

TRADITION AND DISSENT IN ANCIENT KASHMIR (A.D. 6TH TO 12TH CENTURY)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the Ph.D thesis entitled “**TRADITION AND DISSENT IN ANCIENT KASHMIR (A.D. 6TH TO 12TH CENTURY)**” is the original and bonafide research work carried out by **Younus Rashid**, Research Scholar of the Post-Graduate Department of History, University of Kashmir, Srinagar, under my supervision. No part of this thesis has been submitted for any degree before.

It is further certified that the scholar has put in the required attendance in the Department and fulfills all the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy.

I, therefore, recommend this thesis for the award of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D) degree in History.

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Preface

As a ubiquitous element of culture tradition constitutes the link between generations, the bond between present and the past besides being a foundational factor of a community and a means for individuals to become integrated into a 'whole' extending beyond themselves. Tradition occupies furthermore a central position in the structure of knowledge and understanding, and thus one must reckon with it as an integral aspect of the general hermeneutical process. It is therefore, not surprising to see a scholarly recognition during the past century of the fundamental role played by tradition in human history. Having said that it is equally important to mention here that owing to terminological imprecision, lack of uniformity in method and scope and existence of several schools or approaches, there is little agreement among scholars regarding what 'tradition history' actually is? However, scholars broadly agree pertaining to the different characteristics of the tradition viz; reception and transmission from one to another generation, its form and content, direct functionality for the group that transmits it, and its cumulative and agglomerative nature.

Another important concern of scholarly research on tradition has been to establish the historicity of the tradition. Emphasis had not only been laid on questioning the essentialist and unhistorical notions of tradition seeking to demonstrate its historicity but the sacrosanct and monolithic nature of the tradition has also been questioned. Besides the explorations of the dialectics of accommodation and marginalization, and the concurrent tendencies of homogenization and differentiation which characterizes the complex history involved in the fashioning of dominant traditions, the transformative processes at work in the remaking of the tradition has also been the dominant theme of the scholarly inquiry. The Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm even goes to the extent of arguing that traditions supposed to have originated in the remote past are in reality of very recent origin- 'invented traditions'. Defining Invented tradition as "a set of practices normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past.... However, insofar as there is such reference to a historic past, the peculiarity of

'invented' traditions is that the continuity with it is largely fictitious. In short, they are responses to novel situations which take the form of reference to old situations, or which establish their own past by quasi-obligatory repetition" Hobsbawm argues that there is probably no time and place which has not seen the 'invention' of tradition, with traditions being more frequently invented at times of rapid social transformation when 'old' traditions were disappearing. He further argues that all invented traditions use references to the past not only for the cementation of group cohesion but also for the legitimation of action, and that historians in the present should become much more aware of such political uses of their work in the public sphere.

No tradition has ever been static, immobile, a fixed bundle of neither attitudes; nor can any tradition boast to have maintained a monolithic character or without having been called in question. Hemmed in by high mountains at the western end of the Himalayas, little more than eighty miles in length from south east to north west, and no more than twenty-five in breadth at its widest point, Kashmir, in spite of this isolation and limited territory, proved outstandingly creative in the domain of religion during most of the centuries in which the dominant faiths of the inhabitants were Buddhism and Hinduism, the latter embracing in this region not only the tradition of Brahmanical observance but also, and with particular distinction, various traditions of initiatory *Vaisnavism* and *Saivism*. Tradition in Kashmir is marked by change, but change in continuity, internal crisis and tensions leading to competing traditions within tradition and the rise of counter traditions expressing explicit dissent over the fundamentals of whatever may be called normal tradition. The change in traditions, proliferations of cults and the emergence of counter cultures is not difficult to understand if one considers that there was constant inflow of power-backed traditions which confronted with deeply seated local traditions, forcing both to make compromises either for their survival or for establishing hegemony. This and the ever present creative minority with dynamic tendency towards fulfilment, completeness and integrity of their personality led to the emergence of beliefs within a belief and even challenged it to the extent of rejecting it. However, the forces of contestation which rejected tradition could only affirm rather than displace the tradition, evidently because tradition enjoyed the support of rulers and upper castes who were also landed

magnates and big employers. Moreover the tradition provided a psychological therapy to people in an environment of vagaries of weather, recurrent famines, epidemics and diseases where there was no one and no body of empirical knowledge to turn to help or where such knowledge was plainly inadequate.

The earliest certain evidence of pre-Islamic religion in Kashmir is Buddhist rather than Hindu. A tradition related in the *Mūlasarvāstivādinaya* claims that Kashmir had its first encounter with human civilization a hundred years after the Buddha's death through the intervention of Mādhyandina, a disciple or companion of the Buddha's disciple Ānanda. Certainly no Brahmanical, *Saiva*, or *Vaisnava* text from Kashmir can reasonably be assigned to the early centuries of the Christian era. Nor are the claims of Kalhana's history made more plausible by the absence of evidence in early texts of the pan- Indian Brahmanical tradition that Kashmir was already within its territory. Kashmir is mentioned nowhere in Vedic literature; and it appears in no Indian source before Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya* c. 150 BCE, where it occurs in a context that alludes to rice cultivation in the valley at that time. The first references that attest its inclusion in the domain of Brahmanical religion occur in the *Mahābhārata*. A verse there speaks of the holiness of the land and a home of great sages, a remark strengthened in a variant seen in Kashmiri an citations to the effect that Kashmir embodies within itself the sanctity of all the sacred places of the Brahmanical religion, a statement that insists that Kashmir is part of the Brahmanical universe while at the same time stressing its separateness, self-sufficiency, and superiority. A few other passages found in some manuscripts of the *Mahābhārata*, and deriving perhaps from Kashmir itself, add that the sacred waters of the *Vitastā*, the principal river of Kashmir, purify from all sins, and that offerings to the ancestors and gods made on its banks generate merit equal to that of offering a *Vājapeya Soma*- scarifies.

Quite akin to the Indian sub-continent, Kashmir also had been the origin and meeting place of varied and complex traditions- *Naga*, *Brahminical*, *Buddhist*, *Tantricism*, *Trika Sasna* (*Kashmiri Saivism*) etc.-besides many sub-traditions- which interacted and influenced each other thereby setting in the process of accommodation and marginalization. How far the elements of the interacting traditions found accommodation within each other and what led to the domination of a particular

tradition over the other was not only greatly determined by *resilience*- society's capacity to respond to disturbances and threats, also to opportunities, external and internal, natural and social, in a way that enables it to maintain its autonomy i.e. to maintain control over its own fortunes over the long term- but was also considerably influenced by the degree of political patronage enjoyed by them. Thus, it is not surprising to see that while as the Aryan tradition dominated the local *Naga* tradition on account of its proximity with power, however it was mainly because of the activities and corresponding belief systems of wandering forest Brahmans that the *Naga* submission to the immigrating Aryans took place. Nevertheless, it would not be out of place to mention that since the Aryan society was no more homogenous, there were contradictions within, so new alliances and new challenges required fresh legitimizing doctrines. Thus, fortune of the *Naga* vis-a-via Aryans always remained fluid. Similarly, the dialectics of accommodation and marginalization was in full swing during the complex interaction of Buddhism with the pre-dominantly Brahminical tradition comprising of certain dominant *Naga* elements. In order to achieve a semblance of fraternity the Buddhist lore projected Buddha a good *Naga* in some previous birth. Gain of Buddhism was the loss of Brahmanism. Moreover, Buddhists worked silently towards the adjustments of their doctrines with overall changes happening in the society and opened 'Buddhism' to cults and deities originally belonging to Brahmanism and thus managed to transform itself into a popular and respectable religion. Not surprisingly therefore, in addition to political patronage enjoyed by Brahmans the re-exertion of the Brahmanism after the decline of political patronage to Buddhism was to a great extent the result of a paradigm shift in Brahmanism itself which advocated modifications within its thought pattern. The modification effected on the Buddhist statue of Baramula (5th Century A.D) in order to present it as a *Saiva* image in round and declaring Buddha as a 16th incarnation of *Vishnu* fully substantiates the argument. Thus, Buddhism and Brahmanism both were adjusting to each other a process which later culminated in the emergence of *Tantricism (Vajrayana)*.

No doubt heterodoxy had been an important characteristic of the Kashmiri society with the different tradition invokers viz *Nagas*, Brahmans, Buddhists, Tantrics,

Sivates etc competing with each other and sowing the seeds of scepticism however, as the Kashmiri civilization matured, new patterns of dissent emerged with individuals and groups challenging the established order. As the new traditions spread towards Kashmir, elements of existing traditions were either adopted and included within the dominant tradition or defined as forbidden. The adopted/forbidden elements did not however, totally disappear but remained below the surface as vehicles of dissent. The dissent (primarily religious), often attracted dissatisfied and suppressed elements of society who in the process challenged the established traditions/ religious institutions along with their wealth and power to which they were closely allied. In fact religion itself furnished sources of authority available to the dissenters. Kenneth W. Jones rightly remarks that “religion played a dual role within a civilization. In its orthodox forms it supplied much of the legitimization for the status quo but as heterodox sets foreign religions or orthodox ideals were carried to a logical extreme religion furnished sources of authority available to the dissenters.” Moreover, it would not be out of place to mention that in addition to what has already been explained the dialectics between dissent and conformism was very much the manifestation of socio-economic costs of the tradition if and when it was indigenous and the result of power intervention when it was exogenous. Thus, while as the non-conformist movements – Buddhism and Jainism- were the reaction against the economic and social costs of Brahminical domination- the over-emphasis on rituals, casteism and ban on social mobility- the dissent against Buddhism in ancient Kashmir was primarily the result of the political intervention from outside (Mahurkul 6th century A D not only punished Brahmans for supporting and tolerating the Buddhists so long, but also established the *Saivism* with the help of Gandhara Brahmans who created and channelized dissent to make Brahminical teachings popular).

The main features of the religious life in Kashmir were: presence of myriad cults, contest between tradition and dissent, religion in a process of transition and reformulation, introduction of Tantricism in all cults, fluid moral considerations among the priests and gurus, co-operative relations between the rulers and Brahmanas, religion-centred kingship in raja-centred polity, marginalized mass and a popular demand for the supernatural, miraculous and fantastic.

Thus, the regional traditions in ancient Kashmir evolved out of an interaction between the Brahminical/ Buddhist traditions and many local traditions. This process involved a simultaneous emphasis on the authority of religious scriptures and the significance of local customs and accrued legitimacy by sticking a delicate balance between the foreign and local source of authority. The present study is a humble attempt towards understanding the different established traditions of ancient Kashmir together with the voices of dissent which emerged at different points of time.

1. Archaeological Sources

Kashmir seems never to have remained absolutely isolated from its immediate neighbors despite its geographical placement and its subsequent effects. Even if we suppress our desire to go with the finds of Professor H.D. Sankalia and his team as evidence for the presence of man (*Homo habilis*)¹ some twenty lakh years BP. We understand that the surface finds from the upper reaches of Liddar valley in the shape of Acheullian tools is yet to be collaborated by more finds and scientific investigation. However, we have the presence of man in the valley from the period 5 lakh years BP. The Burzahom and Gofkral are by this evidence only a stage in the journey of man in Kashmir. Burzahom finds credited to Petterson and H.de Terra pertain to 3000-1700 BCE.² The finds reveal the settlement patterns of these early Kashmir settlers and help us with the material evidence coming forth from the site to have an idea about the relations and mutual impacts with the immediate neighboring world. From first century CE i.e., the coming of Kushannas begins the historical period of Kashmir better documented and well analyzed. In between the Burzahom- Gofkral settlements and Kushanna period lays the historically more important Semthan finds.³ Semthan near historical town of Bijbehara is a small plateau which yielded a measure and varied numismatic finds in particular ascribed to Parthians, Sakas and Greeks establishing the Kashmiri's cultural/ commercial if not political connections with the region/s ruled by these people.⁴ Kushannas who are historically thought to be the agents for the spread of Buddhism in Kashmir established Harwan, Ushkar and many other places. The Harwan finds are spread in three traces with the middle one all vanished save a few steps. The first traces while yielding some broken figurines, rubble stone wall and an earthen mount supposed to be the stupa.⁵ Near it were found some buried cells also. A couple of votive stupas indicate the kind of architectural as prevailed during the period. It is the same architecture which is now known as

¹ H.D. Sankalia, "New Evidence for Early Man in Kashmir", *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 12, Nis. 4 and 5, 1971, pp 538-61.

² Thapar, B. K., "Fresh light on the Neolithic Culture of Kashmir", in *Center Asian Journal*, Vol. II, No. 1, July, 1984, Pakistan, pp 185-201.

³ Gaur, G.S., "Semthan Excavations: A Step towards bridging the gap between the Neolithic and the Kushanna period", in *Kashmir in Archaeology and History*, 1978, New Delhi, pp 327-66.

⁴ Bleazy, G.B., *List of Coins and Medals in SPS Museum, J&K State*, 1910, Srinagar; Narain, A.K., *Indo Greeks*, pp 85-86.

⁵ Agarwall, A.C., *Kashmir and its Monumental Glory*, pp 94-95.

pyramidal or pagoda type presently seen in Kashmir as retained by the Muslim shrines.⁶ Third trace becomes more significant because of its yield of colored decorated tiles with the figurines of plants, animals and men. Harwan and other such places of the period place Kashmir in the cultural cum political domain of Kushannas and thus closer to the influences of main land India. It is very difficult and controversial to place the third traces along with its tiles in the religious sphere of Buddhism because the tiles betray all non Buddhist and irreligious motifs and events like hunting scenes and much more. The tiles have strong Sassanian and Parthian influences.⁷

Among the numismatic finds from 6th century CE are most important and significant coin types of Mihirakula-a white Huna and a staunch Saivaite as depicted by his coins exhibiting various Saivaite motifs and particularly by his strong and barbarous actions against Buddhists and Buddhist structures.⁸

From 8th century CE onwards the various historical sites from Kashmir yield stone and other metallic sculptures, statues besides the stone temples of various sizes consecrated in the name of Buddha, Siva, Vishnu and their other incarnations and consorts. The free fluting and in-situ sculptures of various dimensions belong to Vishnu, Buddha and Siva. The SPS museum Srinagar has a good number of life size statues of this type were Vishnu with four heads, *Chamanda* with her mirror, *Durga* with her apparently dressed up in Greek style and apparel, Siva with or without his consort.⁹ More interesting is the crown Buddha of Kashmir which has, posterior to it its independent versions from Central Asia particularly from Kyrgyzia.¹⁰ The enthroned Buddha like its Hindu counter parts with their own kind of Tiara are very popular in Kashmir. Central Asia and Afghanistan seem to have been well related to Buddhist Kashmir because of the presence of such Kashmir type statues. Earlier also we have from Kyrgyzia a replica of Kashmir votive stupa of Kushanna period. The fabrication and treatment of the free fluting scriptures from Bijbehara, Pandrathan and elsewhere betray many traits of Gupta art though indigenous treatment of the face and

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ray, S.C., *Early History and Culture of Kashmir*, 2008, Jay Kay Books, Kashmir, pp 47-48.

⁹ Agarwall, A.C., pp 45-57.

¹⁰ Cf, Majeed Gulshan, " A Brief Discourse on Buddhism", "The Journal of Kashmir Studies", Vol. IV, No. 1, 2010, (SAF) Institute of Kashmir Studies, University of Kashmir, pp 72-74.

eyes is not in any way less significant.¹¹ The presence of all the three traditions and religious expressions during one single period makes a significant reading. If these trends are studied along with the manuscripts of the period it becomes obvious how the conflicting and the contradicting faiths accommodated each other and still argued about the not acceptable arguments from each other. 8th and 9th century of CE gets registered also for its bronze objects depicting Siva and Parvate in a dancing posture, Buddha seated on a throne, Buddha with crown and a few Vishnu statues. The quality style and the method of fabrication of all these artifacts seemingly points to their fabrication from one single mould. It looks as if there was in existence one single standard measure and pattern.¹² There are a good number of ivory objects from Kashmir; important place here goes to deity carrying palanquins. The metric plank known in local parlance as *Khanibaran* exhibits the various incarnations of the central figure now absent and thought generally as Vishnu though some scholars identified the central figure with Buddha himself. Whatever the case the incarnations speak about the general belief about Buddha as being the ninth incarnation of lord Vishnu, a belief confirmed by the *Dashavatrcarit* of Kshemendar (10th century CE).¹³

Though there are no temples in existence prior to the ones building stone by Lalitditya, though there are literary references to the presence of such temples in the ancient Kashmir. The *Vishnu Dharmottrapurana* and *Nilamatapurana* do speak about the brick and wood temples of Kashmir, the contention confirmed by Kalhana also. Stone temples of Lalitditya belong to all the three major faiths in existence during his time. Martand on a Karwa above Ananthnag, Parhaspora, near Pattan and nearby Devur and Lakhmanpora on the right bank of river *Vitasta* support tolerant and accommodative character of the populace of the period.¹⁴

The style and pattern of Kashmir temples is with minor modifications same as found in the Gangatic plains during Gupta period. There is a central temple with three chambers, the interior or the sanctum sanatorium the *garbgrah* containing drab walls with no figurines or motifs. The two earlier chambers at Martand support *Surya's Rath*, *Ganga* and *Jamna* along with their identification marks after the Gupta style.

¹¹ Agarwall, A.C., pp 45-57.

¹² Bleazy, G.B., Op.cit., pp 90-98.

¹³ Majeed Gulshan, Op.cit., p 75.

¹⁴ Kak, R.C., *Ancient Monuments of Kashmir*, 2002, Gulshan Publishers, Srinagar, pp 131, 149.

The central temple is surrounded by a courtyard uncurled by rectangular structure with portico undercoated pillars supporting the roof projection above and inside cells.¹⁵ This structure has a double chambered gateway. Plinth of the central temple exhibits the figurines of Vishnu, dancer's musicians. The temple got apparently damaged at a time when the refuge seekers in it came in confrontation with their chasers during the later Hindu period.¹⁶ Parihasapura is significant for the presence of a Buddhist stupa on a three tier plinth exhibiting various Buddhist mortifies like Buddha, loin, the dwarfs etc., the stupa called by Kalhana *cinkun stupa* after the Tokharian minister of the king Laltidatya.¹⁷ It has a big huge dome resembling that of sanchi (UP) with a large umbrella. Presently we have only the plinth of the doom and center stone with a big hole to support the supposed umbrella, with us. Towards west lies *Rajvihar* with the central pound for the ablution etc. Water apparently was drawn up by the water wheels from Vitista. On the left of the *vihar* is the *chetiya* which housed a colossus Buddha image.¹⁸ Nearby on the right bank of the river lie Vishnu temples at Devor and Lakhanpora. The king is credited with the consecration of Siva temples and images also, thus speaking about the popularity of Buddhism and also the presence of Vaisnavite and Saivaites.

The two temples assigned to king Avantivarman at Avantipura as associated with Vishnu (*Avantisvami* temple) and Siva (*Avantisvara* temple) were built by the king at the initial stages of his royal carrier and towards the end of it respectively.¹⁹ During this period it seems the Vaisnavism was prevalent in Kashmir as people generally belonged to this faith. The king had to legitimize his rule by surrendering his inner feelings to the wishes of the people. But once he consolidated his rule and Saivism got some more popularity the king built his second temple dedicated to Siva. Pandrethan and Payar (Pulwama) temples belong to nearly same period, though a little controversy exists about their construction.²⁰ The controversies notwithstanding both temples belong to *Loklesevar* the less known incarnation of Siva. Both are small and constructed with less than a score of stones with a pyramidal roof and one tier plinth.

¹⁵ Basham, A.L., *A Cultural History of India*, 1998, Oxford University Press, p 82-92.

¹⁶ Kak, R.C., *Op.cit.*, p 131.

¹⁷ *Rajtarangini*, translated into English by M. A. Stein., Vol. I, 1979, Reprint, Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, p. 104.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp 118-121.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp 112, 126.

The plinth of the Pandrethan temple exhibits a series of docks and the lowest square contains a pair of flying *Yakshas*, facing each other and holding a garland in their hands, which falls in swags about their bodies and between their knees.²¹ The second group of triangles contains only four figures, each holding a disc in his right hand and a lotus stalk in his left hand. Payer is unique in many ways. It is constructed on a high pedestal approached by stairs from east and fabricated with only eight stones including its parimedial roof which has now lost its water pot.²² In the four arches above the opening between the four pillars are placed *Loklese*, Siva in his *Bairva* incarnation chasing a frightened man looking backwards and Siva in a suit resembling a hunting English man dangling his legs down. The temples seem to have belonged to a period when Saivism was in ascendance and the economic resources in decline. After wards we find that the royalty with all their efforts and apparent faithfulness being able to manage less funds for the construction of the temples. During 11th 12th century CE we find only miniature temples as evidenced from the presence of such temples at Zirapora Phalgam and one housed in SPS museum even the quality of *Lingas* get disturbed. However there is Buniar temple constructed after the general pattern of Avantswamin but it is assigned to a date anterior to the one's mentioned above.²³

Narannag, the site of an interesting group of temples which are commonly known as the Wangath temples is situated above the river sindh in the Ganderbal district. Narannag is the modern name of ancient Sodaratirtha, which has been, since very early times, an important place of pilgrimage in Kashmir. The site probably owes its sanctity to the existence of a large spring, near which have been built two groups of temples belonging to the mediaeval era (12th century CE). The first group, that is the one nearer Wangath, comprises six temples situated within an enclosure wall with difference in their architectural details. This temple has been identified by Sir Aurel Stein with the Jyeshthesa temple of Lalitaditya.²⁴

Ushkur in Baramula and Akhnoor in Jammu represent two famous sites that have yielded a number of terracotta's belonging to the Buddhist temples and had yielded a

²¹ Ibid.

²² Agarwall, A.C., p 102

²³ Agarwall, A.C., pp 103-104

²⁴ Ibid., 165.

large number of fragmentary images of Buddhist creed.²⁵ Very few stone sculptures have been found that belong to the pre-Karkota period, yet an image of Karttikeya (6th century AD) from Vijabror preserved in the S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar and a Laksmi image from Papaharanag (6th century AD), Anantnag documents the existence of a mature stone sculpture idiom from that time. Puranadhisthana present Pandrethan according to the Rajatarangini, witnessed considerable building activity during the reign of Pravarasena I,²⁶ in the middle of 6th century AD. Daya Ram Sahni, a noted archaeologist, excavated the site in the year 1913 and found two dilapidated stone stupas and a quadrangular rubble built enclosure assignable to the 7th century A.D. Its drum appeared to have been decorated with stone sculpture of more than life which displayed forceful execution. Among other images of Buddhist creed, he located some outstanding Brahminical images also which are presently preserved in the S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar.²⁷

The most glorious age of Kashmir sculptural art coincides with the rule of Karkota dynasty especially during the 8th century AD, when Kashmir rose to the heights of power.²⁸ The sculptors, it seems, had by this time acquired a thorough knowledge of iconography and were able to give expression to a great range of movement and gesture.

2. Literary Sources

It is an established fact that Kashmir is the only part of India where the tradition of writing history existed even before the advent of Islam. This must have been due to Kashmir's historical links with a number of non-Indian cultures, such as Greek, Chinese and definitely the Central Asian, all of which had strong historical traditions. References to valley and its people are found in the literature of the Greeks, the Chinese, and the Arabs, as well as in Indian literature. The information which the Chinese records have left us is much more ample.²⁹ By far the greatest Chinese authority on Kashmir is the pilgrim Hsiian- Tsang, who visited Kashmir in A.D. 631 and spent two years here studying "the Sutras and Sastras". A fairly detailed

²⁵ Kak, R.C., op. cit., p. 152-154.

²⁶ *Rajatarangini*, op.cit. p.104.

²⁷ Kak, R.C., *Catalogue of Archaeology and Numismatic Section of S.P.S. Museum*, p. 72.

²⁸ Kak, R.C., op. cit., pp. 146-149.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p 12.

description of the country is contained in the itinerary and life of Hstian-Tsang.³⁰ He found Buddhism flourishing though not predominant. Speaking of the state of learning in Kashmir, he says that “this country from remote times was distinguished for learning, and their priests were all of high religious merit and conspicuous virtue as well as marked talent and power of clear exposition of doctrine; and though the other priests were in their own way distinguished, yet they could not be compared with these, so different were they from the ordinary class”.³¹ He further remarks that “the Kashmiri’s been fond of learning and had a faith which embraced orthodoxy and heterodoxy (Buddhism and other religions), Buddhist monasteries were above 100 in number, and there were 5,000 Buddhist brethren; and there were four Asoka topes each containing above a pint (*sheng*) of the bodily relics of the Buddha”.³²

The next Chinese pilgrim who has left us an account of Kashmir is Ou-kong, who reached Kashmir in 759 A.D. Here he took his full vows as a regular monk. He resided in the country for four years, spending his time mainly in visiting holy places and in studying Sanskrit. He states that the number of Buddhist convents was more than three hundred; which shows that Buddhism was in a much more flourishing condition than in the preceding century when Hstian-tsang visited Kashmir.³³

The manuscripts for the understanding of Buddhism, papered by the Buddhist scholars’ and Brahmans speak indirectly if not directly about the ongoing discussions conducted on the various controversial, problematic and complex questions raised by the faithful and opponents both. The manuscripts as written in Kashmir also make their own innovations in the logic and medical sciences besides making endeavours to incorporate the traditions and beliefs prevalent in the public domine of the time irrespective of the faiths concerned.³⁴ One of the early texts is *Astahasrika - pragnaparamita* was translated into Chinese by Lokaksema³⁵ before the advent of 5th

³⁰ Beal, Samuel, *Life of Hiuen Tsiang*, p 69.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Water, Thomas, *On Yuan Chwang’s Travels in Kashmir*, Vol. I, p 261.

³⁴ Majeed Gulshan, *Op.cit.*, pp 68-69.

³⁵ Lokasema is credited with the development of *Dhyana (Chana)* school in China along with his contemporary Zhu Shu Ofu. The Lokasema is also understood to have compiled *Drumakinnararajapripredha*.

century CE. The text was revised by Kumarajiva³⁶ in 408 CE. The introduction of Buddhism into China by the Kashmiri monks and scholars was a slow process but not without opposition and abhorrence from the elitists and the classes who saw their interests eroded by the new philosophy. The Buddhist texts on *Sutta*, *Vinaya* and *Abhidhara*³⁷ were translated into Tibetan, Chinese and Sogdian. Most of these texts reached Central Asia by the end of 3rd century CE.³⁸ Kashmiri masters Sanghadeva,³⁹ Sanghadra,⁴⁰ Dharmottara⁴¹ and Dharmasri⁴² reached china by the end of 4th century CE. The manuscripts translated into foreign languages including such innovative practices which supported non-traditional ways and paved the way for the Tantrism. Among such was Buddhahadra⁴³ who reached Lu-shan in 410 CE, *Yogacarbhumi* is a Hinayanistic Dhyani treaties; interestingly the treaties also contains the Mahayanistic passages, *Buddhanusmrti*⁴⁴ towards its end, telling us lot about the amalgamation of the doctrines. *Vaibhasikas* which were specialty of Kashmiri scholars were translated into various central Asian and Chinese languages. Vasubandhu's⁴⁵ *Abhidharmakosastra* tries to elucidate most of the questions regarding the permanence and impermanence of things, role of perception, status of knowledge and nature of time. The Kashmiri *Vaibhasikas* considered moments to be four (I) moment of production (II) moment of Existence (III) moment of decay (IV) and moment of annihilation. The Kashmiri *Vaibhasikas* more importantly focused on

³⁶ Zhi Kiam re-translated *Abhidharmahrdaya* which was earlier translated by Lokasema under the title *Suramgamasamadhisutra*. Kumara Jiva translated the *Aslasahasrka* in 408 CE and another Mahayana text *Pancavimsatisahasrika* in 404 CE.

³⁷ *Vinaya* and *Abhidharma* together with *Sutta* form the trilogy of Buddhist scriptures in Pali. *Vinaya* deal with the code of conduct of Monks and *Abhidharma* with doctrines itself and has seven groups of *Pathanla*, *Dhammasangani*, *Dhatukatha*, *Pugglapannatti*, *Vibhanga*, *Yamaka* and *Kathavathu* all belonging to Theravada school of Buddhism.

³⁸ Majeed Gulshan, Op.cit., pp 68-69.

³⁹ Sangadeva (late 4th century CE) called *Abhidharmma* master, reached Yunyang in 391 CE and 384 CE in Luoyang. Sangadeva translated *Abhidharmahrdayasastra*. Liebenthal Festschrift translates it into English (only a few parts); see *Sino-Indian Studies*, Vol. V.

⁴⁰ Sanghadra, the Kashmiri teacher of Vasubhandu.

⁴¹ Dharmottara also credited with the Chinese translation of *Abhidharma*.

⁴² Dharmasiras was the father of Zhu Shutun. Dharmasiras came to China in the first half of 3rd century CE.

⁴³ Some Chinese texts consider him An Faxian.

⁴⁴ One of the six remembrances (*anusmrti*): *Buddhanusmrti*, (remembrances of Buddha); *Dharmanusmrti* (remembrance of Dharma (doctrine)), *Sanghanusmrti* (remembrance of *Sangha*); *Silanusmrti*, (remembrance of roles)); *Devanusmrti*, (remembrance of gods) *Tyanusmrti* (remembrance of charity).

⁴⁵ Vasubhandu was the disciple of Kashmiri *Vaibhashika* master Sanghadeva.

the non displayed future eye.⁴⁶The further eye papered the ground for the admission of intuition as a means of knowledge.

The correspondence between Huiyuan and Kumarajiva concerning the status of *Dharmkeya* or *Dharmadatukaya*, the relation of eternal duration of existence and non-existence, nature of *Shunyata* etc is now documented in *Dasheng da Yazhang*. Kumarajiva was followed by Buddhahadra who besides other works translated *Buddanusmate-Samadhi*⁴⁷ (contemplation of Buddha) helping in the propagation of new myths about the *Nirmankaya*, *Sambhogakaya* and *Dharmakaya*. The myths and legends whose initial origins could be traced to *Jatakas* and their interpretations were provided with logical support and intellectual explanations by the Buddhist scholars of Kashmir who thus helped in the introduction of innovations and further more carried in their own way the gains of Gandhara to east Turkistan and China, besides, of course composing original works in the *Sarvastivadin* and Mahayanist tradition.

The *Dashavatarcarita* of Ksemendara identifies Buddha as the 9th avatar (Incarnation) of Vishnu in near conformity to the lists of incarnations produced by *Siva Puran Rudra Kumara*, *Siva Puran Rudra Yuddha* or *Mahapuranas* belonging to a period not earlier than 8th century CE. Brahmanism, by then, had not only found its voice back but had gained a position of authority to interpret the concepts, and motifs in its own idiom and interest. It, thus, tried to weave a world view, accommodative of every faith and belief or projecting any major differences of opinion as a mere difference of terminology employed and emphasis added or considered to be logical in coherence.

The concept of Buddha as the incarnation of Vishnu evolved with the rise and consolidation of Brahmanism. It is important to note that at this stage Buddhists had already assimilated many of the key motifs from Puranas. In the *Karandavyuhasutra*, Avaloktesvara has Siva (*Mahesvara*) among his devotes while in the *Saddharmapundarikasutra*, he assumes the form of *Mahesvara* in order to preach his doctrine to the *Upska Siva Purana Rudra Yuddha* elaborates on the latter theme to

⁴⁶ Abdullaev, E.V., “The characteristics of Philosophical ideas of Buddhism in Central Asia”, *India and Central Asia*, 2000, Tashkent, p 109.

⁴⁷ Its preface is written by Shi Huiyuan.

relegate the Buddha to *Mayamaya Purusa*, a lesser incarnation of Vishnu assumed to denude the demons.⁴⁸

7th century CE becomes more important because of the Brahmanical assertions and direct continues patronage of royalty concerned. *Vishnudharmottrapurana* which discuss among many things the architectural patterns and requisites is composed in 7th century the period which is also shared by the *Nilamatapurana*. *Nilamatapurana* though begins with the invocation of Vishnu discuss early Kashmir, provides a myth of creation for the emergence of Kashmir and tries to locates Kashmir in a general and broader framework of India of Mahabharata.⁴⁹ *Nilamatapurana* when put to literary criticism appears to have borrowed the outer frame narrative of Mahabharata in toto while introducing much of the ritualistic material of the inner frame of the epic into it. The *Nilamatapurana* is about the so called indigenous people of Kashmir the Nagas and Pisaca and the cults and practices associated with Saivism in Kashmir.⁵⁰ The way *Nilamatapurana* speaks about Vishnu and Siva elude the fact that while the Vaisnavism was now being introduced into the cultural domain of Saivism the compiler of *Nilamatapurana* could in no way ignore the popularity and the establishment of Saivism in Kashmir. The fact is collaborated by the sculptures and statues pertaining to two cults.

