



## SHIVISM IN KASHMIR, IMPACT, BELIEF AND WORSHIP (A HISTORICAL STUDY TILL 1200 CE)



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### ABSTRACT:

*The roots of Hinduism, the predominant religion of ancient times can be traced back to the Vedic period and is believed to be the oldest and earliest faiths and is an unusual combination of many a subsidiary and corollary sects and cults originated in northern India. It is a stupendously complex phenomenon and it could be said that there are various religions within than outside of Hinduism. This gave rise to a spiritual and cultural climate in which different religious faiths flourished side by side without any antagonism. In the ancient chorological records Shiva is known as Rudra, Surva, Mahadeva, Bhava Hara Mahesvara, Sambu, Shiva etc. and abodes mentioned are Amaresvara, Vijayeshvara and Amaranth and so on. Among Hindu gods, Shiva made its entrance and was later followed by Vishnu, Surya and other Brahmanical gods and goddesses.*

**KEY WORDS:** Kashmir, Shivism, kings, belief and worship, Spandasastra, Pratyabhijnastra, temples.

### INTRODUCTION :

Kashmir, a magnificent vale with towering mountains, gushing rivers, dense forests coupled with sparkling green fields is located in Himalayan range. Most of the area is mountainous with fertile land. Beautiful lakes, covered with thick green forests and produce verity of fruits. The whole of Kashmir wears the appearance of delightful garden, made by Nature; requiring no human hand to improve upon. It is said that a nation some 6000 years old on the basis of ancient written records. The inhabitants of the state are called Kashmiri, who are identified by their language, culture and art of living which makes them different from their neighbors. As the society grew, complex religious practices came into existence. According to the legend, as also mentioned in the Nilamatpurana and Rajatarangini, the valley of Kashmir was a vast mountain lake. According to Hindu mythology, the lake was drained by great sage Kashyapa, son of Marichi, son of Brahma, by cutting the gap in the hill at Baramulla. When the lake had been drained, sage Kashyapa asked Brahmins to settle there. The name of Kashyapa was connected with the draining of the lake and the chief town in the valley was called Kashyapapura. Kashmir is distinguished as being the only country possessing an ancient Sanskrit historical record. An appreciation not only as a beautiful valley but as a country with a long history going further back into the distant past than the majority of modern states makes one seek out the evidence of its past greatness. The real history of Kashmir begins probably from five thousand years before Christ. Kashmir formed a part Gandhara during the ancient period. The whole area from Anantnag to

Peshawar is termed as Gandhara and its capital was situated at Taxila. Being called Earthly paradise, Kashmir for centuries has been considered as one of the holiest lands of India.

The birth and growth of civilization paved the way for different religions to spring up here. In pre-historic times, there were no religions as such but people worshipped various forces of nature like the Sun, the Moon, trees etc. The Hindus were not very sectarian in spirit. They evinced a sort of religious eclecticism which characterized Indian life from time immemorial and worshipped numerous goddesses irrespective of the sect to which they might have belonged. Hinduism, with its very long history, oceanic literature and many denominations and schools of philosophic thought is so vast and versatile; its aspects so varied and subtle with profound implications; its mythology, symbology, rituals and organization of ethical principles and high spiritual sentiments so extensive; its mysticism so deep and proliferating; its power of absorption of diverse new elements as well as its capacity to harmonize and synthesize them into a coordinated system covering the whole world of religion in its concepts so great; and its practical application of the highest truths to society so thorough and all these oriented towards the realization of the ultimate infinite spiritual reality through so many varied paths-that it is very difficult to give an adequate condensed picture of it. Brahmanism had represented more or less a single religious stand 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.

