Chapter – V

THE NEOLITHIC SOCIETY

Neolithic Family

Having adopted farming as a permanent mode of production, the Neolithic man in Kashmir had no choice than to settle down at a place where he constructed a residential house for himself as well as for his co-mates. The archaeological sites of Burzahom and Gafkral in particular and other sites in general certify that the Neolithic man settled at one place,

James Mallart opines that agriculture did not produce settlements, it only helped to stabilize patterns that were already in making, Neolithic of the Near-East, London, 1975, p. 277. In Kashmir no such pattern is available of the pre-Neolithic times and such incidences first became known only with the beginning of the Neolithic period. Such a situation was available elsewhere also and, therefore, it is said that the distinguishing mark of the first phase of new farming economy was the establishment of settled village, J. Hawkes, History of Mankind, Vol. I, London, 1963, p. 219. This is substantiated by the Allchins who, while speaking in the Indian context, state that the domestication and successful exploitation of plants produced permanent settlements, The Rise of Civilization in India and Pakistan, New Delhi, 1983, p. 97
generation after generation, for about two thousand years; and built many types of houses for his dwelling purpose. From their shape and size,\(^2\) it appears that each house was accommodative on an average of 6-7 individuals. From the very beginning to the end of their culture, the people built their houses having a provision for kitchen. In contradiction to band organisations who use common hearth, this expression of house pattern offers suggestion of the process of constitution of the institution of family.\(^3\) Though the shape and size of various types of houses found during the excavations at Burzahom and Gofkral is not fully described, yet it becomes known that the earliest houses, the pit-chambers, were either square in shape or rectangular in size. Their size as found in one case was 7x6.4 mts, IAR, 1966-67, which according to S. S. Saar was the average size of the pit-chamber, at Burzahom, with slight difference in measurement of its sides noticeable, Archaeology, Ancestors of Kashmir, New Delhi, 1992, p. 18. However, one big such house measured 11 Mts. square, located near the central part of the mound, called 'Community Chamber', Ibid, p. 18.

When we speak of a family, we ordinarily think that the people have some dependable and workable ways of pairing off, conceiving and raising children, meeting economic needs, caring for the aged and carrying out certain other functions. We actually think of husband and wife, their children and some relatives living together in a household. Sociologists, however, use the term family in several ways and define it as (I) a group with common ancestors; (ii) a kinship group united by blood or marriage; (iii) a married couple with or without children; (iv) an unmarried couple with children; (v) one person with children, Paul B.Horton and Chester L. Hunt, Sociology, Singapur, 1984, p. 232. Accordingly, a definition of a family can be a kinship grouping which provides for the rearing of children and for certain other human needs. Historically it was with the economic development that the institution of family was formed. To institutions which seek material welfare, society adds institutions for the perpetuation of race, Will Durant, The Story of Civilization: Our Oriental Heritage, New York, 1963, pp. 30-31. Adding further he says that 'it is highly improbable that the first human beings lived in isolated families, even in the hunting stage; the inferiority of man in
Not only that but many of their houses were even partitioned and had a separate storage giving evidence of the division of settlement into house-units - a process important for the development of family. Besides, the presence of occupational deposits inside their houses and standardization of their artifacts, like querns, grinders, pottery, stone and bone tools etc. all reaffirm the viewpoint that the concept of family was not unknown to the Neolithic people in Kashmir.

All the family members, notwithstanding their distinct age group, comprised largely men, women and children as is authenticated by the retrieval of human skeleton remains from the site of Burzahom. The skeletal indices or the studies conducted on a variety of such Neolithic human skeletons proves that all of them belonged to one racial group having genetic affinity and ethnic continuity; presupposing thereby that genetic and ethnentic factors must have been the major factors responsible for the evolution of a family as a social institution in the Neolithic Kashmir.

Physiological organs of defence would have left such families a prey to marauding beats ..... he saved himself by solidarity in the hunting pact and the clan. When economic relations replaced kinship as the principle of social organisation, the clan lost its position as the sub structure of society and was supplanted by the family, which assumed the task of reorganising industry and carrying on the race, Ibid, p. 30.

They are said to have been found dipped towards the centre of the houses, IAR, 1966-67; presumably all the material culture found during the excavations in the form of stone and bone tools, pottery etc. was found from the houses and their surrounding areas.

IAR, 1962-63; A Basu and A Paul, Human Remains from Burzahom, Calcutta, 1980, p. 6; of the ten burials found five were men, three women, one child and one juvenile.

The burial places, together with the surroundings in which they were traced, under their house-floors, further oblige one to believe that each of their house was in itself a dwelling for a family unit occupied and owned by the respective family members though there were sometimes large type of houses (but without any kitchen facility) which may have been commonly shared and held for observance of some kind of rituals and rites. All this, therefore, suffices to establish that the Neolithic man in Kashmir did not live in isolation for he must have found that living in family group offered him better means of survival.

