

## **KUL DEVI 's MANIFESTATION AND WORSHIP IN KASHMIR**

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**{I owe this piece of history to my Grandchild, Atharv Kaul, who inherits the protection of Goddess Bhadrakali, heritage of Kashmir and *sanskars* of Kaula's.**

**In Kashmir manifestation of Gods and Goddesses, transition of their forms and amalgamations are unique. This is a historical account of manifestation and worship of *Kul Devi's*, based on lore, scriptures, chronicles and interpretation thereof. Historical evidences of the areas associated have been added to give added information. Translations of verses from Rig Veda, Nilmat Puranam and other extracts from ancient scriptures, chronicles have been appropriately quoted in the text}**

### **Goddesses as *Devi***

**Manifestation of Goddesses in *Bharatvarsha* and Kashmir.** The Great Goddess, known as *Devi* {Goddess}, has many guises. She is '*Ma*' {Mother}; the gentle and approachable mother. As *Jagatmata*, or Mother of the Universe, She assumes cosmic proportions, destroying evil and addressing herself to the creation and dissolution of the world. *Devi* is all-important in the Brahmanic tradition and all Goddesses are different manifestations of *Devi*. Today millions of Brahman's; men and women, conduct regular *pujas* of *Devi* through one of her many forms. For some She is their primary deity, for others She is part of a greater pantheon. In some forms She is benign and gentle, in other forms She is dynamic and ferocious; but in all forms She is helpful to Her devotees.

Religion of original inhabitants of Kashmir, Naga's, basically revolved around the worship of springs, rivers, important Naga Chieftains and had predominance of snake-cult. With the immigration of *Manu's* {Aryans} to Kashmir, whose religious beliefs had amalgamated with those of original inhabitants of *Bharatvarsha* at the time of immigration, their worship had incorporated God/Goddesses forms, which had manifested in *Bharatvarsha*. These beliefs also took roots in Kashmir. The most talked Goddess in Kashmir was Uma; a form of *Devi*. The very land of Kashmir was mother Goddess Kashmir, a form of Uma; mother antagonistic attitude towards other cults. The other Goddesses revered were; Sita, Saci, Lakshmi, Bhadrakali, Durga. **In Kashmir the tendency of describing one deity as the highest among others, at one time or the other, and transferring the same epithet to the other at another time, was clearly perceptible in the praises of Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, Nila and Goddesses Uma, Lakshmi, Bhadrakali and Durga.** However, Uma was higher than *Sarva* {Above all God's and Goddesses}. Verse 511-14 of Nilmat Puranam talks about worship of Uma in Kashmir thus {Translated}; "**On the 4<sup>th</sup> of the bright half of the month of Magha, one desiring prosperity should worship Uma with lamps, grains, garlands, incenses, ginger, coarse sugar, Kusumbha flower, salt, saffron, collyrium, comb and Kunda flowers brought even with great effort. O descendant of Kas'yapa, the women, who are devoted to their husbands and whose husbands are alive, and also the sisters etc. should be worshipped there. Same should be done in the month of Asuj and same in the month of Jeyshta**". Lakshmi was also raised to the high position by assertion that all the Goddesses are Her forms. The earth too was form of goddess Sati. Earth, Water, Air, Sky, Fire, Sun, and Moon were regarded as forms of Shiva; while Shiva's consort Parvati was called *Shakti*; power or strength {*Shakti*} of Shiva.

### **Goddesses Durga and Bhadrakali**

**Goddess Durga.** Durga, in fact, is the goddess widely worshipped in *Bharatvarsha*, in various ways and under various names. Durga name does not figure in any of the Veda's, but Gaoray {Gauri} does figure in the language of Aryans. This name also finds mention in Avesta, Zorashtrian Scripture and appears that Aryans were using this word when they immigrated to *Bharatvarsha*; though context of its usage is not known. Goddess Durga has nine important forms called *Nava-Durga's*; *Shailaputri Brahmakumari {Brahmaputri}*, *Chandraghanta*, *Kushmanda*, *Skandamata*, *Katyayani*, *Kalaratri*, *Mahagauri* and **Bhadrakali** {Also named *Siddhidhatri*}. Each has a different form; two to ten hands, two or three eyes, lotus to rosary or trident or pitcher or weapon in hand, riding bull or tiger and black, marble white or black complexion. During the *Navaratri* festival {October}, each of these Goddesses was to be worshipped on a particular night for the destruction of evil and for the preservation of *Dharma*. Durga is also called by various other names or vice versa; Uma, Gauri, Parvati, Kali, Chandi, Bhairavi, Chamundi, Jagadamba, Aadimaaya, and Tripursundari. In the form of Chamundi, Durga killed two demons, Chanda and Munda, when from Her forehead sprang a goddess of jet-black complexion, robed in the hide of an elephant, with a garland of dead corpses, red-hot eyes and a long tongue She uttered a big shout and jumped upon the two demons and killed them. After this, Durga was called Chamunda or Chamundi. This narration is typical of a warrior's assault,

associating her from time immemorial with warrior class. In Nilmat Puranam her worship is mentioned on three days. **First** on 15<sup>th</sup> of the Bright Half of Chaitra {Chaitra Puranmashi}, when Durga and other Gods and Goddesses are to be worshipped; ‘when Nikumba goes **for fighting** the Pisacas {Verses: 683,702 Nilmat Puranam}’. **Second** is the Fourteenth day of the *Pitra Paksh* {Asuj}, prescribed for *shraddha* of those who were killed by means of weapons {Verse 761a Nilmat Puranam}. **Third** is worship of Goddess on Durga Ashtami {8<sup>th</sup> of the Bright Half of Kartik} {Verse 819-20a Translated}; “**O twice-born, the books should be worshipped in the temple of Durga and the artisans should also worship their tools**”. In addition the worship of Durga is more specific for weapons in Verse 767-69; **‘the weapons should be worshipped at night in the temple of Durga’**; apart from mentioning worship by artisans, astronomers and stage performers in these verses. On all these days, rituals and events, weapons, warriors and the artisans are the focal of her worship.

From Nilmat Puranam and other scriptures it is evident that in the initial period of the settlement of Aryan Saraswat Brahmins in Kashmir, the pantheon of Goddesses did not include Durga. The increasing worship of Durga in *Bharatvarsha*, as well as Kashmir, is attributed to the fact that most of the ruling Kings came from warrior class and worshipped Durga as their Mother God; invocation of whom before setting out for a campaign was a must. Not many temples of Durga, exclusively or in particular, were constructed or exist in Kashmir, yet in other Goddesses basic form Durga. was assumed. This can be attributed to the historical fact that barring one {Lakshman Deva {1273 – 1286 AD}, son of a Kashmiri Brahmin, adopted by then King Ram Deva {1252-1273 AD} and later ascended the throne on the death of Ram Deva}, all Kings of Kashmir were from *Kshatriya* {Warrior} class, hence Durga being more or less the Goddess of the Kingdom or *Raj Kul Devi*. Even in *Shakta* and *Tantric* worship, Durga finds prominent place in her own or other forms. Goddess Durga thus became ‘somewhat’ Mother Goddess, mentioned many times, not displayed in physical form, yet giving direct space for the worship of other Goddesses, in their own and separate form.

**Goddess Bhadrakali.** Worship of Bhadrakali is also indigenous to *Bharatvarsha*, with obscure place of origin. Generally its manifestation can be attributed to the areas closer to Himalayas during the Later Vedic Period, also called **Brahmanic Period** {1000-500 BC}; time Aryans migrated across the Doab; large plain that separates the Yamuna River from the Ganges, including Kashmir, where they came into contact with the indigenous inhabitants of these areas. Goddess *Bhadrakali* or for that matter other Gods and Goddesses of present day Brahmanism have not been mentioned in Veda’s except Visnu {Vishnu} and that too in a different form than perceived in present incarnation. None of the Goddesses of the later Brahmanic pantheon are talked about in Rig Veda. During this Brahmanic Period {1000-500 BC}, the worship of *Trinity* {Brahma, Vishnu, Maheshwar} and their consorts; Parvati or Uma {Consort of Shiva; also called *Shakti*}, Lakshmi (Consort of Vishnu) and Vagheshwari or Saraswati {Consort of Brahma} took roots. This Brahmanic period passed smoothly and was flourishing by 700 to 600 BC. At this time two more forms of Goddesses manifested; Durga and Bhadrakali; more or less simultaneously. It is difficult to pin point the areas where their worship started. Artisans and warriors were required to worship their tools and weapons in the temples of Durga; connoting that Durga manifested for certain class; warriors and artisans. The manifestation and acceptance of these Goddesses is mentioned in Brahman Purana. By the time of Buddha {May 623-547 BC}, Bhadrakali and Durga worship had taken strong roots. Even when Buddhism flourished, the worship of these Goddesses did not diminish, as they represented the benign form of the pantheon, not against the teaching of Buddha. One good thing in Buddhism, during its initial stages, was that it had Buddha’s teachings complimenting then existing religious beliefs, except those of sacrifices. Admittedly the followers of these Goddesses, during Buddhist period, could not increase as the Buddhist *Sakya’s* {Preachers} added further *agams* {Doctrines, Philosophy} to their teachings, which considerably increased their followers during first century AD.

