CHAPTER VII

RELIGION

To understand the cultural basis of a particular community, the study of its religious beliefs is very important. Religion forms an all-pervasive component of the culture of a community. Kashmir has been a very religious land since times immemorial. The birth and growth of civilization paved the way for different religions to spring up here. In pre-historic times, there were no religions as such but people worshipped various forces of nature like the Sun, the Moon, Thunder, etc. As the society grew, complex religious practices came into existence. With the emergence of the priestly class there were a multitude of changes in the religion in Kashmir.

NĀGA WORSHIP

The earliest inhabitants of Kashmir probably cherished some aboriginal beliefs, the details of which are not traceable now. The snake-cult or Nāga-worship seems to have been established in the valley from a remote period and undoubtedly had been one of the earliest religions of the land. The history of the emergence of this cult has been traced back to the Harappan age in two seals where it appears in an attitude of devotion to a figure in yogic posture, possibly a god- an early anticipation of the close association of serpents with Śaiva (and Śakti) cult of the later cult. The vrtras of the Rgveda were most probably Nāga-worshippers and hostile to the Vedic Āryans. Nāga worship thus existed in the Rgvedic period though it was not accepted by the Āryans. But gradually it was accepted by Āryans. It was due to this tendency that the Yajurveda Saṁhitā paid obeisance to the serpents of the earth along with those of the sky and the upper region. In the Atharveveda and the later Sarihitās serpents (sarpah) appear as semi-divine being. In the Gṛhyasūtras, Nāgas, called for the first time by this name and supposed to belong to earth, sky, and heaven as also to the quarters, receive adoration and worship. The Niddesa also
refers to Nāga worshippers, and the Chhargaon life-size Nāgis described as “worshipful Nāga (Bhagavanāga)”. The Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa refers to the divine serpents to whom is offered the sweet sacrificial food. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa refers to Sarpa-vidyā and the Chandogyopaniṣad mentions Sarpa-deva-jiṇāṇa-vidyā. The Gṛhyaṣṭras give a graphic account of the Sarpabali rite which is initiated on the full-moon of Śrāvaṇa and is concluded on the full-moon of Mārgaśīrṣa. Thus it is clear that by the time of Gṛhyaṣṭras, the Nāga cult had made its way in the Āryan religion. The Epics and the Purāṇas testify to this gradually increasing popularity of the Nāga cult and its assimilation by Hinduism. The Mahābhārata states the merits of visiting various Nāga tīrthas like Nāgodbheda, Sarpa-devī, Kurukṣetra, Prayāga etc. The tīrthas of the Nāgas, Kapila and Maṇi, are also glorified. The attempts of Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism to associate their deities with the Nāgas are also seen in the Epics and the Purāṇas.

Kashmir was one of the principal centres of serpent-worship in India. Though detailed evidence is lacking, there is no doubt that snake-worship prevailed in the valley from a very early period. The term ‘nāga’ stands for spring, chesmāh, and nāgin for small spring. The names of nāgas are designated in Kashmir to the tutelary deities which are supposed to reside in the springs and lakes of the valley. The Sanskrit word nāga is for snake, especially the cobra, which is related to the fertility and is considered as source of life. Springs are the main source of water in Kashmir. The five primordial elements (earth, fire, water, air and sky) are, in fact, complimentary to the people’s rituals, cognitive system, religious beliefs and sacrificial practices from a spring near Verinag which, as source of the river Jhelum, is responsible for the water supply to the most of the valley. The nāga was regarded sometimes as the spirit of departed ancestors, and sometimes as a guardian of treasures in later times. The religious significance of the water is established by the Nilmata Purāṇa when it records the entire land of the Kashmir as the
Regarding the exact date when the snake-cult was prevalent in the land, no direct testimony is available. But there are geological and mythological reasons to believe that in the 4th and 3rd centuries BCE, it might have been the principal religion of Kashmir. In the Mahāvaṃśa it is said that Aśoka’s adviser Moggaliputta Tissa sent Majjhāntika to preach Buddhism in Kashmir. When the śramaṇa reached the valley, he found that Aravāla, the king of the Nāgas, was ruling over it. Aravāla was destroying the corns of the country by hail storm. Majjhāntika, however, due to his divine powers remained unaffected from rains and storms. This made the Nāga king furious who sent lightning and struck rocks against the Buddhist monk in herder to kill him. But all these went in vain. Then convinced of the great powers of Majjhāntika, the Nāga king Aravāla together with his followers submitted before the monk and accepted Buddhism. This was followed by the conversion into Buddhism a large number of Nāga worshippers of Kashmir and Gandhāra.

Hiuen Tsang, who visited Kashmir in the 7th century CE, relates that according to the native records, Kashmir was originally a dragon lake. A very detailed and vivid account of how the Arhat Madhyāntika (Majjhāntika) rescued the valley of Kashmir from the Nāgas, established there the religion of the Buddha and settled five hundred arhats in the country has been preserved in the Chinese Vinaya of the Mūla-Sarvāstivādin sect. The Tibetan scholar Bu-ston, who composed his famous history of Buddhism in the 14th century CE, points out that when Madhyānti went to Kashmir to preach Buddhism, he found the Nāgas presiding in the valley. They at first gave a tough opposition to Madhyāntika, but at the end, the Buddhist monk succeeded in subduing the troublesome Nāgas. That Nāga-worship prevailed in early Kashmir receives confirmation not only from the accounts of Sri Lanka, China and Tibet but also from native literature.
The *Nilamata Purâṇa*, which is the oldest record of the legend and to which Kalhana refers in his *Rājatarangini*, probably a work of the 7th or 8th century CE, records at great length how Kashmir was created out of water and left to the care of the Nāgas of whom Nīla, the son of Kaśyapa, was the chief. According to this work the lake was called Sātisaras, the ‘lake of Sāt’, and occupied the place of Kashmir from the beginning of the Kalpa. In the period of the seventh Manu the demon Jalodbhava (‘water-born’), who resided in the lake, caused great distress to all neighbouring regions by his devastations. The sage Kaśyapa, the father of all Nāgas, while on his pilgrimage in the north of India, heard of the cause of this distress from his son Nīla, the King of the Kashmir Nāgas. The sage determined to punish the evil-doer, proceeded to Brahmā to implore his and other gods’ help for this purpose. His prayer was granted. All the gods by Brahmā’s command started for the Sātisaras and took up their position on the lofty peaks above Kaunsarnag. The demon, who was invincible in his own element, refused to come forth from the lake. Viṣṇu, thereupon, called upon his brother Balabhadra to drain the lake which he did by piercing the mountains with his ploughshare. When the lake had dried up, Jalodbhava was attacked by Viṣṇu. After a fierce combat the former was slain with Viṣṇu’s cakra. Kaśyapa then settled the land of Kashmir which had thus been produced. The gods took up their abode in it as well as the Nāgas, while various goddesses adorned the land in the shape of rivers. At first men dwelt in it for only six months in the year owing to a curse of Kaśyapa, who, angered by the Nāgas, had condemned them to dwell for the other six months with the Pīśācas. The men thus left the Valley for the six months of winter and returned in Caitra (March-April) when Pīśācas withdrew. Ultimately when four Yugas had passed, the Brahman Candradeva through Nīla Nāga’s favour acquired a number of rites which freed the country from the Pīśācas and excessive cold. Henceforth Kashmir became habitable throughout the year.7

Most of the rites prescribed by Nīla are concerned with the nature of worship of popular deities. But there are some festivals which are particularly
connected with the worship of Nāga or serpent. Thus Nīla was worshipped on
the festival of the first snowfall. Nīla and the Nāgas were also propitiated on
the Irāmañjari-prujā festivity (New snow fall day; in Kashmiri Navsheen) which
took place in the month of Caitra. Another ceremony called Varunapañcamī
was held on the fifth day of Bhādra and was connected with the worship of
serpent king Nīla under the name Dhanada.

The Nilamata says “Irā is dear to the Nāgas and to me she is especially
so, whosoever pays worship to me in an Irā garden with Irā flowers, with him I
am pleased excessively.” The Nilamata Puranā also records the names of the
principal Nāgas worshipped in Kashmir, the total number of which was 527.
The four dikpālas of Kashmir, mentioned by the author of the Nilamata Puranā
were four Nāgas - Bindusāra in the east, Śrīmadaka in the south, Elapatra in the
west and Uttramāñasa in the north. From a remote period, great importance
must have been attached to the worship of the Nāgas as is shown by the long
account of them given in the Nilamata Puranā. A large number of temples,
built near some of the famous springs and undoubtedly early origin of the
Pilgrimages directed to them, clearly pointed out the popularity of the Nāga-
cult in ancient Kashmir. The Nāgas were supposed, according to the Nilamata
Puranā, to reside in the lakes and springs of the valley. Even now names of
places like Verinag, Anantanag, Śeṣanag, etc. show traces of ancient Nāga
beliefs. Not only Śaivism, but Vaiṣṇavaism, Buddhism, and even Jainism had
the serpent in a subordinate capacity in their own religious system.