In fact the genetic affinity in company with the human necessity to offer a joint front against the hazards of nature, besides promoting social cooperation must have persuaded the Neolithic people to contemplate in terms of family grouping. A cluster of such families formed, what is presently termed as, a hamlet or a village. From the measurements of the Gofkral site, it appears that a Neolithic village in Kashmir measured 400 Mts. x 75 Mts., spread over a Karewa top of vast loess. Such a village at a height of about 35 Mts. from the vast fields below overlooked the water body nearby, like a stream or a lake. It is again evident from the archaeological detection that such Neolithic villages were, broadly speaking, of two types; first those which were distinctly placed away from each other like the site of Burzahom (Map) which imparts a sense of

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7 IAR, 1981-82
8 Ibid. Most of these sites, like Gofkral and Burzahom, are located on Karewa top which, as now, overlook the agricultural fields, rivers, streams or lakes below, B. M. Pande, The Anthropologist, Vol. 17, No. 1 and 2, 1970, pp. 24-41.
apartness to the village people, and second those which were comparatively nearer to each other so as to form a cluster of such villages as is shown by the sites around Gofkral (Map). Such village formations would have given rise to a sense of cooperation and closeness. But the village itself, in any case, might have provided a culture of neighbourhood among the dwellers to develop social behaviour. Taking Gofkral site as a model, a Neolithic village, excluding the associated slopes, measured about 7.5 acres – an area of space for effective habitation. Even if only one third of space was occupied for the houses, storage pits, cattle –pen and the associated open space utilized for other domestic purposes, such a Neolithic village would have been having a large number of houses – the exact number of which has not been mentioned.\(^9\) Nevertheless, on the basis of archaeological findings at Burzahom, it is very likely that each

\(^9\) The only details mentioned are that at Burzahom there were three occupational levels during the period I, IAR, 1973-74 and at Gofkral there were two occupational levels during period IA, IAR, 1981-82; during Period II at Burzahom successive floor levels were found, IAR, 1961-62; without giving their number. Similarly such details are wanting for the number of houses found during the excavations and if anything is reported it is generalized statement, like at Burzahom in a one season of excavation quite a number of rectangular or square pit-chambers were found during period I, IAR, 1964-64; in other season of excavations one such chamber was found to the south of menhirs and few more to the north of the menhirs, IAR, 1967-68; and in the one more season of excavation quite a number of pit chambers were found belonging to Period I, IAR, 1971-72. However, M. Sharif and B. K. Thapar report that forty-five pit-chambers have been exposed at Burzahom besides thirty seven circular pits, belonging to period I, 'Food producing, communities in Pakistan and northern India', *History of Civilizations of Central Asia*, eds. A. H. Dani and V. M. Masson, UNESCO, 1992, p. 143.
village must have been, more or less, occupied by at least twenty houses at any given stage during the early Neolithic period between 3000 – 2500 B.C. This is logical to think as twenty one grinders were found from this period\(^1\) leaving a scope to suppose that each grinder must have belonged to a family. But the number of houses would not have remained static during the succeeding periods of their existence. It would have increased, as the archaeologists have unearthed fifty-six more grinders from the next stage of their culture (period II) at Burzahom,\(^2\) which in other words would mean that there were at least fifty-six houses during this middle stage of the Neolithic period in the village between 2500-1700 B.C..\(^3\) With the increase in number of houses in a village the population accordingly would have varied with each occupational level. Since as we assumed above, each house was relatively occupied by 6-7 individuals, the population can be estimated at 140 persons (20x7) during the early Neolithic level and

\(^{10}\) Supra Chapter II, table III

\(^{11}\) Ibid.

\(^{12}\) The figures of twenty and fifty six houses arrived for period I and II respectively are for the limited excavated area wherefrom the grinders were recovered and, as there were three occupational layers in period I and successive floors levels were found in period II, the number of houses in respective period would accordingly get distributed to various floor levels. The site in fact might actually had more number of houses when we consider that only a limited area of the site was excavated; however these figures of house numbers, as we arrived above, seem to be very conservative in view of the fact that forty-five pit-chambers belonging to period I were located at Burzahom, supra note 9, giving reason to believe that in period II there would have been many more houses, whose number is not known, we have, therefore, taken the example of grinders for arriving to a hypothetical reasoning for defining the situation.
about 400 persons (56x7) at the middle Neolithic level. Comprising men, women and children the three fold increase in number of occupants of the houses is supported by the increase in total number of bone and stone tools that were found at Burzahom during the middle stages of the Neolithic period which too had increased at more or less the same rate.