Goddess Bhadrakali is also mentioned in *Devi Mahatmaya* and another account of the origins of Bhadrakali is found in the *Matsaya Purana*, which states that She manifested in the north-central part of *Bharatvarsha*, in the region of Mount Kalanjara {now known as Kalinjar}. Bhadrakali, is an auspicious form of *Devi* and the legend states that She came into being by *Devi’s* wrath, when Daksha insulted Shiva and assimilated into the mainstream Brahmanism, particularly into Shaiva mythology. She {Bhadrakali} is the consort of Virabhadra. In the central regions of Kerala lie hundreds of temples dedicated to Bhadrakali called *Bhadrakalikavus*. Rituals, bordering on art performances and other artistic manifestations of worship have, for centuries, been performed here to appease Bhadrakali. Bhadrakali worship is also predominant in the hilly tracts and plains closer to the Himalayas {Himachal Pradesh, Garhwal, and Kumaon}, many places in South Tamil Nadu, parts of Karnataka and Andhra, Central India, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Nepal. In Kashmir Bhadrakali and Durga worship came simultaneously, as in *Bharatvarsha*. People mistake Bhadrakali and Kali being same form, which is erroneous. They are two different manifestations of the *Devi*; Bhadrakali being ante Kali; the roles are also different.

Goddess Bhadrakali finds mention in Nilmat Puranam and days fixed for specific worship. As the legend goes, when the Aryans migrated to Kashmir, they were allowed to remain in the valley for six months and this process continued for a long long time. It was one old Brahmin Candradeva {Chandradeva?} who could not move out and remained in Kashmir during the other six months of winter. He approached Nila, the King of Naga's, and asks for a boon from the Naga King to allow Aryans to stay in Kashmir for the whole year, to which Nila agrees but on condition that they will adhere to certain Naga practices. Naga King Nila then narrates a list of practices to be followed by the Aryans while in Kashmir, **which included Bhadrakali worship**. This is best explained in Verse 607 of Nilmat Puranam {Translated}; "Rddhi, Vrddhi, Nidra, Dhanesa and Nadakubara {should be worshipped}. The treasures *Sankha* and *Padma* should be worshipped and so also **Bhadrakali and Saraswati**." The reference is unambiguous and refers to Goddess Bhadrakali and Saraswati {Consort of Brahma}. Nilmat Puranam, though an AD effort of writing, practises are pre BC, possibly pertaining to mid Brahmanic period **{Brahmanic Period {1000-500 BC}}**; around 700 BC, when Brahmanism had taken shape. It also implies that Brahmanic rituals and worship, in initial form, had already manifested amongst the Naga's and Aryans more or less at the same time. Nilmat Puranam mentions Bhadrakali worship on certain specific days of the year. **Firstly** worship during *Chaitra Shukla Paksh* {Bright Half of the Moon} Verses 674 and 675 thus {Translated}; "**On that very 9<sup>th</sup> {Chaitra Navami}, the purified man, observing fast, should worship Bhadrakali with plenty of flowers, incense and grains. Bhadrakali who rules over the gods, should be worshipped on all the 9<sup>th</sup> days, {but} he who worships her on that {9<sup>th</sup>}, obtains success in his undertakings**". The importance of these days for the *Puja* of the deity is significant. Our *Navreh* {New Year} on the first day of the bright half of *Chaitra* starts with worship of Bhadrakali, to be continued on all nine days. Secondly, it calls for similar worship ritual during *Asuj Navratra's* on 8<sup>th</sup> day. The worship is elaborate with fast, decoration.

### Worship of Kul Devi's in Kashmir

**Evolution of Kul Devi's.** From the days of Naga's and later Aryan culture, plethora of forms of Gods and Goddesses were object of veneration in Kashmir. Mostly they were geographically located near combined habitation areas {Villages}; peaks, rivers, springs, idols, Naga's etc; which became wider range of local area objects of worship or deities {*Gram Devta/Devi*}, with least commonality with other habitation areas {Villages}. Each household had a specific place, object or a deity of worship, unspecific in most cases, worshiped as the deity of the household; *Greh Devi/Devta*. Over the centuries much did not change in Kashmir, except, many such deities, places became extinct and numbers reduced. However, a function in honour of *Greh Devta* called **Gada Bhatta**, during the dark fortnight *Pausha* remained and became an annual ritual. The spectrum of deities till about 8<sup>th</sup> Century became mixed; that of Naga's, Buddhists, Vaishnavite and Shaivism. Around the end of 8<sup>th</sup> Century Somananda {8<sup>th</sup> Century AD} extracted the principles of monistic Shaiva philosophy from the scriptures and incorporated them in his own work, *Shivadrishi*, which gives the origin and is first philosophical treatise on Kashmir Shaivism. The other scholars during this period, Eraka Natha, Sumati Natha and Vasu Gupta added more dimension to the Shaivatic worship. The religious practices revolved around the worship of Shiva and Shakti. Shakti the Divine Mother, presiding Deity of *Sri Chakra Yantra* and also worshiped as *Mahavidyas*, manifestations the highest knowledge. Scholars and worshippers of Shakti consider *Sri Chakra* as the holiest and most significant of divine symbols, conceived as Shiva-Shakti. This has led to devotees of different forms of *Devi* to consider the '*Bindu*' of the *Yantra* representing only their particular goddess, as the great mother. By the end of 9<sup>th</sup> Century, plethora of religious scholars had come to Kashmir and the place became centre of religious learning for *Bharatvarsha*, mainly Monistic Shaivism. They also brought the concept of specific Shaivite *Gram Devta/Devi Pujan* with them, which initially did not find favour with common man, as it was different from their normal way of worship over the centuries. With the advent of monistic Shaivism, with a mix of *tantra*, in Kashmir, Abhinav Gupta {940-1015 AD?} and Sidha Natha {alias Shambu Natha; 11<sup>th</sup> Century} eulogized '*Deities of Karmanya*' mentioned in *Kularnava Tantra*. The *Sadhana* mentioned in the *Tantra* {*Malinivijayottara Tantra*, which lays down the *Trika* *Sadhana*} was different, though there are common points in simplistic **Shiva-Shakti** of Shakta worship of the common man. Kashmir Shaivism with admix of *Trika/Tantra* and Shakta worship reached its peak during 11<sup>th</sup> Century AD and continued till the next century {12<sup>th</sup> Century} in which the practitioner and *Sadhaks* {Preachers} reached top of spiritual climb and became a *Kauli*; an *Aghoreshwara* {Enlightened}, with few advanced *Sadhaks* {Preachers/Scholars} directing the *Karma* {Worldly duties}. There had to be someone to carry out the *Karma* {Day to day work} as common man found it difficult to adjust in the maze of religious doctrines {*Agams*}. With the passing phase of scholars, common man slowly moved away from *Sadhak* {Preacher} type of worship and restricted himself to the simplistic normal daily *Shakta Puja* of the deities. This is the time worship of local deities in the form of

Shakti's took strong roots; named as *Kul Devi's* {Deity of the clan}, mostly on clan {*Gotra*}, geographical locations, nearer to cluster of habitation and a new set of deities emerged.

In *Bharatvarsha* Parvati was regarded as a representation of *Shakti*; albeit the gentle aspect of that goddess. This form of Parvati in *Shakti Roop* {Form of Power or Strength} became stronger in Kashmir and even *Kul Devi's* were taken, directly or indirectly, as the form of Parvati {*Shakti*} as Durga and *stotras*, scriptures invariably made mention of it. Even the physical appearance of many hands {*Bujas*}, complexion, articles carried in the hands, number of eyes and riding mode etc found way in the appearance/form of other Goddesses and *Kul Devi's*.