Kalhan while giving the sources of his *Rajtarangini* mentions *Nilamatapurana* and Ksemendara in particular. Ksemendara belongs to 11th century CE. He was a prolific writer and of many interests and deep understanding. He wrote didactic poems on poetics and on the cultural environment of Kashmir. His most important works are *Brhakathamajari*.⁵¹ *Brhakathamajari* has been written after *Brhatkatha* of Gunadya composed supposedly in Pisaca language. The book has many references to Siva practices but his *Ramayanamanjari* is in praise of Vaisnavism thus again supporting the view that how the two religious traditions were accommodated in the cultural domain of Kashmir.⁵² Ksemendara's interest in Vaisnavism is also indicated by his consideration of Buddha as 9th incarnation of

⁴⁸ Majeed Gulshan, Op.cit., p 75.

⁴⁹ Nilmatapurana,1988, (ed., and tran) Ved Kumari, 2 Vols., rep., Srinagar, Kashmir: Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Shukla, N.S., *Cultural trends in Kashmir and Ksemendra*, 1990, Delhi, p 30.

⁵² Ibid., p 45.

Vishnu; a fact again telling us about the position which Buddhism held at that time and how Brahmanism was trying to entire into the Buddhist space. In the *Samayamatrika* one of his most original poems, which is intended to describe the snares of courtesans, he gives us, among other stories, an amusing account of the wanderings of his chief heroine, Kankali, through the length and breadth of Kashmir. The numerous places which form the scene of her exploits can all easily enough be traced on the map. More than once curious touches of true local colour impart additional interest to these references. If these works of Ksemendara are read with his *Desopadesa Narmmalā* an exhaustive picture of people's behavior, mutual relations, the kinds of operation, educational practices and values, attitude of teachers and housewives and the general free liberal permissive atmosphere of Kashmir emerges.

Bilhana, the poet, who has been alluded to above, has also left in his *Vikramankadevacharita* a glowing picture of the beauties of Kashmir in general, besides giving a description of his rural home at *Khunamusha*, which is known today as the *rakh* (game preserve) of Khunamotu Mankha, an elder contemporary of Kalhana, has left a similar description of Kashmir and Srinagar. These accounts serve the additional purpose of enabling us to corroborate the statements of Kalhana from independent evidence. The book known as the *Lokaprakasa* is a curious mixture of the ordinary dictionary and a practical handbook dealing with various topics of administration and private life in Kashmir. Though much of the information given in it is decidedly old and probably from the hand of our well-known Kshemendra, there are unmistakable proofs in the form and contents of the book that it has undergone considerable alterations and additions down even to the seventeenth century.

By far the greatest amount of our information regarding ancient Kashmir is supplied by Kalhana. He composed his *Rajatarangini*, the river of kings, in 1148-49 CE. Born in a Brahman official family, and learned in the traditions of his country both from oral and written sources, Kalhana was specially fitted for his self-imposed task, which he has executed with conspicuous ability. His father, Champaka, was the minister of king Harsha (1089-1101CE), but after the murder of his master in 1101CE neither father nor son appears to have taken office under the

succeeding rulers. His chief defect is his want of critical acumen. He seldom quotes an opinion or a statement with a view to refute it. He is not able to distinguish between the legendary and genuine elements of tradition.⁵³ Owing partly to this defect and partly, probably, to want of authentic sources, the first four books of his chronicles are little more than dynastic lists, interspersed here and there with anecdotes. It is from the seventh century A.D. that history in the modern sense begins. This does not mean that the earlier part of the chronicle is on that account without interest. On the contrary, it has very great value, not only because it mentions the great historic names of Asoka, Kanishka, etc., but also because it presents us with a fairly detailed account of the general condition of the kingdom before we reach the centuries which immediately precede the time of Kalhana, and for which he had genuine oral and written information.⁵⁴ The latter consisted of a number of ancient histories written before Kalhana's time, of which he appears to have made extensive use. Unfortunately all of them are now lost. This makes it impossible to distinguish what is original from what is borrowed in Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*. Perhaps this work, which probably served as a convenient and comprehensive manual of Kashmir history for subsequent generations, was not a little responsible for the gradual disuse and final disappearance of the literary records which were available in his time.⁵⁵ The period which he knew personally or the knowledge of which he owed to living witnesses is treated by him with an exhaustiveness which leaves little to be desired, especially when we bear in mind that Kalhana regarded himself primarily as a poet, and composed the *Rajatarangini* as a didactic poem for the edification of his countrymen. Kalhana's chronicle has been published, with an excellent translation, exhaustive introduction, numerous explanatory notes, and a valuable monograph on the ancient geography and coinage, etc., of Kashmir, by Sir Aurel Stein.⁵⁶ This monumental work is indispensable for the proper understanding of the socio-political and religious conditions of pre-Muslim Kashmir. Exactly three centuries passed before a successor was found to continue Kalhana's work. He was another Kashmiri

⁵³ Rapson, E.J., "Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*: A Chronicle of the Kings of Kashmir by M.A. Stein", Review, *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 18, No. 72, (Oct. 1903), pp 773-775.

⁵⁴ *Rajatarangini*, Op.cit.

⁵⁵ Rapson, E.J., Op.cit., p 774.

⁵⁶ *Rajatarangini*, Op.cit.

Brahman, Jonaraja, who was the contemporary and court historian of Zain-ul-abidin (A.D. 1421-1472).⁵⁷

Kalhana for the reasons better known to him does not mention the names of Abhinavagupt and his close associates in his chronicle; maybe it is because Abhinavagupt belonged to a fraction of Saviates faith which was less acceptable to Kalhana. Abhinavagupt earned the glory of being regarded as an authoritative teacher of *Tantrism* and a perfect master of yoga (*mahasiddha*).⁵⁸ He commented upon the *Saivaist* agamas and *Tantras*, as well as the works of philosophers from the three major schools of northern *Saivism*. He made a synthesis of them (called *trika-kaula*) as an alternative to the orthodox school of *mimansa* and *advaitavedanta*. Abhinavagupta was the author of 44 works, of which 21 remain, and of these 13 are philosophically significant. The sequence of these works presented below most likely reflects the evolution of their author's thought. The most important works in Tantric theology are the encyclopedic *Tantraloka* (*The light of tantra*) and a condensed version *Tantra-sara*, and also mystical-philosophical hymns. His works in aesthetics are the *Abhinava-bharati*, a commentary on the *Nattya-shastry* (*Treatise on Theater*) of Bharata as well as the *Dhvanyaloka-locana* (*An Explanation of the Light of Suggestion*), namely the commentary to the *Dhvanyaloka* of Anandavardhana. His most important works in the monistic metaphysics of *Saivism* are the *Ishvara-pratyabhijnavimarshini* (*Treatise on the "Recognition of the Lord"*), and *Paramartha-sara* (*The Essence of the Highest Truth*).⁵⁹

Analogous in nature, but far later in date, are the Mahatmyas of the different tirthas or places of pilgrimage. These works give lengthy accounts of the legendary origin of the holy places of Kashmir, and the religious merit accruing to the fortunate pilgrim who pays a visit to each sacred spot. They also furnish a complete survey of the sacred places of Kashmir.

⁵⁷ Sternbach, Ludwik, "Rajtarangini of Jonaraja by S. Kaul", Review, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 90, No. 2 (Apr- Jun., 1970), p 411.

⁵⁸ Drabu, Vishva Nath, *Saivagamas A Study in the Socio-Economic Ideas and Institutions of Kashmir*, 1990, Indus Publishing Company, pp 32-45.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

The most remarkable development in the field of religion during Gupta/post-Gupta times was the rise of Hinduism, which like a colossus striding across the religious firmament soon came to overshadow all other existent religions. Certain features which distinguished it from its Vedic *Smarta* roots were its ever widening horizon and popular base, its theological and sectarian pluralism, its Tantric veneer and an extraordinary thrust on devotion or Bhakti. Whereas Brahmanism had represented more or less a single religious strand drawing mainly upon Vedic ideology and throughout manifesting an elitist outlook Puranic Hinduism proved to be a multiplex belief-system which grew and expanded as it absorbed and synthesized polaristic religious ideas and cultic traditions. So that quite in contrast to Brahmanism, Puranic Hinduism through its power of assimilation and synthesis was able to bring within its vortex all possible classes and segments of society, literate as well as preliterate.¹

The transition from Brahmanism to Hinduism was neither sudden nor abrupt nor was it a complete breaking away from the past tradition. It was more the outcome of a slow and gradual process of evolution and growth, reflecting a remarkable continuity along with significant shift in ideological thrust and approach. What however, is really noteworthy is the precise time of its efflorescence. Puranic Hinduism developed at a time when society was in the throes of a changing economic and political order. The period represented a watershed in Indian history, when a flourishing market economy was giving way to a closed landed economic order; when foreign and indigenous tribal groups had begun staking their claims to political power, leading to its fragmentation and the eventual rise of a feudal order. The parallel rise and growth

¹ Vijay Nath, "From Brahmanism to Hinduism: Negotiating the Myth of the Great Tradition", *Social Scientist*, Vol. 29, No. 3/4 (Mar. - Apr., 2001), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3518337>. Accessed: 17/03/2011 12:58, pp 22-25.

of Puranic Hinduism on the one hand and the politico-economic upheaval and changes taking place on the other, definitely suggests some kind of symbiotic connection between the two developments.

One of the important factors long being acknowledged by the scholars² about the changes besetting Brahmanism during the opening centuries of the Christian era is that they were largely the result of sharpening of conflict amongst various religious systems fighting for space. The rivalry was as much responsible for the changes occurring within these systems as it was for their proselytizing activities in uncharted territories lying in remote tribal belts such as those in central India and the Deccan.³ In fact, Buddhist and Jain monks may be regarded as pioneers in carrying new influences into the otherwise placed cultural areas and thus inaugurating the process of acculturation there. The rise of *Mahayanism*, which provided to Buddhism a more popular base and immensely widened its popular appeal seem to have further deepened such a threat perception on the part of the Brahmans. Pertinent to mention here is the fact that the common masses in India were hardly organized faithful of any religious order. The masses were generally in fluid situation and passed along with their personal/local ritualistic traditions into any religious order which became dominant. However, there was the fear of losing ground to these more enterprising rival systems, which led the Brahmanical leaders to unbend from their former elitist and almost inflexible stance and take more notice of the needs of people standing on the lower rungs or the extreme periphery of society. Only such an attitudinal change can explain the growing projection of Vishnu as a compassionate god,⁴ who through intense devotion could be won over to alleviate the sufferings of the humblest of devotees. It explains also why through the newly developed incarnation theory hope was sought to be instilled in the hearts of the despairing and the destitute. It explains moreover why such popular religious practices as making *dana*,⁵ visiting *tirthas*,

² R.C. Hazra, *Studies in the Puranic Records on Hindu Rites and Customs*, 1975, Delhi, p. 208.

³ B.S. Hanumantha Rao, "Religion and Society in the Vengi Chalukyan Kingdom", in *Sriramacandrika*, ed., A.V.N. Murthy and I.K. Sarma, Delhi, 1993, p. 419; Ray, H.P., "Early Buddhist Monachism and Its Socio-economic Implications", *The Age of the Satavahanas*, vol. I, ed., A.M. Shastri, New Delhi, 1999, pp. 199-204.

⁴ Suvira Jaiswal, *The Origin and Development of Vaisnavism*, sec., rev., ed., 1981, New Delhi, p. 130.

⁵ Nath, Vijay, *Dana: Gift-system in Ancient India, 600 BCE- 300 AD. A Socio-economic Perspective*, 1987, New Delhi.

observing *vrata*⁶ and *japa*⁷ which were within the means of the ordinary people began to be widely recommended for all, including women and Sudras and were supposed to yield much greater spiritual merit than even the performance of Vedic *Yajnas*. But most of all it explains why a special genre of Brahmanical texts, namely the Puranas began to be composed from the third-fourth centuries A.D. onwards.⁸ The latter were meant to be recited at collective gatherings and have been rightly described as ‘scriptures for the common people’. But more than religious rivalry it was the exigent conditions created by a fast changing socio-economic order which made it incumbent for the Brahmanical ideologues to take due cognizance of the changes affecting contemporary society and make adjustments of a more existentialist nature.

As noted above a sea of change is perceptible between Brahmanism of the Dharmasastras and Hinduism as reflected in the Puranas. Despite a prominent continuum, whereas the former represented a more or less a single stream fed mainly by the Vedas and the *Vedangas*, Puranic Hinduism on the contrary was more like a vast ocean with the Brahmanical stream no matter how big and forceful, still representing only one amongst numerous others flowing into it and making it an all-encompassing mass of religious beliefs and practices.⁹ The source of its authority and strength lay not merely in the Vedas but was far more variegated, each one of them being as vibrant and efficacious as the other. Though Hinduism has often been compared to a banyan tree which does not allow anything to grow beneath or near it, yet it would be more appropriate to describe it as a tree which has not one but multiple roots with each one of them nurturing and resuscitating it, at the same time vesting it with remarkable heterogeneity and popular appeal. And though it may not be easy to determine the exact source of some of its salient features, yet the conditions under which these took shape may provide some clue to their genesis.¹⁰ The salient

⁶ Banerji, S.C., “Puranic Basis of Vratas Mentioned in Bengal Smritis”, *Indian Culture*, XIII, 1946-47, pp. 35-44.; Upadhye, P.M., “Vows in the Purana Literature”, *Bharatiya Vidya*, XXXII, 1972, pp. 13-19; Gupta, K.K., *A Socio- Religious Study of Visnudharmottara Purana*, 1994, New Delhi, pp. 175-78.

⁷ Sengupta, N.N., “The Practice of Religious Recital (japa)”, *Journal of UP Historical Society*, XII, 1939, pp. 22-48.

⁸ Nath, Vijay, *Puranas and Acculturation: A Historico-Anthropological Perspective*, 2001, New Delhi, ch. 1.

⁹ Nath, Vijay, *Op.cit.*, p 34.

¹⁰ Jash, Pranabanand, *History and Evolution of Vaisnavism in Eastern India*, 1982, Calcutta, p 60.

features of Puranic Hinduism are: (i) pantheon related developments leading to sectarian plurality, (ii) new ritual formations with *puja* and a collective mode of worship gaining greater importance than the offering of *homa* or sacrificial oblations, (iii) mythological overgrowth as reflected in the Puranas, (iv) changed character and format of the new Brahmanical texts, (v) assimilation of Tantric element, and (vi) the new ideological thrust on Bhakti with Puranas once again serving as its chief medium of dissemination.¹¹

Kashmir as evidenced by the historical and non-traditional sources has always occurred a world view which has its references to the neighbouring lands around its borders. There always remained an active correspondence between Kashmir and the world now known as Central Asia and the region generally spoken of as Gandhara. The moment of man and ideas across the borders was mostly welcomed. The early settlers of Kashmir betray the exogenous influences on their arts and crafts and the community formations. The absence of any Vedic cultural traits in Kashmir at this stage (3000-500 B.C) do not necessarily mean that Kashmir was much removed from the correspondences between the two. But the emergence of Buddhism in the main land India and its spread in time and space much changed the situation. Brahmanism which had got diluted because of a kind of stagnation began to reconstitute itself in response to the ideologically more vibrant forces (Buddhism and Jainism) giving rise to such philosophical systems as *Sankhya*, *Nyaya*, *Yoga*, besides finding better logical and ideological devices to defend itself not off-course ignoring the creation of myths and legends. It is also the period of political and cultural dominance of the *Akhmenians* of Persia which brought much of its border lands under its control. Their domination reached upto the western banks of the river Indus. It's also the period when *Magi* saints/ influences are supposed to have informed the cultures prevailing in the Gangetic plains. Magadha emerges as the centre of the *Magi* cults which included sun worship and fire rites. First century BCE brings Kushanna on the Indian scene as fresh agents of change. Without directly associating themselves with any particular religious ideology they recognise, to their political advantage, the ideological forces and patronize them. Among these were the Zoroastrians, Saivaites, Greeks, Buddhists,

¹¹ Bhattacharji, Sukumari, *The Indian Theogony*, 1970, Cambridge, pp. 178- 207, 284-300.

and Janis. It is interesting to find that the Kushannas particularly Kaniska (2nd century CE) issues some twenty five coin types pertaining to Zoroastrian cults while the coin types belonging to Buddhism and Saivism are not more than three in number. It shows the spread and influence of Zoroastrian belief system at this particular period of time. In Kashmir Kushannas are generally associated with the development of Buddhism. Though the Harwan titles from the third and upper most terrace show other than Buddhist influences and mortifies. Archaeologists/scholars relate this title mortifies with the Sassanians and more directly to Zoroastrian information. Before Kushannas we have Indo-Greek and Parthain numismatic finds from Semthan and other scours of places in Kashmir. Parthians though not known as zealots of Zoroastrianism did carry the Persian influences to the areas of their dominance. The Zoroastrian influences in Kashmir could well be gleaned from the evidence coming forth from Harwan, Hoinar, Hutmar titles and cultural events like *Frove*, *Zool*, the Bread ceremonies associated with the dead called *Rohanposh* and the place names like *Tepe*, *Anitch* etc. Though no material evidence is forthcoming in support of the presence of *Saivism* in Kashmir however, the Kushanna coins allude to its popularity in the Kushanna dominance. Mihirakula's short sojourn in Kashmir also helps in the establishment of Saivait's tradition over the debris (which he created) of Buddhism.¹² These traditions were however neither close to nor monolithic, nor could they escape revolts from within.

¹² *Rajtarangini*. Translated into English by M. A. Stein. 2 Vol. 1979, Reprint, Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, Book.1, sh. 62.

A. Naga Tradition

Naga or serpent worship had acquired a prominent position in ancient Indian religious pantheons. The evidences of their worship can be traced with the help of various sources like the Harappan figurines, the Vedic texts, Puranas, Epics, Buddhist literature. There is possible indication of veneration of snakes by Indus Valley people. It is apparent from the women-snake figurine found at Mehrgarh, an important Indus site.¹³ Naga worship existed in the *Rigveda* and various passages of *Atharvaveda*¹⁴ refers to the groups of serpents and one refers to six serpents as the wardens or protectors of six quarters represented as a charm to win the favour of the serpents of all the regions under heaven. Moreover, Epics and Puranas testify its gradually increasing popularity. Mahabharata, too, states the merit of visiting various Naga *Tirthas* like *Nagodbheda*, *Sarpadevi*, *Kurukshetra*, *Prayaga* etc. Various Puranas like *Matsya Purana*, *Padma Purana* etc. also glorified the cult. Even in Buddhist literature, Naga's were represented as animals or super natural beings and had been depicted in various *Jataka* stories as listening to the sermons of Lord Buddha. Towards achieving semblances of fraternity Buddhist lore found Buddha, a good Naga in some previous birth.¹⁵ Gain of Buddhism was the loss of Brahmanism. Buddhists worked silently towards adjustment of their doctrines with over all changes happening in their society. Naga cult was so strong or the influence of Naga belief was so pervasive that the Buddhist tradition mentions only Nagas whom the Buddhist Missionaries had to contest in Kashmir. During the 5th and 4th century BCE Naga's clearly established themselves as formidable force capable enough to achieve political and non-political ends and effect reconciliation between warring regimes.¹⁶ It was around this period that Sisunagas established the first historical dynasty of Magadha. Further, Aellian records worship of snakes by Indians at the time of Alexander's invasion. The Chinese pilgrims Fa-Hian and Hiuen Tsang referred to

¹³ Ratnagar, Shereen, *Understanding Harappa Civilization in the Greater Indus Valley*, 2001, Tulika, pp 103-115.

¹⁴ *Atharvaveda* and some portion of *Rigveda*- book-II,X, have been found to be a late introduction rather interpolations, therefore, the fixation of any period for the Naga cult on the bases of *Atharvaveda* becomes misleading

¹⁵ Buddha himself claimed to have been a Naga in his previous birth; Saletore, R.N., *Encyclopaedia of Indian Culture*, Sterling, 1983, New Delhi, p 1007.

¹⁶ Nag King Campeyya helped the king of Magadha to achieve sovereignty over both the kingdoms of Magadha and Anga; *Jataka*; IV p.454.

Nagas many a times. Abul Fazl found 700 places with graven images of snakes which the Kashmiris worshipped. The *Kada* coins of 3rd-2nd century B.C. found from Sivalik Mountains are the evidence for the rise of Naga power and its spread. *Kada* is identified with *Kadru*, wife of *Kasyapa* and mother of serpents. The coins have on reverse and obverse undulating lines representing symbolically the snakes. These coins have their legends engraved in pre *Kushanna Brahmi*.¹⁷

Migrations voluntary or under duress, and expulsions from the main Brahmanical lands in the north made the *Nagas* spread towards south and west of the Gangetic valley.¹⁸ Nagas established themselves in Narmada region¹⁹ (present Nagpur) which *Mahabharata* places with *Avanti*²⁰ forming in the 4th century BCE integral part of the Magadhan Empire where one of the Naga dynasties also ruled. The kingdom was overthrown by the first dynasty of *Mahismati*, known to Puranas as *Haihaya*. In the post Kushanna period Nagas rose to rule the lands which they earlier held as feudatories of the Kushannas.²¹ During 3rd and early 4th century Nagas had their suzerainty over Mathura²² along with the adjacent region in the northern and central India including Kantipur and Padmavati.²³ The *Vakataka-epigraphs* mention the *Bharsiva Naga* of Padmavati and their matrimonial relationship with the Vaktaka kings of Deccan. The legend on the coins from Padmavati (32 Km. away from Gawaliar) reads Maharaja Bharanaga.²⁴ Popularity of Naga-worship in Mathura is attested by:

- a) The presence of images of Naga deities, who in their human form have snake Lords.
- b) The Naga shrine at Sonkh which has on one of its lintels Naga and Nagis with snake scalp.

¹⁷ Gupta, Parmeshwari Lal, *Coins: The Source of Indian History*, 1981, pp 45-55.

¹⁸ Saletore, R.N. Op.cit., p1008.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Dowson, *Classical Dictionary- A Dictionary of Hindu Mythology and Religion*, Rep., 1987, New Delhi, p 213.

²¹ Nagas were very powerful after Kushannas and prior to the rise of Guptas (Samudra Gupta). Even under Kushannas they are known to have possessed large tracts of land independently.

²² Saletore, R.N., Op.cit., p 1020.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Gupta, Parmeshwari Lal, Op.cit., p 66.

- c) The elephant headed nude dwarf (*Ganesh*) wearing a snake for *Yajnopavita*.⁴²
- d) Statue of *Balrama*, in his incarnation of cosmic serpent *Sesa*; left hand holding a cup and right hand raised in *abhaya-mudra*.⁴³ *Balrama* under a snake canopy.
- e) *Nagraj* panel *Sonkh Mathura*.²⁵

Donations from a community, propitiating fertility deity associated with Naga cult were accepted and appropriated by a late Kushanna monastery at Mathura.²⁶ When the Gupta suzerainty over Magadha was complete, they found Naga chiefdoms and kingdoms a major impediment in their expansion programme.²⁷ In order to legitimize their expeditions against Nagas and other small powers in North India, they took *Garuda*²⁸ (who preys on snakes) as their emblem and projected themselves as the protectors of religion,²⁹ particularly Vaisnava brand of Hinduism, and saviours of the people from anti-Vedic savage usurpers of political power.³⁰ Though Naga brides continued to find their legitimate places in the imperial seraglio³¹ and most of the cults of the communities outside the pale of Hinduism incorporated in the emerging socio-religious system, Gupta monarchs waged a two pronged war against their opponents in the northern and central India. While almost all Naga and non-Naga, political arrangements, chiefdoms or states were vanquished³² in the actual war against them, the new Brahmanic literature created myths and doctrines to the advantage of Guptas and denigration of their opponents including Nagas. Most of the motifs, traditions and concepts which later became circulated among other cultures had their early beginning under Guptas.³³ Brahmins whether Puranic or Vedic received land grants for their services to the state especially in legitimizing its

²⁵ Gulshan Majeed., “No Naga Presence in Ancient Kashmir The Past Never Is”, in *Approaches to Kashmir Studies*, eds G.M. Khawaja, Gulshan Majeed, 2011, Gulshan Books, Srinagar, pp 16-27.

²⁶ Romila Thapar, *Penguin History of Early India*, 2002, Penguin books New Delhi, p.271.

²⁷ The first Gupta king Deva Raja, Deva Sri or Deva Gupta is mentioned by Vakataka inscription of 412-13 CE. Chaudhury, Roy, *Political History of India*, 1996, 8th imp, 2008, pp 490- 492, 768.

²⁸ *Garuda* Symbol had a political motive; Chaudhury, Roy, Op.cit., p 536; Rajim copper plate grant of Raja Tivara Deva; Saletore, R.N., Op.cit., p1010.

²⁹ In Bhitari inscription and coin legends Skanda Gupta is called Amalatma (pure soul), Parahitakari (benefactor of others) Allan, *Gupta Coins* (XXI); Chaudhury, Roy, Op.cit., p 512.

³⁰ Ibid, pp 414, 473, 474.

³¹ Ibid., pp 426, 489.

³² Debreuil, *Ancient History of the Deccan*, p.31; Chaudhury, Roy, Op.cit., p 473.

³³ Romila, Thapar, Op.cit., p.271.

authority and use of force. Varna status became reserved for elites others simply became *Jatis*.³⁴ However Nagas seem to have remained in possession of lands around Garwal³⁵ where they maintained their kingdom during 4th/5th century BCE.

The popularity of the cult is attested by the Hillocks around *Kanwor* which have been named after various Nagas, being worshipped there. The *Sheshnag*, occupies a prominent place in the Kashmir Nag lore but the one situated in *Seeni* (*Garwar* region) is considered by the scholars to be the original one. Nagas retained their cultural cum political centres away from the main Gupta occupations. Around Hardwar between *Bhagirath* (Ganges) and Alak Nanda Hills, Nagrajas established their rule as evidenced by the Haraha³⁶ inscription. On the two tridents, found now in the *Barbat* and *Goveshvar* temple.³⁷ The inscription mentions five Naga rajas in the chronological order. The Nags worshipped there are, *Ganpati* (*Goveshvar* temple) and *Goha* (*Barbat* temple), both are, as the names indicate associated with Siva.³⁸ During the Gupta period, the Puranic Brahman scholars helped reformulate or recast new legends and mythologies, providing not only suitable genealogies, even to the kings whose immediate ancestors, too, were unknown, but also the cults and deities to make their own position secure and economically comfortable because they and they only knew how to maintain the cult and please the deity.³⁹ The subjugation of Nagas was mythologized and metaphorically represented, for example, by providing a Naga bed and canopy to Vishnu for rest.⁴⁰

Nilmatpurana, however is not a mutation or creation *ex-nihilo*. In its essentials, it dwells upon the *Naglore* of India and the concepts involved there in. The two main concepts, providing foundation to the narrative concerned are: the Nagas being the

³⁴ Ibid., p 293.

³⁵ Many more Naga Kingdoms arose during and after the Guptas. Gurrjara – Pratihara Dynasty: Pallava Kingdom with its close relations with Nagas; *Indian Antiquary*, 1984, p.85; fleet CII, III p.283.

³⁶ Of late 4th / 5th century CE. Haraha inscription of 554/55 indicates the end of Gupta rule with the triumph of *Isanavarman*.

³⁷ The two temples are evidence of Naga supremacy and their close connection with Siva in the Bharu incarnation. They belong to early 5th century CE.

³⁸ Guha is the son of Ganesh; Romila Thapar, Op.cit., p 325.

³⁹ Ibid., pp 319-25.

⁴⁰ Even in their surrender, *Nagas* achieve grace through their nearness to the Maheshvara and Siva. The lord of the serpents Ananta of the thousand hoods serves as the bed and canopy to Vishnu and Vasukhi the King of serpents attends Siva as his necklace (or a garland).

forest dwellers and aboriginals of India and that Nagas were expelled by the Vedic people and they spread towards North West from the places mentioned in the epics. *Jatakas*, *Mahabhartha* and Puranas are the original sources of Naga narratives. The Brahmanic lore of India incorporates much of this material as per its requirements and once Brahmans settle down in Kashmir they provide the Nag tales with geographical locales in Kashmir. Pertinent to mention, the folktales travel faster, create their niches and subsequently fresh identities and become naturalised in the land of their immigration, as well. General tales about Nagas could have reached Kashmir earlier through the immigrants particularly from the lands of Naga influences and traditions, including the Brahmans invited and resettled in the parts of Kashmir by the Hindu rulers.

Channels of transmission were many: the immigrants including the Brahmans invited and resettled in the parts of Kashmir by the rulers concerned; The invasions and annexation of Kashmir by the people connected somehow with the Nagas of North India; trade and political arrangements between Kashmir and North India making ingress and egress of the people more frequent. The Kashmir rulers provided patronage⁴¹ to the immigrant Brahmans for various reasons.

Kashmir is not and never was an exclusive land of (for) Brahmans. There always were other communities. The Brahmans were mainly involved with ritualistic cycles at the various levels of the society which included “*The other*” for whom the rituals had to be performed. They were (are) by their own claim and tradition, the immigrants from India (possibly from Gangetic plain) and identified themselves, along with other self-proclaimed “Twice born of (North) India with the Puranic Brahmans, if not with the Vedic Brahmans (also). This claim to purity of race and faith, made them distinct from “*the other*” whom they encountered in Kashmir. Furthermore they considered themselves, as per the myths and legends circulated, the progeny of the first human arrivals to settle in Kashmir. The myth of creation, again the contribution of

⁴¹ Gopaditya bestowed *Agraharas* on Brahmans born in Aryadesha, *Rajatarangini*; Op.cit., Book.1, p 341. He removed those who ate garlic to *Bhukhsiravatika* and transferred the Brahmans, who had broken their rules of conduct to Khasata. Other Brahmans, again of holy life, who he had brought from pure countries, he settled in Vascika and other *Agraharas*, *Rajatarangini*; Op.cit., Vol. I Book.1, Op.cit., pp 342, 343.

Brahmans of the old, provides them an envious position among other creatures (humans included).

As Vedas project the Aryans as the carriers of civilization and saviours of communities living a subhuman life *Nilmatpurana*, too, projects the Brahmans as the most beneficial, enlightened community through whom *Nilanaga* tried to accomplish his project.⁴² By the time *Nilamtpurana* was composed, the Nagas were again on ascendancy. Almost all their cults and festivals had received, by then, recognition and necessary sanction and sanctity. Brahmanism had already created an honorific space for Nagas and Nag lore. The Vishnu and Siva both received their Nagas. Brahmans presided over the rituals and sacrifices performed by the Nagas in India. There are evidences where Nag shrines were associated with Siva and Vishnu. In the creation myths of Hindus Naga occupied a significant place.

Nilmatpurana which follows the Tradition of Mahabharata (late redaction) where Naga narratives are given a prominent space has / had two important objectives: one to establish the prestige and glory of the Brahmans and next to create an environment for the destruction of demons substituted by *Bhikshus* (plague of *Bhikshus*).⁴³ The frame story provided to the treatise has the same scheme of things and characters as known from Mahabharata. The story opens in the manner of the *Mahakavya* with the introduction of *Janamjeya* seeking clarification of his doubts⁴⁴ from *Vaisampayane*, the sage and the pupil of *Vedavyasa* (*Nilmat Vitastamahatmaya*). The creation story of Kashmir is again introduced with a story from Mahabharata. *Kadru*, the mother of Nagas (Thousand in number) and *Vinata*, the mother of *Garudas* challenge each other with a bet which subsequently sets snakes and *Garudas* against each other on a life-long war path. *Vasuki*, the king of *Nagas* of Patala, whose life in the accounts of Mahabharata, is spared by *Janamjeya* invokes Vishnu for a safe shelter from *Garudas*, Vishnu settles them in *Satisaras* and appoints *Nil* another son of *Kasyapa*

⁴² Candradeva, a Brahmin is bestowed with the *Nilmatapurana* by the King *Nil* himself; *Rajtarangini*, Op.cit., Book V, 601; VII 171, 601.

⁴³ Ibid., Vol. I, Op.cit., pp 183-184.

⁴⁴ *Nilmatapurana*, 1988, (ed., and tran) Ved Kumari, 2 Vols., rep., Srinagar, Kashmir: Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages, pp1-5.

as their king. In Mahabharata it is *Astik*,⁴⁵ the Brahman who saves the lives of *Nagas* from the total annihilation and in the *Nilmatpurana* it is *Candradeva*, the Brahman, who is entrusted with the task of getting the *Naga* rites, enshrined in the *Nilmatpurana* promulgated. Most of the rites mentioned are simple repetition of those found in the *Puranas* and practiced in India.

Nilmatpurana is an attempt to retain the divine character of the observances most of which were already in vogue, and recommended by Brahmanic literature of India. The prestige and popularity which Buddhists of Kashmir enjoyed till late would have, been an impediment in the way of popular acceptance of Brahmanism. Despite the near massacre of Buddhists by the *Saivait* ruler Mehrkul in the 6th century the “plague of Bhikshus”⁴⁶ would with ease not only infringe upon the space desired by the Brahmans but also question the authenticity and validity of their rites. Through *Nilmatpurana* the observances and rites to be promulgated, received a divine sanction and negated any doubts about their being a human manipulation.⁴⁷ Brahmans, in their interests, assigned springs and other water bodies to the serpent gods. *Sheshnag*, *Anantnag*, *Vasukh Nag*, *Takshakh Nag* were offered additional dwelling places in Kashmir over and above their original abodes in India.