In the beginning, the greater proportion of the village population must have been engaged in agriculture though they were simultaneously in know of such crafts as were directly or indirectly related to agricultural operations. Thus the Neolithic man had a multifaceted personality. Besides being a hunter, fisherman and farmer, he was also potter, tool maker, weaver, carpenter, at one and the same time. Given his manifold responsibilities, he must have been getting much support from his family members, particularly his wife for in every social makeup husband and wife have been essentially contributing together in sex regulations, biological

As in the case of number of houses, supra note 12, the population figures arrived at are for the area of excavation and, considering that one third area of the site was under habitation, the population figures arrived at would still have been more at any given time, particularly when a house was occupied by successive generations. However, these figures of a period would get distributed into smaller numbers given the number of occupational levels at every stage of the Neolithic culture. The pattern of increase in the population in the Neolithic Kashmir vindicates the arguments put forth earlier by Gorden Childe who maintained that the Neolithic frame-work brought a substantial expansion of population, V. G. Childe, Social Evolution, London, 1951, p. 22.

The ratio of tools (stone and bone together) at Burzahom between Period I and II was 1:3, supra chapter II, table II and III, meaning thereby that in comparison to period I, there was a three fold increase in the material equipment of these people during Period II.
reproduction and socialization of their young ones. Both of them performed various economic functions, like arranging food and shelter for the family as a whole - a phenomenon authenticated by the stone slab engraving excavated at Burzahom which depicts scene in which a man and woman are shown undertaking a joint venture of hunting. This

To raise a family, there have to be some dependable and workable ways of pairing off, conceiving and raising children and to meet the economic needs, supra note 3. Today it is being done by husband and wife. This in other words, means a marriage which may be defined as the association of mates for the care of the offspring, Will Durant, *The Story of Civilization*, p. 37; or as the approved social pattern whereby two or more persons establish a family, Paul B. Horton and Charles L. Haunt, *Sociology*, p. 234, whether this primitive society had the institution of marriage, is difficult to establish from the available data of the material culture. 'For marriage, with its restrictions and psychological irritations, could not possibly compete with sexual communism as the mode of satisfying the erotic propensities of people. Nor could the individual establishment (of institution of marriage) offer at the outset any mode of rearing children that would obviously be superior to their rearing by mother, the family and the clan. Some powerful motives must have favoured the evolution of marriage. In all probability these motives were connected with the rising institution of property', Will Durant, *Ibid*, p. 39. Because of this reason alone the institution of family might have got introduced during this period of time as the Neolithic people owned property, either built houses of their own or inherited these as is evident from the construction of houses which may have been made individually, used by the family, owned by the co-occupants and inherited by the offspring. That there was no community living further helps in this endeavour. It is human behaviour that genealogically related groups strengthen at the expenses of the community and family ownership gets introduced where parents, brothers, sisters or cousins, all have claim to the property, J. Hawkes, *History of Mankind*, p. 263. The passage from hunting to agriculture actually brought a change from tribal property to family properly, the most economic unit of production (i.e. land) became the unit of ownership. Will Durant, *Ibid*, p. 18-19.
archaeological piece of information is significant not because it shows as to how men and women coordinated to enlarge the economic provisions of their family, but also because it furnishes us material for supporting the idea that they must have worked shoulder to shoulder in other fields as well. However, given the comparative strong physical stature, the contribution of the men\(^{16}\) in the overall input labour must have been relatively larger.\(^{17}\) Moreso, he must have been entailed hard labour like construction of houses, carpentry, preparation of agricultural fields by hoeing particularly opening up of virgin soil, besides in stone tool-making

\(^{16}\) The men, at Burzahom, were on an average 176 cms in height while as the women on an average were 161 cms in height, A Basu and A Pal, *Human Remains from Burzahom*, pp. 67-72.

\(^{17}\) Will Durant (*Story of Civilization*, p. 33-43) however argues that females were more robust in the primitive societies and equal in stature and endurance to men. He says that the difference in strength, which now divides the sexes, hardly existed in those days, and are now environmental rather than innate in nature. Woman, apart from her biological disabilities, was almost equal to men in stature, endurance, resourcefulness and courage; she was a robust animal, able to perform arduous work for long hours, and, if necessary, to fight to death for her children or her clan..

Most economic advances, in early society, were made by women rather than men. While, for centuries, he clang to his ancient ways of hunting and herding, she developed agriculture near the camp, and those busy arts of the home which were to become the most important industries of the later days..... It was apparently she who developed sewing, weaving, basketry, pottery, woodworking and building, and in many cases it was she who carried primitive trade. .... But when agriculture became more complex and brought larger rewards, the stronger sex took more and more of it into his hands. The growth of cattle-breeding gave the man a new source of wealth, stability and power; even agriculture was at last accepted by the wandering male, and economic leadership which tillage had for the time given to women was wrested from them by men.
which entailed strenuous labour at the time of chipping, shaping and grinding. On the other hand the Neolithic women must have been, as they are now, largely engaged in such smooth family affairs as cooking, collection of edibles, fruits, roots, weaving and stitching garments, though during the non-agricultural days of chilly winters, men might have, as they do now, contributed to weaving of clothes. Likewise, in pottery-making, both men and women must have worked jointly in sowing seeds, upkeeping their crops, threshing, etc.