That the Nāgas were eminently popular deities in the happy valley is
also testified to by Kalhana’s Chronicle. According to the Rājataranini, Kashmir was a land protected by Nīla, the lord of all Nāgas. Kalhana recounts
Gaurī (Pārvatī) taking the shape of the river Vitastā (Jhelum) that takes its
origin from Verinag. The place is said to have been the abode of lord of the
Nāgas, namely Nīla to whom the pond made his parasol and the river as the
stick of the umbrella. He further says that the land is protected by the Nāgas
Śāṅkha and Padma, resplendent with various jewels. It is worth noting that
traditionally Nāgas or snakes are associated with *mani* or jewels. But both Śaṅkha and Padma, here taken as names of the Nāgas, are two great *nidhis* amongst the nine fortunes (*navanidhis*) known in Indian mythology. Even when Buddhism had undermined the Nāga beliefs, one of its early kings Gonanda III is said to have reintroduced the pilgrimages, sacrifices and other worship in honour of the Nāgas, as they had been before. There is also a story of Suśravas Nāga, and his alliance with a Brāhmaṇa that is depicted with much details. According to the story, a Brāhmaṇa named Viśākha during the course of his travel reached a fountain spring called Suśravas Nāga. While resting there he saw two beautiful damsels in distress, whom he offered food. The maidens turned out to be Nāgakanyās daughters of Suśravas Nāga. On insistence they narrated the tale of their despair because of a *tāntrika* that prevented them from eating rich food from the crops. The Brāhmaṇa Viśākha, then devised way for the so-called ascetic to unknowingly lifting his own spell by breaking its conditions. Now, Suśravas happy with the Brāhmaṇa married one of his daughters to him and made him rich and happy. In this story Kalhaṇa clearly indicates his reverence for the Nāgas, which may be a reflection of the religious beliefs of the time, popular among people. It is reflected by the fact that Kalhaṇa refers to great festivities over there at the time of the festival dedicated to Takṣaka Nāga, which fell on the 12th day of the dark fortnight of Jyeṣṭha. Further, the chronicler refers to the destruction of the king Nara and his capital Narapura for having evil eye on the Nāgakanyā. Incidentally Kalhaṇa also mentions the famous lake Śeṣanāga, located on way to Amarnath cave and its importance. King Durlabhavardhana and his scions are ascribed to a family which, according to Kalhaṇa, was Nāga in its origin. Nāga Mahāpadma, the tutelary deity of the Vular Lake, is said to have showed king Jayapīḍa, a mountain which yielded copper. Another Nāga called Piṇḍāraka deluded the Darad chieftain Acalamaṅgala, who attacked the happy valley during the reign of Ananta. Among the festivals connected with the Nāga-cult, Kalhaṇa speaks of the annual festival in honour of the great serpent king Takṣaka ‘frequented by dances and strolling players and thronged by
crowds of spectators’ which was celebrated on the 12th day of the dark half of Jyeṣṭha. Kṣemendra also refers to a Takṣakavatra festival in his Samayamātrykā.

A large number of temples, buildings near some of the famous springs and undoubtedly early origin of the pilgrimage centres clearly point out the popularity of the Nāga-cult in ancient Kashmir and that the Nāga-cult prevailed in the valley throughout the Hindu rule and even afterwards, seems to be corroborated by the account of Abul Fazal. He tells us that during the reign of Akbar (CE 1556-1605) there were in Kashmir forty five places dedicated to the worship of Śiva, sixty four to Viṣṇu, three to Brahmā and twenty two to Durgā, but there were seven hundreded places in the valley where there were carved images of snakes which the inhabitants worshipped.

ŚAIVISM

The history of the Introduction of Śaivism in Kashmir is shrouded in mystery. Archaeologists have discovered traces of Śaiva worship in the proto-historic Harappan culture. It is not known, whether Śiva of Kashmir was an immigrant from the neighbouring Indus valley or was of local origin. The conception of Rudra Śiva of the Vedic Āryans perhaps might have had some influence on the development and early growth of Śaivism in the valley. It is believed that the first teacher of Kashmir Śaivism was Tryambaka Āditya, a disciple of sage Durvāsā. Around 800 CE Saṅgam Āditya, the sixteenth descendent in the line of Tryambaka Āditya, settled in Kashmir and started propagating Śaivism with earnest. Next was Somānanda (8th century CE), the fourth descendent of Saṅgam Āditya, who extracted the principles of monistic Śaiva philosophy from the scriptures and incorporated them in his own work, Śivadṛśṭi, which gives the origin and is the first philosophical treatise in Kashmir Śaivism. The other scholars were; Eraka Nātha, Sumati Nātha and Vasugupta. Around last part of the 8th century, Vasugupta found seven terse sūtras etched on stone near Mahadeva Peak, as revealed to him in a dream.
which he named the Śiva Sūtras. These teachers of Śaivism established four different schools named; Spanda School, Pratyabhijña School, Krama School and Kula School.

The Spanda School is based on Spanda Śāstra, or Spanda Kārīka. The authorship of it is attributed to Vasugupta and his Pupil Kallatā. The two principal works of the system are Śivasūtram or Śivasūtraṇi and the Spandakārīkas, which are fifty one verses only. The first are said to have been revealed to Vasugupta by Śiva himself on a rock on the Māhadeva hill, and Vasugupta was directed to the rock by Śiva. Another account is that they were revealed by the God in a dream, and yet another account still further confers the credit of the revelation on the perfected human being. These two last occurrences are said to have taken place on the Māhadeva Hill. As to the second work, there are also varying traditions, one ascribing the authorship of the verses to Vasugupta and another to Kallatā. A third tradition, however, that Kallatā obtained the knowledge of the system from Vasugupta and composed the Spandakārīkas for the instruction of his pupils seems to contain the truth. What the meaning of the roundabout tradition about the Śivasūtras which do not ascribe their authorship to Vasugupta directly is, it is difficult to say perhaps the original work was the Spandakārīkas and the prose Śivasūtras were composed in later times in the older or more orthodox form, and as Vasugupta was probably too near the time when they were composed and what he did was known to all, a miraculous origin was given to the new sūtras and Vasugupta was represented to have received them from others and not composed them himself.

Kallatā lived in the reign of Avantivarman, 854 CE wherefore his guru’s literary activity must be referred to the beginning of the ninth century. The followers of this school boldly deny the necessity of God’s having a prompting cause, such as karman, or a material cause, like the pradhāna, for the creation of the world. Neither do they admit that He is Himself the material cause, as the Vedāntasūtras do not maintain, nor do they think some principle
of illusion, such as *māyā*, generates appearances which are false. God is according to them independent and creates merely by the force of his will all that comes into existence. He makes the world appear in himself, as if it were distinct from himself, though not so really, as houses or even towns appear in a mirror, and is as unaffected by it as the mirror is by the images reflected in it. Neither does he exist from the doctrine that he is the material cause. In a verse attributed to Vasugupta an obeisance is made to Śūlin, or Śiva, who is represented as portraying a picture of the world without a canvas and a collection of materials.  

Another illustration that they give of creation without any material or prompting cause is that of a Yogin who creates objects by his mere will without any materials. God himself by his own wonder working power appears in the form of many individual souls and by means of another power brings into existence the state of things which goes to form what we call the wakeful and dreamy condition of our life. Thus according to this system the individual soul is identical with the supreme soul. But the former does not perceive this identity on account of his impurity. This impurity or *mala* is of three kinds. When a soul forgets his own free and universal nature through ignorance and believes him to be imperfect and regards things, such as the body, which are not he, to be himself, and thus reduces him to finiteness or subjects him to limitations, the impurity is called *ānava* (littleness). Then his remaining in the body, which is prepared by the originator of things called *māyā*, is another species of impurity known as *māyīya*, or affected by *māyā*. And when under the influence of the internal organ, or the heart, the organs of action are set in motion, the impurity arising from it is called *karma*, or resulting from actions such as that consisting in a man’s consciousness of having done a good or evil deed which is to lead to happiness or misery in the end. These several kinds of impurity are brought into action by *nāda*, which is female element constituting a primeval power (Śakti) of Śiva and from which raises speech. Without speech the ideas which render a worldly life possible and not stand or
assume a shape or form, and therefore the principle of speech is believed to be the origin of the *mala*, or impurity which leads to a worldly life. This power is associated with others which are personalized as Ambā, Jyeṣṭhā, Raudrī and Vāmā. The impurity vanishes when by means of intense contemplation the vision of the highest being breaks in upon the mind of the devotee and absorbs all finite thought. When this condition becomes stable, the individual soul is free and becomes the supreme soul. The breaking in of the vision is called Bhairava, because it is his and is caused by him.

The founder of the Pratyabhijñā school of Kashmir Śaivism was Somānanda, the work written by who is called Śivadrṣṭi. But the principal treatise of the school was composed by his pupil Udayakara, and contains verses which are called *sūtras*. On these *sūtras* there are glosses and detailed explanations by Abhinavagupta, the pupil of the Somānanda. Abhinavagupta wrote between (933 and 1015 CE), wherefore Somānanda must be taken to have lived in the first quarter of the tenth century.

The doctrines of the creation of the world and of the relations between the individual and supreme souls set forth by this school are the same as those maintained by the preceding one. But the way of the perception of the identity is recognition according to this system. There is an Upaniṣad text, from which it follows that everything shines when He shines and everything becomes perceptible by His light, and thus our knowing power is the same as God’s and everything outside of us becomes an object of knowledge by his illumining power. Capable of knowledge and action as we are, we partake of the nature of God; but there is no reason to place a limit to this participation, and it must be understood that we are God himself. But the joy and elevation characteristic of God we are unconscious of in our present condition, and that is due to the fact that we do not recognize that we are God, though we are really so. Just as a maiden, stricken with love for a youth whose excellences have been described to her, is not filled with raptures when she is carried to him and looks upon him as an ordinary individual, but is overjoyed and devotes her
whole soul to him when she is told that he is the man whose excellence had so fascinated her, so is it with the individual soul. The serene bliss of godly nature he does not feel, though he is himself God, because he is not aware that those high attributes which belong to the divine nature exist in him. But when he is led to believe by his preceptor that he possesses them, i.e. when by his instructions he is enabled to recognize God in himself, then it is that the serene bliss dawns upon him. The Spanda School mentions the dawning of the form or vision of Bhairava, or God, on the mind in the course of meditation and there by the clearing away of the impurities as the way to the realization of the identity with God, while this maintains that recognition of oneself as God is the way.

According to Mādhava these two systems do not enjoin restraint of the breath, concentration, and all that course of fantastic external and internal conduct or discipline which the other schools prescribe as essential. These two schools apparently cut themselves off from the old traditional Śaivism, which gradually developed itself into the ghastly Kāpūlavism of Kālamukhism, and hence the epithet Pāśupata or Lākula cannot be applied to them in any sense. A fresh revelation therefore, was claimed for Vasugupta, though some of the doctrines of the more sober Śaiva school were preserved in the Spanda system.