***Kul Devi Forms.*** The mother Goddess of all worship of *Shakti* in Kashmir was Uma or Parvati and various forms/names of the Goddess were formulated for this *Kul Devi* Worship; mostly forms of Gauri/Durga. There also seems to be conflict of the forms of *Kul Devi's*, based on black complexion of idols, while *Mahatmayas*, *Stotras*, *Bhija Mantra's* attribute their form, in some cases fair complexion. **In a query raised by a Kashmir Shaivite Scholar with one of our great Shaivite Scholars of recent times as to whether the *Kul Devi's* being of *Krishna Yoni* {dark} complexion indicated that they were manifestation of Goddess Kali, the answer by the great scholar was in affirmative. To my mind it is erroneous and it can be attributed to the thinking of the Kashmir Shaivite Scholars, who adhered to *tantric agams* and not plain *Shakta or Shakti Puja*.** Kali is one of the forms of the Mother Goddess and manifested for a particular cause i.e she is said to have emanated from the brow of the Goddess Durga {Slayer of Demons during one of the battles between the divine and anti-divine forces}. Kali is considered the 'forceful' form of the Goddess Durga and not vice versa. *Krishna Yoni* {Dark complexion} is reaffirmation of the fact that these Goddess are indigenous to inhabitants of *Bharatvarsha*, who themselves were dark skinned; called *Dasayu's* by Aryans. In Kashmir the original inhabitants, Naga's, themselves were dark skinned {*Krishna Yoni*} as confirmed by this Verse {345-50} from Nilmat Puranam indicating King Nila of *Krishna Yoni*{Dark Skinned} {Translated}; **“ Seeing in their midst, Nila, resembling a mass of black antimony.....”** and; **“O Nila of dark blue complexion, O lord of the gods, O king of the Naga's {Verse 353}”**. Even Lord Krishna was dark skinned and giving the name of *Krishna Yoni* and was even referred to as *Kale Krishna* {It was Moghul King Akbar {1556-1605 AD} who instructed that a bluish tinge be given to Lord Krishna's idols. Was he repeating what Nilmat Puranam, written around 6<sup>th</sup> Century AD, had ordained the colour of original inhabitants; Dark Blue?}. New names for the *Kul Devi's*, like Sharika, Raghyna etc, mostly new to Brahmanic pantheon manifested; unique and peculiar to Kashmir. Since the *Kul Devi's* main shrines were limited and catered for local populace, shrines of deities with other or similar names came up in other areas and became more or less *Gram Devi's*. Their manifestation, festival or dedicated days were either overlapping or common, which continues till today. This new dispensation enabled common man to carry out his normal duties {*Karma*} with routine of *Kulapuja* {Worship of Family Deities} within his place and *Kul Devi's* closer to their locations. In this process of transition and refinement, *Bhairava's* and *Ganas* also became divine companions to be worshipped with Shiva and/or *Shakti* {in the form of *Kul Devi's*} on important festivals and days.

**Firming of *Kul Devi* Worship.** While Shaivite religious doctrine given by Shaivite Scholars was reaching apical level, King Harsha {1089-1101 AD}, whom Kalhan calls a '*Rakshasa*', indulged in plunder and destruction of the shrines and desecration of *Murti's*, a set back to the process of further development of Shaivitic Brahmanism in Kashmir. Jaisimha {1128– 55 AD}, after the religious terror of Harsha, gave Vedic renaissance programme in the form of '*Shakti- Upasana*' {Worship of Shakti} to Kashmir and many shrines were built or rebuilt. As continuation of Jaisimha's rule, during the reign of Bopa Deva {1171-81 AD} the Brahman's {*Sadhak's*} gained a great deal of supremacy but during the reigns of Raja Deva {1213- 36 AD} an orgy of destruction and plunder was let loose upon them and many were killed or suppressed. This was another turning point reinforcing revised form of worship of *Kul Devi's* by common man in Kashmir. This was the time {12<sup>th</sup> / beginning 13<sup>th</sup> Century} various *Stotras* {*Shaloka's*}, *Bhija Mantra's* {Seed or Basic *Mantra's* in Verse Form} and *Mahatmaya's* in praise of deities; mostly *Kul Devi's* were composed. *Mahatmaya's* {Eulogising of deities in verse form} generally set forth the different legends connected with various places of pilgrimage, the merit to be appeared by their visits and the rites to be performed in each of the sites. They contain lore's, legends and local traditions. Composed *Stotras* {*Shaloka's*} were the verses invoking the Gods/Goddesses and *Bhija Mantra's* {Seed or Basic *Mantra's* in Verse Form} in their praise in musical mode. Many manuscripts of these scriptures have been found; mostly in 19<sup>th</sup> Century. A compendium of *Mahatmaya's* named *Bringesh Samhita* was composed by one Brahmin scholar Bringesh Bhatta of a South Kashmir village containing mythological, spiritual, religious and tantric backgrounds regarding different *tirthas* of Kashmir {Bringee village and Bringee Nallah is known after his name}. Whether it contained contents of extant *Mahatmaya's* also is not known but *Samhita* covered most of the *tirtha's* of Kashmir. Many of the manuscripts

have been recovered though many are either lost or had been recomposed by later scholars. *Bringesh Samhita*, from the analysis of recovered manuscripts, seem to be work of the later part of 18<sup>th</sup> Century, whose contents spread around beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> Century in Kashmir, as it also contains details of *Amarnath Yatra*, which had been found around 1750-75 AD. It was in the last quarter of nineteenth century that Dr Buhler's collected some 16 *Mahatmaya's* and later M A Stein collected some more. 51 *Mahatmaya's* have been traced in Kashmir; most of them are from *Bringesh Samhita* pertaining to shrines, which had come up during beginning of 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium AD, till date of composition of *Samhita*.

***Kul Devi's***. Major shrines dedicated to Shakti {*Kul Devi's*} in Kashmir are; Chakreshwari {Sharika}, Raghnya, Tripursundari, Jwala, Shailputri and Bhadrakali. In fact there are many more *Kul Devi's* of smaller hamlets, villages in the valley, basically connected with the Goddesses of yore or of that particular geographical location. Some of these are Uma, *Baed Brari* of Bheda Devi, Vijaya of Bijebhara, and Bala Devi etc. With the advent of Muslim rule in 14<sup>th</sup> Century, Aryan Saraswat Brahmins of Kashmir could just maintain basic Brahmanic philosophy, could not proliferate as conversions took away big chunk of its followers in the valley. With advent of Islam, *Sufi-Rishi* order also took roots making a strange combination of Shaivism, *Tantra*, Shakta, and *Kul Devi* worship with admix of *Sufi-Rishi* cult.

***Devi Rahasya***. Manuscripts of an old compendium, *Udharkosa*, *grantha* for *mantrodhara* {Recital of *mantra's*}, were found whose contents are in the form of a dialogue between *Dakshinamurti* and his disciple *Akshyaya*. The first half includes 25 *patala's* {paragraphs} and has been composed in the form of *adhyaya's* {chapters}, which deal mainly with the *Bhija Mantra's* {Seed or Basic *Mantra's* in Verse Form} of gods and Goddesses, etc. The other half known as *Rahasyayiya* contains 35 *adhyaya's* {chapters}. Goddesses mentioned therein and the *Bhija Mantra's* related to these Goddesses are: **Jawala, Sharika, Raghnya, Bala Tripursundari, Lakshmi, Saraswati, Tara, Bhuvaneshwari, Matangi, and Bheda**. It also contains *mantra's* of other Goddesses; **Bhadrakali, Turin, Chhinamasta, Dakshinamurti, Shyama, Kalaratri**. In the third section Varahi, Vajra-yogini, Kameshwari, **Gauri**, Annapurna, Sharda etc. are included along with basic *mantras* and *Bhija Mantra's*. The *mantras* of Ganesha, Vatuka Kumara, Mrtyunjaya, Kartaviryarjuna, Sugriva, Hanuman, and those of *Navagreha's* {Nine *Greh's*} are also included. Similarly, the basic *mantras* of *Varnamala* and the *mantras* of *Navagreha's* as also those of *Bhavani* {*Bhawani*}, *Bagumukhi*, *Indrakshi*, *Khechari* too find a place therein. The *dhyana-dharana* of these Goddesses and *greha's* are also included. Though the date of its composition is not known, it is fair to assume that this *grantha* was composed somewhere after 12<sup>th</sup> Century, after most of the *Kul Devi* worship had been formulated in Kashmir. Based on manuscripts found, the *grantha* compendium has been published by Kashmir Research Department in 1941.

