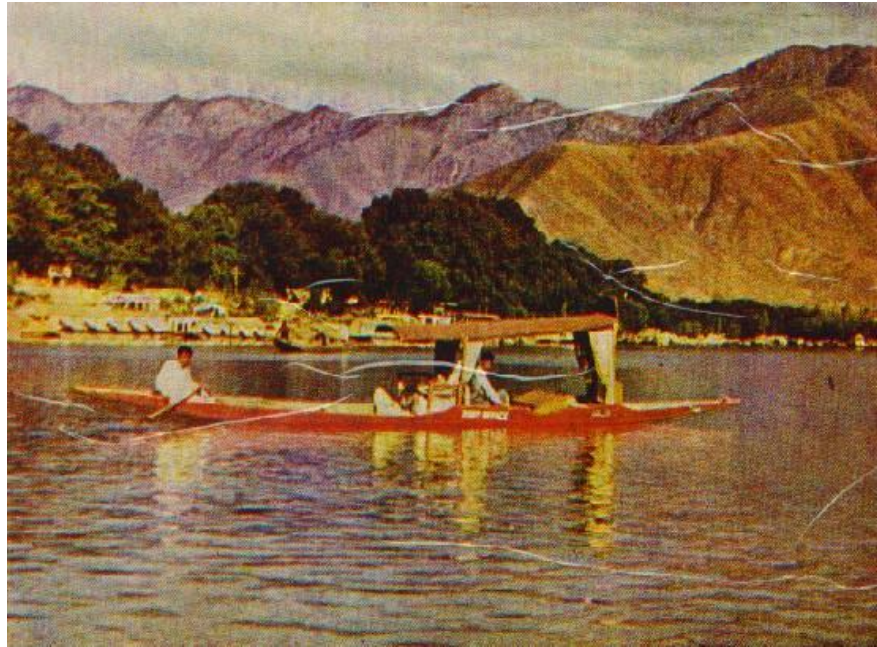




Kashmir: The Crown of India

Vivekananda Kendra, Kanyakumari



KASHMIR: THE CROWN OF INDIA

VIVEKANANDA KENDRA, KANYAKUMARI

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1.0 AN OUTLINE OF THE HISTORY OF KASHMIR

Prof. L. N. Dhar

Kashmir is perhaps, to possess an authentic account of its history from the very earliest period. This past account of the valley, its culture and traditions, rise and fall of various Kingdoms, victory and defeats of the people have been noted carefully, yet critically by the sons of its soil. True it is, that the Kashmiri literature is very rich in information about Kashmir.

The modern state of Jammu and Kashmir covered an area of 86024 square miles (prior to 1947) extending from 32deg 78' to 36deg 58' N and from 73deg 27' to 80deg 72' E. The entire state included, beside the Jammu region, Ladakh, Gilgit, Hunza, Nagar, Puniyal, and Yasin. The tiny state of Chitral, located towards the north-western side of Gilgit, used to pay tribute to Kashmir ruler. It was due to the untiring efforts of Maharaja Gulab Singh Ji (the founder of Dogra Hindu dynasty in Kashmir) that the State took its present shape and form in the 2nd half of the 19th century.

The beauty and the salubrious climate of the valley was known even from the ancient times. The mythological traditions supported fully by the research of geologists confirm that the valley originally was a huge lake called "Satisar", (the land of goddess Sati, consort of Lord Shiva) and its waters were blocked near Baramulla (ancient Varahmulla). In the words of Sir Francis Young Husband, "The huge lake must have been twice the length and three times the width of the lake of Geneva, completely encircled by snowy mountains as high, and higher than Mount Blank, while in the immediately following glacial period, mighty glaciers came wending down to the Sindh, Lidder, and other valleys even to the edge of water."

Kashmir's greatest historian Kalhan writes about his native land : "It is a country where the sun shines mildly, being the place created by Rishi Kashyap, for his glory - big and lofty houses, learning, Saffron, icy cool water and grapes rare in Heaven are plentiful here - Kailash is the best place in the three worlds (Tri-lok), Himalayas the best place in Kailash, and Kashmir the best place in Himalayas". Our immortal Sanskrit poet Kalidas writes about the valley :

"The place is more beautiful than the heaven and is the benefactor of supreme bliss and happiness. It seems to me that I am taking a bath in the lake of nectar here."

Sir Walter Lawrence writes "The valley is an emerald set in pearls; a land of lakes, clear streams, green turf, magnificent trees and mighty mountains where the air is cool, and the water sweet, where men are strong, and women vie with the soil in fruitfulness. " He further writes that the valley contains everything which should make life enjoyable. There is sport varied and excellent, there is scenery for the artist and the layman, mountain for the mountaineer, flower for the Botanist, a vast field for the Geologist and magnificent ruins for the archaeologist.

Pre-Historic Times

According to the oldest extant book on Kashmir, " Nilmat Puran ", in the Satisar lived a demon called Jalod Bowa, who tortured and devoured the people, who lived near mountain slopes. Hearing the suffering of the people, a great saint of our country, Kashyap by name, came to the rescue of the people here. After performing penance for a long time, the saint was blessed, and he was able to cut the mountain near Varahmulla, which blocked the water of the lake from flowing into the plains below. The lake was drained, the land appeared, and the demon was killed. The saint encouraged people from India to settle in the valley. The people named the valley as Kashyap-Mar and Kashyap-Pura. The name Kashmir also implies land desiccated from water: "ka" (the water) and shimeera (to desiccate). The ancient Greeks called it "Kasperia" and the Chinese pilgrim Hien-Tsang who visited the valley around 631

A. D. called it KaShi-Mi-Lo ". In modern times the people of Kashmir have shortened it into "Kasheer" in their tongue.

Regarding pre-historic times, Dr. Sunil Chandra Ray writes: " Pre-historic explorations have discovered the occurrence of quaternary Glacial cycles in the valley. The chief Geological formation of the ice-age here are the lacustrine deposits called the " Karewas ", which overlay the terminal moraines of the first Glaciation and are comprised of two groups, Lower and Upper, differentiated by the moraines of the second Glaciation. The fossil remains of Elphas-hysudrius obtained in the lower 'Karewas' point to lower " Pleistocene age ", writes De Teera. The neolithic culture is indicated by the discovery of ground and polished stone axes, hoes, pestle, and bone implements at the well-known menhir-site of Burzahom, ten miles east of , Srinagar. Burzahoma is famous as one of the only two megalithic sites in the extreme north-west of Indian sub-continent. We do not exactly know the Cultural horizon of the Burzahoma megalithic, nor the Purpose for which they were erected, but the indications are, they were put in places towards the end of the neolithic period at that site, between 400 to 300 B. C."

In 1960, Archaeological Department of the Govt. of India began systematic excavation at this site. Near about the siltbed, pits have been discovered in sections, indicating a settlement of early Pit dwellers whose date has tentatively been fixed at 3000 B.C. This is Perhaps the only known find of such a settlement in India. It is possible that more valuable data would be found, when extensive surface diggings are completed.

Hindu Period

Kalhan has started the history of Kashmir just before the great Mahabharat war, and the first King mentioned by him is Gonanda I, whose initial year of reign he places in 653 Kali-era, the traditional date of the coronation of King Yudhistira, the eldest brother of the Pandvas. Gonanda was killed in a battle along with his son in India, and at the time of the commencement of the Mahabharat war, Gonanda II was ruling Kashmir. After his death, the great historion informs that the record of 35 kings who ruled the valley could not be traced by him, because of the destruction of the record. However a modern scholar Peer Zada Hassan has given a brief record of these Kings from a Persian work composed during the time of Sultan Zainul-Abdeen (1420-70). The author of this work Mulla Ahmad had been able to obtain the names of these kings from an earlier Sanskrit work " Ratnakar ". The great Mauryan emperor Ashoka is recorded to have ruled Kashmir, and Kalhan rightly mentions that the king was a follower of Buddhism. Ashoka founded the old city of Srinagar called now as " Pandrethan ", (Puranadhisthan) and also build many vihars and temples and repaired the old shrine. At Vijeshwari (modern Bijbehra), he built a Shiva Temple, thus winning the heart of the local population, who were mostly worshippers of Lord Shiva. It was Majjhantika, a celebrated Buddhist missionary who was deputed to Kashmir and Urvasa to preach the faith of Buddha in those territories. Hien-Tsang mentions the arrival of 500 monks to Kashmir, and Ashoka making a gift of the valley to Sangha. Many Buddhist scholars, missionaries, and intellectuals permanently settled in the valley. Naturally, in course of time, many people embraced Buddhism here. According to local tradition, like Lord Shri Krishna, Lord Buddha is also supposed to have visited Kashmir. Writes Sir Charles Elliot in a book called 'Hinduism and Buddhism': "For some two centuries after Gautam's death, we have little information as to the geographical extension of his doctrine, but some of the sanskrit versions of the " Vinaya ", represent him visiting Mathura, north-west India and Kashmir. After the death of Ashoka, his son Jaluka ascended the throne of Kashmir, and the latter was succeeded by his son King Damodar II. Jaluka was a great king who cleared the valley of oppressing 'Malechas', (foreign unclean tribes). King Damodar lives in our memory even at present, for the Srinagar Air-port is located at Damodar I Karewa ', where the king is supposed to have lived in a big palace and, where again, he was transformed into a snake by the curse of a Brahmin. The scholars also, accept the theory that the valley for over two hundred years was ruled by Indo-Greek Kings before the start of " Turushka " (Kushan) rule in the state. Cunningham records a large find of silver coins of Azes (and Azilies) (coins of Indo-Scythians) on the banks of Vitasta (river Jhelum) in the hills between Varahmulla and Jhelum. The contact with the Greeks is responsible for the beautiful architectural, and sculptural style of old Kashmir temples, and the coinage of later Kashmir Kings has also been influenced by this contact.

Kalhan's account of Turushka Kings, indicates without any doubt the Kushan occupation of the Valley. The three kings mentioned by him are Huska, Juska, and Kanishka, each of them is credited with the foundation of a town, christened after their respective names : Hushkapura, Jushkapura and Kanishkapura. The Kushan Kings also built many temples and Vihars. According to many scholars, Kanishka held the third great council of the Buddhist church at " Kundalvan ", (Harwan, near Shalimar garden) Hien Tsang has given the proceedings of this council. Nearly 500 Buddhist and Hindu scholars attended this conference, and a learned Kashmir Brahmin Vasumitra presided over its session. Some of the great Buddhist scholars, who took active part in this council were Ashvagosha, Nagarjuna, Vasubandu Sugamitra and Jinamitra. Hien-Tsang praises the intellectual calibre of the Kashmir scholars, and considered them as incomparable. The entire proceedings of the conference were inscribed on copper plates in Sanskrit, enclosed in stone boxes, deposited in a Vihar. Like famous Gilgit manuscripts, it is possible that these copper plates may be unearthed in near future, and we would learn much about the rich cultural history of the valley.

As a result of this conference, large number of Kashmiri intellectuals took to missionary work and hundreds of the wisest sons of the valley carried the torch of Indian civilisation and culture to many parts of central Asia, China, Tibet and other places. Dr. P. C. Bagchi, a noted Indologist and scholar of repute, writes in his excellent book ' India and China': " Kashmir takes the leading part in the transmission of Buddhist thought and traditions directly to Tibet, and China. The number of Buddhist scholars who went to China from Kashmir is larger than that of those who went from other parts of India. Kashmir was the most flourishing centre of Buddhist learning in this period. It was the centre of most powerful Buddhist sect of Northern India known as 'Sarvastivada'. A few of the most important Kashmir Missionaries were Kumarjiva, Yasa, Vima Laksha, Sanghbuti, Gautam Sangha, Buddviyasa, Buddhijiva, Gunavarman, Dharamputra and Shyama Bhata.

After Kanishka, local weak rulers continued to govern the state, till we hear from Kalhan, the arrival of Mahir-Gul, the notorious Hun invader of our country. Kalhan correctly represents him as a savage cruel king, whose approach became known by the sight of thousands of vultures, crows and the like in the sky, eager to feed on those being massacred by his encircling army. While crossing Pir Panchal pass, the tyrant rolled down one hundred elephants from a mountain pass. The shrieks and the yells of the dying elephants greatly delighted this fiend. Till the advent of Karkota dynasty (beginning of 8th Century) the Gonanda dynasty gave Kashmir only two notable rulers viz. Meghvahan and Pravarsein. The former was a pious and a strong ruler with Buddhist leanings. He stopped killing of animals and birds throughout his Kingdom. In fact, he undertook conquest of many countries solely for the purpose of stopping animal slaughter. His chief queen Amrit Prabha built 'Amrit Bhawan' Vihar for foreign pilgrims and students who came to Kashmir in large numbers for learning. The next great King was Praversein II in whose time people enjoyed perfect peace and prosperity. He was a great conqueror who extended the boundaries of the state in all directions. He has made his name immortal by founding the city of Praverseinpura (modern city of Srinagar), the summer capital of the state at present. Praversein ruled ably for 60 years and is supposed to have directly ascended to heaven while worshipping Lord Shiva in his temple 'Pravesha' now standing in ruins near Hari-Parbat fort.

It was during the time of first king of Karkota dynasty, Durlabvardhan that the great Chinese pilgrim, Hien-Tsang visited Kashmir and entered the valley via Varahmulla where he found a huge stone gate. The entry of all outsiders, except the Hindus, was banned in the state then. Hien-Tsang was given a right royal reception by the people including the king. He stayed in Kashmir for nearly two years, studied Sanskrit and Hindu scriptures at the feet of learned men here.

It is the Karkota dynasty that has given Kashmir the greatest ruler Lalitaditya Muktapid (724- 761 A. D.). He is undoubtedly the Samudra Gupta of Kashmir. He was filled with an unquenchable thirst of world conquest. He invaded and conquered many countries in Asia and India. The Punjab, Kanuj, Tibet, Ladhak, Badakshan, Iran, Bihar, Gauda (Bengal) Kalinga (Orissa), South India, Gujarat, Malwa, Marwar and Sindh were all conquered by him. It was he, who finally broke the power of Arabs in Sindh. All these

unbroken victories created a feeling of pride among the people here and his victories came to be celebrated in a big way. Kalhan who wrote his famous chronicle (Rajatarangini) nearly four hundred years after the death of Lalitaditya, records that even in his time the victories of the great victor were being celebrated throughout the valley. Alberuni, who accompanied Mahmud Gaznavi in his Indian Campaigns, specifically mentions in his book (Tahqiq-i-Hind) that Kashmiris observed second of Chaitra, as the day of victory. Lalitaditya was equally a great builder and he built his capital near the sacred shrine of Khir-Bhawani, and gave it the name of Parihaspur (city of pleasure). Throughout the valley, he built very fine and massive temples, out of which the world famous sun temple (Martand) built on Mattan Karewa, reminds us about the grandeur and splendour of the times when their builder ruled the state. The extensive ruins of his capital city Parihaspur, speak of his activities in the field of art and architecture. After his death, it is mostly the weak rulers except his grand son Jayatida, who ruled the valley. Both Lalitaditya, and Jayatida were great patrons of learning and extended their patronage to Bhavabhuti, Vakpatrija, Udhata Bhata, Damodhar Gupta, Manoratha, Sankhdanta and Samadhimat etc. The history of Karkota dynasty after Jayatida is a sad story of decline. All the conquered territories regained their independence, and the sovereignty of the ruler of Kashmir came to be confined to Vitasta basin. The economic ruin was hastened by the extravagant habits of both the rulers and the ministers. In the words of Kalhan : " the ministers and the grandees carried-off the revenues of the country, feasted in mutual jealousy on the masterless kingdom, like wolves on a dead buffalo in a desert. " In spite of all this the Karkota rule on the whole has been considered as the glorious and remarkable periods of ancient Kashmir. Laments Dr. P. C. Ray that " never before the Karkota period, had Kashmir performed such a feat, nor was she able to repeat it in future."

It was round about in 855-56 A. D. that Karkota rule ended, and a new Utpal Dynasty assumed power in Kashmir. The most important ruler of this dynasty was Maharaja Avanti-varman. It was he, who recovered Kashmir from utter political and economic disorder. His reign witnessed a period of peace and consolidation and prosperity. It was during this time, that the valley rose to great heights in the realm of philosophy, art and letters. There was an outburst of literary activity on a grand scale, and eminent men Kallata Bhat sura, Ratnakar, Anandavardhana, Muktakana, Siva-Swamin, Rudrata and Mukula. Kalhan's mention of numerous temples built and towns founded by the King, and his ministers throws plenty of light on the prosperous condition of the period. The most important foundation of the King was his capital city of Avantipur, which he embellished with two temples: one dedicated to Shiva, and other to Vishnu. Both of them are in ruins now, but even then, they stand as the most imposing monuments of ancient Kashmir.

The reign of this King would not be complete without the mention of 'Suya' one of the greatest engineer Kashmir produced in ancient times. For centuries the people of the valley had been suffering from the recurring curse of famines and floods. Suya correctly assessed that these frequent calamities occurred due to heavy rains and excessive water of Vitasta river which could not easily get out with swiftness, through a gorge near Varahmulla, as the compressed passage there had got blocked with silt and huge boulders. The people removed both the silt and stones when the great engineer threw plenty of gold and silver coins into the river at many places. Thousands of starving people immediately jumped into the flooded Vitasta and in order to find the coins, cleared the bed of the rocks and boulders which had choked up the passage. Suya, then raised stone embankments, and adopted other protective measures. Many canals were dug-out to increase the irrigational facilities. The result of all these measures was, that a great increase of land became available for cultivation. The production of paddy increased and the price of one Khirwar (nearly two mounds) came down to 36 Dinars from 200 Dinars. Suya's memory is still preserved to this day, by the town Sayapur (Sopore) founded by him at the point where river Vitasta, since his regulation leaves the basin of Mahapadomsar (Wouler lake). Avantivarman died in a temple on the Dal Lake, when a fatal disease caught him, and in the words of Kalhan, " listening to the end to the song of the Lord (Bhagvatgeeta) and thinking of the residence of Vishnu (Vaikuntha) he cast off his earthly life with a cheerful mind. " (June 883) Avantivarman was succeeded by his son Shankarvarman, but then the decline of Utpal dynasty set in. In the time of King Yasakara (939-48) a 'Math' (hospice) was built for the students of India, who came to Kashmir for study and meditation. It clearly reveals intimate cultural

contact between the valley, and plains of India in the 10th century. In 950, Khemgupta ascended the throne of Kashmir, a man of mediocre ability who married princess Didda, daughter of the ruler of Lohara (Poonch) and grand daughter of the Shahi king of Kabul. After the eclipse of Utpala dynasty, Lohara dynasty ruled Kashmir till the end of the Hindu rule in Kashmir (1339). Queen Didda was the defacto ruler of the state, as she was very dominating and exercised immense influence over her husband. She built many temples and monasteries and one of these was reserved for people of Madyadesha and Lata (U. P., Bihar and Central India). In 980 A.D. Didda ascended the throne after the death of her husband. Before her, two other queens had ruled Kashmir namely Yashovati and Sugandha. Didda was a very unscrupulous, and wilful lady and led a very immoral life. But inspite of these drawbacks, she was an able ruler, who firmly ruled the valley. She died in 1003 A. D. and left the throne of Kashmir to her family in undisputed succession. As her children had died young, she transmitted the crown to Sangramraj, son of her brother Udairaj, the ruler of Lohara (Poonch).

It was during her time, that Mahmud Gaznavi twice tried to capture the valley but the fort at Lohara, remarkable for its height and strength proved impregnable. The Sultan was obliged to abandon the conquest.

From 1089 to 1101 A. D., King Harsha ruled Kashmir. Versed in many languages, a good poet, lover of music and art, he started his rule in a remarkable way, and became famous in northern India. His court was a centre of luxury and splendour. He introduced new fashions in dress and ornaments. His ministers were gorgeously dressed, wore earrings and head dresses, previously reserved for the members of ruling families only. But strangely enough, Harsha's career became a record of follies and misdeeds. The people also suffered from famine, and plague as well, and a considerable section of people became victims of these calamities. A confusion followed these misfortunes, leading to a general rising of the people under two royal princes Uccalia and Succalla. Harsha along with his son Bhoja were murdered, and the Kashmir throne passed into the hands of two princes respectively. Both the princes met the fate of Harsha and when our great historian Kalhan completed his 'Rajatarangini' in 1149 - 50 King Jaisimha, the last great ruler of the Hindu times was ruling the state.