Krama School, expounded by Ekaknāthan is an integral part of Kashmir Śaivism; it is also an independent system both philosophically and historically. It focuses on overcoming barriers of time and space and finally raises himself to the state of universal consciousness. Krama is significant as a synthesis of Tantra and Śākta tradition based on the monistic Śaivism. As a Tantric and Śakti- oriented system, of a mystical flavour, it is similar in some regards to Spand as both centre on the activity of Śakti and similar with Kula in their Tantric approach. By the time of Kalhaṇa this school was quite popular because he has given references related to it e.g. “May that body of the immovable (Śiva) - from which there is no separate existence, which is united with the body of Pārvatī and which knows no obstacles, remove misfortune
from you [who are] in this [world]” 35. Inside the family of Kashmir Śaivism, the Pratyabhijña School is most different from Krama. The most distinctive feature of Krama is its monistic-dualistic (bheda-bhedopāya) discipline in the stages precursory to spiritual realization. Even if Kashmir Śaivism is primarily an idealistic monism, there is still a place for dualistic aspect as precursory stages on the spiritual path. So it is said that in practice Krama employs the dualistic-non dualistic methods, yet in the underlying philosophy it remains un-dualistic. Krama has a positive epistemic bias, aimed at forming a synthesis of enjoyment (bhoga) and illumination (mokṣa).

The Kula is another very important school of Kashmir Śaivism, It is propounded by Sumatinātha, the one who always lives in caitanya (universal consciousness), which is one’s real nature. Kula in Sanskrit means family or totality. This is a tantric (left hand) school par excellence, and here Śakti plays a paramount role. The Kula teachings comprise the skeleton of Tantraloka and Tantrasāra.

This way over the centuries and with the influence of different Śaivite scholars, Śiva became a popular deity, which is widely worshipped in the valley from a remote period. Even the oldest book of Kashmir the Nilmatapurāṇa describes Śaivism in its hilly character, Śīva and Umā. The Nilmatapurāṇa does not mention any sect by the name of Śīva. But it refers to some treatises entitled Śivadharmas which, evidently, must have contained religious duties regarding the cult of Śīva. Of the eight names given to Śīva by Prajāpati, the Nilamata knows only four namely, Rudra Sarva Mahādeva and Bhava. That Śīva was worshiped in early Kashmir is beyond doubt. The Mahābhārata specifically states that Śīva and Umā may be propitiated in Kashmir at the lake Vatikakhaṇḍa.

If Kalhana is to be believed, there was a shrine of Śīva Vijayesa even in pre-Aśokan days36. He says that Aśoka after removing the old stuccoed enclosure of the shrine of Vijayesvara built [in its stead] a new one. Aśoka
himself built two temples of Śiva named Aśokeśvara and was also a devotee of Śiva Bhūteśa. Aśoka’s son Jalauka was also a worshipper of Śiva. He made a vow that he would ever worship Śiva Vijayeśvara and Jyeṣṭheśa residing at Nandiśakṣetrā. He also erected a shrine of Śiva Jyeṣṭharudra at Śrinagari and built a stone temple at Nandikṣetra for Śiva Bhūteśa. Next King Dāmodara II is said to have been crest jewel of Śiva worshippers. The Hūṇa chief Mihirakula, who came into possession of the valley sometime in the 6th century CE, founded at Srinagar a shrine of Śiva Mihireśvara. Mihirakula’s devotion to Śiva is also borne out by his coins where the trisula and the bull of Śiva appear and legend runs as jayatu vrṣa dhvaja. Another King Gokarṇa established a shrine of Śiva Gokarṇesvara, his son Narendrāditya Khinḵhila of Śiva Bhūteśvara and the latter’s preceptor of Śiva Ugreśa.

Tuṇjina I built a temple of Śiva Tuṅgeśvara. A minister named Samdhimati became famous for his devotion to Śiva. When this minister came to be king, he consecrated a large number of Śivalingas and constructed two shrines of Śiva under the names of Sarṇḍhiśvara and Išeśvara. King Śreṣṭhasena, also known as Pravarasena I, constructed the first shrine of Pravareśavara. King Pravarasena II, who was a staunch follower of Śiva, consecrated the Linga of Pravareśavara. Another King Raṇāditya was a votary of Śiva and erected temples in honour of his adored god.

The account of the Śiva worship, as given above, has been gleaned principally from the first three books of the Rājatarangini and as such cannot claim to be wholly trustworthy. The facts furnished by Kalhaṇa, however, indicate in the main, the wide prevalence of the Śiva cult in the valley from an early period. While coming to the more sober portions of Kalhaṇa’s work, we find innumerable references to the foundations of Śiva shrines, erection of temples in honour of Śiva, etc. These references, more reliable than the former ones, help us to portray the actual picture of Śaivism in later days. The very fact that Kalhaṇa starts his work with an invocation of the god Hara i.e. Śiva is evidence enough of the popularity of Śaivism in Kashmir at that time.
The Kārkoṭas came to occupy the throne of Kashmir in the 7th century. Some members of this family were devoted to the cult of Śiva. Narendraprabhā, the mother of Lalitāditya, built a shrine of Śiva Narendreśvara. Lalitāditya erected a lofty temple of stone for Śiva Jyeṣṭharudra and made a grant of land and villages for the maintenance of the temple. He also offered a large amount of money to the shrine of Śiva Bhūteśa. The king’s love for Śaivism was perhaps contagious and his minister founded a shrine of Śiva Mitreśvara. Ācārya Bhapaṭa constructed a shrine of Śiva under the name of Bhappateśvara and many other shrines of Śiva called Rakcatesa etc. were put up by a host of people. During the reign of Lalitāditya’s grandson Jayāpiṭha, his chamberlain Āca who was the ruler of Mathura, built a shrine of Śiva Ācēśvara.

Śaivism received patronage also from the Utpalas, who succeeded the Kārkoṭas. Avantivarman’s minister Śūra built at Śūreśvarikṣetra a temple in honour of Śiva and his consort. His son Ratnavardhana erected a temple of Śiva Bhūteśvara. King Avantivarman founded at Avantipurā a temple of Śiva Avantiśvara. At the shrines of Tripureśvara, Bhūteśa and Vijayeśa, three pedestals were fitted by the king with both conduits made of silver. The King regularly went to worship at the Śaiva shrines of Bhuteśvara and other places.

Avantivarman’s successor to the throne was his son Śaṅkaravarman. He too was a devotee of Śiva. In the town of Śaṅkarapura, founded by him, the king built two temples of Śaṅkaragaurīśa and Sugandheśa. The latter temple was built in the name of Śaṅkaravarman’s queen, Sugandhā who, evidently like her husband, was a worshipper of Śiva. Śaṅkaravarman’s minister Ratnavardhana erected another temple of Śaṅkavardhanesā.

Śiva was worshipped with great devotion not only in the Kārkoṭa and Utpala period but also in the succeeding ages. Parvagupta, who was on the throne about the middle of 10th century CE, founded the shrine of Śiva Parvagupteśvara. Another temple of Śiva Kṣemagaurīśvara was erected by
the succeeding king Kṣemagupta. Among the members of the first Lohara dynasty, Sarṅgrāmarāja obtained religious merit by restoring the famous shrine of Śiva Raṇeśvara. Queen Sūryamatī founded the temple of Śiva Guarīśvara and also consecrated a second temple of Saṅdāśīva near the royal palace. Her devotion towards Śiva was further marked by the consecration of Trīśūla, Bāṇalirīgās, and other sacred emblems. Sūryamatī’s husband, king Ananta, according to the evidence of Kalhana, surpassed even the munis by his devotion to Śiva. Ananta’s son Kalaśa too was a staunch follower of Śiva. The stone temple of Śiva Vijayeśa which was formerly burnt down was built anew by him. At Tripureśvara, Kalaśa founded another temple of Śiva. A third temple of the god was erected by him under the name of Kalaśeśvara. All these temples were adorned with golden parasols and cups and the like.

Śaivism also flourished under the second Lohara dynasty. Rilhaṇa, a minister of Jayasimha, built at Purānādhīṣṭhāna, a shrine of Śiva Rilhaṇeśvara. Another minister of the king, Bhuṭṭa by name, consecrated a Śiva image called Bhūṭeśvara. Prince Saṅgiya, a chief from the īṭa territory, founded a linga after his own name. Maṅkha, the brother of Sāṅdhīvigrāhika Alāṅkāra, constructed a shrine of Śrīkaṅṭha Śiva along with a maṭha. A shrine of Śiva Rudrēśvara was erected by Jayasimha’s queen Raḍḍā. The virtuous king Sirhadeva bowed to Saṅkara, the lord of Gaurī and caused Vijayeśvara to be bathed in milk purchased with one lakh pieces of gold (Niśka).

Some of the Śaiva establishments, referred to by Kalhaṇa, have been actually found out by archaeological explorations. The temple of Śiva Avantīśvara, founded by Avantivarman with massive walls now stands sadly mutilated just outside the village of Jaubror. The temples of Śaṅkaragaurīśa and Sugandhēśa have been identified with two ruined temples of Patan. A temple at Naranāg has been identified by Stein with the Jyeṣṭheśa temple of Lalitāditya and another large temple in the same site with Bhūteśvara. Most of the Śaiva images whether in his phallic or in his human form, have been
destroyed. Among the few early sculptural representations of the god, which have survived up to date, mention may be made of the following; seated figure of Lakulīśa form of Śiva at Pandrethan, several sculptured reliefs of Śiva at the temple of Payer including Śiva seated cross legged on throne under the canopy of an overhanging tree and surmounted by votaries, Śiva Bhairava pursuing a human being, six headed dancing Śiva, three headed Śiva seated cross legged, a large Śiva-mukhalinga at Bārāmūlā. A three headed Śiva image and a three headed Śiva in alto-relievo from Avantipura.

Early Kashmir Śaivism was of the Pāśupata sect. According to a tradition recorded in the Mahābhārata, the Pāśupata doctrine was preached first by Śiva Śrīkaṇṭha. It is interesting to note that Śiva Śrīkaṇṭha was also regarded in the valley as the promulgator of Śivāgama or Āgānta Śaivism which included within itself the system of Pāśupata.