From ancient times, Kashmir was believed to be the abode of Shiva manifests itself as the great lake of Sati, the other form of Shakti. Brahmins who engaged in contemplation to study the Vedas continued to come and settle here. Brahmanism replaced the earliest forms of Naga worship, there was the least religious persecution. The Naga somehow or other mixed with the cult of Shivism. Shiva is imagined to have depended for his ornaments on the Nagas. A time came when the whole of the valley of Kashmir was populated by Brahmins with a rich Vedic scholarship and lore. Aryans laid foundation of Vedic Era, which laid initial foundation of a religion which was to develop in later centuries; Brahmanism, what is also called Hinduism. The worship of Shiva and Vishnu being far more popular than that of other deities, Shiva worship as a popular faith had been prevalent in Kashmir from a remote age. The Kashmiri Brahmins are the worshippers of Shiva, Vishnu and Shaktis. They worship Shiva as God. Shiva was worshipped under various names of which mention is made of Isvara (18, 1004), Pasupati (5,635), Ugra (769), Hara (119, 487, 756, 1041), Sarva (195, 978), Vrsabhadhva (738,778), Bharga (918), Nilalohita (971'), Tripurantaka (749, 486, 1005) or Tripuraripu (194). Reference is also made to various traits of his iconography, viz., his body besmeared with ashes (5, 131); the half lunar orb adorning his forehead,<sup>i</sup> Snakes wrapped on his wrists<sup>ii</sup> and his bull mount.<sup>iii</sup> The Ardhanarisvara or Ardhangaurisvara motif, wherein the left half of his body is occupied by his consort Parvati, appears to have been very popular. In Harivamsa, Sesa is spoken of as 'Son of Shiva'.<sup>iv</sup> In the Mahabharata there is mention of two Nagas paying obeisance to Shiva.<sup>v</sup> It is stated that Sesa was made the axil of Shiva's chariot, Elapatra and Puspendanta were made ani, Taksaka was made rope and Vasuki was made the string of the bow.<sup>vi</sup> He is described as wearing snake garment. Shiva images also show Naga closely associated with Shiva.<sup>vii</sup> In some southern temples there are shown two Nagas standing erect above the Lingam on either side as if worshipping it.<sup>viii</sup> The history of Shivism in Kashmir is shrouded in mystery. Whatever has been the origin of Shivism in Kashmir, there is no doubt that Shiva as a popular deity was widely worshipped in Kashmir valley. The great popularity that Shivism enjoyed in the late 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D. is vouched for by Kalhana's references to pious Shiva establishments emanating from kings, inmates of the royal harem and others.<sup>ix</sup>

Archeologists have discovered traces of Shiva worship in the proto- Harappa culture. It is not known, whether the Shiva of Kashmir was an immigrant from the neighboring Indus Valley or was a local origin. Sir John Marshall maintains that the worship of Shiva goes back to many thousand years in the subcontinent to the Indus valley civilization, where steatite seals have been found suggestive of a deity akin to Shiva. The famous 'pasupati' seal shows a steatite, perhaps ithyphallic, horned figure surrounded by animals. He has suggested that this is a proto type of Shiva as a Yogin and pasupati, the lord of animals.<sup>x</sup> The formation of Shiva tradition begins to occur during the period from 200 B.C. to 100 A.D. apart from the Svestasvatara. We have references to a Shiva devotee, a Shiva -Bhagavata, in the grammarian Patanjali's commentary on the Panini grammar.<sup>xi</sup> He described 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 Shiva ascetics in Mahabharata. There are also suggestions of Shiva worship on the

coins of Saka, Greek and Parthian kings who ruled north India, bearing a bull, a later symbol of Shiva. While little can be inferred from this, it is probable that adoption of Shiva traditions of some from accompanied the general 'Indianization' of the foreign rulers.<sup>xii</sup>