There are many references in the local sources such as *Nilmatapurana*, *Rajatarangini* and the *Vasuki Purana* which clearly states the origin of Naga cult in the valley of Kashmir.⁴⁸ The information gathered through the sources reveal that the snake-cult or the Naga-worship seems to have been established in the Valley from an early period and undoubtedly been one of the earliest religious traditions of the land. According to the *Nilmatapurana*, on the eve of the Aryan immigration there lived two powerful cultural groups in Kashmir pejoratively called Nagas and Pisacas by the Vedic people.⁴⁹ Hence there was no other alternative to the Aryans but to make vital compromises with their adversaries even to the extent of incorporating the Naga and Pisaca leaders in their Pantheon. The *Nilmatapurana* ascribes its own authorship to Purana to Nila,

⁴⁵ Son of a Naga mother and a Brahman father. Kosumbi, D. D., *The Culture and Civilization of Ancient India in Historical outline*, rep., 1994, Vikas, New Delhi, p.93.

⁴⁶ Kalhan’s *Rajatarangini* vol. I, Op.cit., p 184.

⁴⁷ *Nilmatapurana*, I, Op.cit., p 6.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p p 46-50, see also *Rajatarangini*, Op.cit., pp 28-31.

⁴⁹ *Nilmatapurana*, Op.cit., p 23.

the king of Nagas who is said to have related these instructions to the Brahman Chander Deva with the instructions that for living in Kashmir the Aryans had to act up on his instructions contained in the *Nilamatapurana*.⁵⁰ According to the Purana it was obligatory for the Aryans to worship the king of Nagas, Nila, as Kashmir belonged to him. The Purana pronounces 23 hymns in the honour of Nila Naga. For Brahmanising the practices contained in the Purana, it was asserted that Vishnu declared the Nila as a part of his own self, and “He who disobeys his order meets destruction at my hand”. Also the *Purana* claimed that the Nila received the instructions from *Kesava*. Besides worshipping Nila it was obligatory for the Brahmans to worship around 603 Nagas contained in the Purana.⁵¹

Nagas are designated in Kashmir as the tutelary deities supposed to reside in the springs and lakes of the valley. It is because of this association of the Nagas with water that a spring to this day is called Nag in Kashmir. The popular conception of the Nagas represents them in the form of snakes, living in the water of the springs or lakes protected by them. They can, however, also appear in human shape or may take the form of clouds and hailstorms. So much crusted was the belief of springs being abodes of spirits with supernatural powers that people could not forget it notwithstanding their conversion to Islam. Hard Rsi is quoted as having said that the spirits of springs visited him for seeking guidance, Baba Daud Khakhi claims to have seen one such spirit in the religious assemblies held at Hard Rsi’s home during the course of the recital of *Aurad-i-Fatthiyah*.⁵² This reminds one of the Brahmanical legend in which a Naga becomes a pious ascetic and the Buddhist lore where he develops into a self-denying saint. All in all, therefore, the Rsi’s and latter Suhrawardis reinforced the ancient belief of the anthropomorphic attributes of the springs. Even in the beginning of the 20th century Stein found the influences of Naga worship on the Kashmir Muslims: “the belief in *Nagas* is fully alive also in the Muhammadan population of the Valley, which in many places has not ceased to pay a kind of superstitious respect and ill –disguised worship to these deities.” Mirza Haider

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Wani, Muhammad Ashraf., “Tradition in Flux”, Paper presented in three day national seminar on “Tradition and Dissent in Indian History”, organized by Department of History, University of Kashmir, 2001.

⁵² Wani, Muhammad Ashraf, Op.cit., pp 34-56.

Dughlat, Abul Fazl and Malik Haider Chadoora have mentioned in detail many superstitious practices and beliefs followed by the Kashmiri Muslims, owing to the impact of the Naga cult on them.⁵³ The legend and myths pertaining to the cave of Ashmuqaam by Zaina Rsi as for his future abode refer to his most sympathetic and considerate relationship with the original dwellers of the cave, the snakes. Suffice it to say that at the time of drought the peasants flocked to worship and made appropriate offerings of sheep or goat at the springs so that the power residing in the springs would be pleased to release the water for irrigating their dry fields. That the Kashmiri Muslims consider the fish of a spring *haram* (forbidden) and do not kill or eat them is understandably the legacy of deep-rooted Naga cult.

Significantly the first holy practice which the human beings had to observe for living in Kashmir was that they had to celebrate with elaborate rituals the full moon night of 15th of *Asvayuj* for the worship of *Nikumbha*, the chief of the *Pisacas*.⁵⁴ The elaborate rituals are discussed in 31 verses of the *Purana* showing that this was the most important religious ritual which the Vedic people had to observe. And alongside goddess *Umma* being the river *Vetasta*, Lakshmi the river *Visoka*, *Aditi* the river *Trikoti*, *Sachi*, *Harsapatha*, *Deti* the mother of *Detiyas* (demons) became the river *Chandravati*.⁵⁵

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Nilmatpurana, Op.cit., p 23.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

B. Smarta Vedic-Puranic Savism

Siva traditions are those whose focus is the deity Siva and a Siva is a Hindu who follows the teachings of Siva (*Sivasana*). These teachings are thought to have been revealed in sacred scriptures and propagated through the generations in traditions of ritual observance and theology. Sir John Marshall maintains that the worship of Siva goes back to many thousands of years in the subcontinent to the Indus valley civilization, where steatite seals have been found suggestive of a deity akin to Siva. The famous ‘*Pasupati*’ seal shows a steed, perhaps ithyphallic, horned figure surrounded by animals. Sir John Marshall has suggested that this is a prototype of Siva as the *Yogin* and *Pasupati*, the lord of animals.⁵⁶ But it is not clear from the seals that this is a proto-Siva figure and Asko Parpola has convincingly suggested that the seal is in fact a seated bull, almost identical to figures of seated bulls found on early *Elamite* seals of 3000-2750 B.C.⁵⁷ It may be, of course, that elements of Siva’s later iconography – such as the crescent moon in his hair – can be traced to this period but unless the Indus valley script is deciphered, these seals can only be suggestive. There are early textual references to *Rudra*, arguably a forerunner of Siva, one of whose epithets is “auspicious” (Siva), in the *Rigveda*. Here three hymns are addressed to *Rudra*, the “roarer”. He is clothed in an animal skin, brown, with a black belly and a red back. Even at this time he is an ambiguous deity who is like a ferocious beast destroying families and livestock, but yet who is also a benevolent healer of disease.⁵⁸ A famous hymn in *Rigveda*, the hundred names of *Rudra* (*Satarudriya*), speaks further of this ambiguous nature, a hymn which is referred to in the *Siva Purana* and is still recited in *Siva* temples today.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Marshall, J., *Mohenjo-Daro and the Indus Civilization*, 1931, Oxford University Press, London, p 52. But there are scholars who doubt such claims made by Marshall, in this regard Shereen Ratnager says, “the famous seal from Mohenjo-Daro showing a horned personage seated on a stool in what we would today call *Baddhakonasana*, the arms covered with bangles, and flanked by small figures of the rhinoceros and buffalo on one side, and the elephant and tiger on the other, cannot automatically be labelled ‘the prototype of Siva as ‘*Pasupati*’..... Ratnagar, Sheern, *Op.cit.*, pp 122-123.

⁵⁷ Parpola, A., *Deciphering the Indus Script*, 1994, Cambridge University Press, pp 248-50.

⁵⁸ Flood, Gavin, ed. *The Blackwell Companion to Hinduism*, 2008, Blackwell, pp 204-05.

⁵⁹ Gonda, Jan, “The Satarudriya”, in M. Nagatomi, B.K. Matilal and J.M. Masson, eds., *Sanskrit and Indian Studies: Essays in Honour of Daniel H.H. Ingalls*, Dordrecht, Reidel, pp 75-91.

But it is only with the *Svetasvatara Upanisad*, composed some time prior to the *Bhagavad Gita* that theism focused upon *Rudra-Siva* begins to emerge in the literature. This text is important in marking a link between the earlier monistic *Upanisads* and the later theistic traditions. Here *Rudra* is elevated from the feral deity on the edges of society to the status of the supreme-being as the cause of the cosmos, the magician (*mayin*) who produces the world through his grace (*prasada*), liberates the soul from its journey from body to body due to its actions. The seeds of Siva theology are here and indeed the terms “*guru*” and “*bhakti*” occur for the first time in the text, although more than likely this passage is a later interpolation. But certainly the seeds of devotion are implicit in the text’s theism.⁶⁰

The formation of Siva tradition as we understand them begins to occur during the period from 200 B.B to 100 A.D. Apart from the *Svestasvatara*, we have reference to a Siva devotee, a *Siva-bhagavata*, in the grammarian *Patanjali*’s commentary on the Panini grammar.⁶¹ He describes him as a figure clad in animal skins and carrying an iron lance as a symbol of his god, and there are references to early Siva ascetics in the Mahabharata.⁶² There are also suggestions of Siva worship on the coins of Greek, Saka, and Parthian kings who ruled north India during this period, bearing a bull, a later symbol of Siva. While little can be inferred from this, it is probable that adoption of Siva traditions of some form accompanied the general “Indianization” of the foreign rulers.⁶³

During the Gupta dynasty (320-50 A.D) the Puranas developed along with the *Samarta Brahmin* forms of worship.⁶⁴ The Siva Puranas, most notably the *Linga* and *Siva Purana*, contain standard material on genealogy, cast responsibilities, and cosmology, along with specifically Siva topics of installing the symbol (*Linga*) of Siva in temples, descriptions of the forms of Siva and material on early Siva sects. The followers of the Puranic religion, the Mahesvara, referred to by Sankara,⁶⁵ would at death, having led a life of devotion and responsible enactment of social duties, be

⁶⁰ Flood, Gavin, Op.cit., p 205.

⁶¹ *Astadhyayi of Panini*, Katre, Sumitra M., (Trans), 1989, Delhi, pp5, 2, 7, 6.

⁶² Bhandarkar, D.R., *Vaisnavism, Saivism and Minor Religious Systems*, New Delhi, 1983, p 165.

⁶³ Flood, Gavin, Op.cit., p 205.

⁶⁴ For more on this see, Buhnemann, Gurdurn, *Puja: A Study in Smarta Ritual*, 1988, Vienna, Publications of De Nobili Research Library.

⁶⁵ Flood, Gavin, Op.cit., p 205.

transported to Siva's heaven (*Siva-loka*) in the *Brahmanda* and so be liberated. This is the Siva equivalent of the Vaisnava heaven *Vaalkuntha* where the Puranic Vaisnava would go at death. Fully orthopraxy, the Mahesvara adhered to the *Smarta* observance of social duties, the *Varnasrama-Dharama*, pre-orthodox forms of Siva and using Vedic mantras. He followed the Brahmanical path in an ordered universe in which his place in the cosmos at death was assured, as had been his social position in life.

Whatever might have been the origin of Saivism in Kashmir, there is no doubt that Siva as a popular deity was widely worshipped in the valley. If Kalhana is to be believed, there was a shrine of *Siva-vijayesa* even in pre-Ashokan days.⁶⁶ Ashoka himself built two temples of *Siva Asokesvara*⁶⁷ and was also a devotee of *Siva Bhutesa*.⁶⁸ Ashoka's son Jalauka was also a worshiper of Siva. He made a vow that he would ever worship *Siva Vijayesvara* and *Jyesthesa* residing at *Nandisaksetra*.⁶⁹ He also erected a shrine of *Siva Jyesharudra* at Srinagar⁷⁰ and built a stone temple at *Nandiksetra* for *Siva Bhutesa*.⁷¹ Next king Damodara II is said to have been crest jewel of Siva worshippers.⁷² The Huna chief Mihirakula, who came into possession of the valley some-time in the 6th century CE founded at Srinagari a shrine of *Siva Mihiresvara*.⁷³ King Gokarna, established a shrine of *Siva Gokarnesvara*⁷⁴, his son Narendraditya Khinkhila of *Siva Bhutesvara*⁷⁵ and the latter's preceptor of *Siva Ugresa*.⁷⁶ Tunjina-I built a temple of *Siva Tungesvara*.⁷⁷ A Kashmirian minister named Samdhitmati became famous for his devotion to Siva.⁷⁸ When this minister became a king, he constructed two shrines of Siva under the names of *Samdhisvara* and *Isesvara*.⁷⁹ King Sresthasena, also known as Pravarasena I, constructed the first

⁶⁶ *Rajatarangini*, Book .I, Op.cit., pp 105-106

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p 106.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p 107.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p 113.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p 124.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p 148.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p 154.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p 346; Mihirakula's devotion to Siva is also borne out by his coins where the *Trisula* and bull of Siva appear and the legend runs as *Jayatu Visa Divaja*, Cunningham, *Coins of Mediaeval India*, p 27.

⁷⁴ *Rajatarangini*, Book. I, Op.cit., p 346.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p 347.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p 348.

⁷⁷ *Rajatarangini*, Book. II, Op.cit., p 14.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p 65.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp 123-135.

shrine of *Pravaresvara*.⁸⁰ King Pravarasena II, who was a staunch follower of Siva,⁸¹ consecrated the *Linga* of *Pravaresvara*.⁸² Another king Ranaditya was a votary of Siva and erected temples in honour of his adorned god.⁸³

The account of Siva worship in Kashmir, as given above, has been gleaned principally from the first three books of the *Rajatarangini* and as such, cannot claim to be wholly trustworthy. The facts furnished by Kalhana, however, indicate in the main, the wide prevalence of the Siva cult in the valley from an early period.⁸⁴ While coming to the more sober portions of Kalhana's work, we find innumerable references to the foundations of Siva shrines, erection of temples in honour of Siva, etc. These references, more reliable than the former ones, help us to portray the actual picture of Saivism in Kashmir in later days. The Karkotas came to occupy the throne of Kashmir in the 7th century. Some members of this family were devoted to the cult of Siva. Narendraprabha, mother of Lalitaditya, built a shrine of *Siva Narendresvara*.⁸⁵ Lalitaditya erected a lofty temple of stone for *Siva Jyestharudra* and made a grant of land and villages for the maintenance of the temple.⁸⁶ He also offered a large amount of money to the shrine of *Siva Bhutesa*.⁸⁷ The king's love for Saivism was perhaps contagious and his minister Mitrasarman founded a shrine of *Siva Mitresvara*.⁸⁸ Acarya Bhapata constructed a shrine of Siva under the name of *Bhappatesvara* and many other shrines of Siva called *Rakchatesa*, etc. were put up by a most of people.⁸⁹ During the reign of Lalitaditya's grandson Jayapida, his chamberlain Aca built a shrine of *Siva Acesvara*.⁹⁰

Saivism received patronage also from the Utpalas, who succeeded the Karkotas. Avantivarman's minister Sura built at Suresvarilsetra a temple in honour of Siva and his consort.⁹¹ His son Ratnavardhana erected a temple of *Siva Bhutesvara*.⁹² The king

⁸⁰ *Rajatarangini*, Book. III, Op.cit., p 99.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp 268-280.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p 350.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp 440-463.

⁸⁴ Chandra, Ray Sunil, *Early History and Culture of Kashmir*, 2008, Jay Kay Books, Srinagar, p 202.

⁸⁵ *Rajatarangini*, Book. IV, Op.cit., p 43.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p 119.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p 189.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p 209.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p 214.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p 513.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, Book. V., p 37.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p 40.

Avantivarman founded at Avantipura a temple of *Siva Avantisvara*.⁹³ In fact Avantivarman constructed not only *Avantisvara* temple but also *Avantisvamin* temple only a km. away from the former temple towards the later stage of his life. The construction of two temples speaks about the popularity of Saivism during the early stages of his rule, but ones the king consolidates his position he constructs the second temple which biters his inner faith at the fag-end of his rule. A conjecture could be made here by presuming that Saivism was more powerful in Kashmir during the period that even the kings could not supersede it. At the shrines of *Tripuresvara*, *Bhutesa*, and *Vijayesa*, three pedestals were fitted by the king with both conduits made of silver.⁹⁴ The king, moreover, regularly went to worship at the Siva shrines of *Bhutesvara* and other places.⁹⁵ Avnantivarman's successor to the throne was his son Samkaravarman. He too was a devotee of Siva. In the town of *Samkarapura* (present Pattan) founded by him, the king built two temples of *Samkaragaurisa* and *Sugandhesa*.⁹⁶ The latter temple was built in the name of Samkaravarman's queen, Sugandha who, evidently, like her husband, was a worshipper of Siva. Samkara's minister Ratnavardhana erected another temple of *Sadasiva Ratnavardhanesa*.⁹⁷ Siva was worshiped with great devotion not only in the Karktoa and Utpala period, but also in the succeeding ages. Parvagupta, who was on the throne of Kashmir about the middle of the 10th century CE founded the shrine of *Siva Parvaguptesvara*.⁹⁸ Another temple of *Siva Ksemagaurisvara* was erected by the succeeding king Ksemagupta.⁹⁹

Among the members of the first Lohara dynasty, Samgramaraja obtained religious merit by restoring the famous shrine of *Siva Ranesvara*.¹⁰⁰ Queen Suryamati founded the temple of *Siva Gaurisvara*¹⁰¹ and also consecrated a second temple of *Sadasiva* near the royal palace.¹⁰² Her devotion towards Siva was further marked by the consecration of *Trisulas*, *Banalingas*, and other sacred emblems.¹⁰³ Suryamati's

⁹³ Ibid., p 45.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p 46.

⁹⁵ Ibid., pp 48-49.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p 158.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p 163.

⁹⁸ Ibid., Book .VI., p 137.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p 173.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., Book. VII, p 115.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p 180.

¹⁰² Ibid., p 181.

¹⁰³ Ibid., Book. VIII, p 185.

husband, king Ananta, according to the evidence of Kalhana, surpassed even the *Munis* by his devotion of Siva.¹⁰⁴ Ananta's son Kalasa too was a staunch follower of Siva. The stone temple of *Siva Vijayesa* which was formerly burnt down was built anew by him.¹⁰⁵ At Tripuresvara, Kalasa founded another temple of Siva.¹⁰⁶ A third temple of the god was erected by him under the name of *Kalasesvara*.¹⁰⁷ All these temples were adorned with golden parasols and cups and the like.

Saivism also flourished under the second Lohara dynasty. Rerilhana, a minister of Jayasimha, built at Puranadhisthana, a shrine of *Siva Rilhanesvara*.¹⁰⁸ Another minister of the king, Bhutta by name, consecrated a Siva image called *Bhutesvara*.¹⁰⁹ Prince Sangiya, a chief from the Takka territory, founded a *Linga* after his own name.¹¹⁰ Mankha the brother of Samdhivigrahika Alamkara, constructed a shrine of *Srikantha Siva* along with a *Matha*.¹¹¹ A shrine of *Siva Rudresvara* was erected by Jayasimha's queen Radda.¹¹² The virtuous king Simhadeva bowed to *Samkara*, the lord of *Gauri* and caused Vijayesvara to be bathed in milk purchased with one lakh pieces of gold (*Niska*).¹¹³ Thus the above description gives a clear idea about the dominance of Siva tradition in Kashmir.

Early Kashmir Saivism was of the *Pasupata* sect.¹¹⁴ According to a tradition recorded in the Mahabharata, the *Pasupata* doctrine was preached first by Siva *Srikantha*. It is interesting to note that Siva *Srikantha* was also regarded in the Valley as the promulgator of *Sivagama* or *Agamanta Saivism*¹¹⁵ which included within itself the system of *Pasupata*.

The early Kashmir Saivism, based on a number of *Tantras* seems to have preached a dualistic doctrine. From the 8th or 9th century, however, the Siva system of Kashmir

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., Book. VII, p 201.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p 525.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p 526.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p 527.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., Book. VIII, p 2409.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p 2432.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p 3348.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p 3354.

¹¹² Ibid., pp 3389-3391.

¹¹³ Jonaraja, *Rajatarangini*, trans., J. C. Dutt, 1998, Calcutta, verse 127.

¹¹⁴ *Rajatarangini*, Book I.I, Op.cit., pp 17-48., Vol. III., pp 267, 460., Vol. V., p 404.

¹¹⁵ Chatterjee, J.C., *Kashmir Saivism*, 1985, Delhi, p 36.

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 Sastra*. This survey of Siva history, practice and doctrine, shows the diversity of the traditions. Yet it also shows distinctive religious imaginaries that sets Saivism apart from other Indian traditions. There is a fascinating history of groups of *yogis* known as *Naths* or *Siddhas* which has been strongly influenced by Saivism and a rich history of Siva tradition in Southeast Asia.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ White, D.G., *The Alchemical Body: Siddha Tradition in Medieval India*, 1996, Chicago University Press, pp 34-56.

C. Smarta Vedic-Puranic Vaisnavism:

History of Vaisnavism in India can be traced right back to the Vedic period. It is one of the oldest living religions of India and the basis of the religious beliefs of Vaisnavism is the upholding of Vishnu as the Ultimate Reality (*paratattva*). It is a monotheistic system which believes that the exclusive and devoted worship of Vishnu leads to the realization of the highest spiritual goal (*parama-purusartha*) and for this purpose, it has laid down an ethical and religious discipline. The term Vaisnavism etymologically refers to the god Vishnu who, however, is now worshiped more in his incarnations as Krishna or Rama than as the Vedic pervade who is later defined as the embodiment of the quality of *sattva*- the cohesive tendency which holds the universe together- and iconographically represented as a god with four arms symbolising his divine powers.¹¹⁷ The Vaisnava religion revolves round the worship of the supreme god *Narayana-Vishnu* and his numerous manifestations. The epics and the Puranas do not differentiate between *Narayana* and Vishnu; both the names designate the same god who is considered highest by his worshipers, described variously as the *Bhagavatas*, *Pancarattras*, *Ekantins*, *Sattvatas* and *Vaisnavas*.¹¹⁸ The last mentioned worshipers are named only thrice¹¹⁹ in the Mahabharata in a very late passage, but frequently in the Puranas. Similarly, the Mahabharata generally speaks of the deity as *Narayana*, the usage of his other name ‘*Vishnu*’ being comparatively rare.¹²⁰ It follows that the predominance of the Vishnu element in a religion which came to be known as Vaisnava is a later development, and in the beginning *Narayana* was the deity *par excellence*.

Narayana is a non-Vedic divinity mentioned for the first time in two passages¹²¹ of the *Satapatha Brahmana*. In the first he is described as having sent forth from the place of sacrifice the *Vasus*, the *Rudras*, and the *Adityas* by means of morning, midday and evening offerings, he alone remaining in the place. *Prajapati* asked him

¹¹⁷ Bowes, Pratima, *The Hindu Religious Tradition: A Philosophical Approach*, Allied Publishers, New Delhi, 1982, p 219.

¹¹⁸ Jaiswal, Suvira, *The Origin and Development of Vaisnavism*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, New-Delhi, 2nd rev. ed. 1981, p 32.

¹¹⁹ *Mahabharata*, ed. Ramchandra Shastri Kunjawadekar, Poona, 1933, reprint, New Delhi, 1979, p XVIII. 6. 97; 6.98, 6.103.

¹²⁰ Bhandarkar, R.G., *Vaisnavism, Saivism and Minor Religious Systems*, 1913, Strassburg, p. 49.

¹²¹ *Satapatha Brahmana*, ed. A. Weber, Oxford, 1882-1900, p XII. 3.4. if; XIII.6.if.

to sacrifice again; and by means of sacrifice *Narayana* placed himself in all the worlds, the gods, the Vedas, the vital airs, etc.; and all things were placed in him. The same idea is expressed differently in the other passage which states that by performing the *pancaratrastra*, or the five-day sacrifice, *Narayana* gained superiority over all beings, and became identical with all beings. The *Pursua-sukta* is said to be his litany. This shows that already at the time of the composition of the *Satapatha Brahmana* *Narayana* was a deity of considerable eminence.

Attempts are made to trace the original meaning and source of the term *Narayana*, and it is held that it is a *gotra* name derived from *Nara*, analogous to *Kanvayana*, *Katyayana* and similar formations. Thus, according to this view, *Narayana* was a deified sage born in the family of another sage *Nara*. *Nara* and *Narayana* were advocates of solar worship, which led to their identification with sun-god Vishnu in course of time.¹²² This interpretation of terms completely ignores the fact that in the Mahabharata the sage *Nara* is born out of the austerities performed by *Narayana* and not vice versa. Nor is there a shred of evidence to show that *Nara* and *Narayana* ever preached the worship of the sun; the earliest source mentioning *Narayana*, the *Satapatha Brahmana*, speaks of him as a god and not a human being. No doubt it describes him as *Pursa-Narayana*, but the epithet stands here for the Primeval Man, who was considered as much divine as any gods, and is described in the *Pursa-sukta* hymn as the thousand-headed, thousand-eyed male.¹²³ The argument¹²⁴ that the human character of *Narayana* is implied in the passage which states that *Narayana* gained transcendence and immanence after performing the sacrifice, does not stand scrutiny, for even *Prajapati-Brahma* and *Brahma-Svayambhu* are described as having acquired their powers through sacrifice in this work¹²⁵, and the divine character of these deities can hardly be questioned. The view representing *Narayana* as ‘an ancient leader of thought’ dedicated to sun-worship is just an instance of the euhemeristic tendency, repeatedly exhibited in the study of Indian religions, which leads to far-

¹²² Bowes, Pratima, , Op.cit., p 218.

¹²³ *Satapatha Brahmana*, Op.cit., p XII.3.4.if.

¹²⁴ Barnett, L.D., *Hindu Gods and Heroes*, 1936, Calcutta, pp 76-78; see also, Sircar, D.C., *The Age of Imperial Unity (History and Culture of the Indian People, Vol. II., p 437.*

¹²⁵ Dasgupta, S. N., *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vols. II and III, 1952, Cambridge, p 12.

fetched rationalisations and reconstructions of wrong history with no sound justification.¹²⁶

According to another opinion¹²⁷ *Narayana* is a deity of Dravidian origin, his name being a composite of three Dravidian words ‘*nar-ay-an*’. The first part ‘*nar*’ is equated, with Dravidian ‘*nir*’, meaning ‘water’ and ‘*ay*’ means ‘to lie in a place’. With the addition of the Dravidian male personal termination ‘*an*’, it is argued, the name was applied to the male deity who was supposed to lie or reside on waters.¹²⁸ A famous verse of the Mahabharata,¹²⁹ which recurs with slight variations in the Smritis and the Puranas states that waters are known as *Nara*, since they are the offspring of *Nara*. As the waters are the resting places of the Supreme Being, (as per Hindu philosophy) he is described as *Narayana*. It is contended that this rather forced attempt to explain *Nara* as waters, and the fanciful etymology of the word *Narayana*, indicate that the word and deity are of non-Sanskrit, Dravidian origin. However, we may point out that this view does not explain how *Nir* was changed into *Nar*. It seems to suffer from a pre-conceived notion that the name must refer to the conception of the deity as lying on waters as suggested by the Mahabharata verse. But the poet of the Mahabharata seems to have taken particular delight in inventing fanciful derivations of the names of the deities, and any reliance on them may be quit misleading.¹³⁰

Nevertheless, the Mahabharata refers to another less known connotation of the word. A passage of the *Udyoga Parva*¹³¹ and of the *Narayaniya*¹³² states that the godhead is the refuge of all men, and so he is known as *Narayana*. R.G. Bhandarkar¹³³ points out that Medhatithi commenting upon Manu explains the word in a similar fashion; so *Narayana* should mean the resting place or goal (*ayana*) of *Nara* or a collection of *Narah* i.e., men. We may add that a passage of the *Brahmanda Purana* which identifies Brahma with *Narayana* states that Brahma is known as *Narayana*, for he is

¹²⁶ Bhandarkar, R.G., Op.cit., pp 44- 47.

¹²⁷ *Satapatha Brahmana*, Op.cit., p III. 9.1. 4f; XIII. 7.1.1.

¹²⁸ Jaiswal, Suvira, Op.cit., p 33.

¹²⁹ *Mahabharata*, Op.cit., p XII. 328. 35.

¹³⁰ Jaiswal, Suvira, Op.cit., p 34.

¹³¹ *Mahabharata*, Op.cit., p V. 68.10.

¹³² *Naranamayanam Khyatamahamekah, Sanatanah*, Ibid., p XIII.328.35.

¹³³ Bhandarkar R.G., Op.cit., pp 42-43.

the place of eternal sleep of men (*Naranam*). Thus *Narayana* seems to be a combination of two words *Nara* and *Ayana*. In the Vedic literature *Ayana* is used in the sense of ‘going,’ ‘a path’ or ‘road’. Evidently, just as *Nadayana* formed from *Nada* under a sutra of Panini¹³⁴ signifies the *gotra* or the place where a collection of *Nadas* go¹³⁵, *Narayana* means the place where *Nara* go. In other words we may say that *Narayana* stands for the entire settlement, the collective entity of man, *Nara* for the individual. The intrinsic and inseparable relation of *Narayana* with *Nara*, the Man, gave rise to the epic myth of *Nara* and *Narayana* being constant associates and companions. It is further indicated by the *Satapatha Brahmana* which identifies him with *Purusa*, the Primeval Man, and describes him as *Purusa-Narayana*. The text narrates that *Purusa-Narayana* conceived the idea of the *Pancaratra-sattra* with a desire to overpass all beings and become everything here on the universe, and this five-day sacrificial session is described as the *Purusamedha*, the immolation of man.¹³⁶ Although the gigantic array of human victims listed in this text suggests that the sacrifice had by now become symbolical, the passage undoubtedly discloses *Narayan’s* connection with the institution of human-sacrifices and his hoary antiquity. We have unmistakable evidence of the original association of *Narayana* with the rite of human-sacrifice in the form of the ritual of *Narayana-bali* described in some *Grhya-Sutras*.¹³⁷ It is stated that the rite of *Narayana-bali*, literally, an offering to *Narayana*, should be performed for those who die an unnatural death, commit suicide, or are slain and for all those persons for whom cremation is forbidden. It was especially ordained for those who committed the five kinds of great crimes (*Mahapatakah*).¹³⁸

The conception of *Narayana* as a god embodying the whole universe is a logical development from the earlier meaning denoting ‘the dwelling-place, or a resort of a collection of men.’ The idea of a universal form (*Visvarupa* or *Virat-rupa*) of the god popularized by the *Gita* appears to have been originally associated with *Narayana*,

¹³⁴ Paninis *Astadhyayi*, ed. And tr. Srisa Chandra Vasu, 1891, Allahabad, p 1.99.

¹³⁵ Bhandarkar R.G., *Op.cit.*, pp 42-43.

¹³⁶ *Sa etam pancaratram purusamedham yajnakratumapasyat. Satapatha Brahmana*, *Op.cit.*, p XIII 6.

¹³⁷ Jaiswal, Suvira, *Op.cit.*, p 36.

¹³⁸ *Manusmrti (Manava Dharma Sastra)*, ed. J. Jolly, London, 1887, p XI. 55.

and it is contended¹³⁹ that a prototype of the cosmic form of the god shown to *Arjuna* in the *Bhagavadgita* may be found in the *Aranyaka Parva*¹⁴⁰ of the Mahabharata, which narrates the myth of sage *Markandeya's* entry into the mouth of *Narayana* and presents his vision of the whole universe as existing inside the body of the deity. It is rightly argued¹⁴¹ that the god of the *Gita* is neither Vishnu nor *Vasdeva* among the *Vrsnis*, for both are cited as a special case. The *Narayaniya* section of Mahabharata describes the worshipers of the supreme deity *Narayana-Vasudeva* as *Sattvatas*, *Bhagavatas*, *Pancarattras* and *Ekantins*.

The paucity of material makes it very difficult to discern the process which led to *Narayana's* identity with Vishnu, but we may point out a passage in the *Maitri Upanisad* which seems to foreshadow the eventual merging of the two. It identifies the soul (*Atman*) with several gods enumerated as *Isana*, *Sambhu*, *Bhava*, *Rudra*, *Prajapati*, *Visvasrj*, *Hiranyagarbha*, *Satya*, *Prana*, *Hamsa*, *Sasta*, *Acyuta*, *Vishnu* and *Narayana*. The order of the gods suggests that Vishnu and *Narayana* were closely associated, and had prominent similarities. In the Mahabharata and the Puranas the first four names mentioned in the passage refer to the deity *Rudra-Siva*, the next three to *Prajapati-Brahma* and the last three to the well-known names of the supreme deity of the *Vaisnavas*. Among the early *Upanisads* the *Maitri Upanisad* is supposed to be one of the later ones, and it is certainly post-Buddhist.¹⁴² We may assume that, just as similarity in character and attributes conducted to the amalgamation of the Vedic *Rudra* with the non-Vedic *Siva-Sankara*, a similar synthesis worked in the case of Vedic Vishnu and non-Vedic *Narayana*. In the Mahabharata, the identity of *Narayana* and Vishnu is an established fact, but the prominence of the first- mentioned name in the work may suggest that the masses, for which the great epic was intended had greater reverence for or were more familiar with the god *Narayana* than Vishnu.¹⁴³

¹³⁹ Kosambi, D.D., “The Avatara Syncretism and Possible Sources of Social and Economic Aspects of Bhagavadgita”, in *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, XXIV-XXV, 1948-49, p 124f.