The early Kashmir Śaivism, based on a number of Tantras seems to have preached a dualistic doctrine. From the 8th or 9th century, however, the Śaiva system of Kashmir assumed a new character. Based on pure Advaita tatva, it henceforth began to preach a sort of idealistic monism. The new system took the name of Trika Śāstra. The founder of this new doctrine was a holy sage, named Vasugupta, who probably lived in the early years of the 9th century CE. It deals with the three principles of Śiva-Śakti-Anu or Pati, Pāśa and Paśu.

The principles of the Trika system which found its first expression in the Śiva sūtras were amplified and given clearer expositions in the Spanda Śāstra or Spanda Kārikas which was probably a work of Kallāṭa (9th century CE) and probably based on a work called Sapandamrta written by Vasugupta himself. A philosophical treatise, supporting the doctrines of the Trika by critical arguments and reasoning, vicāra and manana, was written by Siddha Somānanda, probably a disciple of the sage Vasugupta and this came to be known as Pratyabhīṣṭā.
The Advaita Śaivism of Kashmir, first propounded by Vasugupta took its origin about the 9th century CE. To Kallata must be given the credit of spreading the knowledge by writing explanatory notes on them. Kallata’s work was carried on through ages by his disciples and some of the writers of the succeeding period wrote several treatises on it.

When Advaita Śaivism grew up in Kashmir, it had a formidable rival in the sister religion of Buddhism. To combat the rival it needed a philosophy to support it and this was supplied by the Pratyabhīṣṭā Śastra. The work of Somānanda was taken up and expanded into greater details by his successor Utpala, Abhinavagupta, Kṣemarāja, Yogarāja and Jayaratha. The lamp of Śaivism burnt steadily in the valley throughout the period of the Hindu rule and even afterwards, as late as the 18th century AD a work on the Pratyabhīṣṭā Śastra was composed by a writer named Śivopadhyāna.

It seems that the idealistic monism of the Trika system being exclusively philosophical and ethical remained confined to a particular class of learned religious minded peoples only the mass kept them attached to their old forms of Śiva worship and perhaps had little to do with the idealistic school. In Kalhana’s Rājatarangini, we have a large number of references to Śaiva establishments etc. but there is no hint of the Trika system. If Kalhana is to be believed, the old traditional Pāśupata Śaivism prevailed in the valley in the 11th century CE and even afterwards. Helarāja, who was great writer of the 10th century, is called Pāśupata brāhmaṇa by Kalhana. Pravarasena, son of Aṇijanā, was offered food by a saint called Aśvapāda, who guised himself as Pāśupata ascetic. Utpala king Cakravarman founded the Cakramaṭha for the residence of Pāśupata ascetics, which was half built by him and was completed by his wife.
VAISNAVISM

Epigraphic as well as literary evidence shows the popularity of Viṣṇu and his many incarnations in Kashmir. As one of the Hindu Trinity (Trimūrti) he is regarded as an embodiment of satyāguna and the protector of the universe in contradiction to Brahmā, the creator and the Śiva, the destroyer. But very often he was regarded as God himself and in this aspect described as sarvadevamāyā and Viṣvarūpa. Viṣṇu is usually recognised as an aspect of the sun in the Rgveda and associated in the later Vedic texts. The earliest reference to Viṣṇu as a god may be traced to the Aṣṭādhayī of Pāṇini which offers the rule for the formation of the word ‘Vāsudevaka’ in the sense of “a person whose object of Bhakti is Vāsudeva.” Of his incarnations twenty four are mentioned in the Bhagvada Gītā. The cult of Viṣṇu seems to have existed in Kashmir from a very early period. Lack of material, however, prevents us from tracing its origin and early character.

The oldest book of Kashmir, the Nīlamatapurāṇa supplies ample information about the prevalence of the Vaiṣṇava cult in ancient Kashmir. Vaiṣṇavism occupies an important place in the Nīlamata which speaks of Viṣṇu more than any other deity. Like other Vaiṣṇava Purāṇas, it describes Viṣṇu as the highest god, praised and honoured even by Brahmā and Śiva. The ultimate cause of the universe, he pervaded the whole universe and is always busy in rescuing the devotees from distress, showing them the right path, giving them boons and destroying the Dānavas. He pleases Indra and his title Janārdana as a fighter comes in part from Indra. His solar nature is clear from his title Trivikrama and from his mention among the twelve suns. As regards the appearance and the weapons of Viṣṇu, the Nīlmata describes him as four-armed, four faced, lotus eyed, having a complexion like that of a blue lotus or white snow, wearing white or yellow cloths, a crown of jewels and also ear rings. His weapons are conch, discus, club, lotus, sword and bow-the last one made of horn.

The earliest historical reference to the worship of Viṣṇu occurs in the pages of the Rājatarangini where it is said that an image of Viṣṇu Jayasvāmin
was consecrated by king Pravarasena II. Pravarasena II might have lived about the end of the 6th century CE. Another image of Viṣṇu Raṇaśvāmin was consecrated by king Raṇāditya at or near his capital Pravarapura. Raṇāditya, who is credited with a reign of three hundred years, is undoubtedly a legendary figure in Kalhana’s Chronicle. But the historicity of the temple of Viṣṇu Raṇaśvāmin is amply proved by Jayanta Bhaṭṭa’s mention of it in the Āgamaṃdambara and Kalhana’s reference to it in his fifth book where he speaks of a visit paid to Raṇaśvāmin by Cakravarman’s queen. Māṅkha (12th century CE) in his Śrīkanṭhacarita refers his father’s worship of Raṇaśvāmin. Jonarāja also mentions Raṇaśvāmin Viṣṇu in his commentary and describes it as Śrīpravarapurapradhānadevata. With the accession of the Kārkotaś to the throne of Kashmir in the 7th century CE, Viṣṇu, the adored deity of the family came to occupy a prominent position in the Kashmir pantheon. A son of king Durlabhavardhana, called Malhaṇa, built the shrine of Viṣṇu Malhaṇasvāmin, while the king himself consecrated at Srinagar the shrine of Viṣṇu Durlabhvasvāmin. Durlabhavardhana’s grandson Candrapīḍa, who lived in the early part of the 8th century CE, consecrated the shrine of Viṣṇu Tribhuvanasvāmin. His preceptor, Miṅharaṭṭa, built a temple of Viṣṇu Gaṅbhiraśvāmin and his city-prefect Calitaka founded a temple of Viṣṇu Calitaśvāmin.

The illustrious Lalitāditya came to the throne of Kashmir not long after the death of Candrapīḍa Vajrāditya. He too was a great devotee of lord Viṣṇu. Resolved upon the conquest of the world, he built a shrine of Keśava Viṣṇu in the early part of his reign. At Huṣkapura, he built a splendid shrine of Viṣṇu Muktāśvāmin and of the town of Lokapuṇya with some villages he made an offering to Viṣṇu. In the town of Parihāsapura, which the monarch constructed in honour of his adored deity, he built the glorious silver statue of Viṣṇu Parihāsakeśava. At Huṣkapura, another famous image of Viṣṇu Muktaśeṣava was made out of gold. A fourth one that of boar incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu was founded by him under the name of Viṣṇu Mahāvarāha.
Lalitāditya consecrated two other silver images of his beloved god, one under the title of Govardhanadhara\textsuperscript{113} and the other under the name of Rāmasvāmin\textsuperscript{114}. The latter image was placed in a stone temple which stood by the temple of Viṣṇu Parihāsakesava. Garuḍa, the vāhana of Viṣṇu was also a great favourite of Lalitāditya\textsuperscript{115}. His zeal for Vaiṣṇavism must have shed its light upon those who were near him and who were driven to the same spiritual inclinations. His queen Kamalāvatī put up a large silver image of Kamalākeśava\textsuperscript{116} and the king of Lāṭa, named Kayya who was probably a feudatory of Lalitāditya, founded a shrine of Viṣṇu Kayyasvāmin\textsuperscript{117}.

Some of the later Kārkotā kings also adhered to the faith of Viṣṇu. Jayāpiḍa, the grandson of Lalitāditya built the town of Jayapura, where as Kalhaṇa poetically describes, Keśava showing his quadruple form as well as reclining on the serpent Śeṣa, has truly taken up his abode, abandoning his residence in Viṣṇu’s world\textsuperscript{118}. Jāyāpiḍa’s mother Amṛṭaprabhā built a temple of Amṛṭakesava for the deliverance of her dead son\textsuperscript{119}. During the reign of Ajitāpiḍa, the ministers Utpala, Padma, Dharma, Kalyāṇa and Mamma built temples of Viṣṇu under the names of Utpalasvāmin, Padmasvāmin, Dharmasvāmin, Kalyāṇasvāmin and Mammaśvāmin, respectively\textsuperscript{120}. Viṣṇu was also worshipped by the members of the Utpala dynasty who succeeded the Kārkotās. Avantivarman (CE 855/56-883); the first king of the dynasty built the shrines of Viṣṇu Avantisvāmin, even before he became a king\textsuperscript{121}. His brother, Śūravarman founded a temple of Śūravarmasvāmin and a gakūla\textsuperscript{122}. Another brother of the king, Samara founded for Keśava in his quadruple form a temple called Samarasvāmin\textsuperscript{123}. Mahodaya, the chief door keeper of Śūra consecrated shrine of Viṣṇu Mahodayasvāmin\textsuperscript{124}, while the king’s minister Prabhākaraavarman built a temple of Viṣṇu Prabhākarasvāmin\textsuperscript{125}. Lastly, Suyya, the irrigation minister of Avantivarman built at the new confluence of Sindhu and Vitastā a temple of Hṛṣīkeśa Yogaśāyin\textsuperscript{126}.

