay, (tonsure), maekhal (Sacred thread-investiture) and khaandar (wedding). Some of the outstanding links in the chain are:

**a. garanaaay:** house-cleaning.

**b. dapun:** formally moving out with a personal invitation to a ceremony at the insistence of a relative or an intimately connected person.

**c. krool:** decorating the walls flanking the main doorway of the residential house, with ritualistic designs of flowers, shrubs and creepers splashing a rich variety of colours.

**d. maanziraath:** the henna-night when the hands of the bride or the bridegroom are beautified with the henna dye, and relatives (particularly women, young and old) also get a touch or two of the auspicious dye. Concurrently goes on a nightlong session of brisk and zestful singing and dancing.

**e. divagoen:** a pre-nuptial ritual held in front of the sacrificial fire invoking the blessings of gods for a flawless celebration of the bride's or the bridegroom's respective performance.

**f. maekhal:** sacred thread-investiture, comprising a number of subsidiaries like

**1. vaaridaan:** ritualistic cooking by the Auntie (father's sister) of the lad who has to wear the sacred thread ensuring the privileged Auntie a rich reward for her tender affection.

**2. Yoeni:** actual investiture of the lad with traavun the sacred thread.

**3. abeed:** ritualistic begging of the lad for collection of money as daksina to be paid to his guru at the symbolic culmination of his learning at the guru's feet.

**4. mandul:** the mandala ritual in which the lad has to take his stand on a colourfully designed and decorated circle called mandala (also called vyoog in Kashmiri.) The ritual is performed on the eve of the lad's trip to a spring or a stream, late at night, after performing the thanksgiving ritual called the koshal-hum (kushala-homa).

**g. khaandar:** the wedding, comprising a number of subcomponents (besides the common components as detailed above under a to e), starting with the kanishraan and concluding with the poeshipoosa. We have:

**1. kani-shraan:** ritualistic ablution of the bride getting ready for the wedding.

**2. daarapoozaa:** ceremonial purification of the doorway through which the bridegroom is expected to enter the bride's house for the wedding ceremony.

**3. lagan:** the pivotal ceremony in front of the sacrificial fire extends from the initial athavaas (handlock of the prospective couple) to the dayabata (the wedded couple's first meal together under divine supervision symbolized by the sacrificial fire). In between, we find the most crucial sacrament.

**3.1 satapady:** the saptapadi, i.e. the ritual featuring the seven symbolic steps taken together by the prospective couple round the vigilant fire, in a clockwise direction, soon after they have beheld each other's face in a mirror held under cover in front of which they sit with hands interlocked. It is during this circumambulation that the father of the bridegroom points out the Dhruva (Polar Star) to the bride who is called upon to set her foot firmly on a granite pestle, signifying the need to be steadfast in wedlock.

**3.2 poeshipozaa:** the loveliest spectacle offered by the lagan ceremony, which is characterized by a meaningful collaboration between the ear and the eye. The ear is treated to a soulstirring felicity of nuptial benedictions reminiscent of happily married couples famous in legend and prehistory, while the eye is refreshingly fed on intermittent showers of colourful flower petals.

**3.3 vaaryuv:** the touching moment of bride's naerun departure from her parental house to that of her lifemate.

**h. koshal-hum:** the final thanksgiving ceremony expressing the family's gratefulness to the tutelary deities for happy culmination of the ceremonial undertaking.

Viewed from the angle of cultural stratification, however, we find two linguistic layers in the snatches of the vanavun. One of these reflects the indigenous pre-Islamic tradition occasionally preserving a verbal fossil or two fixed up in a later setting. The other level reveals a preponderance of socio-linguistic synthesis bringing about a harmonious blend of the indigenous and the domiciled, despite the initial irritants caused by religious conversion. The blending, therefore, appears to be mostly a natural one speaking forth, on occasions, through a single word belonging to a Persi-Arabic hoard and, yet, appearing quite at ease with earlier matrices and modes of expression.

Let us, then, view a few telling instances even though culled rather casually within the parameters of random sampling. Among the first category we may take up the following that appear to have come down the centuries almost unchanged:

**1. Parmaeshvaras ta maaji Parvatiyae  
laagoes poozi lava-hatiyae poesh**

*(Parameshvara and Mother Parvati shall we worship offering flowers fresh with dew.)*

**2. Svana sundi tvangarae ta rvopa sundi baeloe  
lamay vaaloo shaelay mets.**

*(O you golden hoe and you silver shovel, fetch us virgin earth from the mountain-slope.)*

**3. Shishramnaagy vatshkhay Ombraavatiyae  
Sree Sarasvatiyae Kaanie liv.**

*(O Amaravati, you flow down to the Sheshnag lake; come and wash the upper apartment of Shri Sarasvati.)*

**4. Asy ta maali zaanahav na tuhunza vatay  
koeri hundy laany kor ataygath.**

*(We didn't know at all your whereabouts, darling daughter's destiny has linked us up.)*

**5. Samskaar karayae Maheshvaree  
kooree Laleeshvareeyae.**

*(I'll perform your marriage ceremony, Maheshvari, Laleshvari, my daughter dear.)*

**6. Arag kar manas tay po:sh kar praanas  
Kreshna-bhagavaanas saavedaan laag.**

*(Treat your mind as rice-grain offering and turn your life-breath and worship Lord Krishna, heart and soul.)*

**7. Kehe chhakh heri kani koesam tsaaraan  
bona kani Naaraan praaraan chhuy.**

*(How come you are still upstairs just culling flowers; while down below is Narayana awaiting you.)*

Coming to the second category we notice a number of snatches in which just a word or two from the Persi-Arabic hoard reflects an appropriate recognition of the forward-looking expansion in vocabulary so as to cover the authentic nuances of socio-cultural interaction. To this very category, in fact, belong the snatches in which the changing folk diction of the Kashmiri language registers a wider area of susceptibility to change in environment as well as articulation. Here are a few samples (with the new word underlined>):

**1. Pushinee khatsakhay Divasara-baalas  
tala vuchh naalas poesh maa pholy.**

*(O flower-selling maid, you've gone up the Divasar-mount; look up the stream-banks below for any flowers abloom.)*

**2. Gata tsaj gaash aav saarysuy iehaanas  
chhemay Bhagavaanas poeshi-poozaa.**

*(Darkness has vanished, the whole world is aglow with light; floral worship of my Lord is on.)*

**3. Gangaasaagar heth chhes Gangaa.  
vuda zaalaan chhes Tsandrabhaagaa.**

*(Ganga has appeared before her with a sacred kettle; the Chandrabhaga waits upon her with incense.)*

**4. Rukmani saal kor Kreshna Bhagavaanas  
yeti masnad kor laalas kyut.**

*(Rukmini held a feast in honour of Krishna; here we spread a sheet for our darling.)*

**5. Gangabala toermay ganga-vony naavan  
haavasa kaanee livaa sae.**

*(From Gangabal I've brought for your boatfuls of holy water; wash her up-apartment longingly.)*

**6. Nermal neshkal ganga-zal chhaavath  
baalaadari peth behnavath.**

*(I shall treat you to lucid crystal waters of Ganga; I'll seat you in the balcony.)*

**7. Metsi tay paanis khot khambeeray  
gambeera khoermay agnay-koand.**

*(Clay and water showed ferment; I fashioned a grand fire-pit for you.)*

**8. Kehae chhakh gamgeen Rama-Rama mothuyae  
karmayloen choen pothuyae draav.**

*(Why are you worried? Have you forgotten the name of Rama? Your destiny has proved quite eventful.)*

**9. Kooree loen choen azy hay gav sahee  
saakhyaat Maheeshvar hay aav.**

*(Your destiny, my daughter, has turned out right today; Maheshvar in person has come to us.)*

**10. Koshalyaayi thovuyae poeshi-baag livith  
Dashrath raaza khot sraan karith.**

*(Kaushalya swept and washed for you the flower-garden clean; King Dashratha is back after having a river-dip.)*

**11. Kaalaasa kohuky yim hay soora-matiy  
volaas gandy gandy aangan tsaay.**

*(These ash-besmeared denizens of the Kailasa have entered our courtyard wearing ullasa.)*

**12. Lagun chhiy karaan daevaankhaanas  
karee Bhagavaanas namaskaar**

*(Your lagna is on in the audience-hall; do a namaskar to the Lord.)*

**13. Tren bavanan hundy lukh gayi jamaah  
koeri hund tamaah baryze na zaanh.**

*(People of the three worlds have turned up here; never, never, never yearn for a girl.)*

**14. Sayibaana banoevmut chhus aasmaanas  
chhemay Bhagavaanas poeshi-poozaa.**

*(We've set up a canopy of the sky for him; the floral worship of my Bhagavan is afoot.)*

**15. Arshae vathimati Anan Deevoe  
farshes peth kar kalashes jaay.**

*(O Arjuna Deva, who have descended from the heavens, place the kalasha firmly on the floor.)*

(Kashmiri words of Persi-Arabic origin that claim our attention here are: bala, nala, jahan, ud (vuda), masnad, havas, baladari, khamir, ghamghin, sahi, koh, bagh, divankhana and jamah.)

The two extremes between which the vocabulary of the henzae seems to have flourished may, perhaps, be identified in terms of the following snatches:

**1. Arrnaayae dharmayae raazapotraayae  
mandan-rnaali dachhiny dyoo boez baayae.**

*(Armaaya dharmaya raajaputraaya; listen, brother, pay the daksana dues for the nandana-garland.) which preserves an old substratum of Sanskritic morphology; while*

**2. Shaktipaata-dreshti vari kari prasaadaa  
saada shehzaadaa aangan tsaav.**

*(With the shakti-inducing eye he'll favour us and shower grace on us; a saintly simple prince has entered our courtyard.)*

displays a queer juxtaposition of the archaic Shiva metaphor or divine grace with the high-sounding Persian grandeur of the feudal court, rhyming the Sanskrit prasada with the Persi-Arabic sada shehzada.

It is, nevertheless, difficult to pinpoint the detailed chronology of stratification in view of the fact that quite a number of fragments of early legacy have been updated in linguistic expression from time to time. It can, however, be safely inferred that the current version of the henzae text is mostly later than the Vaak-Shruk (XIV century) configuration. Such a state of affairs is amply borne out by telling pointers like reference to institutions, events, places and persons as in the following contexts:

**a. Sataraath anymay Goejevaarae  
dejahurgormay Vejibraarae.**

**(The household-ware for you I got from the market at Gojivoer; your dejihor I got  
manufactured at Vejibroer.)**

**b. Saraafkadaluky saraaf aayi saaree  
sana truvchi rvapayi diyiv tsaary tsaaree.**

**(All the silversmiths of Saraaf Kadal came beseeching; give us the silver coins called  
rupees minted in the year thirteen, referring, obviously to Kupuny, i.e., Queen Victoria's  
rupee.)**

**c. Anathnaagas laj ho savaaree  
doejen gayi ho ambaarreeyae.**

**(Vehicles sped away to Anantnag; wooden tablets called takhteets were piled up.)**

**d. Poosteen nary ho alraavaan aakhoe  
petaree gondayoe khirki-dastaar.**

**(Dangling sleeves of your furjacket you came; Your uncle (paternal) tied a khirki turban on  
your head.)**

**e. Tshvata pethaci lisa ranyi dharmasabhaayae  
Chambaanaathanyi aagyaayae.**

**(The Dharma Sabha insisted on cooking lisa (succulent leaves) that grows on wild dumps;  
Yogi Campanath had thus ordained.)**

Similar, of course, is the evidence of allusions like those to Vakile Sarkar Har Gopal, Tarakh Zityush, Naran Juv, kaaranda, tabardar, tehsildar, Shalamar Bagh, Padshah Bagh, Tulamuly Nag, jagir, jamadari, rozgar, bazar, khana-moel, durdana, shaah zaafraan, saahabzaada, bumakamaan, buma-khanjar, masval and guli akhtaab.

More clinching appears to be the evidence silently offered by the very nomenclature of a crucial segment of the henzae-lore, i.e. the vanavun of the maanziraath which is an inalienable part of the current vanavun text. A sociological and literary study of the henzae in detail, no doubt, calls for a separate write up, yet a rich cross-section of the content with peculiarities of folk-articulations has substantially been covered by the chants quoted above in various contexts.

Finally, a word as to the need for a technological study of the henzae rendering, based on the authentic grounds of musicology. A competent analysis of at least half a dozen tapes in different voices covering different parts of the Valley as well as from Poonch, Bhadravah and Kashtawar is likely to reveal a broad spectrum of renderings; and those could be further taken up for contrastive studies with respect to the resembling chants in some sister languages of the state; Dogri, Panjabi, and Gojri, for instance, present some interesting parallels in their folk-chants, particularly in p'aakh and mahiya which register some remote degree of affinity with the henzae rendering. Do these styles of singing share some variation or the other of the old Sama chant? Let some competent musicologist explore and reveal.

Source: Koshur Samachar

## 4 The Nilamata Purana

### A Brief Survey

Dr. Ved Kumari Ghai

**The Nilamata** is a Kashmiri Purana referred to by Kalhana as one of the sources of the ancient history of Kasmira. Buhler, whom goes the credit of saving its manuscripts, states on page 41 of his Report, "It great value lies therein that it is a real mine of information regarding the sacred places of Kashmir and their legends which are required to explain the Rajatarangini and that it shows how Kalhana has used his sources". But as a matter of fact the Nilamata gives besides, the account of sacred places, a lot of information about the Kashmiri way of living. The picture of ancient 'Kasmira' presented by its study is not complete and compact, still it is significant for its value which is supplementary to that of the Rajatarangini. While the Rajatarangini acquaints us with kings, queens and ministers of 'Kasmira', the Nilamata generally speaks of common men in their homes, streets, gardens and temples. The life of the common people, the food and drinks they took, the amusements they resorted to, the currents of religious thoughts they followed and the rites and ceremonies they performed throughout the year are described therein. If the Rajatarangini is important from the point of view of the political history of 'Kasmira', the Nilamata is no less important for the cultural history of that part of the country.

### 4.1 Date

Kalhana (12th Century A.D.) refers to it as a work of great antiquity. The absence of the term 'avatara' and the use of the term 'Pradurbhava' for incarnation of gods, non-mention of Kalki, Krisna's consort Radha and the sacred leaf of Tulasi, mention of Buddha as an incarnation of Visnu in a spirit of catholicity and the incorporation of its various verses into the Brahma Purana long before the time of Laksmidhara (1104-1154 A.D.) further indicate its early date. The textual study of the work shows that some alterations and additions have been made in it after the ninth or tenth century A.D. in order to incorporate into it the monistic Saiva Philosophy of Kasmira. Had the Nilamata been composed after the ninth century A.D. there would have been no scope for such change. The lower limit of the date thus may be eighth century A. D. and the upper one about the sixth century A.D. as Buddha began to be regarded as an incarnation of Visnu from about 550 A.D.

### 4.2 Out-line of the contents

The Nilmata opens with Janamejaya's enquiry from Vaisampayana as to why the king of 'Kasmira' did not participate in the war of Mababharata although his kingdom was not less important than any other in the country. Vaisampayana states that some time before the Mababharata war was fought, king Gonanda of Kasmira had been invited by his relative Jarasandha to help him in a war against the yadavas. Gonanda complied with his request and was slain on the battle field by Krsna's brother, Bala. In order to avenge his father's death, Gonanda's son Damodara went to Gandhara to fight with Krsna who had gone there to attend a Svayamvara. Krsna killed Damodara in the fight but taking into consideration the high sanctity of Kasmira, he coronated his rival's pregnant widow Yasovati. Damodara's Posthumous son Bala Gonanda was a minor at the time of the great war, so he did not join either the Kauravas or the Pandavas.

Vaismpayana points out the importance of 'Kasmira' by referring to its numerous charms and its identification with Uma. He points out further that the valley was originally a lake known as Satisaras. This leads to the question about the origin of 'Kasmira' to which Vaisanipayana replies by relating a dialogue held previously between Gonanda and the sage Brahadasva.

Brahadasva gives at first the account of the divisions of time, the destruction of the world at the end of manvantara, the presevation of Manu and the seeds in a ship, the birth of the land and the lake, of Sati, the origin of various tribes from Kasyapa and Visnu's allotment of Satisaras to the Nagas. Then follows the story of the demon Jalodbbava born in the waters and reared by the Nagas. Having obtained boons from

Brahma, the demon began to destroy the descendants of Manu dwelling in the lands of Darvabhisara, Gandbars Jubundura, the Sakas, the Khasas etc. Seeing this devastation, Nila the king of the Nagas approached his father Kasyapa and prayed to him to intercede with the gods to punish the evil-doer and to save the innocent victims. He requested the gods, Brahma, Visnu and Siva to do the needful. Visnu followed by Brahma, Siva and various other deities, proceeded to Naubandhana to punish the demon. The demon was imperishable in the waters; so Visnu asked Ananta to make an outlet for the waters by breaking forth the mountain-barriers. He did accordingly. Visnu then cut off the demon's head with his disc. Now the dry land being available in the valley, Kasyapa expressed the desire that it should be inhabited by the Nagas as well as by the descendants of Manu. The Nagas, however, flatly refused to have Manavas as their co-habitants. Filled with rage Kasyapa cursed them to live with the Pisacas. At the request of Nila the curse was modified to the extent that the Pisacas would go every year for a period of six months to the sea of sand and the Manavas would live in the land jointly with the Nagas during that period. Visnu further assured the Nagas that the occupation of Kasmira valley by the Pisacas would last for four ages only.

After the passing away of the four ages, the Manavas, as usual, had gone out for six months. An old Brahmana, Candradeva did not accompany them. Troubled by the Pisacas he approached the Naga King Nila and begged of him to ordain that 'Kasmira' might henceforth be inhabited by Manavas without the fear of emigration. Nila complied with this request on the condition that the Manavas should follow his instructions revealed to him by Kesava. Candradeva lived for six months in the palace of Nila and was initiated into the mysteries of rites or ceremonies prescribed by Nila. In Caitra, when the emigrant population of 'Kasmira' came back, he related the whole incident to Virodaya - king of Manavas. The lengthy dialogue held between Nila and Candradeva describes sixty five rites, ceremonies and festivals many of which are similar to those mentioned in other Puranic works and observed in many parts of India, while a few are peculiar to Kasmira only. At Janamejaya's enquiry as to what Gonanda had asked after listening to the teachings, another dialogue between Gonanda and Brhadrasva follows. Gonanda expresses his desire to know the names of the principal Nagas dwelling in Kasmira and Brhadrasva enumerates not fewer than Sir hundred Nigas. He expresses his inability to enumerate all the Nagas, as their number was too great. He further refers to four Nagas, the guardians of directions and relates the story of the Naga Sadangula and the Naga Mahapadma.

Then follows Gonauda's enquiry about the sacred places of Kasmira and Brhadrasva's reply referring to various places dedicated to Siva and other deities. Two names Bhutesvara and Kapatesvara raise Gonanda's curiosity which leads Brhadrasva to relate Bhutesvara Mahatmya and Kapatesvara Mahatmya. Then follows the enumeration of the sacred places of Visnu and other tirthas situated in the valley of Kasmira. Thereafter is given the eulogy of the river Vitasta and the work ends with the remark that, as this treatise in the form of a dialogue between Janamejaya and Vaisampayana was not useful everywhere (i. e. was of local interest mainly), Vyasa did not include it in the Maha Bharata lest that should become too exhaustive.

### *4.3 Birth of 'Kasmira'*

The Nilamata legend of the origin of 'Kasmira' as a result of the draining off of the lake, occurs in Kalhana's Rajatarangini, and in a bit changed form, in the Mahavamsa, the Chinese Vinaya of the Mula Sarvastivadin sect and in the account of the travels of Hiuen Tsang. Whether it was the basin-like shape of the valley of 'Kasmira' which suggested this legend or the memory of some old age when the area of Kasmira under water was more than what it is now, was responsible for it, cannot be stated with certainty; but it is interesting to know that the geological observations made in recent times corroborate the assertion made in the Nilamata.

The lowest point in the valley with high mountain walls on all sides is 5200 feet high above the sea level, and the lowest pass in the Pirpancal range, forming its outer boundary, is 3000 feet above the valley. The only outlet for the drainage of the valley is the narrow rock-gorge at Baramula.

Now nearly half of the area of this basin-shaped valley is occupied by the Karewas (Flat-topped mounds composed of clay and silt with thin layers of greenish sand) and the present view to quote D. N. Wadia regards "the Karewas as the surviving remnants of deposits of a lake or series of lakes which once filled the whole valley basin from end to end". Of course it will be going too far to suggest that some geological tests were at the basis of this legend. The most plausible hypothesis is that the idea of the great lake was suggested by the basin-like shape of the valley and after this, it was just one step more in the making of mythology to attribute the drainage of water through an outlet in sandstone wall of the western corner of the basin, to a divinity like Ananta.

#### *4.4 Geography*

Like other puranic works, the Nilamata also deals with geography of the world and mentions seven Dvipas, namely Jambu, Saka, Kusa, Kraunca, Salmali, Gomeda and Puskara. Of these seven, Jambudvipa as nine Varsas namely Uttarakuru, Ramya, Hairanvata Badrasva, Ketumala, Ilavrita, Harivarsa, Kimpursa and the last one i. e. Bharataversa alone seems to present India proper. More significant is the information about the tirthas particularly of Kasmira, mentioned in four lists occurring in the later half of the work. These lists are of special interest for the geography of Kasmira but it also deserves to be noted that the reference being too brief it is not possible to identify most of the place-names, especially those which are not mentioned in Kalhana's Rajatarangini or some other work of geographical value. It is also interesting to note the similarity of the nomenclature of Kasmira as found in the Nilamata with that of other parts of India. It seems that the people who had come from various parts of India to inhabit the valley of Kashmir named its beautiful spots after the tirthas familiar to them, they thus recognized prayaga the holy confluence of the Ganga and the Yamuna in the confluence of the Vitasta and the Sindhu and regarded the area extending from Trikotisangama to Har and from the confluence of the Pavana and the Rajobinduvimala to Ciramocana, as holy as Varanasi. The names like Sarasvati Rsikulya, Ramahrada, Bhrgutunga, Mundaprastha, Citrakuta, Bharatagiri Kamatirtha of Kasmira are also names of various tirthas of other parts of India.

#### *4.5 Tribes*

About the inhabitants of ancient Kashmir, the Nilamata has preserved highly valuable information. The original inhabitants of the valley were the Nagas; then came the Pisacas and the Manavas. Being the original occupants of Kashmir, the Nagas did not like introduction of the Pisacas or the Manavas into the valley, but the selection was to be made between these two, they preferred Manavas to the Pisacas. The other tribes which are described occupying the neighbouring countries are the Madras (inhabitants the modern Sialkot and the surrounding regions between the Irava and the Chandrabhaga) the Darvas (inhabitants of Darva identified with the districts of Jammu and Ballavar) the Abhisaras (inhabitants of modern Punch and the area near it) the Gandharas (inhabitants of Peshawar, Rawalpindi etc.), Juhundaras probably same as Jaguda (inhabitants of Afghanistan), the Sakas, the Khasas, the Tarigams, Mandavas, the Antargiris and the Bahirgiris. Indirect mention of Yavanas is also made in the Naga name Yavanapriya.

#### *4.6 Social, Political and Economic Life*

Regarding social, economic and political life in Kashmir the Nilamata has brought to light a few interesting points. The Brahmanas, especially those who were "Itihasavidah" and "Kalavidah" were highly honoured, but the Sudras too were not considered degraded. The humane treatment meted out to the servants is a pleasant feature of social organisation of Kashmir revealed by the Nilamata. The Nilamata often includes the servants also in the list of the persons in whose company the house-holder feasts and enjoys. The artisans like weavers and carpenters etc. commanded so much respect in the society as to exchange gifts with the higher varnas during the Mahimana celebrations. The very fact that

the Nilamata describes the Sudras as taking part in the coronation ceremony of the king indicates that they were not considered debased.

Another enlivening feature of the Kashmiri social life as seen in the Nilamata is the position of women. Nowhere is she considered "the living torch illuminating the way to hell", or the devourer of the intellect of men. There is no reference to any veil worn by her and she moves quite freely in the society emulating as it were the free moving sparkling waters of the springs of the country. In the moon-lit night of Kaumudi Mahotsava we find her sitting beside the sacred fire in the company of her husband, children, servants and husband's friends, although it is not clear as to whether she is merely a silent spectator or she takes active part in the musical and dramatic performances given during this night. She is present in the common feast which takes place on the next day. Not only in the festivals celebrated at home, but also in the outdoor festivals, she is seen enjoying herself. The peasant's wife is lucky enough to participate in the joyous festival celebrated in the refreshing open fields of nature in connection with the ploughing of the fields and sowing of seed. The Nilamata does not deny water-sports to the ladies of Kasmira. The young maidens, it says, "should specially play in the waters" during the celebrations of Sravani festival. Playing with men folk is allowed to women. "The joyful ladies", it says "dressed in their best attire, perfumed with scents and decorated with ornaments should sport in the company of men on the last day of Mahimana celebrations." The ladies of the home are honoured on various occasions. On the full moon day of Margasirasa, the gift of a pair of red clothes is prescribed for a Brahmana lady, for the sister, for the paternal aunt and for the friend's wife. The mention of the presentation of gifts to friend's wife is quite significant as it could have been possible only in a free atmosphere where women were allowed to move freely with no restrictions on their receipt of gifts from their husband's friends.

As regards their place in the religious life, they are not only allowed to accompany their husbands in the performance of various rites and ceremonies but are also enjoined upon to perform singly some rites specially prescribed for them. The predominance of the Goddesses in the religion depicted in the Nilamata is another factor pointing to the high status of women. The very land of 'Kasmira' is a mother Goddess 'Kasmira', a form of Uma. Numerous references are made to courtesans in connection with the description of festivals. The use of a simile comparing 'Kasmira' with a temple due to the presence of tender ladies indicates the popularity of the institution of Devadasis or temple-dancers.

On the whole, the Nilamata offers a pleasant picture of women of 'Kasmira'. As a daughter she was trained in fine arts and was allowed to move freely in the society. By giving her in marriage, the father obtained religious merits. As a wife she was loved and honoured by her husband and as a mother she shone with her sons who revered her highly. A would be mother could even be installed on the throne on the demise of her son-less husband-king.

This unconventional account of the women of 'Kasmira' is quite different from the account available in other Puranas and so it gives a distinctive character of the Nilamata.

Entertaining of guests is another notable feature of the social life of Kasmira depicted in the Nilamata. Even the king is enjoined upon to honour the immigrants from all the quarters.

The people were fond of music, dancing, drama and other means of recreations, which indicates their general prosperity depending upon agriculture and trade. The general terms used for the musical instruments are Vadya, Vaditra and Vadyabhanda. We find reference to Vina (the modern hundred stringed Santoor of 'Kasmira' is probably satatantrivina or Vana referred to in the Taittiriya Samhita), Venu (flute) Sankha ( conch), Pataha ( Drum ) and Muraja ( tambourine ). Dances were performed on religious occasions and in social gatherings held in honour of seasonal and agricultural festivals. The words "Preksa" mentioned in the Nilamata refers to the tricol performances. The Nilamata mentions also a peculiar Phrase "Preksadana" literally meaning "the gift of a dramatic performance". It seems to have denoted "a gift made for the arrangement of a dramatic show". There may have existed some dramatic clubs which have such shows on demand and the injunction of "Yathavidhi preksadana" i. e. the gift for the arrangement of a dramatic show made in the proper procedure, may have been made with reference to them.

As regards the art of image-making, the Nilamata refers to images made of stone, clay, gold, silver, copper, brass, wood, sand, straw and ghee. References are made to printings on the cloth, the wall and the ground. The people are directed to decorate the Caityas with beautiful paints on lord Buddha's birthday. A circular pattern is drawn on the ground on which a 'Kashmira' bridegroom had to stand before entering for his marriage the house of the bride. This is a direct descendant of bhumisodha mentioned in the Nilamata.

Of the items of dress, mention may be made of pravara which seems to be the same as pravara mentioned in the Mahabharata as a cloth offering protection against cold. Kashmiri pheran is most probably derived from pravara.

Meat seems to have been a popular item of diet otherwise there would have been no necessity of prohibiting strongly the eating of meat for five days dedicated to the worship of Visnu. Wine is recommended as a drink on new snow-fall day and Iraman Jari Pujana.

In the sphere of political thought, there existed a belief in the divinity of kingship along with the theory that law is superior to the king. It is stated in a verse that the king of 'Kasmira' is a part of Hara and should not be disobeyed. The same verse is quoted by Kalhana with the significant expression "even a wicked one" added to the king. Compared with Bhishma's statement in the Mahabharata that a virtuous king is truly a god, this difference of statement of the Rajatarangini from that of the Nilamata shows a gradual development of the theory of absolute monarchy. The survival of a few republican elements is also indicated by the terms pradhana and ganamukhya.