¹⁴⁰ *Mahabharata*, Book III., Op.cit., p 186.39f.

¹⁴¹ Kosambi, D.D., Op.cit., p 245.

¹⁴² Macdonell, A.A., *A History of Sanskrit Literature*, 1971, New Delhi, p 230.

¹⁴³ The popularity of *Narayana* is shown by the occurrence of his name in the Buddhist works also; Jaiswal, Suvira, Op.cit., p 51.

Much is written about the Vedic god Vishnu and his rise to the rank of highest divinity in post-Vedic times. In the *Rigveda* only five hymns are addressed to him; his name is mentioned nearly a hundred times, and it is stated¹⁴⁴ that statistically he is a deity of the fourth rank. He often appears in the role of an assistant of *Indra*, and is inferior to him,¹⁴⁵ but there are indications that even in the *Rigvedic* age he was considered to be a great god,¹⁴⁶ and it is suggested that he may have been more popular among the masses whose ideas and inclinations are not recorded in the Vedas.¹⁴⁷ The majority of the scholars are of the opinion that Vishnu represents a form of the sun in the *Rigveda*.¹⁴⁸ But Gonda, who has made a detailed study of the various features of Vishnu, comes to the conclusion that the solar traits of the god represent only one aspect of the deity who is closely associated with vegetation and fertility, and that his principal attribute is his power to pervade and penetrate the regions of the universe. He derives support for his argument from the traditional etymology of Vishnu's name offered in the Puranas, which interpret it as one who enters or pervades. Earlier, R. Otto made a similar suggestion that Vishnu originally represented a power or *numen* dwelling in certain things, pervading and penetrating them.¹⁴⁹ Whatever may have been the original character of Vishnu, his importance was steadily growing in the Vedic circles. In the *Satapatha Brahmana*, he is identified with the sacrifice¹⁵⁰ and in the early *Sutra* works he is an important divinity to whom oblations are offered in many *Srauta* and *Grhya* sacrifices.¹⁵¹ With the rise of Buddhism the cult of *Indra*, becomes discredited, and Vishnu appropriates many myths and features of *Indra*.¹⁵² In the Mahabharata and the Puranas *Indra* is a subordinate divinity, who can maintain his position only through the grace of Vishnu. His identification with *Narayana* further contributed to his rise, and in the new religious movement the Vishnu element asserts itself fully by the fourth-fifth century CE. The *Bhagavadrupa* or *Virat-rupa* of the god in the *Bhagavadgita* becomes the

¹⁴⁴ Keith, A.B., *The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanisada*, 1925, Cambridge, p108.

¹⁴⁵ Raychaudhuri, H.C., *Material for the Study of the Early History of the Vaisnava sect*, 1936, Calcutta, reprint, New Delhi, 1972, p 14.

¹⁴⁶ Bhandarkar R.G., *Op.cit.*, pp 47.

¹⁴⁷ Gonda, J., *Aspects of Early Visnuism*, 1954, Utrecht, p 10f.

¹⁴⁸ Macdonell, A.A., *Vedic Methodology*, 1897, Strassburg, p 37f.

¹⁴⁹ Otto, Rudolf, "The God of the Gita, *Visva Bharati Quarterly*, Vol. I, pt. II, 1935, p 21f.

¹⁵⁰ *Satapatha Brahmana*, *Op.cit.*, p 1.9.3.9.

¹⁵¹ Ram Gopal, *India of Vedic Kalpasutras*, 1959, Delhi, p 466.

¹⁵² Gonda, J., *Op.cit.*, p 122.

Viasnava-rupa in the *Anugita*; and the term *Parama-Vaisnava*, the devote worshiper of Vishnu, appears for the first time on the coins of the *Traikutaka* kings. We have already mentioned that ‘Vaisnava’ as a title of the worshiper of Vishnu is found only in the latest portions of the Mahabharata. The shift to Vishnu element symbolises complete Brahmanization of the diverse trends originating from *Naryana*, *Vasudeva* and other divinities, who are fused and assimilated into Vaisnavism, and its widespread recognition as an orthodox Vedic cult.

Vaisnavism was a development of *Bhagavatism*, the cult of *Bhagavat Narayana*, which through a process of synthesis and absorption became one of the most influential religions of the Gupta age. The cult of the god *Narayana* is the heritage of a very ancient past and its history provides an outstanding example of the origin and evolution of the conception of a god developing out of the primitive tribal life and linked inseparably with the social and material conditions of the times. Numerous scholars have attempted¹⁵³ till now to explain the origin and significance of the terms ‘*Narayana*’, ‘*Bhagavat*’, ‘*Bhakti*’, and ‘*Pancaratra*’ as discussed above. But they have not been able to get rid of the inhibitions imposed upon their minds by the current meanings of the terms and by their ideological outlook; hence they could not fathom the real nature of the *Pancaratra sattr* of *Narayana* and its connection with the later cult of the same name, nor could they offer any explanation for the transition in the meanings of the terms *Bhagavat* and *Bhakti*. Practices and usages which appeared shocking to later sense of propriety were rationalised as mere symbolism, ignoring the fact that symbolism also arises out of material foundations, and obsolete rites which appear senseless today, justifiable only through far-fetched superficial interpretations, had some real practical significance at the time of their origin. *Narayana*, who represented the entire tribal settlement was the *Bhagavat*, the owner and dispenser of communal wealth and was closely associated with agriculture.¹⁵⁴ Similarly *Bhakta* was originally a share of the communal wealth mainly consisting of food,¹⁵⁵ and as a member of the tribe, he belonged to *Narayana*. In course of time, the gulf between the all-powerful body of the tribe and the individual member widened,

¹⁵³ Jaiswal, Suvira, Op.cit., p 229.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

and *Bhagavat Narayana* became a transcendental god and *Bhakta* his devotee.¹⁵⁶ With the breakup of tribal society the ties of kinship lost their force, and new relations were established based upon a sense of devotion, subordination and loyalty. The new form of society was reflected in religious thought; and devotion and faith became the major values of the religions that sprang up after the age of the Buddha.¹⁵⁷

Through the unconscious but deep influence of environment and utility on the formation of religious beliefs, the doctrines of *Bhakti* and *Ahimsa* became two cardinal tenets of Vaisnavism, as these were in harmony with the times and were found socially and economically useful. Faith was the basis of a society planed on Varna organisation, and the importance of non-killing of cattle could not be minimised in a community based on agriculture. The same process can be discerned in *Zoroastrianism*, which forbade the killing of dogs and bulls, indispensable for cattle-herding and agriculture.

The confrontation of the old and the new appears to have created a division in the form of *Narayana*-worship, and in the early centuries of the Christian era *Panacaratra* and *Bhagavatism* seem to have emerged as two different sects of the Vaisnavas. The *Panacaratra* clung to ancient rituals and practices in some form and spurned the Varna distinctions keeping up the old tribal spirit in religious matters, but there extant works show that infiltration of Brahmanical ideas had begun in the Gupta period with the result that even the earliest of these resort to some kind of gradation in matters relating to the four Varnas. The other form of worship, *Bhagavatism*, was dominated by Brahmanical ideology and adopted by the ruling classes. Deriving their origin from the same source, the *Panacaratra* cult and *Bhagavatism* diverged through their association with differing social and ritualistic elements. With the identification of the non-Vedic *Narayana* with the Vedic Vishnu, and the success of Brahmanism, *Bhagavatism* transformed itself into Vaisnavism, and the *Pancaratra* came to be an esoteric and exclusive sect of the Vaisnavas.

For lack of evidence as discussed above, we are unable to trace the steps leading to the margining of *Narayana* and Vishnu into one, but similarity in character and status

¹⁵⁶ Bhandarkar R.G., Op.cit., pp 47-48.

¹⁵⁷ Jaiswal, Suvira, Op.cit., p 230.

in the social complex may have been one reason. The use of the name ‘*Narayana*’ is more frequent in earlier texts, which suggests that he enjoyed greater following than the Vedic god. Gradually, the orthodox Vedic element came to predominate over the composite cult which was now transmuted into Vaisnavism and the prestige of *Narayana* and the orthodox character of Vishnu sanctioned by the Vedas combined to give birth to an authoritarian religion upheld by the priestly and the ruling classes.

The alliance of the worship of *Sankarsana* and *Vasudeva* with that of *Narayana* was a momentous event in the history of the cult. *Sankarsana* and *Vasudeva* were popular divinities in the fourth century BCE; *Megasthenes* and *Kautilya* refer to them. Originally, the two were associate gods of the great tribal goddess *Ekanamsa*, but the transition¹⁵⁸ of the *Vrsni* tribe from a matrilineal stage to patriarchal conditions produced a corresponding change in the importance of the deities it worshiped; the male gods became more important, and a large mass of heroic tales and legends gathered round them. In the earlier stages, the two gods were on equal footing, for both were regarded as partial manifestations of *Narayana*, the orthodox divinity. But, later, *Vasudeva* was completely identified with *Narayana*, and he became his most important human incarnation; while *Sankarsana-Baladeva* receded into background becoming his subordinate ally. He came to be looked upon as an incarnation of the serpent, *Sesa*, who formed the bed and support of *Narayana*. Such developments contributed a good deal to the popularisation of *Bhagavatism*.

The initiative towards the assimilation of these cults into *Bhagavatism* may have been taken as early as the second century B.C. by some progressive priests, to combat *Buddhism* as Ray Chaudhuri suggests; but the real stimulus came from the double threat to the existing social order caused by the influx of foreign hordes and the rise of new economic factors causing an improvement in the conditions of the lower Varnas. To restore the social equilibrium and re-establish the sanctity of the Brahmanical way of life, the two popular gods were identified with *Narayana* so that Brahmanical precepts of social and moral conduct could reach the masses through their worship. The epics and the Puranas provided an excellent means for diffusing the remodelled

¹⁵⁸ David M. Scheider, and Kathleen Gough, *Matrilineal Kinship*, 1961, University of California Press, p 234.

cults and the Brahmanical code, and by recasting these, the priests could combine religious and moral instructions with popular entertainment.

The identification of *Narayana* with *Vasudeva*, who was known to have been born among the *Vrsnis*, gave birth to the theory of incarnation, which was further developed under the influence of the Buddhist doctrine of the *Bodhisattvas* and it fostered a hopeful belief in the coming of a saviour. It also served as a highly effective weapon for removing tribal and regional segregation and unifying the entire country in a Brahmanical mould. In Greece tribal and political disunity engendered polytheism and made monotheism impossible; but in India Vaisnavism solved the problem through its doctrine of incarnation by accommodating polytheism within a monotheistic framework and thus served as a powerful integrating force.

But the doctrine also illustrates fully the character of Vaisnavism as it emerged in the Gupta period. Unlike the *Bodhisattvas* who took birth according to the *Jatakas* even in the families of potters, untouchables, carpenters and ironsmiths, not one of the incarnations of Vishnu is supposed to have appeared in a low ranking family. His human incarnations were either kings or sages of great celebrity; and although the ancestry of some sage incarnations such as *Veda-Vyasa* was of dubious respectability,¹⁵⁹ they were all looked upon traditionally as Brahmans. In fact Vaisnavism, as it is preached in the epics and the Puranas completely identifies itself with the Brahmanical social system.¹⁶⁰ The *Bhagavadgita* is remarkably tolerant in religious matters; but it adopts an extremely rigid attitude towards Varna duties. Thus on one side it declares that even those who worship other gods with devotion are in reality worshipping the *Bhagavat* without knowing so,¹⁶¹ and that whatever form (*Tanum*) a votary worships the godhead snakes his faith secure in that very form;¹⁶² on the other side it twice repeats the dictum that it is better to stick to one's *Varna* duty, even if one does it badly, than to perform another's in an excellent manner. The work states clearly that even if one's innate duty, which is nothing else than Varna

¹⁵⁹ Vyasa, the traditional arrange of the Vedas and the author of the Mahabharata and the Puranas, is reputed to have been the son of a fisherwomen. However, some texts describe him as a Bhargava. See Pargiter, F.E., *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition*, 1922, Oxford, p. 202.

¹⁶⁰ The *Skanda Purana* specifically states that Janardana takes incarnation for the sake of the Brahmanas. *Purusottama Mahatmya*, XXXVIII. 41.

¹⁶¹ Jaiswal, Suvira, Op.cit., p 233.

¹⁶² Ibid.

duty, is wrong or objectionable, one should not abandon it,¹⁶³ for the four orders of Varna were created by the god himself.¹⁶⁴ Thus Vaisnavism as it was promulgated in the early centuries of the Christian era was something which came from above, or perhaps it will be more correct to say that popular cults were transformed into Vaisnavism to maintain the Varna bases of society.

The reason of unprecedented popularity of Vaisnavism lies in the fact that the cult could best realise the requirements of the age. In preaching the principle of devotion Vaisnavism was in tune with the social outlook of the times, when the feudatories considered themselves to be subsisting on the feet of their masters (*Padopajivin*).¹⁶⁵ It also fulfilled the needs of all sections of people. The kings could strengthen their power by posing as the incarnations of Vishnu; the rich could earn religious merit by building temples and images; and the poor could hope to improve their condition in the next birth by simple devotion and faithful discharge of social obligations imposed upon them by a Brahmanical society. The cult countenanced all kinds of religious beliefs and superstitions and encouraged faith instead of logic and reasoning. Thus it acted as a powerful instrument for reconciling the masses to their lot and helped in stabilising the social divisions based on the self-sufficient agricultural economy of villages.

The Puranas¹⁶⁶ fully establish the popularity of Vaisnavism as they have depicted a myriad of myths, rituals and modes of worship connected with Vishnu as a supreme god. The *Nilamatapurana* of Kashmir following the track furrowed by other Puranas has also upheld Vishnu as the supreme god and as such is eulogised and assigned a higher stature than that of Brahma and Siva.¹⁶⁷ Vishnu as per the text of *Nilamatapurana* bears four arms, four faces and has lotus eyes; his overall complexion is that of a blue lotus or white snow. He is described as wearing white or yellow clothes, a crown studded with jewels and earrings. Coming to the attributes, the *Nilamatapurana* makes a mention of conch, discus, club, lotus and bow. He is always waited upon by his weapons in human form and *Garuda* is described as his

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Gunaighar Copper Plate 188

¹⁶⁶ Willson, H.H., 1963, *Vedic Mythology*, Varanast, pp 37-39.

¹⁶⁷ Kumari, Ved., Op.cit., Vol 1, p 139.

mount.¹⁶⁸ The text does not allude to any of the single headed Vishnu images. But such images have been discovered from various art centres in Kashmir establishing the popularity of the *Bhagavat* cult, which also falls within the ambience of Vaisnavism in general. The *Visnudharmottara Purana* has given an elaborate depiction of *Vasudeva* icons.

Ramanuja, the founder of qualified monism, is said to have paid a visit to valley of Kashmir to propagate his brand of Vaisnavism¹⁶⁹ along with its philosophical propositions with a view to combating Saivism, which as a philosophy had left its impact on south India only to generate a new Saivaite movement there. He when in Kashmir must have certainly proved a source to strength to the followers of the creed. Though *Ramanuja's* visit to Kashmir is dated somewhere in the 11th century A.D., it is proof enough to determine the role-profile that Kashmir over the years had come to acquire in regard to the Vaisnava cult and creed in general. Not only was the mass mind deeply impressed by the Vaisnava religious patterns of worship, but it also provided a new impulse to the Kashmirian genius to make new additions to the Philosophical doctrines of the creed and weave a new web of mythology in tune with Vaisnavite gods and goddesses. The *Nilamatapurana*, which is dominantly a Vaisnavite text, gives an elaborate account of Vaisnava impact on the life of the Kashmirians, who shaped their ethical pattern of life and aesthetic expression in consonance with Vaisnava tenets. The valley was a seat of Vishnu in the form of *Cakrin*, says the *Visnudharmottara Purana*.¹⁷⁰ The *Nilamata* text is replete with eulogies in praise of Vishnu, who according to it is lauded and honoured by Brahma and Siva too.¹⁷¹

It is difficult to establish the precise time period when Vaisnavism got introduced into Kashmir and evolutionary process it must have under gone. There are scholars who hold that Vaisnavism as a religious creed and cult was quite popular in Kashmir in the 6th century A.D. The epigraphical evidences which are available also establish the flourishing state of Vaisnavism in the valley. A stone slab was discovered from a

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., pp 141-142.

¹⁶⁹ Bamza, P.N.K., 1962, *A History of Kashmir*, Delhi, p 256.

¹⁷⁰ *Visnudharmottara Purana*, III. 125.10; see also Kumari, Ved., Op.cit., Vol. I., p. 158.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., p 139.

private house in Srinagar containing references to the Brahmanical images like *Gauri*, *Kartikeva*, *Ganapati*, *Aditya* and *Krsna*. The slab carries that date of 68 of the *Laukika* era. Another such inscription discovered from *Pratapapur* (modern *Tapar*)¹⁷² a place 47 km to the south-west of Srinagar records the consecration of something not distinct (perhaps refers to a temple), mentioning a devotee of Vishnu. Sten Konow found an inscription¹⁷³ ‘I worship *Janardana*’, engraved on the base of a huge Vishnu image. This inscription has been reported from Bijbehara.

The popularity of Vishnu cult in the valley of Kashmir is testified and well borne out by availability of such images in different parts of the valley including *Bhawan*, (Mattan) *Bijbehara*¹⁷⁴ and *Verinag*. An image of Vishnu is depicted on the wall of the *Martanda* temple at *Bhawan*.¹⁷⁵ The image as it stands now clearly doles out the impression of its having suffered and undergone ravages of time and weather. *Verinag* has yielded an image of Vishnu whose date can be fixed around 14th century A.D. Two Vishnu images have been discovered from *Bijbehara*, a great centre of artistic and aesthetic activities in the early Kashmir and the same stand preserved in S.P.S Museum, Srinagar. A 10th century image of Vishnu whose exact provenance is not properly known stands preserved in the S.P.S. Museum Srinagar. Kashmir has also reported Vishnu images in bronze establishing the use of metals in image-formation in addition to the commonly used stone as a sculptural material. The bronze image of *Vasudeva* belonging to 9th century A.D. is one such image available in the precious Pan-Asian collection.¹⁷⁶

The antiquity of the tradition of Vishnu worship in Kashmir is further established by the names of some mountains, lakes and places in and around Kashmir indicating *Vainava* connections. Lakes bearing names like *Visnasar* and *Krsnasar* are visibly

¹⁷² Cf., Malla, B.L., *Sculptures of Kashmir (600-1200 AD)*, 1990, Delhi, pp 61-62.

¹⁷³ Deambl, B.K., *Corpus of Sarada Inscriptions of Kashmir*, 1982, Delhi, p 157.

¹⁷⁴ The modern city of *Vijabror* (*Bijbehara*) owes its origin to *Vijayesvara*. In 2nd century BC a king of the name of *Vijaya* had founded this city, whichever the year. It became a great center of culture and learning. For details see, Malla, B.L., *Op.cit.*, pp 60-631.

¹⁷⁵ Ancient *Martanda*, which overlooks the modern village of *Matan* (also called *Bhavan*), is situated on the lofty plateau in Anantnag Distract. The city of *Martanda* derived its name from the presiding deity of the place, *Martanda*, the Sun-god.

¹⁷⁶ Santideva, Sadhu., *Op.cit.*, p 140.

connected with Vishnu.¹⁷⁷ Anantnag is the place name directly connected with *Ananta*, which is the mount of Vishnu. Also *Balarama* the elder brother of *Krsna* is the personification of snake and he is *Ananta* incarnated in human form. The words like *Cakresvara*, *Visnupada*, *Ramardhan* and *Cakradhar* (modern *Chakdar*) are undoubtedly carrying Vaisnava import in them.¹⁷⁸

There are numerous textual allusions to indicate that many kings and queens of Kashmir were the disciples of the Vaisnava creed. These kings and queens were responsible to a large extent for propagating and patronising the sect. Kalhana refers to Queen Ranarambha, who had persuaded her husband Ranaditya to convert a Siva temple into a Vaisnavite shrine.¹⁷⁹ Jayant Bhatt in his *Agamadmara* refers to *Ranasvamin* temple.¹⁸⁰ During the domain of Karkotas both kings and nobles in the corridors of power patronised the erection of Vishnu temples. Kings Durlavhavardhana, Candrapida, Lalitaditya Jayapida and queens Kamalavati and Amritaprabha are known to have patronised the construction of Vishnu temples.¹⁸¹ The *Rajatarangini* unequivocally informs of the construction of two Vaisnavite temples during the regime of king Lalitaditya.¹⁸² At *Buniyar* a temple dedicated to Vishnu is still standing perceptibly bearing all the characteristics of Vaisnavite temples. As per Sahni, the temple can be dated to 8th century A.D.¹⁸³

The popularity of Vaisnavism touched its new pinnacle of glory in the times of Utpala dynasty (855-1003 A.D.). Avantivarman, a scion of the dynasty, was a devout disciple of Vishnu and is credited with erecting a temple of Vishnu called *Avantisvamin*. His minister, Suyya, founded a Vishnu temple called *Hrsikesa Yogasayin*.¹⁸⁴ The period ranging between A.D. 8th and 9th centuries witnessed the production of a number of sculptures carrying Vaisnava motifs and themes. Queen Sugandha and her daughter-

¹⁷⁷ Bamza, P.N.K., "History of Vaisnavism and Krsna cult in Kashmir", *Journal of the Oriental Institute*, Vol. XXX, 1980-81, pp 214.

¹⁷⁸ Santideva, Sadhu., *Op.cit.*, pp 133-134.

¹⁷⁹ *Rajatarangini*, (Stein, tr.) Book, III. Verses 453-54.

¹⁸⁰ Ray, S.C., "Studies on the History of Religion in Ancient Kasmira", *Journal of the Bihar Research Society*, Vol. XLI (III), 1955, p 189. Kalhana also refers to a visit paid to *Ranasvamin* by *Cakravarman's* Queen (See *Rajatarangini*, (Stein, tr.) Book. IV, verse 394).

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, Book. IV, verses 6,79,183,188,208,659 respectively.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, verses 272-74.

¹⁸³ Malla, B.L., *Op.cit.*, pp 60-631.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, Book V. 100.

in-law were for all-out support for the propagation of the Vaisnava creed and cult. They were responsible for the building of *Gopalakesava* and *Nandikesava* temples respectively.¹⁸⁵ Meruwardhanasvami, the minister of king Partha, Yasaskara, Parvagupta, Bhatta, Phalguna and a Sahi king Bhima and queen Didda are known to have played their role in the domain of Vishnu temple construction.¹⁸⁶ Vaisnavism as per the *Rajatarangini* received a setback at the hands of king Harsa, whom Kalhana calls ‘deranged’ and ‘*turuksa*’.¹⁸⁷

Vaisnavism in Kashmir with its protracted history can be said to reflect a synthesis of various Vaisnava cults. The religious aspect of it included the concept of the Vedic Vishnu. Vishnu in *Panacaratra* School which was the religion of *Satvatas* and finally the religion of *Krsna* and *Rama* had an important place.¹⁸⁸ As discussed above the cult of *Bhagavatas* came to accept *Vasudeva-Narayana* as its supreme deity, while the *Pancaratra* followers worshiped four *Vyuhās*, namely, *Vasudeva*, *Sankarasana*, *Pradyumna* and *Aniruddha*.¹⁸⁹ This development in the region subsequently led to the introduction of a sizable number of *Vaikuntha* images in Kashmir. In fact, *Vasudeva*, *Sankarasana*, *Pradyumna* and *Aniruddha* were heroes belonging to *Vrsni* race,¹⁹⁰ which, later on, got deified and incorporated in the cosmological speculation of the *Samkhya* system being a dominant system of the period.

As is well known, Kashmir was display impressed by *Pancaratra* school of Vaisnavism; it left a deep impact on the minds of the people to the extent that it shaped their religious behaviour and also invested them with new horizons of philosophical thinking. Kashmir has been regarded as a cradle of early *Pancaratra* literature dealing mainly with Vishnu and his *Vyuhās*. J.C. Chatterji had noted¹⁹¹ that some Vaisnava works had very strong influence upon the general public of Kashmir which is proved by the fact that a great Saiva philosopher *Abhinavagupta* had to present the tenets of Saiva philosophy in the grab of a Vaisnavite treatise –

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., Book . IV. 244-45.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., Book. IV, verses 267-68. VI, 140-42, 178. 299-302.

¹⁸⁷ *Turuksa* meaning the one who practised *trika sastra*.

¹⁸⁸ Cf. Malla, B.L., Op.cit, p 29.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., pp 29-30.

¹⁹⁰ Desal, K., *Iconography of Visnu (In Northern India, upto Medieval Period)*, 1973, New Delhi, p 3.

¹⁹¹ Chatterji, J.C., *Kashmir Saivism*, Patana, 1978, p 14; see also, Kumari, Ved., Op.cit., Vol. I., p 158.

Paramartha Sar. Pancaratra School in general has laid emphasis on *Jnana*, *Yoga*, *Kriya* and *Charya*.¹⁹² *Jnana* comprises philosophical doctrines in respect of God, nature and individual soul, the process of creation and the modes of liberation. *Yoga* purports meditation and concentration with a view to obtaining release from the shackles of body and mind. *Kriya* stresses the rules to be adhered to in the making of idols and in the construction of temples. *Charya* deals with the rules of conduct regarding rites, worship, festivals and social obligations.¹⁹³ The major works of *Pancaratra* contain an admixture of philosophy and occultism, mysticism and magic, rituals and ethics. The *Pancaratra* philosophy in the *Narayaniya* is free from abstruse and mysterious tangles; it has assumed a vast dimension in the *Pancaratra Samhitas*.¹⁹⁴ The ritualistic elements as dilated upon in the *Narayaniya* are Brahmanical in form and content. But the thought pattern that seems to emerge out of it is a medley of *Upnsadic* monism. *Samkhya* dualist tendency and *Yogic* mysticism stresses upon the worship of a personal God with absolute devotion. The essential concerns of the *Pancaratra* School in *Samhitas* had been that of *Sadhana* as a means to lead a devotee on to the path of ascension. It is none of the concerns of this school in *Samhitas* to weave a web of definite philosophy involving metaphysical speculation.

¹⁹² Bhalt, S.R., *The Philosophy of Pancaratra (an advaitic approach)*, 1980, Delhi, pp 7-10.

¹⁹³ Santideva, Sadhu., *Development of Mysticism in Kashmir*, 2000, Cosmo Publications, p 131.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

D. Minor Traditions

Besides *Siva* and *Visnu* there were many other minor gods and goddesses in the early Kashmirian pantheon. The most important of them include *Surya*, *Karttikeya*, *Ganesa*, *Agni*, *Laksmi*, *Durga*, *Ganga*, *Yamuna* and *Kamadeva*, of whose worship we have real literary evidence; some of their images too have survived.¹⁹⁵

Worship of *Sakti*, the energetic principle, seems to have been widely prevalent. In the worship of goddess *Durga*, who is but an embodiment of *Sakti*, animal sacrifices played an important part.¹⁹⁶ Goddess *Sarada* was one of the most celebrated deities of the valley in early times¹⁹⁷ and she was nothing but ‘*Sakti* embodying three separate manifestations’.¹⁹⁸ References to ‘*Matrcakra*’ are frequently met with in the *Rajatarangini*¹⁹⁹ and sculptured images of ‘*Sapta Matrkas*, such as *Brahmani*, *Mahesvari*, *Kaumari*, *Indrani*, *Vaisnavi*, *Varahi* and *Camundi* have been recovered from Pandrethan.²⁰⁰ A life size separate sculpture of *Varahi*, representing a young woman with the face of *Varahi*, discovered among the ruins of Kashmir, is now preserved in the SPS museum Srinagar.²⁰¹ Though the *Sapta Matrakas* were originally Saivait in origin, there is no doubt that afterwards they became the actual cult emblems of the devout *Saktas*.

Representations of the goddess *Ganga*, sometimes accompanied by the goddess *Yamuna*, are found among the old sculptures of the valley,²⁰² but they do not seem to have any particular cult associated with them. Two similarly sculptured reliefs found in the *Avantisvami* temple have been generally interpreted as representations of the god Vishnu accompanied by *Laksmi* and another goddess *Bhumi*. 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 *Kamadeva* seated between his wives *Rati* and *Priti*. There is literary evidence too to

¹⁹⁵ Ray, Sunil Chandra., Op.cit., p 212.

¹⁹⁶ *Rajatarangini*, Book III, p 83.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., Book I, p 37, IV, p 325, V, p 469, VIII, p 2556; (198)

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., p 280.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., Op.cit., Book I, pp 122, 330-335, 348; Book. III, p 280.

²⁰⁰ Kak, R.C., *Ancient Monuments of Kashmir*, p 116.

²⁰¹ *Rajatarangini* (tr. Stein), p 20.

²⁰² Kak, R.C., Op.cit., pp 120-121, 124, 133.

Kamadeva's popularity in ancient Kashmir. According to the *Nilamatapurana* the 13th of the lunar *Caitra* was devoted to the worship of *Kamadeva*.²⁰³

Laksmi, the goddess of wealth, was quite a popular deity. King Pravarasena II (6th century A.D.) is credited with the establishment of five shrines of the goddess *Sri*.²⁰⁴ An image of *Laksmi* has come from the historic town of *Vijabrur*, modern *Brar*.²⁰⁵ From stylistic consideration, the sculpture may be assigned to about the 6th century A.D. Another beautiful stone figure of the goddess seated on a throne, supported by a pair of lions, with elephants on each side pouring water over her head, has been discovered from the *Avantisvami* temple, and is apparently of the 9th century A.D. Kalhana records that during the reign of Unmattavanti (A.D. 937-939), a Brahmana of well-known valour, named Rakka, raised an image of the goddess *Sri* under the appellation of *Rakkajayadevi*.²⁰⁶

The worship of *Surya* was probably brought into the valley from Iran at an early period. The Sakas and the Kushannas, who ruled over Kashmir in the early centuries of the²⁰⁷ 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.²⁰⁸ Ranaditya, a king of ancient Kashmir, is said in the *Rajatarangini* to have built at the village of Simharotsika a temple of *Martanda*, which became famous everywhere under the name of *Ranapurasvamin*.²⁰⁹ But Ranaditya is a legendary character in the ancient history of Kashmir and the village *Simharotsika* or the *Martanda* temple, said to have been founded by him, cannot be located. In the 8th century A.D., Lalitaditya erected the shrine of *Aditya* at the town of Lalitapura.²¹⁰ He built another massive stone temple of *Surya* under the name of *Martanda*,²¹¹ the ruins of which have survived. The sun worship continued to be in vogue in Kashmir long after the death of Lalitaditya. King Suravarman II (A.D.

²⁰³ *Nilamatapurana*, Op.cit., verses 655-658.

²⁰⁴ *Rajatarangini*, Book III, p 353.

²⁰⁵ Ray, Sunil Chandra., Op.cit., p 215.

²⁰⁶ *Rajatarangini*, Book V, p 426.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ *Rajatarangini*, Book. III, Op.cit., p 467.

²¹⁰ Ibid., Book. IV, Op.cit., p 187.

²¹¹ Ibid., p 192.

939) paid homage to the temple of the sun god *Jayasvamin*.²¹² The copper images of *Surya* called *Tamrasvamin*, was one of the most celebrated shrines of the valley in the 11th century A.D.²¹³ Kalhana remarks that Kashmirian king Kalasa (A.D. 1063-1089) sought refuge with *Martanda* to save his life²¹⁴ and presented a gold statue at the god's feet,²¹⁵ prove the popularity of Sun worship in Kashmir at that time. Kalasa's son Harsa (1089-1101 A.D.), who destroyed a large number of divine images, spared the image of *Martanda*, either out of respect or out of fear.²¹⁶ The ruins of the temple at *Martanda* clearly show with what grandeur and pomp, love and devotion, the god was worshiped. No image of the Sun-god has yet been recovered from any part of the valley. There is, however, in the right panel of the eastern wall of the ante-chamber of the temple of *Martanda*, a representation of *Aruna*, the charioteer of *Surya*, holding the reins of his seven horses.