Jaisimha's (1128-55) early days were critical, because of the preceeding civil wars and political unrest. Still the new ruler was able to maintain his firm rule for 27 years in comparative safety. The King repaired and restored many temples and shrines, and numerous other pious foundations were also made during his reign. The people after a long time heaved a sigh of relief. From 1155 - 1339, the Kashmir rulers remained busy only in intrigues, debauchery, and mutual quarrels. These incessant feuds, civil wars, risings and upheavals greatly weakened Hindu domination of Kashmir. The valley soon fell a prey to Mongol and Turkish raiders, free booters and foreign adventurers. Quite naturally, the boundaries of the Kingdom got shrunk, and were reduced to the peoper valley only. The Kabul valley Proutonsa (Poonch), Pajapuri (Rajauri) Kangra, Jammu, Kisthwar and Ladhak, one after the other threw-off their allegiance to the rulers of Kashmir.

In the beginning of 14th century a ferocious Mongol, Dulucha invaded the valley through its northern side Zojila Pass, with an army of 60,000 men. Like Taimur in the Punjab and Delhi, Dulucha carried sword and fire, destroyed towns and villages and slaughtered thousands. His savage attack practically ended the Hindu rule in Kashmir. A weak and worthless man Raja Sahadev was the ruler then. It was during his reign that three adventurers, Shah Mir from Swat (Tribal) territory on the borders of Afganistan, Rinchin from Ladhak, and Lankar Chak from Dard territory near Gilgit came to Kashmir, and played a notable role in subsequent political history of the valley. All the three men were granted Jagirs by the King. Rinchin for 3 years became the ruler of Kashmir, Shah Mir was the first ruler of Shah Miri-dynasty, and the descendants of Lankar Chak established Chak rule in the Kashmir.

The last Hindu ruler of Kashmir was Udyan Dev. It was his chief Queen Kota Rani, who practically governed the state. She was a very brave lady, shrewd and an able ruler. Though she tried her best to save her Kingdom, odds were too heavy for her. The valley was again invaded by a Mongal and Turk

invader Achalla, but the Queen defeated him, and drove away all the foreign troops. In the confusion Rinchin, the Ladhaki prince, whom the Hindu religious leaders of the time refused to admit into their fold, organised an internal rising and seized the throne. Before his death, he embraced Islam. Finally another rising was led by Shah Mir, who defeated the queen at Jayapur (modern Sumbal). The defeat upset her and seeing the indifference of the Hindu grandees and general public, she stabbed herself to death, because Shah Mir wanted to marry her. Her death in 1339 paved the way for the establishment of Muslim rule in Kashmir.

An Assessment of Hindu Rule

Before switching over to the early Muslim period, it would be proper to point out, very briefly of course, the contribution of people here, in the field of Philosophy, Literature and Archaeology.

In the field of Philosophy Kashmir's contribution is the "Shiva School of thought", which assumed a distinctive character in the valley. "It is known as Trika (Triple) Shastra, as it pertains to the three vital matters of greatest importance namely (a) man (b) his universe and (c) fundamental principle which keeps on restoring order, equilibrium and harmony in the universe where it is disturbed and disrupted by constant change. " Trika, interested in man and his personality, and considers complete freedom (Swatantrya) as the one and the final goal of human life. Shiva is another name for independence, and the only reality of the universe is Shiva who is infinite consciousness, and unrestricted independence. He has many other features like omnipresence, eternity, and formlessness, though independence is peculiar to him. Shiva is the subject as well as the object, the experience, as well as the experienced ". (P. N. Bazaz). The three great Acharyas of this school are Vasugupta, Kallatha and the great Abhinavagupta. Hundreds of other Kashmiri philosophers, and thinkers wrote, masterpieces on this philosophy in the subsequent periods of our history.

Another distinct school of philosophy was the emergence of Mahayana Form of Buddhism during the time of Kanishka, when the 3rd Buddhist Council met here at Harwan. It was Vasumitra and Nagarjuna who gave shape and form to this new school of thought. Nagarjuna, in the words of Havell, was the Luther of Buddhism, the apostle of Bhaktimarga, who would find means of expression for the deep seated religious instinct of the masses, through the way of devotion to the divine teacher, rather than through the dry agnostic philosophy of Hinayana School. This creed became very popular in China, Japan, Tibet and Ladakh. Nagarjuna has been raised to the exalted position of Buddistava and enjoys the reputation of being the greatest thinker of the age. In the field of Literature, there is hardly any branch of learning which the people of Kashmir had not studied, and to which they did not make their own original contribution. In philosophy, religion, medicine, astronomy, literature, engineering, sculpture, architecture, painting, music, dancing, and in many other walks of life the progress of Kashmiries during the ancient times is astonishing and striking.

In the words of Grierson, "for upwards of two thousand years, Kashmir has been the home of Sanskrit learning and from this small valley have issued masterpieces of history, poetry, romance, fable, and philosophy. Kashmiries are justly proud of the literary glories of their land. For centuries Kashmir was the house of the greatest Sanskrit scholars, and at least one great Indian religion of 'Shaivism' has found some of its most eloquent teachers on the banks of the Vitasta. Some of the greatest Sanskrit scholars and poets were born, and wrote in the valley and from it has issued in Sanskrit language a world famous collection of folk-lore." (Panchtantra.)

In the domain of architecture, the charm of Kashmir, apart from its magnificent natural scenery, lies in its temples and fine arts. Wrote one European art critic: "Ancient India has nothing more worthy of its civilization, than the grand remains in Kashmir, the massive, the grotesque the elegant in architecture, may be admired in many parts of India, but now here is to be seen, the counterparts of the classically graceful, yet symmetrically massive edifices of Kashmir, and in beauty, and position are immensely superior. " The best preserved of these stone temples are at Martand and Avantipur. The Martand temple has been universally admired by the archeologists and the artists. I need describe the opinion of three great Europeans of modern times :

Writes Stein: " It is no longer possible to trace with certainty, the cities, and remains of all the towns and structures which owed their existence to Lalitaditya. But those among them which can be identified justly by their extant ruins, the great fame which Lalitaditya enjoyed as a builder. The ruins of the splendid temple of Martand which the king had constructed near the 'Tirtha' of the same name, are still the most striking object of ancient Hindu architecture in the valley. Even in their present state of decay, they command admiration both by their imposing dimensions, and by the beauty of their architectural design and decoration."

Writes Sir Francis Young Husband: "..... built on the most sublime site occupied by any building in the world-finer than the site of Parthenon, or of the Taj Mahal, or of St. Peters or of the Escorial-we may take it, as the representative or rather the culmination of all the rest, and by it, we must judge the Kashmir people at their best. On a perfectly open, and even plain, gently sloping away from a background of a snowy mountains looking directly out, on the entire length both of the smiling Kashmir valley, and of the snowy ranges which bound it-so situated in fact as to be encircled, yet not overwhelmed by snowy mountains-stand the ruins of a temple second only to the Egyptians in massiveness and strength, and to the Greeks in elegance and grace..... No one without an eye for natural beauty would have chosen that special site for the construction of a temple, and no one with an inclination to the ephemeral and transient world have built it, on so massive, and enduring a scale.

Writes H. Gotezi " The temple of Martand set the model for Kashmir Hindu Art in all the following centuries.... Thus Lalitaditya must be regarded as the founder not only of shortlived empire, but also of six centuries of Kashmir Hindu Art. "

Muslim Period

After the death of Queen Kota, Shah Mir ascended the throne under the name of Sultan Shamas-ud-din, and his dynasty ruled the state for 222 years. This period is one of the most important in the annals of Kashmir, in as much as Islam was firmly established here. The Shah-Miri dynasty has given us only two rulers, who are worthy of mention. One is Sultan Shihabud-din, and the second is the great Sultan Zain-ul-Abdin. The former ascended the throne in 1354, and continued to rule till 1373. He was full of energy, and vigour and he was able to establish his sway over the neighbouring countries. His army mainly consisted of Damras, Lavans and the hill tribes of Poonch, Rajapuri and Kishtwar. The important commanders who served under him were both Hindus and Muslims, such as Chandra-Damra, Laula Damara, Shura, Syed Hassan and Abdul Raina. His two important Hindu ministers were Kota Bhat and Udyashri. At the beginning of his reign, he led an army to Sindh and defeated its ruler. While returning he defeated Afgans near Peshawar and then he conquered Kabul, Gazni, Qandhar, Pakhali, Swat and Multan. He invaded Badakshan, and then marched towards Dardistan and Gilgit, which he easily conquered. Then he marched towards Bulochistan and Ladhak. The ruler of Kashgar (central Asia) came with a huge army and Shah-u-din whose army was numerically inferior, inflicted a crushing defeat and the Kashgar army was almost wiped out. This led to the annexation of Laddhak and Bultistan, which were claimed by the Kashgar ruler. It is also said that the ruler of Kashmir marched towards Delhi, and on the way conquered Kangra, and then the army of Ferozashah Tughlaq opposed him on the banks of Sutluj. Since the battle between the rulers of the Delhi and Kashmir was indecisive, peace was concluded and it was agreed that all the territory from Sirhind to Kashmir was to belong to the Kashmir ruler. Shah-ud-din was not only a great conqueror but also an able administrator, and he governed his kingdom with firmness and justice. He was tolerant ruler and treated his Hindu subjects generously.

It is reported that owing to prolonged campaigns he needed money, and his ministers asked him to loot the temples, but he stoutly opposed the proposal, and to quote Jonaraj, he is reported to have said in anger: "Past generation have set-up images to obtain fame, and earn merit, and you propose to demolish them. Some have obtained renown by setting up images of gods, others by worshipping them, some by maintaining them, and you propose demolishing them. How great is the enormity of such a deed ". The king founded a new town which he called Shihab-ud-din-pora, known now as Shadipur. He is also said to

have erected many mosques and monasteries. Shihab-ud-din can rightly be called the Lalitaditya of medieval Kashmir. During his time Kashmir armies marched to distant lands, and our victorious banners were unfurled on many forts of foreign countries. Thus this great ruler raised Kashmir to great eminence, and power.

The next ruler was Sultan Qutab-ud-din, and in whose time the only important event worth mentioning is the arrival of said Ali Hamdani, who was the most remarkable personality of the then muslim world. At the time of his third visit he got with himself 700 Syeds from Hamdan, who were being out to torture by Timur, ruler of Persia. These syeds established their centres of missonery activities in different parts of the valley. In 1389, Qutab-ud-din died, and he was succeeded by his eldest son Sultan-Sikandar. It was in the time of this Sultan, that the political atmosphere of the state was vitiated. Whereas all former rulers had followed a policy of religious toleration, the new Sultan like Aurangazeb was a man of puritan temperament. He banned all gay celebrations and would not listen to music even. He imposed Jizia upon Hindus and stopped them to use tilak on their fore-heads. Writes M. Hassan: "In their misplaced zeal for their faith, Sikandar and his minister Saif-ud-din (who was originally a Hindu) were also responsible for the destruction of images and temples ." Almost all the muslim chroniclers speak of the wholesale destruction of Hindu shrines including the 'Martand' Temple, and forcible conversion of Hindus to Islam. Thousands of Hindus fled to India to save their religion and holy books, and also to escape the wrath of the Sultan. Shahi-Khan or Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin, ascended the throne in 1420 A. D. and ruled upto 1470 A. D. nearly for half a century. His accession to the throne, proved to be the return of a bright and warm day after a cold and a chilly night. In the words of Pandit Anand Kaul: "possessed of a broad and tolerant outlook, with a desire to benefit mankind, he ruled with such equity, and justice and did so much to improve the material prosperity of the people, that one can not fail to admire him, his benevolent rule demands special homage in as much as he lived in a period when he had no worthy and enlightened contemporary to emulate. In the world around him, he could have little to help him. He was a potentate encouraged to be tyrannical and selfish by tradition, and especially by the examples of his father, Sultan Sikander. Zain-ul-Abidin was deservedly surnamed Budshah or the great King. In spite of 5 centuries having rolled by since he ruled, his name is still remembered with genuine reverence and gratitude. Take the name of Budshah before a Kashmiri, and at once with a happy countenance he will rhyme it with Pad-Shah ". Writes another modern historian M. Hassan : " of all the Sultans who sat on the throne of Kashmir, Zainulabidin was undoubtedly the greatest. He ushered in a period of nearly half a century of peace, prosperity, and benevolent rule for his people. He introduced many arts and crafts for which Kashmir has become famous ever since. He promoted learning, music and painting and made Kashmir the centre of great culture. He won the loyalty and affection of his subjects who called him Budshah or the great king, a name by which he is remembered even to day by the people of Kashmir. He acquired a halo in popular imagination which still surrounds his name inspite of the lapse of nearly 500 years." Zain-ul Abidin organized a huge army, and with its help he reconquered the Punjab, Western Tibet, Ladhak and Balti region, Kulu and Ohind (Hazara). The Sultan also maintained cordial and friendly relations with rulers of other countries. The Sheriff of Macca and the Kings of Jilan and Egypt sent him presents. The Maharaja of Gwalior, hearing that the Sultan was interested in Music, sent him valuable works on Indian music. There was also an exchange of embassies and gifts between the great Sultan and the rulers of Sindh, Bengal, Tibet, Gujrat, Malwa and Delhi. The Sultan improved the tone of administration which had rudely been shaken. He appointed talented persons in high administrative posts, irrespective of caste or creed. The Sultan had a high sense of justice and no one who committed a crime was spared, however close he was to throne. Many grandees who were favourites of the king, were severely punished when found guilty. The king took keen interest in agriculture and like Lalitaditya and Avantivarman, many canals were dug out in all parts of the Kingdom. Jonraj and Shriya have given details of these canals in their valuable books. Owing to these irrigation works, the draining of marshes and reclamation of large areas for cultivation, Kashmir became self-sufficient in food, and rice was cheap. One of the most outstanding features of his administration was the just and liberal treatment of the Hindus, who were not only allowed complete freedom of worship, but the Sultan recalled all those who had fled to India in the time of his father. He allowed those Hindus who had forcibly been converted, to return to their former religion. The Sultan banned cow slaughter and permitted the repair and rebuilding

of the temples at government expenses. He granted lands to learned Brahmins, endowed temples and for Hindu pilgrims visiting holy places in the valley he opened a royal kitchen at Rainawari known even now as Jogi Lanker. Jiziya was almost abolished and the Sultan participated in Hindu festivals and entertained Brahmins and Sadhus on auspicious days. Some of his important Hindu ministers were the famous physician Shri Bhat, Tilakacharya, Simha Bhat, Ruppa Bhat, Karupar Bhat and Shrivara. At the same time Sultan was a great patron of men of letters such as Syed Mohammad Rumi, Syed Ahmad Rumi, Quazi Syed Ali Shirazi, Qazi Jamal and Maulana Kabir to mention only a few. The Sultan had also established a translation department where important works were translated from Sanskrit into Persian and Arabic. The Sultan opened schools and hostels for the students. It is for encouragement of arts and crafts that Kashmir will be permanently indebted to the Sultan. In the Hindu times, the valley was equally famous for its arts and crafts but these had greatly suffered in the chaos which lasted for over two hundred years. The Sultan invited competent teachers from countries to Kashmir, so that they could train people here. Among many industries introduced by him, we can mention carpet, paper machine, paper making, silk rearing, shawls, manufacture of gun powder etc. Kashmir became so famous for beautiful designs on silks and shawls that our state acquired an unrivalled fame in Asia. Even after a century when Babar's cousin Mirza Haider Daulghat invaded Kashmir, he wrote in Tarikhi-Reshidi: "In Kashmir one meets with all these arts and crafts which are in most cities uncommon, such as stone polishing, stone cutting, bottle making window cutting, gold beating etc. In the whole Maver-ul-Nahir (Khorasan) except in Samarkand, and Bokhara, these are nowhere to be met with, while in Kashmir they are in abundance. This is all due to Zain-ul-Abidin." The Sultan was a great builder. He founded the new city called Nowshedar (a part of the city now.) He adorned it with splendid houses for his officers, courtiers and learned men. He built a palace of 12 storeys in it, each containing 50 rooms, halls and corridors. It was surmounted by a golden dome, and its spacious halls were lined with glass. Besides Nowshader, the Sultan founded the town of Zainapur, Zainakut and Zainagir. Similarly he built the first wooden bridge at Srinagar known even now as Zainakadal. In 1470 A. D. the Sultan died and for a long time his death was mourned by the people. Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin's death sounded the death knell of Shah-Miri dynasty. It met the same fate that the Lohara dynasty had met after the death of Jaisimha in 1156. The only important event that took place before the establishment of Chak dynasty was the invasion of Mirza Haider Dughlat who attacked Kashmir from Zogila pass in 1533. Soon he was able to establish his ascendancy in the valley. The Moghul, like Dulchu earlier, killed, looted and plundered the people, and made women and children their slaves. The Sultan of Kashmir, Nazuk Shah, became almost a puppet in his hands. Moghuls were appointed on high posts everywhere, and the Jagirs of Kashmir Noblemen were confiscated. For more than a decade Mirza was the virtual ruler of the valley and he gave peace and orderly Government to the country. He encouraged Kashmir Art and Crafts, and trade and commerce once again thrived in the valley. The last Shahmiri ruler, Sultan Habib Shah, a weakling was deposed by his commander, and nobles raised on throne Gazi Chak, a prominent military General of the time. He was the direct descendant of Lankar Chak who had come to Kashmir towards the close of Hindu rule. The Chak rule began in Kashmir in 1561 and lasted till 1587, when Akbar, the great Moghul Emperor conquered Kashmir.

Moghul Period

The Moghuls remained in power here, from 1587 to 1752, and in this period undoubtedly the people enjoyed peace and orderly Govt. There were some rapacious officers, but on the complaint of the people the Moghul rulers immediately removed them. It was in 1579 that illuminated Moghul emperor Akbar visited Kashmir. About eighty thousand Kashmiris were entertained by Akbar at Id-Gah. During his reign Raja Todar Mal, the great Finance and Revenue Minister, made revenue settlement of the valley, which in its broad features forms the basis of the present revenue settlement in the valley. Akbar built a new town near Hariparbat and called it Nagar-Magar and built the massive wall around the hill. The great emperor visited the valley three times, and with him, came a large number of Moghul grandees, noblemen and army generals. The fame of the valley spread throughout the country and a very large number of people started to visit the valley. But actually it was in the time of Jahangir that the beauty of the state attracted thousands of visitors to the happy valley. The great emperor visited the State thirteen times. The Moghul rulers never came alone, but were always accompanied by hundreds of Nobles, Amirs and Umras, Princes

and Army Generals. Jahangir came virtually, under the spell of the scenic beauty of the place, and wherever he found a hill coming down gently to a spring or a grove of majestic Chinar trees or a beautiful lake, he utilised the place for planting a pleasure garden. Shalimar and Nishat gardens on the banks of Dal Lake, would keep Jahangir's love for natural beauty ever fresh in our memory. He laid gardens at Achale and Verinag. Perhaps no other ruler has ever paid so much tribute to the beauty of Kashmir as Jahangir did.

Shah Jahan also visited the happy valley a number of times and he too was accompanied by a large number of nobles. Owing to the long peaceful rule of the three Moghul Kings, hundreds of people now began to come to Kashmir to find mental peace, to regain their health or attain spiritual salvation. Shah Jahan laid the garden of Chashmashai and also built a portion of Shalimar. The Moghul Governor Ali Marden Khan also laid out a number of gardens. Aurangzeb visited Kashmir only once in 1665. An interesting account of the emperor's journey to the valley has been given by a French traveller Francis Bernier who accompanied the Emperor. The traveller gives a favourable impression of the people in his book. "The Kashmiris are celebrated for wit. In poetry and sciences they are not inferior to Persians. They are also active and industrious. The workmanship, and beauty of their Palkies, bedsteads, inkstand, axes, spoons and various other things are quite remarkable, and articles of their manufacture are in use in every part of India. They perfectly understand the art of varnishing, and are eminently skilful in closely imitating the beautiful veins of a certain wood, by inlaying with gold threads so delicately wrought, that never saw anything more elegant or perfect. But what may be considered peculiar to Kashmir and the staple commodity, that which particularly promotes the trade of the country, and fills it with wealth, is the prodigious quantity of shawls which they manufacture, and which gives occupation to her children." Aurangzeb's reign was a signal for revolts and rebellions in several parts of the country. In distant parts of the empire commenced an era of lawlessness, anarchy and disorder. Many states became independent under their subedhars who founded new independent states. A reign of disorder also started in Kashmir. The Moghul Governors began to loot and plunder the people, and at the same time ruthlessly started a policy of religious bigotry and fanaticism. There was absolute chaos in northern India after the invasion of Nadir Shah of Persia. The people of Kashmir could no longer tolerate the misrule of Moghul satraps, and accordingly when Ahmad Shah Abdali of Kabul was at Lahore in 1752, two Kashmir nobleman Mir Muquim Kant and Khwaj'a Zahir Didmari, waited upon him at Lahore, and disgracefully requested him to bring Kashmir under his control.