Concerning religious life it shows not only the other cults adopting the Naga deities but also the Naga cult bringing the deities of other cults into its fold. Bhava Mahadva and Sambhu which are names of Siva, Guha and Kumara which are names of Siva's son, Narayana and the four yugas Vasudeva, Sankarsana, Anirudha and Pradyumna, the epic heroes Rama, Lakshmana and Yudhishthira all appear in the Naga list of the Nilamata. On the whole the Nilamata reveals the spirit of compromise and synthesis in the field of religion. The Brahmanic deities, the Nagas, the pisacas, the Buddha all receive their due share of worship from the inhabitants of 'Kasmira'. The followers of cults are stated to be free to worship their respective deities but the different deities are described as honouring one another and thus creating an atmosphere in which various cults are united.

In the field of philosophical thinking the Nilamata presents the same theistic samkhya which appears in the epics and other Puranas. It would be going too far to suggest that it contains the tenets of the Monistic Saiva philosophy of 'Kasmira'. It is clear that the cult of Visnu, Brahman, Siva, Surya, Durga, Nagas, Buddha etc. flourished side by side in the time of the Nilamata. Vaisnavism no doubt occupies a prominent place in this work but there is no indication of the creator of the creator, illuminating Brahma. Uma is the mother antagonistic attitude towards other cults. In the field of philosophical thoughts the Nilamata presents also a compromise regarding the problem of creation; it uses the terminology of the Samkhya referring to Indriyas, Indriyarthas, Mahabhutas Manas, Buddhi, Atma, Avyakta and Purusa; but it does not accept its atheistic metaphysics. The five gross physical elements-Earth, Water, Fire, Wind and Ether - which may stand for the solid, liquid, gaseous, aerial and ethereal states of matter, are stated to be the supporters of the world, but behind these is seen the working of the force of the Supreme Spirit. The epithet "Cause of the causes of the world" applied to Visnu and Brahma indicates that along with the Supreme Spirit, the final cause, there is also Prakriti, the immediate cause of the world. At one place, Shiva's epithet "Saksivat sthitah" sounds like that Sankhya Purusa but unlike the latter He is regarded as the creator, the sustainer and the destroyer of the world. Three qualities of Rajas, Sattva and Tamas are also referred to and are associated with the power of creation, protection and destruction.

The theology of the Nilamata is replete with numerous gods and goddesses. The trinity of Brahma, Visnu and Siva plays due role but there are others like Indra, Varuna, Yama, Kartikeya, Baladeva; Asvina, Martits, Visvedevas, Vasus, Yaksas, Nagas, Gandharvas, Prthivi, Surabhi, Sita, Saci, Laksmi, Uma, Syama, Bharati, Prajna, Mati etc. The tendency of describing one deity as the highest among others at one time and transferring the same epithet to the other at another time is clearly perceptible in the praises of Brahma, Visnu, Siva, Nila and the goddesses Uma and Laksmi. At some places, Visnu is praised as the

best amongst the gods, unfathomable, the highest, the eternal, the refuge of all gods, the lord of the gods, cause of the causes of the world, the lord of three worlds, worshipped by Siva, praised by Brahma, but at other places Brahma is described as the cause of the causes of the world, the lord of three worlds, the lord of the god of the gods, the lord of all, the omniscient, the real force behind all the elements, the preceptor of the world and the sustainer of the world. Siva is also eulogised as the preceptor of the world, the lord of world, the lord of the gods, the lord of the god of the gods, and the highest lord.

Even the Naga deity Nila is described as the lord of the gods, the creator of the creator, illuminating Brahma. Uma is the mother of all gods, higher than Sarva, and Laksmi is raised to the highest position by saying that all the goddesses are her forms.

The idea that the whole world is God or a manifestation of God is also present in the Nilamata. The whole earth is a form of the goddess Sati. The earth, the water, the air, the sky, the fire, the sun, the moon, and the sacrifier, all these are regarded as eight forms of Siva.

The doctrine of monism, according to which there exists only a single principle from which everything is evolved, is also found in the Nilamata, Brahma in the Nilamata seems to have been identified with the Brahma of the Upanisadas, for He is recognized as the only element in the universe except whom there exists nothing. He is the knower and the thing to be known, the body and the soul, the meditator, the object of meditation and the meditation itself.

He is also of unknown birth. In the eulogy of Nila there is a reference to Brahma in the Upanisadic style. This Brahma is indivisible, imperishable and the highest. Due to its minuteness it is called Ether. The statement that it is minute as well as great, uncreated as well as possessed of limbs reminds one of similar statements found in the Katha and the Svetasvatara Upanisads. Of course, the Nilamata does not give us clear-cut monism; it has just paved the way for the Monistic Saiva Philosophy of Kasmira.

## **5 Living Rituals of Nilmat Purana**

### **Prithvinath Bhat**

**Puranas** are a treasure house of knowledge of our past. They shed light on different customs and rituals that were observed by the Hindus at different places and different times of the year. Puranas are many in number and have been written in Sanskrit. There are eighteen Puranas and an equal number of up-Puranas.

Purana means old. It also means a story of the ancient times. Puranas deal with the creation and destruction of the universe, with the lives of Saints and Sages, with the dynasties of Kings, with the importance of Gods and Goddesses, places of pilgrimage, rivers and rivulets, with festivals, customs and rituals etc, prevalent among the Hindus in olden times. So Puranas have a great religious and social significance. They are the explanation of Shastras.

Nilmat Puran is one of the famous Puranas that deals with the Valley of Kashmir in respect of its creation, its original inhabitants-Nagas, Pisachas and Brahmins, their style of living, religion, customs, festivals and topography. It peeps into the ancient history of Kashmir. It was written by some Kashmiri Brahman between 6th and 7th century A.D. In all there are 1453 verses in it. Some verses and parts thereof are missing with the passage of time. Kalhana, the great historian of Kashmir, has taken help from this document in tracing four Kings- Gonanda I, Damodar, Queen Yashovati and her son Gonanda II from it.

Nilmat Puran is named after the King Nila of the Nagar dynasty that ruled Kashmir in the beginning.

Puranas are written in the descriptive form wherein two persons converse in question and answer style and the story is narrated. In Nilmat Puran, King Janmejaya of the Kuru dynasty asks questions to Vaishampayan the son of Vyas of the Mahabharat times. The first question put to Vaishampayan was why the King of Kashmir did not participate in the Mahabharat war. Vaishampayan replies that Gonanda II was a child those days, so could not take part in the war. Janmejaya further asks how did the lake Satisar dry and how people settled there. The author has brought in two more persons in the Puran who also narrate the story in question- answer form, they are sage Brihdashva and King Gonanda of Kashmir. Thereafter starts the story of Kashmir. Jalodbhav demon lived in the waters of Satisar. He terrorised the people and killed them. King Nila of Kashmir approached his father Sage Kashyapa and requested him to get rid of the demon. Both approached God Vishnu who ordered Ananta to break the Himalaya with his plough. Ananta broke the mountain at Khadanyar. The waters of the lake gushed forth and its bed became visible. Vishnu caught hold of Jalodbhava and killed him with his chakra. He ordered Nagas and Pishachas to live in harmony. Brahmins and other castes of the plains lived as Gypsies in Kashmir. They stayed in the Valley for six months of the Summer and returned to the plains with the setting in of the Winter. One day Brahmin Chandradeva could not leave Kashmir due to old age and weakness. He was teased by Pishachas. He approached King Nila for protection who readily provided it. Then Nila narrated him the way of life of Nagas, their religion, customs, festivals, the places of worship, rivers and rivulets, hills and mountains and all about Kashmir. He also granted the Brahmins and others to settle permanently in Kashmir.

The King Nila described sixtyfive rituals and festivals which were celebrated by the Nagas, with great devotion, faith, pomp and show. Some of the rituals and festivals find mention in other Puranas also. Some of these are celebrated in Kashmir even today. Kaw Poonim and Yaksha Mavas are celebrated in Kashmir only.

Nilmat Puran describes in detail which rituals and festivals are to be celebrated on a particular day of the year. Both men and women participated in them. They kept fasts, prayed to Gods Vishnu, Shiv, Brahma and Goddesses Parvati, Laxmi and Saraswati. They sang and danced and enjoyed life to their best satisfaction. They were freedom loving and happy-go-merry people. The King also participated in the festivals with his subjects. He looked after the welfare of the people and provided them guidance. In fact the festivals and rituals were started by Nila for the prosperity, health and happiness of his people.

As mentioned above, there is a list of Sixty-five rituals and festivals in Nilmat Puran. Here we would make mention of only those rituals (religious practices) which are observed by the Kashmiri Pandits even today.

### **1. Sukhsuptika or Deepawali**

Sukhsuptika literally means sleep with happiness. On Kartika Amavasya all except the sick and the children keep fast. In the evening Laxmi, the Goddess of Wealth is worshipped. Lamps are placed in temples, on crossings of roads, cremation grounds, banks of rivers, streams and lakes, hills, houses, at the foot of trees, cow-sheds, courtyards and shops. Shops are decorated tastefully. Feast is arranged in the evening in which friends relatives, Brahmins and servants participate. On the next day people with new clothes on, gamble and listen to vocal and instrumental music.

This festival is celebrated now as Deepawali and not as Sukhsuptika. Now electric bulbs illuminate houses, temples, shops courtyards and trees etc. besides the lamps. Laxmi is worshipped in the evening. Sweets are distributed, crackers are burst and fire-works illumine the skies.

### **2. Margshirsha Poornima**

According to Nilmat Puran people kept fast on that day and broke it at night after worshipping the moon with white garlands, eatable offerings. Brahmins also were worshipped. The Brahmin lady, sisters and the wife of a friend each was to be honoured with a pair of red clothes.

Nowadays it is celebrated in a different way. Tahar-rice boiled with turmeric, mixed with oil and salt, is prepared. Pooja is performed, a little Tahar is kept in an earthen pot and placed on the roof or the uppermost storey of the house for the house-diety.

We call it MANJHOR TAHAR.

### **3. Tila Dwadashi**

This ritual was observed on the twelfth dark day of Magha. Shradha of the dead was performed with oil and sesame.

Now this ritual is performed on the eighth dark day of Phalgun. How this change occurred is not known. On this day Tarpan (Water oblation) is given with sesame to the dead and a lamp is also lit.

### **4. Magha Poornima**

Shradha with sesame was performed on this day and food was offered to the crows.

Not only food i.e. boiled rice is placed on Kawpatals (A plate woven of grass around two twigs placed one on the other at right angles) and is offered to the crows. Children celebrate this festival with gaiety as they play with Kawpatals after the boiled rice is eaten away by the crows.

### **5. Shivratri**

This festival is the most famous and important of all the festivals of Kashmir. It is celebrated on the dark thirteen of Phalguna. Shivlinga is worshipped with flowers, incense and milk. All members of the family except the sick and the children keep fast. Devotional songs are sung. On the 15th dark day, Shiva is worshipped again and sweet dishes are offered to worshippers and Brahmin.

This festival is celebrated with great devotion, faith and pomp and show now. On 12th dark day of Phalguna, Wagur (an earthen pot or steel pot now) is brought to the house. Food is placed into it and is placed on a small circular asana made of grass. It is supposed to be the Brahmin who has to perform the marriage ceremony of Shiva with Parvati. Some say that Wagur is Shiva's messenger to Himalaya for his daughter Parvati's marriage with Shiva. On the 13th dark day, Watak consisting of big earthen pitcher, two small earthen pitchers, two smaller earthen pitchers, one elephant trunk shaped figure, seven bowls are decorated with flowers garlands and sindoor. They represent Shiva Parvati, Ram Brahmin, Seven Rishis, Ganesa and some other rishis. Walnuts are washed and placed into the pitchers and seven bowls. Then these are filled with water, some milk is poured into each one of them. Mishri (Sugar) is also poured into them. Pooja is started at Pradosh Kala (Dusk). All the members of the family take part in it. It continues with devotion and full faith till late in the night. Then fast is broken and boiled rice with a

variety of cooked vegetables is taken. The worship continues, upto Amavasya and in the evening the Shivratri comes to a close. The walnuts in the pitchers are taken out and washed, Pooja is performed and the flowers and other pooja samagri used for worship is immersed into the river, walnuts are used as prashad and distributed among neighbours and all the relatives.

#### **6. Navsamvatsara (Navreh)**

This festival is celebrated on the first bright night of Chaitra. According to the lunar calendar, it is the first day of the New Year. It is also the first day of the creation of universe. Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva are worshipped on this day. It is also the beginning of Navratras. According to the custom, a plate (thali) is filled with rice. The following articles are also placed on the rice (i) milkpot (ii) flowers (iii) walnuts (iv) pen (v) inkpot (vi) coin or a currency note of any denomination (vii) Panchang of the new lunar calendar year (viii) boiled rice (ix) Sugar or mishri (x) salt (xi) ghee (xii) baked rice flour bread (xiii) wuy a root of some kind of grass that grows in water and (xiv) picture of Vishnu or Shiva-Parvati. This plate is filled on the eve of Navreh (Navsamvatsara). Early in the morning of Navreh, the grandmother or elder lady or mother gets up and brings this thali for darshan by every member of the family. It is considered a good omen for the new year. Tahar of the rice is cooked and served after Pooja. Goddess Sharika is worshipped at Hariparbat. Flowers and Tahar are offered there. Navratras are celebrated with great devotion and faith. Goddess Mother is worshipped in homes and temples. Wye and kernels of walnuts are taken by every member of the family before taking any other thing in the morning.

#### **7. Chaitra Navmi**

It is the ninth bright day of Chaitra. Goddess Bhadrakali is worshipped. Fast is also kept. Navratras come to an end on this day. It is celebrated in the whole of northern India as Rama Navami.

Bhadrakali is a famous temple about eight kilometers to the west of Handwara (Dist. Kupwara) on a hilltop in a thick forest of Devdars. There is a statue of Bhadrakali which is worshipped on Chaitra Navmi.

#### **8. Vasta Pooja**

It was celebrated on the eleventh bright night of Chaitra. Grehdevta (House-deity) was worshipped and offerings were made to Him for the protection, prosperity and health of the family. Now this festival is celebrated only on Tuesday or Saturday of the dark night days of Pausa. Gadabatta (cooked fish with boiled rice) is offered to the house-deity after performing Pooja.

#### **9. Janmashtami**

Lord Krishna's birthday is celebrated on the eighth dark night day of Bhadrapada with great devotion and faith. Fast is kept and broken at the rise of the moon. Temples are decorated and people in large numbers go there to perform pooja.

#### **10. Shradha Pakhsha**

Dark half fortnight or Ashwin is celebrated as Pitra Paksha in memory of the dead ones of the family and maternal side. Fast is kept, shradha Kriya is performed. Brahmins are offered food, fruit and clothes etc. It is also known as Kambirpach.

#### **11. Mahanavmi**

In olden days, Goddess Durga was worshipped in the evening. Arms and weapons were also worshipped. Shanti was worshipped too. Now the practice of worshipping arms and ammunition has stopped. Only Goddess Durga is worshipped at Hariparbat, Durganag and Akingam.

#### **12. Ashokikashtami**

This day is celebrated on the eighth bright half of Bhadrapada. Goddess Uma (Parvati) and Ashoka tree are worshipped. Nowadays only Goddess Uma is worshipped. A Yagna is performed each year on this day at Umanagri (Utrasoo), Distt. Anantnag, where there is a famous temple of Uma. Fast is observed and prayers are offered.

#### **13. Vitasta Utsava**

This is observed on the thirteenth bright half of Bhadrapada as the birthday of the Vitasta river (Jhelum). After bathing in the river, the pilgrims worship Vltasta at Shadipora (confluence of Vitasta and Sindhu). Now this festival is observed at Vethvothur near Verinag (Dist: Anantnag) Pilgrims take bath in the holy spring of Vethvothur and worship the idols of Vitasta and Parvati. Fast is also kept. (Vethvothur is considered as the origin of the Vitasta.) The sixtyfive rituals and festivals have now shrunk to thirteen only. Navhimpatosava was also observed in the past on the first snowfall of the year.

The observance of rituals is incomplete without fasts, worship and offerings to gods and goddesses. From Nilmat Puran, we have learnt what food and eatables the people of Kashmir used to take in those ancient times. Khichri (rice, moong, pepper, turmeric, salt, ghee or edible oil; with water is cooked to form Khichri) barley, milk, curd, ghee, honey, grapes, meat, fish, bread, moong and masoor etc. were used as food items.

The observance of these rituals and festivals speaks of the highly civilized and cultured Kashmiri society. We are proud of being their progeny and we have tried to preserve our culture even after facing onslaughts of marauders of Central and West Asia. We should not give up our festivals and rituals even under the present trauma. We must not forget our language Kashmiri - because that gives us our identity. We must propagate it, learn it, speak it and write it in Devnagri script.

## **6 The Nilamatpuranam and Kashmir**

**M. M. Karmayogi, J. L. K. Jalali**

We have to thank Prof. Ram Lal Kanjilal (my professor in the Shri Pratap College) and Prof. Jagaddhar Zadoo for their joint labour in compiling the present edition of Nilamatapuranam, which was published as far back as 1924. When I used to see my Bengali Professor transcribing the Sanskrit text in Bengali script, so valued by the Bengalis, I was amused. Whenever he would copy out a Sanskrit book or document, he would transcribe it in Bengali. I could not then understand why he did so. Later after 40 years I could satisfy my curiosity, when I came in contact with the late renowned scholar, Prof. Suniti Kumar Chattopadhyaya (or Chatterji) ; who would tell me that he used to recite Bhagvadgita in Sanskrit written in the Bengali script. Prof. Kanjilal and Prof. Zadoo's compilation is admirable although there are inexplicable lacunae in it, which could have been filled in, had a little more labour been put in or effort made to carefully go through the different portions of the Puranam. Though the Editors have themselves referred to such lacunae not all and most important, I as reader and student of the Puranam feel that the Research Department of the Jammu and Kashmir State should have taken it up again and made further search for MSS of the Puranam, which I believe may still be available and have not been known to the department by a non-Kashmiri, least of all by the foreign scholars, without knowing and studying the life, habits, customs, manners, rituals, etc. apart from a thorough knowledge of the land of NAGAS, called Kashmir. To write on metre employed, to infer how men and women lived, who the inhabitants in the past were, does not give the true content of Nilamatpuranam. It is a storehouse, which has to be swept of all excrescences and then made into a running story of historical value of Kashmiri's past of several thousand years, a past in which for more than a milliard it was a Saras (inland sea) bounded by high mountains and inhabited by people living on its shores and on the mountain slopes whom we know as Nagas, ruled over by a king called Nila with his Headquarters at NILAKUNDA (Vernag) fifty miles to the east of Srinagar of today.

Before I proceed further, I consider it proper and an act of gratitude to refer to Dr. Buhler who was responsible for delving the Puranam, out of practical neglect. In the edition of the Puranam, compiled by the two learned professors and followed by others, it appears that what Dr. Buhler has written about the Puranam has been taken for granted and no deeper research has been made. Nilamata is the basic history of Kashmir and the Kashmiris, and it was Dr. Buhler who was responsible for introducing the Paradise on Earth to the scholars and through them to the people of Germany, UK and the world. In Kashmir , occasionally as far as I remember, a learned Brahman for the matter of that, my own family priest, would mention the rites and rituals enjoined on the Kashmiris in the Puranam. I was too young. I could not easily follow what he would say, but my revered mother, Devamali, who though lot conversant with the 3 R'S would avidly try to digest whatever she heard and, repeat to her children during the evening hours after the day's chores had been finished and we were preparing for the warm bed of wintry night a night really reminiscent of the eight of the Pishachas who had been destroyed by the severe frost and snow after they were fought out of the Valley with the help of Vedic Aryans, invited by NILA at the behest of his father Kashyapa, from the plains of Bharat.

Along with this she would recite verses from Sanskrit and Persian too, and other stories from Ramayana and Mahabharata, especially the stories of Harischandra, Nala and Damayanti, Sati Savitri Ahalya, and others. This was responsible for my earnest desire to study what the foreigners called "Myths" and even today a great archaeologist would welcome me "to cherish my myths", perhaps thinking under an obsession that by post dating those "Myths" he could succeed in shaking my faith, or those of other citizens of India in the well established and well pronounced antiquity of my Shastras and scriptures far beyond the 4000 years B. C. creation of the Christian world.

Nilamatpuranam from its very composition does not appear to be a work of the Rishi begun and completed at one long sitting. It has been on the anvil for fears and the strokes of the hammer have not been uniform. So looseness, introducing of general theories, beliefs, stories and mythically imaginal rhapsodies, have found this valuable tome of important information. This has been responsible for some

confusion as well. If the Puranam were taken up and held in the hand and then shaken off all the superfluities, it would give an interesting story of Kashmir, its formation, its original inhabitants, intruders and their outlaw, and consequential inhabiting of the previous race of people called Kashmiris whose ancestors have been the NAGAS, it has clearly to be borne in mind that the author is one well versed in Sanskrit, saturated with Naga words, terms, idioms, expressions, and has a tradition of centuries, of ages, behind him in making this composition. Even the term NAGA itself need not be taken as a Sanskrit but as a Naga word adopted by the Sanskritists. One can never be sure whether the language employed originally has remained intact during the course of centuries to the time the composition has been actually recorded in black and white. These are the considerations which the present day reader has to keep in mind before he comes to a particular conclusion in a particular matter.

We have to be thankful to Dr. Buhler for his labour of love, and I bow to these German scholars first, and then to English and French savants who have made my Kashmir known throughout the world. After all foreign scholars, whatever their country, environments, surroundings, bring-up and outlook have been, born and bread up in an atmosphere different from that of mine, whenever they have come and had an urge to visit India and then my Kashmir, I and my People were not known to them, and they started comparing my land to Switzerland not Switzerland to Kashmir, or comparing me to a Jew and not a Jew to me a Kashmiri, for they had seen Switzerland and the Jews first. This 'liking' was not confined to land and the people only, but to the hoary scriptures, and other literary works and compositions and introduce Hoiner's Iliad or Odyssey to me rather than my Ramayana and Mahabharata to the people of Rome and Greece. It was but natural. And what our Indian authors, scholars and researchers learnt and then produced was nothing but investiture in the thinking of those 'Foreign Greats' because India was a dependency of Great Britain, and whatever the British Masters wanted the slaves to learn and practise was presented to them in the then "modernised" garb. And the wonder is that whenever I would study an Indian "modern" author, I had to learn what lie had copied from a foreign scholar or a foreign periodical, until Tilak, Aurobindo, Gandhi, Tagore, Malaviya, Jawaharlal, Das, Bose, Savarkar, Parmanand and others taught me I-ness and My-ness first to well understand You-ness and He-ness. It does not mean, no, never, that there is nothing worth learning from foreign scholars and researchers, authors and writers, saints and mystics or their ancient scriptures, philosophies and other thoughtful literature.

Dr. Buhler was not a Kashmiri. He and Dr. M. A. Stein did their best to learn and know about Kashmir through the medium of Kashmiris knowing Sanskrit (and Persian too in some cases). But this did not qualify them to be called Kashmiris for the purpose of fully understanding Kashmir as a Kashmiri would. All the same they have done a wonderful and unforgettable service to the Kashmiris for which they are and will be always remembered with a deep sense of gratefulness. Kalhana has mentioned in his memorable Rajatarangini the Nilamatpuranam in these words: "That land is Protected by Nila, the lord of all the Nagas, whose regal parasol is formed by the circular pond (of the Nilakunda) with the Vitasta's newly rising stream as its stick". And these two compositions of intrinsic worth and invaluable information form the base of Kashmir History, its Kings, and dynasties, its people, high and low, their customs and manners, their rites and rituals, their traditions and faiths, their economic condition and administrative structures, and so on. Kashmir was geographically an isolated realm accessible to the few interested either as invaders or as visitors (more political than sight-seers), intent upon knowing the people and their faith and everything concerning them as far as possible, and required for state purposes. The Nilamata has information in regard to the origin of Kashmir, its aboriginal, their beliefs, their mode of living, their general behaviour, occupation and the like. It will be interesting to find in its hoary pages what the general trend and tone of descriptions is. The most dominant is Manes-worship, then comes worship of gods and goddesses. While dealing with and talking of ancestors (pitris) the author describes how shraddhas have to be performed, what offerings to make not without dakshina, (cash and kind) to priests performing the shraddhas. Even in shraddhas the ceremonies are prefaced with worship (puja) of specified deities & gods and goddesses a thing which throughout the Hindu (brahman) world continues even unto this day and will continue for ever. But there is a demarcation between shraddha functions, and other functions like weddings, birthdays, Mekhla (Yajnopavita) etc. If any shraddha ceremony falls on

any of these functions, it is not performed; and nothing connected with shraddha is allowed to be done on that day. This is very important. Even though we never forget our manes and manes-worship, such festivals and functions of worldliness are not intermixed with shraddhas of one's pitris (ancestors). The festivity rules out shraddhas.

In the Nilamatpurana as edited by the two professors mentioned above, verses 804 to 808 describe what should be done in the form of Japa, Homa, shraddhas, austerity, charity etc. on Vaishakha Shukla 2nd and 3rd (dvitiya & tritiya) or lunar 2nd and 3rd of the month of Baisakh April and then slokas 817 to 821 give in detail what is to be done on the Purnima (15th lunar day of Vaishakha (April) in the form of worshipping Brahmans with sesame, of Homa (sacrificial offering) with sesame, shraddha, lights in temples with sesame and sesame is be given to 5 or 7 Brahmanas with honey to eat, and so on.

In between the two sets of slokas there appear slokas 809 to 816 which describe what should be done to celebrate the Birthday or Jayanti of Mahatma Buddha, which includes acting, dancing, but which is evidently a contradiction to the observance of tila shraddha, tila eating, tila sacrifice, etc. This contradiction without any doubt leads to the inference that the slokas 808 to 817 are an interpolation in the Puranam inserted to fall in line with the accepted belief in the incarnation (avatara-ship) of Buddha in the rest of India, made by some later interpolator, which has been responsible for the fixation of the date of 7th Century A.D. for the Puranam by Dr. Buhler, and this dating has been accepted by the joint editors of the Puranam, and now by other authors and scholars and writers who have dealt with or written upon this Purana. This is an interpolation and can in no case be taken as the evidence for establishing the date of composition of the NILMATA. On the other hand, there is sufficient evidence in the Purana itself which establishes beyond doubt that this Puranam must have been written several centuries before Christ, and the Nirvana of Buddha. And in support of that are the various rites and rituals, which are still observed at this time in the twentieth century.

As mentioned in the Puranam, there are very important landmarks which confirm that it is of a very old time and not of the 7th century as arbitrarily fixed by Dr. Buhler and followed by easygoing writers. For instance the Purnima of Shravana month (August) nowadays we celebrate as the day of Lord Shiva, and non-Kashmiri Hindus call it RAKHRI. It is the Purnima when the pilgrims to the Holy Cave at Swami Amarnath Ji have darshan of the Holy Lingam, led as they are by the Holy CHHARI every year there. The Chhari is not mentioned, nor the pilgrimage. What is mentioned in the Puranam is that at the junction of Vitasta and Sindhu rivers (which is now called Prayag at Shadipora) people should take a bath and then worship the god of gods "Sharangin" (the archer Vishnu). And how that should be done is described in slokas 853 to 856. It will be marked that it is the Naga custom that is followed viz. that of playing with girls in water. Why Sharingin is mentioned is as far as one can see attributable to the nature of the amorous play after the archer though said to be Lord Vishnu, but correctly speaking the Archer Cupid or Kamadeva is worshipped. And this playing with girls is to be done "Visheshena". This custom must have, been far older, even before Buddha was born, and his name and teachings and later philosophical invasion of Kashmir took place. In Kashmir, Shaivism was also preceded by Shaktism, and if we say that Kashmir is more the land of Shakti than Shiva, we are but within our proper bounds; because even now wherever you go you find the shrines of Devi (Shakti) spread over, these worshipped and maintained more than the temples of Shiva. If Vishnu is not worshipped here in Kashmir, it is because of the same Shakti Puja which the Vedic Aryan Rishi, the author of Nilamatapuranam harmonised with the introduction of 'SATI and SATI SAR' .... because one does not know what the Nagas called this inland sea in their tongue and making her responsible for the desiccation of this watery abode of Shakti, the Lake or inland Sea.