### ***Kul Devi's***

**Chakreshwari {Sharika}**. 9<sup>th</sup> of Ashad {Har} Shukla Paksh {Bright Half} is the special day for the worship of Chakreshwari {Sharika}; the *Kul Devi* of most of the people living in the city of Srinagar {Pravarpura} and close by areas. Though She is *Kul Devi* in some pockets of rural areas also, separate and exclusive places of worship of the deity in Kashmir are very few. She is one of the *Kul Devi's*, specific to a geographical location; that of Srinagar and areas around it. The deity, **Chakreshwari {Sharika}**, is not talked about in Kashmir till about end of 6<sup>th</sup> Century, when *Sri Chakra*, worshipped in the cosmic form, engraved on a green, circular shaped stone of Sapphire, called *Sri Chakra Yantra*, also known as *Matra Chakra*, was installed at the site by King Pravarsena II {End of 6<sup>th</sup> Century AD; Gonanda Dynasty; son of the Buddhist King Megha Vaahana} who ruled Kashmir. King Pravarsena II {End of 6<sup>th</sup> Century A.D} is credited with the establishment of five shrines of the goddess Sri {Lakshmi, Consort of Vishnu} and established the new capital, naming it Pravarpura {Srinagar}. The present city of Srinagar was founded under the name of Grinagari by Emperor Ashoka {273-232 BC} between Zabarwan Hills on the banks of Dal Lake and Pandrethan, outskirts of the Srinagar City next to cantonment. With the passage of time Girinagari, Ashoka's city, came to be known simply by the appellation of Puranadhishtan {old Capital}. Later, according to Kalhan, Magadh King, Ashoka {different from Ashoka the Great}, who annexed Kashmir in 250 AD, built new city of Shri Nagri, five kilometres from the present day Srinagar city, which stretched from Harwan, East edge of Dal Lake to Zewan, further South of Pandrethan.. Four centuries later Pravarsena II moved his capital farther down the river Vitasta {Jhelum, also called Wyeth}, calling it Pravarpura, which continued to be called so till about end of 12<sup>th</sup> Century. All over cities then were called 'Pura'. Gradually this younger city, Pravarpura, deprived its older rival {Girinagari; Purandhishtan} of all its importance and generally became the seat of Kings. This name of the city was in use as early as the time of Huen Tsang, who visited Kashmir from 631 AD. During the later centuries focus shifted from this city as Lalitaditya {7<sup>th</sup> Century} established another new capital Parihaspura; Jayapira

{764- 95 AD} tried to construct new capital Jayapura and Avanti Varman {Utpal Dynasty; 855- June 883 AD} during his reign shifted the focus away from Pravarpura to Awantipur and Martand. Parvarpura name for the city being in use during 10<sup>th</sup> Century finds mention in the first verse of the *Vartika* on "*Malini Vijaya*" where it has been specifically laid down; "The *Kashmirian* Abhinavagupta in the East of the city known as Pravarpura {Srinagar} composed *Vartika* as the very first verse of "*Malini Vijaya*". It is after installation of idol of *Sarika* {Sharika; Chakreshwari} at the place of installation of *Sri Chakra*, the place was called Sri Nagar {Place of *Sri Chakra*}. Incidentally *Baharistan-e-Shahi*, a Muslim history of Kashmir written during 1593-1614 AD, refers to Srinagar as *Shahr-i -Kashmir* {City of Kashmir}, which became *Shahr* for rural people, while referring to Srinagar. *Sri Chakra*, form of *Shakti* {Power}, is depicted in the form of a diagram representing a *Chakra* {Circular wheel of life} and is associated with *Chakreshwari*. *Sri Chakra* originates from one central point {*Bindu*} that represents the core of the whole cosmos; 3 circles around it and 4 gates to enter, 43 triangles and lotuses vibrate from the very basic central point that represents the core {*Bindu*} depicting the form of *Mahadevi*. It has 6 triangles representing *Shat-Dal* {Six forms/Goddesses; Saraswati, Lakshmi, Gauri, Ashtadashbujaye, Ashtabujaye, Dashannanaye} and 18 angles representing *Ashtadash Bujas* {18 Arms} of *Devi* respectively. Adi Shankaracharya {805 AD- 837 AD} also installed *Sri Chakra's* in many temples like Kamakshi temple of Kanchi, Nara Narayana temple of Badrinath and Guhyeshwari temple in Nepal; but not in Kashmir, as some scholars claim. In fact there is no historical evidence or chronicle of that era that Adi Shankaracharya visited Kashmir during short span of his life.

Nilmat Puranam Verse 1051-53 refers to various deities including **Cakresvari** {*Cakre* {*Chakra*; Wheel}; *Svari* {*Shewari*; Feminine, generally for goddess}; closer to name of *Sri Chakra*} thus translated; "By a sight of the goddess Bhima, one gets the best wealth and by seeing the goddess Kapinjali, the goddess Suresvari. {The Goddesses} Bhadresvari, Gautamesi, the goddess Kalasila, {the goddess} named Udyogasri, (the Goddesses) Gavaksi, Candika, Durga, Gauri, Suvijaya, Sakuni Brahmacarini and **Cakresvari**, one gets one's desire fulfilled". This reference to Cakresvari {Chakreshwari} refers to Vishnu's, the bearer of *Chakra*, consort and her Vaishnavite form {Sri or Lakshmi}, as Cakrin in the scripture refers to Vishnu. Next Verse 1054 of Nilmat Puranam refers to Cakrasvami {Vishnu} thus {Translated}; "**After seeing near Cakrasvami {Vishnu?}, the goddess sitting in the lap of Hara, one is freed from all the sins and is honoured in the world of Rudra**". Kalhan in his *Rajatarangini* Verse 354 Book III mentions King Pravarsena II and *Sri Chakra* thus {Translated}; "He {Pravarsena} founded the city of Pravarpura {Srinagar} on the outskirts of *Sarika Parvat*", which means that till 1150 AD, when *Rajatarangini* writing was completed, this place was called Cakresvari, another name for goddess *Sri Chakra* and **place called Sarika Parvat. The city itself was then called Pravarpura and not Srinagar or Shri Nagar.** Around 9<sup>th</sup> Century, with the Shakta Worship and concept of Mother Goddess taking roots, the Goddess Cakresvari was worshipped in Shaivite form of Gauri/Parvati. *Sarika Mahatmaya* tells us the story of the defeat and destruction of demon Jalodbhava, who lived in water logged Satisar. This *Mahatmaya* relates, in verse form, legend of Goddess assuming form of a *Sarika* {Sharika; bird {*Haar - Maina* in Kashmiri} and taking a pebble in her beak dropped it at the spot and the pebble swelled into gigantic proportion *shila* {Rock} killing demon Jalodbhava; giving the name of *Sarika* {*Sharika*} *Parvat* to the place. This legendry pebble survives under the name of *Haari Parvat* {*Haari Parbat*} name is the Kashmiri equivalent of the Sanskrit *Sarika Parvata*, 'the hill of *Sarika*'- *Haar* in Kashmiri }. A depression in the ground outside the *Sangin Darwaza* {*Sangin* - Strong; *Darwaza*- Gate} of the fort wall is pointed out as the spot where panting breath of the demon {Jalodbhava} forced its way out, as he struggled under the crushing weight of the *shila* {rock} over him. However, the same legend in our oldest scripture Nilmat Puranam {6<sup>th</sup> Century} Verse 173-80 relates the killing of the demon {Jalodbhava} to the effort of Naga King Ananta, who breaks the mountains of Satisar {Kashmir} with a plough and once the water was drained, Vishnu, after terrible fight with the demon cuts off, forcibly, the head of the demon {Jalodbhava}. **"Breaking forth Himalaya today with the plough, make soon this lake devoid of water."** **"There was a terrible fight between Visnu and the demon, with trees and peaks of mountains. All those hosts of gods ..... ( Hari) cut off, forcibly, the head of the demon and then Brahma obtained gratification"**. Later scriptures mention of an idol of *Devi*, made of glazed black stone, having been installed at *Sarika Parvat* and when the deity was also called as *Sarika Devi* {Sharika; later Bhagwati}, possibly installed during the reign of Jaisimha {1128- 55 AD}. *Bhawani Sahasranama* was composed in praise of the *Devi's* one thousand pious names lucidly explains this cosmic form of the goddess. This *Sahasranama* is in the form of questions put forth by *Nandi* and the answers given by Mahadeva. This *grantha* also praises King Jaisimha and thus would have been composed either at the end of his reign {1128- 55 AD} or only after him; possibly in early 12<sup>th</sup> Century after the installation of the idol. From the contents of *Bhawani Sahasranama* it is also apparent that it has been composed after composition of *Sarika Mahatmaya*. *Sri Chakra* continued to be worshipped as *Chakreshwari* {Cakresvari} now called *Sarika* on *Sarika Parvat*, and became the *Kul Devi* of the people around Srinagar

{Pravarapura}. With passage of time and development of Kashmiri language, *Sarika* transited to *Haari* and the place from *Sarika Parvat* to *Haari Parvat*.