Karttikeya worship in early Kashmir is borne out by the discovery of a fine six armed image of the generalissimo.²¹⁷ Though the image cannot be ascribed to any definite chronological setting, the close resemblance which it bears with the *Gandhara* images of the *Bodhisattvas* may place it to a period round about the 5th century A.D. Another standing figure of *Kumara*, along with an *Ardhanarisvara* image, has been found among the ruins of Avantipura²¹⁸ and may be dated to the period of Avantivarman's rule. The *Nilamatapurana* refers that the worship of *Karttikeya* was performed on the 6th of lunar *Caitra* every year and this was supposed to ensure the welfare and safety of the children of Kashmir.²¹⁹ In the *Rajatarangini* there is mention of the foundation of one *Skandabhavanavihara* by a Kashmirian minister Skandagupta.²²⁰ Though at a comparatively modern period the place was associated with the worship of *Karttikeya*, Stein is probably correct in his assumption that in early times it was a Buddhist *Vihara* and had no relation with the deity of *Kumara*.²²¹ But even then, *Skanda*, the

²¹² *Rajatarangini*, Book. V, Op.cit., p 449.

²¹³ *Rajatarangini*, Book. VII, Op.cit., pp 696, 709.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p 709.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p 715.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p 1096.

²¹⁷ Ray, Sunil Chandra., Op.cit., p 213.

²¹⁸ *Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India*, 1913-14, p 53.

²¹⁹ *Nilamatapurana*, Op.cit., verses 647-649.

²²⁰ *Rajatarangini*, Book III, p 380.

²²¹ *Rajatarangini*, (trns. Stein) Vol. II., p 340.

very name of the founder of the *Vihara*, seems to suggest his personal association with the god.²²²

Ganesa, the brother of *Skanda* according to the Hindu mythology was one of the popular gods of the valley. According to Kalhana an image of *Vinayaka Bhimasvamin* existed in Kashmir as early as the days of Pravarasena II and received regular worship.²²³ A stone image of *Ganesa*, along with an *Ardhanarisvara* image, mention of which has already been made, was found amidst the ruins of Avantipura and may be dated to the second half of the 9th century A.D.²²⁴ 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.²²⁵ That Avantipura was a centre of *Ganesa* worship receives further corroboration from Ksemendra who says that bowls of sweets offered to lord *Ganesa* were resold in the town of Avantipura. We learn from the *Nilamatapurana* that the 8th of the darker *Asadha* of every year was dedicated to the worship of *Ganesa* and went by the name of *Vinayaka-astami*.²²⁶ The worship of *Vinayaka* had also to be performed on the eve of the anointing ceremony of the king.²²⁷

No sculptural representation of *Agni* or Fire god has yet been discovered from Kashmir. A passage from *Rajatarangini*, however, refers to the worship of the Fire god and records that king Uccala's father Malla, observed from his earliest time the cult of a sacred fire.²²⁸ As Stein has pointed out, there was probably a shrine of the god of Fire *Svayambhu* at *Suyam*, a place situated about half a mile from the present village of *Nichhom*.²²⁹ The temple of Fire god *Svayambhui* was destroyed, it may be presumed, by Harsa and the decayed building was restored by Uccala.²³⁰ King Uccala is also said to have started once a pilgrimage to *Svayambhu*.²³¹

²²² Ray, Sunil Chandra., Op.cit., p 213.

²²³ *Rajatarangini*, Book. III., p 352.

²²⁴ *Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India*, 1913-14, p 53.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, p 54.

²²⁶ *Nilamatapurana*, Op.cit., verses 698-700.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, verse 847.

²²⁸ *Rajatarangini*, Book VII, p 1474.

²²⁹ *Rajatarangini* (tr. Stein), Vol I, footnotes on I, 34.

²³⁰ *Rajatarangini*, Book VIII, p 78.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, p 250.

Thus from the above discussion one reaches to the conclusion, that religion was not something a bundle of fixed attitudes which could not be reformulated, changed or even challenged in the light of new experiences. To be sure, religious history of Kashmir during our period of study is nothing but a record of assimilation of innovation, adaptation, compromise, reformulation and above all a search for truth – the truth to be discovered by each generation. There was all along a section of intellectuals who were always in the process of becoming and never fully formed. It was largely because of these dynamic and changing actors that we see a dynamic and changing religious history.

A. Tantricism

Tantricism with its vast literature containing intricate ritualistic and theoretical details occupies a significant place in the religious and social life of India. *Kullubukhatta*, in his commentary on Manu II.I., divided traditional knowledge into Vedic and Tantric, and this division was not baseless¹. At the earlier stage of history, Tantra² arose as the sum total of man's knowledge of the objective world around him. It was a way of life that sought the significance of knowledge, not in the realization of an illusory absolute, but in the day-to-day activities of men, in the simple facts of life like agriculture, cattle-breeding, distillation, iron-smelting, etc., and in experimental sciences like alchemy, medicine, embryology, physiology and so forth, with a deliberate theoretical orientation that the structures of the microcosm and the macrocosm are identical and that the key to the knowledge of nature is to be found in the body.³

It is to be noticed that although later Tantric writers wanted to base their doctrines on the Vedas, the orthodox followers of the Vedic tradition invariably referred to Tantra in a spirit of denunciation stressing its anti-Vedic character. Earlier scholars relegated Tantra to a class of black magic, unworthy of study by a man of good taste, while the advocates of Tantra like Johan Woodroffe, Sibchandra Vidyarnava, Panchanan Tarkaranta, Gopinath kaviraj and others equated it with the totality of Hinduism and declared it to be the essence of the Vedas. Most of the writers on this subject insist solely on its sexual elements, minimal thought they are, compared to the vastness of

¹ Wilson, H.H., *Essays and Lectures on the Religion of Hindus*, 1862, London, Vol. I, p 245; See also, Hopkins, E.W., *Religions of India*, Boston, 1885, p 490; Barth, A., *Religions of India*, 1882, London, p 205.

² The word *Tantra* is derived from the root *Tan* (meaning, to spread or propagate). Etymological interpretations of the word *Tantra*, as found in the ancient texts, clearly and conclusively point out that originally *Tantra* had no special religious or metaphysical significance. In the *Vedic* texts the word *Tantra* occurs in the sense of a loom, (*Regveda*, X. 71.9; *Atharvaveda*, X.7.42; *Taittiriya Brahmana*, II.5.5.3. Panini derived the word *Tantraka* (V.2.70), meaning a cloth taken away from the loom, from *Tantra*). The *Srautasutras* use the word in the sense of a process of work containing many parts and in that of an act serving the purpose of many other acts (*Apastamba*, I.I5.I; *Sankhyayana*, I.I6.6). The latter interpretation is confirmed in the *Mimamsa* tradition according to which *Tantra* is an act-process- a method of doing or making something. In the *Mahabhasya* the word *Tantra* signifies a branch of knowledge, while the writers of the sciences of polity and medicine used the word *Tantraniryukti* to mean 'canons', 'propositions', 'principles', 'expositions', etc (*Kautilya* XV; *Caraka*, *Siddhithana*, XII.40-5; *sursruta*, *Uttaratantra* LXV.. The scientific treatises composed in India are generally known as *Tantras*; their sections and subsections also bear the same title (on *Brahmasutra* II.2.32; cf. *Ahirbudhnya Samhita* XII.18ff.).

³ Ibid.

the subject, and purport to popularize certain modern ideas pertaining to sex problems in the name of Tantra.⁴

Historically one has to admit that certain Tantric ideas and practices are evidently rooted in primitive sex rites based on the magical association of natural and human fertility. One should not fail to recall in this connection that such primitive sex rites contributed everywhere to the development of religious ideas and, in a broad sense, to the evolution of human thought as a whole. However, with the advent and popularity of the new religious doctrines like Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity or Islam preached by distinguished individuals the Tantric or near-Tantric rites associated with earlier existing religious systems sank into oblivion.⁵ However, it would be, two, knave to believe that sex in one form or other did not remain an integral part of some esoteric practices within the so called samartic religions and Zoroastrianism. *Anahitadevi-Asura*, whose bust with prominently raised breasts and girdle was discovered from Bigbehara made her re-entire to the Zoroastrian cults as a goddess of fertility and was soon identified as goddess of the whores all over Irean's of and parts of European world. In India, however, under diverse historical conditions, these primitive elements survived and were given new forms and interpretations in accordance with the changing demands of time and taste.

Tantrism was in fact an attitude towards life, a distinct outlook or viewpoint, that had permeated all forms or mental, intellectual and cultural activities of the people of India throughout the ages, and as such its association with different religious and philosophical ideas was natural. But it was more than a mere religious system or stream or undercurrent.⁶ The sociological viewpoints expressed in the Tantras were in virtual opposition to those upheld by the *Samarta-Puranic* tradition. It was a form of knowledge pertaining to different walks of human activities, functioning as a parallel tradition with that of the dominant and sophisticated class and standing in reciprocal relation with the latter by way of influencing and getting influenced.⁷

⁴ Bagchi, P.C., *Studies in the Tantras*, 1939, Calcutta, pp 34-36.

⁵ Cutnur, H., *A Short History of Sex Worship*, 1940, London, p 67.

⁶ Bose, D.N., and H.L. Haldar, *Tantras: Their Philosophy and Occult Secrets*, 1956, Calcutta, p 66.

⁷ hattacharyya, Op.cit., p 12.

There are two sets of religious beliefs and ideas in India, one represented by the dominant class and the other by the masses. To the former category belong the so-called higher religions, viz., Brahmanism, Buddhism and Jainism. These are basically atheistic and share in common absolute dependence on the doctrine of *Karma* and rebirth. To characterize Brahmanism as atheistic may appear to be a bizarre conclusion, but it appears to be justified in view of the fact that all the major Brahmanical philosophical systems, with the exception of the later *Nyaya-Vaisesikas*, hold that the concept of God is an illusion, a subjective error, given the status of objective truth. This anti-theism is doubly substantiated by the sole insistence on *karma* and rebirth on which God can have control logically.⁸

Such an approach cannot, however, inspire the imagination of the common people who need a personal god, supposed to look after them, help them in their struggle for existence, ignore their lapses and bestow grace when it is needed. These popular sentiments give rise to the cult of *Bhakti* or devotion to personal god. This cult of *Bhakti* found expression through innumerable local and tribal deities, no question whether crude or refined. In course of time, these deities were grouped according to their nature and temperament and became either identified or associated with the supreme beings of what came to be known later as *Pancapasana* or the five major forms of devotional religious systems, and also made their way into Buddhism and Jainism. A large number of such deities from the said systems and also from *Mahayana* Buddhism had a reorientation in Tantrism.⁹

In the quest for the foundation and early development of Tantrism, we have to depend more on the parallel tradition itself as manifested in numerous non-Brahmanical and heterodox, scientific and technological treatises, regional, tribal, proletarian, and popular cults, beliefs, and practices and on the broad background of the history of Indian thought in general, rather than on surviving Tantric texts themselves which, valuable though they are in many respects, are in their present form burdened with superimposed elements and thus bear only a parochial and limited significance.

In spite of all sorts of Brahmanical interpolations, grafting and handling, Tantra clearly rejects the *Varna* system and patriarchy and, in the field of religion, all

⁸ Ibid., p 13.

⁹ Ibid.

external formalities in regard to spiritual quest. These viewpoints are in virtual opposition to those upheld in the *Smarta-Puranic* tradition, and that is why the followers of this system have been condemned and various attempts have been made to blacken the Tantric ideas. The tradition of *Varnasrama* was always patronized by the ruling class, even by the Buddhist, Muslims and British rulers who were theoretically opposed to it.

The religion of the dominant class which created a pantheon in each system, in terms of the existing social hierarchy with its supreme being as the acknowledged overlord and allied deities as subordinates, substantiated also by a philosophy of illusion, had little to do with the greater sections of the masses who subscribed to a different tradition: a tradition consisting of popular beliefs, cults, and rituals; liberal social ideals; and an ethics and philosophy that gave a real meaning to life. This tradition was enriched by a host of teachers and religious leaders in different ages and sometimes created new forms of religion which were basically protestant and liberal. It also happened that some of these systems became class-oriented in later times as we find in the case of Buddhism- the tribal, low-born (*vrsala*) Buddha, in time, became a *ksatriya*, a *cakravartin*, a universal monarch.

The five great Tantric teachers, regarded in the *Natha* tradition as *Adi-siddhas*, came from the lower sections of society. Minanatha, also known as Matsyendrantha and Goraksanatha with whom such Tantric works such as *Goraksasamhita*, *Goraksasiddhantasamgraha*, etc., are connected, was either a fisherman, or a *Keotiya* or *Kaivarta*. Hadipa, or Jalandhari-pa, was a *Hadi* (or a net-holder according to another tradition) who served as a stable-sweep in the palace of queen Mainamati of *Patika*. Of the traditional eight-four *Siddhaccaryas*, mentioned in the Tibetan texts, Lui-pa, Khadaga-pa, Kanha-pa, Thagana-pa, Ksatra-pa, Tanti-pa, Kusuli-pa, Mahila-pa, Rahula-pa, Celuk-pa, Nirguna-pa, Bhikhana-pa, Dhahuri-pa, Kambala-pa,, Sarvabhaksa-pa, Putuli-pa and Ananga-pa were Sudras, Ajogi-pa, Meko-pa, Bhali-pa and Udhari-pa came from the trading class, Minapa and Goraksa-pa were fishermen, Camari-pa was a leather-worker, Dhombhi-pa was washer-man, Acinti-pa was a wood-cutter, Kampari-pa was a blacksmith, Jogi-pa was a Doma, Gundari-pa or Gorur-pa was a fowler, Carpari-pa was a *kahar*, Kanthali-pa was a tailor and Pancha-pa was

a shoe maker. Yogini Manibhadra was a *Grhadasi* or maid-servant.¹⁰ Many of these eighty four *Siddhas* were reputed authors of Tantric treatises. The name of their works is recorded, and a few of the works have come to light. One of the most striking features of their teaching is that they asked their fellow man to follow their own crafts honestly and sincerely and asserted that this would lead them to liberation.

In fact every religious system in India maintains a parallel tradition different from and opposed to the one supported and patronized by the dominant class. All known forms of Indian religion have Tantras and Tantric rites which prove that in spite of all that was said against it this parallel tradition had a special potency which was able to influence the contents of major religious system of India and even to create new religious systems like *Sakitism*, under Hinduism and *Vajrayana* under Buddhism. Certain sects of *Pancarattras*, *Ganapatyas*, *Pasupatas* were direct creations of this parallel tradition.¹¹

Because of its original association with the simpler peoples, popular cults and rituals became an integral part of the Tantric way of life. This brought the cult of the Mother Goddess and the fertility rites associated with its original conception in to close relationship with Tantra. The magical rites performed to obtain greater fertility of land, which really underlay elaborate Tantric rituals, were not the creation of fancy or the fruit of leisure. Rather they served as a guide to action, as an illusory technique complementary to the deficiencies of real techniques. By this illusory technique, which consisted of the miming of an incident, are symbolical representation of a coveted object, primitive man thought he could secure the actual occurrence of what he desired. This was the basis not only of magico-religious art, but also of ancient drama, thematic songs and dances, rituals indicative of the efficacy of sound and symbolism of words, and so on—all that had characterized the earlier ingredients of Tantra¹².

The parallel Tantric tradition which was evolving since time immemorial as the philosophy of the masses had a great metamorphosis when elements of the dominant section were imposed on it. It was destroyed and its principals were remodeled so that

¹⁰ B.N. Sharma, *Social Life in Northern India*, 1966, Delhi, pp 351-252.

¹¹ Bhattacharyya, *Op.cit.*, p 25.

¹² B. Farrington, *Philosophy for the Future*, 1949, New-York, pp 4-5.

they would confirm to the philosophy of illusion. The scientific and materialistic traditions were relegated to background, and all references to technical and manual labour, observation and experiment, were divested of importance in the texts. This contempt for worldly knowledge was possible only because one section of the community lived on the surplus produced by another and withdrew itself from the responsibility of labour and hence from the obligation of acknowledging the reality of the material world. It created the illusion of ‘pure knowledge’– a form of transcendental wisdom in which world and worldly actions had no place– and rejected everything that went against it.¹³

This happened not only in India but in other parts of the world as well. In Greece, with the growth of the elaborate institution of slavery, the illusion of ‘pure-knowledge’ became the driving force of philosophical speculation. Empirical knowledge on which Heraklitos laid so much emphasis and which was regarded by Demokritos as the power of man to achieve mastery over nature, was relegated by Plato to a kind of limbo, as the bastard knowledge of a slave. To Plato wisdom meant knowledge not of nature but of a super-nature constituted only by ideas.¹⁴

We do not know when and how this contemptuous attitude towards worldly knowledge began to gain ground in India. The genuinely earlier portions of the Rigveda knew neither caste-distinction nor contempt for empirical knowledge and its functioning in different spheres of life. Far from being looked down upon with contempt, arts and crafts were originally considered so important that *Tvastr*, the craftsman, was raised to the status of a powerful deity. The making of the world was conceived in terms of woodcraft, done as if by a carpenter’s or joiner’s skill.¹⁵ In a Rigvedic verse the poet does not hesitate to proclaim that his father is a leech, mother a grinder and he himself a bard, and that they all jointly strive for cattle.¹⁶

But with the disintegration of undifferentiated tribal life with the growth of the class or caste-divided society, this attitude began to change. This is illustrated by the fate of the *Asvins*, the master-physicians. Their position was lowered and even their right of

¹³ A. Barth, *Religions of India*, 1882, London, p 205.

¹⁴ B. Farrington, *Op.cit.*, p 5.

¹⁵ Bhattacharyya, *Op.cit.*, p 27.

¹⁶ *Regveda*, IX. 112.3.

drinking *Soma* in the assembly of gods was denied, probably due to the work of physicians entails their association with all sorts of people, from a *Brahmana* to a *Candala*, and was not possible for them to follow the way of *Varnasrama* which was introduced in the post-Rigvedic age and enforced in social life by the kings and the administration. This is why men of the medical profession were not given due recognition in the *Smritis*. The science of healing, to which a number of Tantras were devoted, was relegated to the class of *Avidya* or false knowledge. What is need of medicine when disease is caused by the *Karma* of the past life? This was the argument put forward by the upholders of ‘pure-knowledge’. Not only medicine but other branches of practical knowledge were looked down upon. According to the *Dharmasutras*, the Vedas and agriculture are destructive of each other.¹⁷ Manu says that even when compelled to follow the profession of *Vaisya*, the third caste, the *Brahmanas* and *Ksatriyas* must avoid agriculture, because it is slavish and involves injury.¹⁸

The *Chandogya Upanisad* contains an interesting story which, incidentally, throws light on the conflict between material knowledge and ‘pure knowledge’.¹⁹ Although from the *Upanisadic* period we come across the insistence on ‘pure knowledge’, as opposed to worldly empirical knowledge, by the intellectuals belonging to the upper strata of society, but since the country was vast and its development uneven, the cult of ‘pure knowledge’ had to face challenge from many quarters— from the adherents of the *Lokayata*, *Sankhya*, *Nayaya-Vaisesika*, *Mimamsa*, Jain and other schools. The *Nyaya-Vaisikas* developed the atomic structure of the universe which was regarded as the composite of eternal unalterable, causeless atoms and they reduced all composite objects to four kinds of the atoms— of earth, water, fire and air. The basic texts of this system, the *Nyaya* and *Vaisesika Sutras*, did not accept the existence of God. It was not until a subsequent period that the doctrines of the *Nyaya-Vaisesikas* were changed into theism.²⁰ The Buddhists belonging to the *Sarvastivada* school— the *Vaibhasikas* and *Sautrantikas*— who also accepted the atomic theory had challenged the doctrine of ‘pure knowledge’ upheld by the *Madhyamika* and *Yogacara* School, the foster parents

¹⁷ C.f. *Baudhayana Dharmasutra*, 1.5.101.

¹⁸ Manu, X. 83-84.

¹⁹ Bhattacharyya, Op.cit., p 28.

²⁰ Bhattacharyya, N.N., *History of Cosmogonical Ideas*, 1971, New Delhi, pp 63-66.

of *Vedanta*.²¹ The *Mimamsa* school, which had a popular basis and which wanted to revert to the primitive undifferentiated way of life where the *Yajnas* could receive their original significance, challenged the *Vedantic* view of ‘pure knowledge’ with the argument that if the world is produced from Brahman which is free from all defects, then the world should also be defect-less. Likewise *Maya* cannot be at the root of creation because there was no entity other than Brahman on the eve of creation. This cannot be said that Brahman, the only reality has induced the unreal dreamlike *Maya* to create.²² The Jain also postulated the atomic concept of universe and with their ‘unsettling logic’ proved that the material world was eternal, without any beginning or end.²³ Most vital, however, was the challenge that came from the *Sankhya* which, as the precondition of any philosophical enquiry, put forward a formidable law of causation according to which the effect was the real modification of the cause. The same thing which is explicit in the effect is implicit in the cause, and hence the cause of the material world is obviously nothing but matter. Eventually, however, the champions of ‘pure knowledge’ succeeded in imposing their views upon other systems. They did this in several ways, the most effective of which was the fabrication of the texts.

Despite its primitive legacies and its ‘cruel’, ‘barbarous’ and ‘immoral’ rites, Tantra has a special appeal for millions of Indians. A.S. Geden refers to the view of an eminent exponent of Tantra who asserts that ‘two-thirds of our religious rites are Tantric and almost half our medicine’. He also refers to a passage, quoted by H.H. Wilson from one of the principal Tantras, which claims that most of the major religious sects have secret followers of Tantra.²⁴ Tantric saints have a place of honour in Indian society. Moreover, Tantra is committed to certain moral values, the excellence of which even the critics of this system are forced to admit. According to Sir Charles Elliot:

Tantras breathe a liberal and intelligent spirit. Caste-restrictions are minimized; travelling is permitted; women are honoured; they can act as teachers; the burning of windows is forbidden; girl widows may remarry

²¹ Ibid., pp 79-81.

²² Ibid., pp 66-68.

²³ Bhattacharyya, N.N., *Jain Philosophy: Historical Outline*, 1976, New Delhi, pp 138-140.

²⁴ *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. XII, p 193.

and the murder of a woman in peculiarly heinous. Prostitution is denounced. Whereas Christianity is sometimes accused of restricting its higher code to Church and Sundays, the opposite may be said of Tantrism. Outside the temple its morality is excellent.²⁵

One of the main causes of the apathy towards Tantra was the Aryan bias. Earlier scholars equated Tantra with the so called degraded forms of Hinduism supposed to be the legacies of uncivilized aboriginal cultures. It is true that Tantra contains much of a primitive way of life and many repulsive rites. But to judge them simply on the ground of the morality of a given age, ignoring their real social basis goes against all canons of historical criticism. To those learned Western scholars, just as the Englishman came to India with a ‘civilizing mission’ to bear the ‘white man’s burden’, so also in the past aboriginal Indians were ‘civilized’ by the Aryans who came from outside. To them, whatever is noble and praiseworthy in Hinduism is found in this so called Aryan tradition, i.e. the Vedic texts and Brahmanical literature, and all the barbarous and degraded aspects attributed to Tantra are derived from the uncivilized non-Aryans. This idea was also shared by the learned Indians who belonged mostly, if not exclusively, to the upper strata of society and took pride in thinking of themselves as direct descendants of the great Aryan race. Though the myth of Aryanism has now being exploded, its residue is still at work creating a bar to the proper understanding of the Tantra.²⁶

The Tantra is a very wide subject which has a rich tradition of human endeavour and wisdom. However, it is impossible to present this rich tradition in its entirety owing to the paucity of material. It is only the religious elements of Tantra which can be worked out from an historical view point. The popular belief that Tantra is the same as *Saktism* is evidently wrong. This misunderstanding is due to the fact that Tantra attaches supreme importance to the doctrine of *Sakti*, but this doctrine is not the feature of *Saktism* alone.²⁷ It is shared by all known forms of the Hindu religion. Besides the popular religious beliefs and cults and also elements derived from Buddhism and other non-Vedic philosophical systems, the most important constituents of the Hindu religion are the five systems (collectively known as

²⁵ C. Elliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, 1921, London, rep., 1957, Vol. II, p 285.

²⁶ Bhattacharyya, Op.cit., p 43.

²⁷ Bernard, Theos, *Hindu Philosophy*, Pilgrims Publishing, 2005, Varanasi, p 18.

Pancopasana) which are devoted to the worship of Vishnu, Siva, *Sakti*, *Ganapati* and *Surya* respectively. *Pancopasana*, too, has Tantric rituals. Even today there are two distinct modes of worship in each of these religious systems, the Vedic and the Tantric.²⁸ Each of these systems has a general form patronized by the adherents of *Varnasrama* and approved by the *Smrtis* and *Puranas*. But side by side there is a special form, known as *Atimargika*, which is followed by the adherents of the Tantric tradition. This stream was naturally in conflict with that represented by the former and was condemned in the *Puranas* and other Brahmanical texts.

Bengal, Assam, Gujarat and Kashmir were prominent centers of Tantric cult and theories. The Tantric cult was current in Tibet, and also in Kashmir. The Tantra is referred to in the works of acknowledged Vaisnava *Sastra*; the *Deve Bhagvata* in the ninth Skando speaks of it as a Vedanta and Saivism got ascendancy over Buddhism. The experiences gained in the *Sakta* cult and Saivism find a clear exposition and manifestation in treatises on Tantras. Most of these are now lost. Nevertheless, the rituals bear a clear imprint of these tantric influences. This is amply justified by *Nilamatapurana* where certain rituals and sacrifices are prescribed for all the people of the valley.²⁹

The cultural heritage of Kashmir is very rich and derives its inspiration and strength both from her natural environs and the rich literature and literary traditions alike. With the growth of *Tantra-Sastra* that forms one of the important branches of the general *Sastras* like *Kavya*, *Natya*, *Vyakarana* and *Vedanta*, scholars have put forth their divergent opinions regarding the genesis and growth of this *Sastra*. All are, however, agreed on the point that the Vedas are the source of all these *Sastras* and that *Sabda Sastra* or *Vyakarna* (grammar) is their expression and basic source material.³⁰ Along with the growth of a number of religious sects, numerous treatises were written to expound the basic tenets of a particular religion. The *Tantra-Sastra* also was composed to solve the knotty riddles and secret esotericism of Dharma. There are many manual, of Tantras on the diverse religious sects still extant, though some are no

²⁸ Sharma, Chandradhar, *A Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy*, 1960, rpt. 2009, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Delhi, pp. 13-32.

²⁹ Pandit, Moti Lal, *The Trika Saivism of Kashmir*, 2003, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, pp 3-12.

³⁰ Drabu, Vishva Nath, *Saivagamas A Study in the Socio-Economic Ideas and Institutions of Kashmir*, 1990, Indus Publishing Company, pp 32-45.

doubt lost to us. The date of composition of these manuals cannot be determined with any certainty. The internal evidence, however, reveals that these are anterior to the treatises on Indian philosophy and posterior to the Vedas. It may safely be assumed that whatever was evolved in the form of religious literature seems to have been first developed in the form of *Tantra-Sastra*.³¹ A few scholars would go even to the extent of saying that in view of the complexity of the issues and problems discussed therein, these hold a place alongside the Vedas. This is so because the essence of the mantras of the *Tantra-Sastra* is not in any way inferior to those of the mantras or hymns found in the Vedas, Some of the religious principles of India are based upon the Principles of *Tantra-Sastra* and in the Tantric-base their occur glimpses of philosophic doctrines.³²

With the decline of Buddhism, the Sakta cult came into prominence and even the *Vajrayana* branch of Buddhism found expression in Buddha-Tantra. It developed along with the Tantric cult which had already taken deep roots in the soil. This is supported by a study of Saivism itself, the rise of which is held by consensus to be the 6th century of the Christian era. The Buddha Tantra (*Vajrayana* branch of Buddhism) also flourished along with the Tantric principles in Kashmir. A study of the *Siva-Sastra* reveals that the Tantric literature that had developed much earlier in the 6th century was based upon the main principles of *Isvaradyavada*. These principles have been explained at length in different forms in *Saivasastra* and have been rightly characterized as *Trika-Sastra*. It took the name of *Trika* as it included the elements of *Agama*, *Pratyabhijna* and *Spanda Sidhanta*. *Agama Sastra* is included in the *Tantra-Sastra* which implies the description and analysis of a particular sectarian *Sastra*.³³

Once the Tantric practices got established scholars began to find legitimacy for it in the interpretation of Vedic rituals. *Atharvaveda* which has a good amount of referral material belongs to a late period. The Tantric literature is now not procurable. There is no gainsaying the fact that even before the prevalence of the Vedic religion, the Tantra cult was a presumably dominant creed and this explains the existence of Tantricism in the various activities of Vedic rituals. The sixth century saw the

³¹ Pandit, Moti Lal, Op.cit., p 34.

³² Drabu, Vishva Nath, Op.cit., p 22.

³³ Ibid., pp 44-52.

emergence of Siva philosophy, in course of time it led to the development of a refined and highly evolved *Saiva-advaitavada*.³⁴ The main *Tantras* which fall under the group of Agamas are: *Svachhanda Tantra*, *Mainivijaya*, *Netra Tantra*, *Vamakesvari*, *Rudrayamal* and *Vijnana Bhairava*. The subject matter of these is closely related to the exposition of the *Trika* cult. Of these the *Svachhanda Tantra*, *Malinitantra*, *Netra Tantra*, *Mrgendra Tantra*, *Vijnana bhairava*, *Vamakesvara Tantra* have been published by the Kashmir Research Department.³⁵

³⁴ Pandit, Moti Lal, Op.cit., p 42.

³⁵ Ibid., pp II-XII.

B. Tantric Saivism

A special form of Saivism flourished in the Kashmir region from about the 9th century CE. This was considered more authentic by the followers of Tantra. The exponents of Kashmiri Saivism such as Vasugupta, Somananda, Abhinavagupta, Ksemaraja, etc., are reputed names in the *Tantric* tradition. No account of the religious philosophical system of India would be complete without Kashmiri Saivism for its comprehensive conceptualization and analysis of Nature than any of other six *Darsanas*. It is a system of ideal Monism founded by Vasugupta. Its central position is that there is only one Ultimate Principle, with two distinct and apparently differentiable aspects one transcendental and the other immanent.³⁶ Its analysis of the process of cosmic evolution postulates thirty-six categories (*tattvas*). What the other systems assume, Kashmiri Saivism explains, for it shows the origin of spirit and Matter, for it discusses the nature of the ultimate principle; and it explains the causes of the initial impulse in Nature. Kashmiri Saivism is a philosophical system based on the *Sivasutra* which is one of the main texts of the vast body of traditional literature.³⁷

The origins of the *Agamic* tradition must, doubtless, go back to the pre-Mauryan period. The first reference to this tradition can be found in the later Vedic literature (*Atharvaveda*). Similarity of the *Agamic* tradition is also met with in the *Arthashastra* where a clear practical aspect of the ‘material culture’, its stress on the pursuit of the useful material gains brings it closer to the *Arthashastra* tradition, which contains some Tantric *Mantras*.³⁸ It appears that a group of rationalist Brahmans like Kautilya advocated the supremacy of *artha* (wealth) over *dharma*, which accounts for the inclusion of Tantric tenets in the *Arthashastra*.

From about the 3rd century BCE Saivism appeared in India as a distinct sectarian religion. By nature Saivism was a religion of the masses, especially of the lower orders of society; hence it had the greatest potentiality of absorbing the Tantric elements. And, it was Saivism that the Tantric ideas found a ground most favourable for their expansion.³⁹ J.N. Banerjea is of the opinion that many of the seals or seal-

³⁶ Bernard, Theos, *Hindu Philosophy*, 2005, Pilgrims Publishing, Varanasi, pp 12-13.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Drabu, Vishva Nath, *Op.cit.*, p 31.

³⁹ Bhattacharyya, *Op.cit.*, p 188.

amulets of steatite, faience, etc., and other objects unearthed in the Harappan sites bear unmistakable traces of Tantrism and that some of the composite figures engraved on the seals remind us of the hybrid figures of *Pramathas* and *Ganas*, attendants of Siva.⁴⁰ In the *Rigveda* there are many hymns dedicated to *Rudra*. In most of them he symbolizes the dreadful and destructive forces of nature.⁴¹ The *Satarudriya* verses of the *Yajurveda* contain one hundred names of *Rudra*, some of which allude to his terrific and others to his auspicious forms. This dual aspect is maintained in the post-*Rigvedic* texts, and the word Siva was previously used as an adjective to denote his pacific aspect became a proper name added to that of *Rudra*. In the *Svestasvatara Upanisad* Siva is raised to the status of the supreme being, and in the *Atharvasiras Upanisad*, which is a late work, he is the head of a sectarian religion. Panini, who may be assigned to 5th century BCE, records several names of *Rudra* such as *Bhava*, *Sarva*, *Rudra* and *Mrda* in one of his sutras.⁴² He also mentions a word *Sivadibhyon* probably to convey the idea that the words like *Saivan*, derived by the application of the suffix ‘an’ to such words as Siva, etc., denote the descendants of them. Patanjali makes clearer reference to *Rudra* and Siva, and also to the exclusive worshippers of Siva as *Siva-Bhagavata*. This is the earliest certain reference to Siva sect. The Greek writers found in Siva a parallel of their own God *Dionysos*.