Again, the custom of celebrating the festival of Chaitra Purnima and the day after, with dance, women, liquor, and Ira flowers indicative of cupidity; things which are of Naga origin and belong to Naga time, and have been faithfully recorded by the Rishi of Nilamata with his Aryan touch. When we come across the festival of celebration of the fall of First Snow, it is a very very old custom, and people are asked to celebrate it with songs, dances, liquor, and what is remarkable is that "shyama devi" is to be honoured or worshipped, which I would interpret as young, beautiful girls whom Shastras would call Shyama, decked in new clothes and adornments, and enjoy the festival with friends, servants, relations, and eat special

dishes on snow covered with heavy cloth (I think it refers to the heavy woollen flooring like Lois). This markedly is to be celebrated with <verse> on this fall of snow. This is definitely a Naga custom of very olden times which has come down to us intact, though with the centuries of Buddhism that invaded in between this custom had lost its fervour, and it was only after the ouster of Buddhism that it regained some of its original charm. We keep it alive by "nav shin kharun" and asking the person tricked to entertain the "tricker" (the use of these two terms may be pardoned) on the occasion. This custom could not have been mentioned in the 6th or 7th century when Kashmir was under the influence of Buddhism and it was a time when there was a struggle between the past and the present, and forces to usher in Lalitaditya and his halcyon days, day of glory for Kashmir, were to make themselves felt all rounds.

In short, when we go through the Puranam and the rituals and customs mentioned very carefully, it becomes clear that the Puranam has an older, much older, chronology than ascribed to it. It is true there are some customs and rites which are not mentioned in the Puranam, those were not then observed, and have come into vogue later. It will be seen that the author of the Puranam does not mention the hill Gopadri, which was known so during the reign of king Gopaditya ( 369 B. C. ). So, the composition must have been made before that date. This Gopadri became known as Shankaracharya after the visit in the 8th century A. D. of Adi Shankaracharya Ji to Kashmir, when both Gopadri hill and the Jyeshtheshwar temple on it were given the new name in his honour. For fear of length, I content myself, and I hope my readers will also remain content with what has been recorded above, which undoubtedly establishes that the Nilamatapuram is of a date much earlier than Buddha, and that the mention of Buddha Jayanti is a later interpolation which does not fit in with what is written about Dvitiya or Tritiya and the Purnima of Vaishakha... KALOHAM (I AM TIME).

## **7 Pancastavi In Kashmir**

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**Dr. B. N. Pandit**

**The** Pancastavi is a collection of five hymns sung in the praise of Mother Goddess Tripura, the personified absolute Godhead of the lord. God is Siva in his ever static transcendental aspect. He is the theistic Absolute reality of Saiva monism. He is Himself Sakti, the absolute divine power of Godhead in His ever dynamic immanent aspect. Both Siva and Shakti are thus one and the same reality. Such two concepts of Sivahood and Shaktihood, known under the two names are worked out with respect to the ultimate absolute reality just for the sake of the perfectness of understanding on the part of seekers of the truth. God is to be realized by them in both His static and dynamic aspects. He remains ever pure, even while appearing in the forms of numerous creations and dissolutions of countless universes containing all sorts of beings, objects, sin, piety, etc. To create, to preserve and to dissolve the phenomenal existence as well as to conceal the real nature of subjective beings and to reveal it to them are the five divine activities of God and that is His Godhead which is His very essential nature. Had He not possessed such nature of Godhead, He alone would have existed: no other subject or any object would at all, have appeared and that would have meant a dreadful nihilism, without any charm about it. All charm lies in the divine activities of God. The highest degree of charm lies in recognizing and realizing one's own self as none other than Almighty God Himself. No recognition is possible without forgetting, because recognition is a kind of recollection of some previously known but subsequently forgotten, particulars of a person or a thing. God, pushing playfully His nature of Godhead into oblivion, appears as a finite being and He, revealing it again to such a being, recognizes His own nature of Godhead. Fire is realized to be fire only through the realization of its powers to illuminate, to give heat, to burn and so on.

We put our fingers inside the ashes in our "Kangri" to examine if there is fire in it. If we feel sufficient warmth we become sure about the existence of fire. God is realized through the realization of the powers of Godhead. When an adept practitioner of spiritual sadhana feels actually his powers to create, to dissolve, to make and to unmake things at his free will, he realizes himself as none other than God. Discussions and debates without such realizations are futile. Parrots also can conduct such discussions, if trained to do so. A Spiritual aspirant has to realize all divine powers in him. For such purpose he has to meditate and contemplate upon the dynamic aspect of the Absolute and that is its Sakti aspect. The worship of higher and superior deities help in the attainment of such realization and all such deities, right up to lord Sadasiva, are different types of outward manifestations of the Godhead of God. Therefore any worship, that is ever performed by any spiritual aspirants, is in fact the worship of the Godhead of God. Sakti alone is thus the real object of spiritual worship. Therefore the worship of Sakti becomes an essential element of the sadhana of Saiva aspirants. Bhatta Kallata, Bhatta Pradyumna and Abhinava Gupta were staunch worshippers of Sakti. Hymns sung in praise of the absolute Godhead of God, the Divine Mother of the whole universe, are therefore accepted as part and parcel of Saivism. Pancastavi is thus a beautiful Saiva Sastra composed in poetic form. It is as good a Saiva Sastra as the "Sivastotravli" of Utpaldeva and is practically as much popular with the Saivas of Kashmir as the latter. For the sake of conducting the divine drama of the five divine activities of Godhead and also for the sake of the fulfilment of the longings of worldly beings, God appears in the universe in the form of numerous divine beings, belonging to both male and female sexes, assisting each other in their duties in the divine administration. All such forms of God become objects of worship for aspirants desirous of attaining worldly, heavenly and spiritual aims of life. Female deities are very often much more suited to human beings having still some human weaknesses in them because the approach of such female deities towards them is very much motherly in its character. Such an approach on their part does not ignore the human weaknesses of their devotees and therefore these deities direct worldly souls, step by step, towards upward ascent to higher stages of spiritual evolution. Such deities do not resent the passionate longings of worldly beings for the attainment of sensual enjoyments. Granting such enjoyments to them through right means, these motherly deities carry them steadily and slowly to some higher spiritual states and finally

lead them to the highest state of perfect liberation from all bondage and to the actual attainment of perfect Sivahood, that is the position of absolute Godhead. It is on this account that Tantric Saivism and Saktism attach greater importance to the worship of God in His female aspect, the aspect of His absolute motherhood and Pancastavi contains religiophilosophic lyric poetry of a very high standard eulogising such female aspect of God. Therefore it has become very popular with the Saivas of Kashmir.

The first one among the five hymns of Pancastavi bears several commentaries in Sanskrit. It alludes to several doctrines of the Tantric worship of mother Goddess through the use of the bijamantras and has therefore attracted the attention of commentators, well-versed in Tantric sadhana. One of the commentators names the hymn as Tripura-bhaiyavistava. All the five hymns can be counted among the best examples of the most beautiful religio-philosophical lyrics. Many esoteric doctrines of Sakta-sadhana and Tantric yoga, described through the medium of poetry, can be found in all the five hymns in abundance. The principles of Saiva-Sakta monism also have been expressed likewise at many places. The similarities in the poetic style, the views on the methods of sadhana, the expression of the doctrines of philosophy and the general literary character of all the five hymns prove it beyond doubt that all of them are the works of one and the same philosopher-poet. A spontaneous rise of the poetic inspiration, capable of creating charming poetry, has been counted among the signs of a devotee on whom God bestows His forceful divine grace.

Thus says Malinivijaya

***Tatraitat prathamam cihnam Rudre Bhaktih suniscata, Kavivam pancamam ineyam  
salankaram manoharam. (M V T. II 14 to 16)***

The author of Pancastavi was surely one among such philosopher poets. He has not said anything about his personal history except that the Mother Goddess had been pleased to grant him all the worldly pleasures through honest and respectable means. He says thus about it.

***Yace na Kancana na kancana Vancayami  
Seve na Kancana nirasta - samasta - dainyah.  
Slaksnam vase madhuram-admi bhaje varastrim  
Devil hrdi sphurati me kula-kama-dhenuh.***

***( P.Sh. III-19)***

The highest thing prayed for by the poet is a constant engagement in the worship of the Mother Goddess by means of the activities of all his senses and organs. He says about it:

***Tvad-rupaika - nirupana-pranayita-bandho drsos tvadguna - Grama Karnana ragita  
sraavanayos tvat samsmrtis cctasi,***

***Tvat padarcana - caturi karayuge tvat kirtanam vaci me kutrapi tvadupasana vyasanita me  
Devi ma samyatu,***

***(P.Sh.II-29)***

Pancastavi is highly popular with the pandits of Kashmir who sing it regularly at the time of their daily worship at their homes and especially at the religious places of the Mother Goddess. On account of such popularity of the poem in Kashmir, many articles of Kashmirian writers have been appearing from time to time on Pancastavi at Srinagar and Delhi. Many things about the hymns and their author have thus come to light. But some important facts which have escaped the attention of the writers of such articles are being brought to light in the paper at hand. Pancastavi has been enjoying popularity in Kashmir from ancient times, as its verses have been quoted as examples by Mammata- Acharya in his Kavyaprakasa in the twelfth century. On account of this popularity of the poem, writers in Kashmir have been tempted to believe that its author lived in the valley. An oral tradition is prevalent in Kashmir which says that the work was composed by Abhinavagupta on the occasion of his discussions on Saktism with Sankaracharya, the great Vedantist teacher Sivopadhyaya, an eighteenth century author and renowned teacher of Saivism, refers to the meeting of the two great philosophers in his Srividya, a small work

aiming at a mutual reconciliation between Tantric Saivism and Upanisadic Vedanta. He says that a boy disciple of Abhinavagupta getting just an indication from his preceptor, stood up and in order to impress the importance of Saktis on Sankaracharya, uttered Laghustava as a spontaneous flow of poetry coming out of the speech of an "Asukavi". Many other similarly wonderful but fantastic things about the meeting of the two great teachers are still being heard from old pandits of Kashmir.

There is a gap of at least two hundred years between the times of these two great teachers of monism. All the traditional tales about their meeting are therefore based on mere fiction. Such tales do not establish any historical fact. The tradition of writing such fictitious accounts of the lives of great religious-philosophic teachers is based on the policy of the authors of the later Puranic mythology. One of its fresh traditions was laid down by Madavacharya in the fourteenth century. He wrote an extensive poetical work name 'Sankra-digvijaya' after about five hundred years from the time of Sankaracharya. While doing so he did not adhere to the account of the religious activities of that great teacher as given by Anantanandagiri in his Sankaravi Jaya-Kavya which was written after only about a hundred years from the time of Sankaracharya. Madavacharya wrote his poem only on the basis of his poetic imagination and personal devotion. It contains many fictitious stories and hardly any correct historical accounts. About ninety percent of it is mere fiction with just about ten percent of history in it.

Such tales about the life of Sankaracharya, as had been recorded by Madavacharya, and as had been built upon further by his followers, were imported to Kashmir in the later part of the fifteenth century by some such pandits of Kashmir that had been earlier driven out of the valley by Sikandar butshikan and were later invited back and rehabilitated in the valley by Sultan Zainulabadin. They had picked up devotion for Sankaracharya while wandering in the plains of India. But these of the pandits of Kashmir, who were highly devoted to teachers like Abhinavagupta followed the policy adopted in Sankaradivijaya and fabricated, likewise, many fantastic stories of the opposite type through that very power of poetic imagination, which had been used by Madhavacharya. It is a wonder that most of the research scholars of today do not at all care to examine the authenticity of such imaginary accounts and go on quoting Sankaradigvijaya as an authority on the history of Sankaracharya. Madhavacharya says at one place that Abhanivagupta, a Sakta commentator of Brahmasutra, living in Assam (Kamarupa) was a Tantric sorcerer who applied sorcery to Sankaracharya with the result that the latter developed a dangerous disease name bhagandhara in his lower intestine. There is no evidence that can establish the existence of any scholar under the name Abhinavagupta other than the great Saiva author of Kashmir. The story is thus purely imaginarily in character. The description of the temple of Sarda, as given by Madhavacharya, is also based mostly on poetic imagination. Similarly the stories prevalent in Kashmirian tradition are also mere fiction. The account of Laghustava, as having been uttered by a boy disciple of Abhinavagupta, is also based on oral tradition of an imaginary character. Its having been composed by some Lagvacharya is the imagination of the commentator. There is neither any internal nor any external evidence to prove the correctness of any such thing.

Nityanada, an ancient commentator of some tantric works, says that Laghustava was composed by a poet named Dharmacharya. This fact has been corroborated by Vidyaranya, a fourth degree disciple in the line of Sankaracharya, in his Srividya-mavatantra. Referring to the "Maya-Kundalini" verse, he says that a particular theological doctrine had been indicated by Dharmacharya through the verse concerned in this Laghustava: Satu Sri-Dharmacarya varyaih svakiye Laghustave "mayakundalini" ityadi-slokena sucitah. (V.T.Ch. 31 P.654) The author of that Tantra appeared after about one hundred years from the time of Sankaracharya and Dharamcharya preceded him. As all the five hymns appear to be the works of one and the same author, the whole of Pancastavi was composed by him.

As far the domicile of Dharmacharya, the author, he appears to have been a southerner belonging probably to Kerala. The facts given below strengthen such view:

i. Pancastavi resembles Saundaryalahari of Sankaracharya, a Keralite, in its technique and also in its theological as well as philosophic contents.

ii. It alludes to the importance of Sabari as the most favourite form of the Divine Mother goddess worshipped by her devotees. Worship of Sabari holds such position in the Kerala tradition of Tantric Sadhana, but not in the Kashmirian tradition.

iii. Pancastavi does not contain even the slightest mention of any of the kali deities popularly worshipped by Saivas of Kashmir, especially by Somananda, Abhinavagupta and Jayaratha.

iv. The Yoga system that has been mostly and highly praised in Pancastavi is neither the Trika Yoga nor the Kaula Yoga, the two systems which were highly popular among the Saiva/Saktas of Kashmir. The hymns allude to the highest importance of Kundalini Yoga, which does not enjoy any prominent position in the Kashmirian tradition but is highly popular in the south as its highest importance has been accepted in both Tamilian and Canaries works on Siddhanta Saiva and Virasiava respectively. But Kashmir Saivism does not give much importance to Kundalini Yoga. There it can be included in Karanayoga of the Trika System and such yoga has been assigned there the third step in the descending order in the third type of yoga named Anavobaya. Saundaryalahari of Sankaracharya also describes kundalini-yoga as the means of unity with the Absolute.

v. There is not even the slightest allusion to the Sambhavayoga or even to any special variety of Sakta yoga of the Trika system in any of the five hymns of Pancastavi.

vi. Some practices of Kriyayoga have been alluded to in it, but any specific type of Anavayoga, like Uccara, Karana etc. of the Trika system has not been at all hinted at in Pancastavi.

vii. Abhinavagupta and Siddhanatha (alias Sambbhunatha) have eulogized special deities of Kramanya in accordance with the Sadhana of Saktopaya, but such deities do not find any place either in Pancastavi or in other stotras like Saundarya Lahari and Subhagodaya of the south.

viii. Pancastavi follows thus a typically Kerala tradition of theology rather than the Kashmirian tradition.

ix. Pancastavi does not resemble even the Tattuagrabha-Stotra, a hymn to Mother goddess by Bhatta Pradyamna, the chief disciple of Bhatta Kallata. The resemblance with Saundary-Lahari is on the other hand, immensely remarkable.

x. The only important common element between the Sadhanas of the Trika system and Pancastavi is the worship of Tripura with the help of three bijamantras named Vagbhava, Kamaraja and Saktibija but that is one of the highest common factors of nearly all the Tantric systems of Saiva/Sakta theology.

xi. The Philosophic principle of absolute and theistic monism is also a common element of all monistic Saiva/ Sakta traditions and cannot lead to any specific conclusion.

It is thus clear that Pancastavi does not follow the Kashmirian tradition of Sakta theology but follows the Kerala one. Acharya Amrtavagbhava, a highly advanced practitioner of Saiva/Sakta theology, has also recorded such facts about Pancastavi in the introduction of the work published through his efforts and instructions. As for its highest popularity in Kashmir, that cannot lead to any definite conclusion. Makundamala by Kulasekhara Alvara of Tamilnadu also enjoys such popularity in Kashmir and stories about this author also have been heard by the present writer in his boyhood. Poetic imagination has always been a strong element in the character of Kashmiri brain and Kashmiris were ever since used to such creation of fiction that looked as history. In fact this tendency also existed in some lower or higher measure In all literary writers of India, Madhavacharva is typical example of such poetic writers. Being himself a Kashmiri, the present writer would also like that a beautiful poetic work like Pancastavi were attributed to the pen of some Kashmirian author, but the facts mentioned above do not allow him to think in such terms.

There is however no doubt in the fact that Dharmacharya, the author of Pancastavi, was a master of Saiva/Sakta monism and belonged to the whole of India from Kanyakumari to Kashmir and from Kamarupa to Dwaraka.

## 8 Panchastavi - A Brief Study

Prof. K. N. Dhar

### 8.1 Prologue

The compound word 'Panchastavi' in ordinary parlance connotes a collection of devotional hymns divided into five cantos. The very first verse of the first canto remakes it abundantly clear that these panegyrics are essentially meant for the 'Rainbow-hued' Divine Energy comprising the 'speech' and 'resplendence of symbols'. Moreover the whole gamut of Alphabet from AA to Ksa is presided over by this Transcendental Energy; and to speak squarely, it is the progenitor of the sound and sense. At times it has been equated with super-knowledge, bliss and even this whole cosmic world. Moreover, this 'super-marvel' Maha-maya creates and annihilates this world of sound and sense by the triple formula of desire, perception and action. However it is also to be conceded that this poetic work is essentially an allegory in which the mental experience of supreme consciousness has been clothed in the flesh and blood of words to make it appear as physical or concrete. The poet has very candidly referred to this approach in the fifth canto (6th verse). So the 'Benign Motherhood' of that 'Primeval Energy' has become the focal point throughout the pages of this devotional composition.

### 8.2 Title of the Composition

But this word five pancha or, the original panchan has many other shades of meaning, moreso with the Saiva philosophers, which naturally must have weighed with the poet while giving a name to his composition. So, it will not be out of place here to , allude to those shades contained in the number five, so as to comprehend exactly as to what the poet wants to express by its use. Perhaps this contention presupposes that the devotee-poet has deliberately confined his imagination to five cantos (stavas) only, so as to make it synchronize with other shades of meaning contained in this number.

In 'TantraSadbhava' - a Shaivistic treatise, the Divine Energy has been described as five-fold, panch-mantra gata and also Panch-vidha having five forms. Herein clear reference has been made to the five modes of reciting a Mantra or an incantation with syllabic instants (Kala). These are Ishana with five instants, Tatpurusha with four. Aghora with eight; vamadeva with thirteen and Sadyojata also with eight respectively, making a total of thirty eight, which works out to be the exact number of consonants in the Alphabet.

The school of cognition in the Shaiva-lore takes five as the synonym of five duties which are Abhasan appearance, rakti attachment, Vimarshan scrutiny, Bija source, and avasthapanam establishing. These five duties or the stages of perception are also extricable part of the muttering of an incantation Japa-vidhi; hence the reference to mantroddharah delivering an incantation is not without purpose in Panchastavi.

Moreover, this pentad of devotional poems is essentially a treatise on Para-vidya super knowledge, as conceived by the Shaivas. Naturally to spell out its contrast with the negation of knowledge avidya - Ignorance, the poet must have made its five-fold division in his mind. This ignorance comprises tamah - error- Moha - illusion-, Maha-mohah - obduration-, tamisrah -fallacy, and andha mental blindness; copious references throughout the text of Panchastavi for dispelling tamah - error moha - illusion etc. have been made in this context. " Consequently these concomitants of ignorance are to be crossed, so that Super knowledge may dawn which is also called Shuddha Vidya or sad- vidya) by the Shaivas, which can be attained by adopting the course prescribed in Shuddhadhvan - the pure path. The Shaivas also believe that the purusha - the limited individual self has five envelopments of niyati - confinement, Kalah - experience of changes in time, Ragah - attachment, Vidva -limited knowledge and Kala -limited authorship. The cumulative effect of these aberrations produces Maya (obduration) and this can be removed completely by Shuddha vidya, the pure knowledge as alluded to above. Actually Maya obduration, is the name given to non-identity between Shiva and Shakti. So the poet invokes the 'Immanent Mother' Sakala Janani - to emancipate all the living beings from this 'knot of Maya'.

As a corollary to this, having overcome Maya (obduration) the experiencer has to traverse five stages of sad-vidya, assimilative consciousness (Aishvarya). All pervasive conscious-self, Sadakhya, objective conscious self, Shakti tattva predicative manifestation, and Shiva-tattva subjective conscious-self, so as to identify himself with the Parama Shiva (Supreme conscious-self), the acme of Shaiva realization. The Panchastavi-kara (the composer of Panchastavi) has referred to these in very unambiguous terms also."

In addition to these shades of meaning projecting from five, it cannot be gainsaid that it does not connote the body made up of five elements namely Prithvi, solidity. Apas liquidity, Agni (formativity). Vayu (aeriality) and akasha (etheriality). The recitation of an incantation is definitely a mental drill with physiological basis; so the body - the very first expedient for accomplishing Dharma- is an inevitable part of this mental discipline. Hence the poet is at pains to refer to this Vehicle in his eulogies to the Supreme Energy.

Not only this, in several Tantric works, human body is looked upon as Shri Chakra (disc of bountiful Superhuman power) in which the microcosmic angles of the Energy (Shakti) have been detailed as tvak (Skin), asrah (blood), mamsam (flesh), Meda (lymph) and asthi (bones). The macrocosmic angles have also been defined as the five elements, five tanmatras (subtle elements ) belonging to Shabda (sound), sparsha (touch), rupa (colour), rasa (flavour), and gandha (smell), five senses, of perception, five senses of action and five pranas. This aspect of SHakti (Energy) has been fully brought out not only by Panchastavi but also by another compilation of panegyrics named Saundarya Lahri (the wave of Beautitude) even. Again the five karnas @ur (generative causes) in Shaiva philosophy are Brahma (the progenitor), Vishnu (the nourisher), Rudra (the annihilator), Sada-Shiva, (perennial & immanent conscious spirit) and Ishvara (the supreme Lord). To this belief the poet has succinctly referred in these eulogisms."

Last but not the least, the Shiva from which the Shaivism derives its name, is supposed to have five faces, Panch-mukha, but it is just a corpse (Shavah), without the union, with Energy (Shakti). This very thought has been expressed by the author in dexterously fine poetry. The Saundarya Lahri begins the devotional praise of the Super-Energy with this belief.

So it has been made abundantly clear that the poet, who composed Panchastavi was an ardent Shaiva and had all these shades of five in his mind, when he deliberately selected this very number, so pregnant with esoteric content, for choosing an apt and befitting title for his imagination concentrated in Panchastavi. It could not have been a mere accident or even a happy coincidence; it was wilfully done by him as a conscious artist and a versatile Shaiva.

In tune with the arguments advanced above, it also seems plausible to assert that Shaivism in essence advocates a happy compromise between materiality (bhoga) and spirituality (Yoga), a rewarding attitude to life, and if that balance is tilted in favour of any of the two, that attitude will get disturbed and may not contribute to the well-being of the humanity at large; so when vamacharah (the left hand ritual of the Tantras) pleaded for the introduction of pancha makara (five Ms); naturally as a healthy reaction to this degenerate Tantric ritual which ran counter to the Shaiva teachings, the poet thought it fit to substitute the five eulogiums for five Ms. This conjecture is substantiated by the dig in undertones he has dealt at such believers in his own composition. The use of the words aparey and budhah are significant here. Budhah (the wise, enlightened) call this super-Energy as transcendental (akulam); in contrast with this aparey (others), not enlightened or wise call Her Kaulam personifying Kaulacharah.

### *8.3 Nomenclature of Cantos*

Furthermore, the poet has captioned each canto with a sub-title. Herein also these subtitles have been used not haphazardly but with a purpose.

**First Canto:** The first canto bears the sub-title Laghu (insignificant or light). In the penultimate verse of this chapter, the poet has justified the use of this word and hinted at his insignificance laghustvatmani for undertaking such a lofty yet burdensome task for analysing the Super-Energy. However, also, it seems

that he has tried to play on the word 'Laghu' and in keeping with the Shaivistic tradition tried to keep it occult rahasya sampradayah. As the word discussion has many other meanings also we have to glean any such out of these, which is in consonance with what has been described in this canto.

Without mincing words, it may be said that this canto tries to define, explain and emphasize the purport contained in the aphorism ' Vidya shariratta mantra rahsyam. "The occult power of an incantation is its efficacy to strike identity between the sound and its symbol. " Vidya has been described as nothing other than the symbols (matrika) of the alphabet. Hence the 'origin of letters' and their method of grouping into an incantation and the consequent mode of recitation has been fully dealt with in this canto. This very knowledge of letters has been treated as a fond Mother granting each and every boon to her children. These sounds and symbols (nada, Bindu) emanate from the Muladhara where these are coiled together like a Kundalini - the coiled serpent and traversing twelve stations (dwadash-dalam) approaches the Brahma-randra and then its return or descent into the Kanda or Muladhara begins and it again lies dormant there. The poet, while describing this terse and yet intricate discipline of the breath is alive to the fact that it may not be taken kindly to by the prospective realizers; they might feel diffident to practise this course which seemingly appears guru (weighty, difficult); hence to make it popular and banish all the scare from the minds of the devotees, he has captioned this chapter as Laghu (very light, easy to comprehend). Some say that it is the composition of a devotee named Laghu Bhattaraka, hence the subtitle Laghustava will mean a panegyric composed by Laghu, a diminutive from Laghu Bhattaraka.

**Second Canto:** The second canto, is known as charchastava (the panegyric containing careful study or reflection). Herein the attributes of the Divine Mother ( Energy ) in cosmic form have been fully described. She is also invoked to cut the shackles of birth and rebirth, and to release the devotee from the prison (bondage) of his body. This canto gives in detail the immanent form of the Super-Energy, whereas the first brought into bold relief Her Vishvotteerna transcendental form.

**Third Canto:** The third canto bears the title gatastavah. Gatah is patently derived from Ghat verb meaning to unite, to join or, bring together. Herein the ghatnam or sanghatnam (union) of Shiva and Shakti is complete. The impersonal as described in the first and the personal in the second cantos respectively get fully immersed in each other in this canto just like the water and its container (Ghatah). This coincides with the paraparadasha or bhedabheda vimarshanatmakta (complete identity) for which sadyidya (the perennial and pure knowledge) is also a synonym. Hence the third canto deals with this aspect of knowledge. The Ghatah (pitcher) is looked upon as the body metaphysically by the Yogis and the water inside it is taken to be the soul (Atman). The body of the alphabet (Vidyasharira) has been profusely mentioned in the first Canto, the second locates its soul and the third marks their auspicious blending, hence the use of the word ghatah or the verb ghat. So the poet jeers at those fools who torment their body with various kinds of penance or make themselves paupers by spending lavishly on Yajnas (sacrificial fires) and liberal remunerations. The realizer attaining this stage has not to bother himself with these fruitless rituals. This very union between the sound and the symbol, para (higher) and apara (lower), the immanent and the transcendental. Shiva and the Shakti, Bheda (duality) and abheda (identity) has been very beautifully alluded to by the poet while addressing the Supreme Energy as 'Shabda Brahmamayi'.

**Fourth Canto:** The fourth canto is called Amba Stavah, a panegyric eulogizing the Mother. The word Amba is to be read in the context of Jyeshtha and Raudri. While discussing the origin of letters, the 'Tantra Sadbhava' has to say that Raudri the terrible, on account of the agitation it produces, is the first stage of a letter being conceived. Jyeshtha-'the elderly or prominent' indicates its form being taken, and Amba is the final sound which comes at the tip of the tongue. Hence it is established beyond doubt that embryonic and formative stages of a letter having been described at length in the previous chapters, the fullfledged word having taken shape and being pronounced singly or is a part of an incantation is actually the Amba. This word also means a mother like matrika, hence may also mean vidya Super-knowledge as corroborated by the poet himself in the very first verse of this chapter. Herein, consequently the praises of Vidya have been sung which has been naturally equated with Shakti (energy) without which Shiva is a non-entity ( asamartha ). So, this Amba (Mother) is the real generative power in nature or man ; bereft of Her, this world would look desolate. Moreover, only when Her two lotus - feet are enshrined in the of

hearts people, the puzzling din and strife of obstinacy, argument and counter-argument will cease. In the last verse the poet prepares the ground for captioning the penultimate chapter as 'sakala janani stava' by invoking Her as sakala bhuvana mata (Mother of all the worlds - inanimate or animate) with Her protruding breasts ebbing with the milk of human kindness.