The *murti* of the Goddess was taken away to Sarthal {Kishtwar} by Ugra Deva, a feudal lord of Kishtwar, in 1170 AD, during the reign of Vanti Deva {1164- 71 AD}. It is during the reign of Vanti Deva when *shila* {Rock}, where the *Sri Chakra* was first installed, became the rock of veneration in the absence of the idol. **Incidentally *Har* {*Ashad*} *Navmi* is also the special day for worship of Vijyeshawari {*Vijaya Devi*} presiding deity {*Gram Devi*} of Vijeshawar {*Bijebehara*} and this day is famous for laying *Hara-mandul* {*Rangoli*} in Kashmir.** Similarly many deities of smaller temples in Kashmir are also worshipped on this day. No details or lore are available to validate *Har Navmi* as special date of her worship. It is probable that *Sarika Mahatmaya* has given this day as the day of her manifestation in Kashmir, which also could be the day her *Murti* was installed at the place of *Sri Chakra Yantara*. ***Horashtmi* {8<sup>th</sup> of *Phalgun Krishna Paksha* {*Dark Half*}} is also devoted to the worship of the Goddess *Chakreshwari*.** Actually this day is celebrated in most of the *Devi mandir's* for the worship of *Gram Devi*/Goddesses across the valley and in Nilmat Puranam the day is associated with worship by women, **by no means by men**, of Goddess Kashmir {Nilmat Verse 552}. The connection of *Chakreshwari* {*Sharika*} to Durga has been adopted during the last century {Dogra rule}, when the situation for the community was more peaceful and *Chakreshwari*, taken as a form of Durga, '*Ishta Devi*' i.e. personal goddess of many Kings, who ruled Kashmir including Dogra Rulers, though their *Isht Devta* is Rama, as they claim to be *Suryavanshi's*, descendants of Rama. ***Bhairav of Chakreshwari* {*Sharika*} is *Vamadeva*** {In Kashmir *Bhairav's* are held at lesser pedestal than their goddesses, more like *Dwarpals*, and are to be worshipped after the goddess. The *Bhairava's* of Kashmir **closely related to *Tantra Shastra*** are eight; **Anandeswara, Mangaleswara, Hatkeswara, Purnaraja Bhairava, Turskaraja Bhairava, Visvaksina, Jayakasina and Mahakala** {*Nandkishur Bhairava of Seer Jagir* {*Sopore*} **does not figure in this list**}. The *Bhairav's* of *Kul Devi's*; *Vamadeva* {*Sharika*}, *Bhuteswara* {*Raghnya*}, *Karneshwara* {*Tripursundari*} and *Mahadeva* {*Jawala*} are different from the above eight *Bhairava's*.

*Shrivara's Rajatarangini*, covering 1459-86 AD period, records that the rock shrine of 'Ganesha' at the foot *Chakreshwari* {*Sharika*; *Haari Parvat*} was built at public level during the reign of Sultan Hassan Khan {1475-87 AD} grandson of Zain-ul-Abdin. Under Akbar {1556-1605 AD} a fort was constructed around the hill and a town founded there; named *Nogar Nagar*. The place was also called as '*Nogar*' meaning 'new home'. According to chronicles the construction of the *Haari Parvat*, or, as Akbar named it, *Nogar-Nagar*, rampart was started as a relief work, to alleviate the distress of the people during a famine. He {Akbar} sent One Crore and Ten Lakhs of rupees of that time from his treasury for this work.

***Raghnya* {*Tul Mul*, *Kheer Bhawani*}**. 8<sup>th</sup> of *Zeyshita* and *Ashad* {*Har*} *Shukla Paksh* {*Bright Half*} are the special days for the worship of the Goddess. The holy spring {*Nag*} is believed to have been rediscovered on 7<sup>th</sup> {*Saptami*} *Ashad* {*Har*} *Shukla Paksh* {*Bright Half*}, which is also considered equally auspicious day. Incidentally there is no mention of the days of worship of *Raghnya* in Nilmat Puranam and generally 8<sup>th</sup> of *Bright Half's* are to be devoted to worship of *Vinayak* {Verse 724- 725} and *Ashad Saptami* is to be devoted to the worship of *Sun* {Verse 469-470}. She is the *Kul Devi* of people living around *Tul Mul* {*Wokur*, *Lar*, *Manigam*, and *Sumbal* etc}; worshipped as *Kul Devi* by majority of the denizens of *Rainawari* and many pockets in rural areas, where separate temples of *Raghnya* have been constructed. With the legend of water of *Nag* changing colours and after *Partap Singh*, *Dogra King* {**1885-1925 AD**} built a temple, *Tul Mul*, *tirath* attracted pilgrims from *Srinagar* and near by places, though *Raghnya* was not their *Kul Devi*. Brahmins of many places in the valley have also constructed shrines dedicated to *Raghnya* and worshipped on *Zeyshita Ashtami* like *Lokit Pur* {*Lo-graer-pur*}, *Manzgam* {*Noorabad*}, *Khana Barni* and *Tikar*, *Bhuvaneshvar*, *Bheda*, *Manigam*, *Raithan* and *Baedpur*.

*Nag's* {springs} have been places of veneration for more than two millenniums, mostly associated as the abode of *Naga's*. There is no mention of *Tul Mul* or the goddess *Raghnya* in our oldest religious scripture *Nilmat Puranam* {6<sup>th</sup> Century}. A look at the areas connecting *Vitsar Nag* {*Vichar Nag*}, *Harwan*, *Burzhom*, *Wokur* {*Vaskur*}, *Lahara* {*Lar*}, *Naran Nag* {*Wangat*; near *Kangan*}, *Ganga Bal* {*Harmukh*}, *Anderkot* {*Sumbal*}, *Parihaspura* and *Prayag* {*Shadipur*} reveals their location closer to hill slopes on the fringes of water bodies, places which have been closely associated with places of veneration for *Naga's*, *Buddhists* and *Brahmins*. These areas flourished amongst *Neolithic* settlements of original inhabitants of *Kashmir-Naga's*, *Megalithic* {*Aryan*} settlements, *Buddhists* and during *Lalitaditya Muktapida's* reign {724-761AD}. *Lalitaditya* had constructed *Jyeshthega* temple at *Naran Nag* spring {*Wangath* near *Kangan*, approximately 20 Kilometres from *Tul Mul*} and had given *Agrahara's* {*Jagir*} at various places to *Brahmins* including at *Tul Mul Nag*, which was close to his new capital *Parihaspura*. There is no evidence of his having constructed a temple at the site of the *Nag* and it remained place of veneration and *sadhana* within *Tul Mul Agrahara* {*Jagir*}. Situated on the banks of *Tul Mul Nar* {*Rivulet*}, this *Agrahara* extended right up to *Duderhama*, place where *Tul Mul Nar*

emanated from Sindhu {Sindh, Lower Sindh; equated with sacred River Ganga} and was ideal place for religious development and *sadhana* of Brahmins. Duderhama is repeatedly referred to by Shrivara {*Rajatarangini*, covering 1459-86 AD} under its old name of Dugdhasrama. He also talks of the religious activities of Tul Mul *Agrahara* as {Translated} "The worship of the 'Mothers', which is identical with that of the *Shaktis* at Tul Mul *Agrahara* plays a great part in the *Tantra* ritual flourishing in Kashmir from ancient times."