On some coins from Ujjayini, belonging to 3rd- 2nd century BCE, we come across the figure of three-faced Siva carrying a *danda* and *kamandalu*. Two-armed Siva is shown with a trident and knotted club on the *Sirkap* inscribed bronze seal of *Sivarksita*, on some copper coins of Maues and Gondophares, on a few coins of the Audumbara chief Dharaghosa and on Kushanna coins. Wema Kadphises was undoubtedly a sectarian Siva which is proved not only by the trident bearer-god on his coins, but also the attributive epithet *mashesvara* in his coin-legend.⁴³ *Siva* in his phallic form is also represented on coins. *Phallism* in the Siva cult is perhaps a continuation of the Harappan tradition.⁴⁴ Although in the Vedic texts the *Sisnadevas* or phallic worshippers were condemned, the cult was popular among the masses. That

⁴⁰ Baanerjea, J.N., *Development of Hindu Iconography*, 1956, Calcutta, pp 161ff.

⁴¹ Bhandarkar, R.G., *Vaisnavism, Saivism and Minor Religious Systems*, 1931, Strassburg, p 103.

⁴² Bhattacharyya, Op.cit., p 189.

⁴³ Baanerjea, J.N., Op.cit., pp 117ff. and Plates.

⁴⁴ Ratnagar, Shereen, *Understanding Harappa Civilization in the Great Indus Valley*, 2001, Tulika, pp 103-112.

Rudra-Siva was outside the pale of Vedic gods and *Vedism* (*vedabahya*) is clear from the *Daksa-Yajna*⁴⁵ story of the Mahabharata not including Siva and *Devi* in their pantheon. According to the Mahabharata, *Daksa* arranged for a horse sacrifice at Hardwar which was attended by all the gods. The sage *Dadhici* happened to notice that *Mahesvara* (*Rudra*), the consort of *Parvati* was not present in the assembly, and when he asked *Daksa* the reason for Siva's absence, the latter replied that there were eleven *Rudras* with matted hair, each holding a spear, but he did not know who among them *Mahesvara* was. The insult made *Parvati* angry, and in order to please her Siva created *Virabhadra. Mahakali*, also called *Bhadrakali*, born of *Devi's* wrath, followed *Virabhadra* to the place of *Daksa's* sacrifice and they destroyed the sacrificial materials. The destruction of his sacrifice brought *Daksa* to his senses, and he was advised by *Virabhadra* to propitiate Siva. *Daksa* prayed to Siva, and Siva, having been moved by his fervent appeal, appeared on the spot and consoled *Daksa* delivering a brief lecture on his own religious view. Chandra remarks:

It should be noticed that Siva whom *Daksa* ignored in his sacrifice was not the Vedic *Rudra* but the Siva worshiped by the *Pasupatas*. The legend of *Daksa's* sacrifice indicates that *Pasupata* conception of *Rudra* or Siva arose outside the pale of *Vedism* and the orthodox followers of the Veda could not persuade themselves to acknowledge them readily. No share of sacrificial food is claimed on behalf of Siva's consort, *Durga*.⁴⁶

In the *Bhagavata Purana* we have an elaborate version of this story which shows how Siva was viewed by the followers of the other religious sects. The author, a devout Vaisnava, made *Daksa* describe Siva as monkey-eyed, roaming in the burning ground with his attendants, the ghosts and goblins, impure and riteless, naked with matted locks on his head, wandering here and there like a mad man, etc., etc., Although some of the characteristics of the Vedic *Rudra* were infused into Siva of later times, his basic features were composed of anti-Vedic elements. His popular character and association with the lower order is also indicated in the Ramayana.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Bhattacharyya, Op.cit., p 189.

⁴⁶ Chandra, R.P., *Indo Aryan Race*, 1978, Delhi, p 129.

⁴⁷ Bhattacharyya, Op.cit., pp 190-191.

It has been pointed out that the earliest reference to a class of exclusive Siva-worshippers is found in Patanjali's *Mahabhasya*.⁴⁸ Commenting on another sutra of Panini, he says that the suffixes 'thak' and 'then', if added to the words *ayahsula* and *dandajina*, should denote such persons as want to achieve their ends by means of a spear or trident made of iron (*lauhasula*), staff (*danda*) and animal-skin (*ajiina*). Further he explains that the Siva *bhagavatas* are indeed *ayahsulika*, i.e. users of the iron trident. Wandering ascetics, with a bamboo staff in their hands, are mentioned by Panini in his sutra: *mascara-maskarinau venuparivrajakayoh*.⁴⁹ This has been commented on by Patanjali in terms of the wandering ascetics who used to teach the doctrine of non-action. Such groups of ascetics, preaching *akriya*, have been very frequently mentioned in Buddhist and Jain literature.

The *Narayaniya* section of the *Mahabharata* names the *Pasupata* School as one of the five systems—*Sankhya*, *Yoga*, *Pancaratra*, *Veda* and *Pasupata*. According to this classification *Veda* and *Pasupata* are distinct and independent of each other. This is one of the earliest clear reference to the *Pasupata* sect. The *Atharvasiras Upanisad* refers to *Pasupata-vrata*, the main feature of which is the ceremonial touching of the different limbs with ashes in the pattern of the Tantric *nyasa*. In the *Mahabharata*⁵⁰ it is stated that *Sankhya* was propounded by the great sage Kapila, *Yoga* by Hiranyagarbha, *Veda* by the great teacher Apantaratama who was also known by the name Pracinagarbha, *Pancaratra* by the lord (*Krisna*) himself and *Pasupata* by Siva Srikantha, the consort of Uma, the lord of spirits and the son of *Brahmadeva* (*Umapatirbhutapatih Srikantho Brahmanah sutah, uktavanidamavyagro jnanam ppasuptam Sivah*).

The earliest known work of the *Pasupata* sect is the *Pasupata Sutra*.⁵¹ Nothing about its authorship is known. It was commented on by *Rasikara Kaundinya* of the Gupta period. But it appears that this learned commentator did not do full justice to this work, probably owing to his Brahmanical preoccupations. It is quite certain that *Madhavacarya* of the 14th century depended on this commentary for his systematic exposition of the *Pasupatasutra* and his *Sarvadarasnasamgraha*. The contents of the

⁴⁸ Commentary on Panini IV. 1.112.

⁴⁹ Bhattacharyya, Op.cit., p 190.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Edited with Kaundinya's commentary by R. Ananthakrishna Sastri in TSS, No. CXLIII.

Pasupatasutra and its commentary deals with the five main tenets of this system which are, *Karya*, *Karana*, *Yoga*, *Vidhi* and *Duhkhanta*. This arrangement of the contents of the *Pasupata* doctrine reminds us of the arrangements found in the Buddhist and medical treatises. In fact these five categories are the same as the four *Arya-satyas* preached by the Buddha. The concepts of suffering and its extinction, and of the cause-effect relation, etc., reveal a different line of thinking.⁵²

The first category of the *Pasupata* doctrine is known as *Karya*, or effect, by which is meant all the problems and conditions of worldly existence. These are effects because they are all produced by certain causes. The problems and conditions of worldly existence are concerned mainly with the man or individual who is known as *Pasu*. His organs are known as *Kala* while the qualities are known as *Vidya*. According to the *Pasupata* system the evolution of *Karya* and its production from *Karana* follow the *Sankhya* pattern. What is seen as the effect, or *Karya*, which is manifested in the material world and worldly beings is formed by the combination of the five *Mahabhutas* or material elements (earth, water, fire, air and space) and five *Tanmatras* or subtle elements. Other *Tattvas* of the *Sankhya* like the five sense organs, five physical organs, mind, intellect and the principle of egoity are regarded as the substrata on which the production of the effect rests. So long as the *Pasu* or individual is conditioned by all these elements he remains fettered.

The second category is known as *Karana*. Existence and suffering are produced by concurrent causes. This idea is shared equally by the Buddhists and *Pasupatas*. But while the Buddhists trace the cause of suffering to *Avidya* or false knowledge, the same view is put forward by the *Pasupatas* in a different way. They ascribe the cause of suffering to the failure to recognize Siva as the creator, preserver and destroyer at one and the same time. The ultimate cause is Siva, in their terminology *Pati* or Lord, who is omnipotent and almighty. The world, or individual, or *Pasu*, fails to recognize him owing to *Pasa* or fetters. Since the individual is a conditioned entity it is not always possible for him to break all fetters to meet his source which is Siva. This takes us to the third category which is called *Yoga*, or union or the connection. The term *Yoga* of *Pasu* and *Pati* is to be achieved through mental action or conceptual

⁵² Bhattacharyya, Op.cit., p 193.

faculty which is called *Citta* in *Pasupata* terminology. This mental action may be of two kinds *Satmaka*, or active, and *Miratmaka*, or passive. The former consists of action such as muttering of *Mantras*, *Japa*, *Dhyana*, worship, etc., and the latter insists on attaining the union through intense feeling which is known as *Samvid*. This union leads to the fifth category which is called *Duhkhanta* which is the extermination of suffering. This category clearly reveals that influence of Buddhist doctrines on the *Pasupata*. The fourth category is known as *Vidhi* or means to achieve the end. The important *Vidhis* are known as *Caryas*, which are again subdivided into *Vrata* (vows) and *Dvara* (door).

It is not claimed that because of such unusual rites the *Pasupata* system is Tantric. Its ant-Brahmanical character, however, invites an enquiry into the reason why it has been regarded as *Vedabahya*. The essence of the *Pasupata* doctrine has nothing to do with the Vedic tradition because in the latter, world and worldly existence have never been conceived of in terms of suffering and its extinction. In character it is, thus. More akin to Buddhism, though it insists on pure theism. Another aspect which should be noticed in this connection is that in the early *Pasupata* system the concept of the Female Principle, or the *Sakti* of Siva by which later *Saivism* is dominated, has not been crystallized.

When all the forms of the surviving Hindu religion are treated as non-Vedic, how is that they have been accepted by orthodox tradition? The fact is that religious systems like *Pancaratra*, *Pasupata*, *Sakta*, etc., were exclusively Tantric, originally having nothing to do with the Vedas. These forms of religion were extremely popular among the masses, and hence the followers of the Vedic tradition had to give them sanction. Slowly but steadily Vedic elements were infused into these systems which resulted in the separation of the original elements stamped *Atimargika*. The grafted elements were given publicity and patronized by the ruling class and the elite, while the *Atimargika* elements were blackened and severely condemned. But these elements could not be stamped out, completely and their followers, though isolated, did not become totally extinct, Tantric Saivism being no exception to this regard.

Unlike most ancient cultural traditions of India about which we know very little, the culture and history of Kashmir is not completely opaque to the intellectual historian.

Especially in Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*, written in the 12th century A.D., we have an important quasi-history or near-history of the Kashmir which provides a valuable and reasonably accurate picture of the social-cultural life of the region from the eighth or ninth centuries onward.⁵³ Prior to the eighth century, we know that Kashmir was a center for Buddhist studies.⁵⁴ Already in the reign of Asoka in the 3rd century B.C., some Buddhist traditions had spread to the Kashmir region.⁵⁵ Moreover, from the first few centuries A.D., beginning with the reign of Kaniska and thereafter, Kashmir became an important center for northern Buddhist developments including traditions of *Sarvastivada*,⁵⁶ the Greco-Buddhist art of Gandhara, and early *Mahayana* both in its popular manifestations and in its more intellectual formulations of *Madhyamika* and *Yogacara*. Running parallel through these Buddhist centuries in the Kashmir area there were also developing traditions of an archaic Naga cult which was provided by legitimacy and some essential doctrinal foundations by the Brahmans of Kashmir (either recently settled or earlier) to attain their objective to a) retain or isolate Buddhism in Kashmir b) to safeguard their space by creating or encouraging traditional/ non-Vedic practices unknown/ non-acceptable to the Vedic Brahmans besides there is supposed to have in existence some early texts of *Saivagama*, although very little is known about these latter traditions prior to the 8th or the 9th century.⁵⁷ At any rate, there is enough evidence, even for these earlier centuries, to suggest that, in spite of the geographical isolation of the Kashmir valley, the region was unusually cosmopolitan, wherein traditions of Hindu, Buddhist, Central Asian and even Mediterranean culture freely intermingled and cross-fertilized one another.⁵⁸

⁵³ Larson, Gerald James, "The Aesthetic (*Rasāsvadā*) and the Religious (*Brahmāsvāda*) in *Abhinavagupta's* Kashmir Śaivism", *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 26, No. 4, October, 1976, p 372.

⁵⁴ For useful surveys of the history of the various religious traditions in Kashmir, see the: P. N. K. Bamzai, *A History of Kashmir*, 1962, Delhi, pp. 84-107, 226-279; S. C. Banerji, *Cultural Heritage of Kashmir*, 1965, Calcutta, pp. 106ff.; Edward Conze, *A Short History of Buddhism*, Bombay, 1960, pp. 41ff., 64ff., and 87ff.; and S. C. Ray, *Early History and Culture of Kashmir*, 2d ed., 1970, New Delhi, pp. 168-174.

⁵⁵ Conze, Op. cit., p 42.

⁵⁶ The *Sarvāstivāda* was an early school of Buddhism that held to 'the existence of all *Dharmas* in the past, present and future, the 'three times'. Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa-bhāya* states: He who affirms the existence of the dharmas of the three time periods (past, present and future) is held to be a *Sarvastivādin*; De La Vallée Poussin, *Pruden: Abhidharma-kośa-bhāyām*, 1988, Asian Humanities Press, p 807.

⁵⁷ J. C. Chatterji, *Kashmir Shaivism*, 1962, Srinagar, pp 1-14.

⁵⁸ To add Agerwalls book

It was, however, the political expansion under the powerful king, Lalitaditya, in the 8th century, and the cultural consolidation under King Avantivarman in the 9th century that presumably provided the social reality requisite for the emergence of what we now call *Kashmir Saivism*.⁵⁹ Hindu culture in all of its dimensions was patronized and encouraged, including poetry, drama, music, dance, *darsana*, *vydkarana*, temple building, *smrti*, *purdna*, and Tantra. Well-known Brahmana-pandits were brought from elsewhere in north India to Kashmir, and Abhinavagupta, in a later text, comments that his ancestor, Atrigupta, came to Kashmir by invitation of King Lalitaditya in this period.⁶⁰ It should be noted, moreover, that even in this time of Hindu ascendancy, Buddhist studies were also encouraged, and one can only wonder about and perhaps envy the vigorous debates and intellectual exchange that must surely have taken place in the period. It should also be noted that this was probably the era of the Sanikaracarya, and one is strongly tempted to believe the tradition which asserts that Sanikara visited Kashmir during his career both to carry on his polemic against the Buddhists as well as to help reshape the older Advaitavad Vedic tradition in the region, but he met no successes in Kashmir.⁶¹

In any case, a reshaping of the older Siva traditions was precisely what took place, and the reshaping moved primarily in two distinct directions. Vasugupt and Kallat are credited with the founding of *Spanda-Sastra*, a collection of religious speculations focusing around the idea of consciousness as ‘vibration’ and Somanand and Utpaladev are generally credited with establishing *Pratyabhijhii-Sastra*, a collection of philosophical writings dealing mainly with the notion of ‘recognition’.⁶² Both traditions apparently grew out of the older *Saivagama* and undoubtedly represent efforts to construct more sophisticated interpretations of Saivaite faith and philosophy.⁶³ These religio-philosophical traditions taken together are referred to as

⁵⁹ Bamzai, Op.cit., pp 108-136.

⁶⁰ K. C. Pandey, *Abhinavagupta: An Historical and Philosophical Study*, 1963, Varanasi; 2d rev. ed. Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, vol. 1, pp 5-6.

⁶¹ Ibid., pp 151ff.

⁶² Chatterji, Op.cit., pp 15-42; K. C. Pandey, Op.cit., pp 154ff.

⁶³ For useful treatments of the *Saiva* traditions generally, see: R. G. Bhandarkar, *Vaisnavism, Saivism and Minor Religious Systems*, reprint; 1965, Varanasi, pp 102ff.; Arabinda Basu, "Kashmir Saivism" in *The Cultural Heritage of India*, 1956, Calcutta, Vol. 4, pp 79ff.; J. C. Chatterji, *Kashmir Shaivism*, Op. cit., pp 15ff.; J. N. Farquhar, *An Outline of the Religious Literature of India* (reprint); 1967, Delhi; J. Gonda, *Visnuism and Sivaism*, 1970, Oxford; S. Kumaraswamiji, "Virasaivism", *Cultural Heritage of India*, Op.cit., Vol. 4, pp 98ff.; K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, "An

the *Trika* that is, triple, threefold or ‘forming a triad’, usually construed to mean the triad *Siva*, *Sakti*, and *Anu*, or the triad *Pati*, *Pasa*, and *Pasu* (that is, the lord, the fetters, the souls, respectively). The Sanskrit literature of the movement is extensive as can be seen in the numerous volumes of the *Kashmir Series of Texts and Studies* and the active intellectual life of the movement runs from the late 8th or early 9th centuries through the 12th or 13th centuries or roughly until the period that Kashmir came under the influence of Islam. Key figures in the movement, in addition to Vasugupta, Kallata, Somananda, and Utpaladeva, included Lakshmana, Ramakantha, Abhinavagupta, Ksemaraja, Yogaraja, and Jayaratha.⁶⁴ It was primarily, however, in the latter part of the 10th century and the early 11th and interestingly in the reign of Queen Didda,⁶⁵ that the school reached its zenith under the influence of one of the most remarkable minds that India has ever produced, Abhinavagupta.⁶⁶ Coming from a famous Brahmana family, Abhinavagupta was trained, according to tradition, in Siva philosophy, the *Kula* and *Krama* systems of the Hindu Tantra, Jain thought, and *Mahayana* Buddhist philosophy (primarily *Yogacara*).⁶⁷ In addition, his numerous writings indicate a careful training in traditions of the philosophy of language as represented in *Mimamsaka* and *Naiyayika* thought as well as the linguistic speculations of the famed *Bhartrhari*, together with a careful training in *Alamkarasastra* or Sanskrit poetics as represented in the works of Bharata, Anandavardhana, Bhattanayaka, and Bhattatauta.⁶⁸ He composed numerous works touching on many of these subjects and, according to all accounts, made distinctive contributions primarily in three areas: first, in the area of *Pratyabhijñā-Sastra*, in which his *Isvarapratyabhijñā-havivrttivimarsin*, his *Laghvivr̥tti*, and his *Paramir̥thasara* became perhaps most well-known; second, in the area of *Alamkara-sastra*, in which his *Dhvanyalokalocana* and his *Abhinavabharati* became famous; and finally in the area of *Tantra*, in which he set forth a massive twelve-volume synthesis of the

Historical Sketch of Saivism", *The Cultural Heritage of India*, Vol. 4, pp 63ff.; L. N. Sharma, *Kashmir Saivism*, 1972, Varanasi; and K. Sivaraman, *Saivism in Philosophical Perspective*, 1973, Delhi.

⁶⁴ Chatterji, Op.cit., pp 15ff.

⁶⁵ For a useful summary of Kalhana's description of political events from Avantivarman to Queen Didda, see Bamzai, Op.cit., pp 109-136. For Kalhana's own account, see M. A. Stein, ed. and trans., *Kalhana's Rajatarahgini*, 1900; reprint ed.; Delhi, 1961, pp 186ff.

⁶⁶ K. C. Pandey, Op.cit., pp 3-26.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ P. V. Kane, *History of Sanskrit Poetics*, 4th ed., Delhi, 1971, pp 236-243.

mystical Saiva philosophy and Tantra, known as *Tantraloka*.⁶⁹ As just indicated, his corpus is so vast and difficult that there has been a tendency to focus on one or another aspect of his work, thereby creating the impression that these various areas of his interest were really quite separate. As translations and studies have emerged, however, and as one begins to get a picture of *Abhinavagupta's* technical terminology, which clearly carries over into all the areas of his interests (namely, philosophy of language, philosophy of religion, Tantra and poetics), one begins to get a sense of an overall integrity and intellectual program that, in many ways, is one of the most remarkable legacies of classical or medieval Indian culture, as valuable as and in many ways more impressive than that of Kalidasa, Nagarjuna, Vasubandhu, Saiikara, or Ramanuja. Subsequent development in Indian poetics, even down to our own time, is inconceivable apart from Abhinavagupta, and many of the later poetic theologies of the Vaisnava Goswamins in north India as well as the later systematic interpretations of theistic *Vainava* and Saiva thought in south India undoubtedly owe much to his contribution.⁷⁰

The historian-philosopher Kshemaraja mentions the immediate cause of the founding of Kashmiri Saivism. According to him there prevailed two mutually conflicting systems of thought in the 8th century in the valley. One of them led by a Buddhist teacher Naga-Bodhi and his well-disciplined band taught *Nihilist* doctrines; they had earned the sobriquets like *Nastiknam Pursara* (Front rank leaders of Nihilists) and *Atmeshvara Nirosaka* (Repellers of *Atman* and *Ishvara*).⁷¹ Opposed to them were *Nareshavar- bhedvadina*, the adherents of dualistic system holding man and God eternally different from each other. Kshemaraja says that the dust raised by the recurrent clashes of the zealots in the two schools concealed the monistic mysteries of Saivism and the danger of its disappearance from the world was real. It was in these circumstances that Vasugupta came forward arraigning both the schools as incomplete and misguided. He propounded *Siva Sutras*, a compendium in which the tenets of monistic idealism were succinctly adumbrated in a scholarly fashion.⁷²

⁶⁹ K. C. Pandey, Op. cit., pp 27-77.

⁷⁰ E. C. Dimock, Jr., et al., *The Literatures of India: An Introduction*, 1974, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press; pp 136-143.

⁷¹ Pandit, Moti Lal, Op.cit., pp. 1- 22.

⁷² Ibid.

The Siva monism of Kashmir has a pragmatic approach towards the problems of philosophy. It is neither rigidly idealistic like the *Advaita Vedanta* and Buddhism, nor so realistic as the *Nyaya-Vaisesika* or *Samkhya*. The universe, according to it, is neither like a mirage, nor like the child of barren women. It is a reality for all practical purposes. But it is not an absolute reality, because it is a creation. It exists in the absolute reality in the form of pure, limitless and all containing consciousness (*cit*). That consciousness, called *Parama-Siva*, is ever vibrating because of its being consciousness and its vibrative nature is called *Spanda*. *Spanda* which exists in *Parama-Siva* in the form of pure consciousness appears, by stages, in its phenomenal aspect in the manner of a reflection appearing in a mirror.⁷³ A mirror bears the reflection of outward objects, but the mirror of pure consciousness bears the reflections of its own powers.

Kashmiri Saivism accepts no restrictions based on caste, creed, sex, etc. Every curious and devout aspirant can have access to it both theoretically and practically. It gives more importance to practice than to bookish knowledge and logical discussions. In its theory it comes closer to the theism of *Bhagavadgita* and not to the nihilism of *Nagarjuna*. In practice it does not prescribe the ‘profession’ of monks but advises to live the life of a householder and to practice, side by side, the *Siva yoga* for the sake of self-realization.

These Siva philosophers did not at all try to disturb the age old religion of the masses. They advocated the practice of the then established Brahmanical Hinduism based on Vedas, *Smritis* and tradition. They also advocated the practice of Siva worship in temples, at sacred places and in homes. In addition to these outward aspects of religion, they preached the practice of *Siva-yoga* in accordance with the *Trika* and *Kula* system of *Tantric* practice. The *Kula* system advocated the use of *Makaras* consisting of *Mamsa* (meat), *matsya* (fish), *madya* (wine) and even *mudra* (A sort of cake as well as a supreme *yogic* practice). This *Kula* practice was performed in closed-door compartments called *Kulacakras*. One had to keep in his mind concentrated in meditation while enjoying outwardly all these means of sense pleasure. Indulgence in these sensual activities had not to be allowed to disturb the

⁷³ Pandit, Moti Lal, Op.cit., pp 167-169.

meditation of an aspirant.⁷⁴ When an aspirant could succeed thoroughly in controlling the effects of these means of sense pleasure and in keeping his mind immersed in meditation, he would afterwards attain such a psychological state in which he could constantly enjoy the divine bliss of his unity with *Parama-Siva* even while doing all the worldly activities. He would not then require any formal practice in a secluded place under any special discipline for that purpose. An aspirant gets access to the limitless and divine self-bliss through the path of worldly enjoyment by the means of this Tantric practice.⁷⁵

Where going through the historical material dealing directly or indirectly with the presence and development of Saivism in Kashmir we discern three distinct lines of thought in the Kashmiri Saivism- a) the Saivism which was apparently recognized by the royalty prior to Didda Rani and acceptable to the Kalhana of *Rajatarahgini*. This tradition accepted the more sober temple oriented *linga* worship with the traditions near to Vedic practices. b) the Saivism which was vigorously preached by Abhinavagupta with a ritualistic tradition in contradiction to the Vedic rites. It was Tantric in origin and extremist in its practices. *Vimacar*, *Koulacar* which was in practice identical with *Samvarcakra* of Buddhists. c) the Saivism which was practiced and recommended by Lal-Ded- the most authentic poetic voice of Kashmiri Saivism. In this tradition there is no space for rituals, temples, idolatry including *linga*. It is the purest form and spiritualistic. The absence of any name including data of Abhinavagupta who belonged to second tradition in the *Rajatarahgini* speaks itself about the rivalry of the Saivaite groups.

⁷⁴ Chatterji, Chandra Jagadish, Op.cit., p. 22.

⁷⁵ Pandit, Moti Lal, Op.cit., p. 172.

C. Tantric Buddhism

Throughout its history in India, Buddhism interacted with the other religions in its environment, both influencing and being influenced by them. Such changes always raise the question as to how much any one religion can absorb from others without being absorbed by them. Even when a religion does successfully maintain its identity; there is the question of how much it becomes altered by the process of defining and defending itself in relation to its rivals. These questions became especially acute for Buddhism in India during the latter half of the first millennium A.D. as Hinduism grew stronger in all levels of society.⁷⁶

First there was Sakyamuni Buddha,⁷⁷ the original propounded of ‘Buddhism’ (about whom most reputable scholars will admit that we really have no reliable data). The first period of Buddhism popularly belongs to *Theravada*.⁷⁸ In a little space of time after Buddha attained his Nirvana their appeared various trends of thought and action

⁷⁶ Robinson, Richard H., *The Buddhist Religion: A Historical Introduction*, 1997, Wadsworth Publishing Company, United States of America, p 117.

⁷⁷ For more details on the biography of Buddha see, Auboyer, Jeannine, *Buddha: A Pictorial History of His Life and Legacy*, 1983, New York, Crossroad; Nanamoli, Bhikkhu, *The Life of the Buddha According to the Pali Canon*, 1978, Kandy, Sri Lanka, Buddhist Publication Society.

⁷⁸ During the two centuries from 100 B.C. to 100 A.D., as India switched from an oral to a written culture, developments within and without Buddhism caused the religion to undergo one of the most far-reaching splits in its history. On the internal level, the early canons were committed to writing, thus fixing a standardized version of the teachings with a greater finality than ever before. *Abhidharma* scholars succeeded in getting their texts accepted as part of this established corpus, on a par with the Sutra and *Vinaya Pitakas*, but a backlash gradually developed centering largely in Andhra, in South India among those who felt that *Abhidharma* analysis had missed the point of the teaching. In taking on the *Abhidharmists*, the members of this backlash found themselves faced with the belief that the *Abhidharma* was directly or indirectly the word of the Buddha, so they began composing new Sutras of their own, placing their anti-*Abhidharma* arguments in the mouths of the Buddha and the great *arhants*, and claiming that their Sutras were newly discovered texts that had been hidden since the Buddha's time. The disagreement over whether these new Sutras could be accepted as normative seems to have been the first rift leading to the major split. On the external level, Buddhism as a whole was encountering a host of new theistic religious movements in its expanding environment. The cult of *Visnu* was developing in India, while *Hellenistic* and *Zoroastrian* savior cults were spreading into *Gandhara* in northwestern India and along the major trade routes in central Asia at the same time that Buddhist missionaries were active in these areas. No one knows for sure how and why Buddhism picked up cultic and doctrinal elements from these external sources. Buddhists may have been reacting to external criticisms that they had been orphaned by a dead god who was no longer in a position to offer salvation. They may have also been responding to pressures within their own ranks as the rise of written culture weakened their sense of corporate cohesion and encouraged greater individualism, causing the laity and junior monastics to regard themselves as competent and free to combine elements from various traditions as they saw fit. At any rate, because Buddhist monastics were wandering the length and breadth of India, the anti-*Abhidharma* partisans eventually joined forces with the new Buddhist savior cults and other like-minded factions to grow into a widespread movement calling itself the *Mahayana* (the Great Course or Great Vehicle-*Yana*: a going, a course, a journey; a vehicle), Robinson, Op.cit., p. 82.

in the *Sangha*; all of these deviations/ lines of thought claimed their legitimacy from the supposed sayings and actions of Buddha himself.⁷⁹ This is clearly the view subscribed to by Monier Williams⁸⁰ in his *Buddhism*. ‘The tendency of every religious movement’, claims Williams, ‘is towards deterioration and disintegration’. After the Buddha's death, he claims, ‘the eternal instincts of humanity ... insisted on making them-selves felt notwithstanding the unnatural restraint to which the Buddha had subjected them’, and Buddhists quickly began to give up the celibacy, ethics, and other teachings enjoined by the Buddha. Then, he claims, ‘the protean system called *Mahayana* arose, and grew, by the operation of the usual laws... into a congeries of heterogeneous doctrines, including the worship of *Bodhisattvas*, deified saints, and personal gods. Yet, ‘far worse than this, Buddhism ultimately allied itself with Tantrism or the worship of the female principle (*sakti*) and under its sanction encouraged the grossest violations of decency and the worst forms of profligacy’.⁸¹

Apart from internal crises that forced Buddhists to think for a change in their religious outlook from time to time there were also the external pressures as well. The contest between Buddhism and Hinduism was conducted on two fronts: doctrine and practice.⁸² Because these two fronts were for a period almost totally separate, those who specialized in defending Buddhism against doctrinal attacks became so focused on their immediate task that they lost touch with the original therapeutic thrust of the teaching. For them, Buddhism was a philosophical position to be defended in debate against Hindu and Jain philosophers, so they reformulated many of the teachings to conform to the new criteria of logic and epistemology that formed the ground rules for the debate.⁸³ Divorced from their therapeutic context, the major points of the doctrine became little more than abstract concepts. Even the *Prasangika Madhyamika* School⁸⁴, which refused to defend any position, maintained that the practical expression of the Buddhist doctrine of emptiness lay in a debating stance: the use of

⁷⁹ Das Gupta, Shashibhusan, *Obscure Religious Cults*, 1969, Calcutta, Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, pp 34-35.

⁸⁰ Known popularly in later years as "Sir Monier Monier-Williams."

⁸¹ Monier Williams, *Buddhism, in Its Connexion with Brahmanism and Hinduism, and in Its Contrast with Christianity*, 1889, London: John Murray, p 148

⁸² Harvey, Peter, *An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History, and Practices*, 1990, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pp 56-78.

⁸³ Robinson, Op.cit., p 123.

⁸⁴ *Nagarjuna* (150-250 A.D.) founded the *Madhyamika* School, so called because it claimed to maintain emptiness as the *Madhyamipratipad* (Middle Path) between being and non-being.

logic to demolish the theories of others without proposing a positive theory of one's own. It might wonder how successful the debaters were in maintaining the essential features of Buddhist doctrine, but the debaters themselves were always conscious of their identity as Buddhists, and of the need to protect what they viewed as Buddhism from outside encroachments. However, the view of Buddhism the debaters were defending became less and less related to the area of practice, its depiction of the goal more and more remote from the realm of human possibility. Thus it was of little help in defending the religion on the popular level. At the same time, because the basic concepts of the doctrine had become divorced from their original practical matrix, they could be freely reinterpreted in light of other practices, some of which might be quite alien to the original teachings.⁸⁵ This is precisely what happened as Buddhism encountered what was perhaps the major event in the history of Indian popular religion during the first millennium C.E.: the rise of Saivism.⁸⁶ Saivism had an almost inexhaustible capacity to absorb elements in its cultural environment and convert them to its own purposes. As Saivism came to the fore, it absorbed Vedic ritual patterns, *Samkhya* philosophy, and the cults of many local gods and goddesses. The gods became different expressions of Siva's personality, whereas the goddesses became his consorts, although-in keeping with the Indian view that the female principle is active and the male passive-they maintained their role as sources of spiritual power. Saivism also absorbed and developed various types of *yoga* (meditative practice), including *Hatha Yoga*, which involved elaborate physical postures and breathe control, and *Kundalini Yoga*, which involved the manipulation of the subtle flow of energy through channels in the body. As the religion grew, Siva took on the form of the Lord of the Dance, a god from whom emanated all the beings in the great dance of the cosmos, simply for the purpose of his own entertainment, and into whom all beings would eventually return.⁸⁷ Under such a situation the question for Buddhism was how to react to this new movement, in as much as its traditional rituals had nothing nearly so viscerally appealing to offer the public. The *Hinayana* schools seem, for the most part, to have distanced themselves from these

⁸⁵ Monier Williams, Op.cit., pp 148-152.