**Fifth Canto:** Sakala (entire or whole) can be expounded in more than one way. It may mean, along with other parts, digits or full, such as sakalaindu (the full moon). It might also connote in the language of Shaivas as sayenjan (with consonants) as against nishkala (avyenjan without consonants one of the methods of japa muttering an incantation. It might also indicate the medial sounds or letters of the incantation with sakala japa vidhih the method of muttering with consonants. The latter part of the compound Janani (Compassionate Mother) makes it more clear and all the same unambiguous. Actually this chapter is devoted to the propitiation of the 'Universal Mother' Jagatmata; and this Universal Mother is maha vidya Super knowledge being beyond speech and argument. This all-pervading Mother represents in Her ownself attributes of creation, sustenance and annihilation, as also the over-lordship and the super-knowledge, thereby exhibiting diversity, out of unity. She showers supreme bliss on those, who take pains to know Her in essence.

#### 8.4 Precise import of Tripurasundari

Before proceeding further it seems pertinent to explain the content of Tripura or Tripura Sundari personifying the 'Divine Energy' and repeatedly used by the poet in all the cantos.

*tri* denotes number three and *pura* means among other things, the body also. The word thus literally will indicate any such woman who has three bodies (tripura) or who represents in herself the beauty of three worlds (whole cosmos). Perhaps to facilitate the exact comprehension of this word, the poet, on his own, has advanced reasons for calling this 'Divine Energy' as Tripura. After enumerating the triple form of gods (Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra), fire (household, sacrificial and of pyre), energies (desire, perception and action), basic vowels, worlds (Bhur, Bhuvah and Svah), Vedas (Rig, Yajus and sama) and other cosmic manifestations, he very convincingly tries to establish that this threefold division is actually an extension of the essence of the Divine Energy, consequently called Tripura. Shaivistic lore confirms this view of the poet, 'Prapanchasara' asserts that 'Ambika' is named as Tripura because of its accent on the three basic vowels. 'Tripurarnava' lays down that the Energy residing in 'Sushumna, pingala and Ida'-Blood Vessels-as also in the mind, intellect and soul is called Tripura. 'Kalika Purana' says since everything is threefold, so she (Divine, Energy) is called Tripura. 'Vamakeshvara -Tantra' believes that Tripura is threefold in the form of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, and also personifies in Herself the three powers of desire, perception and action. 'Varaha Purana' also explains the name on those very lines. Hence the word Tripura is actually the manifestation of triple power of the super-Energy-Raudri, Jyeshtha and Amba-the birth of a letter from the embryo to the actual pronunciation. Letter is an indissoluble part of an incantation, hence the poet feels that Tripura Sundari on being discerned by physical eyes or through mastering a Mantra (mentally) dispells sins and mitigates the fear of death.

Hindu genius has all along provided form (Vyakt BERTE) to the formless (Avyakta), not because it believes that 'Divine Energy' can have any form, but with the sole motive of making that abstract Entity look like a concrete object, especially in human form, so as to make it more acceptable and intelligible to the general masses. To make this approach more impressive and effective the image of the Mother came in handy for them. "An unworthy son may be born, but there can never be a bad- Mother." This attitude is at the root of the Mother- worship so popular with the Hindus. In this way also the so called polytheism grew out of the monotheist. Even in the hoary times of Vedas the seer was constrained to remark "Ekam hi sadvipra bahuda vadanti "The Reality being one is interpreted in many ways." On the same analogy the poet-devotee of panchastavi has provided all the human attributes to Her, and yet made her look superhuman. Hence Tripura in essence being an abstract feeling of mind, has been painted in words pulsating with undivided devotion as a 'Loving Mother'; such discipline of mind is a mental experience beyond the domain of physical words. This discipline will remain incomplete, if the mention of the

common belief is not made that Tripura is the consort of Tripurari (shiva). Propitiation of Tripura is still performed in Kashmir especially by a sect of Kashmiri Pandits, known as Tikus, presumably a Kashmiri rendering of trik.

### **8.5 The name of the Composer**

Unfortunately for us, the poet has maintained sphinx-like silence about his name, time or lineage throughout the length and breadth of his versified composition. However strange it might seem, but it is all the same true about many Sanskrit authors of repute. Even Kalidasa, the prince among poets has been also reticent about himself. Barring a few authors like Bilhana and Ksemendra, the date and name of whole galaxy of Sanskrit luminaries of Kashmir is still a matter of research. In the Shaivistic literature only Abhinavagupta has given his brief biographical sketch and some dates in one of his stotaras devotional panegyrics. Herein his versatility has to be thanked, otherwise the Hindu attitude of mind by and large feels shy of publicity more so, of self-advertisement.

In 1917 A. D. T. Ganapati Shastri brought out an edition of the first chapter of Panchastavi naming it as Laghustuti with the Sanskrit commentary of one Raghvananda. On the authority of the commentator he put down the name of the poet as Laghu Bhattaraka:

#### **<verses>**

However, he has also referred to another commentary on the same treatise which to quote him is very voluminous and consists of nearly two thousand verses by some Parameshwaracharya. This commentary is not still out, hence nothing can be said about it. Had this commentary been made available after getting it printed, who knows many knotty problems would have been solved. In his introduction the learned Shastri has not referred to Panchastavi at all, and has, for all practical purposes, thought these 21 verses to be an independent work, and not the first canto of Panchastavi. Curiously enough the commentator Raghvananda also has not made the mention of Panchastavi or its other cantos even once directly or indirectly. This intriguing silence poses many questions which deserve plausible answers. Firstly, it seems that Panchastavi as a whole is unknown in the south and only its first chapter has gained currency there. Therein also the original Stava has been substituted by Stuti even though both mean the same thing. Moreover, it is thought to be a Composition of some Laghu Bhattaraka.

It is very well known that Shaivism of the south is predominantly dualistic in content. Madhvacharya (A.D. 1199-1276) has described: 'Shaiva Darshan' as, a, dualistic system, which is fundamentally at variance with the Monistic system which thrived only in Kashmir. Nimbarka (A. D. 1162) emphasizes that it is from duality bheda that non-duality abheda can be realized. In the Tantric literature a clear division has been made on the basis of duality and non-duality; hence the Tantras like Kamaja, Yogaja, etc. numbering ten have been ascribed to the dualistic school of Shaivism. Therefore it seems surprising that a composition like this advocating non-duality should come from the south. As will be made clear later Panchastavi as a whole, beyond any doubt, breathes an air of being composed in Kashmir, and to crown all, by a Kashmiri author. Hence it seems plausible to surmise that the text of only one canto was commented upon by Raghvananda for propounding a faith which would have raised many eyebrows there. If we contend that the other four cantos were lost, it will not be tenable in the face of his not referring to any one of these in his commentary. For fear of being misinterpreted and also misunderstood, he stopped at the conclusion of the first chapter. Perhaps this will also solve the puzzle of substituting Stutih for Stava by him. Even though both these words mean the same thing, yet in usual practice Stava is a collection of stutih; Had he used the original Stavah he would have then betrayed the knowledge of other Stavahs also. Hence he changed the word to Stutih without impairing its connotation as in the original, and also thereby implied that he knew nothing about other cantos. Our poet has used the Stutih (praise) in the same context, which confirms our belief in the rightness of this conjecture. Raghvananda wanted it to look like an independent and single Stutih (praise) of the 'Supreme Energy' like 'Saundarya Lahri' or Bhairavastuti of Abhinava Gupta.

Bhattaraka or Bhattara is an appellation of respect or esteem joined with the names of either very learned Brahmins or Kings, its diminutive Bhattah still survives as a generic name for Kashmiri Pandits. In south no such practice is in vogue perhaps with the exception of Kumarilla Bhatta; so Laghu Bhattaraka seems also to be a Kashmiri Brahmin; 'Laghu' taken as an adjective would mean 'quick witted' or one who was so proficient as to give the minutest details Laghava (noun) about the Supreme Energy. Hence it can not be the actual name of the author but a commendatory epithet used by the commentator for his erudition and devotion. On the analogy of *raiyauhabhedah* (Panini's diction in his sutras) it strikes as the name of the commentator itself *laghava* becoming *Raghava*. Hence we come to the conclusion that the commentator did not know the real name of the poet and to be on the safe side ascribed it to a quick-witted Kashmiri Brahmin Laghu - Bhattarka and thereby inserted his name also with it.

Lakshmi Dhara in his commentary on - Saundarya Lahri while quoting from Panchastavi has referred to its author as an 'Acharya' generally, but in one case has referred to Kalidasa particularly also in this context. However, we can authoritatively say that he is not the famous Kalidasa of Raghuvarnsha or Shakuntala repute. It might mean "A votary of Kali," some Acharya who was a devotee of Kali is perhaps meant by him.

In some manuscripts in the possession of the Kashmir Government Research Library the name of the author has been given as Laghavacharya, and in some as Acharya Prithvi Dhara, disciple of Shambhunatha. In one Ms the name of the poet has been written as Shri Ramchandracharya. Kashmiri tradition ascribes it to Abhinava Gupta. In the quoted verses from Panchastavi used by commentators of 'Vidyarnava' and 'Saubhagya Ratnakara' the author has been mentioned as Dharmacharyah. Nityananda, the commentator of Tripura Mahimastotra also corroborates the same view. Harabhatta Shastri, the reputed local scholar also has taken Dharmacharyah to be its author.

The very fact that there is no unanimity of views about the authorship of Panchastavi leads us easily to think that actually the author has wanted to remain anonymous to which view the last verse of the first canto also subscribes. The use of *Laghustvatmani* (insignificance of his own self) debars him to proclaim his name. This is the zenith of humility and knowledge has been acclaimed as the giver of the same. As to the names Acharya, Kalidasa and Dharmacharyah, we may say that actually these are not the proper names but assumed ones. Acharya may mean a preceptor and Dharmacharyah accordingly indicates a preceptor of Dharma, here Shaiva Dharmah ostensibly. At times even scribes when not finding the name of the author therein, may have put in their name in his stead. In the absence of any indisputable and authentic evidence, we are forced to conclude that the authorship of Panchastavi is an un resolved mystery.

### ***8.6 Date of Composition***

Panchastavi is the quintessence of Tantric scriptures of non-dualistic school. The earliest extant reference to its verses used as quotations are found in the Saraswati Kanthabharana of King Bhoja. The probable date of the composition of Saraswati Kanthabharan is between 1030-1040 A. D. Hence Panchastavi must have been composed much earlier to it; by the time of Bhoja its poetic merit (leaving devotional apart) must have been established on firm footing, only then it could deserve a place in this work on poetics. Moreover Saundarya Lahri whose authorship is ascribed to Shankaracharya, does in a way, treat the same thought as couched in the Panchastavi.

For this very reason Lakshmi Dhara has quoted profusely from it. It is very difficult to say as to which composition of these two is earlier; in other words, what debt they owe to each other is a subject of profound research. However it can be said without any fear of contradiction that the subject matter of these two compositions being similar, as also the phrase and idiom at many places, both these might have been composed at the same time when the devotional climate in Kashmir was vibrating with 'Shaivistic Monism'. It is also believed that Shankaracharya was converted to this line of thinking during his sojourn in Kashmir. Local tradition of Kashmir also confirms it. Shankara's date has been fixed between 788-820 A.D. So it seems probable that Panchastavi was also composed during this period, Even if it may be

argued that Panchastavi is posterior to Saundar Lahari, still it could not have been composed by after 1030-1050 A.D. in any case. The upper limit may be fixed at 788-820 A.D. Shankara's visit to Kashmir and consequently composing Saundarya Lahari by him, and the lowest limit is furnished by the date of Bhoja's treatise on poetics (Saraswati Kanthabharna) i.e. 1030-1050 A.D. During this Span of period out poet's composition must have seen the light of the day. So in all fairness to the author, it may be concluded that Panchastavi must have been composed in the latter half of ninth century and by the time of Bhoja its verses had attained sufficient fame and credence for being included in his work.

### *8.7 Common authorship of five Cantos*

One more point deserves consideration before we conclude this brief study, whether this is the work of one and the same author, who-so-ever, he might have been. On the strength of the internal evidence as well as the external, we have to answer this query in affirmative. The data available to us from the internal evidence conclusively points towards this hypothesis. Besides the astounding similarities of phrase and idiom and even repetition of words, the reference made to Vatsa Raja Udyana who was blessed with plenty and opulence by the Divine Mother, in more than one cantos, corroborates this view. Not only this, in the second factual reference there is mention of a famous Kashmiri king Pravarsena also, who, has been equated with king Udyana. The use of api (also) in the verse itself makes this inference obvious. The king Udyana as also the "Pravara" (Pravarsena) is the correct translation and not 'Udyana pravara' or very esteemed Udyana. Pravara herein is not a qualifying adjective of Udyana, but a noun, name of another king Pravarsena, the use of api (also) can be justified only then, otherwise it seems redundant. The translation thus would be 'king Udyana' (as referred to already in I-12 but also Pravarsena (api) which agrees with the singular sah in the third line, otherwise should have been tau (these two). In this verse, therefore explicit reference to Udyana has been made. Pravarsena has been obviously mentioned explicitly. If the poet had meant to refer to Udyana again, he could not have escaped the blemish of repetition and as such his verses could not have been cited as examples by rhetoricians like Bhoja and Mammata.

Taking this suggestive import into account, we can easily identify as to which Pravarsena is meant by the poet, as Kalhana has given two kings of this name in his Rajatarangini. It seems Pravarsena II (590 A.D. roughly), who was a great warrior and an ardent believer like vatsa Raja Udyana. In Kalhana's own words: "He founded the city of Pravarpura on the outskirts of Sharika Parbat, which formed the centre of the new city". This Sharika Parbat, now known as Hari Parbat is regarded as the abode of the Goddess. So the cause of establishing the capital around Sharika Parbat is not far to seek. Being the recipient of favours from the Goddess he wanted to remain permanently under the canopy of Her feet literally. Moreover, verses not only from the I and V cantos, but from II, III and IV have also been quoted by later writers, this fact beyond any doubt establishes that these were the product of a single poet's imagination.

### *8.8 His Kashmiri Origin*

He was a Kashmiri by birth needs no further elucidation. The monistic Shaivism was founded and propagated only here. It could not catch up with other schools of this philosophy, more especially in the south. This poetic composition is found as a whole in Kashmir alone, and from very remote times its verses are on the tongue of the Kashmiri Brahmins. In this connection reference to purely Kashmiri herbs like trupsi also points eloquently towards this conclusion. Moreso, reference to Pravarsena discussed earlier, also substantiates this view. Reference to Udyana in this respect is not so important, as he has been an ideal with most of the Sanskrit poets and Dramatists for his amors, exploits and bravery. Pravarsena is known only to Kashmiris; Kashmiri scholars have often referred to him, but no mention of him has been made anywhere in Sanskrit literature outside Kashmir. Tripura Pooja is exclusively carried on here without any break from times immemorial. Tripura worship outside Kashmir does not seem to be

popular, even Tantriks over there have chosen kali as their Tutelar Deity (Isht Devi). Only the Brahmins of this place persist with this name of the Goddess.

### *8.9 Epilogue*

In the end, it looks quite appropriate to invoke the 'Supreme Energy' in the words of the poet himself who is bold enough like other true Shaivas of Kashmir to announce that caste restriction is no bar to Her propitiation; but only the steadfast intellect and unflinching faith overcomes any impediments whatsoever, ushering in a span of material opulence and spiritual ascendancy for the devotee.

In this context it will be of interest to note here that the charisma of 'Shakti' worship here in Kashmir, prompted 'Adi- Shankaracharya' to pay this tribute to Her immanence and transcendence:

"Oh Youthful Spouse of Shiva, Thou art Mind, Ether, Air, Fire, Water, Earth and dost thereby transform Thyself into the universe. Nevertheless there is nothing beyond Thee. By Thy play Thou dost manifest Thy consciousness and Bliss in the body of the universe."

## 9 Shivismahimna Stotr (Mahimnapar)

Commentary by: Piyaray Lal Raina

### 9.1 Introduction

**Shivismahimna Stotr** or **Mahimnapar** as it is called by Kashmiri Pandits is one of the earliest and one of the most recited Shiva prayer. It is said to have been written by a Gandharva (a demigod or heavenly musician) known as Pushpadanta. He was a great devotee of Lord Shiva. One day he could not get flowers to offer during prayers. He cut flowers from a neighbour's garden without his permission which he realised later on was a sin; though a small one but to wash off that sin he decided to compose his own hymn to Lord Shiva for His forgiveness. Thus he composed thirty-two hymns and at the end of each hymn he offered his tooth as offering instead of flowers. In this way, he composed thirty-two hymns for his thirty-two teeth.

It is a practice in writing of a Stotr (an appreciation) to conclude with writing of a few stanzas stating the rewards for those who conduct that prayer (e.g. a student will succeed in exams, a poor man will be rewarded with prosperity and so on). Thus at the end of thirty-two hymns, we have eleven stanzas offering rewards for those who recite the original thirty-two hymns. However, it is not a common practice to recite stanzas that are written for those seeking rewards.

In Kashmir, we have a tradition of reciting three hymns at the start which may have been composed by some Kashmiri devotee or adopted from some other version. Thus we have 35 hymns instead of thirty-two. Only Kashmiri's recite hymn number 23 and 30. They may be from the original rendering but their recitation by Hindus outside Kashmir has been dropped. They have different hymns for these two in their version, which have been given at the end of Kashmiri version.

It may be stated that the hymns of this stotr are unintelligible to a person who does not have the background knowledge about the contents described in the hymn. It is in this context that a commentary at the end of each hymn has been written.

Recitation of this stotr is rather difficult without some guidance. In the Sanskrit written language it is common to write several words together and while reading these words pronunciation changes depending on what place the combination of words is broken by the reader e.g. words ending with R or S change to H. Similarly when a word is broken at M the next word starts with A. It is the grammar of the language and in no way changes the meaning of the word. In addition, there are various methods of reciting this Stotr. Therefore, it is suggested that one may seek guidance from some knowledgeable person or by reciting along with the recitations rendered by some person on a recorded audio. There are several recordings available in the market. The hymns in this write up have been rendered as per the recitation of Pandit Jasraj award winner of Padma Vibhushan.

The first three hymns of Kashmiri version are:

1

**AADHINAAM AGDM DIVYM VYAADINAAM MUULKRNTNM  
UPDRAVAANAAM DALNM MHADEVAM UPASMHE**

I am worshipping Mahadev –which worship is medicine for mental agonies, destroyer of physical pain, and remover of obstacles.

2

**AHM PAAPI PAP KHIPN NIPUNH SHNKR BHVAAN  
AHM BHITO BHITA BHY VITRNE TE VYSNITA  
AHM DINO DINO DHRN VIDHI SNJS TVM ITRN  
N JAANE HM VKTUMZZZ KURU SKL SHAIKHE MYI KRPAM**

I am a sinner and O Shanker you are quick in destroying sins. I am one who is afraid and you are always there to remove fears of fearful. I am poor and you are always ready to help the poor. I do not know anything more about you that I would like to describe. Please help me to be exact.

3

**JNAAS TVT PAADABJ SHRVN MNN DHYAAN NIPUNH  
SVYM TE NISTIRNA N KHLU KRUUNA TESHU KRUUNA.  
BHVE LEENE DEENE MYI MNN HEENE N KRUUNH  
KTHM NAATH KHAYAATH TVM ASI KRUUNA SAAGAR ITI**

If you are graceful to those who are perfect in praying you at your feet with their mind and speech and get them cross over to bhavsagar(Immortal Bliss) that cannot be called as your grace? If you cannot (will not) help me, who is poor and weak, and deprived of praying at your lotus feet, then how can you be known as Karunasagar (Ocean of Compassion).

**MAIN STROTM**

1

**MHIMNH PAARM TE PRMVIDSHU YDH SDRSHL.  
STO TIR BRHMAADINAAM API TD VSNNAM TVYI GIRH.  
ATH VACHY SRVH SVMTI PRINAAMAA VIDHI GRNN  
MMAA PYESH STOTRE HR NIRP VAADH PRIKRH.**

If the praise of thee by one who is ignorant of the extent of Thy greatness be unbecoming, then the praise of even Brahma and others are inadequate for Thee, and if all remain unblamable by praising Thee according to their intellectual powers then even an attempt on my part to compose a hymn in praise of your greatness is free from any blemish.

2

**ATITH PNTHAANM TV CH MHIMAAH VAN MNSYO  
RTD VYAAVRTTYAA YM CHIKTM ABIDHTE SHRUTIR API  
S KSYS TO TVYHH KTI VIDH GUNNH KSY VISHYH  
PDE TVR VACHEENE PTIT N MNH KSY N VCH**

Thy greatness is beyond the reach of mind and speech. Who (no one can) will praise that which even Vedas describe with trepidation by the method of not this, not this, not this? (Because it is impossible to describe what is Absolute) -How many qualities does that possess and can be perceived by whom? Yet to the form taken later\* by Thee, whose mind and speech do not turn to Him when He revealed Himself.

\* This has reference to the revelation of God in a physical form when He appeared as Sadashiv (Brahman) for the benefit of His devotee

3

**MDHUS FEETA VAACH PRMM AMRTM NIRMIT VTH  
TV BRMN KIM VAAGPI SURGUROR VISMYPDM  
MM TVETAM VAANEEM GUN KTHN PUNYEN BVTH  
PUNAAMEE TYR THES MIN PUR MTHN BUDHIR VYVSITAA**

O Sadashiv Does the praise of even Brahaspati(the teacher of Gods) cause any wonderment to Thee who art the author of the nectar like sweet Vedas?(Vedas are direct revelation of God) O destroyer of Tripura ( a powerful demon ), the thought that by praising Thy glories I shall purify my speech has prompted me to undertake this work.

4

**TVAI SVRYM YT TT JGT UDY RKSHA PRLY KRT  
TRYEE VSTU YSTM TRSRSHU. GUNBINAASU TNUSHU  
ABVYA NAM ASMIN VRD RMNEE YAAM RMNEEM  
VIHNTUM VYAKROSHIM VID DHT IHAI KE JD DHIYH.**

O giver of boons in refutation of Thy divinity which is described by the three Vedas(Rig ved Yujer ved, and Sama ved) who creates, preserves and destroys the world, and who is divided into three bodies (Brahma Vishnu and Mahesh) according to the different qualities( Satvic Rajsic and Tamsic), some thick headed (ignorant) persons offer arguments which are pleasing to the ignorant but (in reality) hateful\*

\* This has reference to Mimaska system which is one of the six systems of Vedanta which does not recognize God in form and He is not cause of creation preservation and destruction of the world.

5

**KIMEEHAH KIM KAYH S KHLU KIM UPAAYS TRIBHUVNM  
KIM AADHAARO DHAATAA SRJIT KIM UPADAANM ITI CH  
ATR KYAI SHVRYAI TV YYN VSR DHUSTHO HTIDHYH  
KUTR KOYM KANSCHN MUKHR YTI MOHAY JGTH.**

To fulfill what desire, having what body, with what instruments, support and materials does that creator indeed create the three worlds?\* This kind of vain argumentation with regard to Thee whose Divine nature is beyond the reach of intellect makes the perverted vociferous to the delusion of mankind\*\*.

\* This has reference to a common belief among people that if they do something they have a definite purpose for doing so and that they need a physical body to do so. Not only this, for making any physical object one needs three things ie some instruments, some materials and a support. Ignorant people want to see these conditions fulfilled in Gods act of creation as well. But such expectations are idle for the simple fact that God is God. He can not be judged by human standards

\*\* This has again reference to Mimasa system They cannot perceive the fact that God is above human perception.

6

**AJNMAANO LOKAH KIM AVYV VNTUPI JGTAAM  
MDHISHTHATARM KIM BV VIDIR ANADRTY BHVTI  
ANEESHO VA KURYAAD BHUVAN JNNE KH PRIKRM  
YTO MNDAS TVAAM PRTY MRVR SMSHO RT IME**

O Lord of gods can the worlds be without origin though they have parts? Is the creation of the worlds (possible) without a creator? Who else but god can begin the creation of the worlds? Because they are fools, they\* raise doubt as regards Thy existence.

\* This has again reference to Mimasa System.

7

**TRYEE SAANKHYM YOGH PSHUPTI MTM VAISHNVM ITI  
PRBHINNE PRSTHAANE PRM IDM ADH PTHYM ITI CH  
RUUCHINAAM VAICHITRYAD RJU KUTIL NANA PTH JUSHAAM NRNAAMEKO GMYH  
TVM ASI PYSAM ARNV IV**

There are different paths (of realization) as enjoined by the three Vedas(Rig veda ,Sama veda, and Yajur veda),such as, Samkhya ,Yoga, Pasupata and Vaishnava\* .Persons following different paths- straight or crooked according as they consider that this path is best or that one is proper due to the difference in temperament, reach Thee alone just as rivers enter the Ocean.

\* This has reference to six orthodox philosophical schools of thoughts that accepted authority of Vedas. These are regarded as complimentary views of the one truth seen from different angles These are:

**Samkhya** This is developed by saint Kapila It accepts two eternal realities Purusha (spirit or non matter)and Prakrati( subtle nature of matter)which consists of three gunas(elements) Rajas, Tamas and Sattwa which combine to produce all existence.

**Yoga.** The author of this school is Patanjali. He defines yoga as means to control fluctuations of mind which can be done in four ways .By knowledge (gyan yoga),meditation (Dhyan yoga),Prayers (Bhakti Yoga)and with the control development unfolding of pertinent laws relating to mind (Raja yoga)

**Vedanta** The author of this school of thought is Badarayana The main belief is that there is Supreme Consciousness or Infinite Reality called Imperishable Brahman and the main object of life is to identify with this Supreme Consciousness through the Atman, the eternal sprit in every individual. This changeless infinite reality is veiled by its own creative power called Maya which projects the infinite changes brought on this world through names forms and activities.

**Mimamsa** The author of this school is Jaimini.He does not recognise god in form and that god is responsible for changes brought about in the world. They believe Vedas are eternal and unchanging

**Vaisesika** The author of this school of thought is Kanada. They believe that every thing in this world is composed of atoms in varying combinations which are un-created, invisible, eternal entities and realise their potentialities when the soul and manas (mind) unite to activate its faculties, whereupon these combine and become visibly manifest as substances.

**Nyaya** The author of this school of thought is Gautama (Not to be confused with Gautam Budha)It maintains that true knowledge can be attained by an analysis and understanding of the nature of knowledge, its source, the validity of its arguments and its methodologies for distinguishing true from false knowledge.

8

**MHOKHSH KHTVANGM PRSHUR AJINM BSM FNINH  
KPAALM CHETI YT TV VRD TNTROP KRNAAM  
SURAASTAAM TAAM RDHIM DDHTI TU BVD BRUU PRNIHITAAM  
NHI SVATMA RAMM VISHY MRG TRSHNAA BHRM YTIH**

O Giver of boons, a great bull, a wooden club, an axe, a tiger skin, ashes, a human skull and the like - these are Thy sole possessions, though by the mere casting of eye Thou gave to gods great treasures which they enjoy\*. Indeed the mirage of sense objects cannot delude one whose delight is in the self.

\* Sadashiv is the master of all and giver of boons and all treasures and yet for Himself He enjoys a simple life. To save Gods from asuras He participated in Sagar Manthn(Churning of oceans).For Himself He kept poison which was one of the objects that came out of ocean to save His creation but gave away all the whealth that came out of it to Gods. He held all the poison in His throat which made his throat blue, the colour of poison and hence He is refered to Neelkanth (blue throat)as well.

9

**DHRUVM KSHCHIT SRV SKLM APRS TV DHRVM IDM  
PRO DHROUYA DHRDUYE JGTI GDTI VYST VISHYE  
SMSTE PYE TASMIN PURMTHN TAIRVIS MIT IVH  
STUVN JIRHEMI TVAAM N KHULU NNU DHSTAV MUKHRATA**

O Destroyer of Pura,\* some say that the whole universe is eternal, while others say that all is transitory. Yet others maintain that all these are eternal and non eternal having different characteristics\*\*.

Bewildered, as it were by them I do not feel ashamed to praise Thee. Indeed this garrulity indicates my audacity.

\* This has reference to the destruction of Tripura sur A demon who was very power full and was destroyed by lord Shiva.

\*\* This refers to various schools of thoughts as stated above (See Hymn7)

10

**TVAI SHRUYM YT NAD YDUPRI VIRMCHIR HRI RDH. PRICHCHETUM YATA VNLNM  
ANLSKNDH VPUSHH  
TTO BHKTI SRDHA BHR GURUU GRND BYAM GIRISH YT  
SVYM TSTHE TABYAM TV KIM ANUVRTIR N FLTI**

O Grisha,(One who lives on the mountain Kailash –ie Lord Shiva), Brahma trying above and Vishnu trying below failed to measure Thee who took the form of a pillar of fire. After wards when they praised

Thee with great devotion and faith Thou revealed Thyself to them of Thy own accord, indicating Thy worship can not go without bearing result.\*

\* This has reference to a Puranic story. Brahma and Lord Vishnu had an argument as to who among them is senior. Just then a huge column of fire appeared in the sky. They stopped their arguments and decided to find about this column of fire and the one who came back first to the spot after probing this column would be declared senior. Bhrhma went in the upper region while Vishnu went in the lower region. .After travelling for thousands of years they returned back to original spot without finding the upper or lower end of this column. Right at that time Sadashiv appeared on the scene and told them that He has decided to manifest Himself for the benefit of His devotees and it is in this context that He manifest a part of Himself as Brahma (for creation of universe and as Vishnu (for its preservation) and as Mahesh (for its cyclic destruction).This is called as Trinity of Gods in Hindu belief.