The area in and around Tul Mul pulsated during Naga period, flourished with religious fervour and knowledge during Buddhism and later when Vaishnavism came back in 6<sup>th</sup> Century. For last 1300 years the place has been known as Tul Mul, derived from Sanskrit word "Tul Muli - **of great value**" given during 7<sup>th</sup> Century after Nilmat had been written; **apparently referring to value of the place in terms of religious development.** The mention of *Nag* {Spring} is found in Kalhan's *Rajatarangini* {written 1148-50 AD}; **'The sacred spring {Tulamulya} is situated in a marshy ground and Brahmins of Tul Mul have been described as full with spiritual powers'**. It is also chronicled that Tul Mul Brahmins had become vain and force by themselves. Around end of 8<sup>th</sup> Century, Brahmins of Tul Mul took offence to the employment of *Rakshasas* {artisans} by Jayapira {764- 95 AD}, from King Vibisana of Lanka {Not to be mistaken with Vibhishana of Ramayana} to construct a castle in his newly built capital at Anderkot {Near Sumbal, then named Jayapura}. He confiscated *Jagir* lands of Tul Mul *Agrahara* and as per Kalhan's *Rajatarangini* ninety-nine Brahmins committed suicide by jumping in the river; but it had no effect on Jayapira. Actually during this period Jayapira needed financial resources specially when he had undertaken construction of a new capital at Jayapura {Anderkot} and he re-appropriated many *Agrahara's* to boost his resources, including part of Tul Mul *Agrahara*. These Brahmins went to Jayapira and one Brahmin named Diyannu Attal 'threatened' that 'their supernatural powers could finish the King'. Challenged by Jayapira 'that he {Brahmin} was no Vishwamitra', Diyannu Attal cursed him thus {Translated}; "O you unfortunate King! May goddess destroy you before my very eyes". As per *Rajatarangini*, heavy pole of the throne's canopy fell on Jayapira and after a few days he died. With this event Brahmins of Tul Mul gained more standing for their spiritual powers. During the next century during the reign of Avanti Varman {Utpal Dynasty; 855- June 883 AD} large rocks **obstructed Vitasta {River Jhelum, Wyeth} near Yaksadara {Dyargul – near Varhamulla {Baramulla}}**. **The water rose along the course of Vitasta and Sindhu Rivers and vast tracks of the valley were submerged including Manasbal, Wokur {Vaskur} and Tul Mul.** Though Suya cleared this obstruction and the level of rivers lowered, the area continued to be under water for more than a century. This calamity was regarded as revenge against Brahmins, who had adopted confrontationist attitudes towards the Kings, aggravated by the feuds of Kashmiri tribes; Tantrins {Tantres}, Damaras and Ekangas. With partial development of Anderkot {Jayapura}, Shaivism and *Kul Devi's* concept taking roots, Tul Mul belt **{Sumbal, Wokur {Vaskur}, Lar and Tul Mul}** had become centre of large chunk of Brahmanic population. As part of renaissance of Brahmanism during Jaisimha's reign {1128– 55 AD}, possibly a miniature temple, similar to miniature temple at Pattan {Shankar Varman 883-902 AD}, on a small Estrada {Platform} inside the *Nag* was constructed and a stone idol installed. Few centuries back when the *Nag* was being cleaned, remnants of an Estrada construction were found. An old photograph of the temple {1901?} shows remnants of an estrada in the spring. Before the main spring came to be worshipped, there were many places of worship within Tul Mul *Agrahara*. At Solur, under a chinar tree a spring still exists and called *Devot Wol Boine* {Chinar}; a mile northeast near Ladwun village *Ganesh Bal* or *Vodjen*, where Ganesh is worshipped. Many springs in the area which are still known are: *Ashta Rudhar* to the south; *Tsandar Nag* to the southeast; *Machi Nag*, *Naga Rad* and *Gokhin Nag* to the east.

As part of *Bringesh Samhita*, as quoted above, Canto II {Chapter} known as '*Raghnya Pradurbhava*', in an enquiry dialogue between Bhairvi and Bhairava, records appearance of Raghnya in Kashmir from Ravana's Lanka, where she was his *Isht Devi*; Shyama {Canto II.58}{ According to *Shiva Purâna*, Bhairava is the complete form {*Pûrnarûpa*} of Shiva and Bhairavi that of Parvati}. As per *Raghnya Pradurbhava* Lord Rama ordered Hanuman to carry *Maha Raghnya* to Satisar {Kashmir}. Hanuman installed the goddess with all her satellites in the area, surrounded by the villages of Borus {Bhawanish}, Ahatung {Tungish}, Ladwun {Labdawan}, Wokur {Vaskur, Bhageh} and from then onwards, legend says, Ram and Sita undertake pilgrimage to Tul Mul on every *Puranmashi* of Asuj and Hanuman stands guard all the time. *Raghnya Pradurbhava* dialogue ends with Bhairava saying {Translated}; **"O' Auspicious Bhairvi, I have in this way; unfolded to you as to how Goddess Raghnya appeared in cosmic form, spring changing colours. By mere listening to this account proficiency of every denomination is achieved {Canto II. 72}"**. In the case of **Raghnya her consort is Bhuteswara {Shiva} and her Bhairav is also Bhuteswara.** This combination of roles of Bhairava's, as consort and Bhairav may be intriguing but not so. At Tul Mul the idol of Bhuteswara {Shiva} is on the right of Raghnya and adjacent to her and not on a lower pedestal like Bhairava's of other Goddesses. *Vijnana Bhairava Tantra* commented partly by Kshemaraja {Disciple of Abhinav Gupta; late 11<sup>th</sup> Century} and partly by Shivopadbyaya, is text of the *Tantra Shastra* of *Agamic* {Doctrine}, is a conversation between Shiva as Bhairva and Shakti as Bhairvi. This connection of Bhuteswara Bhairava as Shiva is also clear when we refer

to *Sodaritirath* {Naran Nag}, whose deity is Bhuteswara {Shiva} {Jaisimha {12<sup>th</sup> Century} consecrated a *linga* of Shiva called Bhuteswara here} and *tirath* quoted widely in Nilmat Puranam {Verses 1065-66, 1151-52, 1167-1168}. The proximity of these two *tiratha*'s, with commonality of Bhuteswara {Shiva} at both places, also confirms to the construction of temple on an Estrada during Jaisimha's time. Tul Mul fell in the area of Lahara {Lar} fiefdom of warlord Ram Chand Renu {Raina} {Koteh Ren's father was commander of Suh Dev's army {1301-1320 AD} and was later killed by Rinchen, who converted to Islam and became the King of Kashmir, in 1324 AD. His son Ravan Chand, brother of Koteh Ren, who by then had married Rinchen, converted to Islam in 1325 AD}. According to Jonaraja {*Rajatarangini* 1050 to 1459 AD} Sikander *But Shikan* {1389- 1413 AD}, the iconoclast who destroyed temples in Kashmir, tried to target this temple also but failed. In 1460 AD all the rivers, namely Vitasta, Lidar, Veshav, Sindh and Kuta Kol were again in spate due to torrential rains and vied with each other in recording the highest water-level. Lot of areas in the valley got submerged including Tul Mul. It appears that the temple was destroyed between 1496 – 1518 AD when Malik Musa Raina {Soma Chandra before conversion} then Chief Vazir, destroyed eighteen big temples, scriptures from Atri Gupta {7<sup>th</sup> Century AD} onwards, massacred 700 to 800 prominent Brahmins on 10<sup>th</sup> of Har {Ashad} 1518 AD and revived *Jazia*. {Prajya Bhatta's *Rajatarangini* covering 1487- 1513 AD has been lost and no authentic account of this period is available}.

Next mention of *Nag*, no mention of a temple, is by Abul Fazal, chronicler of Akbar {1556-1605 AD}, in *Aine-e- Akbari*; "Area of Tul Mul extended over hundred bigha's of land, which got sunk in the summer season and formed into a marsh and *Nag* waters changed colour"; apparently area had shrunk due to appropriation of land by convertees to Islam. Krishna Pandit Kar, guru of Rishi Pir {b; 1637 AD} was a great devotee of the goddess. Legend says that during the reign of Shah Jehan {1627- 1659 AD}, Shyam Sunder Kaul, a devotee of *Shakti* and adviser to Shah Jehan's son Dara Shikoh, used to make offering of meat and wine to Goddesses but when he offered the same at Tul Mul, they changed into vegetables. This was probably during Moghul Subedar Ali Mardan Khan's time {1650-1657 AD}, known for his attraction to philosophy of *Shaivism* and sublime eulogy of *Devi*. Apparently the shrine was accessible till about mid 17<sup>th</sup> Century but during Subedarship of Afsari Beg Khan {1747-52 AD} valley had floods and the shrine may have become inaccessible again to people from other **places in the valley**. It is around 1840 Krishna Taploo of Habba Kadal {2<sup>nd</sup> Bridge Srinagar} found inland water way route from Shadipur {Prayag} along Tul Mul Nar and reached the shrine on 7<sup>th</sup> Saptami of Ashad {Har} Shukla Paksh {Bright Half}. The worship of Goddess at Tul Mul was done under Brahmanic as well as *Tantric mantras*. On the conclusion of the puja, it is said that a piece of birch bark was seen floating over the water of the spring and Krishna Pandit took it up and found a *shaloka* {Verse} written on it. The verse described the divine form of the goddess Raghnya. **Verse**; "I make obeisance to that one goddess who, having taken the position of the Supreme God is the Queen in reality, whose form is made of light and is adorned by (the luster of) twelve suns, who cannot be observed through senses, who is seated on a throne and is wrapped with serpents". He composed a poem of as many stanzas as there were letters in this *Shaloka* and this poem is still extant. The water of the *Nag* changes colour from time to time. **It is also said that Sri Chakra has been installed here. The only place in Kashmir where Sri Chakra has been installed is Chakreshwari during 6<sup>th</sup> Century. It appears that as the worship of the Goddess progressed, Yantra of her worship was devised by scholars. This Yantra has 4 Gates {Dwar's to enter}; 4 Middle lines {Mudra's}; 4 innermost lines {Shakti's}; {Brahmi, Maheshwari, Kumari and Vaishnavi}, *Ashta Dal* {Eight lotus leaves resting on the circle representing Eight Mothers { *Ashta-Matrika's*} (*Adhishtatri Devi's*)- Chamunda Brahmani, Maheshwari, Kumari, Vaishnavi, Varahi, Narsinghi, and Indrani }; 6 *Shat Kon* {Saraswati, Lakshmi, Ashtadashbujaye, Ashtabujaye, Dashannanaye, Goauri}, *Trikon* {Mahakali, Mahasaraswati and Mahalakshmi}, and the *Bindu* {Core; The Goddess}. Many parts of this *Yantra* are similar to that of Sri Chakreshwari.**