Afgan Rule : 1752 - 1819

Ahmad Shah, a free hooter of Nadir Shah gladly accepted this offer and immediately despatched a strong and a powerful Afghan army under the command of Abdullah Khan Ishik Aqasi, to occupy the valley. The Moghul satrap offered a strong resistance, but was defeated and the Afghan Governor planted the Afghan flag on the ramparts of Akbar's town at Nogar. The rule of Moghuls in Kashmir came to an end although it continued to exist in northern India, nominally upto 1857. Kashmir remained a dependency of Kabul rulers till 1819, roughly a period of 67 years.

The Pathan rule is the darkest period in the history of our state. The rulers of Kabul were great despots, and they ruled all the parts of their kingdom ruthlessly and with an iron hand. The corner stone of their policy was terror. As many as twenty eight Durrani Subedars governed Kashmir during these sixty seven years. The Kashmir nobleman had expected that Abdali would give them a good and a stable government, but the very first Afghan governor Abdullah Khan Aquasi, immediately after assuming powers started a reign of terror. People began to be looted and killed indiscriminately, and even the petty Afghan soliders began to amass wealth by the foulest possible means. Most of the well to do people of the valley were summoned by the Governor to his palace, and ordered to surrender all their wealth on pain of death. Their houses were completely sacked, and many people were put to sword. There was complete gloom and despair on every side. All the prosperity of the valley was gone, and the people could not even move on the streets, for fear of being robbed of even their scanty clothing. Each and everyday for a Kashmiri was a day of struggle and uncertainty. As ill luck would have it, only weak and worthless Amirs governed Kabul, after the death of Abdali. These Amirs would either be quickly deposed

or assassinated. Naturally accession of every new Amir would mean appointment of a new Subedar in Kashmir. Hence every Governor expected his recall or dismissal at any time. This uncertainty made these rapacious governors ruthless, and they squeezed every penny from the people mercilessly. It is true, that all sections of people suffered here during their time, but the chief victims of these fiends were the Hindus, Shias and Bombas of Jhelum valley.

It is strange that during this dark period a Hindu also became a Governor here. His name was Raja Sukh Jeevan Mal. It was only in his time that Kashmir heaved a sigh of relief. He was afterwards defeated and killed by Ahmad Shah. The Pathan rulers are now only remembered for their brutality and cruelty, and it is said of them that they thought no more of cutting off heads than plucking a flower.

Sikh Rule: 1819-46

At last the reign of terror broke the patience of the peace loving people, and a deputation of Kashmiris led by Pandit Birbal Dhar, and his son Pandit Rajakak Dhar, left for Lahore and fervently requested Maharaja Ranjit Singh to conquer Kashmir. Three prominent Muslims helped Pandit Birbal Dhar in his escape from the valley. They were Abdul Qadoos Gojwari, Mallick Zulfiqar and Malik Kamgar. In 1819, 30,000 soliders of Maharaja Ranjit Singh attacked Kashmir, defeated the Pathans, and the state became a part of Ranjit Singh's empire. On receipt of the news, Maharaja Ranjit Singh bestowed honours in Dhar family and Lahore was illuminated for three days, Sikh rule lasted for only 27 years and during this period 10 Governors administersd the country one after another, out of whom the last two were Muslims. In the beginning Sikh rule also proved to be oppressive. " It must have been an intense relief ", writes Lawrence, " to all classes in Kashmir to see the downfall of the evil rule of Pathan, and to none was the relief greater than to the peasants who had been cruelly fleeced by the rapacious sardars of Kabul. I do not mean to suggest that the Sikh rule was benign or good, but it was at any rate better that that of the Pathans. " The Sikh rule over Kashmir lasted only for a brief span of time, during which the rulers at Lahore were far too pre-occupied at home to pay any attention to the affairs of this outlying province of theirs. The misery of the people increased due to natural calamities as well, such as premature snow falls, which would destroy a ripe rice crop leading to famines. These famines were followed by diseases like cholera and plague, resulting in a heavy loss of life. Thousands of people migrated to India during these hard days, and no wonder the population of the valley came down to two lakhs from 8 lakhs. Mr. Ranel Taylor who visited Kashmir in 1846 writes about Kashmir, "The town presents a very miserable appearance. The houses made of wood are tumbling in every direction. The streets are filthy for want of drainage, none of the bazars looked well-filled and prospseous and altogether my ride made me very unhappy ". Moorcraft who visited the valley in 1835 writes, "Everywhere the people were in most abject condition, not one sixteenth of the cultivable land is under cultivation, and the inhabitants are starving. They were in a condition of extreme weakness. Villages were half deserted and those who lived there were the semblance of extreme sickness. Villages were filthy and swarming with beggars. The rural folk on the whole were half naked and miserably emaciated and presented a ghastly picture of poverty and starvation ". Such was the general condition of the state when Maharaja Ranjit Singh died in 1830. His death was a signal for the mutiny of Sikh Army which become uncontrollable, and plunge entire Punjab into confusion and chaos.

Dogra Period : 1846 1957

The two Anglo-Sikh wars led to the final extinction of Sikh sovereignty in the Punjab and by virtue of the treaties of Lahore and Amritsar the British who had by now become undisputed masters of India, transferred and made over in perpetuity, the independent position to the Maharaja Gulab Singh and heirs male of his body, all the hilly and mountaineous country situated to the east of Indus, and west of Ravi river. In consideration of this transfer Maharaja Gulab Singh paid to the British government the sum of 75 lakhs of rupees. Maharaja Gulab Singh entered Srinagar on 9th November 1848 at 8 in the morning. The Dogra royal line traces its descent from the ancient Kshatriyas mentioned frequently in Mahabharata. The Dogra ruler claimed that they belong to the Surya Vanshi (sun born) race. Maharaja Gulab Singh was a man of great vigour, foresight and determination. He repressed opposition and crime with an iron hand and he was universally feared and respected. He crushed gangs of organized plunderers, and murderers

in the valley known as Galwans, and also broke the power of Bombas and Khokhas the inhabitants of Jhelum valley region below Varamulla, who brought havoc to every home in the valley by following a policy of arson and plunder. Large number of forts were built in their territory which were garrisoned with troops. It was because of his energetic measures that the conditions of the people improved and after many years some confidence was inspired in the permanence of administration. The people got a spell of peace and order, after centuries of lawlessness. The greatest service of the first Dogra ruler is the foundation he laid of the modern Jammu and Kashmir State. It was Gulab Singh who conquered one by one different places and regions of the state, Jammu, Poonch, Ram Nagar, Basoli, Bhahderwah, Kishtwar, Bhimbar, Rajauri, Sikardu, Kharmang, Kiris, Khaplu, Sheghar, Astor Gilgit, Chitral, Yasin, Hunza, Nagar, and Puniyal. In the words of K. M. Panikar an area of more than eighty thousand sq. miles including part of Tibet, as well as part of Pamier, besides the genuinely kingdoms of Jammu and Kashmir came into Maharaja Gulab Singh's possession. This area had never been effectively united under one ruler and much of it with of course, the exception of the valley of Kashmir had never known any settled govt. " Writes P. N. Bamzai : " Mahraja Gulab Singh is the only Indian ruler to have carved out a state during the 19th century out of the wreckage of the great kingdom of Sikhs. Moreover he is the only Indian ruler to have extended the frontiers of India to their natural boundary ." Even Dr. Soft who is not very kind in his comments writes about him: "Gulab Singh was unquestionably a remarkable figure in the history of Northern India during the first half of the 19th Century. He was a distinguished soldier and diplomat and knew the state craft of his own days exceedingly well."

The Maharaja died in 1857 after a rule of 11 years, during which period he laid the foundation of a sound system of administration. He was succeeded by Maharaja Ranbir Singh who ruled from 1857 to 1885. It was in his time that the rule of law commenced in the state. Almost all the laws, civil and criminal, which the British had introduced in India were with some modifications made applicable to the state. The various state departments were organised on the pattern of departments as these existed in British India. A slight attempt was also made to assess the amount of land revenue at a fixed amount.

In 1885 Maharaja Sir Pratap Singh ascended the throne and he ruled for a period of 40 years. It is in the time of this Maharaja that the real modernisation of the state took place and several progressive reforms were carried through. Sir Walter Lawrence carried the first assessment of land revenue system in the state on scientific lines. The two mountain roads-Jhelum valley road and Banihal Cart road were built linking the state with the rest of India. A scheme for drainage of the valley reclaiming waste-land and preventing floods by digging flood channels was put into operation. Construction of water reserivior at Harwan and establishment of electric generating plant at Mohra was also undertaken during this period. Two colleges in the state besides large number of education institutions were also established by the order of the Maharaja. The administrative machinery was completely overhauled. There was development in the means of communication and telegraphs, telephones and post offices were opened in many places. The isolation of Kashmir from the rest of the country was now a thing of the past, and large number of people, mostly Europeans began to visit the valley. The fame of the valley, its climate and beauty spread in all parts of the world and it can truly be said that an era of tourist traffic started in right earnest in the state. Many efforts were made by Englishmen to obtain the right of purchasing land here for building houses. This would have turned Kashmir into a British Colony. The Maharaja stoutly refused to entertain the proposal, and this actually led to the construction of House Boats. After the death of Maharaja Pratap Singh his nephew Maharaja Sir Hari Singh ascended the throne in 1925. He continued to govern the state till 1950. During this period, large number of Indians and also foreigners came to enjoy the bracing climate of the valley. Gulmarg before independence almost looked like an English town during summer. The same was the case with Nagin Lake. Maharaja Hari Singh modernised the state and carried out a large number of reforms. It was in his time that the popular elements began to be associated with the Government. The most important thing that had far reaching consequences in the future history of the state was the birth of political parties and the growth of political consciousness in the state during this period. But even more important was the liberation of the country from the British Yoke in 1947, that ended all the traces of foreign domination, absolutism and autocracy in our country. It was on 26th Jan. 1957 that the Kashmir Constituent Assembly ended the hereditary rule of the Hindu monarchy in the state exactly after one hundred and ten years of its establishment. The liberation of India, facilitated the

establishment of responsible government in Jammu and Kashmir State, but the liberalisation also brought the division of our country on religious and communal consideration. This division led to disastrous consequences plunging northern India into a sort of bloody civil war. The Pakistan Government invaded the state, and encouraged the Tribal people and other titanic hordes of medieval barbarism to carry loot, plunder, death and destruction into the hearths and homes of innocent Kashmiris in general and among Hindus in particular. Pakistan wanted to grab Kashmir, even though its ruler in the terms of Independence Act, had acceded to India, and signed the instrument of Accession as required under the said Act. The main burden of Pakistan invasion had to be borne by the Hindus of the districts of Muzaffarabad, Baramulla, Poonch, Rajouri, Mirpur, Bhimber, Kotli, Skardu, Gilgit and Ladhak. Thousands of people became the victims and lost their lives for no fault of theirs, and property worth crores accumulated for decades was lost just within a weeks time.

This was the result of the mighty Congress Party with its host of gallant leaders bowing disgracefully before fanaticism, ' Two Nation Theory ', and its author Mr. Jinnah.

The Congress leaders accepted the partition of India, but totally ignored or could not perhaps realise its disastrous consequences. In short, the Hindus here have paid the penalty rather heavily. Kashmir was attacked in 1965 and 1971 by Pakistan. In spite of these historical vicissitudes the popular government has been trying its level best to mitigate the suffering of the people, thanks to the generous financial assistance of the Central Government.

The importance of the state of Jammu and Kashmir should never be lost sight of, because the borders of our country here touch the boundaries of Pakistan and China - the two states which are hostile to India.

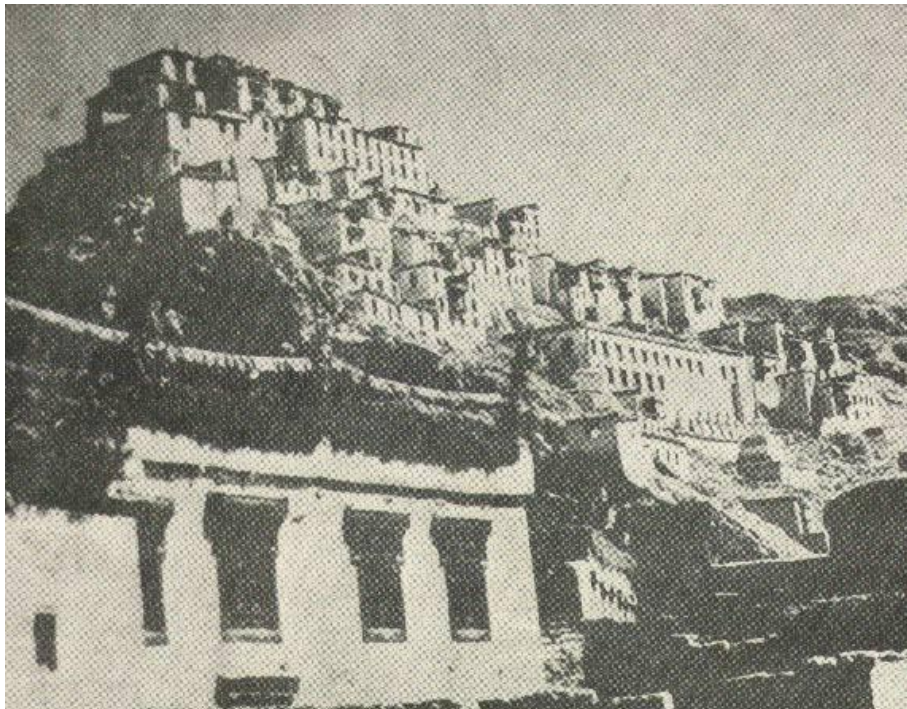
2.0 BUDDHISM IN KASHMIR

by Dr. R. L. Aima

'Nilmata Purana' (the Purana of Kashmir) refers to the gaiety with which the Vaishakha Purnima-the day on which Buddha was born, attained 'Bodhi' and 'Mahanirvana' - used to be celebrated in the picturesque vale of Kashmir. Buddhist Chaityas - Stupas' used to be decorated with flowers and paintings. Lord Buddha's statues used to be decorated with Aushdhis and Ratan. This tradition continued almost to the eleventh century A. D. Kshemendra (10th-11th A. D.) started the writing of his famous treatise 'Avdhankalaplataon' on this auspicious day. Somdeva (1027 A. D.) has brought out this fact as under -

*Samvatsare Saptavinshe
Vaishikhasya Sitodaye
Kriteyam Kalpalatiki
Jinjanmotsave.*

The history of Buddhism in Kashmir has not been much different than its history in the rest of the country. Before the advent of Aryans in the valley, it is said, it had already seen the rise and fall of Nagas, Pishachas and Yakshas. Of these, Nagas are supposed to be of great historical and cultural value. It is believed that Kapil the propounder of 'Sankhya Darshana' and the author of Parmarthasar-Patanjali were Nagas. Likewise, it is again believed that the famous Buddhist philosopher-thinkers Nagarjun and Naga Budhi, both were Nagas. It appears that after the induction of Aryans, these aboriginies of Kashmir accepted the Vedic religion and thereafter the Buddhism. Buddhism has played one of the most important roles in the making of Indian mind, culture, religion and civilization.



Thiksey Monasteries

When did actually the spread of Buddhism start in Kashmir? Historians have various theories and ideas. Kalhan's Rajatarangni has it that even before Ashoka (3rd Century B. C.), Kashmir had many Buddha Viharas. According to the Chinese Sources, Buddhism has spread in Kashmir just fifty years after the Mahaparinirvana of Tathagata.

Most of the authorities agreed on this fact that Mogaliputra Tissa, the Buddhist minister of the Ashoka the great sent Majhantika, the famous Buddhist authority of Varanasi to spread Buddhism in Kashmir and Gandhar. Gandhar, according to some Greek historians and Jakatas, probably included Kashmir also. But no stone-edicts of Ashoka the great, has so far been found in Kashmir. Chinese scholars believe that Madhyantik (Majhantik) disciple of famous Buddhist scholar Anand, was the first man to preach Buddhism in Kashmir. This very Buddhist preacher is supposed to have introduced the forming and also the cultivation of world famous Kashmir saffron in the valley.

After the Mahanirvana of Tathagata Buddhism got divided into various schools of thought. All these scholars were followers of Buddha and all of them considered ' Moksha ' to be the ultimate aim of life. Various interpretations of ' Vinaya ' and ' Abhidharma' led the various schools of thought in Buddhism. Amongst the oldest and the holiest philosophies of the various Buddhist philosophy is supposed to be Sarvastivada. Famous Tibetan scholar Rahul Bhadra is supposed to be the father of this philosophy. But generally Upgupta of Mathura is supposed to be the propounder of this theory. Some scholars believe that this philosophy originated from Kashmir and Maghantik was its preacher. Whatever the case may be Sarvastivada was the most prestigious philosophy of northern India and it was deeply connected with Kashmir, even if it was born in Mathura. It is said that famous Buddhist thinkers in order to safeguard the original thinking of Sarvastivada came to Kashmir and it was here only that its purest form was decided upon. It was only in Kashmir that a detailed and authentic commentary of this philosophy by the name ' Vaibhashika ' was written. ' Sarvastivadi ', Abhidharma's basic scripture is supposed to have been divided into six volumes. This monumental work was completed, by Vasubandhu, son of Katyayani, in Kashmir. It is said that it was translated into Chinese in year 383 A. D. Parmartha, writes in the biography of Vasubandhu that Vasubandhu in order to get Vibasha written Abhidharama, invited famous Sanskrit poet Ashvaghosh from Sakat (Ayodhya) Ashvaghosh lived in Kashmir for twelve long years and prepared the literary forms of ' Vibasha ' in ten lakh cantos. This work is known by the name ' Abhidharma Mahavibhashashastra. '

The famous Chinese traveller Huang Suang (7th Century A. D.) says that during the period of Kanishka there were five hundred Buddhist scholars, inclusive of Vasumitra who after detailed discussions on ' Pitakas ' following which ' Sutrapitaka ' ' Vinayapitaka' and ' Abhidharma Pitaka ' were written down, which are known as ' Upadeshashastra', ' Vinaya Vibhashashastra' and ' Abhidharma Vibhashashastra ' respectively.

In fact the history of Buddhism in Kashmir, is not clear after downfall of Maurya dynasty. But it seems that Buddhism continued its progress here. Here one needs to refer to the main character ' Menandara ' of famous book, ' Milindapanha '. Greek Menendar (Minander) was the King of Gandhar and his capital was Siyalkot. It is said that at a place Twelve Yojanas from Kashmir there was a discussion on Buddhism between Milind or Menender and Nagsen following, which Milind embraced Buddhism and he became an ' Arhata. ' Milind is supposed to have lived in Second Century B. C.

King Kanishka is the person who gave a firm footing to Buddhism in Kashmir. Before him there is a mention, of Kashmiri king Sinha or ' Sudershana '. It is said that it is only with the contact of this king, Kanishka embraced Buddhism as a faith. Kanishka is remembered in the history of Buddhism like the great king Ashoka. He is supposed to be responsible to have organized the fourth and last Buddhist council at Kundal Vanvihara. Some of the scholars feel that this place is what is known at present day as Jullunder. But most of the scholars are of the view that Kundal Vanvrhara is the present day ' Harwan ' in Kashmir. The chief aim of this council was to collect, collate and finalize the fundamental Buddhist principles and get a commentary written on them in accordance with the 'Sarvastivadi' Buddhist thought.

Where else could this council have taken place other than in Kashmir -- the fountain head of Sarvastivadi philosophy - this council was chaired by Vasumitra and its Vice Chairman was the famous Sanskrit poet Ashvaghosha. The three main treatises of Sarvastivadi were written here. Of these ' Maha Vibhasha Shastra ' is still in existence today in Chinese. After the council was over, King Kanishka donated entire Kashmir to ' Sangha.' Kanishka made many ' Viharas ' and raised ' Stupas ' here. He raised a city ' Kanishkapur' which is today known as ' Kanispur ', which falls in the district Baramulla.