The account of Shiva worship in Kashmir 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 Shiva cult in the valley from an early period.<sup>xiii</sup> The Shiva was worshipped in early Kashmir is beyond doubt. The *Mahabharata* states specially that Shiva and Uma may be propitiated in Kashmir at the lake Vatikasanda.<sup>xiv</sup> *Rajatarangini* of Kalhana contains innumerable references to Shiva and Shiva images erected by kings, ministers and other people of Kashmir.<sup>xv</sup> The picture of Shivism which Nilamata gives is that of a simple cult of Shiva and Uma having much about it to indicate its hilly character. The form of Shivism which appeared in Kashmir in the beginning of 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D. has not much, except the name Shiva, in common with the Shivism of Nilamata. No Shiva sect has been mentioned by name in the Nilamata but has mentioned by name in the Nilamata but it refers to some treatises entitled *Shivadharmas*<sup>xvi</sup> which, evidently, must have contained religious duties regarding the cult of Shiva.<sup>xvii</sup>

The first teacher of Kashmir Shivism is believed to be Triambakaditya, Sage Durvasa's disciple. His descendents continued the tradition for the next several centuries. At around 800CE Sangam Aditya, the sixteenth descendent in the line of Triambakaditya settled in Valley of Kashmir and introduced Shivism with earnest.<sup>xviii</sup> After that Somananda (8<sup>th</sup> century CE), Sangam Aditya's fourth descendent, who extracted the principles of monistic Shiva philosophy from the scriptures and incorporated them in his own work, *Shivadrasti*, which gives the origin and is the first philosophical treatise in Kashmir Shivism. The other scholars were Eraka Nath, Umati Natha and Vasugupta. Around last part of the 8<sup>th</sup> century, sage Vasugupta found seven terse sutras etched on stone near *Mahadeva Peak*, as revealed to him in a dream, which he named the Shiva Sutras. These teachers of Shivism established four different schools named "Spanda School, Pratyabhijna School, Krama School and Kula School.

Early Kashmir Shivism was of Pasputa sect and the prevalence and popularity of the Pasputa school of Kashmir is indicated by the numerous references in the *Rajatarangini*.<sup>xix</sup> According to a tradition recorded in the *Mahabharata*, the Pasupata doctrine was preached first by Shiva Srikantha. It is interesting to note that Shiva Srikantha was also regarded in the valley as the promulgator of Shivagam or Agamanta Shivism,<sup>xx</sup> which included with in itself the system of Pasupata. The early Kashmir Shivism, based on a number of Tantras seems to have preached a dualistic doctrine. From the 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> century, however, the Shiva system of Kashmir assumed a new character. Based on pure *Advaita Tatva*, it henceforth began to preach a sort of idealistic monism. The new system took the name of Trika Sastra. The founder of this doctrine was Vasugupta a holy sage, who probably lived in the early years of the 9<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>xxi</sup>

Shivism in Kashmir has two branches, the first one is Spandasatra and the second one is Pratyabhijnasatra. The Spanda School is based on Spanda Sastra or Spanda Karika. Vasugupta and his pupil Kallata are credited to have the authorship of the basic text of the first school. These two principal works of the system, the Sivasutras and Spandakarikas or Spandas sutras, consist of 51 verses only. The Shiva sutras form, from the Kashmiri Shaivite (*Trika*) point of view, the most important part of the Agamasatra. Their authorship is attributed to Shiva himself, while they are said to have been revealed to sage Vasugupta.<sup>xxii</sup> The Advaita Shivism of Kashmir, first propounded by Vasugupta, took its origin about the 9<sup>th</sup> century. According to tradition, the knowledge of Kashmiri Shivism was passed on the form of Shiva sutras. Among his notable disciples, Kallata must be given the credit of spreading the knowledge by writing explanatory notes on them. Kallata's work was carried on through ages by his disciples and some of the writers of the succeeding period wrote several treatises on it.