Swami Vivekananda visited the shrine in 1894 AD and made offerings of *Kheer* to the holly spring and since then the *Devi* is also known as *Kheer Bhawani*. *Bhawani* {*Bhavani*} is a form of address of Mother Goddess {*Shakti*} and used by Adi Shankara { Adi Shankaracharya - May/June 805 – May/June 837 AD} in *Soundarya Lahiri* {Verse {Stanza} 22 of *Soundarya Lahiri*}. Swami Vivekananda, an ardent devotee of Adi Shankara, used this form of address for Raghnya as devotion to the goddess. He {Vivekananda} has also mentioned the destruction of the temple, for during his time only an 'Estrada' existed in the spring The worship here is done with milk, *Mentha Sylvestris* {*Vena*}, Lotus and sweets. Remains of a construction were found around when Pratap Singh {1885 –1925 AD} built a temple at the place of Estrada in 1912 AD and *Murti* of Raghnya and her consort/Bhairava Bhuteswar was installed. There is no authentic account that the *Murti* of the *Devi* and her consort/*Bhairava* are the old ones. An Aryan Saraswat Brahmin, aged about 90 in 1948, has been quoted that he knew the time when reeds were placed along swampy foot-path from *Hur Mengin Wor*, close to Duderhama, to enable the pilgrims to walk to the island {*Hur Mengan* was a Spirit, who sometimes possessed the bodies of the persons traveling during the night and he was a dread to the inhabitants of Tul Mul neighbourhood}. Kalhan's *Rajatarangini* calls the place Tul Mul {Tulamulya}, a Sanskrit form of "great value".

The place name Tul Mul is also being associated with Mulberry {*Tul*} tree. In Kashmiri *Mul* is root {*Mool*} and it is made that a mulberry tree root has given this name to the *tirath*. Kashmiri masses, on the other hand, then {12<sup>th</sup> Century} spoke *Apabramsha*, which assumed the form of Kashmiri only in 13<sup>th</sup> Century and in 14<sup>th</sup> Century. Later Persian, Arabic words and expressions entered its vocabulary. Thus Tul Mul is corrupted name of Tulamulya and has nothing to do with root of a mulberry tree. Also mulberry tree cannot last that many centuries and no authentic details of existence of a Mulberry Tree have been chronicled or found on ground at any time at Tul Mul.

**Tripursundari {Bala Tripursundari, Tripura.** Also called Lalitha {Parvati} Tripursundari, Maha Tripursundari}. **The special day of her worship is Tripur Chaturthi {Magh Shukul Paksh Chaturthi}. Tripura is the consort of Tripurari {Shiva} and her Bhairava is Karneshwar.** She is the *Kul Devi* of Tiku's {*Tiku*'s; a Kashmiri rendering of *trik*, a clan of Aryan Saraswat Brahmins of Kashmir} and a cross section of the Aryan Saraswat Brahmins of Kashmir. Goddess Tripura is also worshipped in *Bharatvarsha*, especially in Nepal, Maharashtra, Eastern parts of the country and many pockets in the South. In Kashmir the main shrines of the goddess are Tripursundari Temple at foothills of Gopadiri {Durga Nag} and Devsar {Anantnag District}. In fact she is the Goddess well known in *Bharatvarsha* and Kashmir, though the *Mahatmaya*, *Bhija Mantra*'s and *Stotras*, peculiar to Kashmir, are different.

With Shakta worship, two broad forms *Shri Kul* and *Kali Kul* came about. *Trika Shastra* brought philosophy of the Triad; Shiva, Shakti, and *Nara* {the bound individual self}. A further modification to Kashmir Shaivism took place in the form of *Tantra Shastra*. *Tantra*'s are taken as revealed by Shiva through his five mouths namely *Ishana*, *Tatpuruasha*, *Sadyojata*, *Vamadeva*, and *Aghora*. The approach explained in *Tantra*'s is also part of *Trika* philosophy. Adi Shankara composed *Saundarya Lahiri* {**Wave of Consciousness and Bliss**}; hundred *Shaloka*'s {actually contains 103} eulogising the grace and purity of Goddess **Parvati/Dakshayani, consort of Shiva**. {Researchers who have analysed Adi Shankara's works, while acknowledging commentary on *Brahmasutra*, *Bhagavad Gita* and *Upanishads* etc as his major works, term composition attribution of *Saundarya Lahiri* to him as 'doubtful'}. Each *Shaloka*; describes *tantric* ways of performing devotion connected to that *Shaloka*. The verses start with benedictory invocation that Shiva, when enjoined with Shakti, is the real power; Shiv- Shakti. Verses 1 - 41 describe the mystical experience of this union of Shiva and Shakti. Verses 42 to 100 describe the physical beauty of the Goddess, whom he addresses as Bhavani {Bhawani}, Sri Vidya, Bhagawati, Uma, Mother {*Maha Devi*}, Daughter of the Mountains {*Parvat Putri*}, *Devi*, Parvati, Candi {Chandi?} and Mahamaya. **Few of the verses refer to the third eye; Tri of the Goddess. Stanza 47 of Saundarya Lahiri; "Your right eye being of the nature of the sun, begets the day, your left (eye) being of the nature of the moon creates the night. Your third eye with the lustre of a slightly blossomed golden lotus produces well the twilight, abiding in between the day and night."**

The manifestation of Goddess Tripursundari in Kashmir is attributed to *Panchastavi*, a collection of devotional hymns divided into five Cantos {chapters} sung in the praise of Mother Goddess, which personifies absolute Godhead and lays stress on the Mother's worship which it connotes. It alludes to several doctrines of *Tantric* worship of mother Goddess through the use of *Bhija Mantras* and has therefore attracted the attention of commentators, well versed in *Tantric Sadhana*. The resemblance in technique, similar objective of bringing awareness of Mother's eminence in both; *Panchastavi* and *Saundarya Lahiri*; is remarkable and is mainly responsible for creating a dilemma of *Panchastavi* having been composed by Adi Shankara. *Panchastavi* appears to have been composed few centuries before *Bhavani Sahasranama* composed in 12<sup>th</sup> Century. The composer of *Panchastavi* has maintained silence about his name, time or lineage throughout his versified composition. It is taken that *Panchastavi* is post *Saundarya Lahiri* and could not have been composed after 1030-1040 AD as *Saraswati Kanthabharana* of King Bhoja, which has references to its verses, was composed between 1030-1040 AD. By this time *Panchastavi* would have attained sufficient fame and credence for being included in *Saraswati Kanthabharana*. Thus composition date band of *Panchastavi* can be between 800 and 1050 AD; most probably later half of 9<sup>th</sup> Century. Mammata Acharya in his *Kavyaprakasa*, 12<sup>th</sup> Century, has quoted *Panchastavi* verses as examples in his composition. Legend says that Abhinav Gupta {940-1015 AD?} and his disciples used to recite *Panchastavi*. It is necessary to dwell further into the composition of *Panchastavi*, to bring more facts about the manifestation of Goddess Tripursundari in the valley.

*Panchastavi* does not follow Kashmiri tradition of *Shakta* theology but follows the one in South. The common element between *Sadhana* of the *Trika* system and *Panchastavi* is the worship of *Tripura*; common factor of nearly all *Shaiva-Shakta* theology systems and traditions. However, there is no doubt that *Dharma Acharaya* {Religious Scholar} who composed *Panchastavi*, was a master of *Shiva-Shakta* monism, a Brahmin to the core, hailing from **Bharatvarsha and or Kashmir**, whole of *Panchastavi* was composed by him alone, was well versed with *Sabari* and *Kundalini Yoga*, possibly a Kashmiri by birth or had been long enough in the

valley to know Kashmir very well and literally one of them. Finally he had also imbibed Southern nuances also. *Panchastavi* does not mention *Kali*, popularly worshipped in Kashmir especially by Somananda, Abhinav Gupta and Jayaratha. *Yoga* system praised in *Panchastavi* is different from systems popular in Kashmir {*Trika Yoga* and *Kaula Yoga*}. It is through *Panchastavi*, the Goddess Tripursundari manifested in Kashmir; first amongst the *Sadhak's* {Preachers} and then amongst the common man.