**Professional Diversification**

The recovery of the kitchen ware, agricultural tools, food processing tools, remains of cereal plants from and around their houses suggest that in the early Neolithic period, Kashmiri family must have remained a self-sufficient economic unit. However, with the passage of time, self sufficiency in what was produced and essentially required must not have remained due to human urge for more biological production, for the sake of supplementing family resources and facilitating agricultural operation. Under these circumstances the substantial increase in the overall population was but natural. The paleontologists who conducted research on the environmental history of the Neolithic age certify that the period around 2000 B.C. in Kashmir was marked by an overall increase in the agricultural activity spread in the forest areas at the cost of forest cover. It was possibly because of the increase in population. Such a dimension must have certainly helped in the growth of agricultural production as well.

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At the same time it must have enlarged the scope of human need and requirement.

Since human skills and natural resources are diversely and unequally distributed, a group of people may be enabled, by the developments of specific talents, or by its proximity to the needed material, to produce certain articles more than the others. Standardization of the articles of these Neolithic people, like bone and stone tools, pottery articles, etc. suggests the development of specific talents and skills. Besides this, human requirements in turn might have led to the occupational diversification followed by the emergence of a class of specialists in certain crafts or professions. Thus along with the farmers, carpenters, weavers, potters, smiths may have contributed as separate social entities to the village structure in the Neolithic Kashmir. However all these social groups must have been, as they are now, tied in a close-knit relationship based on the exchange of their respective products. For, no specialist, however important he might have been, could afford to live and produce all that he required for his family, particularly in a situation necessitated by occupational diversification. Therefore, these social groups were inevitably required to enter into a relationship featuring communal pooling and sharing of village resources on the one hand, and exchange of food grains and craft products, on the other. A Neolithic farmer might have, therefore, provided a certain share of his produce, as now, to the artisanal community for they provided him the necessary articles including the much needed tools required for agricultural activity. Such exchanges might have, therefore, remained personal, direct and specific either inside a village or
within the ring of several villages. In due course of time, the canvas of this exchange-based relationship seems to have widened with the entry of certain extraneous articles. This is evidenced by archaeological detection which indicates that these Neolithic villagers imported some luxury items, like hundreds of carnelian beads, from the cultures outside Kashmir. Such foreign articles might have been acquired with the entry of travellers who would have spent their time in traveling and given certain gifts by the members of other communities as gift exchanges\(^{19}\) or got these articles in lieu of their possessions as in the process of trade\(^{20}\) or either there was a class of people who preferred nomadic or pastoral way of life and acted as carriers between two communities or cultures for their goods.\(^{21}\)

**Village Chief**

The very existence of numerous occupational or social groups demanded for some mechanism that would regulate their inter-relations and weave them into a large economic web. Since the economic pursuits

\(^{19}\) In societies where institutions of trade are not sharply differentiated, gift exchanges shade imperceptibly into trade, M. J. Herskovits, *Cultural Anthropology*, an abridged revision of *Man and His Works*, Indian edition, New Delhi, 1974, p. 152.

\(^{20}\) Trade, properly speaking, consists of direct exchange of values, *Ibid.*, but the societies making or producing such articles more than it consumes and offers its surplus to other people in exchange of its own, as in barter, this is the origin of trade. But trade in surpluses was at first by an inter-change of gifts, gradually an orderly system of barter grew up. Will Durant, *The Story of Civilization*, p. 15.

\(^{21}\) Such people, being for the most part of their time on move, could have helped in the spread of knowledge of potting, weaving, manufacture of other articles etc., particularly such articles as bear affinities of the equipment of other cultures; see Chapter VI for such affinities.
are to be governed in a family and a society, to bring in discipline it might have, therefore, required a simple family order (in a family) wherein the experiences of elders or leaders would have helped in living a peaceful life. With the passage of time and the development of culture, a group or clan of several such families in a village with one ethnic background required to be governed in an order that could attain the desired objectives. Though we have no direct evidence pointing to the presence of a head or chief of a clan or the village, yet an archaeological evidence amply bears on the presence of a group of individuals whose dead bodies were found buried in well prepared graves at Burzahom. These persons must have been none else than the most privileged persons like the head of a village or his kith or kin inhabiting the village who must have belonged to this ruling class. The fact that they were respected by the ruled class of the village is evident from the fact that these villagers incurred huge expenditure of labour on the performance of certain funerary rites, from the preparation of graves, to painting of skeleton remains and the erecting of huge megalithic architecture at the sites. All this was done as a patent of respectability. The emergence of this class of society must have been a slow development as

22 The earliest form of continuous social organisation was a clan - a group of related families occupying a common track of land having the same totems and taboos and governed by the same customs; when a group of clans united, under the same chief, the tribe was formed. Will Durant, *The Story of Civilization*, pp. 21-22.