⁸⁶ Ramacharaka, Yogi, *The Inner Teachings of the Philosophies and Religions of India*, 1981, London, L.N. Fowler & Co., pp 232-259.

⁸⁷ Robinson, Op.cit., p. 118.

developments. However, the four classes of Buddhist *Tantras*, or esoteric ritual texts, dating from the sixth century onward, show three basic ways in which Saivaite practices were absorbed by the *Mahayana*: *Kriya* (Action) and *Carya* (Performance) *Tantras* use simple ritual forms for the purpose of making merit in the classic *Mahayana* context; *Yoga Tantras* teach, for the most part, a nonsexual *deva-yoga* centered on *Sakya-muni* in a cosmic form called *Mahavairocana*; and *Anuttarayoga* (Unexcelled *Yoga*) *Tantras* teach a sexual *deva-yoga*, often using symbols from the *Kapilika* sect, centered in wrathful Buddha derived from wrathful forms of Siva, identified as a family of Buddhas higher than *Sakyamuni* and *Mahavairocana*.⁸⁸ These last two sets of *Tantras* appear to be primarily the work of lay *yoga* practitioners operating outside of traditional Buddhist institutions. However, beginning in the eighth century, monastic scholars tried to reunite doctrine and practice by bringing the *Yoga Tantras* into the mainstream of the Buddhist university curriculum. In the tenth century, they began admitting even the Unexcelled *Yoga Tantras* as well, writing elaborate commentaries teaching that the *yoga* should be visualized rather than physically practiced, and identifying the more scandalous parts of the ritual as code symbols for standard *Madhyamika* doctrines. Meditation retreats were built as adjuncts to the universities so that scholar-monks could practice their visualizations in an orthodox monastic setting. Lay practitioners, however, continued their physical practice of Unexcelled *Yoga*, denouncing the monastics for being bound to small-minded rules. The monastics, in turn, called the lay practitioners fools for ignoring the doctrine of *karma*. Despite their differences, the lay and monastic practitioners together created a radically new development in the Buddhist tradition that took on the status of a separate vehicle, as different from the *Mahayana* as the *Mahayana* was from the *Hinayana*. The new vehicle acquired several names. Most prominent among them was *Vajrayiina*, the *Adamantine Vehicle*, named after *Vajradhiitu* (the Adamantine Realm), the new vehicle's term for the ground of Buddhahood. In adopting the symbolism of the *Vajra* (diamond/ thunderbolt), the new vehicle was laying claim to a tradition with deep roots in Indian religion, as the *Vajra* was the weapon wielded by the Vedic storm god *Indra*. As both a diamond and a thunderbolt, the *Vajra* stands for two aspects of supreme power: total invincibility and unfettered

⁸⁸ Robinson, Op.cit., pp 118-124.

spontaneity. Another term for the new vehicle was *Mantrayāna*, the Incantation Vehicle, derived from its extensive use of mantras. The new vehicle took an essentially Saivaite view of the religious life in which sexual union is the paradigm for the highest religious state, and the coalescing of all dualities in an adamantine union of light, emptiness, and bliss is the practitioner's goal and gave it a Buddhist expression. Scholars will probably never agree as to whether this final chapter in the development of Indian Buddhism should be viewed as a sign of creative strength, in that Buddhists were able to recast their doctrines in imaginative ways to meet the Saivaite challenge, or as a sign of weakness in their being unable to resist the passionate intensity of their rivals. Because survival is typically a matter of both appropriating from and adapting to one's environment, both interpretations probably contain their measure of truth.⁸⁹

Vajrayāna is often referred to as Buddhist Tantrism, after the Tantras that form its primary body of texts. However, it is important to bear in mind that not all Buddhist *Tantras* originated with *Vajrayāna*. Most of the Action and Performance Tantras appear to have been composed for use in a typical *Mahayāna* setting; the Buddha and bodhisattvas they invoke come from the standard *Mahayāna* pantheon, and the doctrines and concepts they espouse fit well with standard *Mahayāna* thought. Only with the *Yoga* and Unexcelled *Yoga Tantras* do we enter a distinctively new phase of Buddhist thought and practice. Because the *Tantras* were originally intended to be secret doctrines, requiring initiation into their mysteries, it is impossible to date their initial composition with any certainty. However, they were not the earliest Buddhist ritual or incantation texts. The *Pali* Canon contains texts for Buddhists to recite for protection against evil spirits and dangerous animals. Unlike the *Tantras*, however, these early texts do not claim that their words have the power of coercion. Most of them, such as the *Metta Sutta*, derive their power from the compassion in the reciter's mind; the good *karma* produced by thoughts of goodwill is what protects the reciter from danger. In another discourse, the *Atanatiya Sutta*, the *Deva Vaisravanapromises* that if any practicing Buddhists are being harassed by spirits under his jurisdiction, they need only chant his mantra and he will deal with the offenders. In this case, the

⁸⁹ Robinson, Op.cit., p. 125.

power comes from *Vaisravana* as voluntary offer to fellow Buddhists; this is the pattern followed in the ritual passages of the early *Mahayana* texts.⁹⁰

The idea most commonly associated with Tantra from the outset (and still widespread today) was sex. Edward Thomas put this reductionist portrayal in its most undisguised form when he reported, in his *History of Buddhist Thought*, that Tantric Buddhism ‘consists in giving a religious significance to the facts of sex’. Inevitably, this conception of the Tantric tradition suggested to the narrative imagination of the nineteenth century the classical archetype of the ‘decline and fall’. The resulting tale, it should be apparent, is a familiar one, recapitulating that of Etruria: a once strong and vital culture becomes seduced by pleasure and renounces its earlier commitment to purity and virtue. In particular the lure of the ‘pleasures of the flesh’ so difficult to keep in check overcomes the people, and society becomes ‘decadent’. The ultimate outcome is the death of the once great society.⁹¹

The introduction of Buddhism to Kashmir is attributed to a monk called Majjhantika, a disciple of Ananda. The Buddhist legend regarding his journey to Kashmir and his victory over the *Naga* king is a recession of the *Nilamatpurana* legend.⁹² A similar tradition appears in *Mulasarvastivada Vinaya Pitaka* of Kashmir.⁹³ Actually there is reference in *Divyavadana* that invitation to participate in the third Buddhist council was extended to the monks and scholars of Kashmir also, thereby confirming the presence of Buddhism in Kashmir prior to first century CE. Early Kushanna period saw the fruition of Buddhist institutions and their unique material manifestations,⁹⁴ *Vihars/monasteries* assumed a prominence among all the institutions of the state and monks a unique class distinction.⁹⁵ Donations and land grants from state and private parties helped in the enhancement of economic power of the inmates. Though there were other religious sects and faiths also contesting the prestige and power of the

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Edward J. Thomas, *The History of Buddhist Thought*, 1933; reprint, New York: Barnes & Noble, 1951, p 246.

⁹² Ganhar, J.N., *Buddhism in Kashmir*, 1965, New Delhi, pp 33-35.

⁹³ Razdan, S., "Contribution of Kashmir to Buddhist Literature", *The Journal of Kashmir Studies*, Institute of Kashmir Studies, University of Kashmir, Vol. IV, No.I, 2010, pp 112-121.

⁹⁴ Thaper Romila, *The Penguin History of Early India, from the origins AD 1300*, 2003, Penguin Books, New Delhi, pp 262,270-271.

⁹⁵ Yogadin, B., "New Findings Relating to the Historical and Cultural Relations between India and Khorezm", in *India and Central Asia: Pre Islamic Period*, 2000, Takshkent, pp 59, 61.

Buddhist monks but their institutional support and missionary activities were comparatively limited and methodically restricted to groups and regions. Enlarged mass base of Buddhism further opened its doors for innovations, fresh interpretations and inclusion of cults and beliefs of the people making it easier for the new initiates and laity to identify themselves with it. The reach and quality of the governance and visible emphasis on trade, in which members of ruling families had direct or indirect stakes through their agents, made the trade routes more secure.⁹⁶ Kashmir's re-entry into the world of trade and culture became more pronounced and authentic during Kushanna period. The period of consolidation of Buddhism in Kashmir and its ramifications, though obscure, towards North, North-east and North-west could be better understood in its two prominent stages:

a). The Kushanna period from 1st-5th century CE is the period of near dominance of *Sarvastivad (Theravad)* school. Though the supposed 4th Buddhist council recognized all the eighteen schools which had emerged till then, the major philosophical discourses were generally guided by the *Sarvastivadins*.⁹⁷ *Madhmyka* philosophy which was till then in the formative stage had initiated the process for its reassertion. Kashmir was then the much sought center of *Vibhasha* texts and its masters and books were highly welcome in China.⁹⁸ One of the early texts *Astasahasrikapragnaparamita*⁹⁹ was translated into Chinese by Lokaksema¹⁰⁰ much before it was revised by Kumarajiva¹⁰¹ (in 408 CE) who had his education and training in Kashmir¹⁰² (354 CE).

While Buddhism was slowly gaining grounds in Central Asia (1st century CE) and in China (earlier presence reported by an edict of 65 CE by its compiler Hou-Han-Shu)

⁹⁶ Ibid

⁹⁷ Zurcher. E., *The Buddhist Conquest of China*. 2007, Brill, Leiden, p 202

⁹⁸ *Abhidharmahrdaya* was partially translated in Chinese by *Sangadeva* who went to China around 381 CE. It was under the instruction of *KamaraJiva* that *Sarvastivadins* text were abandoned in China; Ibid.

⁹⁹ This Mahayana text deals with the concept of emptiness and other related issues; Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Lokasema is credited with the development of Dhyana (Chana) school in China along with his contemporary Zhu Shufo. The Lokasema is also understood to have compiled *Drumakinnarajapariprecha*.

¹⁰¹ Zhi Qian re-translated *Abhidharmahrdaya* which was earlier translated by Lokasema under the title *Suuramgamasamadhisutra*. Kumara Jiva translated the *Aslasahasrka* in 408 CE and other Mahayana text *Pancavimasatisahasrika* in 404 CE.

¹⁰² Kumarajiva, born in 344 CE came to Kashmir around 354 CE and was initiated into *Sarvastivadins* texts but after he repaired to Sule (Kashghar) he was converted to Mahayana. He went to China in 402 CE and helped in developing the Mahayana school there.

through the activities of foreign traders immigrants and travelers and coming to prominence in the Han China (2nd century CE), Kashmiri schools¹⁰³ were engaged in the compilation of texts which carried the understanding and discussions on the Buddhist *Sutta's Vinaya* and *Abhidharma*. Most of these works had reached Central Asia and China by the end of 3rd century AD. Zhi Qian (Indo-Scythian) who was active during the last quarter of 2nd century and 1st quarter of 3rd century collected the original texts and put them to translation. Kashmiri masters Sanghadeva, Sangbhadra, Dharmottara and Dharmasri reached China by the end of 4th century AD.

Vibhashikas were earlier to raise the questions of time the nature and status of existents and emergence of life. Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakosasastra* tries to elucidate most of the questions regarding the permanence and impermanence of things, role of perception, and status of knowledge and nature of time. *Vaibhasikas* definition and elaboration of organ of vision was based on their concept of moments. They considered moments to be four (I) moment of production (II) moment of existence (III) moment of decay (IV) and moment of annihilation. The Kashmir *Vaibhasikas* more importantly focused on the non displayed future eye.¹⁰⁴ The future discussions on the subclasses of this non displayed future eye prepared the ground for the admission of intuition as a means of knowledge. The ability to see without the involvement of the eye 'is some yogic ability which is did play during meditation'.

b). The post Kushanna period from 5th century CE to 8th century and beyond emerges as the period of dominance of *Mahayana* Buddhism. Its unbridled, all welcome permissiveness to local cults and acceptance of the Brahmanic practice of assigning individual divine no appellations and designations to each and every attribute conceived of the Buddha.¹⁰⁵ Female divinities soon followed. The methodology for salvation (*Nirvana*) from the wheel of birth and death was equally available to both the sexes.¹⁰⁶ Women *Buddhissattvas* were only a matter of time. Almost every divinity was bestowed with a consort as *Shakti*. *Taras* in all hues occupied a place of prominence and veneration. The concept of *Sakti* which is so pivotal for the

¹⁰³ The Vaibhasikas of Kashmir composed the earlier extent treatises of the school which later paved the way for many scholastic writings and introduction of various lines of thought and practices.

¹⁰⁴ Abdullaev. E.V., "The characteristics of philosophical ideas of Buddhism in Central Asia", India and Central Asia, op. cit, p. 109.

¹⁰⁵ Winternetz, *History of Indian Literature*, London, pp 247, 255-256.

¹⁰⁶ W. Morgan Kenneth (ed), *The Path of Buddha*, 1956, New York, p 367.

Vajrayana recognized *Tara* as the principal female deity and mother of all Buddhas. She has her origins in the Hindu magic rite and cult of mother goddesses and was earlier recognized as an epithet of *Siva* himself. She is considered savior, protector and guide of all those who invoke her. She seems to have been very popular among the Buddhists of Kashmir. Sarvajnanmitra, composed in her honour, *Sragdhara stotra*, *Ekavimsati stotra* and *Ary Tara namastottara-Sataka Stotra*.¹⁰⁷

As in India so in Kashmir the two religious faiths which found each other facing each other and virtually in the same space and time began to accommodate the traditions and rituals of the masses in order to counter the each other's influences. In this regard as mentioned above Buddhists accepted many popular Hindu deities in their pantheon but not before relegating them to the third order. There however, were the conflicts which are reflected through the literature produced during the period by the proponents of the two faiths. In this literature we find the questions raised by the opponents and the answers provided with newer arguments cutting their opponents arguments.¹⁰⁸

The popularity of old Buddhism rested chiefly on the simplicity of its doctrine, namely, that the state of the untrammelled self (*Atman*) is bliss and therefore birth is misery. The cause of misery is desire and therefore the cessation of desire and the path leading to that is right behaviour and right concentration of thought.¹⁰⁹ But the complete denial or negation of the existence of a Supreme Being or a personal God could not for long keep the minds of the general mass of people attached to this form of religion. The end which the followers of the *Hinayana* school seek is the redemption of man from this toilsome world of birth and death by absorption in the Brahma, not felicity in a higher and better world.¹¹⁰

This pessimistic outlook on life and the world was doubly enhanced by the central point of *Hinayana*—the doctrine of *Arhatship*, a system of ethical and mental self-culture in which deliverance was found from all mysteries of sorrows of life in a change of heart to be reached here on this earth.¹¹¹ This school had taught that

¹⁰⁷ Gulshan Majeed, Op.cit., pp 75-76.

¹⁰⁸ Dutt, Nalinaksha, *Buddhism in Kashmir*, 1985, Eastern Book Linkers, Delhi, pp 12-13, 15, 28-29.

¹⁰⁹ Harvey, Peter, Op.cit., pp 77-79.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Dutt, Nalinaksha., Op.cit., pp 31-33.

Gautama was a Buddha, a man who by self-denying efforts continued through many hundreds of different births had acquired the ten *paramitas* or cardinal virtues in such perfection that he was able, when sin and ignorance had gained the upper hand throughout the world, to save the human race from impending ruin by preaching the doctrine of *Arhatship*. In other words, the older school laid stress on individuals own efforts for his own salvation.¹¹²

To the saints and scholars of Kashmir deeply learned in more subtle and higher philosophies, this doctrine seemed crude as well as incapable of keeping the masses attached to it for long. Coming into contact with these master-minds, the simple creed of early Buddhism got permeated with their refined ritualistic and philosophic teachings.

The older type of Buddhists could become an *Arhat* (deserving) and so attain *nirvana* in the sense of annihilation or absorption into the Universal Self. But the newer one could become a *Bodhisatva* (one whose nature consists in enlightenment hence destined to become a Buddha) who, though he became entitled by the sanctity of many lives to attain nirvana remained alive as a god to help the seeker after release; while Buddha through transcendental philosophical appreciation of him as a superman became a great savior-god. The old or Lesser Vehicle (*Hinayana*) could only appeal to the few, whereas the new or the Great Vehicle was open to all.¹¹³

In fact, the teachers of the *Mahayana* school were not slow to perceive that if Buddhism was to gain any hold over the masses, it was essential that it should adapt itself to their human needs. It became imperatively necessary, as a simple preservative measure, to convert a cold philosophical creed based on an ultra-pessimistic theory of existence, into some sort of belief in the value of human life as worth living. And if life was not to be some sort of faith in a superintending God, controlling their life an invariable current of misery it followed that there must also be an interesting Himself in man's welfare.¹¹⁴

The chief school of the *Mahayanists* thus taught devotion to the many Buddhas and their attendant *Bodhisatvas*; they created for their *nirvana* a dwelling place, a Heaven;

¹¹² Singh, NX, Op.cit., pp 208-213.

¹¹³ Edward J. Thomas, Op.cit., pp 245-246.

¹¹⁴ Robinson, Op.cit., p 122.

and they attributed to the *Bodhistvas* the will and the power to give assistance to mankind; Buddha's and *Bodhisatvas* both being also made subject to transmigration and reincarnation. Thus, they evolved the worship of *Maitreya*, the *Dhyani Buddhas*, *Manjusri*, and *Avlokiteshwar*. The first of these appears in ancient Buddhism as the name of the Buddha to come and the last is the holy spirit of the *Mahayanist* school. Among the *Dhyani Buddhas* who are philosophic abstractions corresponding to earthly Buddha's, *Amitabha*, i.e., Infinite Light, is the Heavenly counterpart of Gautama and soon took the most important place. *Avlokiteshwar* proceeds from him and manifests him to the world since the death of Buddha. He is like *Siva* destroyer of the evil and the fountain of eternal bliss.¹¹⁵

Similarly, the female counterpart of the male *Avlokiteshwar* is the form of the god chiefly worshipped in China and Japan. In these countries, he is known in the feminine character of *Kwan-Yin*, 'Goddess of Mercy', and in this form is represented with two arms but oftener with four or more. The connection of *Avlokiteshwar* with *Siva* says Sir M. Monier Williams, 'is proved by the fact that in some characteristics *Kwan-Yin* corresponds to *Durga* form of *Siva*'s wife and in others to the form called *Parvali*, who as dwelling in the mountains, may be supposed to look down with compassion on the world'. As may be expected voluminous literature on the new doctrine and its various branches was written during and before the reign of Kanishka. The home of early Buddhism was round about Kosala and Magadha, subject indeed to Brahman influence, but where the sacred language was never more than a learned tongue and where the exclusive claims of the Brahmans had never been universally admitted. The *Mahayana* or the Great Vehicle arose in -the very stronghold of Brahmanism and among a people to whom Sanskrit was a familiar tongue. The new literature, therefore, which the new movement called forth was written and has been preserved in Sanskrit.¹¹⁶

The philosophy developed chiefly on the lines of *Sarvastivadins* (All Things Exist System) or realist school.¹¹⁷ Nagarjuna, the philosopher who lived in the first century A.D. and was a contemporary of Kanishka, is the founder of the *Madhyamika* or the

¹¹⁵ N.K. Singh, Op.cit., pp 211-212.

¹¹⁶ Ramacharaka, Yogi, op.cit., p 232.

¹¹⁷ N. K. Singh, Op.cit. p 213.

Middle Way which ended in Buddhist *Kanteism*. Later on Asanga and Vasubandhu laid the foundation of a third school, the *Vijnanvad*, holding that all phenomena are illusion and nothing but thought.

The early Buddhist doctrine had been carried to China through Indian missionaries in the second century B.C. it could not take a firm root there. It was, however, three centuries later that *Mahayana*, after gaining in strength and popularity and attaining the status of a state religion under Kanishka, was with great success carried to Central Asia and China mostly by Kashmiri missionaries.

There is a great deal of mystery surrounding the rise and early development of the *Sarvastivadin* School. On the one hand, we have the tradition of Asoka's council, stating that the schismatic group in the *Sangha* was expelled from Magadha, migrating to northwestern India and evolving into the *Sarvastivadin* School.¹¹⁸ On the other hand, we have the attempts of several scholars to ascribe the rise of the school to one of Asoka's missions—that sending Majjhantika to Gandhara, an early seat of the school. This episode corresponds well with one *Sarvastivadin* tradition stating that Madhyantika (the Sanskrit counterpart of the Pali *Majjhantika*) converted the city of Kashmir, which seems to have close ties with Gandhara. Still another tradition established a community of *Sarvastivadin* monks at Mathura, founded by the patriarch Upagupta. Be that as it may, until the reign of King Kanishka, around the turn of the Christian era, the history of the school is at best sketchy.¹¹⁹ They enjoyed the patronage of Kanishka, during which time they were greatly strengthened, and became one of the dominant sects of Buddhism for the next thousand years.¹²⁰ From the Kushana period *Theravad* school attained popularity under a new nomenclature of *Sarvastivadins* which is along with *Madhyamika*, *Yogacharya* and *Vaibhasika* the fourth popular Buddhist school.

Whatever the case may be *Sarvastivada* was the most prestigious philosophy of northern India and it was deeply connected with Kashmir, even if it was born in Mathura. It is said that famous Buddhist thinkers in order to safeguard the original thinking of *Sarvastivada* came to Kashmir and it was here only that its purest form

¹¹⁸ N.K. Singh, Op.cit. p 207.

¹¹⁹ Charles S. Prebish, *Buddhism: A Modern Perspective*, 1975, Penn State Press, pp 42-43.

¹²⁰ Hino, Shoun. *Three Mountains and Seven Rivers*, 2004, Penn State Press p 55.

was decided upon. It was only in Kashmir that a detailed and authentic commentary of this philosophy by the name *Vaibhashika* was written. *Sarvastivada*, *Abhidharma's* basic scripture is supposed to have been divided into six volumes. This monumental work was completed, by Vasubandhu, son of Katyayani, in Kashmir.¹²¹ It is said that it was translated into Chinese in year 383 A. D. Parmartha, writes in the biography of Vasubandhu that Vasubandhu in order to get *Vibasha* written *Abhidharama*, invited famous Sanskrit poet Ashvaghosh from *Sakat* (Ayodhya) Ashvaghosh lived in Kashmir for twelve long years and prepared the literary forms of *Vibasha* in ten lakh cantos. This work is known by the name *Abhidharma Mahavibhashashastra*.¹²²

The *Sarvastivada* comprised two sub-schools, the *Vaibhasika* and the *Sautrantika*. The pioneering work about the subject was undertaken by Ch. Willemen ever since 1975, and more recently in 2006 (*Abhidharmahrdaya*) and in 2008 in the Journal of the International College for Postgraduate Buddhist Studies (Tokyo). The *Vaibhasika* was formed by adherents of the *Mahavibhasa Sastra*, comprising the orthodox Kashmiri branch of the *Sarvastivada* School. The *Vaibhasika-Sarvastivada*, which had by far the most comprehensive edifice of doctrinal systematic of the early Buddhist schools, was widely influential in India and beyond. Regarding divisions of practice, the *Vaibhasika Sarvastivadins* are known to have employed the outlook of Buddhist practice as consisting of the Three Vehicles:¹²³

1. *Sravakayana*
2. *Pratyekabuddhaydna*
3. *Bodhisattvaydna*

In contrast to the *Vaibhasikas*, the *Sautrantika Sarvastivadins* did not uphold the *Mahavibhasa-Sastra*, but rather emphasized the Buddhist *Sutras*.¹²⁴ The name *Sautrantika* means ‘those who uphold the *Sutras*’. According to the *Abhidharmakosa-*

¹²¹ Razdan, S., pp 114-120.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Nakamura, Hajime, *Indian Buddhism: A Survey with Bibliographical Notes*, 1999, New Delhi, p 189.

¹²⁴ N.K. Singh, Op.cit. pp 207-209.

bhasya, the *Sautrantikas* held the doctrine that there may be many contemporaneous Buddha's.¹²⁵

Though the *Sarvastivadins* would themselves claim that their teaching of 'all exists' (*Sarvasti*) is a direct teaching of the Buddha himself, as shown by their attributing the earliest *Abhidharma* texts to direct disciples of the Buddha, notably to Sariputra and constant reference to the sutras throughout, the school in its entirety is more rightly to be considered as part of the age of scholastic Buddhism, It was the most influential school in the northwestern part of India. In a Chinese context, the word *Abhidharma* refers to the *Sarvastivada Abhidharma*, although at a minimum the *Dharmaguptaka*, *Pudsalavada* and *Theravada* also had *Abhidharmas*.¹²⁶

Although the *Sarvastitvad* was the central thesis, there were different theories on how 'Sarvam' and even 'Asti' were actually to be explained and understood among the Gandharan diverse *Sarvastivadins*. Vasubandhu's *Koshabhasya*, an elaborate yoga manual based on the *Hrdaya*, describes four main theses on *Sarvasti*. There are four types of *Sarvastivadins* accordingly as they teach a difference in existence (*Bhavanyalhatva*), a difference in characteristic (*laksananyathatva*), a difference in condition (*Avasthanyathatva*), and mutual difference (*Anyonyathatva*).¹²⁷ Later *Sarvastivada* takes a combination of the first and third theses as its model. It was on this basis that the school's doctrines were defended in the face of growing external, and sometimes even internal, criticism.

The doctrines of *Sarvastivada* were not confined to 'all exists', but also include the theory of momentariness (*Ksanika*), conjoining (*Samprayukta*) and simultaneity (*Sahabhu*), conditionality (*Hetu* and *Pratyaya*), the culmination of the spiritual path (*Marga*), and others.¹²⁸ These doctrines are all inter-connected and it is the principle of 'all exists' that is the axial doctrine holding the larger movement together when the precise details of other doctrines are at stake. Interestingly, the Kashmiri orthodoxy, the *Vaibhasikas* disappeared in the later part of the 7th century. Subsequently, the old Gandharan *Sarvastivadins*, the *non-Vaibhasika Saittrantikas*, were named

¹²⁵ Guang Xing, *The Concept of the Buddha: Its Evolution from Early Buddhism to the Trikaya Theory*, 2004 p 66.

¹²⁶ N.K. Singh, Op.cit. p 210

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

'*Mulasarvastivadins*', who then at a later date went to Tibet. It has been suggested that the minority *Vaibhasikas* were absorbed into the majority *Sautrantika Sarvastivadins* as a possible result of the latter's adaptations.¹²⁹ The *Vaibhasika Sarvastivadins* were in conflict with Hindu thought (Nyaya, Samkhya....) on the denial of soul, doctrine of momentariness, causal efficiency and on ontological problems.

Buddhism and Saivism thus together contributed to more evolved *Vijrayana* in Kashmir and Tibet through the intellectual discourses of Kashmiri scholars whose efforts could well be attested from the *Alchipaintings* of the 11th century.

¹²⁹ Majeed, Gulshan., Op.cit, p 69.

D. Renouncers

The earliest historical information about the renouncer tradition comes from the *Upanisads* and other Vedic writings, as well as from Buddhist literary sources. Given the uncertainty of their dates, however, it is impossible to give a precise or certain date to the origin of that tradition. The earliest datable source that attests to the existence of the renouncer tradition is the Asokan inscriptions of the middle of the third century BCE. Around this time, two competing ascetic traditions appear to have crystallized: anchorites living settled lives in forest hermitages cut off from social intercourse, and renouncers living itinerant lives in the wilderness but in interaction with towns and villages from which they begged their food. An ancient Brahmanical law book describes the normative lifestyle of anchorites:

An anchorites shall live in the forest, living on roots and fruits and given to austerities. He kindles the sacred fire according to the procedure for recluses and refrains from eating what is grown in a village. He may also avail himself of the flesh of animals killed by predators. He should not step on plowed land or enter a village. He shall wear matted hair and clothes of bark or skin and never eat anything that has been stored for more than a year.¹³⁰

The anchorite's life is marked by his refusal to avail himself of any product mediated by human culture. His clothing and food come from the wild; he is not permitted to step on plowed land, the symbol of human culture and society. The anchorite has physically withdrawn from society, even though he continues to participate in some of the central religious activities of society, such as maintaining a ritual fire and performing rituals. At least some of the anchorites may have lived in family units; we hear often of wives and children living in forest hermitages.¹³¹

The renouncer, on the other hand, lives in proximity to civilized society and in close interaction with it.

¹³⁰ Bradford, N. J. "The Indian Renouncer: Structure and Transformation in the Lingay at Community", in R. Burghart and A. Cantlie, eds., *Indian Religion*, 1985, London, Curzon Press, pp 45-57.

¹³¹ Bronkhorst, J., *The Two Sources of Indian Asceticism*, 1993, Schweizer Asiatische Studien, Monographien 13. Bern: Peter Lang, pp 22-24.

A mendicant shall live without any possessions, be chaste, and remain in one place during the rainy season. Let him enter a village only to obtain alms food and go on his begging round late in the evening, without visiting the same house twice and without pronouncing blessings. He shall control his speech, sight, and actions; and wear a garment to cover his private parts, using, according to some, a discarded piece of cloth after washing it. Outside the rainy season, he should not spend two nights in the same village. He shall be shaven-headed or wear a topknot; refrain from injuring seeds; treat all creatures alike, whether they cause him harm or treat him with kindness; and not undertake ritual activities.¹³²

The renouncer's withdrawal from society is not physical but ideological. He does not participate in the most central of socio-religious institutions: family and sex, ritual fire and ritual activities, a permanent residence, and wealth and economic activities. He is a religious beggar, depending on social charity for his most basic needs. Of these two ascetic institutions, the one that became central to the development of Indian religions and cultures was the renouncer tradition. The hermit culture became obsolete at least by the beginning of the Common Era and lived on only in poetic imagination; some of the most beloved of Indian poetry and drama, including the two great epics, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, center around hermit life in the forest. Sakuntala immortalized by the Sanskrit playwright Kalidasa, was a character living in a forest hermitage. But it had little historical influence on Indian religion.¹³³

There is a longstanding and ongoing scholarly debate regarding the origin of the renouncer tradition. To simplify a somewhat intricate issue, some contend that the origins of Indian asceticism in general and of the renouncer tradition in particular go back to the indigenous non-Aryan population.¹³⁴ Others, on the contrary, see it as an organic and logical development of ideas found in the Vedic religious culture.¹³⁵

It is obvious that the ancient Indian society comprised numerous racial, ethnic, and linguistic groups and that their beliefs and practices must have influenced the

¹³² Cantlie, A., "Aspects of Hindu Asceticism", 1977, in J. Lewis. ed., *Symbols and Sentiments*, London, Academic Press, p 67.

¹³³ Flood, Gavin, Op.cit., p 272.

¹³⁴ Bronkhorst, J., Op.cit., p 56.

¹³⁵ Heesterman, J. C., "Brahmin, Ritual and Renouncer", 1964, *Wiener Zeitschrift fur die Kunde SUDasiens* 8, pp 1-31.

development of Indian religions. It is quite a different matter, however, to attempt to isolate these different strands at any given point in Indian history.¹³⁶ The second half of the first millennium BCE was the period that created many of the ideological and institutional elements that characterize later Indian religions. The renouncer tradition played a central role during this formative period of Indian religious history.

Renouncers often formed groups around prominent and charismatic ascetic leaders, groups that often developed into major religious organizations. Some of them, such as Buddhism and Jainism, survived as major religions; others, such as the *Ajivakas*, existed for many centuries before disappearing. They took the concept of renunciation to its extreme position. The three skinny frail and apparently dried up human figures on the Harwan (Kashmir) titles are supposedly the three *Ajivakas*. Renunciation was at the heart of these religions. Even though the ideal of homeless wandering is often maintained as a theological fiction, many of these renouncer groups, such as the Buddhist and the Jain, organized themselves into monastic communities with at least a semi permanent residence. These communities vied with each other to attract lay members, donors and benefactors, and for political patronage. Among the heterodoxies there were atheistic *Caravakas* who challenged the very foundations of the concept of renunciation.

The influence of renouncer practices and ideologies was not limited to what we have come to regard as non-Hindu or ‘heterodox’ traditions; their influence can be seen within the Brahmanical tradition itself. Indeed, during this early period of Indian history the very division into ‘orthodox’ and ‘heterodox’ is anachronistic and presents a distorted historical picture. Scholars in the past have argued that some of the changes within the Brahmanical tradition, such as the creation of the *asrama* (orders of life) system, was instituted as a defense mechanism against the onslaught of renunciation. Evidence does not support such claims. The Brahmanical tradition was not a monolithic entity. The debates, controversies, and struggles between the new ideologies and lifestyles of renunciation and the older ritualistic religion took place as much within the Brahmanical tradition as between it and the new religions.¹³⁷ This

¹³⁶ Olivelle, P., “A Definition of World Renunciation”, 1975, *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Sudasiens* 19, pp 75-83.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

struggle created new institutions and ideas within that tradition, the *asrama* system being one of the more remarkable and enduring.