' Turushka ' King Kanishka is succeeded in Kashmir by two Buddhist Kings ' Hushaka ' and ' Jushaka '. Both of these raised two cities by the name ' Hushakpura ' and ' Jushakpura ' respectively. ' Hushakpura ' is ' Ushkar ' of Baramulla district of today and ' Jushakpura' is ' Zakura ', a few kilometers away from Srinagar.

According to Kalhana ' Kushana' Kings in Kashmir were followed by Abhimaniyu. It is said that because of Nagarjun's tremendous scholarship and preaching, Kashmir's traditional Naga cult of Nagas was almost wiped out. In fact at this time the revival of Naga cult was the result of tremendous hard work by a Brahmin named 'Chandadeva.'

The first organized crusade throughout the Buddhism in Kashmir was made by Raja ' Nara.' It is said that he harassed and terrorised Buddhists to such an extent that famous Buddhist Scholar Nagarjuna had to run away from Kashmir to south. In the sixth century A. D. Mihirkula (or Mihirula) the legendary terrorist king of Kashmir harassed Buddhists here. He devastated Buddhist Viharas, Chaityas and Mathas and killed Buddhists ruthlessly. But even under such terrorism Buddhism in Kashmir remained alive. In fact the famous Chinese traveller Huang Suang (631 - 633 A. D.) stayed as a state guest. While staying here, he studied the ' Sutras ', ' Shastras ' and other Buddhist scriptures. Raja Durlabhawardhana provided him with twenty clerks who copied the religious scriptures for him. The chief Buddhist scholar of that time declared Huang Suang as a great intellect and said, Huang Suang is one of the greatest Buddhist scholars in the tradition of great Acharya Vasubandhu.

Buddhism was almost wiped out from whole of India by the efforts of Jagadguru Shankaracharya, But in seventh-eighth century A. D. Buddhism had official protection in the time of great Kashmir King Lalitaditya Muktapeeda. Lalitaditya served both Hindus as well as Buddhists in Kashmir. After this, Buddhism because of its inherent weaknesses started decaying in Kashmir. Kalhana writes that Raja Shankara Varmana's wife Sugandha was nurtured in the Nishpalaka Vihara. Maharaj Kshemgupta (950-958 A. D.) was a famous Shaivite and he raised the Jaindera Vihara to ground and with its stones he built a massive temple to lord Shiva. Acharya Abhinavgupta, the famous scholar of Kashmir Shaivism and Indian literary criticism was one of the most important Shaivist scholars of this time. Queen Didha and the kings who followed her did very little to promote Buddhism in Kashmir. Buddhist Viharas had already started decaying morally. During the reign of Lohara dynasty in Kashmir, there was a brief attempt to revive Buddhism in Kashmir. But by the time of King Harshvardhan the Buddhist sun in Kashmir had set. Kalhana (who seems to have had great respect for Buddhism) calls Harshvardhan as a ' Malecha. ' Kalhana's history has shown a lot of respect for Buddhist rule in Kashmir. Buddhism had come under the influence of Kashmir Shakatmata and slowly it was breathing its last. One can have ample references about this fact in the literary writings of Kshemendra and Somadeva.

After going through this bird's eye view of the development and decay of Buddhism in Kashmir, one is supposed to conclude that amongst the main centres of Buddhist learnings, Kashmir has an important place. It was through Kashmir that Buddhism spread to Ladakh and Tibet. Pt. Rahul Sanskritayana writes about a tell-tale episode about this fact. Tibetan King Shiyen Shung's son Jnanprabha was a Buddhist and he did not see eye to eye with the Tibetan form of Tantarika Buddhism. He selected twenty one intelligent, young scholars and taught them Buddhism for ten years. Then he sent them for higher education to Kashmir. But during the hard winters of Kashmir, these scholars, except for Rattanbhadrha Suprajnya could not survive the rigours of winter. Rattanbhadrha is still remembered as one of the greatest translators and scholars of Tibetan Buddhism. Acharya Vasubandhu, known as second Buddha-author of Abhidharma Kosha reached the pinnacle of his fame only when he came to Kashmir. It is said

that he came to Kashmir to study one of the main Buddhist philosophies Sarvastivada. He belonged to Peshawar and his Abhidharma Kosha is still safe in sixty volumes in Chinese language. Likewise the other famous Buddhist scholar by name Vasubhadra is also referred to. It is said that he entered Kashmir as pseudo insane and learned by heart Vibhasha Shastra of Sarvastivada and then went back to Ayodhya, where he made his knowledge known to various Indian scholars.

Kashmir has been the birth place of many Buddhist scholars. One of the eight main scholars of famous Buddhist Vihara, Vikramshila, was Smrityakara Siddha, who was Kashmiri. Who spread 'Madhyamika', 'Satyashidi' and Nirvana forms of Buddhism in China was Pt. Kumar Vijaya - a Kashmiri, who was disciple of famous Buddhist scholar Bandhudutta. There is a long list of Kashmiri scholars who were either connected with Buddhism or influenced by it like Jayanta Bhatta, Vamana Bhatta, Damodaragupta, Kshirswamina, Bhatta Udbhatta, Vasugupta, Bhatta Kalata, Kayyata, Abhinavagupta, Kshemaraja, Mammata, Kalhana, Yogaraja, Bilhana, Somdeva etc.

The influence of Buddhism on life is very deep. Buddhism, though born in India could not wipe-out Hindu religion from Indian life, instead it itself got so deeply enmeshed up in Hindu religion and philosophy that it is difficult to isolate it, and it also gave Hinduism a new shape. In fact Dr. Radhakrishnan has said that Buddha was born, reared up and died as a Hindu. 'Tathagata' actually was a reincarnation of highest ideals and philosophies of India and Aryans. He was not born to vanquish, but to nurture. One can very safely say that Buddha was the prepounder of modern Hinduism and it is probably because of this that he was included in the Hindu pantheon.

With reference to Kashmir, even the Shaiva philosophy of this state has been influenced by Buddhism. It is said that when Kanishka donated the entire Kashmir to 'Sangha', the Brahmins rose against it. Kalhana says that it was at this that Nagarjuna with the use of his official support and scholarship tried to spread Buddhism far and wide in Kashmir. He opposed the various religious cults of Neelmata Purana and defeated in discussion the Shaivite Brahmins. This resulted into fierce struggle between Shaivites and Buddhists. One of the major results of this struggle went in favour of Kashmir Shaivism. Kashmiri Shaivism was till then a knowledge carried from teacher to disciple by word of mouth only. It was at this time that the first written document of this philosophy was born. It is said that this first written form of Kashmiri Shaivism was prepared by a famous Brahmin, 'Yogi Chandradev' (1st Century A.D.). In fact according to Mr. K. C. Pandey's Abhinavagupta, this is the only historical fact in Kalhana's Rajatarangani. This fact has been supported by Vardharaja who wrote a commentary on Vamagupta's famous treatise 'Shivasutra'. In fact all the three main forms of 'Trika' philosophy - 'Agam Shastra', 'Spanda Shastra' and 'Pritivijna Shastra' have been tremendously influenced by Buddhist Philosophy.

In this regard, we must refer to Shankaracharya (8th Century AD). He had come to Kashmir and was deeply influenced by the Shaiva and Buddhist philosophies, Buddhist religious power, Sangha system and the idealistic 'Matha' system of this place. Shankara's theory of Maya and different aspects of truth seems to be the influence of Buddhism. Some scholars say that Kashmiris are basically non-vegetarian, but it is the influence of Buddhism that has made them strict vegetarians on certain important days of the year like 'Ashtami', 'Amavasya', 'Ekadashi' and 'Khirbhawani Mela'. Besides this, Muslims of this place also have vegetarian days on the Rishi Molsaheb and 'Batmalu Saheb's day in Anantnag and Srinagar district respectively. But this could be the influence of 'Vaishnavite' because almost the whole of Buddhist world is non-vegetarian today. Buddha himself died of eating pork. Buddha in fact did not approve of killing. He even disapproved of the watching of killing, but he never forbade eating meat. Buddhism influenced the religious rights of Kashmiri Hindus. Even today during 'Yajnas' and 'Pujas', Buddhist 'Trirattanas' are propitiated. The Kashmiris like 'Prajnaparmita', 'Tara', 'Buddhamata', 'Jineshwary', 'Jinmata', 'Vajrahasta', 'Lochana', etc. Even today the tradition of presenting scrolls to their 'Jitmana' by Kashmiri on New Year's day - 'Navreh' is a Buddhist tradition.

One of the most important influence of Buddhism in Kashmir is on Muslims of this place. Buddhists had a tradition of 'Chaityas' and 'Stupas'. But once they were raised to ground, the Muslims have continued the

tradition in their own Islamic manner. Although Islam prohibits such religious cults, Muslims of Kashmir still continue to follow the Buddhist tradition. One of the world famous mosque ' Hazartbal ' has a relic, the sacred hair of Prophet Mohammed. It seems that it was mostly Buddhists who got converted to Islam in Kashmir. Buddhism influenced the Kashmiri literary and philosophical traditions also. One can very easily point it out in Kashmiri Sufi and Sant poets. Dr. S. C. Roy believes that bead-telling, ' fan of philosophy ' and different postulates - ' Makamat ' etc. of Sufism are heavily influenced by Buddhism and Indian philosophies. Kashmiri folk literature too is influenced by Buddhism.

Buddhism has influenced to a large extent Kashmiri architecture. Buddhist architecture in Kashmir has three clear divisions - First is the architecture of Harwan (Srinagar) of third century B. C. This belongs to Indo-Parthian style. After this we have the architecture of Kushana king Hushka in first Century A. D., who raised the city of ' Hushkapura.' In this Gandhara style was followed. The architecture and sculptural remains found at Pandrethan near Srinagar belongs to Gupta style. There the sculpture of Mahamaya (Buddha's mother) along with her sisters before the birth of Lord Buddha is a significant find. In this, she is wearing in her ears an ornament (Dejeharu) which is worn even today by married Kashmiri Hindu women. This special type of ear ornament is supposed to be the influence of Naga tradition in Kashmir. This fact leads to the conclusion that Buddhism came under local influence.

Kashmir was under the influence of Buddhism for almost a thousand years. That is why we have even today the remains of Buddhist influence. Most of the Viharas about which Kalhana has given details have not been located so far. But it is certain that they are spread over the whole of Kashmir valley. There are certain Viharas whose locations have been pin-pointed. Some of them are-' Jalora Vihara ' at Zalur Zainageer (Sopore in Baramulla Dist.), ' Vitastatra ' is today's ' Vyathavotur ' in Anantnag district. King Ashoka (different from the great King Ashoka of Maurya dynasty) had built a ' stupa' in today's Budgam; queen Shukdevi had built a Vihara in Srinagar at a place named ' Nadvana '. Vihara is not seen today, but the word ' Nadvana ' got changed into ' Narvora ' which is one of the oldest parts of old Srinagar City. Huang Suang has written about a ' Jainder Vihara ' near Srinagar City, which had a huge Buddha idol in it. Huang Suang had stayed in this Vihara, but its place is still a matter of dispute. Besides these there are many places in Kashmir which remind us of Buddhism and its influence on Kashmir like, ' Parihaspora ', ' Anderkut ', ' Ahen ' (Sumbal), ' Khandhbhawan ' (Srinagar), ' Rattani Pura ', ' Harwan ', ' Raithan ', etc. etc.

3.0 KASHMIR'S CONTRIBUTION TO INDIAN CULTURE

by Dr. (Mrs.) Bimla K. Munshi

Some scholars in the Centre of Central Asian Studies of Kashmir University are probing in the direction of establishing the thesis that First man appeared in the Kashmir Valley. This has reference also to the Burzahom excavation and the remains of the so called pit-dwellers found there. All scientists agree that the earliest Homo Erectus named as Ramapithecus Panjabicus appeared in the Northern parts of India situated just south of Kashmir. In my opinion, all these facts point to the inescapable conclusion that Kashmir is the original home of the Aryans and that Aryan and Vedic Culture spread out to other parts of the country from Kashmir Valley itself. We should not forget that there was a time when Gandhar Pradesh (present Afganistan and N. W. F. P. of Pakistan) included Kashmir also. There are certain symbols and sacred things of Hinduism which were and are, found in Kashmir only. I mean to say that Kashmir Valley is the only place where all of them are found. Some of them are: Srichakra Fish (Sacred as Matsyavatora and worshipped here even now) Lotus (connected with Brahma, Vishnu and Lakshmi) Bhoorjva (Bhoj-Patra on which ancient scriptures were etched), Devadaru Tree, Kesar, Kustoori, Snow, The Snow white God Shiv (Him-Rund-Endu-Karpur-Varna), Mountains, Water, Nag and Sarp, (not only in Humun form), Som (it is being proved now that it was found in the mountains of Kashmir towards Sharada teerth), Kesar Dhatura (Used in Shiv Worship) and Kasturi these all have an essential place in our ancient traditions and also in present religious rituals.

The boat of Manu, when it was floundering in the floods of the Khand-Pralaya had found its final resting ground at a place called Manoravsarpan, which is situated in the Pakistan occupied Kashmir. Manu was the Adi Purush from whom sprang the modern human race and Kashmir was the place where the first human of the present civilisation originated.

The seals of the Sindh-Valley Civilisation have been deciphered and it has now been proved that they contain the picture of the Aryan God Shiv in Makhanasan Mudra. Foreign scholars have been trying to squeeze the Vedic, Ramayan and Mahabharat periods between 1500 B.C., (when Sindh Valley Civilisation was destroyed) to 600 B. C., to prove that the movement of Aryans had been from the west to the east, the time of Buddha (600 B. C.) a historically confirmed fact. If the Sindh Valley civilisation is a vedic civilisation and/or it was destroyed earlier than 1500 B. C. then the movement of Aryans will be proved to have been from the East (from India) to the west (to Iran and other parts of Europe). The creation of Vedas, their reduction into writing and the spread of their oral tradition, the spread of Aryan Culture to the eastern parts of India, the time-lag between the Vedic and Ramayana period, the Ramayan and Mahabharat periods, the Mahabharat and Buddha periods and the gradual evolution (or degeneration) of the Vedic language into Sanskrit, and of Sanskrit into Pali could not have taken place during only 900 years (between 1500 B. C. to 600 B. C.). Thus, when it has been proved that the Sindh Valley Civilisation is post Vedic (not pre-vedic as some foreign scholars have been trying to project), the movement of the Aryans had surely been from the east to the west and their original home was Kashmir. It is a different matter that more than 80% of the people of the Aryan stock in Asia are now muslims and they inhabit the areas of Kashmir, Pakistan, Afganistan and Iran.

There is another point of importance. The Jews who migrated from the city of Or to their present country of Israel in about 4000 B. C. have a mention of this movement in their scriptures but nowhere in the Vedas is a mention that the Aryan had come from anywhere outside India.

The Kashmiri language which is the only Apabhhransha (degenerate form) of the Vedic language (not of Sanskrit) also proves that the original home of the Aryans was this sacred valley of Kashmir of noble traditions.

This is a very big subject to discuss, hence I am only listing below the other factors which prove that Kashmir has contributed to Indian culture more than any other ' Pradesh ' of the Country:

- 1) There is a tradition that Bhagwan Ramchandra had come to Kashmir in search of Devi Sita.
- 2) Lord Krishna himself had come to Kashmir to put on throne the widow (Yashomati) of the Kashmiri King defeated by him. There are hints in the Mahabharata that the forces of the King of Kashmir had taken part in great Indian war though they were on the side of the Kauravas, and that Takshak (Nag), who belonged to Kashmir later killed Raja Parikshit.
- 3) During the Buddhist period, Kashmir was a great centre of Buddhism and it was from Kashmir that this faith spread (through Khotan) to China, Mangolia, Japan and Turkey (from where it was eliminated later). The last Buddhist Congress during the times of Kanishka was held in Kashmir.
- 4) Pantni the great grammarian of Sanskrit was also from Kashmir. Gandharadesh (present Afganistan) and Kashmir were part of the same region in olden times.
- 5) It is a well known fact that even today the old Vedic rituals of marriages and Yajnas are followed only by the Brahmans of Kerala, Kashmir and Karnatak.
- 6) When Jagatguru Shankaracharya eliminated the impossible religion of Buddhism from India he came to Kashmir also. The Shankaracharya temple still stands as a monument of his visit.
- 7) After Takshila and Nalanda, the Centre of Sanskrit studies shifted to the Sanskrit University Brajbihara in Kashmir, which was, along with its huge library, later destroyed by Sikander Butshikhan.
- 8) A majority of the major poets and scholars of Sanskrit of India were Kashmiris: - Kalidas, Kshirswamin, Kalhan, Bilhan, Mammat, Anand Vardhan, Vaman, Kshemendra, Abhinav Gupta, Rojanak Shitianth and others. The first historically viable book of history in Sanskrit is Rajtarangini.
- 9) The Kashmiri Shaivism and Tantra Schools are also distinct contributions to the ethos of India. Even Vamachar is sort of a contribution of Kashmir to Indian rituals.

Thus Kashmir has been the home of Vedic Culture and religion, Buddhist faith, Sanskrit scholarship, Shaivism, Islam, Sufism (Kashmiri Sufism is a little different from the Sufism which developed in other parts of the country) and Sikhism.

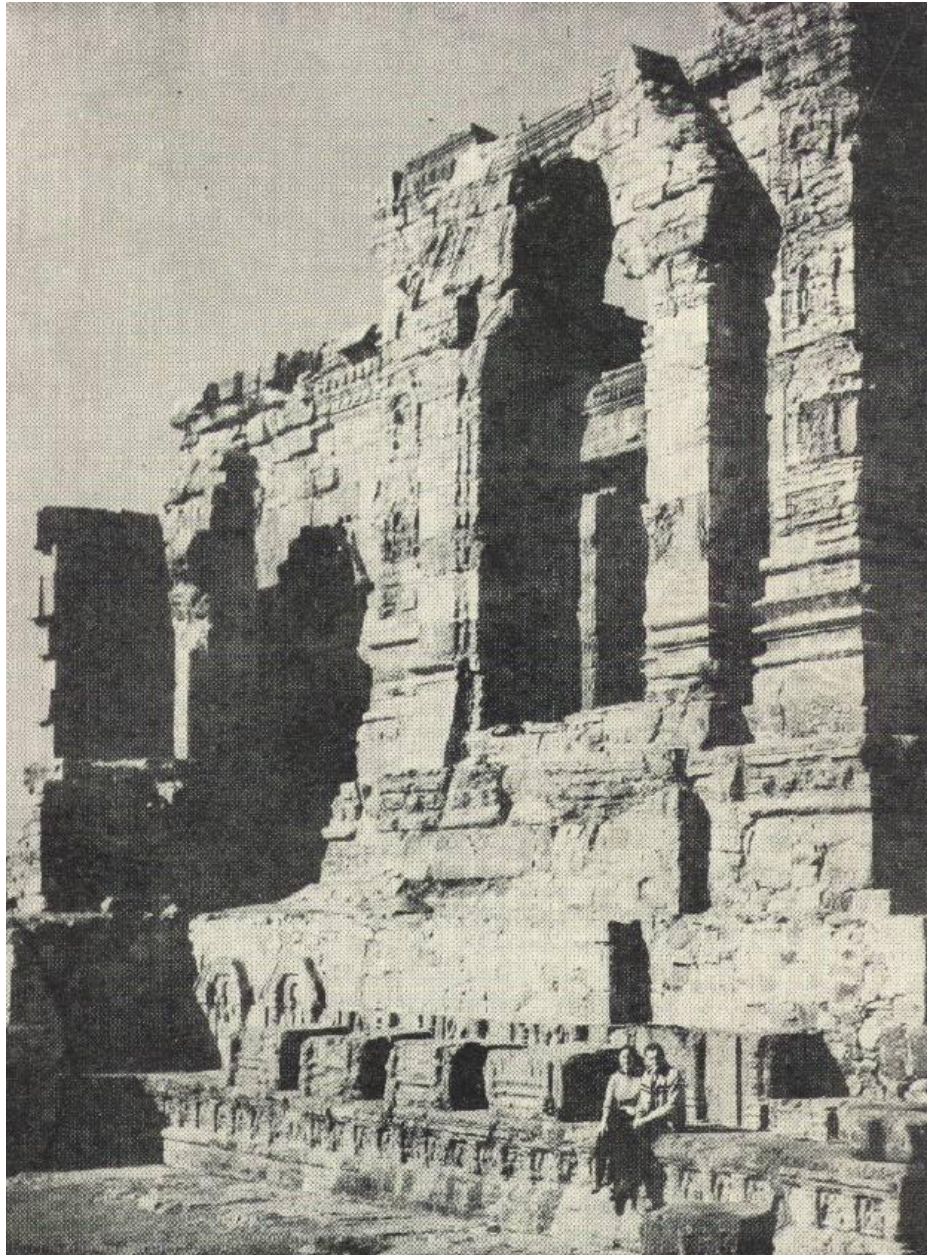
Strategically also the contribution and importance of Kashmir after partition of the country has been of a notable nature. It seems certain that this importance of Kashmir in its modern political context will remain alive as long as India and Pakistan survive as separate nations.