The important development in the religious history of Kashmir during the period was the foundation of monistic Shivism or what is popularly called Kashmir Shivism. Sangamaditya, the fourth ancestor of Somananda, the founder of the Pratyabhijna School and Atrigupta, and ancestor of Abhinavagupta, the greatest authority on Pratyabhijna, had settled in Kashmir about the middle of the eight century A.D. and probably tried to popularize monistic Shiva tantras. The founder of the spanda branch of Kashmir Shivism, Vasugupta was probably a contemporary of Damodaragupta and may have just systematized the philosophical ideas of the monistic Tantras in his Shiva sutras when *Damodaragupta* composed the *Kuttanimata*.<sup>xxiii</sup>

Somananda was the founder of the Pratyabhijna school of Kashmir Shivism. The work written by him is called Shivadrsti, while the principal treatise of the school was composed by his pupil Udayakara and contains verses which are called Sutras. On these sutras there are glosses and detailed explanations by Abhinavagupta, the pupil of the sage Somananda,<sup>xxiv</sup> who wrote between (933 and 1015 CE).<sup>xxv</sup> According to Madhava, the Spanda and Pratyabhijna Systems do not enjoin restraint of the breath, concentration and all that course of fantastic external and internal conduct or discipline which the other schools prescribe as essential. These two schools apparently cut themselves off from the old traditional Shivism, which gradually developed itself into the ghastly Kapalism of Kalamukhism and hence the epithet Pasupata or Lakula cannot be applied to them in any sense. A fresh revelation therefore was claimed for Vasugupta though some of the doctrines of the more sober Shiva school were preserved in the Spanda system.

Krama School expounded by Ekaknathan is an integral part of Kashmir Shivism. It is also an independent system both philosophically and historically. It focuses on overcoming barriers of time and space and finally raises himself to the state of universal consciousness. Krama is significant as a synthesis of Tantra and Sakta tradition based on the monistic Shivism. As a tantric and Sakti oriented system of the activity of Sakti and similar in some regards to Spand as both centre on the activity of Sakti and similar with Kula in their Tantric approach. The Pratyabhijna School is most different from Karma inside the family of Kashmir Shivism. Another very important school of Kashmir Shivism Kula is propounded by Sumatinatha. Kula in Sanskrit means family or totality. This is a tantric. School par excellence and here Sakti plays a paramount role. The Kula teachings comprise the Skeleton of Tantraloka and Tantrasara.

With the influence of Shivite scholars, Shiva became a popular deity in Kashmir valley and was widely worshipped. Temples had come to play an increasingly important role in the socio-religious life of the people. The extant literary and epigraphic evidence attests the brisk temple-building activity in the early period when people were trying to cover each and every inch of available space with temples dedicated to various gods and goddesses. The temple was not only a place of religious worship, but was also served as a venue of colorful social activities. The religious beliefs and the activities of the Kings of Kashmir led them to erect many religious foundations of temples, vihars and mathas. With a few exceptions all of them tried to do something or the other for the sake of religious merit. Kalhana mentions the existence of Shiva shrines of Vijayesa and Bhutesa even in Pre-Asokan days<sup>xxvi</sup> and records the foundation of the temples of Shiva Asokeswara<sup>xxvii</sup> by Asoka himself when he visited the valley. Asoka is said to have been a worshipper of Shiva at the sacred shrine of Bhutesa. His son, Jalauka, was an ardent Saivist and made a vow that he would daily worship Shiva at the two shrines of Vijayeswara and Jyestesa which are separated by a distance of forty kilometers. For this purpose he had arranged a relay of horse every few kilometers and used to reach from one shrine to another in a few hours. He also erected a shrine of Shiva Jyestarudra at Srinagar<sup>xxviii</sup> and built a stone temple at Nandiksetra for Shiva Bhutesa.<sup>xxix</sup> Next king, Damodara II, is said to have been a devotee Shiva. The Hun ruler Mihirakula, who usurped the throne of Kashmir time in the sixth century C.E., showed learning towards the Shiva Cult and became a patron of Brahmis and upheld Shiva worship and founded at Srinagari a shrine of Shiva Mihireswara.<sup>xxx</sup> Later king Gokarna and his son and successor, Narendraditya Khinkhila, also built Shiva temples named Shiva Gokarneswara.<sup>xxxi</sup> His son Narendraditya Khinkhila of Shiva Bhuteswara<sup>xxxii</sup> and the latter's preceptor of Shiva Ugresa.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