Some of the fundamental values and beliefs that we generally associate with Indian religions in general and Hinduism in particular were at least in part the creation of the renouncer tradition. These include the two pillars of Indian theologies-*samsara*- the belief that life in this world is one of suffering and subject to repeated deaths and births (rebirth); *moksa/ nirvana*- the goal of human existence and, therefore, of the religious quest is the search for liberation from that life of suffering.¹³⁸ All later Indian religious traditions and sects are fundamentally ideologies that map the processes of *Samsara* and *Moksa* and technologies that provide humans the tools for escaping *samsaric* existence. Such technologies include different forms of *yoga* and meditation. An offshoot of these ideologies and technologies is the profound anti-ritualism evident in later traditions. In the areas of ethics and values, moreover, renunciation was principally responsible for the ideals of non-injury (*ahimsa*) and vegetarianism.¹³⁹

Renouncer groups both within and outside the Brahmanical tradition developed their own literature, especially texts that dealt with their modes of life and rules of conduct. The Buddhist and Jain textual traditions are well known. Within Brahmanism itself we have evidences of renouncer texts. The 4th century B.C. Grammarian Panini,¹⁴⁰ for example, mentions the *Bhiksusutras* composed by Parasary and Karmandin. The *Baudhdyana Dharmasiitra* mentions a treatise on forest hermits.¹⁴¹ Nonethese early texts has survived. One of the reasons may have been that of ascetic life became incorporated in the Dharmasastras within the context of the *asrama* system. Some of their sections dealing with renouncers and forest hermits may, indeed, be fragments from early handbooks for these ascetics. Theepic *Mahdbhdrata*, likewise, contains similar fragments of ascetic (Winternitz 1923). Sections of some of the early Upanisads may reflect renouncer influence or literature.

Within the Brahmanicai tradition, nevertheless, the only surviving literature dealing with renunciation is embedded within the Dharmasastras. It was not until the early

¹³⁸ Dumont, L., “World Renunciation in Indian Religions”, 1960, *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, 4, pp 33-62.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Flood, Gavin., p 281.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

Middle Ages that independent compositions dealing with the life of renouncers were composed. These fall into the category called *Nibandha*, that is, scholarly texts dealing with one or several elements of Dharma with copious quotations from earlier Dharmasastric treatises. One of the earliest surviving texts of this class is the *Yatidharma samuccaya* by Yadava Prakasa¹⁴² (12th century A.D). Numerous other texts dealing with the rite for becoming a renouncer, his daily life and activities, rules governing his life, and his funeral were composed during medieval times. Most of these have not been edited or printed and only exist in manuscript.¹⁴³

Even in the valley of Kashmir according to Marco Polo, the semi-Vedic Saivaites or what may be called the renouncers who “live in communities, observe strict abstinence in regard to eating, drinking and the intercourse of the sexes and refrain from every kind of sexual indulgence in order that they may not give any offence to the idols whom they worship.”

¹⁴² Olivelle, P., Op.cit., p 66.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

With or without any reference to Heraclitus, the Greek philosopher (ca 540-ca 480) Strife has remained a major if not single sole agent of change and progress of life on this planet. All efforts of humans have been towards domestication of the other-- be it his kind, his super or lower co-shareholders or the environment-- all of whom humans have variously encountered. Humans even to sustain the gains had to be in a mode of preparedness, engaged in constructing defenses and fabricating arguments, myths, fables, and legends for the legitimization of actions taken or need to be taken. So is true of tradition in Kashmir. It is marked by change, but change in continuity, internal crisis and tensions leading to competing traditions within tradition and the rise of counter traditions expressing explicit dissent over the fundamentals of whatever may be called normal tradition. The change in traditions, proliferations of cults and the emergence of counter cultures is not difficult to understand if one considers that there was constant inflow of power-backed traditions which confronted with deeply seated local traditions, forcing both to make compromises either for their survival or for establishing hegemony. This and the ever present creative minority with dynamic tendency towards fulfillment, completeness and integrity of their personality led to the emergence of beliefs within a belief and even challenged it to the extent of rejecting it. However, the forces of contestation which rejected tradition could only affirm rather than displace the tradition, evidently because tradition enjoyed the support of rulers and upper castes who were also landed magnates and big employers. Moreover the tradition provided a psychological therapy to people in an environment of vagaries of weather, recurrent famines, epidemics and diseases where there was no one and no body of empirical knowledge to turn to help or where such knowledge was plainly inadequate.

The earliest extant religious work of Kashmir written in 6th or 7th Century A.D is significantly Nilamatapurana. Needless to say the tradition of writing Puranas was a Pan-Indian Practice for striking the balance between the Vedic and local sources of authority by (local) Brahmans who were in a position to access the points of minimum compatibility between different traditions. This technique of absorbing local cults and associated practices for widening the social base of Brahmanical social order in different regions is known as Puranic process. The Nilamatapurana provides a typical example of this process which commensurates with Gramsci's concept of hegemony as the Aryans, showed sufficient flexibility to respond to new circumstances and to reach into the minds and lives of its subordinates. How the Aryans reformulated the Vedic religion to suit the local circumstances without however compromising with its basic fundamentals, Nilamatapurana is all about it. According to the Nilamata, on the eve of the Aryan immigration there lived two powerful cultural groups in Kashmir pejoratively called Nagas and Pisacas by the Vedic people. Hence there was no other alternative to the Aryans but to make vital compromises with their adversaries even to the extent of incorporating the Naga and Pisaca leaders in their Pantheon.

Nagas are designated in Kashmir as the tutelary deities supposed to reside in the springs and lakes of the valley. It is because of this association of the Nagas with water that a spring to this day is called nag in Kashmir. The popular conception of the Nagas represents them in the form of snakes, living in the water of the springs or lakes protected by them. They can, however, also appear in human shape or may take the form of clouds and hailstorms. So much crusted was the belief of springs being abodes of spirits with supernatural powers that people could not forget it notwithstanding their conversion to Islam. What is, however, of considerable importance for our immediate purpose is that the Rishis and even some Sufis believed in the sacredness of the springs and held the view that the spirits occupying the springs could assume the form of human beings and snakes. However, they Islamized the belief declaring that the spirits of the springs had been converted to Islam by them.

Having been a part of the geographical and cultural complex of the border lands situated on its immediate north and north-west, the world view of Kashmiris was always shaped by the religious developments occurring in these lands. It is therefore

understandable to see almost identical sequences of religious changes between Kashmir and its neighbourhood. In the neighbouring territories of Kashmir we found Naga cult perhaps the earliest and the most popular belief. The Aryans introduced Vedic Religion around 1500 B.C. The worship of Vishnu was popular in Ghandhara as early as the 5th Century B.C. The Persian occupation of Ghandhara for more than 200 years between (516-326 B.C) led to the spread of Zoroastrianism. In Kashmir too we found almost the same religious sequence. Buddhism was introduced around 300 B.C following Mauryan occupation of the Valley. The Greeks who ruled Kashmir for about 150 years introduced their own gods and goddesses besides promoting worshipping of images. However, it may be wrong to suppose that only Hellenistic religion became the dominant faith during the Indo-Greek rule. In this respect Kashmir was a part of Ghandhara where besides Buddhism and the Greek religion we find Shiva powerful in Posh Kalawati (Greek Capital) and Vishnu strong in Taxila. Having their center at Bactria which was the traditional center of Zoroastrianism the Greeks were also influenced by this religion besides the Sun worship prevailing in Taxila and the Anatolian and Syrian religious beliefs.

From 6th Century B.C up to the conversion to Islam Saivism and Vaisnavism remained the dominant religious traditions of Kashmir under the patronage of the rulers who were thoroughly Indianized. These traditions were however neither close to nor monolithic, nor could they escape revolts from within. Let us cite the example of Saivism, which became the dominant cult of Kashmir from the tenth century. There were many Siva sects with hardly anything in common save that all of them regarded Siva as the cosmic overlord. Broadly speaking there were three types of Saivaites who may be classified as semi-Vedic, non-Vedic and anti-Vedic. The semi-Vedic Saivaites were those Saivaites who followed the Vedic and Smarta Puranic norms plus many aspects of Saivism namely, the Mother Goddess cult, *lingum* worship, carnivorous diet etc. However, as adherents of Vedas and Smarta Puranic norms, they were the believers of Varnāśramadharmā, authority of the Brahmans, idol worship, theism and pantheism, rituals and ceremonies. Among the semi-Vedic Saivaites may also be counted, what may be called the renouncers who according to Marco Polo “live in communities, observe strict abstinence in regard to eating, drinking and refrain from every kind of sexual indulgence in order that they may not give any offence to the

idols whom they worship.” The non-Vedic Saivaites were the Tantric Saivaites who relied more on Tantras than on the Vedas. The Tantric Saivism of Kashmir also known as Kashmiri Saivism is essentially an absolute monistic philosophy based on sixty-four Siva Āgamas. This absolute non-dualistic philosophy posits that there is only one absolute reality called Paramaśiva. It belittles the worth and value of pilgrimage, worship of the gods and the like of *vrata*, *tapa*, *tīrtha*, *devācārṇādīshu*. It also emphasizes that God should be meditated upon as one without hands, feet, belly or limbs and only as *Satcidānanda* and *Prakāsha*. To ‘men of little intelligence God seems to dwell in icons or symbolic diagrams (pratimāsualpabuddhīnam)’. Telling of beads or recitation of the names of God and singing of hymns of praise ‘are worship of a low kind while offering of oblations into sacrificial fire (*hōma*) and pūja are even lower than the low kind of worship (japastutihsyād adhamāhoma pūjādham ādhamā)’. In the same vein it does not see any worth and value in austere penance. More emphasis is laid on yoga rather than on ritual. Also, there is no room for discrimination on the basis of caste and sex so far as initiation in Saivism is concerned.

The Tantric Saivism which developed close proximity to Buddhist *Samvaracakra* incorporated many of its traditions and practices. The Tantric Saivaites were also divided into different sects on the basis of the different *ācāras* followed by different groups. The main *ācāras* were *Daksinaācāra*, *Samayaācāra*, *Vamaācāra*, *Kaulaācāra*, *Mata ācāra* and *Trikaācāra*. The last one of these was predominantly popular among the Śaivas of Kashmir. The use of five *makārās* (wine, meat, fish, roasted corn and sex) was essentially prescribed in *Kaulācāra*– the *ācāra* whose popularity in Kashmir was only next to *Trikaācāra*. *Trikaācāra*, however agrees with the *Kaula* view that the limitless divine self-bliss can be experienced through sensual enjoyments. The use of *makārās* has been recommended in couplets 69-74 of the *Vijnānabhairava*, an important scriptural work on the *Trika* system. Abhinavgupta, the famous exponent of Kashmiri Saivism, maintains that an aspirant can have access to the limitless divine bliss called *jagadānanda* through an experience of sensual enjoyments. *Vamācāra* prescribed an excessive use of intoxicants without any element of modesty in its practice. While *Kaulas* used *makārās* in closed compartments called *Kulacakras*, *Vamācārins* took it publically. *Daksinācāra*

prohibits the use of such objects. The *Mata ācāra* has a position in between the *Kaula* and *Trikaācāra*. Both Kshemendra and Kalhana unanimously talk of extreme depravity that had pervaded the Śaivagurus. In *Deśopadesā* and *Narmamālā*, Kshemendra delineates the voluptuousness of Saiva teachers. They carried on illicit relations even with the wives of their pupils. They nurtured lasciviousness, ire, jealousy, covetousness, capriciousness – in fact all evil deeds. They had a liaison with prostitutes and enjoyed drinks in their company.

True, the tradition of heterodoxy was so old and so strong in Kashmir that *Tirumular*, the earliest of the Siddhas of Tamil Nadu assigned to the second half of the seventh century, is believed to have come from Kashmir. Siddhas, it may be mentioned, were anti-ritual, anti-ceremonial and anti-caste. There is almost total absence of any cult of a local deity in the poems of *Tirumular*. Just as we find in Kashmir theistic non-conformism growing and culminating in blunt and direct attacks on the established religious order by the time of Lalla, similarly among Tamil Siddhas we notice rebellion against the Brāhmanical order becoming blunt and direct as the time passed. Interestingly, the substance, tone and tenor of the poems of the Tamil Siddhas closely fall in line with the outspoken *vaakh* of Lalla.

Certain facts mentioned in Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* namely flexibility of Varna *Ashrama Dharma*, persecution of Brahmans (gods of the Earth), spoliation of temples, revoking of *Agraharas* and imposing taxes up on Brahmans by rulers, killing of cows and eating of beef, matrimonial relations with other religious and cultural groups, absence of sati among the general populous, taking of arms by Brahmans, drinking of wine by Brahmana Gurus while singing their chants, conjurer life of the ascetics and their possession of lands, revising of traditional doctrines, texts of their own by ignorant gurus, etc only point to fluid religious milieu of the period.

Besides the theistic non-conformism, we also come across a powerful group of atheists in Kashmir. From Jayantabhatta, Kshemendra, Kalhana and Jonarāja's brief but illustrative mention it appears beyond doubt that the atheists had become a force to reckon with and were posing a serious challenge to the existing religious and social order. According to Jayantabhatta, Samakaravarman (883-902) failed to stem the tide of atheists during his reign. A religious synod, possibly summoned at the instance of

king and queen. Kshemendra cautions the king that he should not appoint the atheists as *Sabhyas*(jurors) as “*those who deny the existence of God, they pollute the company of the believers*”. About king Simhadeva (1286-1301) Jonaraja says, “*by keeping company with bad men the king became devoid of his belief in God*”. Needless to emphasize that atheists of Kashmir were not a unique body of non-believers. They were, on the other hand, an integral part of a pan-Indian tradition. References here to the presence of atheistic are generally understood to be the heterodox Buddhists.

Notwithstanding the powerful presence of the non-conformists and dissenters, the Vedic Shiva Brahmanism maintained its dominance and used power and position against the forces of contestation. Yet despite having arrayed themselves against the ideology that critiqued and rejected tradition, it may, however, be wrong to assume that the forces, which favoured continuity, regarded tradition as sacrosanct and monolithic. For its own survival in the face of varied pressures, the tradition had no other alternative save to be fluid and dynamic. We see its pantheon having been drawn from various sources. Alongside the Vedic gods one finds, Siva, Vishnu, Surya, Bhairava, Ganesha, Kartikkiya, Kamadeva and Śakti under various names. Writing about the distinct number of Vishnu images in the famous Sun temple of Kashmir Martand, Robert E. Fisher remarks, “*Were it not for the traditional popularity of the Sun God cult in north western India and the name of the temple being Martand, this structure might today be judged to have been dedicated to Vishnu, so prominent are the images of that deity*”. Indeed the religious life was in a state of constant fluidity, where the people adopted new cults and beliefs without any apparent sense of conflict. The deep seated impact of Tantricism on Vedic Saivaites can be had from their appropriation of many Tantric rituals which alongside the Vedic rituals came to be recognized as fundamental principles in achieving union with Siva. In this regard mention be made of their concept of Śakti in its various forms, the *lingam* worship, the awakening of *kundalini* by yoga, the idea of deities presiding over the different parts of the body and their outward symbolic representation by means of mystic diagrams, the different *ācāras* followed in worship, the recitation of *mantras*, the necessity of rituals, the spiritual discipline in company with women, etc. Another important feature of this new Brāhmanism was that the folk belief, viz, the worship of springs, streams, rivers and other water bodies was fully adopted and the

sacred spots of the tribal's were included as new places of pilgrimage (*tīrtha*) with suitable myths to make them respectable. The deep-rooted reverence for Buddha among the masses was also accommodated by prescribing reverential celebration of his birthday. For striking the balance between the Vedic and local sources of authority *Purānas* were written as elsewhere in India, by local Brahmins who were in a position to assess the points of minimum compatibility between different traditions. This technique of absorbing local cults and associated practices for widening the social base of Brahmanical social order in different regions is known as *Purānic process*.

In effect, the emergence of myriad cults, the binary opposition between the dominant tradition and dissent and the *Purānic process* all point to the same conclusion: religion was not something of a bundle of fixed attitudes which could not be reformulated, changed or even challenged in the light of new experiences. To be sure, religious history of Kashmir prior to Islam is nothing but a record of assimilation of innovation, adaptation, compromise, reformulation and above all a search for truth – the truth to be discovered by each generation. There was all along a section of intellectuals who were always in the process of becoming and never fully formed. It was largely because of these dynamic and changing actors that we see a dynamic and changing religious history.

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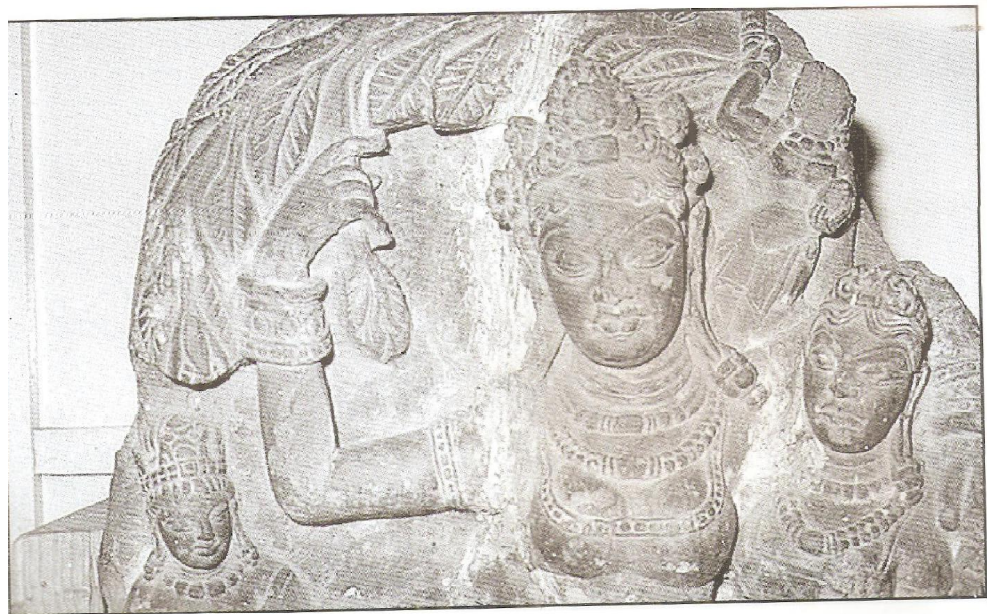
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Kartikeya (Bijbeara)



Headless deity, identified as Durga (Bijbeara)



Birth of Sidhartha (The upper part in relief represents images of Queen Maya in center, her sister Prajapati to her left, a small figure of diety to right and a defaced figure of some goddess towards left up) (Pandhrethan)



**Buddha Cross – Legged
(Pandhrethan)**



**Bodhisathva- Avaloixitesvara
(Pandhrethan)**



Mahesvara (Pandhrethan)



Mahesvara (Pandhrethan)



Pinaka Siva (Pandhrethan)



Indrani (Pandhrethan)



Chamenda (Pandhrethan)



Varahi (Pandhrethan)



Ganga (Pandhrethan)



Headless Vishnu (Pandhrethan)



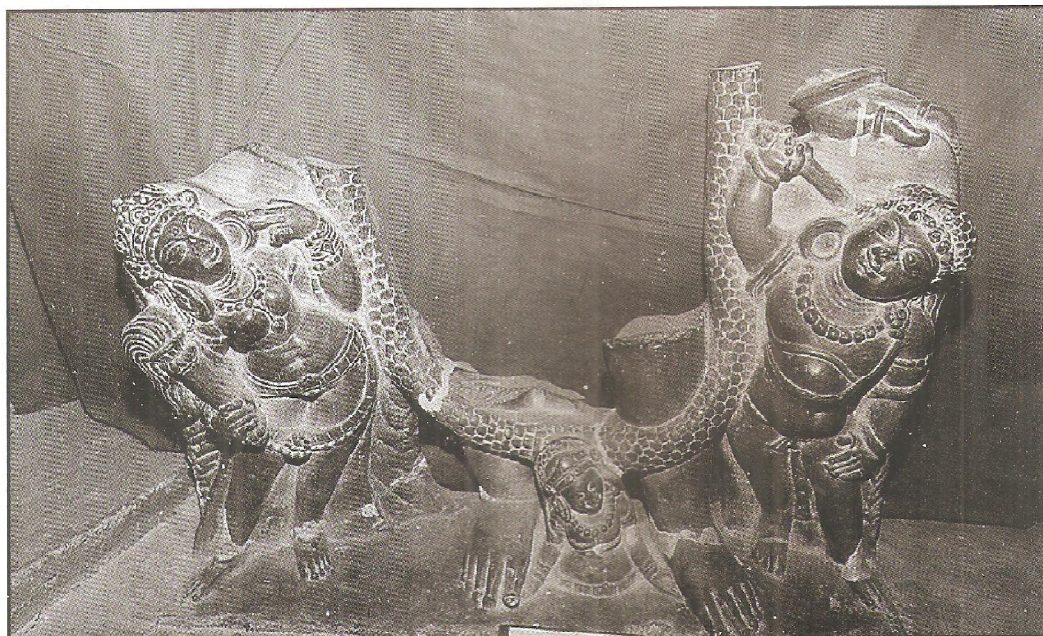
Bodhisattavas (Identified by R.C. Kak, however, later scholars identified it as Crowned Buddha (**Parhaspura**))



Vishnui (Pandhrethan)



Vishnui chaturanana (Pandhrethan)



Ardhanarisvara (Avantipora)



Vasudeva (Avantipora)



Laxshmi Narayana (Verinag)



Ganish (Verinag)



Narasimha (Verinag)



Naga Rising from water



Vishnu as Narayana



**Vishnu killing Kaitumba and
Madhu**



Yoga-Narayan



Bronze image (Bodhisawtva)



Bronze image (Buddha)

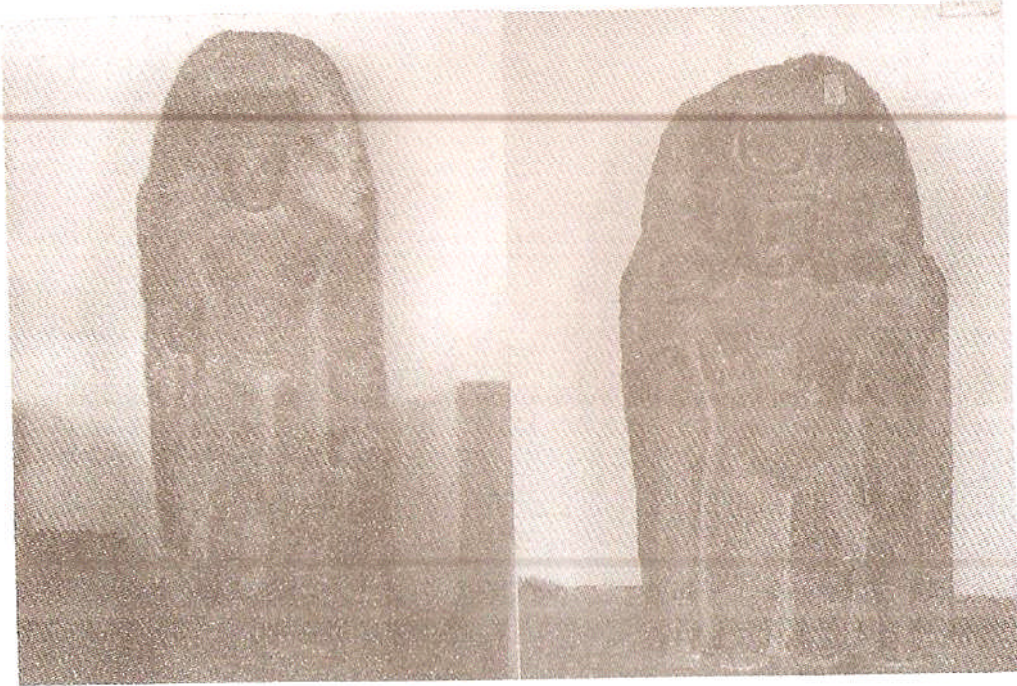


**Bronze image (Buddha Seated
cross legged)**



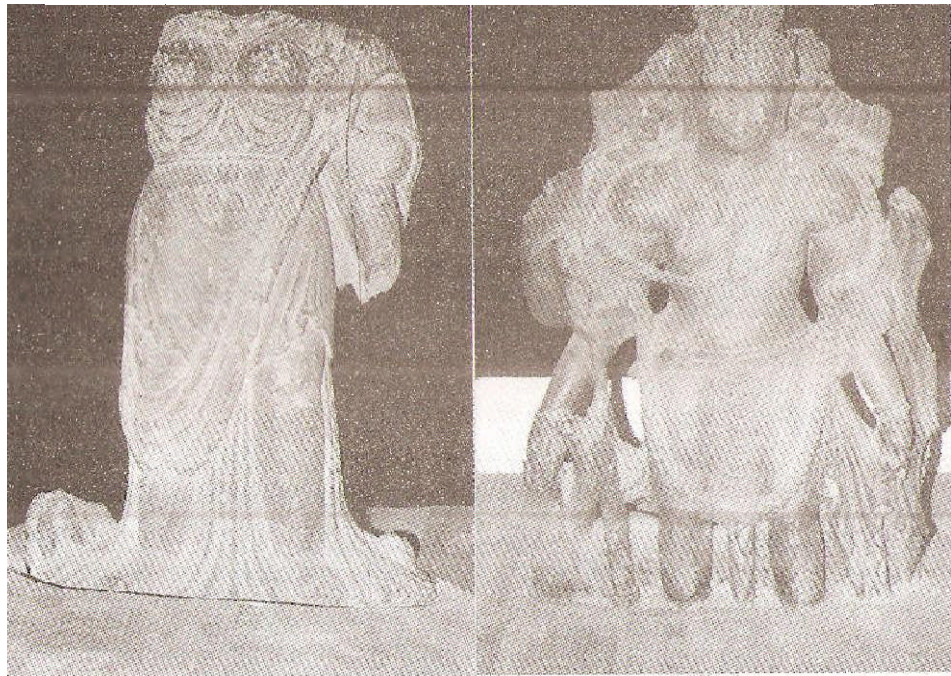
**Bronze image (Sukhasavati-
Lokeshvera)**

**Graceo-Budhist stone sculptures Parashpura
Baramulla 8th Century CE.**



Crowned Buddha

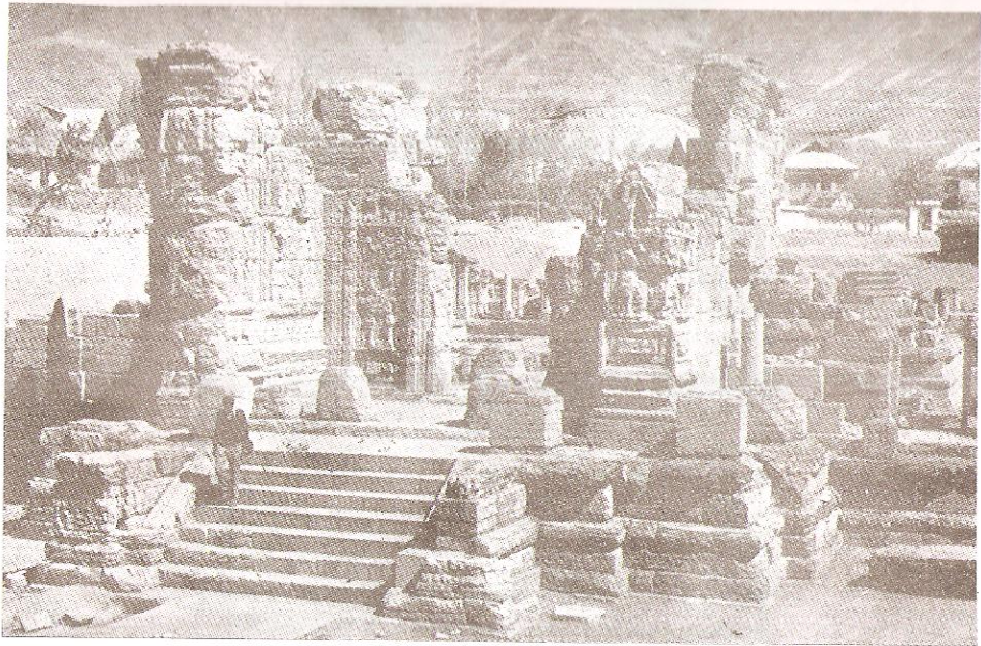
**Graco-Hindu stone sculptures Bijbehara 6th
and 7th Century CE.**



Parvati and Kartikya



Avantisvara Temple (9th Century)



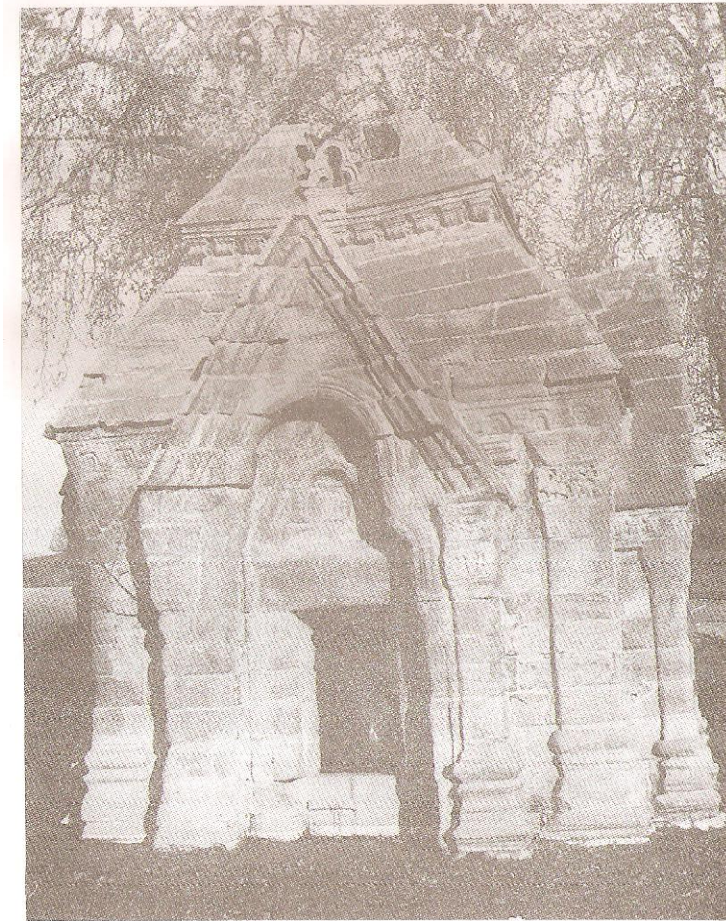
Avantisawami Temple 9th Century)



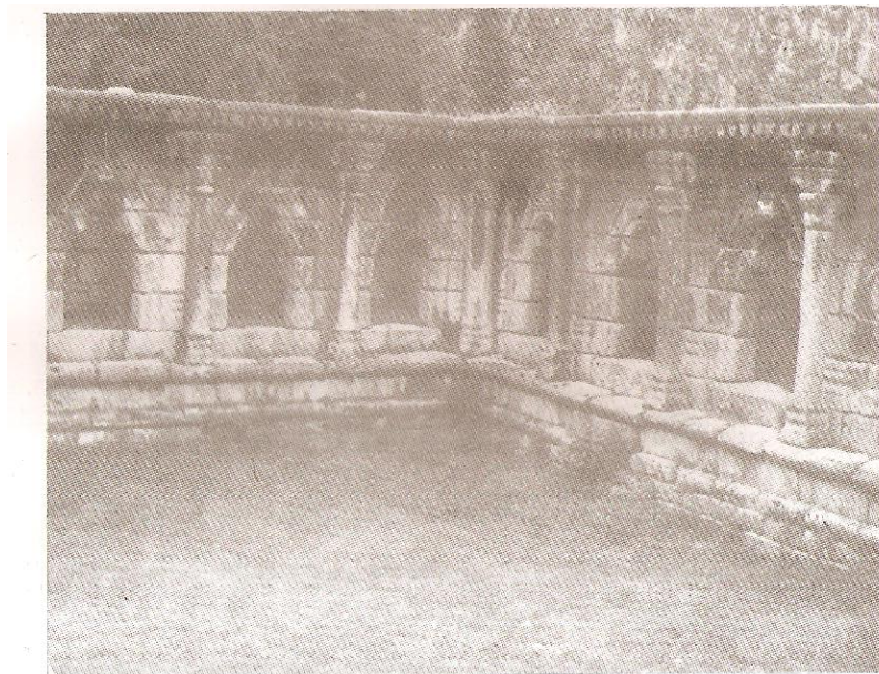
Sun Temple (Martand)



Siva Temple (Narasthan)



Siva Temple (Pandrathan)



Temple Wall, (Bunyar Uri)



Siva Temple, (Payar)



Siva Temple, (Bunyar Uri)