

Kashmir, its Name and Fame: Analysis of different Theories

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Abstract

The valley of Kashmir lies towards the north of the India. The term Kashmir was known as the valley that lies between the Himalayas and Pir Panchal range till mid-19th century. Presently, it lies from Pak occupied Kashmir with Gilgit-Baltistan, Jammu and Ladakh.

Besides that, it also includes Chinese-administered territories of Aksai Chin and the Trans-Karakoram with Gilgit-Baltistan Tract. Kashmir remained the crown of India from the beginning. It was ruled by powerful dynastic like Mughals, Afghans, Sikhs, and Dogra's. All these dynasties contributed in terms of warfare and laid a well established government from time to time.

All these dynasties that ruled the Valley of Kashmir contributed the region in terms of trade and commerce. Besides that, they brought new reforms in the agriculture and tried to boost the economy of the valley. The rulers also tried to beautify the valley and constructed roads, temples, public parks, resting places (sarais), which transformed the physical structure of the valley and turned it into paradise, which was later on coined as "the heaven on earth". The paper tries to highlight how Kashmir got its name and how different theories are relevant to Kashmir.

Key Words: Kashmir, Legendary name, Theories related to Kashmir

Introduction:

Kashmir lies on the top in the map of India. It is also known as **Crown of India**. The region is wrapped with neighbours from all sides, which increases its geo-political stability. River Jhelum flows with its tributaries through Kashmir and occupies area of nearly 10,240 square kilometres.

Kashmir is surrounded by mountains which add its beauty from all sides. From the North, lie the Nanga Parbat, to the East stand Harmukh, To the South lie Mahadeo. The PirPanjal range is in the South. Kashmir is blessed with water in terms in springs, lakes and rivers. Besides that, the valley had various picnic spots, attracted places, dense forests that attract the vistors from all over the world.

How Kashmir Got Its Name: A Legendary Tale:

There are different theories related to the name of Kashmir. The folk etymology denotes Kashmir as dried land. While as Kalhana mentions in his book Rajatarangini that Kashmir was the name of a lake called satar.

As per Hindu mythology, the saint Rishi Kashyapa laid its contribution in the formation of Kashmir by draining out the water through the hills of Varaha-mula (Baramulla). After draining out the water, Kashyapa ordered Brahmans (Creator of the World) to settle on this land to protect its people from devil. So, on his name, the land was called as Kashyapa Pura, which today is known as Kashmir.

Legend of Naga:

Naga in Sanskrit Means Serpent. It is believed that the earliest inhabitants of Kashmir were worshipping snakes. There are many springs in Kashmir. It is believed that in the spring waters lived the Nagas. It is believed that the Suffix Nag is associated with different places belonged to snake worshippers like Nilnag, Verinag, Anantnag, and so on.

The residence of Mahapadma was thought to be the large Lake Wular in Kashmir. Mahapadma was a snake-goddess who had the power to fulfil any wish. Plains settlers, primarily Brahmins, are thought to have followed the Nagas and had to defeat the Yakshas and Pisachas (beings of a lower evolutionary stage than humans) in order to dwell in peace in Kashmir. One of the main locations of serpent worship in India was Kashmir. It is believed that the snake-worship prevailed in the valley since 4th and 3rd centuries B.C. According to the Mahavamsa, Majjhantika was dispatched by Moggaliputta Tissa, Asoka's advisor, to spread Buddhism in Kashmir. Upon arriving in Kashmir, he discovered that Aravala, the King of Nagas, was in charge of the region. Aravala's hailstorms decimated the nation's maize crop.

Majjhantika (the Buddhist monk) who has been given to spread Buddhism in Kashmir had divine powers. Because of this, he remained safe from rain and storm. This enraged the Naga King. He sent lightning that struck the rocks which would strike the Buddhist Monk and he would be killed. But his attempt failed. Aravala was convinced by the great powers of Majjhantika and they accepted Buddhism. So a large number of Naga-worshippers converted to Buddhism.

It is believed that Kashmir was originally a Dragon Lake, according to historical evidences. There is least literature that supports how the arhant Madhyantika (Majjhantika) protected the people from nagas and laid foundation of Bhuddism. This detailed account has been preserved in the Chiens eVinaya of the Mula Sarvasti-Vandin Sect. A thorough explanation of how Kashmir was formed out of water and given to the Nagas of which Nila, the son of Kasyapa, was the chief is provided in the Nilamatapurana.ⁱⁱ

Different Theories Related to Kashmir:

Kashmir holds a significant place in India's political geography. The people of Kashmir consider these mountains as their protectors and guardians. Many theories have been given about the name of the valley of Kashmir. According to Welford the name is derived from chasas.

When Hien Tsang visited Kashmir in A.D. 634, he called the valley "ka-shi-mi-lo." During his two years there, he became well acquainted with the topography of the region and characterised it as a nation surrounded by towering mountains on all sides. He claims that these organic fortifications have prevented the kingdom from being conquered. He views that the Kashmir ashandsome, learned, frivolous and cleverⁱⁱⁱ.