Belief in attaining spiritual merit by the consecration of a large number of Shiva *lingas* seems to have been common during the early period of Kashmir history. Tunjina-I built a Shiva Bhuteswara and his ministers constructed several shrines dedicated to the worship of Shiva and placed therein a number of Shiva lingas. A Kashmiri minister named Samdhimati became famous for his devotion of Shiva.<sup>xxxiv</sup> When this minister became a king, he constructed two shrines of Shiva under the name of Samdhiswara and Iseswara.<sup>xxxv</sup> Similarly the King Srestasena alias Pravarasena I, constructed the first Pravareswara temples<sup>xxxvi</sup> and Pravarasena II, who was an ardent worshipper of Shiva<sup>xxxvii</sup> consecrated the linga of Pravareswara<sup>xxxviii</sup>. Another king Ranaditya is said to have erected temples and shrines in honor of Shiva.<sup>xxxix</sup> The chief of Huna dynasty, Mihirakula came into possession of the valley in the 6<sup>th</sup> century CE and founded at Srinagar a shrine of Shiva Mihireswara.

The Karkotas came to occupy the throne of Kashmir in 7<sup>th</sup> century. Some members of this family were devoted to Shiva cult. During the period of the Karkotas rule, Kashmir developed a humanistic philosophy of its own, which is known as Kashmir Shivism. The zealous patronage has substantially



contributed to the great increase in its popularity. Agamas, which give a description of dialogues between Shiva and Parvati, were compiled with suitable interpretations by Somananda in 8<sup>th</sup> century. Somananda and Vasugupta are regarded as the human founders of the Trika Shivism which is peculiar to Kashmir. The work of Somananda was carried on in greater detail by Utpala and Abhinavagupta, the chief exponents of the Pratyabhijna philosophy. Somananda tells us about his lineage that once Srikantha. (Shiva), while roaming over mount Kailasa, was touched with pity for suffering humanity which was immersed in spiritual darkness caused by the disappearance of Shivagamas. Then he instructed the Sage Durvasa to revive the Shivite teaching. Somananda represented himself as the nineteenth descendants of Tryambaka, the founder of the Advaita Tantric School. Somaananda's fourth ancestor named Samgamaditya came in the course of his wanderings of Kashmir and settled here.

During Karkotas rule, several important and beautiful temples seem to have been built for Shiva worship. Narendra-Prabha, the mother of Lalitaditya built a Shiva temple called Narendreswara.<sup>xi</sup> Lalitaditya himself is credited to have been ardent believer in Shivism and erected the temple of Jyestaruda, making a grant of the revenue of several villages for its maintenance. He also made a grant to the shrine of Shiva Bhutesa.<sup>xli</sup> His love for Shivism was perhaps contagious and his minister Mitrasarman founded a shrine of Shiva Mitresvara<sup>xlii</sup> and his Guru, Acharya Bhappata and host of courtiers built shrines and temples dedicated to Shiva. His grandson, his Chamberlain Acha, built the shrine of Shiva Acheswara.<sup>xliii</sup>