The popularity of the cult of Viṣṇu in early Kashmir, as indicated by the Nilmata, is corroborated by the Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa. It mentions
Kashmir as a seat of Viṣṇu in the form of Cakrin. The Rājataranginī informs about various temples of Viṣṇu erected by various kings, their relatives and ministers. The happy valley during the 8th and 9th centuries is further attested to by a number of images discovered from several ancient sites. These include few busts and heads of Viṣṇu which have been recovered from Vijabror, three-faced Viṣṇu figures carved on the walls of the Martanda temple, relief sculptures of Caturbhujā Viṣṇu and Viṣṇu seated between consorts hailing from the Ruins of Andarkoth and four-headed Viṣṇu images from Avantipura and the surroundings.\[127\]

The development of Vaiṣṇavism in Kashmir, from the 10th century onwards, is evidenced from Kalhana’s Rājataranginī. Queen Sugandha (CE 904-906) built a temple of Viṣṇu Gopāla Keśava and her daughter-in-law Nandā founded a temple of Nandikeśava\[128\]. A temple of Viṣṇu Meruvardhanasvāmi was built by Meruvardhana a minister of Pārtha (CE 906-921)\[129\]. Yaśaskara (CE 939-948) started the construction of a temple of Viṣṇu Yaśāskarasvāmin, which when he died, was left incomplete. The construction, however, was completed by Parvagupta (CE 949-950). Bhaṭṭa Phalguna, a councillor of Kṣemagupta (CE 950-958), founded the shrine of Viṣṇu Phalgunasvāmin\[130\]. About the same time, Bhīma, the illustrious monarch of the Śāhi dynasty, who was the maternal grandfather of Kṣemagupta’s queen Diddā, built a high temple of Bhīmakaśēvā\[131\]. About the end of the third quarter of the 10th century CE queen Diddā, founded a series of Viṣṇu shrines. The temple of Abhimanyusvāmin, she built to increase her deceased son Abhimanyu’s merit\[132\], while the shrine of Viṣṇu Simhasvāmin was erected by her, under the name of her father Sīrharājā\[133\]. The queen further built two temples under the name of Viṣṇu Diddāsvāmin\[134\].

The iconoclast Harṣa (CE 1089-1101) destroyed a large number of Hindu and Buddhist images. The Viṣṇu images desecrated by the dissolute king included the famous Pariḥāsakesvāma. But king Uccala, who stepped into his shoes in the early years of the 12th century CE, put up a new image of
Parihasakesava\textsuperscript{135}. He also adorned the shrine of Viṣṇu Tribhuvanasvāmin with \textit{sukāvalī}, which Harṣa had carried off\textsuperscript{136}. Lastly, he restored the decayed temple of the ancient shrine of Viṣṇu Cakradhara\textsuperscript{137}. All these are indications enough of the king’s love and admiration for Vaiṣṇavism. Vaiṣṇavism was popular even after Uccala’s death. Ratnāvalī, the queen of Jayasimha established Vaikunṭhamaṭha and other pious buildings\textsuperscript{138}. The \textit{gokulas}, erected by her, far excelled the \textit{gokulas} erected previously\textsuperscript{139}. Alaṃkāra, the superintendent of Jayasimha’s great treasury (bṛhadgaṇja) was also a worshipper of Viṣṇu\textsuperscript{140}.

Among the later Hindu kings who professed Vaiṣṇavism, Jonarāja mentions Rāmadeva, who renewed the Viṣṇu temple at Utpalapura\textsuperscript{141} and Udayanadeva who gave all golden ornaments in his treasury to Viṣṇu\textsuperscript{142}. In the Vaiṣṇavism of Kashmir, we find a synthesis of the different Vaiṣṇava cults, which were current in ancient India. In it seems to have mingled, the faith of the Vedic Viṣṇu, the system of the Pañcarātra School, the religion of the Sātvats and the faith in the cowherd god Gopāla Kṛṣṇa. Rāma was worshipped as an incarnation of Viṣṇu\textsuperscript{143}, but there is no definite evidence of the existence of Rāma-cult in early Kashmir.

Among the various incarnations of Viṣṇu, Varāha (boar), Kṛṣṇa and Nṛsinha (man-lion) were most popular. Lalitāditya built a temple of Mahāvarāha\textsuperscript{144} and iconographic representations of boar, man and lion-faced Viṣṇu (Viṣṇu–Vaikuntha) come from the temple of Mārtanda (8th century CE) as well as from the ruins of Avantipura (9th century CE). Rāma, as an incarnation of Viṣṇu seems to have been worshipped in the 8th century CE. The \textit{Nilamata Purāṇa} refers to the celebration of Buddha’s birthday festival\textsuperscript{145} and this was a step towards the Buddha becoming an \textit{avatāra} of Viṣṇu. The \textit{avatāravāda} of Kashmir was, however, thoroughly systematised by the 11th century CE and in Kṣemendra’s \textit{Daśāvatārācarita}, we find a list of the ten incarnations of Viṣṇu under the names of Matsya, Kurma, Varāha, Nṛsinha, Vāmana, Paraśurāma, Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Buddha and Kalki\textsuperscript{146}.

182
The origin of Buddhism in Kashmir is shrouded in obscurity. Buddhist sources, however, are unanimous in attributing the introduction of Buddhism in Kashmir to Majjhāntika, a monk of Varanasi and a disciple of Ānanda. According to the Ceylonese chronicle, the *Mahāvaṃśa*, Moggaliputta Tissa was the spiritual guide of King Aśoka. After the conclusion of the third Buddhist Council, missionaries were sent to different countries to propagate Buddhism. The Buddhist savant Majjhāntika was deputed to Kashmir and Gandhāra. The story of the Introduction of Buddhism in Kashmir by Majjhāntika is also told in several other Buddhist texts like the *Aṣokāvadāṇa*, the *Avadānakaṇḍa*, the travel account left by Hsiuen Tsang and the Tibetan *Dul-vā (Vinaya)*. The story is infested with legendary colouring and relates how Majjhāntika received hostile treatment at the hands of the local Nāga people and their chief and how he was finally able to win over to Buddhist faith the entire Nāga population along with the king through his supernatural power.

According to the Buddhist text the *Divyāvadāṇa*, however, several monks from Tamasavana in Kashmir were invited by Aśoka to attend the third Buddhist Council which was held at Pātaliputra. Again, Kalhana describes the establishment of several vihāras in Kashmir during the reign of King Surendra, the predecessor of Aśoka. This leads us to presume that the Buddhist faith was already introduced in Kashmir before the time of Majjhāntika and Aśoka. However, it also seems possible that Buddhism, though introduced earlier, gained a firm footing in Kashmir only under the spiritual leadership of Majjhāntika during the third century BCE.

Aśoka (circa. 273-236 BCE), whose sway extended to Kashmir as well, is described by Kalhana as a king of Kashmir and the follower of Jina i.e. Buddha and is credited by him with the establishment of several stūpas and vihāras in the valley. Thus he is credited with the Building of a caitya of
amazing height in the town of Vitastātra. Hsiuen Tsang also noticed four stūpas in the valley containing a portion of relics of the Buddha which, according to him were set up by Aśoka. The well-known Tibetan historian Tārānātha speaks of King Aśoka as having bestowed lavish gifts on several Buddhist sagas in Kashmir.

The history of Buddhism in Kashmir after Aśoka is somewhat obscure. Buddhism seems to have fallen on evil days during the reign of Jalauka, the son of Aśoka. Jalauka was a supporter of the indigenous Nāga and Śaiva cults and not well disposed towards the Buddhist faith. A change in his attitude towards Buddhist faith is, however, said to have been effected in him later by the intercession of the divine sorceress named Kṛtya at whose request he built a vihāra called Kṛtyāśrama. This vihāra has been identified as ‘Ki-teche’ by O’kong the Chinese traveller who visited it during the eighth century CE and further, the site has been identified with the place known as Kitsahom which is situated five miles below Baramula district of Kashmir.

The next landmark in the history of Buddhism in Kashmir is formed by the famous Buddhist treatise Milindapañho which records the discussion on important Buddhist topics between the Indo-Greek King Menander or Milinda and the arhat named Nāgasena. The scene of the discussion is said to have remained a spot only twelve yojanas from Kashmir. The author of this famous treatise refers to his intimate knowledge about Kashmir and surrounding regions and appears to be fairly familiar with the people of this region. King Milinda, according to this work, first became a lay devotee, then built the Milinda-vihāra and after some time handed over the reins of his government to his son to join the Buddhist samgha. The epigraphic and numismatic evidences attest to the professing of Buddhist faith by the Indo-Greek rulers, who, after the fall of Mauryan empire, established their sway over whole of the north-western India. It is not unlikely that Kashmir also came under the influence of Indo-Greek rulers and Buddhism flourished in the valley.
Buddhism received a great Philip during the rule of the Kuṣāṇa Rulers. Kanishka’s reign (circa. 78-102 CE) is full of glory in the history of Buddhism. He recovered the lost glory of the religion and fulfilled the work of King Asoka of sending distinguished scholars abroad to propagate the faith. Kashmir and Gandhāra particularly enjoyed the prosperity in the history of Buddhism during Kanishka’s reign. The session of the fourth Buddhist Council, the creation of the famous commentaries in Sanskrit language, well known as vibhāṣā śāstra and the appearance of distinguished scholars are some of the important factors for which Kashmir stood prominent during his reign.

With Kashmir becoming an important centre of Abhidhamma studies i.e. the Sarvāstivādin Abhidhamma a large number of distinguished scholars were produced from here that specialised in Abhidhamma studies and wrote commentaries on the same. Many scholars went outside India to propagate the faith. Some, who went to the neighbouring countries of Central Asia, China, and Tibet, translated Sanskrit texts into the languages of those regions. Again, after becoming an important centre of Abhidhamma studies, distinguished scholars from other Countries also were attracted to Kashmir to gain the knowledge.

According to Kalhana, Huška, Juska and Kaniska were the pious Turuṣka rulers who founded three towns (puras) viz. Huškapura (Uskur), Juskapura (Zukur) and Kaniṣkapura (Kanespur) respectively and erected caityas and mathas at Šuškaleta and other places. Juska is also reported having built a vihāra in Juskapura. According to Tārānātha, Kaniṣka became a devout Buddhist and listened to the discourses delivered to him by Sinha—a ruler of Kashmir, who, after ordination was called Sudarśana.