The Herodotus mentioned it as Kasyapatros while Hikatus calls it by the name of Kaspalros. Other theories have the description that the name is derived from Kas, which means light and Mira, which means sea. According to Muslim tradition the desiccation was affected by Kasheb (Deo) who performed this work at the command of Solomon, king of Israel. While little Tibetans called Kashmir as "*Khachepa*". The people of Gilgits called Kashmir as "*Kashir*".

Rulers of Kashmir: An Overview

Here are the pictures representing the founders or key rulers of various dynasties that ruled over Kashmir, each depicted in their traditional attire.

The earliest records are lost in prehistoric oblivion. Kalhana states that the first king of Kashmir was Gonanda-I who came to throne in 653 Kali which is about 300 B.C. He fought war for Jars and against Krishna at Mathura and killed^{iv}. Gonanda was succeeded by Dhamodar to the throne of Kashmir. He always remained sad and brooded over his father's death. He also suffered at the hands of Krishna in the neighbouring territory of Gandhara.

Afterwards Kashmir was ruled by Pandavas, later Cyrus, the founder of Persian Empire extended his conquests up to the Hindukush and Gandhara formed a part of his Empire^v. Chronologically, Ashoka is the first name that had a genuine historical basis.

Kashmir was conquered by the great Maurya, in about 250 B.C, and with his conquest, before Ashoka, during King Surendra's reign, Buddhism arrived in Kashmir. In the city of Samaka, which corresponds to Sura beyond the Zogilapass, the Suriendar erected a vihara. This is referred to as Narendra Bhavana. The Buddhist doctrine drew in the Kashmiri Brahmanas, who subsequently became Buddhist administrators. Some took up the role of missionaries and travelled great distances to spread the new faiths among the populace.

The lower class of Hindus adapted the new faith. Buddhism stayed in Kashmir for about nine centuries. Kashmir was

subjected to tartar chiefs after Ashoka. Immediately after, the Indo-Scythian kings followed them. When the Romans invaded Britain and Buddhism spread throughout China, they controlled Kashmir. Kanishka was the well-known Kushan or Indo-Scythian emperor. He assumed control in 40 A.D.

Legends of Kashmir, Tibet, China, and Magnolia bear witness to its name. The city of Mansour (Kanishkapura) was created by Kanishka. It is possible to determine whether Kanishka's professed religious beliefs have evolved over time by examining his many coins. In Kashmir, he convened the fourth Buddhist council. The parsva gave him advice to gather all the monks for the purpose of gathering sacred writings and to compose comments on the Abhidharma, the Vinaya, and the sutra around 40 A.D. This council happened at a place called Kundalvan^{vi}.

Commonly known as the great Buddhist monarch and in his time a famous Bodhisatta named Nagarjuna lived at Harwan. In the sixth century A.D came the white Huns who ruled over Kashmir in about 528 A.D. the famous one was Mihirakula "cruel as death" ruled over Kashmir during this period^{vii}. He was a worshiper of Shiva and was a staunch enemy of the Buddhists. Hieun Tsang, the Buddhist pilgrim states in his account that he was a staunch communalist, who not only persecuted the Buddhists but plundered their monasteries.

Besides that he mentions that 631 A.D during the reign of Prasavana II abuilt a magnificent city known as Pravaraपुरa was built on his name, presently known as Srinagar^{viii}. After that, the reign passed into the hands of Durlabharvardhana who was the first ruler of the Karkota dynasty (625-661). He was ruled according to Kalhana for 36 years. Hieun Tsang visited the country during his rule. He mentioned it in his account, the dynasty's founder had already begun to push the lands west and south of the valley all the way down to the plains, and under the control of the ruler of Kashmir. The account does not mention any reference to the political condition of the kingdom^{ix}. Then next few kings, who followed were been volent monarchs, because they tried their best to administer the country with an ideal of sincere benevolence^x. Lalitaditya was one of the most famous rulers of Karkota dynasty. His legacy is that of a magnificent monarch who bestowed respect and glory onto the people of Kashmir started a new era of prosperity in the region. He ruled over Kashmir around the middle of the eighth century; from 695 to 732 A.D. Lalitaditya was a magnificent emperor. He conquered Badakshan, Tibet, Kannuj, and Punjab. He constructed the Martand temple (dedicated to sun) and town of Purihaspur (Shadipur) besides, he made numerous cannals and reclaimed wasteland but he was not allowed to remain more with the cultivators than what they required in a year^{xi}. The successors of Lalitaditya proved incapable, and engaged themselves in quarrels with each other which resulted in the misgovernment and administration. In A.D 855-833 a great king Avantivarman ascended the throne. He belonged to utpala dynasty^{xii}. The reign of Avantivarman is considered to be the happiest and prosperous in the history of Kashmir. He also founded the city of Awantipora where he built many irrigation canals and temples. His rule was remembered for the welfare and it is said that he protected the valley from heavy^{xiii}.