Shivism received also patronage from Utpalas, who succeeded the Karkotas. Sura, the minister of Avantivarman built at Suresvarilsetra a temple in honor of lord Shiva and his consort.<sup>xliiv</sup> He was the founder of many cities and founded the city of Surapur, which is now Hurpur seven kilometers from Shopian in the south West locating there the watch station (Drangha) in the Pirpanchal Pass now known as old Moghal route. Here he built this grand temple as discussed above. This city was known as Diamond city. The architecture of this city was purely Brahmanical, which rose to its greatest heights under this ruler. Ratnavardhana, his son erected a temple of Shiva Bhutesvara.<sup>xliv</sup> One of the loveable persons in the history of Kashmir was Avantivarman, who had risen from a particularly low origin to a position of all powerful Monarchs. King Avantivarman constructed at Avantipura a temple of Shiva Avantisvara<sup>xlvi</sup> and also Avantisvamin temple only at a single kilometer distance. Avantivarman's son and successor of his throne of Kashmir, Samkaravarman was also devoted to Shiva. He constructed in the town Samkarapura (present Pattan) founded by him, two temples of Samkaragaurisa and Sugandhesa.<sup>xlvii</sup> The temple Sugandhesa was built in the name of the king Samkaravarman's queen, Sugendha, who like her husband was a worshiper of Shiva. Ruins of these temples are still found at Pattan, 27 kilometers below to Srinagar Baramulla highway. Shiva was worshiped with great devotion by several kings who followed the Utpala rulers. For instance, Parvagupta was on the throne of Kashmir about the middle of the 10<sup>th</sup> century constructed the shrine of Shiva Parvagupteswara<sup>xlviii</sup> and his successor king Kshemagupta<sup>xlix</sup> erected the temple called Shiva Ksemagaurisvara in honor of Shiva.

Several kings of the first Lohara dynasty were Shiva worshipers, among them Samgramaraja is said to have obtained religious merit by restoring the famous shrine of Shiva Ranisvara.<sup>l</sup> Queen Suryamati founded the temple of Shiva Gaurisvara<sup>li</sup> and also consecrated a second temple of Sadasiva near her royal palace. Her husband king Ananta was also a devotee of Shiva. her devotion to Shiva apparent by her consecration of Trisulas, Banalingas and other sacred emblems<sup>lii</sup> while her son, King Kalasa, who also a devotee of Shiva restored the famous stone temple of Vijayeswara which had been damaged by fire<sup>liii</sup> and also built the Shiva temples of Tripureswara and Kaleswara,<sup>liv</sup> adorned with golden parasols, cup and other paraphernalia of worship.

Shivism also flourished under the second Lohara dynasty. Jayasimha is said to have built new and restored old temples of Shiva while Rilhana, his minister built at Puranandhisthana, a temple of Shiva Rilhanesvara.<sup>lv</sup> Similarly, his ministers, queens and other Courtiers built temples and shrines in honor of Shiva. Another minister of Jayasimha, Bhutta consecrated a Shiva image called Bhutesvara.<sup>lvi</sup> The chief from the Takka territory, Prince Sangiya founded a Linga after his own name.<sup>lvii</sup> Radda, the queen of Jayasimha erected a shrine of Shiva Rudresvara.<sup>lviii</sup> Samdhivigrahika Alamkara's brother Mankha constructed a shrine of Srikantha Shiva along with a Matha.

To conclude we can say that among Hindu gods, Shiva made its entrance and was later followed by Vishnu, Surya and other Brahmanical gods and goddesses. Shivism was not a late entrant in the religious culture of Kashmiris but in some form or other was worshipped by the people of the valley right from the

creation of the land of Satisar. It is believed that prior to the introduction of Naga cult as well as the Buddhist faith, the people of the valley in the aboriginal state of their existence worshiped Shiva. The primeval god of creation as one of the triad of the Hindu pantheon Shiva occupies the place of ultimate spiritual awakening in the life of his worshippers. The popularity of Shivism in Kashmir among the mass of common people during this period shown by images of Shiva in different forms and innumerable *Lingas* found intact or scattered in pieces and fragments all over the valley. The temples and shrines enumerated above have been identified with the large number of ruins dotting the valley gives us a clear idea about the dominance of Shiva tradition, practice and doctrine in valley of Kashmir while as the facts furnished by Pandith Kalhana, however, indicate the wide prevalence of the Shiva cult in Kashmir from ancient times with its purity and subtlety is very rightly considered more humane and rational.

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