After Kaniṣka, another king who is known to have extended Patronage to Buddhism in Kashmir was Meghavāhana (circa. 6th century CE).
Meghavāhana originally hailed from Gandhāra – a predominantly Buddhist land. He prohibited the slaughter of living creatures in his country. His queen Amṛṭaprabhā of Prāgjyotisā (modern Assam) built, for the use of foreign monks, a lofty vihāra called Amṛṭabhavana to which reference has been made by the Chinese traveller O’Kong also and which is represented by the extant ruins at Vounta Bhavan a suburb of Srinagar situated three miles towards north. Her father’s spiritual preceptor, who was a native of Ladakh, constructed a stūpa called Lo-stonpa. Other queens are also referred to having built many vihāras. Queen Yukadevī having built a vihāra of wonderful appearance at Nadavana is reported having accommodated in it both the monks as also lay devotees. Queen Indradevī is said to have founded the Indradevī-bhavana-vihāra with a quadrangle and a stūpa. In the same way, queens Khadana and Samma also established vihāras in their own names. In this context it seems that the place named Khādaniyār which is situated four miles below Baramula may have remained connected with Queen Khadana.

Kalhana further refers to some evidences which prove the establishment of Buddhism during the sixth and the seventh centuries CE. Jayendra, the maternal uncle of King Pravarasena II, patronised Buddhism and built Jayendra-vihāra and erected a statue of the Buddha in it. This vihāra was subsequently destroyed by King Kṣemagupta (950-958 CE). The ministers of Yudhiṣṭhīra II also patronised the faith and constructed vihāras, caityas and completed other pious works. Amṛṭaprabhā, wife of King Raṇāditya installed the statue of the Buddha in a vihāra built by Meghavāhana’s wife Bhinna. Galuna, the minister of King Vikramādiṭyā built one vihāra in the name of his wife Ratnāvati. The queen of the Kārkota king Durlabhavardhana (600-636 CE) set up Anangabhavana-vihāra and Prakāśadevi, wife of King Candraśīṇḍa (686-695 CE) founded Prākaśavihāra.

A fairly trust worthy account of the state of Buddhism in Kashmir from the 7th century onwards is furnished by some literary documents, The travel
accounts of the Chinese travellers Hsien Tsang and O’Kong, the Rajatarangini, some archaeological discoveries and epigraphic records.

The Nīlamata Purāṇa of the 6th-7th century CE is a local Sanskrit text dealing with the sacred places, rituals and ceremonials of Kashmir. The Buddha is referred to as an incarnation of Viṣṇu in this work. It prescribes the celebration of the Buddha’s birthday as follows:

“In the bright fortnight the images of the Buddha should be bathed in water rendered holy with all herbs, jewels and scents, in accordance with the instructions of the Śākyas i.e. Buddhists. The dwelling places of the Śākyas should be whitewashed and the walls of the caityās the abodes of the god, should be decorated with paintings. Gifts of clothes, food and books should be made to the Buddhists and a festival swarming with dancers and actors should be celebrated. Worship of the Buddha with eatable offerings, flowers, clothes etc., and the charities to the poor should continue for three days.”

The discovery of Buddhist manuscripts from a stūpa at Gilgit is an important landmark in the history of Buddhism in Kashmir. On the basis of palaeography these manuscripts which are written in the so called post Gupta alphabets may be assigned to the 7th century CE. Gilgit at that time was ruled by the (Paṭola) Śāhī princes as is indicated by some epigraphic records and the manuscripts themselves contain a mention of some Śāhī rulers. These Śāhī rulers owed allegiance to the rulers of Kashmir. It appears that the flourishing state of Buddhism in the 7th century was not confined to the valley alone but the predominance of Buddhism could also be noticed in the distant north of Kashmir.

Hsien Tsang visited Kashmir in 631 CE. He saw about a hundred sanghārāmas and five thousand Buddhist priests in the valley. He also saw four stūpas built by Asoka each of which contained relics of the Buddha. Among the Buddhist vihāras visited by him he specially mentions the Juṣṭa-vihāra where he stayed for the night after his first entry into the valley at
Baramula. He also speaks about Jayendra-vihāra\textsuperscript{179} founded by the maternal uncle of Pravarsena II. Here, he stayed for a couple of years and received instructions in various śāstras. Hsiuen Tsang was warmly received by the king and was invited to his palace where he was provided all facilities including assistance of twenty scribes for copying important Buddhist texts. Hsiuen-Tsang’s account proves beyond doubt that Kashmir even during his visit was a centre of Buddhist learning and there were several distinguished Buddhist scholars in the valley that not only commanded mastery over the vibhāṣā and the upadeśa śāstras but also continued composing texts on important subjects with unabated and unfledged zeal and enthusiasm. Admiring the contents of these literary Texts, Hsiuen Tsang remarks that in these texts there was evidence of great Study and research. In them could be found an extra-ordinary insight into the Buddhist lores of various kinds and also into the Brahmanical learning, Indian alphabets and Vedas and their *āngas*\textsuperscript{180}.

O’Kong, also known as Dharmadhātu, reached Kashmir via Kabul and Gandhāra in 759 CE. He stayed in Kashmir for four years and studied Sanskrit and Vinaya texts from the celebrated Buddhist teachers. In Muṇḍi-vihāra, he studied the Vinaya texts of the Mūlasarvāstivādins. He noticed more than three hundred vihāras in the valley and a large number of stūpas and images. Besides, the Mount-ti-vihāra, O’Kong mentions the following Buddhist monasteries in the valley: Ngo-mi-to-p’a-wan (Amitabhavana), Ngo-Namli (Ananga or Ānandabhavana), Kiteche (Krtyāśrama-vihāra), Nao-ye-le, Je-Jo, Ye-li-t’e-le, and K’o-qeen\textsuperscript{181}.

The rulers of the Kārkotā dynasty of Kashmir, who ruled during the 8th century CE though staunch followers of Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava faiths, were also favourably disposed towards the Buddhist faith. They founded Buddhist institutions and endowed them with lavish gifts. The celebrated Kārkotā ruler, Lalitāditya Muktāpīda (600-736 CE) founded one Rāja-vihāra with a large quadrangle and a large caitya at Parihāspura\textsuperscript{182} (the modern Pāraspur). He also built another vihāra with a stūpa at Huṣkapura near Baramula\textsuperscript{183}. A huge
copper image of the Buddha built by him is said was as high as almost touching the sky\textsuperscript{184}. His minister Kayya built Kayya-vihāra. Bhikṣu Sarvajñāmitra who had attained the purity of the Buddha lived in this vihāra\textsuperscript{185}. Another minister of Lalitāditya named Cañkuṇa, who was a Tokharian, built two viharas\textsuperscript{186} one of which had a golden image of the Buddha\textsuperscript{186}. Cañkuṇa’s son-in-law also built a vihāra\textsuperscript{187}. Next celebrated ruler of the Kārkota dynasty, Jayāpiḍa Vinayāditya (751-782 CE) embellished his newly founded town Jayapura with three images of the Buddha and a large vihāra\textsuperscript{188}. The flourishing condition of Buddhism during the period of Kārkotās is also evinced by archaeological excavations carried out at Parihāṣpura and other places which have brought to light several stūpas, viharas, caityas and brought to surface two images of Bodhisattva and one of the Buddha\textsuperscript{189}.

In the following centuries Buddhism in Kashmir was overshadowed by the wide upsurge of the Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva faiths. However, in spite of the overwhelming predominance of Brahmanism and the loss of the royal patronage, Buddhism continued to flourish even as late as the 13th century CE. This is supported by the Rājatarangini and the epigraphic evidences.

King Avantivarman (855/6-833 CE) revered Viṣṇu, Śiva and the Buddha also. He prohibited the killing of living creatures\textsuperscript{190}. During his time the great scholars like Śivāsvāmin, poets Ānadavardhana, Muktākara and Ratnākara lived\textsuperscript{191}. Although a Śaiva by faith, Śivasvāmin composed a work with Buddhist theme entitled Kapphinābhyudaya\textsuperscript{192}. The poet Ānadavardhana is also reported to have written a sub commentary (vṛtti) on the Pramāṇavinīścayaṭīkā of Dharmottara, a text belonging to Buddhist logic\textsuperscript{193}.

The Avadānakalpalatā\textsuperscript{194} was composed by the very well-known poet of Kashmir named Kṣemendra during 11th Century CE. It was completed by his son Somendra who added one more chapter to his father’s work to make the total number of Avadānas 108, an auspicious number. He also wrote an introduction to it. The Avadānakalpalatā is a huge collection of Avadānas
which are called Jātakas in early Buddhist tradition. Kṣemendra has drawn up the traditional Avadānas but in a poetical form.

Kṣemendra has many works to his credit some of which are known by name only. He composed his works during the reign of King Ananta (1028-1063 CE) and his son Kalaśa (1063-1089 CE) as is evident from his works available to us. Kṣemendra had a variety of interests and has written on different subjects. Having been influenced by Buddhism also he seems to have studied the Buddhist religion deeply that made it possible for him to compose the Avadānas successfully. Further, being impressed by the faith he also included the Buddha among the ten incarnations of Viṣṇu in his Daśāvatāraracarita. In the beginning this work had a mixed reception in Tibet on the grounds that it was written by a layman and not by a monk. Because of their imperfect acquaintance with sūtras and āgamas, some lāmas of Tibet even charged that the work contained matters which differed from the real Jātakas of the Buddha. But in due course of time the Tibetan scholars realised the merits of this work and started appreciating it. A large number of Tibetan translators as well as scholars devoted their attention to the study of this work which contained the largest number of Avadānas than any other work of this class. Each Avadāṇa contains a distinct story of an incident in the life of the Buddha illustrating a particular moral. The Buddhist propensity of self-sacrifice is brought to a climax here. In the last chapter the author has illustrated very well the six perfections (pāramitās), viz., charity, moral character, patience, diligence, contemplation and wisdom, of the Bodhisattva. Describing the merits of the Avadānakalpalatā, Somendra says:

“Those well-known vihāras, gorgeous with the array of pictures, pleasing to the eye, have passed away in the course of time. But the vihāra of moral merits, excellent and delightful, erected by my father, in whom the Avadāṇas, with weighty meanings underlying them, are carved out, as it were, and painted in variegated colours by the pencil of the goddess of learning, will not perish even at the end of time not even by the ravages of fire or of water”.