23 During the excavations at Burzahom only ten human burials were found, that too under the house floors, A Basu and A. Pal, *Human Remains from Burzahom*; pointing to the fact that not all people of the village received this treatment and the burial was not, in all probability, the practice of disposal of the dead of the common masses.
such a ruling class seems to have been absent in the earlier stages as no burial practice is known to have existed during the early Neolithic period. Even during the middle and the late Neolithic stages the burial practice must have been followed in terms of this referral group only, as only a few burials were excavated at Burzahom, which represent the most privileged persons of the times. It would, therefore, mean that this Neolithic society was, broadly speaking, fragmented into privileged and unprivileged classes.

Whatever the case, the chief of the village as a distinguished person must have been charged with the responsibility of conducting the community affairs for the sake of ensuring peace as a pre-requisite for gradual and continued development. As a matter of fact, the Neolithic settlements in Kashmir appear to be comparatively peaceful socio-economic units for we do not come across any war weapon from the graves of their dead. Even their settlements appear to have been devoid of any defence mechanism like the ditches or fencing around. The presence of a few compact walls at one or the other stage of their habitational level is to be taken as part of the defence strategy against the onslaught of the beasts than the humans.

Religion

Death, if not anything else, may have been one aspect to develop ideas about the conception of super-natural realm of existence. It is even said that fear, above all, of death was the first mother of gods.\(^\text{24}\) Early man believed that all living things in the universe contained certain spiritual (soul

or secret life) or hidden gods, which always threatened the human mind with the fear of death; to escape therefrom, the human beings may have tried to appease the spirits by opting a certain mode of worship which came later on termed as religion. Thus if religion is perceived to be animism or the belief that natural phenomena are due to spirits and the dead have spirits, then the Neolithic man of Kashmir was not averse to such a religion. However to him religion does not seem to have evolved with the faith in the existence of the ultimate God but in the worship of many gods. There is ample archaeological evidence which provides a sufficient proof of this fact and that people buried their dead to prevent their return for they were probably feared, and had to be placated lest they should curse and blight the lives of the living. Besides this form of religion, most human gods,

26 "Worship of supernatural forces is religion; religion is also established rites, mandatory ceremonies, sacrifices and taboos; it is a moral and legal code that is an integral part of family and social affairs; it has a direct ideological and psychological effect on the consciousness of each individual who is accustomed to relying on religion for support and consolation in any progress and failure. In broadest term, religion may best be defined as belief in and identification with greater forces or power", M. J. Herskovits, Cultural Anthropology, p. 233. Physical anthropologists generally characterise religion as a complex series of adaptive social mechanisms that developed as humans struggled for survival, Edward O. Willson, Sociobiology, 1975; Cultural anthropologists and ethnologists believe religion as a web of beliefs which hold culture together through myth, symbols and rituals, Mircea Eliada, the Encyclopedia of Religion, 1987; Clifford Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures, 1973; Religion is also believed to be a series of cognitive attempts to explain and adjust to one's external environment by means of animistic practices. E. B. Tyler, Primitive Culture, 1871; or by means of magic, J. G. Frazer, The Golden Bough, New York, 1930.
moreover, seem to have been merely idealized dead men giving rise to a sort of cult of the dead or of the ancestors. The burials of men, women and children, as found at Burzahom, seem to point to a high degree of respect for the dead as the graves, in which they were buried, were carefully dug and decorated with a coat of plaster on the surrounding walls. These dead were so reverend by the living members of a family that the graves were dug not away from their residences but under the floors of their living houses. That apart, the corpses were treated in a manner that sounded optimum regard towards the ancestors. Out of the deep family attachment besides the consideration of propitiating the secret souls and ensuring life-giving energy to the dead, the skeletal remains were painted with red ochre. Significantly, the living members would not hesitate undertaking the tiresome job of re-opening the graves for skeletal painting, after the body flesh had decayed. The appearance of the dead in their dreams was possibly a strong reason to establish that the dead are living

Herbert Spencer taught that religion grew from emotional states, pointing to ancestor worship as both responding to and provoking further emotions of respect and fear, The Principles of Sociology, 1896; even though Max Muller also believed that emotional reasoning stood for the same and stressed that spontaneous emotional reactions of awe, wonder, and fear evoked by natural phenomena was the reason for religious growth in the primitive societies, Origin and Growth of Religion, 1892; while R. R. Marett stressed awe but in the presence of a supernatural power as the primal, pre-animistic stage of religion, The Threshold of Religion, 2nd edition, 1914.