4.0 KASHMIR: THE FOUNTAINHEAD OF INDIAN CULTURE

by Ratanlal Joshi

From the time of the beginning of the formation of the present Asian continent, Kashmir has remained an unseparable part of Indian Peninsula. This unchallengeable geographical truth has been expressed by Kalidasa in the first verse in Kumara Sambhava giving the description of the northern boundary of India thus:

< verses >



Martand ruins

"The paramount Himalayas in the North extending from the East to West stands unshakable in its glory." After the coming of Aryans to India, this geographical unity has been transformed into a cultural unity. The Nadi Sukta of Rig Veda (7th Sukta of 10th Mandal) gives a clue to almost all the rivers which flow in the present Afghanistan and Kashmir viz., Kuma (Kabul), Trushtama (tributary of Chitral), Vipasha (Vyasa) Shutudri (Sutlej) etc. The Rig Veda also mentions of Gandhar which was a part of Kashmir. The Aryans were impressed by the breed of cattle found in this region.

The mantra from Rig Veda

< verses >

says that they liked the variety of cattle found in Gandhara.

Kashmir had a Republican system of Government for many years. It is an indisputable fact that Kamboj ruled over this State. Later, Panchal established its rule and a part of Kashmir, Peer Panjal is a witness to this fact. Panjal is a distorted form of the word Panchal. Later, the Muslims prefixed the word " peer " to this, in memory of one Siddha Fakir.

In the Epic period, this truth became clearer. Kashmir has been given a prominent place in the Mahabharata. In the Vana Parva of Mahabharata, there is a description of Pandava's journey to the Vrashaparva Ashram. It says that during this journey towards China they crossed Kashmir. Addressing Janamejaya, it says that before the Ajnatavasa, the dethroned Pandavas were wandering for 12 years in these regions. They travelled over Gandhamadan mountains, Kailash, Bhadri Ashram, and other different hermitages and at the end reached Subhahu region.

Though it may seem to be a poetic imagination that Pandavas visited China, it proves that Aryans were familiar with the regions in and around Kashmir.

Around 700 B. C. in India, Panini's Sanskrit grammar played a great role in the spread of Sanskrit literature. In his " Ashtadhyayi " dealing with history, literature and culture, the geographical details of India are given. So this book has contributed to the geographical knowledge of India after RigVeda and Mahabharata Panini is called by the people as Kashmiri, as he belonged to this region and hence was able to describe this region in great details in his book. But there is no ample proof for this. Generally, the historians say that he was born at Shalatur village formerly known as Lahu village (in Campbalpur district) near Takshashila. But from Ashtadhyayi it can be said that he had travelled in various parts of the country including Kashmir. In one of his sutras, there is a word ' Pandukambali ' which is also found in the ' jatak ': < verses > meaning " Indragopa coloured blanket produced in Gandhar". The art of dyeing blankets from various colours extracted from forest plants is in vogue even today in Kashmir and Peshawar. Even in ancient times, Gandhar was an integral part of Kashmir. Later, even during the time of Huan Chawang Kabul, Punjab and the entire mountain range of Gandhar was under the reign of a Hindu King. Kalidasa has depicted a picturesque journey of Raghu through this land in the 4th sarga of Raghuvamsa. There is a mention of his horses rolling in the sands of Sindhu banks and leaving marks of saffron. In Persian language Saffron is called "Kafishi " and that is why Kashmir is also known as "Kafishi". Saffron has been cultivated in Kashmir since a long time and has always been famous in the Asian and European market. Kashmir Saffron has also been mentioned in Sanskrit Encyclopedia of China. According to Chinese records, in 647 A. D., the King of Kashmir had presented this to the Chinese Emperor. It was exported to Cambodia too. In 519 A.D. the King of Cambodia had sent a consignment of saffron to China. Kashmir has been described in Amarkosh with reference to saffron.

Kalidasa's description of the Himalayan region is in the form of the best poetry in this world. The latter section of Meghdoot, the 4th section of Vikramavashya, the 7th part of Shakuntalam and the 2nd and 4th Sargas of Raghuvamsa and the whole of Kumara-Sambhavam describe the beauty of these ranges.

From the description of the flora and fauna, it is observed that Kalidasa was for a long time involved in this region.

Kashmir has the privilege of giving birth to two great sons-Matrucheshta and Jagaddhar Bhat. Matrucheshta was a contemporary of Kanishka. They are considered as eminent poets in the entire Buddhistic world because of their contribution of hymns in the religious texts -" Chatushataka" and " Adharvashataka".

Nagarjuna, Aryashura, Dingnaga, Siddhasena Divakara and Acharaya Hemachandra have followed Matrucheshta's style in writing their religious texts. In the 7th century, when the Chinese pilgrim Itsing was travelling all over India, the hymns of Matrucheshta were very popular. The extent of their popularity can be judged from this story of Itsing:

" One day Bhagwan Buddha was taking rest in a garden. Accidentally a nightingale started singing sweetly. He felt very happy and told his disciples that this sweet singing bird would take birth as Matrucheshta in his next birth. "

Because of his belonging to Buddhism, Matrucheshta did not receive as much respect in his motherland as Kalidasa got. But in countrieslike China, Japan, Korea and Indonesia, every one remembers and considers him as the only poet who deserves utmost respect in the world.

In one of his stutis, Matrucheshta describes the weakness of human mind thus:

< verses >

"Just as it is difficult to catch a tortoise by its neck by throwing a line at it, it is difficult to be born as a human being with a religious bent of mind."

A second stutikar was Jagaddhar Bhat whose period of authorship was during 14th century. "Stuti Kusumanjali " is his famous poetical work. In this book in praise of his favourite God Shiva, he offers himself to Him in such a soul-stirring style that it wets one's eyes with tears and heart warms up with ecstasy.

Jagaddhar Bhat's name is unique - in Kashmir's Sanskrit literature because of his poetic renditions and moving figures of speech.

In Kushan period, Kashmir had become the centre of Buddhistic culture. At that time, Kashmir was a part of Kanishka Empire. To spread the glory of Buddhist principles, he arranged at Kashmir a conference which was attended by various national and international scholars. Then Kashmir was the centre of Mahayana cult, whence Buddhist monks spread their religion in Kabul, China and Tibet. The new Buddhist philosophy "Sarvastivada " originated in Kashmir. This was propounded by Nagarjuna. Great scholars like Ashvaghosh, Vasumitra and Sugatamitra also participated in this conference. This lasted for six months during which period various Buddhist philosophies were discussed reinterpreted and were rewritten in Sanskrit because at that time Sanskrit was in full swing in Kashmir. On the contrary, Ashoka's Buddhist edicts and literature were in Pali language. Though all over India, Pali and Prakrit were predominant Kashmir scholars helped to preserve the glory of Sanskrit.

Even though the atmosphere favoured Buddhism, it could not remain so for ever. The name of Bhagavata Dharma had spread to Kashmir also. During the reign of Lalitaditya and his subsequent dynasty, not only Bhagavata religion but also the literature and art blossomed. Later, Buddhism was replaced by Shaivism. At that time, Gita was also interpreted in various ways by different scholars of Kashmir. Of these, only two, one Vasugupta, founder of Shaivism and another by name Anandavardhana were most important. The Gita in use now is also based on their interpretation.

The encouragement given to the scholars at that time had been unique in the history of the world. From 8th to 15th century, Kashmir produced about 10-12 great scholars whose contribution has been more than half of the whole Sanskrit literature. In the 8th century, Ratnakar wrote a great epic " Hari Vijay. " This grand Epic containing 50 sargas was a successful outcome of the competition to " Kanya Kaumidi " of the great poet Magha.

Kshemendra, the Veda Vyasa of Kashmir, was so worried about the duality in the society that he decided to sacrifice his life for its upliftment. Based on the Ramayana and Mahabharata he composed Ramayana Manjari and Bharat Manjari. He did a poetic translation of Brihatkatha Manjari from Sanskrit into Paisachi language. This book became a source of inspiration to other authors. This literary work has a humorous touch to the morals preached. His humorous literature ' Deshodesha ' and ' Narmamala ' succeed in making even the hard-hearted soften. He has given such a strong blow to the Arishadvargas that it produces cheer even in the most gloomiest of hearts.

Sri Harsha, author of 'Naishadha' has been blessed by Devi Saraswati. He was the nephew of Rajanak Mammata. Sri Harsha was famous not only as a great poet but also as a philosopher and a Yogi. In reality, the contribution of poetry and philosophy is very rare in Sanskrit literature. Naishadha contains all the best aspects of literature and poetry.

Kalhana-great poet and historian-too lived in Kashmir. He was the pioneer in having written the historic book " Rajatarangini " after his scientific research in Indian history and for this Sanskrit lovers will always be indebted to him. This book emerged as a result of his experience and knowledge which was not based on any historical literature.

To write historical works, he gave his own idea as follows:

< verses >

"That scholar is praiseworthy whose words do not ring of any jealousy or hatred while narrating past history."

The speciality found in Kalhana which distinguishes him from the Western scholars of the 19th century is his view of considering the kings and commoners as equals. His book Rajatarangini gives equal importance to both the glory of kings and common men's life.

After the peak of glory, the further development of Sanskrit was done by Kashmir Pandits. The bright stars in the sky of Kashmir literature are Acharya Bhamaha, Udbhata, Rudrata, Acharya Kutanka, Vamana, Anandavardhana, Abhinavagupta, Mammata and Kshemendra.

Kashmir has not only been the source for the development of Sanskrit literature but the stories of Mahabharata, Ramayana and Buddha spread throughout Asia, China, and Japan from this region only.

It was from Kashmir that Indian culture along with Sanskrit literature and Buddhism travelled to various countries of Asia and merged with their cultures. Even today, this is visible in the cultures of Indonesia, Philippines, Malaya, Kamboj and Siam. Kashmir has acted as a launch-medium to spread the Indian culture all over Asia. It was not only a medium but also a central point from which Indian culture spread from Sri Lanka to Central Asia and from Egypt to Japan.

5.0 SOME MARVELS OF KASHMIR

by Prof. C. L. Sadhu

The happy valley of Kashmir is well known throughout the world for its Natural beauty. Here nature has been prodigal enough in crowning this ancient land with all its splendour and glory. Gulmarg, Pahalgam and Mughal gardens attract visitors from all over the world. Its lakes, green meadows, dancing and foaming streams, majestic forests full of fir and pine, snow-capped peaks are common attractions to the outsider as well as to the native.

Besides this, the valley being sacred and called Rishi wari till now, abounds in sacred places, Tirthas and Asthans. Long ago at the dawn of civilisation when the sons of Rishi Kashyapa from plains came to settle here they brought with them their traditions, religion, mythology etc. etc. These early settlers named the confluence of river Sindh and river Jhelum as Prayag, equal to holy Prayag at the confluence of the Ganga and the Jamna in India. They named the tallest mountain peaks here after their Gods and deities such as Brahma, Vishnoo and Mahadev. These settlers must have felt surprised to see the hide and seek of water in the Spring of Trisandya; melting of snow around the spring of Bedaba Devi and other marvellous places. With the passage of time, these places became Tirthas or places of worship and has continued so upto the present time. The tradition being like this R. L. Stein who has translated Rajatarangini into English writes, "Kashmir is a country where there is not a place as large as a grain of seasam without a Tirtha. Time and conversion to Islam of greater portion of population has changed but little in this respect. " Pandit Kalhana while writing introduction to Rajatarangini names the miraculous springs of Trisandya Saraswati lake on the Bheda hillock, Self created fire at Soyambhu etc. etc. " In this small article I have made a humble effort to sift and choose certain marvels and wonders shrouded by myth and mystery, hidden and lying in oblivion from the eyes of the outsider. I have made an effort as to what is myth, heresay and what is real. These wondrous, now as Tirthas (places of pilgrimage) have been verified by me personally. These wonders consist in the shape of springs, temples, caves, boulders, and other things which lie scattered throughout the length and breadth of the valley.

I have not included such things which lack corroboration and verification. For example in the vale of Sonamarg people refer to a cow carved out of a rock and from whose uddersmilk-white water issues forth. The locals also claim a couple, of waters lying transformed into stone far up in the Jungle. I have also excluded such objects where people seem to have exaggerated things such as Nakwarlbal in the village of Seer Kanligund on way to Pahalgam. They claim that a stone-head lying on an allevation gives out water by right Nostril during the bright fortnight and by left Nostril during the dark lunar fortnight. Nakwar in Kashmir means Nostrils and therefore the name Nakwaribal. On verification I found it simply false, though the stone head, with Nostrils exists near the villages.

The Holy Spring At Tullamulla (Kheir Bhawani)

(Its water changes colour)

One marvel of Kashmir is the mysterious holy spring of Kheir Bhawani which is widely known to change its colour from time to time. It is towards the north of Srinagar at a distance of about 14 km. and can be reached within an hour by bus.

Before we enter the main islet to have Darshana of the holy spring of Bhawani we come across two important sites - one is Ziarat of Mir Baba Haider (a Muslim saint) and the other is the Samadhi of Shri Labhu Shah, a saint who lived some 150 years ago in Kashmir.

The main spring dedicated to Goddess Kheir Bhawani has an irregular septagonal shape with its apex called Pad (feet) to the East. The northern and the southern sides are longer than the western side which is called Shir (Head). In the centre of the holy spring where once stood a mulberry tree, there is one marble temple which enshrines some idols found at the time of cleansing the spring. In January 1970 an electric pump was installed to conduct the cleansing operation of the spring. Besides removal of mud and mire which had accumulated since long at the bottom of the spring a number of gold ornaments and silver pieces offered to the Goddess were recovered. As a result of the silt clearance a huge volume of milky white water bubbled out. During recent times regular clearance is being made after each festival when huge quantities of flowers, lotuses, mentha sylvestries (Vena) offered by devotees collect at the surface of the holy spring.

The water of the Spring changes its colour from time to time. It takes on various hues like red, pink, orange, green, blue and has often light green, red rosy and milky white shades. Abul Fazal in 16th century and Swami Vivekananda in the year 1894 have testified this fact. Any shade of black colour is supposed to be inauspicious for the inhabitants of the valley. This colour was prominent in the year 1947 when the Pakistani raiders attacked the peaceful valley. Many times rising of bubbles has been observed which form the mystic Chakra on the surface of the water. In my infancy I had a strange experience here. An outstretched hand from the holy spring offered me a beautiful pen in a dream. In the morning when I woke up I found the same pen under my pillow which I retained for many years with me as a sacred relic of the Divine Mother. Such a sacred and mysterious spring is found nowhere else in India. The people living round the holy spring have great veneration for the holy shrine. A Hindu or a Muslim will not enter the premises of the holy spring if he happens to have taken meat on the day. In 1947 when the Pakistani marauders attacked the valley the local Muslims led them astray to save the shrine from their unholy hands.

Various legends and stories are current among the people regarding the holy spring. One such legend is that when Ravana was killed at the hands of Bagwan Rama the Goddess Bhawani ordered Hanuman to carry her to Satisar-Kashmir along with 360 Nagas. Hanuman selected the site and installed the Goddess in the Northern part of the valley. She came to be known as Kheir Bhawani or Ragyna Bhagwati as her favourite offerings consist of rice cooked in milk and sugar, and all other vegetarian forms of diet. How did the existence of the holy spring come to light among the people ? It is related that one pious Brahmin named Krishna Pandit of Habba Kadal in Srinagar had a vision wherein he was informed by a Deva to offer Puja to Kheir Bhawani in the swamps of Tullamulla. How shall I locate the Goddess and her holy abode was the query on behalf of the saintly Brahmin. Thereupon he was asked to hire a boat at Shadipora wherefrom a snake would guide him to the destination. Krishna Pandit did the same and was extremely happy when the snake guided him through the swampy and marshy land, until he reached the hollow trunk of a mulberry tree. The snake made a dip and disappeared from sight. The saint took the clue and after performing Pujā poured milk which he had brought for this purpose. It is thus that the holy spring was discovered and was known to Kashmiries. It is believed that the discovery of the holy spring has been made on Ashadha Saptami, the 7th day of the bright fortnight of the month of June-July. Kashmiri Hindus come here on every Ashtami - 8th day of the bright fortnight of each lunar month and majority of Kashmiri Hindus consider Kheir Bhawani as their guardian Goddess. Such is the brief history of the holy spring, the abode of Goddess Kheir Bhawani which has been eulogized by a poet in the following words :

"I make obeisance to that one Goddess, who having taken the position of the supreme God is the Queen in reality, whose form is made of light and is adorned by the lustre of 12 suns who cannot be observed through senses, who is seated on a throne and is wrapped with serpents ."

The Cave At Beerwa

To the south of Gulmarg there is a village known as Beerwa which is the tehsil headquarters of the surrounding area. The village is flanked by a mountain range on its southern side. At the eastern super of

this mountain is located the celebrated cave connected with life of Acharya Abinav Gupta, the greatest Shiva philioopher of Kashmir. The Acharya was called Bairwa meaning the fairless one. The village comes to be known after this title of Bairwa and has now become Beerwa.

The celebrated cave is located at the height of nearly 300 meter on the super of the ridge overlooking the crescent shaped narrow valley of evergreen Jungles with a Sukh Nag Nalla flowing through it. One Haji Mohd. Sultan Dar (75 years) who guided me up to the cave said " Hindus used to assemble here upto year 1947 on the 12th day of the bright fortnight of the month corresponding to the month of June. In 1947 the valley was attacked by Pakistani raiders and so the tirtha was given up for security reasons. Since then a Government employee or some research scholar is seen occasionally visiting the cave."

The entrance of the cave is like a rectangular room where some 8 or 10 persons can accommodate themselves. Going further, the cave begins to narrow and opens to another smaller room where a stone Shiva lingum is visible. One can go further sideways but nobody proceeds further because of darkness and narrowness of the passage. On right and left vermilion covered rocks-adds can be seen. Nearly one thousand years ago Acharya Abhinav Gupta who flourished at the beginning of the 11th century A. D. and is the exponent of Kashmir Shivaism known as Trika, entered this cave. The locals and the Hindus in the valley hold the legend that the Acharya entered the cave with 1200 disciples following him. None of them returned. Even at present while offering prayers, the Kashmiri Hindus recite the same prayers which the Acharya and his followers recited while entering the cave. It is believed that they entered Shivaloka in their earthly bodies through the cave. It is since then that the cave is held in great veneration by the Hindus of the valley and till recently it was the place of annual pilirimage.

Shankerun Pal or Boulder of Lord Shiva

On the way to Mahadeva the pilgrims leaving Harwan behind, come across a huge boulder which they shower with flowers as token of reverence. This huge boulder is known as Shankerun Pal meaning the boulder of Lord Shiva.

In Shivsutra Vimershima, it is recorded that sage Vasugupta - the founder of Shiva philosophy of Kashmir - lived in Harvan in a hermitage. One night he saw lord Shiva in a dream who seemed moved with compassion at Vasuguptas helplessness in arguing before Buddhistic scholars. To enlighten him the Lord disclosed to the sage, the existence of a rock on which some sacred Shiv Sutras were inscribed. Vasugupta was further directed to proceed on spot early before sun rise, when by his mere touch, the rock would overturn by itself and expose four Shiv Sutras to him which he should learn and teach to worthy pupils. The huge boulder with almost smooth surface is still pointed out as one on which the sage Vasugupta found the inscription.