11

**AYT NAADAA PADHY TRIBHUVNM AVAIR VYTI KRM  
DSHAASYO YD BHAHUN ABRT RNKNDU PRVSHAAN  
SHRH PDM SHRENE RCHIT CHRNAM BHORUH BLE  
SITH RAA YAAHS TVD BHKTE TRIPUR HR VISFUUR JITM IDM**

O Destroyer of Tripura, that the ten headed Ravana after ridding the three worlds of any trace of enemies remained with arms eager for (fresh) war is due to the fact of his having great devotion to Thee-, devotion which prompted him to offer his heads as lotuses to Thy feet.\*

\* This has reference to Ravana who was a great devout of Shiva. He fought a war with Lord Rama.

12

**AMUSHY TVT SEVA SM ADHI GT SARM BHUVNM  
BHLAT KAILASE PI TVT ADHI VSTOU VIKRM YTH.  
ALBYAA PAATALE PYLS CHLITAN GUSHTH SHIRSI  
PRTISHTHA TVYYA SEED HRUVM UPCHITO MUHYTI KHLH.**

When Ravana extended the valour of his arms whose strength was obtained by worshipping Thee to Kailasa, Thy abode, Thou moved the tip of Thy Toe and he did not get a resting place even in the nether world. Verily when affluent, the wicked becomes deluded.\*

\* Ravana got drunk with power and decided to move the abode of Lord Shiv to his own kingdom in Lanka so that he could worship Him there without taking the trouble of going to Kailash mountain. At this Shiv got very angry and by just moving little finger of His foot Ravana tumbled over and could not get resting place any where, not even in Patal (nether world)He got deluded by his affluence.

13

**YDRDHIM SUTRAAMNO VRD PRMO CHAIR API STEEM  
ADHSH CHKRE VANH PARIJN VIDHEY TRIBUVNH  
N TCHITRM TSMIN VRI VSI TRI TVT CHRNYOH  
N KSYAH UNNTYAI BHVTI SHR SSTV YV NTIH.**

O giver of boons, that Bana, who had the Three worlds at his Command put to shade the wealth of Indra, is not to be wondered at ,he being the worshipper of Thy feet. What prosperity does not result from bowing down the head to Thee?\*

\* Banasur was an assur devotee of Shiv.He was son of Bali and grand son of Prahlada.Lord shiva worship had made him very prosperous so much so that even the wealth of Indra, the Lord of heaven was no match to him.

14

**AKAAND BHRHMAAND KHIY CHKIT DEVA SUR KRPA  
VIDE YSYAA SEED YS TRNYN VISHM SM HRT VTH**

**S KLMASH KNTHE TV N KURUUTE N SHRIYM AHO  
VIKAROPI SHLAAGYO BHUVN BHY BHNG VYSNINH.**

O, Three eyed one, (Lord Shiva)\* it is not that the dark stain on the Throat of Thee who drank poison as an act of favor to gods and demons at their being panicky at the threatened destruction, does not beautify Thee. Even deformity is admirable in One who is given to freeing the world of fear.\*\*

\* Shiva is called Triyambkum i.e. Three-eyed One. The third eye refers to His mental vision with which He reaches everywhere.

\*\* See footnote of Hymn 8 .The blue colour of His throat does not make Him look ugly . It rather enhances His looks.

15

**ASIDDHAARTHA NAIV KAUCHID API SDEVA SURNRE  
NIVRTNTE NITYM JGTI JYNO YSY VISHIKHAH  
S PSHYNNISH TVAM ITR SUR SAADAARNM ABUUT  
SMRH SMR TVYAATMAA N HI VSHISHU PTHYH PRIBHVH.**

O, Lord, the god of love, Kamdev, whose arrows(advances) do not fail any where in the world of gods, demons and men but are always successful, became simply an object of memory by looking upon Thee as an ordinary god. For an insult to the self-controlled (ie Lord Shiv) does not conduce to good (was not a good act)\*

\* This has reference to a puranic story .The great Lord Shiva was in deep meditation without any break. But gods wanted that a son should be born to Him to lead them in the battle against the demon Taraka, as it was professed that only Shivas son could kill him. Gods sought the help of Kamadev the god of love. Kamadev threw an arrow of passion over Shiva .Shiva was distracted in His meditation and as a punishment burnt Kamadev to ashes with the fire of His third eye.

16

**MHEE PAADAA GHAATAAD VRJTI SHSA SMSHY PDM  
PDM VISHNOHR BRAAMYD BUJ PRI GHRUUGN GRH GNM  
MUHR DYOUR DOUSTHYM YAT YNI BHRT JTI TDIT TTA  
JGT RKHIIIAAYAAI TVM NTSI NNU NAAMAIV VIBHUTA**

In order to save the world when Thou danced\*, the earth wondered at the striking of Thy feet, whether it would not come to a sudden end; so felt the spatial region along with the planets oppressed by the movement of Thy iron club like arms; and the heaven became then miserable -its side being stuck by Thy waving matted hair. Ah, Thy\*\* very mightiness is the cause of the trouble

\* This has a puranic reference. Once a demon prayed for long to Brahma for a boon to destroy the world. .Brahma promised to give the boon at a specific date. This alerted gods who approached Lord Shiva for protection. Shiva at this began to dance so that the time for granting of the boon might pass un noticed. It was such a mighty dance that the three worlds were terror-stricken.

\*\* Shiva danced for the protection of the world but because of His mightiness unknowingly caused trouble to many.

17

**VIYD VYAAPEE TARA GN GUNIT FENOD GM RUUCHI  
PRVAAHO VARAM YH PRSHT LGU DRSHTH SHIRSI TE  
JGT DVEEPKARM JLDHI VLYM TEN KRTMI  
TYNE NAIVONNEYM DHRTI MHIM DIVYM TV VPUH.**

The river which pervades the sky and whose foams look all the more beautiful because of the stars and planets, seems no more than a drop of water when on Thy head \*.That again has turned the world in to island surrounded by waters .And by this should be inferred how vast is the divine body

\* This has reference to a puranic story. King Bhagirath prayed to Brahma for a long time to allow Ganga river flow on Earth to purify ashes of his ancestors. His wish was granted by Brahma and Lord Shiva held it in His matted hair to reduce its impact of falling from such height. The volume of water flowing from Ganges filled the oceans and create land masses of continents within it.

18

**RTHH KHIONEE YNTA STDHHRRTIR AGENDRO DHNURTHO  
RTHANGE CHNDRAR KOU RTH CHRNPANIH SHR ITI  
DIDHKHIOSTE KOYM TRIPUR TRNM AADMBR VIDHI VIDHEYAIH. KRIDNTYO N  
KHULU PRTNTRA PRBHU DHYH**

When Thou wanted to burn the three cities\* which were but a piece of straw (to Thee) the Earth was Thy chariot, Brahma Thy charioteer, the great mountain Meru Thy bow, the Sun and Moon the wheels of thy chariot, Vishnu thy arrow. Why this paraphernalia\*\* ? The lord is not dependent on others, He was playing with things at his command

\* See hymn 9. Tripurasur. He had three sons who had received three cities in boon from Brahma. To show their power they teased devas who prayed to lord Shiva who decided to destroy all the three cities along with their masters.

\*\* Lord Shiva did not need the help of all these but He wanted to test the faithfulness of all of them towards Him.

19

**HRISTE SAAHASTRM KML BLIM AADHAAY PD YOH  
YD EKANE TSMIN NIJM UDHRN NETR KMLM  
GTO BKTY UDREKH PRINTM ASOU CHKR VPUSHAA  
TRYANAM RKHIYAI TRIPUR HR JAGRTI JGTAAM.**

To worship Destroyer of Tripura( Lord Shiva), Lord Vishnu (Hari) rooted out his lotus eye to make up the deficiency when one flower was missing in his offerings to Shiva of thousand flowers (lotuses) at Thy feet, this great devotion transformed into a discus\* which was given as boon to him by Lord Shiva for protecting the three worlds.

\* The story goes that Vishnu would worship Shiva daily with a thousand lotuses. One day Shiva in order to test the devotion of Vishnu stole away one lotus from His offering of thousand lotuses. At this Vishnu plucked one of His eyes and offered that for the missing flower. Shiva was moved by this action and as a reward gave Him the discus, Sudarshana with which the latter protected the three worlds.

20

**KRTOU SUPTE JAAGRT TYM ASI FLYOGE KRT MTAAM  
KV KRM PRDVSTM FLTI PURSHAA DHNM RTE  
ATS TVAAM SMPRKHIY KRTSHU FLDAN PRTI BHUVM  
SHRTOU SHRDHAAM BDVAA DRDHPRIKRH KRMSU JNH**

The sacrifice being destroyed. Thou ever remained the connecting link between the sacrifice and the fruit of the sacrifice. When does the destroyed sacrifice bear fruit if not accompanied by the worship of the Lord? Therefore knowing thee to be the giver of the fruits and putting faith in the Vedas people became resolute about the performance of sacrificial rites\*

\* This has reference to Mimamsa school which believe that the fruits of sacrifice are stored for some future date without any divine intervention. That is being refuted in this hymn.

21

**KRIYADKIO DKIOH KRUTUPTIR DHISHS TNUBHRTAAM  
RSHINAAM AARTVIJYM SHRND SDSYAH SURGNH  
KRTUBRMSHS TVTH KRTUFL VIDHAN VYSNINO  
DHRUVM KURTUH SHRDHAA VIDHURM ABHICHAARAAY HI -MKHAAH**

Thou, giver of refuge (even) the sacrifice where Daksha the lord of creation, expert in the sacrifice, was the sacrificer, Rishes were priests, gods were supervisors, was destroyed by Thee \*, (though Thou art ) bent upon giving fruits of the sacrifices. Surely the sacrifices cause injury to the sacrificers in the absence of devotion.\*\*

\* There is a puranic story that Daksha Prjapati, Lord Shivs father in law by first wife Sati, organised a big sacrificial yagnya in which all gods participated except Lord Shiva as He was not invited, because He had insulted His father in law by not respecting him on some previous occasion. Lord Shiva destroyed this sacrificial fire through His ganas as a revenge for the insult.

\*\* Though Lord is giver of fruits of sacrifices but in the absence of devotion there is no fruit.

22

**PRJANAATHM NATH PRSBHM ABHIKM SVAM DUHITRM  
GTM ROHID BHUTAAM RIR MYISHUM RSHYSU VPUSHAAM  
DHNUSH PAANER YTIM DIVM API SPTRA KRTMMUM  
TRSNTM TEYDYAPI TYJTI N MRGVYAADH RBSH**

O Lord, the fury of Thee, Who became a hunter with a bow in hand has not as yet left Brahma though, keenly pierced by Thy arrow and terror stricken, he has fled to the sky.\*

\* The puranic story goes like this that Brahma had a beautiful daughter (Sandya in human form). Brahma was overcome by lust and wanted to have sex with her. She escaped by taking the form of a deer. Brahma also adopted the same form to chase her into submission. Lord Shiva saved situation by firing an arrow at Brahma, which hurt Him and ever since He became a combination of deer shaped stars in the sky with an arrow of Shiva chasing Him that is visible to naked eye even today.

23

**APURVM LAVNM VIVSN TNOSTE VIMRSHTAM  
MUNANAM DARANAM SHJNI S KOAPI VYTIKRH.  
YTO BHGNE GUHY SKRD API SPRYAM VIDDHTAAM  
DHUVM MOKHIOSHLILM KIM API PURUUSAARTH PRSVITE.**

Oh !Lord the worship of the most private part of your body when it was cut off due to the curse of Rishis has liberated its worshippers, then how much exalted it would be to worship your body.\*

As per puranic story Rishis wives were driven to have sex with Lord Shiva when they saw His naked body. This angered Rishis and they cursed Him that resulted in the detachment of Shivas sex organ that later on became the object of His worship for the mortal

· (This hymn is not included in non-Kashmiri version)

24

**SVLAVNYAA SHMSAA DHRT DHNUSHM AHNAAY TRNVT  
PURH PLUSHTM DRSHVA PURMTHN PUSHPA YUDHM API  
UDI STRAINM DEVI YM NIRT DEHARDH GTNAD  
AIVETI TVAM ADDHA VT VRD MUGDHA YUVTYH.**

O Destroyer of Tripura\* ,O Giver of booms ,even on seeing in front ,the god of love, bow in hand, burnt like piece of straw in a trice by Thee\*\*. If Parvati proud of her beauty, thinks that Thou art under her fascination because she was allowed to occupy half of Thy body on account of her austerities ,ah, surely the young women are under delusion.\*\*\*

\* See hymn 11

\*\* See hymn 15

\*\*\* Parvati performed much austerity to get love of Shiva. Taking pity on her suffering Shiv allowed her to become part of His body. If Parvati or other young women think that Shiv accepted her for her beauty then they are wrong.

25

**SHMSHANESHVA KRIDA SMRHR PISHACAH SHCHRAH  
CHITA BHSMA LEPH SRGPI NRKROTEE PRIKRH  
AMNGLYM SHILM TV BHVTU NAMAIVM AKHILM  
TTHAAPI SMRTRNAM VRD PRMM MNGLM ASI**

O destroyer of god of love, O giver of boons, Thy play is in the cremation ground, Thy companions are ghosts, Thou besmear Thy body with the ashes of burnt bodies and human skulls are Thy garland -all Thy conduct indeed is thus full of evil. But Thou conducts to the great good of those who remember Thee.

26

**MNH PRTYK CHITE SVIDHM AVIDHAAYAAT MRUUTH.  
PRSHY DROMANH PRMD SLILOT SNJT DRSHH.  
YDAA LOKYAA HLADM HRD IV NIMJJYAA MRTMYE  
DDH TYNTS TTVM KIM API YAMINS TTKIL BHVAAN**

Thou art indeed that unspeakable truth which the Yogis realized through meditation on thy self, on controlling the breath according the scriptures directions and realizing which they shed tears of thrilling joy and swimming as it were, in a pool of nectar, enjoying inner bliss.

27

**TVM ARKS TVM SOMS TVM ASI PVNS TVM HUTVHH.  
TVM AAPS TVM VYOM TVM UDHRNIR AATMA TVM ITI CH  
PRICHCHNAAM EVM TVYI PRINTAA VIBHRTU GIRM  
N VID MS TT TT TVM VYMHI HU YTTVM N BHVSI**

The wise hold this limiting opinion about Thee Thou art the Sun, Thou art the Moon, Thou art the Fire, Thou art the Air, Thou art the Water. Thou art the Space; Thou art the Earth and Thou art the Self. We don not know that thing which Thou art not.

28

**TRYEEM TIS TRO VRTIS TRIBHVNM ATHO TRIN API SURAN  
AKAARAADYAI VRNAIS TRIBHIR ABHI DDHTTIRN VIKRTI  
TUREEYM TE DHAAM DVNIBHIR AVRUN DHANM ANUBHIH  
SMST VYSTM TVAM SHRND GRNA TYOM ITI PDM**

O giver of refuge, with the three letters -A, U, M, indicating the three Vedas\*,the three states\*\*, the three worlds\*\*\* and the three Gods\*\*\*\*, the word OM mentions Thee separately. United by the scuttle sound the world OM collectively\*\*\*\*\* mentions Thee - Thy Absolute Transcendent State.

\* Rig, Yajur and Sam Ved

\*\* Namely waking ,dreaming and sleeping states

\*\*\* Earth, Patal and Swarg Lok

\*\*\*\* Three gods -Namely, Bhrama Vishnu and Rudra

\*\*\*\*\* The mantra OM when uttered as one word indicates the absolute Bhrahman

29

**BHVH SHRVO RUDRH PSHUPTI RTHOGRH SH MHAAN  
TTHA BHIMESHANOV ITI YD ABHDHAANAASH TKM IDM  
AMUSHMIN PRTYEKM PRVICHIRIT DEV SHRTIR API  
PRIYAAYAASMAI DHAMNE PRNIHIT NMSYOSMI BHVTE**

O Lord, Bhava, Sarva, Rudra, Pasupati, Ugra, Mahadeva, Bhima, and Isana- those eight names\* are mentioned even\*\* by the Vedas. To Thee who art beloved and effulgent, I bow down

\* Out of thousand names of Lord Shiva the following eight are very common-

1. **Bhava**- One who is creator
2. **Shrva**- One who is destroyer
3. **Rudra**- One who is terrible

4. **Pashuoati**- One who takes care of all beings
5. **Ugr**- One who removes ignorance
6. **Maha**- One who is above all
7. **Bhima**- One who is very powerful
8. **Ishan**- One who is a great governor

\*\* even here refers to the fact that these names are referred in Vedas which are the earliest reference books.

30

**VPSH PRAADUR BHAAVAAD ANUMITIM IDM JNMNI PURA  
PURARE NAIVAHM KVCHD API BHVNTM PRNTVAN  
NMN MUKTH SMPR TYTNUR AHM AGRE API PYNTIMAAN  
MHESH KHINTVYM TD IDM APRAADH DVYM API**

O Lord! I feel my present birth is due to the reason that I did not pray to you in my previous life. Now that I prayed and hope to be liberated but then I cannot pray you any more. I beg to be excused for this double fault of mine.

(This hymn is not included in the non-Kashmiri versions)

31

**NMO NEDISTHAAY PRIYDV DVISTHAAY CH NMO  
NMH KHIODISTHAAY SMRHR MHISHTHAAY CH NMH.  
NMO VRSHISHTHAAY TRINYN YVISHTHAAY CH NMO  
NMH SRVSMAI TE TD IDM ITI SHRVAAY CH NMH**

O lover of solitude my salutations to Thee who art very near\* as also very far & far away\*\*. O Destroyer of the God of love, my salutation to Thee who art the minutest as also the largest. O three eyed one my salutation to Thee who art the oldest\*\*\* as also the youngest. Thus my salutation to Thee who art all as also transcending all.

\* Because He is indwelling Spirit of all

\*\* Because He is beyond mind and speech

\*\*\* He was existing even before creation of universe

32

**BHUL RJSE VISHVOT PTOU BHVAY NMO NMH  
PRBL TMSE TT SMHARE HRAY NMO NMH  
JNSUKHKRTE STVO DRIKTOU MRDHAY. NMO NMH.  
PRMHSI PDE NISTRAIGUNYE SHIVAAY NMO NMH.**

Salutations to Brahma in whom rajas preponderates for the creation of the universe, Salutations to Rudra in whom tams predominates for the destruction of the same, Salutations to Vishnu in whom satva predominates for giving happiness to the people, Salutations to Shiva who is effulgent and beyond the three attributes.

To make up the total to 32 the following two hymn are recited by Hindus outside Kashmir as 31 and 32 hymn:

**KRSHPRINTI CHETH KLESH VSHYM KV CHEDM  
KVCH TV GUNSEEM ULLNGNEE SHSHVDRDHIH  
ITI CHKITM AMNID KRTY MAAM BHKTI RADHAD  
VRD CHRNYOSTE VAKY PUSHUPAHARM**

O giver of boons, where is my ill developed mind subject to misery\* and where in Thy Divinity - eternal and possessing infinite virtues? Though terror stricken because of this, I am forced by my devotion to offer this hymn at Thy feet.

\* According to Patanjali there are five kinds of misery –namely, Ignorance, Egoism, Attachment, Aversion and Clinging to life

**ASITGRISMM SYAT KJLM SINDHU PATRE  
SUR TRUU VR SHAKHA LEKHNI PTRMURVI  
LIKHTI YDI GRHITVA SHARDA SRVKALM  
TDPI TV GUNANAMISH PARM N YATI**

O Lord, if the blue mountains be ink, the ocean the ink pot, the branch of the heavenly Tree\* be pen, the earth the writing leaf, and by making these if the goddess of leaning writes for eternity, even then the limit of Thy virtues will not be reached.

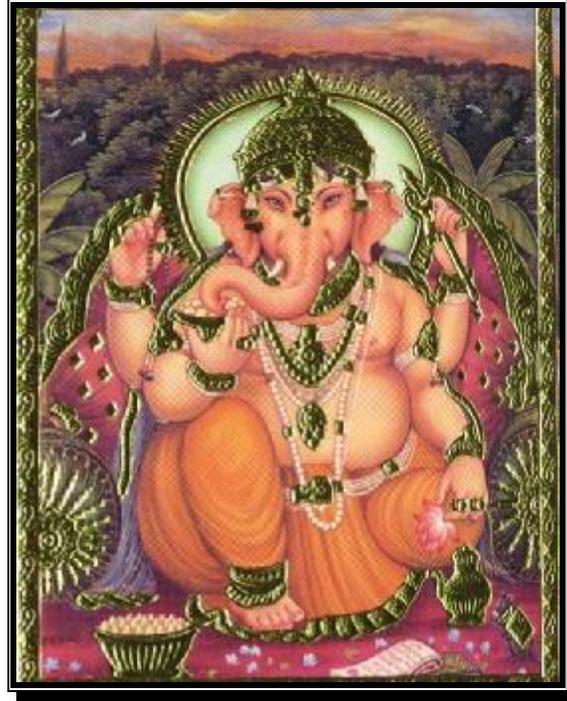
Refers to mythological tree Parijata.

### **References**

Swami Pavitranda of Advaita Ashrama of Calcutta has made the above translation of hymns. The translation of hymns 23 and 30 and those of three hymns recited by Kashmiri's at the start is based on Hindi translation made by Pandit Prem Nath Sadoo in his book Mahimnastotrm. The commentary has been written from references in Shiv puran and other sources.

## 10 Ganesh Astuti

Commentary by: Piyaray Lal Raina



Lord Ganesh (Ganpati)

1

**HEMJAASUTM BHUJM GNESHM EESH NNDNM  
EK DNT VKR TUND NAAG YGN SUUTR KM  
RKT GAATR DHUUMR NETR SHUKL VSTR MNDIT  
KLPVRKHI BHKTRKHI NMOSTUTE GJAANNM  
NMOSTUTE GJAANNM NMOSTUTE VINAYKM**

He who is son of the daughter of the kingdom of mountains Parvati, He who is leader of the multitude of Gods, He who is dear to Shiva, He who has one tusk, He who has a curved trunk, He who has snake around his neck as yagnopavit, He whose body is red, He whose eyes are reddish brown, He who looks splendid in white robes, He who takes care of his devotees just like a KLPVRKHI (a mythical tree which yielded whatever one wanted), and He who has the head of elephant - I bow to that Vinayak (a leader with special qualities).

2

**PASH PANE CHKR PANE MUUSHKASH CH ROHNM  
AGNEKOTE SUURY JYOTE VJR KOTI PRVTM  
CHETR MAL BHKT JAL BHAAL CHNDR SHOBETM  
KLP VRKHI BHKTRKHI NMOSTUTE GJAJAANNM  
NMOSTUTE GJAANNM NMOSTUTE VINAY**

He who has snare in one hand and an axe in another, He who is riding a mouse whose fire and light is as powerful as those of millions of suns put together, He who is like a mountain of diamonds, He who is wearing a garland of many colored flowers, He who is always involved in the welfare of his devotees, He

who is decorated with crescent moon on his head, He who takes care of his devotees just like a KLPVRKHI, and He who has the head of elephant - I bow to that Vinayak.

3

**VISHV VEERY VISHV DEERG VISHV KRM NIRMLM  
VISHV HRTAA VISHV KRATA YTR TTR PUJITM  
CHTUR BHUJM CHTUR MUKHM SEVITM CHTUR YUGM  
KLP VRKHI BHKTRKHI NMOSTUTE GJAJAANM  
NMOSTUTE GJAANM NMOSTUTE VINAYKM**

He who is most powerful in the world, He who has maximum patience whose karma is without attachment, He who is both a creator and maintainer of our world, He who is worshiped everywhere, He who is four-faced and four-armed and He who is worshiped in all the four yugs, He who takes care of his devotees just like a KLPVRKHI, and He who has the head of elephant - I bow to that Vinayak.

4

**BHUUT BHVY HVY KVV BHRG BHAARGV ARCHITM  
DIVY VAAHIHN KAAL JAAL LOK PAAL VNDITM  
PUURN BRHM SUURY VRN POURSHM PURANTKM  
KLP VRKHI BHKTRKHI NMOSTUTE GJAJAANM  
NMOSTUTE GJAANM NMOSTUTE VINAYKM**

He whose is worshipped by humans, He who is eulogized and worshiped by divine saints like Bhrg and Bhaargv, He who rides a divine vehicle, He who is above time and its entanglements, He who is the caretaker of people and is dear to them, He who is Himself a Supreme Being, He who belongs to Surya class, He who is a original Being, He who takes care of his devotees just like KLPVRKHI and He who has the head of elephant - I bow to that Vinayak.

5

**RRDI BUDI ASHT SIDHI NVNIDHAAN DAYKM  
YGN KRM SRV DHRM SRV VRN ARCHITM  
PUUT DHUUMRH DUSHT MUSHT DAYKM VINAYKM  
KLP VRKHI BHKTRKHI NMOSTUTE GJAJAANM  
NMOSTUTE GJAANM NMOSTUTE VINAYKM**

He who gives prosperity, wisdom, asht sidhi<sup>1</sup> (eight fold boons), and Novnidi<sup>2</sup> (Nine treasures), He who is worshiped by performing yagnyas and religious ceremonies, He who is worshiped by all classes of people, He who is purified with the smoke of sacred fire, He who punishes evil, He who takes care of his devotes just like a KLPVRKHI and He who has the head of elephant - I bow to that Vinayak.

### Notes

1 ASHT SIDHI (eight boons). These are:

- 1 ANIMAA: Power to make one invisible and enter into anything.
- 2 MHIMA: Power by which one can assume the shape of the largest object.
- 3 GRIMA: Power by which one can make oneself very heavy.
- 4 LGIMA: Power by which one can make oneself very light.
- 5 PRAPTI: Power by which one can get anything.
- 6 PRAKAMY: Power by which one can enter Earth or fly in space.
- 7 EESHITV: Power by which one can rule over everything.
- 8 VSHITV: Power by which one can have full control over others.

2 NOV NIDHIYAN (Nine treasures).

These are Pdm, Maha Pdm, Shnk, Mkr, Kchchap, Mukund, Kund, and Neel.

## ***11 Sun Worship in Kashmir***

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**Prof. M. L. Koul**

The sun-god is in essence is a Vedic god and its reverential worship has been widely prevalent throughout including Kashmir. In the Rig-veda we find a web of mythology woven around the sun-god known as Aditi. During the upanishadic era the sun-worship had assumed tremendous significance and the Chamdogya upanishad is replete with references to the sun-worship as it created life and also nourished it. In the Mahabharata the sun-god attained a sweeping sovereign status and in some respects was deemed more significant than most other gods in the Hindu pantheon. The sun-worship was so pervasive that massive temples were built in honour of the sun-god. The magnificent Konark temple, built in the eleventh century A.D. testifies to the importance and prevalence of the sun-god worship.

The sun-worship touched a new height during the reign of King Harsha. In his court, an eminent writer Banabhata, has made a specific reference to Harsha's father, who was an ardent devotee of sun-god and offered its worship as a matter of regular practice. Kalhana's Rajatarangini equally establishes that the sun-worship was prevalent in Kashmir too. As Kashmir had been a crucible of numerous cultural traditions and trends, the sun-god was worshipped alongwith a litany of religious gods and icons connected with Buddhism, Shaivism and Vaishnavism. As per Kalhana, a ruler named Ranaditya as a devotee had built a sun-temple at a place known as 'Simharotsika'. The temple was said to be grand, massive and exemplary in terms of art. He has made a mention of another sun-temple, known world over as Martand. This temple is built on an elevated plateau in natural ambience in the vicinity of Mattan in Anantnag.

The temple was made to perfection by Lalitaditya, who besides being a conqueror was a great builder. Martand as a temple has been evaluated as the 'germ of Indian architecture', which set a trend in the contemporary temple architecture. The temple caused amazing wonder to medieval fanatic Zealot Sultan Sikander, who set up a government department to destroy it by the use of gun-poweder. The hamlet of Mattan which has been of great religious importance to the Hindus all over India has been traditionally known as the 'Surya tirth', a place of sun-pilgrimage. After Mattan, second in importance was Kwalkhetra, not far away from Srinagar. Here Pandits would go on pilgrimage for sun-worship and for a purificatory bath to wash off wordly sins. As per Nilmatpurana, there were eight places exclusively meant for sun-worship in Kashmir. The temples built at the places were known as Aryaman Arka, Divakar, Surya , Savitra, Martand etc, all these words are synonyms of the word sun. Kashmiri Pandits still stick to a number of rituals, which are directly related to sun-workship.