Painting the skeletal remains with red ochre is generally regarded to represent life-giving properties of blood, J. Hawkes, History of Mankind, p. 208.

entities. That such rites were performed under the concept of living corpses they seem to have been buried in a manner which suffices to establish their belief in the continued life of the dead. In order to make sure that the 'corpse should not come back to curse the living members,' various goods and personal ornaments were sometimes buried along with the dead. Victuals were also made for the dead probably under metaphysical intuitions, as cooked food and remains of other funeral feasts have been located in the graves excavated at Burzahom. The impulses of life after death seem to have been strong enough and existed throughout their existence in Kashmir as food offerings were made not only at the time of burial of the dead but thereafter too.

Perhaps under the very considerations of animism that living things contained one or the other kind of spirit and that there is life after death, the Neolithic man in Kashmir seems to have had a scientific knowledge for he followed a practice of trephining the human skull. A careful study of a female skeleton recovered at Burzahom reveals that neat and round disks of bone were chiseled out to make small holes on the head. While elsewhere this kind of 'surgical operation' was conducted upon the heads

31 Primitive man did not disassociate dreaming from the waking world, and it is easy to see how dream experiences could enhance the natural emotions and reverential attitude, J. Hawkes, History of Mankind, p. 208
J. Hawkes, Ibid, p. 208. The ritual of the people to dig graves, plaster them, paint the skeletal remains and provide food offerings at any stage of the death, suggests that these people had an idea of physical continuity of the dead and believed in all likelihood that the dead ancestors were still among their living ancestors.
of living persons, so as to release through these holes, 'mad spirits' or 'harmful things intruded in their spirits', in Kashmir it was contrarily performed on the skull of the deceased person. Thus, unlike ante mortem, the post-mortem type skull operation was conducted in the Neolithic Kashmir to uphold a metaphysical belief that possibly even the dead contained 'evil' spirits which required to be given a way out for the sake of those who lived thereafter. Whatever the fact, trephining of skull, itself an astonishing act, was carried out at Burzahom exactly at the time of skeletal painting of the corpse in the grave itself and insitu position. This was, therefore, a rite based upon ancestor worship itself. A further proof of such funnery rites seeking to magnify the ancestor respect and their inherent propensity to worship the dead can be visualized from the huge megaliths raised above the graves. These monumental stones were

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35 A Basu and A Pal, *Human Remains from Burzahom*, p. 17. Before this scientific work was conducted by the two anthropologists, it was believed by many that it was ante-mortem operation at Burzahom, e.g. B. and F. Allchin, *The Birth of Indian Civilization*, Cambridge, 1968.
37 Basu and Pal believe that the operation was conducted for some magico-religious purpose when the skeleton was exposed for the application of red-ochre, *Ibid*, p. 17 or for some ritual purposes, *Ibid*, p. 19.
38 Below one of the menhirs was found intered an adult male in a grave pit at Burzahom, B. M. Pande, 'The Neolithic in Kashmir: New Discoveries' *The Anthropologist*, Vol. 17, No. 1 & 2, 1970, pp. 25-41; however he further adds that these megaliths did not contain any funnery remains directly below them and were most likely commemorative rather than funnery in character.
planted towards the late Neolithic stages in Kashmir\textsuperscript{39} suggesting thereby that by this time the idea of death and its related funnery rites had been firmly established in human mind. However it is also true that all the people in the Neolithic Kashmir did not practice the burial system as only ten burials were found from the excavated area at Burzahom; it, therefore, leads to suggest that men who had been powerful during life, and, therefore, had been feared, were especially likely to be worshiped after their death.\textsuperscript{40}

Probably fear was the origin of totemism too.\textsuperscript{41} Significantly, the Neolithic man in Kashmir seems to have given much more the same treatment to the animals as they gave to the humans. They buried their domesticated as well as wild varieties of the animals inside the habitational area in well-prepared graves like that for the humans.\textsuperscript{42} This evidence of

\textsuperscript{39} Besides Burzahom and Gofkral Megaliths have been found in Kashmir at Bagagund, Pampur, Hariparigoam, \textit{IAR}, 1962-63; Dadsar, \textit{IAR}, 1966-67; Brah and Waztal \textit{IAR}, 1969-70.


\textsuperscript{41} Will Durant, \textit{The Story of Civilization}, p. 62. Totemism denotes vaguely any worship of a particular object – usually an animal or a plant – as especially sacred to a group, \textit{Ibid}, p. 61; the totem as a religious object helped to unify a clan and a tribe that worshiped it, whose members thought themselves bound up with it or descended from it; it as a symbol or object became a useful sign of relationship and distinction for primitive peoples, \textit{Ibid}, p. 62.