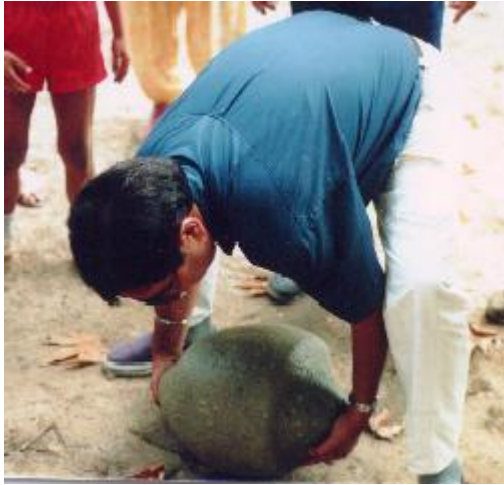
At present there is no trace of any inscription on it, and it is believed that the boulder over turned after the inscriptions were copied by Vasugupta. According to Kshemendra the very sutras became the foundation of Advaita Shaivism of Kashmir known as Trika.

Budbrari Or Beda Devi Spring

(Where snow does not fall within a radius of 350 ft.)

Towards the south of village Kellar, high up in the small valley of Birnai Nallah which connects Drubgam by a direct route with the Pir Panchal pass of the old Moghul Road, there is a stone lined spring bubbling with milky water. It is situated on a hillock with low-lying area on all sides and so is free from mountain torrents. It is 7800 ft. above thesea level in the Romeshi Forest Range. Snow does not fall within 125 Hastas a radius of 350 ft. from the spring. The holy spring is square shaped and in measurement is 50 ft square. The water is milky white and is shallow near the banks. The source of the water is in the centre and is very deep, so much so that once a buffalo got swallowed there leaving no trace behind. Because of this incident shepherds do not let their cattle stray near the holy spring which accounts for the clean

and tidy premises of the fount. The spring is full of water through out the year. It has a beautiful forest



full of fir and pine for its background. While going up to reach the holy spring from Keller one comes across a small hamlet known as Shukroo. From the hamlet upto the sacred spring a number of mounds can be seen under which bricks lie buried which show that long ago there existed some human habitation near the holy spring. Some three chains away from the sacred spring there is a small waterfall which emits a sulphuric smell. The local gojars told me that patients suffering from rheumatism and skin diseases get relieved by having a bath in this water. Lime is also found buried here and there. There are no idols nor any ruins of any temple here except a boulder on which Shiva Lingas are carved. The sacred spring must have been a very popular Tirtha in the Kashmir Valley. Kalhana in his Rajatarangini writes: "There the Goddess Saraswati was believed to have shown herself as a swan in a lake situated on the summit of the hill ". Though in the present era it is

forgotten by people, the old Mahatmya of the sacred lake has survived and Shri.M. A. Stein who visited the Valley in 1890-95 and has translated Rajatarangini into English has identified the site known at present as Budbrari. At the end of 16th century when Hindus still made pilgrimage to the Tirtha, Abu Fazal has recorded; "Near Shukroo is a low hill on the summit of which is a fountain, which flows throughout the year, is a place of pilgrimage for the devout. The snow does not fall on this spur."

It is related that in ancient times Rishi Pulastya performed long penance here and made the holy Ganga push forth near Ashram. He further craved for a boon that it may rest forever by his side which was granted. It is thus that Ganga Behda Tirtha got created. The Goddess Saraswati (Goddess of speech) appeared to him in the shape of a swan which the Rishi worshipped on the 8th and 9th of the bright fortnight of Chitra of each year. Ever since the Goddess Saraswati has been receiving worship at the Ganga Behda Tirtha. Nilmat Purana recounts the Tirtha as Ganga Behda and is included in the list of Tirthas mentioned in the epic of Mahabharat. This establishes the antiquity of the Tirtha.

I visited this holy Fount in Oct. 1976. From Srinagar via Pulwama regular bus service is available up to village Keller wherefrom one is to cover a distance of 9 km. either on horseback or on foot. The enchanting scenery, the green meadows with Nallah Birnai flowing at the foot of the hillock, the spring bubbling with milky white water is a thing to be ever remembered. The site if connected to a pucca road from Keller Masapora will prove the greatest attraction for tourists and will provide means of livelihood for poor Gujjars who inhabit the neighbourhood of the sacred spot popularly known as Bujbrari.

The Chinar of Prayag

Which Neither Grows Nor Decays With Time.

Early settlers in Kashmir named their new places of settlement after the names which they cherished most in India. Such a place is Prayag at Shadipur, situated at a distance of 18 km. in the north west of Srinagar city. It is situated at the confluence of the river Sindhu and the river Vitasta, similarly as Prayag in India stands at the confluence of the river Yamuna and the river Ganga. The place has enjoyed exceptional sanctity as a Tirtha since times immemorial. Here, as a Prayag in India, Hindus immerse the sacred ashes of their deceased relatives. Opposite to Shadipur village once there stood a temple dedicated to Lord Vishnu.

At the confluence of the river Sindhu and the river Vitasta there is a small island built of solid masonry on which an old chinar stands, which shelters a few idols and statues. The chinar neither grows in size nor decays with time. It has taken the place of the famous Ficus Indica. There is a popular legend among

people here that the island rises when the rivers get swollen with flood waters so as rising tides cannot touch the Chinar. The Chinar has found its place in the vocabulary of Kashmiri dialect and is referred to when the size of a boy or a girl is found stunted !

Kah-Kah-Pal

The stone which rises up when persons numbering 11 touch it with their index fingers.

At a distance of 32 km. towards the south of Srinagar city on the National Highway there is a town-Bijbehra on the left bank of the River Jhelum. At the southern tip of the town there is a massive stone temple dedicated to Lord Shiva. In the compound of the same temple there is a conch shaped stone tapering at one end which is popularly known as Kah-Kah-Pal. The stone does not weigh more than 60 kilos or more and one adult person can move it from side to side.

The marvel of the stone gets apparent when 11 persons encircle it, and apply their 11 index fingers to the base of the stone. While repeating Kah-Kah (eleven-eleven) the stone gets lifted above the ground. The stone is popularly known as Kah-Kah-Pal which in Kashmiri means the digit eleven. The stone is in the custody of the pujari of the temple. Many stories and legends about the stone are attributable to it. For example it is related that once it was thrown into the river and next day it reappeared on the bank of the river. I have dismissed such legends as mere heresay.

Takshak Nag

At a distance of 10 km, towards the east of Srinagar city there is a village known at present as Zewan. The spring known Takshak Nag is situated in this village. It is said that saffron has originated from the spring and that its cultivation has spread in its neighbourhood. It is related that the Lord of the Spring offered Hakim Waga Bhat, the saffron bulbs as a token of reward for curing his eye ailment.

Bilhan the great Sanskrit poet who flourished in 11th century and was born at Khunmoh (a village at a distance of 5 km. towards the east of Zewan). He described the spring as "A pool filled with pure water sacred to Takshak the Lord of snakes ", Abdul Fazal records the facts that this spring is held to be the place wherefrom saffron originated and flourished in the neighbourhood.

In the time of Akbar, the cultivators worshipped at the spring at the beginning of each spring season. To get successful crops it was customary to pour cow's milk in it. As a local divinity Takshak Naga retained sanctity and importance for long with cultivators. Pilgrims when on their way to Harishwar cave offer Puja at the spring on the twelfth of the dark fortnight of Jeth corresponding to the month of June.

Where relating the story of Chander lekha-the beautiful Naga damsel-the great poet Historian, Kalhana mentions the name of the spring in the Rajatarangini as a place of pilgrimage. The inclusion Or the spring as a Tirtha in the list of Tirthas recorded in Mahabharata signifies its antiquity.

At present the spring stands intact with embankments of chiselled stones full of pure and sweet water. The spring measures 50' x 50' and has depth of 3'. The water source is in the North east corner of the spring.

Lal Trag at Pampore

In the South of Srinagar at a short distance there is a small town as Pampore, at present famous for saffron cultivation. In the centre of this town there is a pond measuring 50' x 250' with varying depths of 2' to 5'. It is known as Lal Trag. The pond is held in great reverence by Hindus as well as Muslims of the locality, since the tank happens to be connected with an important event in the life of Laleshwari popularly known as Lal Ded in the valley.

Laleshwari flourished in the 14th century. She sang of divine love, tolerance, secularism and universal brotherhood when Persia lay prostrate under conquering feet of Timur and Black Death hovered over

the British islands. The great mystic poetess chose the common man's language for expression of her subtle spiritual ideas. She was the harbinger of new patriotic awakening and laid the foundation of Kashmiri song and poetry. Her couplets are so popular even at present times that a Kashmiri gets spell-bound when he hears some village minstrel singing them for some audience.

Lal Ded was born at village Sempore in the year 1317 A. D. and was married at Pampore. Her married life was most unhappy. She had initiation from her spiritual Guru known as Sedu Mole as the practice in vogue at that time. Her mother-in-law at the time of serving meals would keep a round stone in the dish and cover it with a little of boiled rice for Laleshwari. She was subjected to this mal-treatment of near starvation for not less than 12 years, until her father-in-law came to know about it. Her husband under the provocation of his mother would always find fault with his saintly wife. One day when Lal Ded returned from the river with one earthen pitcher full of water on her shoulder, her husband hurled a stone on the pitcher which broke into pieces and fell on the ground. To the amazement and horror of mother and son, the water remained intact like a frozen piece on the shoulder of Lal Ded. Instantly all the empty pots got filled with water and the rest of the water was thrown away from the window on to the ground where it assumed the form of a pond and is existing there till today. The tank became known as Lal Trag. The fame of the miracle spread like wild fire in the valley and Lal Ded began to shine like a pole star over the spiritual firmament of the Kashmir Valley.

Among Hindus of Pampore, on a marriage ceremony the bridegroom offers Puja at the tank before he enters the house of the bride. Muslims pour cow's milk into it as a token of respect. Some locals bathe their children in order to cure them of scabbies and other skin diseases. The elders in the locality saw that the tank never get dried even when the valley happened to be in the grip of severe drought. This holy pond is in dire need of repairs and renovations because of its national importance in the valley. Such is the legend of Lal Trag at Pampore.

Harmukh

Towards North-East of Srinagar city there stands one conspicuous hoary headed mountain overlooking the Gangabal Lake. It is known as Harmukh meaning thereby that the peak appears same from all sides. It is situated at an elevation of 16890ft. The reverence which ancient Greeks had for Olympus, the Kashmiris have for Harmukh since they believe that on its top is the abode of Lord Shiva. Shamus-Faqir a well known Kashmiri poet in one of the songs says, "Thou knower of truth if you want to see Him face to face you can see Him at Harmukh."

Sir Walter Lawrence, the Settlement Commissioner of J & K State, has recorded about 100 years ago in his book "Valley of Kashmir" that Kashmiris in general believe that there is a mine of jewels and rubies in Harmukh. The inhabitants of the valley believe that wherever the Harmukh peak is visible in the Valley, the serpents of the place happen to be quite harmless, and on the other hand, the peak is not visible the serpents of the locality are poisonous and their bites are fatal. In Ilaqa Pulwama where the peak is visible the snakes are quite harmless and at village Lar where it is invisible the serpents are poisonous. At the foot of Harmukh there is one beautiful lake known as Gangabal Lake. In the month of September corresponding to the bright fortnight of Bahadun, Kashmiri Pandits immerse the urns (ashes) of their dead relatives in this lake after performing their Shraddha. No sooner are the ashes cast in the crystal clear water of the lake, than swarms of small red worms appear on the surface and render the water unfit for drinking purposes. The pilgrims know it, and therefore, cook their meals before casting ashes in the lake.

Long ago some pilgrims gave me to understand that they saw a small channel with mercury flowing down the mountain side into the lake. Having no container with them they collected a little quantity of the same in a dried piece of cowdung. On reaching their destination they found ~he mercury slipped down somewhere on their way back.

Once a hermit tried to reach the summit of the Harmukh to see Lord Shiva face to face. For twelve years long he tried to scale the summit, but failed until one day he saw a gojar descending the summit. When the gojar approached him, the hermit enquired as to what he saw there. The gojar whose goat had strayed and for whom he had been searching, said that he saw a couple milking a cow and drinking the same in a human skull. They had offered some milk to him, which he refused to drink and when they departed they rubbed a little of the milk on his forehead. As the gojar indicated the spot on his forehead where the milk was rubbed, the hermit was extremely joyful and rushed to lick his forehead. It is said that the hermit got Nirvana and disappeared from the place, to the entire surprise of the gojar. The legend is known as Hurmukhuk Gosoni.

6.0 KASHMIR'S PLACE IN THE CULTURAL MOSAIC OF INDIA

by Manmohan Dhar

Kashmir suddenly flashed into the world news when Pakistani marauders came over the mountains to annex Kashmir by force. Although repeated attempts to annex Kashmir on the flimsy ground of majority Muslim population, have been frustrated in the recent past, grim clouds of a more organized attempt, backed by modern arms and armoury that are being supplied to Pakistan, are again gathering in menacing proportions. Whereas, India will again face such a situation with greater determination and united will and strength of the country, it is essential that every Indian should refresh his mind with a broader understanding of the place of Kashmir in the Indian Cultural fabric.

Kashmiri mind transcends the bounds of narrow religious and communal view of Hinduism and Islam, and has been a creation of thousands of years of cultural and spiritual enquiry and experiment. It was amidst its cool valleys, known for their enchanting beauty, that these fair coloured men - all of them brahmins - with their sharp features, aquiline noses and beautiful eyes, measured with and exceeded in thought and spirit, the excellence of their surroundings. Different religions were considered as complementary aids to greater understanding of the human spirit and these geniuses of thought, untangled the path of men from the snares of narrow religious creeds and conventions, to strive into perennial streams of freedom, sustained, softened and sweetened by love, religious catholicity and enlightened human understanding. Right from the very ancient times, Kashmir had become a clearing house of spiritual knowledge, a laboratory to nourish and to give shape to new thoughts and a place where scholars concurred, conversed and concurred to give ground rules for thinking processes, language, logic, aesthetics, religions, philosophies, music, dance and sciences. Scholars and spiritual seekers moved regularly from Kashmir to various parts of India and central Asia and from central Asia and India to Kashmir. Says Grierson " For upward of two thousand years Kashmir has been the house of sanskrit learning and from this small valley have issued masterpieces of history, poetry, romance, fable and philosophy. For centuries Kashmir was the home of the greatest sanskrit scholars ..". According to Bilhana " Even women in Kashmir spoke Sanskrit and Prakrit quite fluently ".

Is it surprising, therefore, that Panini-the father of sanskrit grammar was born there in a village called Salatoor-for which reason he was also known as Salatooriya-but later moved to Patliputra (Patna in Bihar) where he taught sanskrit grammar. Patanjali, the author of Mahabhashya-the commentary of Panini's grammar-and also one of the greatest systems of Yoga- ' Yoga Darshan ', was a Kashmiri. ' Saivism' which represents one of the most luminous attainments of spiritual endeavour to relate human with the Divine, was conceived there and was and is being taught in the valley even today. According to Prof. Sylyan Levi, Caraka author of the famous book on Medicine, Carkasamhita, was a Kashmiri, and so was Koka - author of Koka Shastra which is considered the most important book on sex after ' Kamasutra '. Even ' Panchtantra ' is supposed to be of Kashmiri origin. Damodara Gupta wrote Ruttani Maram an interesting poetical work dealing with the ethics of concubinage. Much can also be said in favour of Kalidas having been a Kashmiri.

The names of mighty minds who made contributions to Indian thought in the field of sanskrit learning, literature and sciences covering a wide field of philosophy, poetry, prosody, aesthetics, tables, plays, medicines, astronomy, astrology etc., are legion. Volumes have been written on the work of these great personalities. What is, however, more important, is that during this period and even centuries before Christ, there was a constant flow of scholars from Kashmir to the rest of India and vice-versa. Having become a seat of learning scholars from all over India used to go to Kashmir for higher studies. As is well known Kashmiri's had developed their own script, called the sharada script for writing sanskrit. It is significant, that 'recently several important manuscripts of works of Kashmirian Saivan philosophy in sharada and some South Indian scripts have been found in Kerala and Madras'.

Kashmiri scholars wrote extensive commentaries on the Gita, Mahabharata and other important sanskrit works including those of Kalidasa and others and actively participated in many important assemblies deliberating on religion, philosophy or literature in various parts of India.

According to Narayan Menon, the most important work on music in the medieval period is that on Karnataka Music, Sangit Ratnakara. This was written by Sarangdeva who was a Kashmiri. His father had immigrated to South in the 12th century and worked at Devagiri. Menon says that Sarangadeva's book formulates the basis of Karnataka music and there are few West Asian and European works to compare with 'Sangita Ratnakara' when it comes to detailed accounts of theory and practise by scholarly musicians.

According to Professor Thattacheriar, head of the sanskrit department of Madras University, the contribution of Kashmiri scholars to South Indian Philosophy, aesthetics, dance and music has been very significant. For instance, it is known that Thirumalur, one of the earliest teachers of Saivism in South (1st to 9th Century AD) came for Kashmir.

Similarly, many scholars from India went to Kashmir and settled there. Notable among these is Atrigupta, a well known scholar from Kanauj who came to Kashmir at the invitation of King Lalitaditya. His descendent, Abhinavagupta (950-960 AD) stands like a prince amongst Kashmiri thinkers, whose contribution in the field of aesthetics and philosophy has been the most profound.

There is a strong belief that Shankaracharya visited Kashmir and the legend has it that he held philosophical discussions with Mandan Misra and his wife. So did Ramanuja the doyen of the Vaishnava creed go to Kashmir all the way from Madras to argue with the Kashmiri Shaivait philosophers. In the field of Tantra Shastra, the links established between Bengal, Kashmir and Kerala, would in itself be a fertile field for study to provide considerable evidence of exchange and inter-action that took place over many centuries. 'Kaula' is a title given to the adept in the tantra sadhana and the prevalence of this system of spiritual pursuit in Kashmir can be judged by the number of 'Kauls' in and outside Kashmir, whose surname is derived from the spiritual attainment their fore-fathers may have attained. Earlier, during Ashoka's reign, 5000 monks were settled in the valley to establish a centre of study and propagation of Buddhist religious texts. Ashoka is stated to have gone to Kashmir and worshipped Lord Shiva at the famous temple of Harmuktaganga.

In the later period, Kanishka held the third Buddhist Council in Kashmir and 'Mahayan Doctrine' was born. The deliberations were conducted in sanskrit. Kashmiri missionaries, radiated into Tibet, China and other parts of south-east Asia. In order to make propagation in Tibet purposeful, Kashmiri scholars devised a script and grammar for the Tibetan language and translated Mahayan Buddhist Doctrines into Tibetan. The greatest among these missionaries is Shyam Bhatta who created the script and grammar for the Tibetan language.

Added to these facts, are the evidence in sculpture strewn all over the valley. Says Lawrence "The valley of Kashmir is the holy land of Hindus and I have rarely been in any village which cannot show some relic of Antiquity..." The ruins of Martanda and other old temples are even now called 'Pandava Houses' and Kalhana says it was at Lord Krishna's advice that Yasovati was made queen regent of Kashmir after Krishna had defeated King Damodara, Yasovati's husband.

A whole population of Saraswat Brahmins, who gave themselves up wholly to the refined graces of life, in the bracing and beautiful environment, unique in its own right, and kept alive the pursuit of spiritual enquiry and art of living, have to be seen in the foregoing back-drop of the pre-buddhist era and later, which gives some indication of the deep spiritual and cultural links of Kashmir with the rest of India. But history was not to leave them at peace. While muslim Kings invaded India, their ingress into the valley was at first thwarted by high mountains, cold weather and snow. Mahmud Ghazni made several attempts but finally like Napoleon's retreat from the Russian soil, he yielded against the geography of

Kashmir and abandoned the idea of invading Kashmir again. Islam had, however, swayed over vast territories around Kashmir, and the new faith had made its entry gradually, stealthily but steadily. Harsha, a Hindu King, influenced by Islam, destroyed Hindu temples and images. During the ' Saltanate ' rule lasting for over 200 years from early fourteenth century, King Sultan Sikander, decided to convert Hindus by force and his Prime Minister, Suha Bhatt (Saif-ud-Din) a convert to Islam, razed to the ground some of the most famous and beautiful edifices to the Hindu temple and architectural genius. Mosques were raised in their place. Simultaneously, muslim scholars from Iran and other places were invited, and the artistic propensities of the Kashmiris were stifled by banning playing of musical instruments and dancing.