*Source:* Kashmir Sentinel, Panun Kashmir publication

## 12 Religion and Philosophy

Dr. Sunil Chandra Ray

### 12.1 Religion

The earliest inhabitants of Kashmir probably cherished some aboriginal beliefs, the details of which are not traceable now. The snake-cult or Naga-worship seems to have been established in the valley from a remote period and undoubtedly had been one of the earliest religions of the land. In the third century B.C., Buddhism seems to have made some headway, converted a large number of people and overshadowed the Naga cult which ultimately sunk into oblivion. Among Hindu gods, Siva either originated or entered the valley sometime before the faith of the Sakya prince made its entrance and was later followed by Visnu, Surya and other Brahminical gods and goddesses. A brief history of the different types of religious cults and beliefs of early Kashmir, may be sketched as follows.

### 12.2 Naga-Worship

Kashmir was one of the principal centres of serpent-worship in India. Though detailed evidence is lacking, there is no doubt that snake-worship prevailed in the valley from a very early period.

Regarding the exact date when the snake-cult was prevalent in the land, no direct testimony is available. But there are reasons to believe that in the 4th and 3rd centuries B.C., it might have been the principal religion of Kashmir. In the *Mahavamsa*, it is said that Asoka's adviser Moggaliputta Tissa sent Majjhantika to preach Buddhism in Kashmir. When the *sramana* reached the valley, he found that Aravala, the king of the Nagas, was ruling over it. Aravala was destroying the crops of the country by hail storm. Majjhantika, however, due to his divine powers remained unaffected from rains and storms. This made the Naga king furious who sent lightning and struck rocks against the Buddhist monk in herder to kill him. But all these went in vain. Then convinced of the great powers of Majjhantika, the Naga king Aravala together with his followers submitted before the monk and accepted Buddhism. This was followed by the conversion into Buddhism a large number of Naga worshippers of KasmiraGandhara.

Hiuen Tsang, who visited Kashmir in the 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. relates that according to the native records, Kashmir was originally a dragon lake. A very detailed and vivid account of how the arhat Madhyantika (apparently Majjhantika) rescued the valley of Kashmir from the Nagas, established there the religion of Buddha and settled 500 *arhats* in the country, has been preserved in the Chinese *Vinaya* of the Mula-Sarvasti-vadin sect. The Tibetan scholar Bu-ston, who composed his famous history of Buddhism in the 14th century A.D., points out that when Madhyanti went to Kashmir to preach Buddhism, he found the Nagas presiding in the valley. They at first gave a tough opposition to Madhyantika, but at the end, the Buddhist monk succeeded in subduing the troublesome Nagas.

That Naga-worship prevailed in early Kashmir receives confirmation not only from the accounts of Ceylon, China and Tibet but also from native literatures.

The *Nilamatapurana*, probably a work of the 7th or 8th century A.D., records at great length how Kashmir was created out of water and left to the care of The Nagas of whom Nila, the son of Kasyapa, was the chief. According to this work, in the beginning, human beings could dwell in the valley for six months of the year, i.e., during the summer. In winter, the land was occupied by the Pisacas and human beings had to leave the valley due to excessive cold. Once Nila was satisfied with a Brahmana called Candradeva and agreed at his prayer that men should be

allowed to live in Kashmir during the winter also. The Naga king also disclosed to him the rites which were to be observed by the future human inhabitants if they were to live permanently in the valley.

Most of the rites prescribed by Nila are concerned with the nature of worship of popular deities. But there are some festivals which are particularly connected with the worship of Naga or serpent. Thus Nila was worshipped on the festival of the first snowfall. Nila and the Nagas were also 'propitiated on the Iramanjaripuja festivity which took place in the month of *Caitra*. Another ceremony called Varunapancami was held on the fifth day of *Bhadra* and was connected with the worship of serpent king Nila.

The *Nilamatapurana* also records the names of B the principal Nagas worshipped in Kashmir, the total number of which was 527. The four *dikpalas* of Kashmir, mentioned by the author of the *Nilamatapurana* were four Nagas - Bindusara in the east, Srimadaka in the south, Elapatra in the west and Uttaramanasa in the north. From a remote period, great importance must have been attached to the worship of the Nagas as is shown by the long account of them given in the *Nilamatapurana*. A large number of temples, built near some of the famous springs and undoubtedly early origin of the pilgrimages directed to them, clearly pointed out the popularity of the Naga-cult in ancient Kashmir. The Nagas were supposed, according to the *Nilamatapurana*, to reside in the lakes and springs of the valley. Even now names of places like Vernag, Anantanag, Sernag, etc. show traces of ancient Naga beliefs. That the Nagas were eminently popular deities in the happy valley, is also testified to by Kalhana's Chronicle. According to the *Rajatarangini*, Kashmir was a land protected by Nila, the lord of all Nagas. Even when Buddhism had undermined the Naga beliefs, one of its early kings Gonanda III is said to have reintroduced the pilgrimages, sacrifices and other worship in honour of the Nagas, as they had been before. There is also a story of Susravas Naga, and his alliance with a Brahmana is depicted with much details. King Durlabhavardhana and his scions are ascribed to a family which, according to Kalhana, was Naga in its origin. Naga Mahapadma, the tutelary deity of the Vular lake, is said to have showed king Jayapida, a mountain which yielded copper. Another Naga called Pindaraka deluded the Darad chieftain Acalamangala, who attacked the happy valley during the reign of Ananta. Among the festivals connected with the Naga-cult, Kalhana speaks of the annual festival in honour of the great serpent king Taksaka 'frequented by dances and strolling players and thronged by crowds of spectators' which was celebrated on the 12th day of the dark half of *Jyaistha*. Ksemendra also refers to a Taksakavatra festival in his *Samayamtrka* (*Samayamtrka*, ii, 88).

That the Naga-cult prevailed in the valley throughout the Hindu rule and even afterwards, seems to be corroborated by the account of Abul Fazal. He tells us that during the reign of Akbar (A.D. 1556-1605) there were in Kashmir 45 places dedicated to the worship of Siva, 64 to Visnu, 3 to Brahma and 22 to Durga, but there were 700 places in the valley where there were carved images of snakes which the inhabitants worshipped.

### 12.3 Buddhism

Buddhism seems to have obtained a footing in Kashmir as early as the 3rd century B.C. The Ceylonese chronicle *Mahavamsa* preserves an account of the introduction of Buddhism in the valley by Majjhantika which has been already noted. That Buddhism was first preached in Kashmir by Madhyantika and that he succeeded in making a large number of converts also

receives confirmation from traditions recorded in the Tibetan work *Dul-va* and the account of Hiuen Tsang.

We learn from Kalhana that Kashmir formed a part of the empire of Asoka, who was a follower of Jina, i.e., Buddha. The emperor built in the valley numerous *stupas*, some of which were existing as late as the time of the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang's visit. The great emperor, who was zealous always in preaching and disseminating the religion of Buddha throughout the length and breadth of his kingdom and even beyond, seems to have tried his best to spread it in the secluded vale of Kashmir too.

What happened to the state of Buddhism in Kashmir, after the death of Asoka, we do not know. Probably in the 1st century B.C., Kashmir came under the occupation of the Greek king Menander. He was first a lay devotee of Buddha but afterwards left his throne, joined the Sangha and at last became an *arhant*. He created a *vihara* for his co-religionists which came to be known as Milindavihara, after the name of its founder.

The Buddhism of Kashmir entered its golden phase under the patronage of the Kusana king Kaniska and his successors who came to occupy the valley about the end of the 1st century A.D. Kalhana mentions that three Turuska, i.e., Kusana kings, Huska, Juska and Kaniska ruled over Kashmir and founded three towns called Huskapura (mod. Huskur), Juskapura (mod. Juskar) and Kaniskapura (mod. Kanespur). These Kusana kings were given to acts of piety and built many *viharas*, *mathas*, *caityas* and similar other structures. During their powerful rule, the land of Kashmir was, to a great extent, under the possession of the Bauddhas, who, by practicing the law of religious mendicancy, had acquired great renown.

That Kashmir was a great centre of Buddhism under the Kusanas receives further corroboration to from the fact that the fourth Buddhist council took place in Kashmir under the auspices of Kaniska. At the end of the council, Hiuen Tsang informs us, several expository commentaries were written on the *Sutra*, *Vinaya*, and *Abhidharma*. The original text and its explanation came to be known as *Upadesa-sastra* and *Vibhasa-sastra*. Kaniska had these treatises engraved on copper plates and deposited them at a *stupa*, apparently situated in Kashmir.

Many great Buddhist scholars resided in Kashmir during the reign of the Kusanas. Of these, Kalhana mentions the name of Nagarjuna who resided at Sadarhadvana, i.e. Harwan. According to Chinese evidence Asvaghosa, Vasuvandhu, Vasumitra, Dharmatrata, Sanghabhadra, Jinatrata and many other scholars lived in Kashmir from the time of Kaniska onwards.

The flourishing state of Buddhism in Kashmir at the end of the Kusana period and afterwards is testified to by archaeological evidence. The site of Harwan yields Buddhist *stupas*, bases of chapels, inscriptions containing the celebrated Buddhist creed *Ye dharma*, etc. From the appearance of Kharosthi numerals on the brick tiles and from the Buddhist inscriptions written in Brahmi characters of about the 4th century A.D., the Buddhist antiquarian objects of Harwan may be assigned to a period round about A.D. 300. A number of terracotta figures, mainly busts or heads of Buddha, Bodhisattva and Buddhist monks have been recovered from another ancient site. Uskur (Huviskapura) and are assignable stylistically to the 4th or 5th century A.D.

Not only the Kusana kings, but local rulers of Kashmir also seem to have patronized the faith of Buddha in the early centuries of the Christian era. One of its early kings, Meghavahana, prohibited the slaughter of animals in his kingdom. He also stopped the killing of animals in sacrifices. Amrtaprabha, the wife of the king, erected a *vihara* for Buddhist monks, which was called Amrtabhavana. Many *viharas* of renown were built by other queens. Kalhana compares

the king with Jina, i.e., Buddha and also with Bodhisattvas. All these probably indicate Meghavahana's attachment to the faith of the Sakya prince.

During the reign of Pravarasena (c. 6th century A.D.) his maternal uncle Jayendra built a *vihara* and erected a statue of the 'Great Buddha'. Pravarasena, according to Kalhana, was succeeded by his son Yudhisthira II. Several ministers of his, who bore the names of Sarvaratna, Jaya and Skandagupta obtained distinction by erecting *vihara* and *caityas*. In the *vihara* built by a queen of king Meghavahana, a fine statue of Buddha was placed by Amrtaprabha, the wife of king Ranaditya.

In spite of the legendary character of the early portions of the *Rajatarangini*, Kalhana's main contention that Buddhism received patronage from the local rulers of Kashmir during the early centuries of the Christian era, seems on the whole, to be based on facts. The Jayendravihara, said to have been founded by Pravarasena's maternal uncle Jayendra, was visited by Hiuen Tsang in the 7th century and Ou-kong about the middle of the next century saw the *vihara* of Amrtabhavana, built by Amrtaprabha, queen of Meghavahana, in a flourishing condition.

A fairly reliable account of the condition of Buddhism in Kashmir from the 7th century onward has been furnished by the accounts of the Chinese travellers Hiuen Tsang and Ou-kong, the Chronicle of Kalhana and some archaeological discoveries made at Gilgit, Pandrethan and Paraspor.

Several Buddhist manuscripts were found out from a *stupa* at Gilgit. The script used in the manuscripts may be assigned to the 6th or 7th century A.D. One of the manuscripts reveals the name of a Sahi king Srideva Sahi Surendra Vikramaditya Nanda who was apparently ruling over the Gilgit region when the manuscripts were deposited. Buddhism was thus flourishing on the northern part of Kashmir sometime about the end of the 6th century A.D. or in the early part of the next under the patronage of Sahi rulers.

To about the same period as the manuscripts of Gilgit, may probably be assigned also a large number of Buddhist sculptures hailing from the village of Pandrethan (ancient Puranadhisthana). Puranadhisthana was the capital of Kashmir from a very early date. It enjoyed the privilege of being the metropolis until about the end of the 6th century, A.D. when Pravarasena built a new city called Pravarasenapura (mod. Srinagar), which henceforth became the new capital of the valley. From stylistic consideration, the sculptural remains discovered at Pandrethan seem to have belonged to a period when the old city was finally abandoned in favour of the new. Besides two Buddhist *stupas* and the courtyard of a monastery, the objects of Buddhist antiquities found at Pandrethan include two standing figures of Buddha, a seated statue of Buddha, one diademed and ornamented image of Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, another fragmentary sculptured relief of Buddha or Bodhisattiva and lastly a relief representation of the birth of Siddhartha.

Hiuen Tsang paid a visit to Kashmir in A.D. 631. He saw in the valley about one hundred *sangharamas* and five thousand Buddhist priests. There were four *stupas* built by Asoka, each of which contained relics of Tathagata. Among the Buddhist *viharas* visited by him specific mention is made of the Juskavihara (mod. Uskur, near Baraarnula) and Jayendra vihara (founded by Jayendra, the maternal uncle of Pravarasana II). The Chinese pilgrim stayed in the court of Kashmir for a couple of years, during which period (with the help of the local clerks) he took copies of a large number of Buddhist scriptures. Evidently, Kashmir was a great centre of Buddhism when Hiuen Tsang visited it.

Hiuen Tsang entered Kashmir during the period of the Karkotas. The kings of the Karkota dynasty were followers of Hinduism and worshipped in general gods like Visnu, Siva and Surya,

all belonging to the Hindu pantheon. Nonetheless, some of the monarchs of the dynasty also gave liberal patronage to the religion of Tathagata. Hiuen Tsang was received with favour by one of its early kings, presumably Durlabhavardhana. Durlabha's queen Anangalekha built a Buddhist *vihara*, which came to be known as Anangabhavanavihara. Lalitaditya Muktapida founded one Rajavihara with a large quadrangle and a large *caitya* at Parihasapura. At Huskapura, the noble minded king built another large *vihara* with a *stupa*. A colossal copper image of Buddha was made by him, which is said to have reached up to the sky. At Parihasapura Cankuna, a Tukhara minister of the king erected the Cankunavihara, built a *stupa* and placed there a golden image of Jina. i.e., Buddha. A second *vihara*, together with a *caitya* was built by the minister at *adhasthanantare*, evidently at Srinagara and in this *vihara*, the minister put a brownish image of Buddha Sugata which was brought from Magadha on the shoulders of an elephant. Jayapida Vinayaditya, another celebrated monarch of the Karkota family, set up three images of Buddha and a large *vihara* at his newly founded town Jayapura.

Archaeological excavations carried on at Parihasapura, the city founded by Lalitaditya, have brought to light Buddhist structures - a *stupa*, a monastery and a *caitya*. The *stupa* has been identified as the *stupa* of Cankuna, the monastery with the Rajavihara built by Lalitaditya and the *caitya* with a large *caitya* said to have been founded by the same monarch. Among the sculptures discovered at Parihasapura, there are two images of Bodhisattva and one of Buddha. All these, prove to the hilt the popularity of Buddhism in the days of the Karkotas.

The thriving state of Buddhism during the reign of the Karkotas, i.e., during the 7th or 8th centuries A.D. is also attested to by the evidence of the Chinese traveller Ou-kong. Ou-kong came to Kashmir in A.D. 759. He spent four years in the valley in pilgrimages to holy sites and in studying Sanskrit. He learnt the *Silas* and the *Vinayas* of the Mulasarvastivadins at the *Moung-ti-vihara*. The other *viharas* referred to by him are *Ngo-mi-to-po-wan*, *Ngo-nan-i*, *Ki-tche*, *Nago-ye-le*, *Je-je*, *Ye-li-te-le* and *Ko-toan*. While Hiuen Tsang saw about one hundred *viharas*, Oukong noticed more than three hundred *viharas* in Kashmir and innumerable *stupas* and sacred images. This undoubtedly indicates a rise in the popularity of Buddhism in the valley during the Karkotas.

Buddhism seems to have been overshadowed by the growing Vaisnava and Saiva faith which became predominant in the valley in the centuries following the Karkota period. The dynasty of Utpala supplanted the Karkotas about the middle of the 9th century A.D. The founder of this dynasty, Avantivarman, (A.D. 855/56-883) was a staunch follower of Siva and Visnu and the architectural remains which have been discovered from the site of Avantipura, the town founded by the monarch, include some images of Visnu, Siva, and other Brahminical gods, but not a single figure of Buddha or Bodhisattva. But though Buddhism was in the background, the opinion cherished by some scholars that from the middle of the 9th century on till the advent of the 11th century, the Buddhists fell on evil days and all the kings were anti-Buddhistic in spirit seems to be an extreme view yet to be established beyond doubt. Except Ksemagupta (A.D. 950-958) and Harsa (A.D. 1089-1101), no king of this period is known to have cherished any anti-Buddhistic feeling in their heart. As for Ksemagupta, we learn from Kalhana that he burnt down a Buddhist monastery named Jayendravihara. From this decaying *vihara*, he took away the brass image of Buddha Sugata. The stones of the temple, he utilized for a Siva temple in his own name. Ksemagupta further confiscated thirty-two villages which belonged to the burnt *vihara* and gave them to Khasa ruler. But the wrath of a cruel eccentric king against a single particular Buddhist monastery should not be taken as an instance of systematic policy of religious persecution adopted by the State against the Buddhists. Moreover, it may be noted, that if Ksemagupta had

followed an anti-Buddhist policy, he would have destroyed many of the Buddhist viharas of Kashmir. But as we learn from Kalhana, the king burnt only a solitary Buddhist monastery; and this incident may suggest at most the king's ill-feelings towards a particular monastery which might have been guilty of some gross misdemeanour. It is unfair to infer from this single instance, that the king pursued a policy of anti-Buddhism, when we have no other information to support the view. A remarkably fine statue of the Bodhisattva Padmapani is now preserved in the Pratap Singh Museum, Srinagar. An inscription engraved at the base mentions its consecration in the reign of queen Didda (A.D. 980-1003). That Buddha was not looked with disapproval in the 11th century A.D. receives further corroboration from the writings of Ksemendra who says that during his time, the birth day of Buddha was observed with great ceremony in the valley.

As for Harsa, it may be said that the king was not merely an anti-Buddhist, but a man having no sympathy, for any religion whatsoever. If he plundered the statues of Buddha, he confiscated alike the images of the Brahminical gods and goddesses. And for all these works of plunder, spoliation and confiscation, the king was actuated not by his enmity towards any particular sect, but by his greed or rather need for money.

Buddhism received patronage from king Jayasimha, who ascended the throne of Kashmir in A.V. 1128. Many Buddhist *viharas* were built or repaired during this period. Pie completed the construction of the Sullavihara, which was started by his uncle, Uccala. Another *vihara*, built by the queen Ratnadevi, also received the king's care. The king's minister Rilhana constructed a *vihara* in memory of his deceased wife Sussala. Sussala was indeed a sincere follower of Buddha, as she is said to have built at the site of the Cankunavihara, of which nothing but the name remained, a stone shrine, residences and other structures. Cinta, the wife of Jayasimha's commander Udaya, built a *vihara*, which included within it, five buildings. One of the ministers of Jayasimha, Dhanya by name, commenced the construction of a *vihara*, but could not complete the structure, due to his premature death. Then Jayasimha, the king himself, made arrangements for the completion of the building and for a permanent endowment.

It is almost definite that Buddha was held in high honour in Kashmir upto the last days of the Hindu rule. A stone inscription, generally taken to have been dated A.D. 1197 has been discovered at Arigon (anc. Hadigrama), about 15 miles south west of Srinagara. The inscription opens with a salutation to Buddha Avalokitesvara and exalts him with glorious titles.

Marco Polo (13th century) states that in his time Kashmir was pre-eminent among the idolatrous countries and it was the very original source from which idolatry had spread around. There were also a number of idolatrous abbeys and monasteries. The superiors who exercised the functions of the abbots in these monasteries were held in great reverence by the mass of the people. If Yule's interpretation that the word 'Idolatry' is an expression meaning Buddhism be accepted, then, we are to admit that the Buddhism enjoyed wide popularity in the valley as late as the end of the 13th century.

The place of Kashmir in the history of Buddhism was great indeed. From the moment Buddhism was preached in the valley. Kashmir became mistress of the Buddhist doctrine and particularly the citadel of the Sarvastivada school. She played a great role in the spread of Buddhism beyond India, to Kandahar and Kabul and Bactria and thence to Central Asia and China. Tibetan Buddhism also drew its inspiration from Kashmir.

## **12.4 Saivism**

Detailed separately.

## 12.5 Vaisnavism

The cult of Visnu seems to have existed in Kashmir from a very early period. Lack of material, however, prevents us from tracing its origin and early character.

The earliest historical reference to the worship of Visnu occurs in the pages of the *Rajatarangini* where it is said that an image of Visnu Jayasvamin was consecrated by king Pravarasena II. Pravarasena II might have lived about the end of the 6th century A.D. Another image of Visnu Ranasvamin was consecrated by king Ranaditya at or near his capital Pravarapura. Ranaditya, who is credited with a reign of three hundred years is undoubtedly a legendary figure in Kalhana's Chronicle. But the historicity of the temple of Visnu Ranasvamin is amply proved by Jayanta Bhatta's mention of it in the *Agamadambara* and Kalhana's reference to it in his fifth book where he speaks of a visit paid to Ranasvamin by Cakravarman's queen. Mankha (12th century A.D.) in his *Srikanthacarita* refers to his father's worship of Ranasvamin. Jonaraja also mentions Ranasvamin Visnu in his commentary and describes it as *Sripravarapurapradhanadevata*.

With the accession of the Karkotas to the throne of Kashmir in the 7th century A.D., Visnu, the adored deity of the family, came to occupy a prominent position in the Kashmir pantheon. A son of king Durlabhavardhana, called Malhana, built the shrine of Visnu Malhanasvamin, while the king himself consecrated at Srinagari the shrine of Visnu Durlabhasvamin. Durlabhavardhana's grandson Candrapida, who lived in the early part of the 8th century A.D., consecrated the shrine of Visnu Tribhuvanasvamin. His preceptor, Mihiradatta, built a temple of Visnu Gambhirasvamin and his city-prefect Calitaka founded a temple of Visnu Calitasvamin.

The illustrious Lalitaditya came to the throne of Kashmir not long after the death of Candrapida Vajraditya. He too was a great devotee of lord Visnu. Resolved upon the conquest of the world, he built a shrine of KesavaVisnu in the early part of his reign. At Huskapura, he built a splendid shrine of Visnu Muktasvamin and of the town of Lokapunya with some villages he made an offering to Visnu. In the town of Parihasapura, which the monarch constructed in honour of his adored deity, he built the glorious silver statue of Visnu Parihasakesava. At Huskapura, another famous image of Visnu Muktakesava, was made out of gold. A fourth one, that of boar incarnation of Lord Visnu, was founded by him under the name of Visnu Mahavaraha. Lalitaditya consecrated two other silver images of his beloved god, one under the title of Govardhanadhara, and the other under the name of Ramasvamin. The latter image was placed in a stone temple which stood by the temple of Visnu Parihasakesava. Garuda, the *vahana* of Visnu was also a great favourite of Lalitaditya.

Lalitaditya's zeal for Vaisnavism must have shed its light upon those who were near him and who were driven to the same spiritual inclinations. His queen Kamalavati put up a large silver image of Kamalakesava and the king of Lata, named Kayya who was probably a feudatory of Lalitaditya, founded a shrine of Visnu Kayyasvamin.

Some of the later Karkota kings also adhered to the faith of Visnu. Jayapida, the grandson of Lalitaditya built the town of Jayapura, where as Kalhana poetically describes, Kesava showing his quadruple form as well as reclining on the serpent Sesa, has truly taken up his abode, abandoning his residence in Visnu's world. Jayapida's mother Amrtaprabha built a temple of Amrtakesava for the deliverance of her dead son. During the reign of Ajitapida, the ministers Utpala, Padma, Dharma, Kalyana and Mamma built temples of Visnu under the names of Utpalavamin, Padmasvamin, Dharmasvamin, Kalyanasvamin and Mammavamin, respectively.

Visnu was also worshipped by the members of the Utpala dynasty who succeeded the Karkotas. Avantivarman (A.D. 855/56-883), the first king of the dynasty built the shrines of Visnu Avantisvamin, even before he became a king. His brother, Suravarman founded a temple of Suravarmasvamin and a *gakula*. Another brother of the king, Samara founded for Kesava in his quadruple form a temple called Samarasvamin. Mahodaya, the chief door keeper of Sura consecrated a shrine of Visnu Mahodayasvamin, while the king's minister Prabhakaravarman built a temple of Visnu Prabhakarasvamin. Lastly, Suyya, the irrigation minister of Avantivarman built at the new confluence of Sindhu and Vitasta a temple of Hrsikesa Yogasayin.

The popularity of the cult of Visnu in the happy valley during the 8th and 9th centuries is further attested to by a number of images discovered from various ancient ruins. These include a few busts and heads of Visnu which have been recovered from Vijabror, three-faced Visnu figures carved on the walls of the Martanda temple, relief sculptures of Caturbhuj Visnu and Visnu seated between consorts hailing from the ruins of Andarkoth and four-headed Visnu images from Avantipura and the surroundings.

The development of Vaisnavism in Kashmir, from the 10th century onwards, is evidenced from Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*. Queen Sugandha (a.d. 904-906) built a temple of Visnu Gopala Kesava and her daughter-in-law Nanda founded a temple of Nandikesava. A temple of Visnu Meruwardhandasvami was built by Partha's (A.D. 906-921) minister, Meruwardhana. Yasaskara (A.D. 939-948) started the construction of a temple of Visnu Yasaskarasvamin, which when he died, was left incomplete. The construction, however, was completed by Parvagupta (A.D. 949-950). Bhatta Phalguna, a councillor of Ksemagupta (A.D. 950-958), founded the shrine of Visnu Phalgunasvamin. About the same time, Bhima, the illustrious monarch of the Sahi dynasty, who was the maternal grandfather of Ksemagupta's queen Didda, built a high temple of Bhimakesava. About the end of the third quarter of the 10th century A.D. queen Didda, founded a series of Visnu shrines. The temple of Abhimanyusvamin, she built to increase her deceased son Abhimanyu's merit, while the shrine of Visnu Simhasvamin was erected by her, under the name of her father Simharaja. The queen further built two temples under the name of Visnu Diddasvamin.

The iconoclast Harsa (A.D. 1089-1101) destroyed a large number of Hindu and Buddhist images. The Visnu images desecrated by the dissolute king included the famous Parihasakesava. But king Uccala, who stepped into his shoes in the early years of the 12th century A.D., put up a new image of Parihasakesava. He also adorned the shrine of Visnu Tribhuvanasvamin with *sukavali*, which Harsa had carried off. Lastly, he restored the decayed temple of the ancient shrine of Visnu Cakradhara. All these are indications enough of the king's love and admiration for Vaisnavism.

Vaisnavism was popular even after Uccala's death. Ratnavali, the queen of Jayasimha established Vaikuntllamatlla and other pious buildings. The *gok'la*, erected by her, far excelled the *gakulas* erected previously. Alamkara, the superintendent of Jayasimba's great treasury (*vrhadganja*) was also a worshipper of Visnu. Among the later Hindu kings who professed Vainavism, Jonaraja mentions Ramadeva, who renewed the Visnu temple at Utpalapura and Udayanadeva who gave all golden armaments in his treasury to Visnu.

In the Vaisnavism of Kashmir, we find a synthesis of the different Vaisnava cults, which were current in ancient India. In it seems to have mingled, the faith of the Vedic Visnu, the system of the Pancaratra school, the religion of the Satvats and the faith in the cowherd god Gopala Krsna.

Rama was worshipped as an incarnation of Visnu, but there is no definite evidence of the existence of Rama-cult in early Kashmir.

Among the various incarnations of Visnu, Varaha (boar), Krsna and Nrsimha (man-lion) were most popular. Lalitaditya built a temple of Mahavaraha ~Ind iconographic representations of boar, man and lion-faced Visnu come from the temple of Martanda (8th century A.D.) as well as from the ruins of Avantipira (9th century A.D.). Rama, as an incarnation of Visnu seems to have been worshipped in the 8th century A.D. The Nilamatapurana refers to the celebration of Buddha's birthday festival, and this was a step towards the Buddha becoming an *avatara* of Visnu. The *avataravada* of Kashmir was, however, thoroughly systematised by the 11th century A.D. and in Ksemendra's *Dasavataracarita*, we find a list of the ten incarnations of Visnu under the names of Matsya, Kurma, Buddha and Karkya.

Varaha, Narasimha, Vamana, Parasurama, Srirama, Srikrnsna.