\textsuperscript{42} Like human burials, animal graves belong to period II and III at Burzahom, \textit{IAR}, 1962-63; most of these were of Period III while only two cases were found of Period II, A. K. Sharma, 'Animal burials from Burzahom – A Neolithic settlement in Kashmir', \textit{Journal of Oriental Institute of Baroda}, Vol. XVIII, No. 1 and 2, 1968. Like humans they were buried in regular grave pits, oval in shape, narrow at the top and wider at the base, only in one case
animal burial, therefore, indicates that the religious impulses of human psyche also went out towards the animals and animal life. Animals being as dear as the humans, this practice may lead to assume that this man in Kashmir, believed in animal cult akin to totemism. Such a mystical relationship between men and animals seems to have continued for generations together that is why one or the other kind of animal was found buried in the Burzahom graves at different stages of the Neolithic period. Significantly a stone engraving found at Bruzahom, depicting an abstract

from period II the pit was irregular in shape whileas in one case the pit was plastered with lime from inside. Sharma classifies these animal burials into three type; (a) primary burials having complete skeletons, either single or two animals in the same grave at different levels, mostly of dogs and, in two cases of wolves; where two animals were in a grave, the two animals were dogs only in one case the one at higher level was of a wolf; (b) fractional burials having fragmentary bones, in one case of wild dogs alongwith two antlers of a stag. The dog bones included five intact skulls to which were attached portions of vertebral columns besides fragments of ribs, limbs and pelvic bones bearing fracture marks. In another example of this type bone fragments of stag were deposited at a higher level whereas at a lower level fragmentary bones of antler, dog, sheep and goat were present; (c) the third type had bones which were deposited in the human burials either alongwith the humans or at a higher level, in one case skull of dog and in other cases bones of goat and antler; sometimes these bones were treated with red-ochre, A. K. Sharma, Ibid.

Both the fractional burials and the bones buried in human graves, Sharma believes were that of sacrificial animals, who were sacrificed to honour the dead person; some striped of their flesh or a feast of flesh made and then ceremonially buried, A. K. Sharma, Ibid. However it is also said that in most cases the totem animal was tabu – i.e. forbidden, not to be touched; under certain circumstances it might be eaten, but only as a religious act, amounting to the ritual eating of god. S. Frend, Totem and Taboo, Leipzig, 1913; Will Durant, The Story of Civilization, p. 62.
representation of an animal in a thatched roofed trap, called tectiform. characterizes a magical rite or a magico-religious belief intended to trap evil spirits. It may even point to the mythological ritual underlying human-totem relationship.

Be it as it may be, the engraving of the tectiform together with the other forms of worship testifies that the population in the Neolithic Kashmir was mystically oriented and the characterization and symbolisation of their beliefs required large number of rites to be performed. As these religious rites became more numerous, they might have outgrown the knowledge and competence of an ordinary man, to generate a specialist class, be it the priests or privileged persons or clan lords, who gave most of their


Ibid.

J. G. Frazer, Golden Bough, Vol. I, pp. 220-25. Magic is an antecedent to the worship of gods; techniques of magic stand in contrast to prayer - though not in opposition; magic is used with reference to a specific problem while the gods are propitiated for general wellbeing as such magic is difficult to be distinguished fully from the worship of gods and is actually an integral part of religion, M. J. Herskovits, Cultural Anthropology, pp. 221-25.

Ritual is the implementation of belief, myth the 'charter of belief' and gives point and meaning to the ritualistic behaviour that derives from it sanctions ... and therefore, if mythology gives belief its charter, ritual is the instrument by which conviction is renewed and strengthened, M. J. Herskovits, Cultural Anthropology, pp. 229-30.

Will Durant, The Story of Civilization, p. 22. He holds that it is war that makes the chief, the king and the state, just as it is these that makes war .... In the intervals of peace, it was the priest or head magician who had most authority and influence; and when at last permanent kingship developed as the usual mode of government among the majority of tribes, it combined – and derived from – the offices of warrior, father and priest.
time to the functions and ceremonies of their religion. It was possibly the specialist who took the savory food, ate all the edible parts of the food offerings himself and offered upon the altar (graves) only the remains and bones.\textsuperscript{50} It was evidently he who got erected imposing funnery architectures at the grave sites on a very huge cost of labour.\textsuperscript{51} The dead, because of their efforts, never got annihilated but continued to live among the living entities. This class of specialists, however, did not create religion, they merely used it as an agent through which religion got nourished.\textsuperscript{52}

All the rites of these people reflect a sense of solidarity and attachment, relationship and bondage between the dead and the living people. Be it preparation of graves for the dead, honouring the corpses, the skeletal painting, or the trephining of the skull or the erecting huge monumental stones, all such rituals were performed not only as means to express optimum degree of attachment and respect for the dead but also as a means to certify different forms of worship. A pertinent question remains as to what was the source of the human thought for the belief in life after death.