Yet amidst this multi-point thrust on the Hindus, Sanskrit continued to be the official routine language in the Government. Several Kashmiri Pandits were in high position. But Persian and Arabic words were freely used and it was in about the 15 th century that Persian became the official language under the rule Or Sultan Zain-ul-abibin. He was a great King, who lent Hindu content to the Persian language by getting some of the ancient Hindu scriptures translated into Persian. Kashmiris during this and later periods made outstanding contributions to the Persian literature. Zain-ul-abidin laid the foundation, for a cultural synthesis, where in the spirit behind form, it was difficult to find the dividing lines between Hinduism, Budhism and Islam.

During this period, the local language became the repository of Sanskrit, Arabic and the Persian words; and Kashmir became the cradle of cultures and almost through unconscious accretion of various influences worked out a synthesis, which became the dominant message in the poetry of some of the greatest seers of ' Unity in the diversity of religions', such as 'Laleshwari' and ' Nunda Rishi '. Although buffeted by constant strifes and travails of wars, through the passage of history and persecuted by religious bigots, Kashmiri Pandits survived the holocaust of tyranny, which at one time reduced their population to a mere eleven families, the rest were either converted or fled from the valley to various parts of India. There have thus been a series of exoduses from the valley.

In the words of Dr. Sengupta " Kashmir has been very much in the news since 1947 as if it is just a piece of terrain, over the possession of which warring forces are at bay

We want the world to know a bit of the bubbling fountain of life that has been flowing through her arteries, since the Aryan immigrants settled first in this snow-capped valley, which constitutes a diadem of diamond on the head of India".

India has thus a spiritual and an emotional stake in Kashmir, which has been the culmination of thousands of years of deep association, exchange and a living process. It is the duty of every Indian, not to barter it away because of lowly concept of communal claim on her, on the basis of majority muslim population. Kashmir has indeed become the symbol of secularism.

Kashmiri Pandits, have gone through the tortures of wars and persecution. A few thousands of them - perhaps less than a lac are in Kashmir and other parts of India. They have played their enlightened and constructive role in various fields through the centuries over the length and breadth of India, which can be written in letters of gold and have always been the torch bearers of cultural excellence of India. Pandit Nehru's and the Nation's spontaneous response to fight Pakistan have to be seen in this broad vision of Kashmir's place in the cultural mosaic of India and the Nation must take due note of the efforts and role of the Kashmiri Pandit community so as to ensure that the links between Kashmir and the rest of India enriched by the glorious past of thousands of years, are not snapped or obliterated by unscrupulous elements through the subversive and subterranean efforts in Kashmir with their epic centre in Pakistan.

7.0 KASHMIR SCHOOL OF PAINTING

by Dr. A. K. Singh

The Kashmir school of painting is an obscure topic in the otherwise scholarly field of Indian art history, although much has been written about the ancient Kashmiri architecture and sculpture in recent times. It is true that Kashmir yields no archaeological remains of paintings nor do we know anything regarding the painting to reorganise the chronological history of painting in Kashmir. This paucity of archaeological material, of course, poses a severe lacuna in reorganisation and interpretation of the history of painting of Kashmiri people in early days but nevertheless it means that painting was an unknown or omitted discipline of fine arts to the Kashmiri society. An advanced culture like Kashmir that had well organised style of architecture, sculpture and other arts would never ignore the art of painting as it has been a most expressive and lively medium of human feelings and creative impulse. However, paintings being fragile in nature have completely disappeared from Kashmir on account of its unsuitable climatic conditions and ravages of wars. But the paintings created by the medieval artists of Kashmir have fortunately survived in the Trans-Himalayan region where climate preserved them. The earliest surviving examples of Kashmiri painting come from Gilgit which date from about 8th century A. D. Paintings discovered from Gilgit represent a highly developed style which did not appear overnight. Kashmiri craftsmen, long-famed in the North Western Indian peninsula, used to be invited to Central Asia and Tibet to decorate Buddhist monasteries. All the earliest monasteries of Tibet and Western Tibetan provinces used their services and their artifacts were in ever greater demand.

References of paintings in ancient Kashmir literature are very limited and scattered. It is only by piecing together the literary references and combining them with sculptural index a picture emerges of plausible form of painting which corresponds to the paintings that are preserved in the Buddhist temples of Ladakh and Western Tibet. Ancient Tibetan chronicles register clear evidences pertaining to the school of painting in medieval Kashmir. Biography of the great Tibetan scholar Rinchen Sangpo (950 - 1055 A . D.) registers an important reference that he visited Kashmir three times from Guge to obtain the services of Kashmiri craftsmen and teachers to reorganise and re-establish Buddhism in the Tibetan world. He is credited to have built one hundred and eight temples in Western Tibet with the help of seventy five skilled Kashmiri craftsmen and painters. In certain stances, name of particular artist is found. Some of the temples of this epoch have survived which still preserve the markmanship of those artists who were invited to build and decorate the temples. Another important information is recorded by the 16th century Tibetan polygrapher, Lama Taranath who writes in his "History of Buddhism in India " that when the kings Dharmapala and Devapala (8th-9th century) were ruling in Eastern India, there flourished two art schools namely, the Eastern Indian School established by Dhiman and the Madhyadesha school established by Pritipal son of the former. At the same time, Kashmir had its own distinct school of painting and metal casting under Hasuraja. Lama Taranath further comments that the school of Kashmiri art was influenced by the Madhyadesha school upto some degree. There was another school localised in Marwar established by Sringadhari which spread its influence far away in Kashmir, Punjab and in the northwestern provinces, of India.

The foregoing and a brief survey of Kashmiri sculpture makes clear that the genesis and evolution of Kashmiri art was not an isolated phenomenon rather possessed an unified character with the mainstream of Indian culture. To interpret the Kashmiri painting it would be necessary to consider certain factors like geographical, social and political, which in fact determine the whole personality of a culture and its art. Kashmir being north-western frontier province of India, enjoyed a melting-pot position where various cultural cross currents from East and West happened to mingle together and influence the development of contemporary art which appears, basically, eclectic in character. From or even earlier to the time of

Mauryan Emperor Ashoka Kashmir was intimately associated with Gandhara and had cultural and political relationship with Afghanistan, Central Asia and Southern India.

From 7th-8th century onwards the school of Kashmiri art acquired distinct features when Kashmir emerged as a powerful kingdom in northern India. Before this period, the whole region from Kashmir and Gandhara to Bamiyana, Central Asia and Southern peripheries of Iran was under an unbroken chain of tradition which interlocked all the flourishing centres of trade and Buddhism contemporaneous to each other. The stucco figures found in the ancient sites of Ushkur, Akhnoor (in Kashmir), Hadda, Taxila, Baniyan, Fardukistan, Begram, Shoforak, Adzitepe, Fayaztepe, Airtam, Yarkand, Kizil, Dandan uilik, Khotan, Kashgar etc. display a striking affinity in their style which points to a common artistic tradition that overwhelmed the whole region. These stucco figures approximately date from 5th-6th to 8th century and present a beautiful synthesis of the Gandharan and the Gupta Indian tradition. Similarly fragmentary examples of paintings survived from Baniyan, Fondukistan, Balewatse, Dandanuilik etc., stylistically appear to be analogous to the stucco figures. The Indian influence crystallised into the art of Central Asia may be attributed to have transmitted through the medium of Kashmir as then Kashmir was one of the greatest centres of Buddhist learning and art which played a key role in the spread of Buddhism in Central Asia and Far East.

With the discovery of Gilgit manuscript paintings, the interpretation of the Kashmiri painting gets an authentic base line. The Gilgit manuscript paintings are assigned to the Kashmir school of the 9th century but stylistically, they may date even earlier in the 7th-8th century as their nearest parallels are found in the Kashmiri stone sculptures dated to the 8th century from Pandrethan. Well organised style of the paintings of Gilgit manuscript appears to be the result of a chronological evolution to which Kashmiri painting underwent. Painted figures of Bodhisattva Padmapani from Gilgit demonstrates the mingling of the Gandharan and the Gupta Indian mannerism with certain local elements. Physiognomy of the figures in the paintings from Gilgit is characterised by muscular and sturdy-built bodies; the faces are typical Gandharan while the iconography and spirit are purely Indian. This whole combination may be called the basic characteristic of medieval Kashmiri art which is very well demonstrated in the sculptures produced in the period of King Lalitaditya (925-56).

The Kashmiri artistic tradition of Lalitaditya's period seems eclectic in nature synthesizing the Gupta Indian, the Gandharan, the Central Asian, the Iranian and the byzantine traditions. Lofty fame and prosperity of Lalitaditya's monarchy attracted many more traders and artists to settle in Kashmir from far afield. At the same time, Arabic hordes in Egypt, Syria, Central Asia and Iran compelled the craftsmen and Buddhist community to take refuge in peaceful Kashmir who in turn enriched the art and culture of the age.

In Lalitaditya's time, Roman, Syrian and Central Asian artists were available in Kashmir. On this basis, affinity of Kashmiri architecture with western architecture can be explained while sculptures of the same construction remained Indian in spirit.

After Lalitaditya, Kashmiri style appears to have changed slightly and in its new get-up it sustained till 10-11th century. This phase is supposed to be the most developed stage of Kashmiri art style when its fame spread in the remote Himalayas and before facing decay in Kashmir due to lack of patronage and religious upheaval, it was grafted into Tibet for further flowering.

Roerich has designated the Kashmir school of art of the 9th century as Avantipura school as the best examples of Kashmir art are found at Avantipura complex built by King Avantivarman (855-883 A. D.) of Kashmir who was a great lover of fine arts. This new style of Avantivarman's time is an amalgam of various earlier prevalent forms like Gandharan, Greco-Roman, Sarcarenian, Chinese, Central Asian and over-all Indian. Best representation of this style is found in the good numbers of Kashmiri bronzes dated to 9th to 11th century cast by Kashmiri craftsmen for Tibetan patrons. The style of such bronzes presents a remarkable affinity to that of wall-paintings dating to 10-11th century decorated in the Buddhist

temples of Western Tibet. In this connection, Roerich opines that the art of Avantipura school strongly influenced the development of art tradition of Western Tibet in 10-11 century.

The wall paintings of Mang nang and manuscript painting of Thaling discovered by Prof. Tucci in Western Tibet are great breakthrough in the field of Kashmiri art. Tucci believes that the paintings of Mang nang are created by Kashmiri painters of the 10th -11th century and are the best examples of Kashmiri painting and same is the case with Thaling manuscripts. They are dated as 11th century. Stylistically speaking, the paintings of Mang nang and Thaling appear to be pictorial translation of contemporary Kashmiri bronzes. Style of paintings of Mang nang and Thaling represent a successive stage of development of tradition next to what was characterised in the paintings from Gilgit.

The characteristic features of the Kashmiri paintings represented in the paintings of Mang nang lie in naturalistic colour modelling which is very prominently carried out in the female figures with the help of tonal variation of body hues to produce an impression of volume. In the female figure, the artists have applied the aesthetic canon following the standard characterised in medieval sculpture of Indian mainland. Female figures appear voluptuous having a balanced proportions and sensuous limbs. A unique feature of physiognomy equally observed in Kashmiri paintings and sculptures is the treatment of abdominal portion. It depicts slightly pouched sensuous lower belly and tight abdominal muscles around navel which divide the abdomen in four compartments. The facial type is marked with ovaloid face, fleshy cheeks, double chin, acquiline nose and full lips, highly arched eye brows and almond shaped eyes. Another characteristic feature lies in the depiction of eyes in case of three fourth profile faces where one eye projects in outer space which reminds of Western Indian paintings. The paintings present a rich variety of costumes used by the contemporary society. In the treatment of costumes and ornaments, the artists have meticulously executed the finest details of diaphanous and embroidered garments and intricate design of ornaments.

The colour scheme of Kashmiri paintings is very attractive as lapis lazuli blue and malachite green dominate the palette. The colours are used in various shades and tones but all very soothing and soft unlike Eastern Indian and Nepalese school. The Kashmiri colour palette resembles that of Central Asian. The wall paintings identical to Mang nang are found in the 10th-11th century Buddhist monasteries of Western Tibet, Ladakh, and Spiti such as Alchi, Mongyu, Tsaparang Thaling, Twang, Tabo etc., All were built during the period of revival of Buddhism in Western Tibet with the help of Kashmiri craftsmen commissioned by Rinchen Sangpo. These wall paintings present a final stage of progression of the Kashmiri style which reminds something related to the distant Ajanta.

The story of Kashmiri painting does not end here. In fact, at the time of its culmination it was shifted into western Tibet where it played a formative role in the genesis of Guge school of painting and later so called Tibetan painting. After the 11th century, art in Kashmir gradually lost patronage and degenerated and with the advent of Islam it suffered considerably. Nevertheless, it was not completely forgotten. With the socio-religious and political changes in Kashmir, the art of painting changed its nature and later made significant contributions to the school of Mughal painting.

However, the sole purpose of this discussion is to highlight the point that in ancient and medieval Kashmir, there was a distinct school of painting of its own.

8.0 SAIVISM IN PROSPECT AND RETROSPECT

by Dr. C. L. Raina



The circuitous upper valley of Vitasta, is the famous Kashmir in the Himalayan region. There are Harimukh (Haramukta) and Amarnath mounts, branches off from the great Himalayas a little further east, proceeds due south and encircling the sources of Vitasta, turns north west, where it is called Pir Pansal or Panchaldhara now Banihal range). These lesser mountains of the Himalayas surround the valley of Kashmir on all sides; leaving only a narrow outlet for the Vitasta at Baramulla. Kashmir valley is thus surrounded by the Himalayas and Vitasta has been the life and source for the socio-economic welfare of Kashmir. The climate of Kashmir is fine to suit the spring, summer and autumn season while the winter season makes the inhabitants of Kashmir to be in their homes. At the fag end of winter Kashmiri Hindus observe the Maha Shivaratri with great pomp and show associated with the belief and tradition of the union of Siva and Shakti. Many mythological stories are connected with the celebration of the Maha Shivaratri popularly known in Kashmir as Herat. Should we believe that Harmukta, Amarnath cave or Ma Shivaratri are the impact of Saivism for which Kashmir enjoys a special position in the globe for giving a dynamic philosophy of day to day living ? Is it closely related to Vedanta System or the Sankhya System or its obligation is due to Shakti worship that we see in every corner of Kashmir or because of the impact of Tantra fold prevalent in Kashmir. Kashmir is one of the Shakti pithas among fifty pithas mentioned in Lalita Sahasranama. Such questions need a rationalistic approach of study rather to believe in tradition and myth.

Dr. Radhakrishnan has very truly said that spiritual life was the true genius of India. Those who made the greatest appeal to the Indian mind were not the military conquerors, not the rich merchants or the great diplomats but the holy sages, the rishis who embodied spirituality at its finest and purest. The great sages and seers or the holy men had the vision to realise the truth according to the need and requirement of the time. Ekam Sat, Vipra Bahuda Vadanti stands true in the highly rationalistic age. It is, therefore, no wonder why Kashmir could give its own philosophy of Saivism.

Philosophy in its widest etymological sense means " love of knowledge. " It tries to know things that immediately and remotely concern man. What is the real nature of man ? What is the end of this life ? What is the nature of this world in which he lives? Is there any creator of this world ? How should man live in the light of his knowledge of himself, the world and God ? These are some of many problems that have been discussed threadbare in the Siva philosophy. It is easily intelligible because it does believe in the existence of matter and spirit. Life is worth knowing and hence worth enjoying. There seems to be vision of truth (darshana). According to Rabindranath Tagore in " The Spirit of India, " " Brahman is Truth, Wisdom and Infinite-Satyam, Jnanam Anantam Brahma. Peace is in Brahma, goodness is in Brahma and the unity of all things. He who is one, who is above all colour distinctions, who dispenses the inherent needs of men of all colours, who comprehends all things from their beginning to the end. Let Him unite us to one another with wisdom which is the wisdom of goodness.

The Saiva philosophy is typical of the entire range of Hindu thought. It subscribes to the belief in three padarths or categories viz., God, Soul and the bonds and thirty six tatvas (principles). It varies from idealistic monism and the pluralistic realism. It recognises thirty six principles as against the twenty four of the Sankhya and Yoga system. Panchratra also recognises twenty four principles. According to Pauskara Agma- "The Advaita Vedanta reckons thirty six principles, but the new principles in this scheme

are not independent principles, being for the most part, modification of one principal, Vayu the cosmic force. "

We have the five gross elements known as "Mahabutas"- ether, air, fire, water and earth; the last possesses the five qualities of sound, touch, colour, taste and odour; ether has sound alone. These qualities are called " Tanmatras ". According to "Paushkara-Agma " and Sivajnanamahapadyam, it is very much of an idealistic view of substance. The tanmatras are themselves evolutes of that variety of individuation (ahankara) wherein the quality of darkness and inertia (tamas) is predominant. This variety of " Ahankara " is also called bhutadi, since it is indirectly the cause of the elements. According to Sankhya " manas " is recognised to be an organ of both sense and action. Ahankara is itself derived from " Buddhi " or intellect. It is the determining faculty and self-derivative. Buddhi, Ahankar, manas and chitta constitute the internal organs. Thus the twenty four impure principles are known as " Bhogya-kanda." Further, in Saiva system, there are seven mixed principles where Mula Prakriti is termed as " Prakriti-Maya ". It is the product of " Ashudda Maya and it evolves primarily into three principles- Kala (Time), Niyati (Destiny) and Kala. Time is an independent Principle. In experience, we observe that even when all necessary causes are present, the effect is not produced except with the passage of time. We find that time matures and time heals. Destiny sees that every soul has its due in the matter of the enjoyment of its appropriate fruit. Kala is the instrument whereby the darkness that envelopes souls is removed in part. It has two functions to evolve into "Mula Prakriti " and on the other into Vidya (knowledge) and Raga (attachments) Kala, Niyati, Kala, Vidya and Raga are termed as five sheaths or pancha kanchukas. According to Tattva Traya Nirnaya the five Kleshas are called Pumsatva Mala or human impurities and the soul is admitted to be known as Purusha Tattva.

The pure principles are five. Siva Tattva is the first of these and the cause of the rest - Shakti, Sadasiva, Ishwara and Shuddhvidya. Shivatattva is one, pervasive and eternal, it is the resultant of both knowledge and action and happens to be the cause of other pure principles. It is not however to be identified with Siva. Neither Siva himself nor his inherent Shakti can be directly the cause of any principles as they would then be the cause liable to transformation and affected by interness. Thus Shivatattva is an evolution through " Maha Maya " or cosmic force quite different from "Ashuddh maya" as mentioned earlier. Dr. Burnett has translated the Aghora Siva's commentary on the Tattva Prakasha in the following manner " Even the realistic school has to admit maya to be a parigraha shakti. While, however, the idealistic school draws what seems to be the natural inference and compares the product to the reflection in a mirror.... Aghora Siva condemns it as an interpolation According to him There is an order of evolution and involution even among the pure principles.

Souls are naturally infinite, pervasive and omniscient, yet they experience themselves as limited, finite and little knowing. This is due to the bonds of " anava " Karma and Maya. Souls which have all the three kinds of bonds are called Sakalas. Those for whom Maya alone has been resolved by the involution of the worlds in the periodical deluges are called Pralaya Kalas.

God is pure, omnipotent, omniscient, gracious, eternally free from bonds. He is both the material and the efficient cause of the world; through his Shaktis. He is the material cause and in His own nature the efficient cause. Souls in their essential nature are the same as God but their potencies are concealed by beginningless " Anava. " The ignorance of souls can be removed partially through the bodies, instruments provided by " Ashuddha Maya "- the physical world around us. God functions through His own energy called the energy of concealment (Tirodham Shakti). Through mere momentum or through the residue of Prarabdha Karma, the physical body may persist for a while after spiritual illumination; but it does not fetter the enlightened soul since it is not cognised as such. The attainment of Sivatva may be understood as complete merger in Siva or the realisation of an identity of essence in spite of difference in existence. The origins of Saivism or the roots of Saivism are found in pre-Aryan society. The hold of Saivism extends not only over the whole of India, from the Indus valley to Bengal but beyond the northern mountains to central Asia. The characteristics of Saivism are the exaltations of Siva above all other gods, the highly concrete conception of the deity and a close relationship between Siva and his devotees. On the one

hand, Siva is identified with the eternal Absolute, formless. On the other hand, he is the God of all gods, potent for good and evil. He is " Girish ", " Ishan " and " Maheshwara " the supreme Lord. In Rig Veda, he is known as Rudra,

< verses >

" Prostrations to the Lord, the Master of the Universe, the great God, the three eyed one, the destroyer of Tripura, the extinguisher of the Trika fire and the fire of death, the blue-necked one, the Victor over Death, the Lord of all, the ever peaceful one, the glorious God of gods. He is attained by Tapas or austerity and comes to our refuge and frees us from all bondage."