### *12.6 Minor gods and goddesses of the Hindu Religion*

Besides Visnu and Siva, there were many other minor Hindu gods and goddesses in the early Kashmirian pantheon. The most important of them include Surya, Karttikeya, Ganesa, Agni, Laksmi, Durga, Ganga, Yamuna and Kamadeva, of whose worship we have real literary evidence; some of their images too have survived.

The worship of Surya was probably brought into the valley from Iran at an early period. The Sakas and the Kusanas who ruled over Kashmir in the early centuries of the Christian era, seem to have been responsible for its introduction. Paucity of evidence, however, prevents us from making any definite assertion on the point or from tracing the early character of the cult.

Ranaditya, a king of ancient Kashmir, is said in the *Rajatarangini* to have built at the village of Simharotsika a temple of Martanda, which became famous everywhere under the name of Ranapurvasvamin. But Ranaditya is a legendary character in the ancient history of Kashmir and the village Simharotsika or the Martanda temple, said to have been founded by him, cannot be located. In the 8th century A.D., Lalitaditya erected the shrine of Aditya at the town of Lalitapura. He built another massive stone temple of Surya under the name of Martanda, the ruins of which have survived.

The sun worship continued to be in vogue in Kashmir long after the death of Lalitaditya. King Suravarman II (A.D. 939) paid homage to the temple of the Sun-god Jayasvamin. The copper image of Surya, called Tamrasvamin, was one of the most celebrated shrines of the valley in the 11th century A.D. Kalhana's remarks that Kashmirian king Kalasa (A.D. 1063-1089) sought refuge with Martanda to have his life and presented a gold statue at the god's feet, prove the popularity of Sun-worship at that time. Kalasa's son Harsa (A.D. 1089-1101), who destroyed a large number of divine images, spared the image of Martanda, either out of respect or out of fear.

The ruins of the temple of Martanda clearly show with what grandeur and pomp, love and devotion, the god was worshipped. No image of the Sun-god has yet been recovered from any part of the valley. There is however, in the right panel of the eastern wall of the ante-chamber of the temple of Martanda, a representation of Aruna, the charioteer of Surya, holding the reins of his seven horses.

Karttikeya worship in early Kashmir is borne out by the discovery of a fine six armed image of the generallisimo. Though the image can not be ascribed to any definite chronological setting, its bold execution indicates a period round about the

9th century A.D. Another standing figure of Kumara, along with an Ardhanarisvara image, has been found among the ruins of Avantipura and may be dated to the period of Avantivarman's rule (A.D. 855/56-883). The *Nilamatapurana*, which was probably composed in the 8th century A.D. refers that the worship of Karttikeya was performed on the 6th of lunar Caitra every year and this was supposed to ensure the welfare and safety of the children of Kashmir. In the *Rajatarangini*, there is mention of the foundation of one Skandabhavanavihara by a Kashmirian minister Skandagupta. Though at a comparatively modern period the place was associated with the worship of Karttikeya. Stein is probably correct in his assumption that in early times it was a Buddhist *vihara*, seems to suggest his personal association with the god.

Ganesa, the brother of Skanda according to the Hindu mythology, was one of the popular gods of the valley of Kashmir. According to Kalhana an image of Vinayaka Bhimasvamin existed as early as the days of Pravarasena II (c. 6th century A.D.) and received regular worship. A stone image of Ganesa, along with an Ardhanarisvara image, mention of which has already been made, was found amidst the ruins of Avantipura and may be dated to the second half of the 9th century A.D. Several terracotta plaques, containing the figure of the elephantheaded god, evidently works of local craftsmanship have also been recovered from the site of Avantipura. That Avantipura was a centre of Ganesa-worship receives further corroboration from Ksemendra who says that bowls of sweets offered to Lord Ganesa were resold in the town of Avantipura. We learn from the *Nilamatapurana* that the 8th of the darker Asadha of every year was dedicated to the worship of Ganesa and went by the name of Vinayaka-Astami. The worship of Vinayaka had also to be performed on the eve of the anointing ceremony of the king.

No sculptural representation of Agni or Fire god has yet been discovered from Kashmir. A passage from the *Rajatarangini*, however, refers to the worship of the Fire god and records that king Uccala's father Malla, observed from his earliest time the cult of a sacred fire. As Stein has pointed out, there was probably a shrine of the god of Fire Svayambhu at Suyam, a place situated about half a mile from the present village of Nichhom. The temple of fire god Svayambhu was destroyed, it may be presumed, by Harsa and the decayed building was restored by Uccala. King Uccala is also said to have started once on a pilgrimage to Svayambhu.

Laksmi, the goddess of wealth, was quite a popular deity. King Pravarasena II (6th century A.D.) is credited with the establishment of five shrines of the goddess Sri. An image of Laksmi has come from the historic town of Vijabror, modern Brar. From stylistic consideration, the sculpture may be assigned to about the 6th century A.D. Another beautiful stone figure of the goddess seated on a throne, supported by a pair of lions, with elephants on each side pouring water over her head, has been discovered from the Avantisvami temple, and is apparently of the 9th century A.D. Kalhana records that during the reign of Unmattavanti (A.D. 937-939), a Brahmana of well-known valour, named Rakka, raised an image of the goddess Sri under the appellation of Rakkajayadevi.

Worship of Sakti, the energetic principle, seems to have been widely prevalent. In the worship of goddess Durga, who is but an embodiment of Sakti, animal sacrifices played an important part. Goddess Sarada was one of the most celebrated deities of the valley in early times and she was nothing but Sakti embodying three separate manifestations. References to 'Matrcakra' are frequently met with in the *Rajatarangini* and sculptured images of *sapta matrkas*, such as Brahmani, Mahesvar, Kaumari, Indrani, Vaisnavi, Varahi and Camundi have been recovered from Pandrethan. A lifesize separate sculpture of Varahi, representing a young woman with the face of Varahi, discovered among the ruins of Kashmir, is now preserved in the Lalmandi

Museum, Srinagara. Though the *sapta matrkas* were originally Sivaite in origin, there is no doubt that afterwards they became the actual cult emblems of the devout Saktas.

Representations of the goddess Ganga, sometimes accompanied by the goddess Yamuna, are found among the old sculptures of the valley, but they do not seem to have any particular cult associated with them.

Two similarly sculptured relief found in the Avantisvami temple have been generally interpreted as representations of the god Visnu accompanied by Laksmi and another goddess (Bhumi?). But according to Vogel, the amorons attitude of the central personage and his attributes, a bow and an arrow ending in a flower, indicate that here we have an iconographic representation of Kamadeva seated between his wives Rati and Priti. There is literary evidence to Kamadeva's popularity in ancient Kashmir. According to the *Nilamatapurana* the 13th of lunar Caitra was devoted to the worship of Kamadeva.

*Excerpts - 'EARLY HISTORY AND CULTURE OF KASHMIR'* by Dr. Sunil Chandra Ray

*Source: Vitasta*

## ***13 Religion and Philosophy***

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**P. N. K. Bamzai**

**While** the fascinating valley of Kashmir was yet under the rule of the Hindu Lohara dynasty and Kalhana was giving his final touches to his monumental history, the Rajatarangini, North-West India was witnessing the end of an era. The old order was changing rapidly with the advent of Muhammadan rule. Though the Islamic movement was of relatively recent growth, it was yet powerfully forcing itself on the ancient and firmly established social and religious institutions of the country. There was "a clashing of fundamental convictions, a conflict of realism with idealism, of the material with the visionary, of the concrete with the abstract." New values were being set up in art and literature and a chain of action and reaction resulted in a slow and imperceptible synthesis of the two fundamentally opposite cultures.

### ***13.1 Spread of Islam***

Perhaps the best example of this synthesis is provided by medieval Kashmir which, as mentioned earlier, came under the influence of the new religion peacefully and was spared the violent birthpangs that ushered in the new order in the rest of the country. For over two centuries following Mahmud Ghazni's expeditions to north and west of India, Kashmir sealed itself up behind its mountain ramparts, secure against the attacks of the zealous armies of Mohammadan invaders. But cultural influences and ideas could not be shut out, howsoever high the enclosing walls might be. Islamic missionaries and adventurers carried the teachings of the new religion into the Valley. Most of these missionaries belonged to one or the other of the Order of Sufis from Persia and Bukhara. How these saints and their teachings influenced the already rich cultural heritage of Kashmir will be clear from a reference to the development of Sufism and its propagation in the Valley by devoted and selfless missionaries.

### ***13.2 Islamic Mystics***

Islam on coming into contact with Mahayana Buddhism in Central Asia and in some parts of Persia, could not but be influenced by its philosophic thought, and the devotion and ardour of its monks. The religious tolerance and harmlessness to all life as taught by its scriptures had a moderating effect on a good proportion of the followers of the new faith. It was, therefore, a matter of time when in the process of the synthesis of the two religions, there should evolve a new school of Islamic mystics - the Sufis.

By the end of the ninth century, Islam had begun to ossify itself into a system of formulas and observances and Sufism appeared as a reaction of the spirit against the letter. There was felt a need for a 'heart' religion and the Brahmanic Pantheism and Buddhist Nihilism alike teaching the unreality of the seeming world, attracted the attention of the Sub doctors, although their mysticism is less intense and practical but more airy and literary in character.

Mysticism, therefore, made great progress in Persia and assumed the character of a sect there. A certain Abu Sayyid was the first who advised his disciples to forsake the world and embrace a monastic life in order to devote themselves exclusively to meditation and contemplation; a practice borrowed from the Hindu and Buddhist religions. The disciples of Abu Sayyid wore a garment of wool (suf) whence they received the name of Sufis.

Sufism spread more and more in Persia, the home of a people imbibed with the teachings of various Asiatic religions and was enthusiastically embraced by those who wished to give themselves up undisturbed to philosophical speculation. In its first form Sufism was quite compatible with Muslim dogma. It was satisfied to profess a contempt for life and an exclusive love of God, and to extol ascetic practices, as the fittest means of procuring those states of ecstasy during which the soul was supposed to contemplate the Supreme being face to face. But by degrees, thanks to the adepts whom it drew from the ranks of heterodoxy, Sufism departed from its original purpose and entered upon discussions respecting the Divine nature which finally led to Pantheism. The increasing tendency towards Pantheism and ascetic practices are thus the main scope of Sufism. The former was the result of contacts and discussions with the followers of Hindu philosophy and the latter was borrowed from Buddhist monkery in Central Asia. "The great movement of mysticism, in spite of the Greek and Indian origin of much of its philosophical skeleton and terminology, is the most significant genuinely Islamic contribution to the religious experience of mankind."

Its principal argument was that God being one, the creation must make a part of His being, since otherwise it would exist externally to Him and would form a principal distinct from Him, which would be equal to looking on the universe as a deity opposed to God. In their view, God is immanent in all things and is the essence of every human soul. There is not only no God but God, but no being, life or spirit except the being, life and spirit of God. These doctrines shocked the orthodox Muslim opinion and in the reign of Moktadir, a Persian Sufi named Haltaj, who taught publicly that every man is God, was tortured and put to death.

Several of the chief dervish orders took their birth from various accomplished Sufis - Abdul-jilani, who founded the Qadiriya Order; Ahmad-ul-Rifai, the Rifaiya; Jalal-ud-din Rumi, the Mawaliya; etc. Rumi who was the most uncompromising Sufi was the greatest Pantheistic writer of all ages. Of the later Order may be named the Naqshbandiya, which has been the most important in the Khanates of Turkistan.

There were too among the Naqshbandiyas exercises in the restraint of breathing, strongly reminiscent of the yoga exercises of the Hindus. There is much in common between the Saiva philosophy and Sufism. The cardinal doctrine of Sufis that all forms of religion are equal appealed to intellectuals of the age.

### *13.3 Sayyid Bulbul Shah*

It was thus fortunate that Islam entered Kashmir from Central Asia, the land which owed so much to Kashmir in the realm of art and philosophy. The first name associated with the propagation of the new faith of whom we find a record in the annals of Kashmir, was Bulbul Shah. He appears to have deeply impressed the people by his personal example, his methods of preaching and persuasion, at a time when the fortunes of the ruling dynasty were in the melting pot and the people were passing through a period of political instability, heavy taxation, and crushing burdens of feudalism. Above all, he was responsible of initiating the new ruler into the fold of Islam and thus elevating it to the status of State religion.

Bulbul Shah or Sayyid Bilal Shah is said to have visited Kashmir first in the time of King Sahadeva, the predecessor of Rinchin. He was a widely travelled Musavi Sayyid from Turkistan, and was a "disciple of Shah Niamatullah Wali Farsi, Khalifa of the Suhrawardi Tariq or school of Sufis founded originally by Sheikh Shihab-ud-din Suhrawardi. The circumstances which led to the conversion of Rinchin to Islam have already been mentioned. Suffice it to say here that

with this first success of his mission, Bulbul Shah acquired great influence in the Valley and very soon he effected the conversion of Rinchin's brother-in-law and commander-in-chief and several others to his creed. The first mosque was built at the place now called Bulbul Lankar, below the fifth bridge in Srinagar. Bulbul Shah died in 1327 AD and lies buried near the mosque. His lieutenant, Mulla Ahmed, carried on the mission till his death in the reign of Sultan Shihab-ud-din and is buried near the grave of his preceptor. The Mulla was made the first Sheikh-ul-Islam and is the author of two books, *Fataw-i-Shihabi* and *Shihab-i-Saqib*.

### ***13.4 Sayyid Ali Hamadani***

After Bulbul Shah came other Sufis, like Sayyid Jalal-ud-din of Bukhara; and Sayyid Taj-ud-din who arrived in the reign of Sultan Shihab-ud-din (1354-73 AD) and was accompanied by Sayyid Mas'ud and Sayyid Yusuf, his disciples. But the most prominent among the Sufi missionaries was Sayyid Ali Hamadani who "by his learning, piety and devotion is said to have made 37,000 converts to Islam." Known in Kashmir as Shah Hamadan he may well be said to have practically established Islam in Kashmir and laid its foundations well and true.

The great Sayyid, also known as Amir-i-Kabir or the great Amir was born at Hamadan in 1314 A.D. His geneology can be traced to Hazrat Ali through Imam Husain. Born in a family with traditions of scholarship and piety, Sayyid Ali learnt the holy Quran by heart while in his teens. He studied Islamic theology and learnt the secrets of Sufi doctrines and practices under the tuition of his learned uncle, Sayyid Alau-ud-din Simnani. Later he became the spiritual disciple of Sheikh Sharaf-ud-din Muzdaqani who advised him to complete his education by extensive travels in foreign countries. For 21 years Sayyid Ali journeyed from one country to the other and came in contact with contemporary scholars and saints of note. When he returned in 1370 AD he found that the political conditions in Persia had undergone a change during his absence and Timur who ruled Persia had unleashed a policy of repression against the Sayyids, forcing most of them out of the country. Sayyid Ali Hamadani accompanied by 700 more Sayyids, left Persia to escape the tyrannical rule of Timur and entered Kashmir in 1372 AD. Sultan Shihab-ud-din was the reigning king. The Sultan was at that time on one of his military expeditions against the ruler of Kabul and his brother, Qutb-ud-din had the honour of receiving the party of Sayyids and waiting upon them for four months, after which they left on a pilgrimage to Mecca. Seven years later (in 1379) Shah Hamadan again visited the Valley and stayed there for over two and a half years. He paid a third visit to Kashmir in 1387, but had to leave early on account of ill-health. While at Pakhli in Hazara district, he had a relapse and passed away in 1384. His disciples carried the dead body to Khutlan where it lies buried. A monument to the Sayyid stands at Pakhli, of which, writes Babar in his Diary, "I made the circuit (tawaf) when I came and took Chaghan-Sarai in 920 AH (1514 AD)".

Sayyid Ali Hamadani was a versatile genius, a great saint and a scholar. He wrote profusely on Sufism and elucidated several earlier works on the subject. Although a great authority on theology and philosophy, he did not disdain to write on such varied secular subjects as jurisprudence, political science and the science of physiognomy. Author of more than a hundred works on logic, ethics, and other subjects in prose, Sayyid Ali also wrote Persian poetry of no mean order. His odes are naturally Sufistic and his mystical poems illustrate his broad humanistic outlook on life and religion.

Sayyid Ali's visits to Kashmir, particularly the one in 1372 when he was accompanied by 700 Sayyids who had to leave Persia following Timur's invasion of that country and his decision to

exterminate the Alavi Sayyids of Hamadan, had a profound influence on the spread of Islam in the Valley. A leader of the great Naqshbandya Order of Sufis, founded by his contemporary Khwaja Muhammad Bahau-u-din Naqshband (1319-89) of Bukhara, Sayyid Ali Hamadani obtained great influence over the ruler, Sultan Qutb-ud-din. He was received with great warmth and respect and lodged along with his followers in a hospice in the Alaudinpura quarter of Srinagar. Some of his learned followers visited the remote corners of the Valley and by their religious discourses effected the conversion of a large number of people to Islam.

Till then the new religion had not made any appreciable headway in the Valley, even though the Sultans had been its followers. The majority of the people being still Hindu, the Muslims had nothing to distinguish them in dress, manners and customs from their compatriots. In Alaudinpura, for instance there was a temple which was visited every morning both by the Sultan and his Muslim subjects. To avert the recurrence of famines "the king performed a Yagna in the month of Bhadra, and distributed large gifts." In contravention of the Islamic teachings he had two wives who were sisters. Sayyid Ali disapproved of these practices and in accordance with his advice, Qutb-ud-din divorced one of the sisters and retained the other. He also advised the Sultan to adopt the dress common in Muslim countries. However, "anxious not to antagonise his non-Muslim subjects, Qutbud-din did not follow every advice of the Sayyid, but he held him in great reverence and visited him every day. Sayyid Ali gave him a cap which, out of respect, the Sultan always wore under his crown. The subsequent Sultans followed the same practice until the cap was buried along with the body of Fateh Shah according to the latter's will."

That Sayyid Ali Hamadani's deep scholarship and his spiritual attainments were responsible for the furtherance of the conversion of the Valley to Islam, goes without saying. He came in contact with the popular Saiva teacher Lalleswari and the great Sufi Saint Sheikh Nur-ud-din, and had long discourses with them on spiritual and philosophic subjects. Lallewari's association with Shah Hamadan was due to an identity of the faith of Sufis and Hindu mendicants and saints in Kashmir. The Sufis had charm of manners and attractive personalities and treating all religions alike they naturally preferred the faith to which they themselves belonged and which their patrons favoured. It was, therefore, natural that they should have influenced the people among whom they lived and worked and thus facilitated the peaceful propagation of Islam among the people in Kashmir.

### *13.5 Mir Muhammad Hamadani*

Sayyid Ali Hamadani's work was continued with greater vigour by his disciples and more particularly by Mir Muhammad Hamadani. Born in 1372, Mir Muhammad was only 12 years old at the time of his father's death, and his education in theology and Sufism was conducted under the prominent admirers and followers of his father - Khwaja Ishaq of Khutlan and Maulana Nur-ud-din Jafar of Badakhshan. He soon attained preeminence as a scholar and saint and arrived in Kashmir with 300 Sayyids when only 22 years of age. This influx of a large number of Sayyids into Kashmir was no doubt the direct result of the tyranny and self-assertion of first the Mongols and then of Timur. "They were attracted to the Valley owing to the peace that prevailed there compared to the social and political upheavals that were characteristic of Central Asia and Persia during this period. Moreover; they also came on account of the patronage that was extended to them by the Sultans."

Mir Muhammad stayed in the Valley for about 22 years and then left to perform the Hadj pilgrimage. The presence of a large number of Sayyids, imbued deeply with the Sufistic

doctrines and practices stimulated the tendency to mysticism among Kashmiris for which Saivism and Buddhism had already laid a foundation. This was mainly responsible for not only the adoption of Muslim faith by the general mass of people, but moulding their character and outlook on life on a humanistic and tolerant plane.

But not all the Sayyids who entered Kashmir during this time were devout Sufis. Many of them upheld the orthodox and puritanic views on Islam. In order to gain favours and privileges from the Sultans, they actively interfered with the politics of the State. This culminated in the narrow-minded religious policies adopted by Sultan Sikandar and his minister, Malik Suha Bhatt, who embraced Islam at the hands of Mir Hamadani. In contrast to the peaceful propagation of Islam by the earlier Sufis, throughout example and precept, Malik Suha Bhatt, with the active support of Sultan Sikandar, indulged in forcible conversion of Brahmins and wholesale destruction of their temples. A strong reaction during the reign of Sultan Zain-ul-abidin against this policy resulted in the proclamation of complete freedom of conscience and tolerance to all beliefs.

But the mode of conversion adopted by Suha Bhatt and Sikandar naturally brought about its own revenge, and reacted on their concept of Islam. The converts, and through them their leaders, were unable to resist the Hindu philosophy and trend of thought. This resulted in the emergence of a remarkable School or Order of Sufis in Kashmir - the Rishis - who wielded enormous influence on the religious and philosophical beliefs of the people, and moulded their mind and set up the ideal of religious tolerance and abiding faith in the grace of God.

### *13.6 Sheikh Nur-ud-din alias Nand Rishi*

Foremost among them was Sheikh Nur-ud-din, the patron-saint of Kashmir. Revered alike by the Hindus and Muslims of Kashmir, Sheikh Nur-ud-din alias Nand Rishi, or Sahazanand, was born in 1377 AD at Kaimah, a village two miles to the west of the important town of Bijbihara (ancient Vijayesa), 26 miles from Srinagar on the Jammu road. His ancestors belonged to a noble family of Kishtwar and had emigrated to the valley. His father, Salar Sanz, was a pious man and came under the spiritual influence of a Sufi saint, Yasman Rishi, who arranged his marriage to Sadra Maji. The child of their union was Nand Rishi, the great founder of the Order of the Rishis of Kashmir.

In his very childhood Nand Rishi gave proof of his saintly nature. He held himself aloof from the daily affairs of the family and though apprenticed to several trades, showed no inclination for any of them. Finally he gave up the world, lived in a cave for 12 years practicing penances which reduced him almost to a skeleton. His fame as a saint and the glory of his spiritual attainments travelled far and wide, attracting to him a great number of followers. Though unable to read and write, he gave utterance to hundreds of beautiful Sayings which furnish the Kashmiri literature with gems having both a terrestrial as well as celestial meaning. Concise, and objective in their approach, they have been stamped in people's memories. They are collected and preserved in two volumes called the Rishi Nama and Nur Nama; but because of the transliteration in the Persian alphabet, many of them are not easily deciphered.

Nand Rishi exhorted his followers to perform good actions. That he said, was the secret of happiness in this world as well as in the life to come;

***The dog is barking in the compound,  
O Brothers! give ear and listen to (what he says):  
"As one sowed, so did he reap;  
Thou, Nand, sow, sow, sow !"***

Of his experiences in a lonely cave where he led an austere life, he says:

***The cave seems to me to be a celestial castle;  
The quilt seems to me to be a silken garment.  
I play with the rats as if they were creatures of good omen to me.  
One year seems to me to be one single hour.***

He preached that all men should lead disciplined lives and none should fall a prey to worldly desires:

***Desire is like the knotted wood of the forest,  
It cannot be made into planks, beams or into cradles;  
He who cut and felled it,  
Will burn it into ashes.***

Religious schisms were raising their head in his time and Nand Rishi warns the Kashmiris against the snares of false prophets in the following terms:

***I saw a priest blowing out fire (and)  
Beating a drum to others:  
The priests have nice big turbans on their heads;  
They walk about daintily dressed.  
Dressed in priestly robes they indulge in mutton,  
They run away with cooking pots under their arms.***

He ridicules the pretentious nature of a priest, addressing him thus:

***The rosary is like a snake;  
Thou bendest it on seeing the disciples;  
Thou hast eaten six platefuls, one like another;  
If thou art a priest then who are robbers.***

Nand Rishi also left what might be called a note on the state of the world to come:

***During this Iron Age I found liars prospering;  
In the house of the pious I found grief born of poverty.***

He constantly advised the seeking of good company and shunning the bad, contrasting the two in forceful terms. He showed that rogues will always wrong the good, attacking them with dishonest words if one lacked in care and gave them such opportunities:

***Spend thy days with the good -  
The shah-wulga (one of the best kinds of rice) will get pounded,  
Never go about with the wicked -***

***Do riot walk close to pots covered with  
soot (else thou shalt get soiled.)***

He also held that devotion to God lay in leading a disciplined life. It availed men nothing to carry out the rites and rituals of religion in a cold and mechanical manner.

***Having washed thy face, thou hast called the believers to prayer;  
How can I know, O Rishi, what thou feelest in thy heart,  
or what thy vows are for?  
Thou hast lived a life without seeing (God);  
Tell me to whom didst thou offer prayer.  
by thou listeneth to truth, thou oughtest to subdue the five (senses)  
If thou lowereth only the fleshy body, the fleshy body will not save thee;  
If thou maketh union witli Siva,  
Then only, O Rishi Mali, will prayer avail thee.***

Of true worship he says:

**Do not go to Sheikh and priest and Mullah;  
Do not feed the cattle on arkhor (poisonous) leaves;  
Do not shut thyself up in mosques or forests;  
Enter shine own body with breath controlled in communion with God.**

Sheikh Nur-ud-din acquired enormous influence over the people of Kashmir and when he passed away at an advanced age, King Zain-ul-Abidin himself was the chief mourner at his funeral. His grave at Tsrar Sharif is an object of pilgrimage, Kashmiris of all religions and communities flocking to it every year. The extent of the veneration in which his memory has been cherished may be gauged from the fact that nearly four centuries after his death, Atta Muhammad Khan, an Afghan governor, in order to win the sympathy and support of the people of Kashmir, struck coins in the name of Sheikh Nur-ud-din. No other saint perhaps in human history has ever had coins struck in his honour.

### **13.7 The Order of Rishis of Kashmir**

During his lifetime Nand Rishi founded an Order of Rishis, and it is noteworthy that this Order had members from amongst Hindus and Muslims and commanded the respect and homage of all Kashmiris, irrespective of their caste or creed. Janak Rishi of Aishmuqam, Rishi Mol of Anantnag, Bata Mol. Rishi Pir, Thagababa Sahib of Srinagar, belonged to the same Order. The political, social and economic travail and suffering through which the land had to pass, was considerably lightened by the comforting words and kind acts of these highly advanced souls. To them goes the credit of keeping the people firm to the ideals of love and toleration. They lived among the common people, shared their troubles and pains. No better tribute can be paid to them than that recorded by Abut Fazal:

"The most respectable people of Kashmir are the Rishis who, although they do not suffer themselves to be fettered by traditions, are doubtless true worshippers of God. They revile not any other sect and ask nothing of anyone; they plant the roads with fruit trees to furnish the traveller with refreshments; they abstain from flesh and have no intercourse with the other sex. There are two thousand of these Rishis in Kashmir."

Jehangir was also impressed with their piety and utter self-abnegation. In his *Memoirs TUZK-I-JEHANGIRI* he speaks of these Rishis as possessing simplicity and though not having religious knowledge or learning, being without presence. "They restrain the tongue of desire and the foot of seeking," continues he in his florid style, "and eat no flesh. They have no wives, and always plant fruit-bearing trees in the fields so that men may benefit by them, themselves desiring no advantage."

Every district and village had its *Asthan* where a Rishi took his abode and practiced meditation. Their graves and relics are objects of respect and veneration to this day. The shrines attest to their founders' austerities and virtues. "Associated as they are with acts of piety and self-denial," observes Lawrence, "the *Ziarat* are pleasant places of meeting at fair time, and the natural beauty of their position and surroundings afford additional attraction. Noble brotherhood of venerable trees, of chinar, elms and poplar with its white bark and shimmer of silver leaves, gives a pleasant shade, and there is always some spring of water for the thirsty."

### ***13.8 Mir Sham-ud-din-Iraqi***

An event of great importance in the spread of Islam in Kashmir was the arrival in about 1492 AD of a preacher from Talish on the shores of the Caspian, named Shams-ud-din Iraqi, who described himself as the disciple of Sayyid Muhammad Nurbakhsh of Khorasan. His father was a Musavi Sayyid and it appears that he was converted to Nurbakhshi beliefs early in his life. He entered the service of Sultan Hussain Mirza Baiqara (1469-1506) of Herat and was sent by him as his envoy in 1481 to the court of Sultan Hassan Shah of Kashmir. For eight years he stayed in Kashmir and though prevented by the nature of his post to take an active part in the religious or political movements in Kashmir, nevertheless made a keen study of the people and their leaders. He even converted secretly two preachers to his faith, and having aroused suspicion among the orthodox Ulama, he was forced to leave Kashmir.

But it was in 1492 itself that he came back to Kashmir to carry on his religious mission.

Shams-ud-din, however, professed to be an orthodox Sunni like most of the inhabitants of the Valley, but the doctrine he preached was "conforming neither to the Sunni nor to the Shia creeds." The way that ultimately led to the preachings among, and converts from the people of Kashmir to the Shia sect, is the story of a constant struggle and strife among Sunnis and followers of Mir Shams-ud-din.