Suyya, who is regarded as a remarkable engineer to this day, was born into a lowly background, worked his way up to become an engineer, and carried out the valley's first soil survey. He built the city Suyyapur, now known as Sopore. He not only drained the valley and reclaimed wasteland but regulated the course of the Jhelum. Vaishnavism and Shaktivism attained prominence in Kashmir^{xiv}. He patronized Shaivism, founded by Vasugupta, an author of Shivasutras^{xv}.

He was a lover of art and literature and during his reign, learned men and scholars came to Kashmir from abroad and we're placed in important posts. Avantivarman was succeeded by his son Shankarvarman. He leads many expeditions in the south and north of his kingdom. In later days of his rule he turned to be notorious and started extorting money from his subjects. The forced labours came into existence during his reign.

Gufta dynasty ruled for about fifty years (948-1003). This dynasty was founded by Paravagupta who started his career as a clerk of low origin but after the murder of Sangram, ruler of the Brahmanic dynasty. He captured the throne in A.D 948. His rule lasted for about two years during this period; he oppressed the people and extorted money from them by all means. After his death he was succeeded by his son Kshemgupta. He ruled from A.D 950-958, Kshemgupta succeeded his father in 950 A.D sensual and vicious by nature, he became still wicked when he came to the throne. According to Kalhana the royal court became the assembly of whores, villains, idiots and corruptors of boys.

The golden period of Kashmir begins with the reign of Zain-ul-Abidin which commenced on A.D 1423-1474. He reigned

for 52 years and still is remembered by the Kashmiris as great, enlightened, tolerant and virtuous ruler. The Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin was the most famous ruler during the Muslim period. The accession of Sultan was enjoyed by both Hindus and Muslims.

He gave freedom of thought in religious matter to all. The culture and crafts which Kashmiri enjoyed and for which Kashmir is known to the whole world. He was a great patron of art and architecture and a magnificent builder^{xvi}. He also taught their manufacture of paper which exist to the present day. In addition to other public works, he built the Nalla Mar canal that connects the city to Dal Lake.

He improved the condition of people both economically and socially. He really deservedly surnamed "Budshah" or the great king. During the reign of Shah Mir the land revenue was fixed at one sixth of gross produce^{xvii}. During the period of Zain-ul-Abidin the method of assessment and mode of payment of land revenue was based on measurement of land. The land revenue was reduced to one fourth and in some places it was to one-seventh. The land was measured and its produce ascertained^{xviii}.

Later the Chak rule began in Kashmir in A.D 1561 and till 1587, when Emperor Akbar conquered Kashmir. From 1587 to 1752, the Mughals ruled this region, and it is beyond a doubt that throughout this time the populace had calm and well-ordered governance. Akbar visited the valley three (03) times, during his reign Todarmal, the great finance made a revenue settlement to make it uniform with the rest of the country^{xix}. In addition to being a very intelligent and driven man; Akbar also showed regard for other people's feelings. Eliminated the jaziya and other levies imposed by the Muslim rulers upon their Hindu subjects and gave high posts to the Hindus^{xx}.

The wall around Hariparbat was built by Akbar and the country was governed by Subadras, Aitad Khan (Governor of Kashmir during Jahangir's reign) is considered as worse, because he was cruel by his nature and used harsh methods to treat his subjects, while Jafar Khan and Ali mardan Khan are spoken of as kind as just^{xxi}. After the death of Aurangzeb however the country relapsed into a long period of unsettled conditions in which it witnessed brutal tyranny and cruel anarchy under the Afghans the Afghans ruled for 67 years. During these 60 years of rule Kashmir was governed by 28 Afghan governors. The direct result of Mughal rule was the rise of Afghans to prominence in Kashmiri politics in the middle of the eighteenth century.

The Afghan subadars attempted to consolidate their political dominance over the ruins of the Mughal dynasty, which had already begun to disintegrate under the latter emperors. In contrast to the pre-Mughal era, the political climate in the surrounding areas had a significantly bigger influence on the political and administrative landscape of the Kashmir region. Even though internal administrative instability and disgruntled nobility contributed to the often shifting dynastic rule in post-Mughal Kashmir, the political history of Kashmir both under and after the Afghans was shaped by the dynamics of neighbouring political formations, particularly in Lahore, Sind, and Punjab.

During the 67 years that the Afghans governed Kashmir, there were about 26 subadars in the province and Pathan emperors at the imperial court. Though, it was an extension of Mughal administrative machinery and institutions but the position and functioning of the significant provincial officials like subadars, sahibkars, diwans, etc. With the exception of a few official posts, particularly in the region's revenue administration, the Afghan kings did not attempt to change the administrative measures in the valley; instead, they stuck with the early Mughals' systems of control.

Endnotes

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