190
That Buddhism was still popular in the valley and had following in the tenth century is also indicated by an inscription of the reign of Queen Diddā (980/1-1003 CE) preserved in SPS Museum, Srinagar. The inscription is incised on three sides of a pedestal of a bronze statuette of the Boddhisattva Padmapāni. The epigraph records consecration of a religious gift (deya-dharma) consisting of the statuette itself by Rājānaka Bhūmaṭa, a Buddhist devotee. The inscription is dated as the year 65 in the reign of Queen Diddā on the 18th lunar day of the bright half of the month of Śrāvana. The year 65 referred to the Laukika era corresponds to 989 CE, which falls appropriately within the reign of Queen Diddā. Another inscription, of probably the same or somewhat later period and incised on the back of a Buddha image, contains the famous Buddhist creed Ye Dharma hetu prabhava, etc. There is another inscription, discovered from Aragon, fifteen miles south-west of Srinagar belonging to 1197 CE, which records the construction of a brick shrine by certain Rāmadeva. This vihāra originally in wood was built by some vaidya (physician) named Ulhanadeva, to house an image of Avalokiteśvara and was burnt down during the reign of Jayasimha. Similarly, in the reign of Rājadeva (1213-1235 A.D.) a particular cult object, called Maṇḍalaka, was consecrated by the Buddhist teacher Kamalaśri in honour of Boddhisattva Lokesvara (Avalokiteśvara). To the same or the somewhat earlier period probably belong the two inscriptions discovered by Cunningham at Dras in Ladakh which mention the Bodhisattva Maitreya and Lokesvara.

On the basis of the Rājatarāṅgini it seems that Buddhism somehow continued to receive patronage under the second Lohāra dynasty (1101 – 1339 CE). King Uccala’s queen, Jayamatī built a vihāra and the king himself laid the foundation of a vihāra in honour of his sister Sullā. Then we find Jayasirīha, another king of this dynasty, whose rule commenced in 1128 CE. His favourable attitude towards Buddhism led him to completing the construction of Sullāvihāra which was started by Jayasirīha’s uncle Uccala. The relatives and officers of Jayasirīha also gave expression to their Buddhist leanings and
founded a number of Buddhist institutions to which large endowments were granted by Jayasimha. His queen, Ratnadēvi’s vihāra attained importance among the religious monuments203. Rilhana, his minister, who was a pious man, built a vihāra at Bhalerakaprapā in honour of his deceased wife Sussalā204. Jayasimha adorned Bhuttapura with vihāras and maṭhas205 and completed the Bijja-vihāra206. His commander-in-chief’s wife Cintā built a vihāra on the bank of the river Vitastā with five other buildings207. Despite the prosperous career of the Buddhist faith in Kashmir there are only few monuments left in the valley. Whatever is extant are only the plinths and lower portions of the superstructure. And, their architectural peculiarities exhibit a distinct resemblance to the architecture of Buddhist Gandhāra. The figures of the Buddha and other related personages from Ushkur (thirty one miles to the west-northwest of Srinagar), Harwan (seven miles to the northeast of Srinagar), and Akhnur (nineteen miles north-west of Jammu town) seem to have been executed in the same art-tradition as the latest reliefs on the walls of late edifices of Taxila and other analogue sites.

In the history of Buddhism, Kashmir has a pride of place. Ever since its introduction, Buddhism continued to flourish and enjoy popularity in the valley. The benign patronage of the pious rulers with Buddhist leanings gave it a philip and a large number of monasteries with rich endowments were constructed throughout. These vihāras, in course of time, became great centres of Buddhist study and research and a large number of authentic Buddhist texts and expository commentaries were composed by distinguished Buddhist scholars. These flourishing centres not only attracted the attention of Buddhist scholars in the country but several Buddhist celebrities of other countries also flocked to the valley to gain firsthand knowledge of the Buddhist scriptures. The Buddhist scholars of Kashmir who studied and taught not only in the valley but also disseminated and expounded the Buddhist faith and Buddhist teachings in neighbouring countries of Central Asia, China and Tibet.
MINOR GODS AND GODDESS

Besides Viṣṇu and Śiva, there were many other minor Hindu gods and goddesses amongst the early Kashmirian pantheon. The most important of them include Sūrya, Kārttikeya, Gaṇeśa, Agni, Lākṣmī, Durgā, Gaṅgā, Yamunā and Kāmadeva, of whose worship we have literary evidence; some of their images too have survived.

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

The worship of Sūrya was probably brought into the valley from Iran at an early period. The Sakas and the Kuśāṇas who ruled over Kashmir in the early centuries of the Christian era, seem to have been responsible for its introduction. Paucity of evidence, however, prevents us from making any definite assertion on the point or from tracing the early character of the cult. Raṇāditya, a king of ancient Kashmir, is said in the *Rajataranginī* to have built at the village of Siriharotsikā a temple of Mārtanḍa, which became famous everywhere under the name of Raṇapurāsvāmin. But Raṇādityā is a legendary character in the ancient history of Kashmir and the village Siriharotsika or the Mārtanḍa temple, said to have been founded by him, cannot be located. In the 8th century CE Lalitāditya erected the shrine of Āditya at the town of Lalitapura. He built another massive stone temple of
Sūrya under the name of Mārtanḍa. This temple is located at Matan. Kalhaṇa, has given contradictory references regarding the founder of the Mārtanḍa. For example, at one place, he has mentioned that King Raṇāḍitya founded Mārtanḍa and in another book he has mentioned the name of famous warrior King Lalitāḍitya Muktāḍa. The construction of world famous Martand is usually ascribed to Lalitāḍitya Muktāḍa. The king appeared to be a worshiper of Sun as all pervading phenomenon. He also offered to the deity the territory of Kāṇyaḳubja (Kanauj) together with the villages. The fact was that Kanauj King Yaśovarman had suffered defeat at his hands and this had made his task easier to march on up to the Bay of Bengal. Turning back, he passed through Mysore and Konkan territory. He met with least or no resistance. So his power and valour naturally would have made him (Lalitāḍitya Muktāḍa) swell with pride. Therefore, he paid homage to the fierce luminary by founding Mārtanḍa (Sun Temple). It is now in ruins. Only some parts have survived but its picture has been preserved in most of the books written on Kashmir. However, one can judge the magnificence and grandeur of it by just casting a glance on the site, and surrounding view. It was constructed on the highest part of a plateau. It has been recorded that it had eighty four columns, as this number is sacred to the Hindus. Its interior must have been extremely beautiful with the Sun entering a decorated chamber with a door way of each side covered by a pediment, with a trefoil headed niche having a bust of Hindu Trinity. It over looked the finest view in Kashmir. Little wonder the foreign visitors described it as the wonder of Kashmir, the ruins of which have survived.

The Sun worship continued to be in vogue in Kashmir long after the death of Lalitāḍitya. King Śūravarman II (CE 939) paid homage to the temple of the Sun-god Jayasvāmin. The copper image of Sūrya, called Tāmravāmin, was one of the most celebrated shrines of the valley in the 11th century CE. Kalhaṇa’s remarks that Kashmirian king Kalaśa (CE 1063-1089) sought refuge with Mārtanḍ to save his life and presented a gold statue at
the god’s feet, prove the popularity of Sun worship at that time. Kalasa’s son Harsa (CE 1089-1101), who destroyed a large number of divine images, spared the image of Mártaṇḍa, either out of respect or out of fear. The ruins of the temple of Mártaṇḍa clearly show with what grandeur and pomp, love and devotion, the god was worshipped. No image of the Sun-god has yet been recovered from any part of the valley. There is however, in the right panel of the eastern wall of the ante-chamber of the temple of Mártaṇḍa, a representation of Aruṇa, the charioteer of Sūrya, holding the reins of his seven horses.

Kārttikeya worship in early Kashmir is borne out by the discovery of a fine six armed image of the generalissimo. Though the image cannot be ascribed to any definite chronological setting, its bold execution indicates a period round about the 9th century CE. Another standing figure of Kumāra, along with an Ardhanārīśvara image, has been found among the ruins of Avantipura and may be dated to the period of Avantivarman’s rule (CE 855/56-883). The Nilamata-purāṇa, which was probably composed in the 8th century CE refers that the worship of Kārttikeya was performed on the 6th of lunar Caitra every year and this was supposed to ensure the welfare and safety of the children of Kashmir. In the Rājarātārangini, there is mention of the foundation of one Skandabhavanavihāra by a Kashmirian minister Skandagupta. Though at a comparatively modern period the place was associated with the worship of Kārttikeya. Stein is probably correct in his assumption that in early times it was a Buddhist vihāra, and had no relation with Kumāra. But even then Skanda, the very name the founder of the vihāra.

Ganēśa, the brother of Skanda according to the Hindu mythology, was one of the popular gods of the valley of Kashmir. His name is self-explanatory, for he is the leader of the ganas, the troublesome followers of the wild god. Rudra is father of the Maruts and is the Gaṇapati par excellence, but the title is used for Brhaspati and Indra also in the Rgveda. The later concept of Ganēśa or
Ganapati as the god of wisdom has probably come from this association with Brhaspati in the *Rgveda*. Vinayaka, a synonym of Gaṇeṣa, occurs in the *Aṭharvasiras* Upaniṣad where Rudra is identified with him. Gaṇeṣa latter on becomes the giver of siddhi (success), because he was supposed to keep back the disturbing factors and thus indirectly removes evils and promote success in undertaking. His real popularity came slightly later. According to Kalhaṇa an image of Vinayaka Bhīmavāmin existed as early as the days of Pravaraṇa II (c. 6th century CE) and received regular worship. A stone image of Gaṇeṣa, along with an Ardhanārīśvara image, mention of which has already been made, was found amidst the ruins of Avantipura and may be dated to the second half of the 9th century A.D. Several terracotta plaques, containing the figure of the elephant headed god, evidently works of local craftsmanship have also been recovered from the site of Avantipura. That Avantipura was a centre of Gaṇeṣa-worship receives further corroboration from Kṣemendra who says that bowls of sweets offered to Lord Gaṇeṣa were resold in the town of Avantipura. We learn from the *Nilamatapurāṇa* that the 8th of the dark fortnight of Āṣāḍha of every year was dedicated to the worship of Gaṇeṣa and went by the name of Vināyaka- Aṣṭami. The worship of Vināyaka had also to be performed on the eve of the anointing ceremony of the king.