In fact, the Nurbakhshi movement was an offshoot of the Sufi cult prevailing in Persia, and its founder, Sayyid Muhammad Nur Bakhsh claimed to have seen the Divine Light and to have received the esoteric teachings of All through the Imam Jafar-i-Sadiq. Naturally the teachings of Sayyid Muhammad Nurbakhsh had a tendency towards the Shia tenets, and Shams-ud-din Iraqi who was his follower reflected these while conducting his proselytizing mission in Kashmir. With his eloquence and learning, he soon succeeded in converting a number of people to the Nurbakhshi sect, the most important person being Musa Raina, a powerful noble, who gave him money to carry on his work and also land at Zadibal, a suburb to the north of Srinagar, to build a Khanaqah on.

But in spite of the initial success, Mir Shams-uddin had to face great obstacles. His patron, Musa Raina, soon fell from power and the influential Sayyid noble, Muhammad Baihaqi, the chief minister of Sultan Muhammad Shah drove him out of the Valley to Baltistan. There he continued his missionary activities and converted nearly the whole population to the Shia creed. After sometime when Musa Raina returned to power, he was recalled by the latter to Srinagar. As long as his patron enjoyed power, Shams-ud-din had the fullest support and cooperation from the government in his activities and it was then that he converted the turbulent Chak tribe too, thus giving a religious character to the subsequent race for power between the Shahmir Sultans and the Chaks.

The first severe setback that the Nurbakhshis had was at the hands of Mirza Haider Dughlat. He was an orthodox Sunni and looked with disfavour on any departure from the letter of Islamic tradition or dogma. Besides it served his political ends to bring down his heavy hand on the Nurbakhshis and other Sufi sects, hoping thus to gain the support and goodwill of the orthodox Sunnis. He was thus able for some time to easily impose his rule and his Mughal officials on the people of the Valley. Writes he in great wrath and venom:

"At the present time in Kashmir, the Sufis have legitimized so many heresies that they know nothing of what is lawful or unlawful. They consider that piety and purity consist in night watching and abstinence in food. They are for ever interpreting information regarding either the future or the past. They prostrate themselves before another and, together with such disgraceful

acts observe the forty days (of retirement). In short nowhere else in such a band of heretics to be found. May the most High God defend all the people of Islam from such misfortune and calamities as this, and turn them all into the true path of righteousness....."

"Thanks be to God that at the present time no one in Kashmir dares openly profess this faith; but all deny it, and give themselves out as good Sunnis. They are aware of my severity towards them, and know that if any one of the sect appears, he will not escape the punishment of death."

But the spirit which animated the religious beliefs of Kashmir asserted itself soon and with the death of Mirza Haider Dughlat, several Sufi saints and Rishis carried on openly their activities all over the Valley. A noted saint who wielded a powerful influence on the masses was Sheikh Hamza Makhdum. Born in 1494 AD Sheikh Hamza studied under a well known scholar of his time, Baba Ismail Qubravi, whose school stood at the foot of the Hari Parbat hill.

Sheith Hamza was, however, forced by the Shia ruler, Ghazi Shah Chak to leave Srinagar. He established his seat in the village of Biru (about 20 miles from Srinagar on the road to Magam) and won a large number of disciples. In course of time he became unbearable, he blessed the mission of Baba Daud Khaki, his disciple, and Sheikh Yaqub Sarfi, the learned theologian and poet, to Akbar's court to induce him to annex Kashmir to his expanding empire.

Both Sheikh Hamza and Baba Daud Khaki were responsible for converting a large number of people to Islam and also in setting up mosques in the Valley. Sheikh Hamza dies in 1586 at an advanced age and lies buried on the south-eastern spur of the Hari Parbat hill in Srinagar. The tomb attracts large crowds who offer *Fatiha* to the Sheikh and some of his disciples who lie buried nearby.

### *13.9 Use of Force*

It would, however, be wrong to assert that the spread of Islam in the Valley was throughout effected peacefully and without the use of force. Though the Valley had no conqueror like Mahmud, nor a warrior like Shihab-ud-din Ghorī, nor a general like Muhammad bin Qasim, it had yet religious zealots like Sultan Sikandar, Sultan All Shah, Mirza Haider Dughlat, Yaqub Shah Chak, Mughal governors Itqad Khan and Ibrahim Khan, and most of the Afghan rulers. A close and careful study of the history of medieval Kashmir, however, reveals that persecution of non-Muslims by these zealots was resented by the majority of their Muslim subjects, who used to give shelter and solace to their compatriots in trouble. The people were conscious of the fact that in most cases this policy was born of political exigencies of these rulers who were experiencing difficulties in their carrer, and it did not reflect their respect for, or devotion to, the faith they professed. That the various religious communities bore no ill-will to one another, is proved by the political unrest in Kashmir during the 15th century when all the people, Hindu and Muslim, combined to give a fight to the Sayyids who had come from Iran and Turan and established their settlements in the Valley. Likewise the cruelties perpetrated by the Afghan rulers on Hindus to forcibly convert them to Islam, did not win them the sympathy or support of the Muslims of the Valley; instead they joined the Hindus in exending an invitation to Ranjit Singh to invade Kashmir and rid them of the tyrannical rule of the Afghans. Religious fanaticism and persecution of communities professing a creed other than the religion of the king, seems to have been the general trend in medieval times: witness, for example, the wholesale extirpation of Sayyids from Persia by Timur, the suppression of Sufis and Nurbakhshis in Kashmir by Mirza Haider Dughlat, and the constant feuds in Afghanistan between the Shia and Sunni sects. That the masses in

Kashmir did not fall victim to this malady of the times is apparent from the tolerant reigns of Sultans like Qutb-ud-din, Zain-ul-Abidin, and Hussain Shah Chak.

Kashmir was the meeting place of two mighty traditions - the heart of India's monistic Wisdom-Religion, which was Kashmir Saivism, and Erfan, the "Wisdom of the Quran." The geographical situation of the Valley and the rich cultural heritage of its people were responsible for this unique development. In what manner the two religions acted and reacted on one another is an interesting study.

### 13.10 Hinduism

As mentioned earlier the Hindu religion and society before the advent of Islam, had been affected by Buddhism. If Kashmir Saivism was responsible for the development of Mahayana Hinduism was no less influenced by the heterodox dogma of Buddhism and its denunciation of caste. The social fabric was thus loosened and many undesirable practices, like those of *Devadasi* and *sati*, became common. The religious beliefs were petrified into rigid Saiva rites and rituals conducted under the supervision of Brahmins. The tatters influence through their *parishads* or societies was being increasingly felt not only in religion but also in the policies of the State. Devaswamin the head of the Saiva sect, for instance, refused to admit Rinchin to the Hindu fold.

The Saiva cult became the predominant religion of the people and replaced the Vedic rites and rituals connected with birth, marriage and death of a Hindu. All the religious and philosophical books were in Sanskrit which, with the emergence of the popular Kashmiri language, became the domain of the privileged few, mostly of Brahmin caste. Since the latter also carried on the civil administration, there grew up slowly a stiff though silent opposition to this class among the general mass of the people. This was reflected in the bid for gaining popular support through the persecution of the Kayasthas and Brahmins by several Hindu kings.

No wonder the teachings of Islam as carried to Kashmir by the Sultans found a ready response from the general populace. By the time Shah Mir ascended the throne, there seems to have been a fairly strong Muslim community in Kashmir, and by the end of the 14th century the "adoption of Islam by the great mass of the population became an accomplished fact."

But the Brahmins did not actively oppose the expansion of Muslim influence in the Valley, since "the administration remained as before in the hands of the traditional official class, the Brahmins, for whom a change of religion presented no advantage and who accordingly retained their inherited status, together with its literary traditions."

With the growing influence of Iranian and Turanian Sayyids at the Kashmir Court, and the consequent encouragement of Persian language by the Sultans, the Brahmins were faced with the prospect of losing their privileged position. But with their quick adaptability they switched over to the study of the Persian language and literature in which they soon outshone the Sayyids. They had, however, to suffer persecution at the hands of Sultans Sikandar and All Shah who adopted this policy at the bidding of the Sayyid nobles. Most of the temples were destroyed by Suha Bhatt the newly converted minister of Sikandar and he, "with the leaders of the army, tried to destroy the caste of the people." The Brahmins resisted forcible conversion by death, by flight to places in the rest of India, more particularly to the South. "The difficult country through which they passed," laments Srivara, "the scanty food, painful illness, and the torments of hell during lifetime, removed from the minds of the Brahmins the fear of hell. Oppressed by various calamities such as encounter with the enemy, fear of snakes, fierce heat and scanty food, many

Brahmins perished on the way, and thus obtained relief." Those, however, who could not leave the Valley "wandered about in Kashmira wearing the dress of the malechas."

Under Zain-ul-Abidin's tolerant rule the Brahmins regained their power and prestige and occupied positions of trust and responsibility in his government. They took an active part in reviving the literary traditions of the land enriching it with the influences from Persian and Arabic science and literature.

The Mughal emperors treated the Brahmins of Kashmir with great respect and with the opening up of the Valley, they found a wider field for their talent. Many Kashmiri Brahmins rose to high political posts, as for instance Pandit Mahadeo and Chaudhri Mahesh in Kashmir and Jai Ram Bhan at Delhi. The Brahmins were no doubt victims of religious persecution during the time of some Mughal governors, Itqad Khan for instance, but by and large they had a peaceful time throughout the Mughal period.

The Afghan rule was particularly harsh on them, but with their literary and political acumen, they produced several eminent administrators who won the confidence of even the most tyrannous of governors. For instance Dila Ram Quli was the chief minister of both Haji Karim Dad Khan and his son, Azad Khan, and "possessed a more liberal disposition than is usually found in an Indian..... His deportment seemed uniformly benevolent to all classes of people. With his companions he was affable and good humoured. He was humane to his domestics and exercised with a reasonable temperance the duties of his office."

All this shows that though the Brahmins had to face very rough times, they weathered the storm with their courage and faith. But this was made possible by the affection and solace they received from the general mass of the population who were Muslims. We have it on the authority of a Brahmin historian that many Muslims gave shelter to a large number of Hindus and kept them concealed in their houses till the dawn of better days."

The most potent reason, however, for their survival as a distinct community was the preaching of the philosophy of Kashmir Saivism in Kashmiri by the great hermitess, Lalleswari.

### *13.11 Lalleswari - Forerunner of Medieval Reformers*

As in the rest of India, the middle of the 14th century was a period of religious and moral fermentation in Kashmir. Buddhism had practically disappeared from the Valley, though we find mention of Buddhist priests and viharas in the later Rajataranginis. Tilakacharya, described as a Buddhist, was a minister of Zain-ul-Abidin. Most of the Buddhist theologians and saints finding the Valley uncongenial, had left for Ladakh and Tibet. The long period of political instability which followed the peaceful and enlightened reign of Avantivarman (855-83 A.D.) was responsible for the ossification of the predominant religion, Shaivism, into elaborate and complicated rituals which dominated all social and cultural activities. Shaktism, born of the love for Durga worship, had degenerated into grotesque forms of rites and ceremonies. Vaishnavism was not a strong element in the religious fabric of the Valley, but in the 11th century it received further nourishment from the teachings of Ramanuja who travelled all the way from Madras to Kashmir to fight Shaivism at its fountain-head. And with the destruction of temples and images by several Hindu kings like Harsha, as well as by Muslim zealots, Hindu worship was driven to the seclusion of the home or of 'natural' (Svayambhu) images - rocks, or ice formations, or springs. Sanskrit became the domain of the learned few, the common man having taken to a form of Prakrit which though retaining its essentials, was yet wholly different from the 'Language of the Gods'.

In this troubled period of political uncertainty and changing social values, the people of the Valley were subjected to the impact of Islam. From a close contact between the two religions and their deep influence on each other, there resulted the evolution of what may be called Medieval Reformers or Mystics.

For more than two hundred years Islam had, in central Asia and Persia, been similarly influenced by the teachings and dogmas of Mahayana Buddhism and Upanishadic philosophy, resulting in the emergence of a cult of Islamic mystics. Fortunately, the new religion entered the Valley in this form, being carried there by enlightened Sufis like Bulbul Shah. With their humanistic approach to religion, they found a ready and sympathetic response from the Kashmiris, already permeated with the teachings of mystic saints and "seers".

For, it was during this period of religious fermentation that a need had been felt for a new approach to religion embracing all creeds and castes appealing to the 'heart' rather than the 'head'. Thanks to its rich religious and philosophic traditions, Kashmir rose to the occasion and produced a number of mystics and saints who by their teachings and their lives of complete self-abnegation were the living embodiments of true religion and morality.

Foremost among them was the great mystic "seer", Lalleshwari, popularly known as Lal Ded (Mother Lalla), who profoundly influenced the thought and life of her contemporaries and whose sayings still touch the Kashmiri's ear, as well as the chords of his heart, and are freely quoted by him as maxims on appropriate occasions. She was born in about the middle of the 14th century of the Christian Era in the time of Sultan Ala-ud-din. Lalla's parents lived at Pandrenthan (ancient Puranadhithana) some four and a half miles to the south-east of Srinagar. She was married at an early age, but was cruelly treated by her mother-in-law who nearly starved her. This story is preserved in a Kashmiri proverb: Whether they killed a big sheep or a small one, Lalla had always a stone for her dinner - an allusion to her mother-in-law's practice of putting a lumpy stone on her platter and covering it thinly with rice, to make it look quite a big heap to others. And yet she never murmured.

Her father-in-law accidentally found out the truth. He got annoyed with his wife and scolded her. This incident invited more curses on Lalla. Her mother-in-law poisoned the ears of her son with all sorts of stories. Ultimately, the anomalies and cruelties of wordly life led her to renunciation and she discovered liberty in the life of the spirit.

She found her guru in Sidh Srikanth, whom she ultimately excelled in spiritual attainments:

***Gav Tsatha guras Khasithay  
Tyuth var ditam Diva  
The disciple surpassed the Guru:  
God grant me a similar boon***

She pursued Yoga under Sidh Srikanth, until she succeeded in reaching the 'abode of nectar'. But she did not stop there. All around her was conflict and chaos. Her countrymen and women needed her guidance. She had a mission to perform, and well and effectively she did it. Her life and sayings were mainly responsible in moulding the character of her people and setting up tradition of love and tolerance which characterises them even today.

Eventually she gave up her secluded life and became a wandering preacher. She led a severely ascetic life, clad in the bareness of one who had forsaken comforts, and by example and precept conveyed her teachings to the masses. Like Mira she sang of Siva, the great beloved, and

thousands of her followers, Hindus as well as Muslims, committed to memory her famous Vakyas.

There is a high moral teaching which Lalla demonstrated when during her nude state a gang of youthful rowdies were mocking her. A sober-minded cloth vendor intervened and chastised them. On this she asked the vendor for two pieces of ordinary cloth, equal in weight. She put them on either shoulder and continued her wandering. On the way some had salutations for her and some had gibes. For every such greeting she had a knot in the cloth, for the salutations in the piece on the right, and for the gibes in the piece on the left. In the evening after her round, she returned the pieces to the vendor and had them weighed. Neither had, of course, gained or lost by the knots. She thus brought home to the vendor, and her disciples, that mental equipoise should not be shaken by the manner people greeted or treated a person.

So that her teachings and spiritual experiences might reach the masses, she propagated them in their own language. She thus laid the foundations of the rich Kashmiri literature and folklore. More than thirty per cent of the Kashmiri idioms and proverbs derive their origin from her Vakyas.

These Vakyas or sayings are an aggregate of Yoga philosophy and Saivism, expressive of high thought and spiritual truth, precise, apt and sweet. Her quatrains are now rather difficult to understand as the language has undergone so many changes, and references to special Yogic and philosophic terms are numerous therein.

Some of these sayings have been collected and published by Dr. Grierson, Dr. Barnett, Sir Richard Temple and Pandit Anand Koul and apart from the consideration that they explain the Saiva philosophy of Kashmir through the Kashmiri language, they exemplify the synthesis of cultures for which Kashmir has always been noted.

Lalla fills her teachings with many truths that are common to all religious philosophy. There are in it many touches of Vaishnavism, the great rival of Saivism, much that is strongly reminiscent of the doctrines and methods of the Muhammadan Sufis who were in India and Kashmir well before her day, and teachings that might be Christian with Biblical analogies, though Indian's knowledge of Christianity must have been very remote and indirect at her date.

Lalla is no believer in good work in this or in former lives, in pilgrimages or austerities. In one of her sayings she criticises the cold and meaningless way in which religious rituals are performed:

***God does not want meditations and austerities  
Through love alone canst thou reach the Abode of Bliss.  
Thou mayst be lost like salt in water  
Still it is difficult for thee to know God.***

All labour, to be effective, must be undertaken without thought of profit and dedicated to Him. Exhorting her followers to stick fast to ideals of love and service to humanity, paying no thought to the praise or condemnation that might follow from their observance, she says:

***Let them jeer or cheer me;  
Let anybody say what he likes;  
Let good persons worship me with flowers;  
What can any one of them gain I being pure?  
If the world talks ill of me  
My heart shall harbour no ill-will:  
If am a true worshipper of God  
Can ashes leave a stain on a mirror?***

She is a strong critic of idolatory as a useless and even silly "work" and adjures the worshippers of stocks and stones to turn to Yogic doctrines and exercises for salvation:

***Idol is of stone temple is of stone;  
Above (temple) and below (idol) are one;  
Which of them wilt thou worship O foolish Pandit?  
Cause thou the union of mind with Soul.***

She further castigates the fanatical followers of the so-called "religions" in the following apt saying:

***O Mind, why hast thou become intoxicated at another's expense?  
Why hast thou mistaken true for untrue?  
Thy little understanding hath made thee attached to other's religion;  
Subdued to coming and going; to birth and death.***

But Lalla is not a bigot; she constantly preaches wide and even eclectic doctrines; witness the following and many other instances: "it matters nothing by what name the Supreme is called. He is still the Supreme;" "Be all things to all men;" "the true saint is the servant of all mankind through his humility and loving kindness," "It matters nothing what a man is or what his work of gaining his livelihood may be, so long as he sees the Supreme properly."

She puts no value on anything done without the saving belief in Yogic doctrine and practice, one of the results of which is the destruction of the fruits of all work, good or bad. The aspirant should try to attain perfection in this life. He only requires faith and perseverance:

***Siva is with a fine net spread out  
He permeath the mortal coils  
If thou whilst living canst not see  
Him, how canst thou when dead  
Take out Self from Self after pondering over it***

She is a firm believer in herself. She has become famous and talks of the "wine of her sayings" as something obviously precious, and alludes often to her own mode of life, fully believing she has obtained Release:

***I saw and found I am in everything  
I saw God effulgent in everything.  
After hearing and pausing see Siva  
The House is His alone; Who am I, Lalla.***

The removal of confusion caused among the masses by the preachings of zealots was the most important object of her mission. Having realised the Absolute Truth, all religions were to her merely paths leading to the same goal:

***Shiv chuy thali thali rozan;  
Mo zan Hindu to Musalman.  
Truk ay chuk pan panun parzanav,  
Soy chay Sahivas sati zaniy zan.  
Siva pervades every place and thing;  
Do not differentiate between Hindu and Musalman.  
you art intelligent recognise thine own self;  
That is the true acquaintance with God.***

The greatness of Lalla lies in giving the essence of her experiences in the course of her Yoga practices through the language of the common man. She has shown very clearly the evolution of the human being, theory of nada, the worries and miseries of a jiva and the way to keep them off.

The different stages of Yoga with the awakening of the Kundalini and the experiences at the six plexi have been elucidated by her.

Much can, indeed, be said on her work as a poet and more, perhaps, on her work in the spiritual realm. But at a time when the world was suffering from conflict - social, political and economic - her efforts in removing the differences between man and man need to be emphasised.

The composite culture and thought she preached and the Orders she founded was an admixture of the non-dualistic philosophy of Saivism and Islamic Sufism. As long back as the 13th century she preached non-violence, simple living and high thinking and became thus Lalla Arifa for Muhammadans and Lalleshwari for Hindus.

She was thus the first among the long list of saints who preached medieval mysticism which later enwrapped the whole of India. It must be remembered that Ramananda's teaching and that of those that came after him could not have affected Lalla, because Ramananda flourished between 1400 and 1470, while Kabir sang his famous Dohas between 1440 and 1518, and Guru Nanak between 1469 and 1538. Tulsidasa did not come on the scene till 1532 whereas Mira flourished much later.

### *13.12 Later Mystics*

The traditions set up by Lalla were kept alive by numerous mystic saints both Hindu and Muslim, in the centuries following her death. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, during the reign of Aurangzeb, there flourished two whose memory is still cherished by the general populace and still command reverence from a large number of Kashmiri Brahmins.

The first is the famous hermitess, Rupa Bhawani alias Alakeswari ('the lady of the lock of hair') so called because she used to leave the hair loose and undone, or Alak-Iswari (incarnation of the Invisible). She was born in 1625 AD. Her father, Pandit Madhav Dhar, a saintly person, lived in Srinagar. He used to have philosophical discussions with a Muslim Faqir, Sayyid Kamal alias Thag Baba, who lived just near his house across the river.

Like Lalleswari, Rupa Bhawani also got married at a young age, and like her again she had to give up the world and live an ascetic's life. Her spiritual preceptor was her father who initiated her into the mysteries of yoga. While living as an ascetic at a village near Srinagar, she came in contact with a Muhammadan mystic, Shah Sadiq Qalandar, with whom she used to have long philosophical discussions.

Her Verses and Sayings composed in the Kashmiri language of her times, have a profound mystic significance. They reveal the influence of both Kashmir Saivism and Islamic Sufism: some explaining her spiritual experiences and teachings of yoga. According to her, non-attachment and dissolution of 'serf' or ego (fana of the Sufis) are the essentials of Realisation:

***Selflessness is the sign of the Selfless;  
Bow down at the door of the Selfless.  
The selfless are of the highest authority***

The kings of the time and the wearers of the crest and crown. Allowing a glimpse into her own spiritual experiences, she says:

***I dashed down into the nether regions (of the body)  
and brought the vital breath up;  
I got its close out of earth and stones;  
They my Kundalini woke up with nada (loud noise);***

***I drank wine by the mouth.  
I got the vital breath (and) gathered it within myself.***

Rupa Bhawani introduced a very important social reform, which is still respected and strictly followed. She tabooed bigamy and polygamy in the family of her father, the Dhars. This reform has greater force and higher sanction than a statutory law, and has now nearly become universal among the Hindus of Kashmir.

Rupa Bhawani passed away at a ripe old age of 96 years in the year 1721 AD. Shah Sadiq Qalandar recorded the year in a Persian chronogram, meaning,

***That holy-natured incarnation of the Unseen  
Broke her coil of four elements (i.e. quitted her lady);  
Flew to the highest heaven;  
With a good-natured heart united with Bliss.***

While Aurangzeb was enforcing his puritanism and orthodoxy at his court, Sufism and mysticism were still being preached among the general populace by mystics like Sarmad in Delhi and Rishi Pir in Kashmir. Born in 1637 AD of a family of orthodox Brahmins, Rishi Pir had a religious turn of mind from his very childhood. He found a "spiritual guide" in a famous hermit, Pandit Krishna Kar.

Rishi Pir on account of his saintly nature soon became famous and was revered by all classes of people. He had long sessions of discussions and discourses with Akhund Mullah Shah, the learned tutor of Dara Shikoh who had built his monastery on the southern slope of the Hari Parbat hill.

Rishi Pir was called by his followers "*padshah har du jehan*" the "Emperor of two worlds". This, Shikoh's tutor, alarmed Aurangzeb, particularly when he had to face revolts raised by religious leaders in different parts of the country. He, therefore, sent order to his governor, Saif Khan, to put him under arrest.

Whereas the Hindus claim that he appeared in a dream to Aurangzeb the same night demanding the annulment of the imperial order, the Muslim version is that some of his ministers assured the emperor that Rishi Pir had no political axe to grind but was simply a holy man to whom worldly power was repugnant. Howsoever it may be, the emperor cancelled his orders and thenceforth Rishi Pir carried on his religious mission peacefully.

Aurangzeb seems to have been struck with remorse at his cruel action in condemning Sarmad, the famous Sufi of his time, to the gallows. When in 1665 he visited Kashmir, Rishi Pir comforted him by his assurance that exalted souls like that of Sarmad did neither care for death, nor bear any sense of grievance against those who harmed them.

Many miracles are attributed to Rishi Pir. But this was sharply criticised by his contemporary, Rupa Bhawani, who viewed them with disfavour as tending to show personal and worldly aggrandizement. Rishi Pir was humbled and desisted thenceforth from indulging in this cheap way of winning popular applause. He died at the age of 60 in the year 1697. His son also turned a recluse and was affectionately known among the people as Rahnavab.

During the Afghan rule too, Kashmir had a number of Muslim and Hindu saints, who with their comforting words and sometimes even by their active intercession with the governors on behalf of the people reduced the pitch of fury of many an unscrupulous ruler. Jiwan Sahib, for instance, cast a spell of devotion on the hardhearted tyrant, Azad Khan. The latter had a superstitious awe of the *faqir*, who many a time admonished him not to indulge in wanton cruelty. Jiwan Sahib lived at Rainawari, the eastern suburb of Srinagar, and led a life of austere meditation and

penance. Thousands of people used to flock to him for solace and listen attentively to his discourses, the burden of which was simple living and high thinking.

### 13.13 Influence of Islam on Hinduism and Vice Versa

We have now a fair picture of the deep influence that Islam had on orthodox Hinduism. Long before a Kashmir had a Muslim ruler the new religion had penetrated into the Valley, its missionaries having effected the conversion of most of the lower castes. The denunciation of idolatory and caste system by Islam was no doubt a major factor in making an accomplished king like Harsa to spoliage temples and desecrate the images. Hindus, particularly of lower castes, also seem to have discarded many of the rigid rituals and practices preached by orthodox Brahmins. Bemoans Jonaraja: "As the wind destroys the trees and the locusts the *shali* crop, so did the Yavanas destroy the usages of Kashmira." And again, "the kingdom of Kashmira was polluted by the evil practices of the malechas." Srivara, the historian who followed him, speaks in the same strain. He complains that many of the misfortunes of Kashmir were due to the changes in customs and manners of the people. In course of time, the lower castes gave up the performance of prescribed ceremonies, and accepted Islam.

Even the Brahmins, who retained the Hindu religion and caste, could not escape the influence of the new religion. A majority of them in order to retain the government jobs, took to the study of Persian which in a few centuries became so popular with the Pandit class that they composed hymns and prayers to their deities in the Persian language rather than in Sanskrit. There were changes in dress and manners.

Lalla, for instance, was critical of the caste system and idol worship.

But if Islam was responsible in effecting profound changes in the Hindu rites, rituals, and belief in caste and idol worship, it could not escape a transformation in several of its own beliefs and practices. The new converts could not make a complete break with the past, and continued to follow some of their old rites and rituals. Even though Islam, for instance, denounced the caste system, they carried on with their old caste rites in marriage and other social customs. They also continued to celebrate their festivals of *Gana-chakra*, *Chaitra*, *Vyathtruwah*, *Sri Panchami*. Many of them did not totally give up idol worship and continued to have reverence for their old places of worship and pilgrimage.

This had also a profound effect on the rulers, particularly the Sultans, who in deference to the wishes of the people, adopted some of the practices of their former religion. Most of these Sultans had Hindu wives who, though converted to Islam, could not fail to influence their husbands and children with their former religious beliefs. It is, therefore, no wonder that some Sultans had faith in the efficacy of *havens* or sacrificial ceremonies of the Hindus; in visiting Hindu *tirthas*, and in allowing Brahmin priests to officiate at several functions, for example, the time of coronation, or birth of the heir-apparent.

A unique practice among the Kashmiri Muslims is the singing in chorus "Darood" or praises of the various aspects of God in Persian after offering *namaz* in the mosque. Singing hymns in chorus is prohibited in mosques, but the converts prevailed upon Shah Hamadan to waive this prohibition in their case as they were used to offer worship in this manner in temples before conversion. The Rishis of Kashmir had been greatly influenced by the Hindu religion. Like the Hindu Rishis or recluses, they believed in withdrawing from the world, practicing celibacy, undergoing penances in caves and jungles, refraining from killing birds and animals for food or

eating even freshly picked vegetables and fruits. They lived on wild vegetables and endeavoured to follow the Yogic practices of the Hindus.

"Popular Islam in Kashmir thus became diluted with foreign elements, and this character it has retained until today."

*Source:* Vitasta

*Excerpts:* **'CULTURE AND POLITICAL HISTORY OF KASHMIR': Volume 2** - by P.N.K. Bamzai