\textsuperscript{50} W. G. Sumner, \textit{Folk Ways}, Boston, 1906, pp. 336-39, 553-55. As at Burzahom some animal bones were buried in human graves at different levels of the grave fillings, offered to the dead at different times after a person's death, sometimes these were painted with red ochre carrying thereby the meaning that the edible parts of the food were eaten and only the bones were offered to the dead.

\textsuperscript{51} It can be logically assumed that only such 'divine' people could have enjoyed enough social power to inspire the expenditure of unprecedented labour for the transportation and plantation of megaliths at these places.

\textsuperscript{52} Will Durant, \textit{The Story of Civilization}, p. 68.
In this regard, the process of germination of seeds must have greatly influenced the Neolithic people as they themselves used to sow several types of seeds. The development of agriculture must have, therefore, brought home to them even the relation of death to life for seeds which seem to be dead but are born anew.\(^5\) In this entire process of seed production and germination, water, earth, light and heat are indispensable. Of these celestial objects of worship, the sun seems to have been deified by this Neolithic society in Kashmir, as a male deity, while the earth in that case might have been a female deity.\(^4\) The depiction of the sun, in a hunting scene engraved on a stone slab found at Burzahom, may have been done with a view to re-affirm human belief in the sun as a deity having the inherent power to multiply the game (notably, the stag); the cults of the sun and of fertility merge together as was believed elsewhere by the Neolithic people.\(^5\) This radiating sun on the engraving together with the orientation of most of the dead in the graves facing the sun is an evidence that the burial cult itself was related to cosmic conceptions. Moreover, the large megaliths form large circles on the grave-sites reaffirms that such a


\(^4\) Will Durant, *The Story of Civilization*, p. 59-60. Perhaps it was when agriculture replaced hunting that the sun was worshiped and its heat was recognised as the main cause of the bounty of the soil, *Ibid*, p. 59. The earth became then a mother goddess fertilized by hot rays, and men worshiped the sun as the father of all living things, Robert Briffault, *The Mothers*, Vol. 3, New York, 1927, p. 147.

belief might have continued till the very end of their civilization in Kashmir. The development of agriculture may have equally obliged these people to believe, and rightly so, that the processes involved in the seed and human production were by and large analogous; hence might have held the belief that what was the role of the earth in plant germination, a mother's womb had the same role in human production. This is most certainly why they buried some of their dead, significantly women and infants, in foetal postures believing thereby that the dead would seek rebirth as usually happens to a foetus in the female womb which ultimately grows into a child and then adult. However, the role of a male and his genital organ in the whole process of biological reproduction must have been well known to them. That the cult of fertility existed then is indeed understood from the effort which they made while depicting magnified male genitals in the hunting scene engraved on a stone slab. Normally such a representation of the genital and, that too in exaggerated size, was not required to be depicted in a hunting scene. But these people seem to have done the same willfully keeping in view the importance of the organ as the most

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56 A Basu and A Pal, Human Remains from Burzahom, p. 4 see Appendix II supra Chapter II.

57 Will Durant argues that in earliest human groups the physiological role of the male in reproduction appears to have escaped notice quite as completely as among animals, who rut and mate and breed with happy unconsciousness of cause and effect, The Story of Civilization, p. 31; however at our sites the female genitals have not been projected but only the male ones pointing towards the fact that these people had the knowledge that male association was necessary for the reproduction.
indispensable symbol of human as well as animal reproduction. The depiction of a horned bucranian head, painted on a globular pot as found at Burzahom, if not an intelligible totem, may equally be viewed as an emblem of masculine fertility. In view of its inherent capacity to reproduce, the deity might have been the first icon of god for the Neolithic people in Kashmir.

From the above discussion we may, therefore, draw the conclusion that from the fear and worship of formless spirits the Neolithic Kashmiris seem to have passed from adoration of celestial and sexual powers, to reverence of animals and worship of ancestors, and even to iconization of god.

58 The primitive man does not know anything about the ovum or the sperm; he sees only the external structures involved, and deifies them; they, too, have spirits in them and must be worshiped, for are not these mysteriously creative powers the most marvelous of all? In them, even more than in soil, the miracle of fertility and growth appears; therefore, they must be the most direct embodiments of the divine potency, Will Durant, Ibid, p. 61. Accordingly the scene as a whole, with sun symbols, stag and the genitals, together with figures of male and female humans becomes a fertility scene, and may, therefore, as a whole convey the prevalence of fertility concept among the Neolithic people in Kashmir.