In the Yajur Veda ~Taittiriya Samhitta, " VI 2 3, however we meet with stories concerning Rudra's exploits such as killing the "Asuras" and destroying their "Tripura."

Due to the advancement of Hindu mathematics, it has been felt to simplify the highest Truths in the symbolic fashion. Lingam has been the emblem of Siva. Is the Sivalinga a phallus? The worship of the Linga as a symbol once started, there was little to prevent a confusion in the popular mind between this and the cult of phallus and legends came to be invented of the origin of the worship of Linga as the phallus of Siva. Barth is of the opinion that these lingas are perhaps the least offensive to look at. Anyhow, they are the least materialistic and if the common people make fetishes of them, it is nevertheless true that the choice of these symbols by themselves to the exclusion of every other image was, on the part of certain founders of sects such as Basava, a sort of protest against idolatry. In other words, the Puranic exaltation of Linga worship over image worship, the former leading to release and the latter only to some variety of prosperity. The Linga purana version is due to Siva becoming a pillar of fire, whose top and bottom could not be seen by Brahma and Vishnu.

Siva is known as Pashupati (the lord of creatures). Abhinav Shankara in his Rudrabhashya lays the foundation for the tenets of Saivism concerning pati, pashu and pasha (bondage). Kaivalya Upanishad describes Sivayoga as a means of release. Saivism closely agrees with the Sankhya in its dogmatics and with the Yoga school in its practical discipline.

Role of Shakti in Saivism is clear from Lalita, Bhawani and Rajina Sahasranam. Sri Chakra worship stands a witness to the unification of Shakti and Siva. Sri Chakra is the symbol of the infinite.

Sri Aurobindo in his book-philosophic work Savitri-has sung the praises of the symbol of the infinite as under:

*The unseen grew visible
to student eyes,
Explained was the immense
Inconscients Scheme
Audacious lines were traced
upon the Void;
The infinite was reduced to
Square and Cube
Arranging symbol
and significance
They framed the Cabbla of Cosmic Law,
The balancing line discovered of
Life's technique
And structured her magic and*

her mystery.

- Savitri (11:11)

Consciousness in the spirit and it is responsible for the Truth and Bliss. Arunopanishad says :
" Realise in us the microcosm, Thy form of Macrocosm. Make me know again ". In Saiva system we can't ignore the Shakti, the energy force of Siva.

Shankara in Soundarya Lahari explains the unification of Siva and Shakti in the following fashion:
< verses >

Sri Chakra is verily the macrocosm as well as the microcosm, is the body of the two in one, Siva Shakti. Sri Aurobindo emphasised it as under:

*"This is the knot that ties together the stars;
The two who are one and the Secret of all power,
The two who are one are the might and right in things "*
- Savitri (1.4)

In Kashmir Saivism is known as " Trika Philosophy " or Trika Shasua. Trika Shastra symbolises the same Trayambhaka Sampradaya or Rahasya Sampradaya. Trika accepts the most important triad Siva, Shakti and Anu or atom (matter) or again Siva, Shakti and Nara or lastly of the goddesses Para, Aparā and Paratpara. It also explains nondual (abheda), non-dual cum dual (bhedaabedha) and dual (bheda).

This system has two main branches Spanda and Pratibijna. The Trika is also known as " Svantryavad ", " Svantantriya " and Spanda expressing the same concepts. Abhyasvada is another name of the system. It is called Kashmir Saivism, because it enriched its culture, literature and spiritual integrity.

The Trika is a spiritual philosophy. Its concepts are experience concepts. Its greatest exponents are yoginies of high stature who showed wonderful insight into abstruse points of philosophy.
(Pratybigna-Karika I-38)

This system is a statement based on experience about the nature of Reality and a way of Life. Among the Agamas, Malinivijaya, Sivachanda, Vignān Bhairva, Ananda Bhairva, Mrigendra, Matang, Netra Svayambhu and Rudrayamala happen to be the chief ones, they were written to stop the propagation expounding a purely advaitic metaphysics of Siva Sutra revealed to a sage called Vasugupta (9th century).

The Pritigna Shastra is really the philosophic branch of Trika. Siddha Somananda, the disciple of Vasugupta is credited with adopting the method of giving an elaborate treatment of his own views. Parmartha Sara and Tantra Sara both by Abhinava Gupta and Pritibigna Hridya are three but important works of the school: Tantraloka.

According to the Trika, the Shastras have eternal existence. It means wisdom, self-existent and impersonal. It is also known as ' Shabda ' and ' Vak. ' Shastra is authority according to Tantrasara, told or revealed by the Supreme Lord. Therefore, Shabda creates or manifests every thing. Reality is ineffable and beyond any descriptions. Trika tries to formulate a philosophy about its nature. Siva and Shakti are not two separate realities. Kalidasa in Raghu Vamsa refers to Siva and Shakti as " Jagtah Pitarau Vande

Parvati Parameshwarau ". Like fire and its burning power, Siva and Shakti are the same identical facts though they are spoken of as distinct (Siv Drishti III. 7). Shakti is known as Swanriya and the principles of universal manifestation of five fold aspects as Chit Shakti- the power of self consciousness entails Ananda enjoyment and wonderment on the part of Siva, bliss gives rise to Ichha, desire to create, then Jnana or knowledge leading to Kriya Shakti will to act. According to Tantrasara, some times, Chit and Anada Shaktis are kept in background; Icha, Jnana and Kriya are taken to be the principal powers. Universe is Siva's Krida or play. Siva's self imposition of limitation upon Himself and also His breaking the fetters and returning to His own native glory are both Krida and play. Siva as Shakti manifests Himself as a correlated order of knowers, knowables and means of knowledge. The limited individual is subject to ignorance, which according to Trika is two fold viz. paurasha and bandha. The descent of the force of grace achieves two purposes: first pasa-kshya, the destruction of fetters and secondly Sivatva yoga - the restoration of Shiva-hood. The most important of this is Diksha or initiation. The Trika says that is a result of Shaktipat, one is brought to a real Guru. It awakens the " kriya-shakti " in the limited soul. There are four " upayas " or means of attaining the supreme goal. They are "anupaya; Sambhava, Sakta and Anav upaya ". Due to Shaktipat or descent of grace in a very intense degree, everything needed for the realisation, beginning from the liquidation of the atomic impurity down to the recognition of the state of Paramashiva may be achieved by the aspirant immediately and without going through any Sadhna or discipline. Samvid is the only reality, knowledge of duality is nothing in itself and can be removed through the rise of Shuddha Vikapa or Nirvikalpa. "

Dhyana means meditation in the heart space or " Hriday-Akash " on the Supreme Reality. By the process of meditation the whole field of knowables is swallowed up and absorbed into the knower. Uccara means the directing the prana or vital force upwards in the process of meditation. Through these already experienced means, the limited individual attains the rich treasures of his own true Self.

The Trika does not stop with the deliverance of the Soul from Maya from the delusion of duality. It goes to the concept of the divinisation of the Soul which means the recognition of its own identity with Parmashiva.

The Trika philosophy promises to satisfy both matter and spirit. It does not give independent reality to Prakriti. It is a stage in the evolution of the universe out of paramashiva. The Trika is a virgin field of research and will repay the most conscientious labour of philosopher for many years to come.

9.0 SWAMI ASHOKANANDA AS I KNEW

by P. Dattaram



Swami Ashokananda

The great Saint Sant Kabir has said:

<verse>

It means that an ordinary animal serves the mankind throughout its life and even after its death its body is useful. Several things can be prepared out of its hide and bones for the benefit of the man. But this is not the case of mankind. After the death of a man nothing is being utilised out of his mortal remains. So long a man is alive, if he does the work for the benefit of mankind and be useful for all, his name will remain even after his death.

Our Swami Ashokananda comes under the category of the immortals by his service and his name has been well known in Kashmir.

He was born in a poor Mukherjee Brahmin family in a small village in Jessore district now in Bangla Desh. When he was of three years age, his father died and he was left alone with his elder brother aged 12 and widowed mother. Being poor, they had to live a hard life on the earnings of the lady and her first son. Our Dinabandhu, to be known afterwards as Swami Ashokananda, was a very calm and quiet natured boy but his elder brother was of rash temper. Even for a small fault he used to beat poor Dinabandhu and his mother was very much worried about the behaviour of her elder son.

Dinabandhu was enrolled in a school as per tradition at his fifth year. He had to walk bare-footed in adverse conditions to his school far away from his home. His teacher was also of harsh temper and if the

boy was late on any day he too used to beat him. Neither in the school nor at his own home he was getting any affection and he started to remain absent from the school frequently and preferred to sit under a mango tree in deep contemplation.

One day he was severely beaten up by his brother for his frequent absence from school and he was warned that if he persisted in doing so, he would be driven out of his house. His mother also admonished him without realising the boy's plight. The poor boy could not tolerate such kind of treatment for long, both in the house and in the school and one day he took to his heels and absconded.

It was said that for years he did not appear. Some said that he went to Himalayas, some that he was doing Sadhana in some unknown place. After a prolonged period of absence, he came in contact with His Holiness Shri Sachitananda Maharaj known as Dadaji. Dadaji was a staunch disciple of Holy Mother Sharada Devi. He was a renowned Sanyasi of those days. Under Dadaji's kind guidance, his spiritual pursuit developed.

It was not known as to how he was called Ashokananda, though some attributed that he was called so because of his constant meditation for hours under an Ashoka tree.

One day in the early hours of dawn, he had a dream in which a young tall Sanyasi of divine face standing before him and keeping his right hand on his head as an 'Ashirwad' and advising him not to waste his time there but to go to Kashmir valley instead, and try to continue the incomplete work which he could not finish himself during his lifetime.

When Ashokananda woke up, he could not still get over the dream and mentioned this to Dadaji and on his advice left on his quest to Kashmir.

Sometime in 1935-36, he reached Sumbal and stayed there for a year or two. He was not satisfied and moved this time to a hilly place near Achhabal village which later came to be called Nagdandi. This place was surrounded by thick pine trees and had many natural springs gushing with clear water. In Kashmir valley, Nag means spring and there were many such springs: Kokar Nag, Beri Nag, Anant Nag, Nag Dandi etc. In this area, Ashokananda selected a gigantic pine tree and sat under it for his Sadhana. He sat bare-bodied regardless of snow and rain and none knew that such a person was residing there for a long time. The jungle was thick and none would dare to enter it as it was under the control of the Maharaja of Kashmir for his hunting sprees. The place was inhabited by a number of tigers, panthers, wolves and several varieties of stags.

Swamiji was absolutely fearless and the dangerous animals also were not afraid of him and hence there seemed to be a close rapport between them. Many times, the wood cutters appeared to have noticed Swamiji in deep meditation and many animals lying about him without fear. The news soon spread and people started flocking to see this unusual sight and have the darshan of Swamiji. It was said that many times Swamiji used to order the animals to go away from near him to permit the visitors to come close to him and they used to obey him like tamed animals.

Once Maharaja Hari Singh of Kashmir, accompanied by his guards happened to pass through the jungle when he espied a young Sanyasi sitting under a pine tree in deep meditation. He was surprised to see the wonderful sight of a radiant young Sanyasi still as if in trance. He and his guards dismounted and watched him for more than half an hour but still there was no movement of any limbs of Swamiji. Suddenly a horse neighed and disturbed the silence. Swamiji opened his eyes and saw before him some royal person and his attendants, standing with fear and awe writ on their faces for having disturbed him accidentally.

The Maharaja was quick to offer his apologies but Swamiji smiled this away and soon both of them fell into a long close conversation. Maharaja Hari Singh was deeply impressed by Swamiji and after receiving

his Ashirwad left the place with his retinue promising to call on him again. Then began his frequent visits to Swamiji and Yuvaraj Karan Singh was also one of those who accompanied his father when he visited Swamiji.

Their visits in turn encouraged visits by others and as no proper shelter was available for all, a small hut with a kitchen was constructed in the beginning. Gradually some disciples donated lands and some more lands were also purchased and more rooms were constructed.

His discourse at Satsang was becoming popular and many people from other parts of Jammu and Kashmir, Delhi, Bombay, Kanpur and even from abroad started to visit the Ashram. He was a very good singer and used to play on Sitar or Been. Soon a small temple for Thakur Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and a guest-house were also added. By 1948, the Ashram acquired about 7 acres of land and an apple orchard was started to make the Ashram self-sufficient for its maintenance. The Ashram has now about 800 fruit bearing trees of 17 varieties. The revenue earned by the auction of annual crop harvests meets the major share of the expenses of the Ashram.

The period between 1935 and 1970 was a golden era for the Ashram. It became a pilgrim centre attracting people from far and near, without distinction between rich and poor, caste and creed, literate and illiterate. Thousands used to take part in Sri Ramakrishna and Ma Sharada jayantis celebrated here. Swami Ashokananda was a perfect Sadhak but he never performed any miracles. His sound advice and kind look were the only remedy he offered to those who visited him. He was so simple that even in the severe winter he wore only a simple dhoti and a chaddar which impressed the visitors very much. Occasionally he used to visit Bombay, Delhi or Calcutta at the pressing invitations of his admirers and disciples.

During the later part of 1970, Swamiji was not keeping well. He was anxious about the continuance of the work after him. Being an ardent disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, he was keen that the Ashram should be taken over by Sri Ramakrishna Mutt. He also came to know of the reluctance on the part of Sri Ramakrishna Mutt to take up any new commitments due to their own preoccupations with other centres. He sent an invitation to Sri Eknathji on the advice of a mutual acquaintance.

Sri Eknathji visited Kashmir and called on the Swamiji who was sick and a bed in Dr. Gyalal Ogra's house at Srinagar.

Swamiji told him of his interest in handing over the Ashram to Sri Ramakrishna Mutt or to the Kendra for its proper running after him.

Sri Eknathji too was reluctant to accept the proposal and he informed Swamiji that he will talk and persuade Ramakrishna Mission authorities to accept his offer.

However in the meantime Swamiji passed away and in his will he expressed his desire to handover the properties of the Ashram to Ramakrishna Mission or Vivekananda Kendra.

Soon it became clear that Sri Ramakrishna Mutt was not taking up the Ashram and thus it came into the possession of the Vivekananda Kendra.

Swami Ashokananda attained the Maha Samadhi in December 1971. As per his wishes, his mortal remains were cremated at the premises of the Ashram which he used to call his Tapo-bhumi and Karma-bhumi. Thousands of his devotees thronged to the funeral, covering long distance from Jammu and other areas to Nagadandi.

His eternal Soul continues to shed its blessings on the Ashram which was dear to him.

10.0 NAGADANDI: SOME REMINISCENCES

by S. Kaul Safapuri



Swami Ashokananda

About two kilometres away from the historical and picturesque town of Achhabal, on the right side of the road to Uma Devi (Barari-Aangan), there is the Ramakrishna Mahasammelan Ashram, which was founded by late Swami Ashokananda, more than forty years ago.

It is a fairly big Ashram now, a compact complex of some buildings and a small temple, dedicated to Ramakrishna Paramahansa, at the foot of the wooded Achhabal hills. The Samadhi of Swami Ashokananda is within the precincts of the Ashram.

I am one of those persons who have seen this Ashram, which was the abode of Swamiji for nearly thirty years, grow from a tiny two-kanal hermitage, with a solitary hut within, into a sprawling five-acre Ashram, inclusive of a well maintained small apple orchard.

I vividly recall the warm summer day back in 1940, or perhaps 1941, when two tonga loads of people travelled from Anantnag to Achhabal. I was one of the party, a young school boy. I was staying with an uncle at Anantnag. One day my parents came there and the entire household was thrilled when my father, late Shri Shambunath Kaul, who was a devout disciple of Swamiji, disclosed that Swamiji was somewhere at Achhabal.

Swamiji, it may be recalled had been staying for many years in a small room at the shrine of Nandi Bhairav at Sumbal (Sonawari) but had moved out from there and his whereabouts were not known to many people. Naturally when the disclosure came, it thrilled all; because all of us. our family and relatives, were deeply attached to Swamiji.

At Achhabal we got into a three-storey building across the road, opposite to the Mughal garden and climbed up to the third storey. This storey had a narrow but long wooden balcony on the side facing the road and there we found Swami ji sitting on a bed and talking to some people. The house was the residence of one Shri Amarnath, a police official posted at Achhabal and a devotee of Swamiji. It was a great reunion which gave tremendous joy to everyone.

A little later we again got into the tongas and took the road to what turned out to be a pretty small retreat on the fringes of a wooded slope Nagadandi.

I recollect there was a tall poplar tree by the side of the road where the tongas halted, I caught sight of a Sanyasi, with a thick beard and matted hair, perhaps collecting cowdung. Later I learnt that he was Shri Damoder Ji, who was helping in setting up the small Ashram. Perhaps he is now at Wanpuh near Anantnag.

We climbed up the little distance to the Ashram. All that we found was a newly built small hut on the banks of a small pond fed by a tiny natural fresh-water spring just inside the forest. An ideal site for a secluded Ashram and we were told that Swamiji himself had chosen the site. The hut consisted of two small rooms. The interior one which was smaller and hardly enough for one person to stretch himself, was to be Swamiji's sanctum for many years. There was also a tiny shed next to the hut which was to serve as the kitchen. This shed was improved later to provide more space.

Swamiji had not moved in yet as the Ashram was being given finishing touches. Those doing so were to be the first resident disciples at the Ashram. They were Shri Shambunath, later to be known as Shakti Chaitanya and Shri Trilokinath who now lives in Srinagar.

While at the Ashram, Swamiji himself took us round and showed us a dry spring a little distance inside the forest. On a subsequent visit I found water gushing out of this spring.

After spending sometime at the Ashram we again took to the road in the two tongas along with Swamiji and proceeded to Uma Devi. Some kind of a festival was going on at the shrine and we all had our mid-day, meals there. I do not recollect clearly whether on our return Swamiji got down at Nagadandi or came back to Achhabal.

For me it was the beginning of a long association with Nagadandi I was deeply attached to Swamiji and the place fascinated me and therefore I paid frequent visits during my school and college days. I would spend weeks in the Ashram helping in vegetable cultivation, watering and such other chores. I was an ignorant young man and did not have an inkling of Swamiji's towering spiritual height. I would simply treat him as a friend.

One early winter day I went to the Ashram and spent the night there. Next morning when we woke up we found there had been a heavy snowfall during the night. I was stranded as no transport was available. I got bored and told Swamiji that we would roll some snow and make a snowman. He could feel my boredom and readily agreed. We got so engrossed in the job that we had to seek the help of Shaktiji and Trilokiji also and a whole day was spent in the pastime.

On another occasion when I spent many days at the Ashram, I would bicycle down to Achhabal every day to collect the mail. One day I asked Swamiji whether he knew cycling. He replied in the negative and I promptly offered to teach him. It gave me the joy of a proud teacher when he agreed. There was a small open space surrounded by forests, on a higher elevation opposite the Ashram. I toiled up the slope with the bicycle with Swamiji close on my heels. There I tried to teach him the art of riding the machine. The seat of the bicycle was very hard and he asked me to get a sheet of cloth to cover it. I raced down to the Ashram and returned with a sheet a few minutes later. And imagine my shock when I found Swamiji riding the bicycle with the ease of an expert over the undulating ground.

A few years later, Brig. Omkar Singh became the next-door neighbour of Nagadandi when he bought a plot of land to lay an orchard. He built a house there and would live there during the summer months. He would visit the Ashram almost daily in the evening. This would be followed by long walks in which I would always participate.

The next resident disciple at the Ashram was Shri Jia Lall who came to be known as Maharaj Ji. He is possibly in Jammu now. After 1947, he was joined by Shri Makhanlal Chaku and Shri Kanaiyah Lall Kaul, who got the names of Sambit and Shanti respectively.

I often visited Nagadandi as long as Swamiji was there. My association with the Ashram will always be one of the most cherished memories with me. When I think of Nagadandi, my mind is flooded with recollections which might find expression some day.