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

Worship of the female principle (Śakti) was one of the most popular cults at any time during the period under review. The Mother aspect of the
divinity might have been venerated in the pre-Vedic times. In the Vedic age, though gods played a more important part in contemporary mythology, respect was shown also to the female principle as the divine Mother, the goddess of abundance and personified energy (Śakti). It is, however, a fact that clear reference to the exclusive worshippers of the Devī is not to be found until a comparatively late period. The author of the Periplus (c. 1st century CE) probably refers to a class of such worshippers of the goddess in her virgin aspect as Kanyākumarī in his brief account of Comari the southernmost port-town of India. The Gangadharā Stone Inscription of the time of Kumāragupta I (c. 415-454 CE) records the Tantric form of worship of the Divine Mother and there is clear reference to this in the Brahatsaṁhitā (c. 6th century CE). Some Gūrjara-Pratihāra kings of the early medieval period were initiated Śāktas, for they are described in the inscriptions as Paramabhaṅgavatībhaktaḥ. But there is no doubt that most of the extant works connected with the Tantric form Śakti worship were composed in later times. The Devī-Mahāmya section of the Mārkandeya Purāṇa, however, appears to have been reedited in the Gupta period; it contains some essential tenets of Devī worship. The most talked of Goddess in Kashmir was Uṃā, a form of Devī. The very land of Kashmir was mother Goddess Kashmir, a form of Uṃā, mother antagonistic attitude towards other cults. The other Goddesses revered were; Śītā, Śacī, Lakṣmī, Bhadrakāli and Durgā. In Kashmir the tendency of describing one deity as the highest among others, at one time or the other, and transferring the same epithet to the other at another time, was clearly perceptible in the praises of Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Śiva, Nīla and goddesses Uṃā, Lakṣmī, Bhadrakāli and Durgā. Lakṣmī, the goddess of wealth, was quite a popular deity. King Pravarasena II (6th century CE) is credited with the establishment of five shrines of the goddess Śrī. An image of Lakṣmī has come from the historic town of Vijabror. From stylistic consideration, the sculpture may be assigned to about the 6th century CE. Another beautiful stone figure of the goddess seated on a throne, supported by a pair of lions, with elephants on each side pouring water over her head, has been discovered from the Avantisvāmī temple, and is
apparently of the 9th century CE. Kalhana records that during the reign of Unmattavanti (CE 937-939), a brahma of well-known valour, named Rakka, raised an image of the goddess Sri under the appellation of Rakkajayadevi²³⁵.

Worship of Śakti, the energetic principle, seems to have been widely prevalent. In the worship of goddess Durgā²³⁶ or goddess Kālī, who is but an embodiment of Śakti, animal sacrifices played an important part²³⁷. Goddess Śāradā was one of the most celebrated deities of the valley in early times and she was nothing but Śakti embodying three separate manifestations²³⁸. References to ‘Mātrcaakra’ are frequently met with in the Rājatarangini²³⁹ and sculptured images of sapta-matrākās, such as Brahmāṇī, Māheśvarī, Kaumārī, Indrāṇī, Vaiṣṇavī, Varāhī and Cāmunḍā have been recovered from Pandrethan²⁴⁰. A life-size separate sculpture of Varāhī, representing a young woman with the face of Varāhī, discovered among the ruins of Kashmir, is now preserved in the Lalmandi Museum, Srinagar²⁴¹. Though the saptamatrākās were originally Śaivaite in origin, there is no doubt that afterwards they became the actual cult emblems of the devout Śaktas. Goddess Sarasvatī was also known to Kalhana²⁴².

The river-goddesses- destroyer of sins and bestowers of heaven and immortality, hold prominent position in the religion of the Kashmir. Representations of the river goddess Gaṅgā, sometimes accompanied by the goddess Yamunā, are found among the old sculptures of the valley²⁴³. The Nīlamatapuruṣa described five river-goddesses, namely, Vitastā²⁴⁴, Viśokā²⁴⁵, Trikoṭi²⁴⁶, Haṃsapathā²⁴⁷ and Candravati²⁴⁸ are identified respectively with Umā, Lakṣmī, Aditi, Śaṭī and Dītī. All these Goddesses like Gaṅgā²⁴⁹, Yamunā²⁵⁰. Two sculptured relief found in the Avantisvāmi temple have been generally interpreted as representations of the god Viṣṇu accompanied by Lakṣmī and another goddess (Bhūdevī?)²⁵¹. But according to Vogel, the amorous attitude of the central personage and his attributes, a bow and an arrow ending in a flower, indicate that here we have an iconographic representation of Kāmadeva seated between his wives Rāti and Pritī²⁵². There is
literary evidence to Kāmādeva’s popularity in ancient Kashmir. According to the *Nilamatapurāṇa* the 13th of lunar Caitra was devoted to the worship of Kāmādeva.\(^{253}\)

Brahmanism was quite prominent by this time. The *Nilamata Purāṇa* prescribes gifts to brahmanas on almost every religious ceremony and considers such gifts to acquire religious merit for the donor.\(^{254}\) Kalhaṇa often mentions that *agrahāras* were donated by the ruler to the brahmanas.\(^{255}\) The priests of the temples had often other sources of income. They enjoyed the revenue of the villages which belonged to the temples. Occasionally they were also given cows, gold, horses, jewels and other presents as well.

Ancient Kashmir was really rich in holy places and the objects of pilgrimages were planted throughout the valley. According to the *Rājatarangini*, Kashmir was a country where there was not a space as large as a grain of sesamum without a Tirtha.\(^{256}\) The springs (Nāga in Kashmiri), which had their tutelary deities in the form of Nāgas, the streams and the rivers, in particular sacred legends attached to each of them, innumerable places connected with the worship of various gods and goddesses - all these and many more have been frequently mentioned by Kalhaṇa. They have some topographical importance as they enable us to trace with more or less certainty the early history of most of the popular places of pilgrims visited up to present day. The marvellous accuracy of Kalhaṇa’s topographical knowledge about some of the *tīrthas* tends to show that he visited them personally. A number of references made by Kalhaṇa regarding the holy pilgrimages of that time like "The lake of dazzling whiteness [resembling] a sea of milk (Śeṣnāga), which he created [for himself as residence] on a far off mountain, is to the present day seen by the people on the pilgrimage to Amareśvara."\(^ {257}\) At another place in the *Rājatarangini*, Kalhaṇa says that King Sandhīmat Aryanāja (34 BCE-17CE) used to spend "the most delightful Kashmir summer" in worshiping a *liṅga* formed of snow "in the regions above the forests". This too appears to be a reference to the ice Liṅga at Amarnath. There is yet another reference to
Amareśvara or Amarnath in the *Rājataṅgini*\(^{258}\). According to Kalhana, Queen Sūryamaṭi, the wife of King Ananta (1028-1063), "granted under her husband’s name *agrahāras* at Amareśvara, and arranged for the consecration of *trisūlas, bāṇalingas* and other [sacred emblems]". There was Āryarāja (34 BCE-17CE) used to spend "the most delightful Kashmir summer” in worshiping a *liṅgam* formed of snow-ice “in the regions above the forests”. This too appears to be a reference to the ice *liṅgam* at Amarnath. In his chronicle of Kashmir, a sequel to Kalhana’s *Rājataṅgini*, Jonarāja relates that that Sultan Zainu’l-abidin (1420-1470) paid a visit to the sacred *tīrtha* of Amarnath while constructing a canal on the left bank of the river Lidder. The canal is now known as Shah Kol. In the Fourth Chronicle named Rājavalipataka, which was begun by Prjāyabhaṭṭa and completed by Šuka, there is a clear and detailed reference to the pilgrimage to the sacred site\(^{259}\).

Besides this, the valley being sacred and called Rṣivārī till now abounds in sacred places, *tīrthas* and *asthanas*. Long ago at the dawn of civilisation when the sons of Rṣi Kaśyapa from plains came to settle here they brought with them their traditions, religion, mythology etc. These early settlers named the confluence of river Sindh and river Jhelum as Prayāga, equal to holy Prayāga at the confluence of the Ganga and the Yamuna. They named the tallest mountain peaks here after their gods and deities such as Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Mahādeva. These settlers must have felt surprised to see the hide and seek of water in the spring of Triserdhya; melting of snow around the spring of Bedabā Devī and other marvellous places with the passage of time, these places became *tīrthas* or places of worship and have continued so up to the present time. The tradition being like this M. Aurel Stein, who has edited and translated *Rājataṅgini* into English writes, "Kashmir is a country where there is not a place as large as a grain of seasam without a *tīrtha*. Time and conversion to Islam of greater portion of population has changed but little in this respect. “ Paṇḍita Kalhaṇa while writing introduction to the *Rājataṅgini* names the miraculous springs
of Trisandhya Sarasvati lake on the Bheda hillock, self created fire at Svyambhu etc. etc.”

Thus it can be rightly said that like its scenic beauty, Kashmir valley is even famous for its cultural and religious heritage. The valley of Kashmir is very rich as far as different aspects of its religion are concerned. Right through ages, it has adopted and assimilated components of various civilizations and religions. The amalgamation of Hindu, Muslim and Buddhist philosophies has added colour and fragrance to the Kashmir culture resulting into a composite culture based on humanism, secularism and tolerance. Besides, it has borrowed certain features from its adjacent regions like Central Asia.
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156. Menander ruled during the later middle of 2nd century BCE. *The Age of imperial Unity*, pp.112-14.
157. *Yojana* – “this from the time of holy kings of old has been regarded as a day’s march for an army. The old account says, it is equal to 40 Li, according to the
common reckoning in India it is 30 LI, but in the sacred books (of Buddha) the Yojana is only 16 li.” Li—“one third of a mile, with local variations according to the difficulty of the route.”

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