Before proceeding further it seems pertinent to explain Tripursundari personifying the 'Divine Energy' and repeatedly used by the poet in all the cantos of *Panchastavi*. Tripursundari is regarded as the manifestation of *Prakriti*, the feminine power, the vital energy of the universe. *Tri* denotes number three, *pura* means cities or three worlds and *Sundari* refers to beauty of the deity; '**The Beauty of the Three Worlds**' or more precisely whole cosmos. Perhaps to facilitate the exact comprehension of this word, the poet, on his own, has advanced reasons for calling this 'Divine Energy' as Tripura, by enumerating triple form of gods, fire, energies, basic vowels, worlds, Vedas and other cosmic manifestations and tries to establish that this threefold division is actually an extension of the essence of the Divine Energy, consequently called Tripursundari. Shaivistic lore confirms this view of the poet. '*Prapanchasara*' asserts that 'Ambika' is named as Tripura, because of its accent on the three basic vowels. '*Tripurarnava*' lays down that the energy residing in '*Sushumna, Pingala and Ida*' {Blood Vessels, mind, intellect and soul} is called Tripura. '*Kalika Purana*' says everything is threefold, so she {Divine Energy} is called Tripura. '*Vamakshvara-Tantra*' believes that Tripura is threefold in the form of **Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva**, and also personifies in Herself the three powers of desire, perception and action. '*Varaha Purana*' also explains the name on those very lines and word Tripura is actually the manifestation of triple power of the super energy of **Raudri, Jyeshtha and Amba**. The poet feels that Tripursundari on being discerned by physical eyes or through mastering a *Mantra* {mentally} dispels sins and mitigates the fear of death.

*Vidyarnava Tantra* by Vidyaranymuni gives description of Tripursundari; as the three main activities of powers of desire, perception and creation. Parmashiva has been eulogized and this represents the energy of Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra and is manifested in Mahasaraswati, Mahalakshmi and Mahakali. In the form of a 'male-female', dialogue a very apt description is given of Shiva-Shakti worship. Tripursundari is not only the Sundari of three worlds but is also the sole directing force of the activities of the Trinity and of the five different kinds of forces to the east, west, south and north and the higher regions in the form of Unmani, Bhogini, Kumbika, Kalika and Maha Tripursundari of the upper regions. The said '*grantha*' is in the form of hymns in worship of Maha Tripursundari. It has too large sections dealing with the numerous *mantras* etc. in praise of Maha Tripursundari and her twenty different forms. The date of composition of *Vidyarnava Tantra* is fixed at 1130 of Vikrami Samvat corresponding to 1073 AD. In popular parlance *Tantrik's* are supposed to be those who are worshippers of Shakti {*Devi*}. "**When we speak of Goddess worship, Mother Maha Tripurasundari is the Goddess to be worshiped as the Mother residing in our Crown Chakra. She is one of the Maha Vidyas. Maha Tripurasundari, the absolute, the all pervading, beyond speech and mind and even beyond time and space.**" Her *Yantra* is the Sri Chakra.

The manifestation of Tripursundari in Kashmir took place at the beginning of 10<sup>th</sup> Century, when *Sadhak's* knew contents of *Panchastavi*. Being under the *Tantric agam* {Doctrine}; it remained a scripture for *Sadhaks* {Preachers} who would worship it under *Tantric* rituals. By the beginning of 11<sup>th</sup> Century teachings of *Shaiva Darshan* and *Trika* raised a conflict among the Kashmiri's whether to go in for worship on elaborate *Tantrik* methods or adopt simplistic rituals, particularly in their *Sadhana*. Circumstances in 11<sup>th</sup> Century and then in 12<sup>th</sup> Century, as discussed in the evolution of *Kul Devi* concept above, a different form of worship of Tripursundari evolved. She was adopted and worshipped as *Kul Devi* by a section but the recital of *Panchastavi* became a ritual in temples or at home. By this time even the *Sadhak's* of *Tantra* chose Kali as their tutelary deity {*Isht Devi*}. Around 12<sup>th</sup> Century for common Brahmin of Kashmir, Tripursundari also became a *Kul Devi* or a goddess of the pantheon with *Panchastavi* recital becoming a daily worship ritual.

Some scholars have argued on the basis of *Tantra Shastra* and *Panchastavi*, Tripursundari is mother goddess and other *Kul Devi's* are the form of Tripursundari, a stand, which does not hold ground. The mother goddess of Kashmir is **Uma**, also called Parvati and Gauri. Nilmat Puranam mentions special *puja* of **Goddess Uma** on Magh *Shukul Paksh Chaturthi* { **Verse 511-14 {Translated}; " On the 4th of the bright half of the month of Magha, one desiring prosperity should worship Uma with lamps, grains, garlands, incenses, ginger, coarse sugar, Kusumbha flower, salt, saffron, collyrium, comb and Kunda flowers brought even with great effort. O descendant of Kasyapa, the women, who are devoted to their husbands and whose husbands are alive, and also the sisters etc. should be worshipped there. Same should be done in the month of Asuj and same in the month of Jyestha."** This also confirms her being a form of Uma and not the Mother Goddess Uma or Parvati by herself. Stanza 71 of *Saundarya Lahiri* refers to this as the form of Goddess **Oh Uma! you tell (us), how will we speak of the beauty of your hands, which detract {your} nails which shine with the redness of the new lotus? Alas, let the lotus some how obtain a**

little similarity {for becoming an object of comparison}. {This will be possible only} if it acquires the red dye from the sole of the foot of Lakshmi who plays {on it}.” All the *Kul Devi's* including Tripursundari are the forms of the mother goddess, who manifested at different places and are associated with some religious relics of the past. Like Chakraeshwari {*Sarika*} with Sri Chakra/ Sarika Parvat, Raghnya {Shyama; a form of Parvati} with the *Nag* of Tul Mul and Jwala with the fire of Khrew. Tripursundari manifested in *Tantra Agams* and unlike other *Kul Devi's* of Kashmir did not have any religious relic in Kashmir to be associated with, but away from her *Tantrik* form of worship by *Sadhak's*, a benign and simplistic form in line with other *Kul Devi's* was adopted by the common man and remains so till today. Our oldest religious scripture Nilmat Puranam does not mention anything about Goddess Tripursundari. Her manifestation as *Kul Devi* time frame is more or less same as the other *Kul Devi's*, as discussed above. Though details of *Tik Choram* {*Tripur Chaturthi* {*Magh Shukul Paksh Chaturthi*}} being special day of her worship is not known, it could be the day of completion of composition of *Panchastavi* or the day her idol was installed at Tripursundari Temple at Gopadhiri {Shankaracharya} Foot Hills {Durga Nag} or Devsar. During the reign of Jehangir {1605-27 AD} his queen Noor Jehan got sculptured and chiselled stones from flight of steps linking of Goddess *Tripursundari* {*Durga Nag*} temple to the river Vitasta {Jehlum} dismantled and reconstructed *Pathar Masjid* with these stones.

**Jawala.** 14<sup>th</sup> of Har Shukla Paksh {Bright Half} is the special day of Jawala's worship at Khrew, about 20 Kilometres from Srinagar. Fire was worshipped by humans from time immemorial and the God of Fire, Agni, finds mention in Rig Veda also. Agni is the second most prominently mentioned deity in Rig Veda but is described in masculine form. In Nilmat Puranam there is mention of the fire god Svayambhu, also masculine, thus {Translated}; Verse 1057-1064; **“O great king, one is released from all the sins by seeing everyone of these viz., Sudarsana Hara near Cakrasvami, Svayambhu, {Hara's image} erected by the: Fire-god, {Hara's images called} Pidgalesvara ..... O king, the god Hara - the lord of the Bhutas {Refers to Bhuteswara {Bhutesvara – Sanskrit; from *Bhuta* {living being} + *isvara* Lord and refers to Shiva} is always present {in all these images}.”** In the close vicinity of Bhadrakali Shrine at Bhadrakal at Suyam near Nichom and Tsakvaar {Handwara} lies the sacred site of Svayambhu {Self Created Fire}. Kalhan *Rajatarangini* mentions the place as such; **“The self-created fire rising from the womb of the earth, receives with numerous arms of flame the offerings of the sacrificers”.** Again it is the masculine form. Both Nilmat Puranam and *Rajatarangini* of Kalhan do not mention Jawala of Khrew. In fact Nilmat Puranam refers to performance of *Dhanahotra* on 14<sup>th</sup> Day of Ashad Shukla Paksh thus {Translated} Verse 730; **“On the 11<sup>th</sup> and the 14<sup>th</sup> {Ashad} Dhanahotra should be performed and vigil should be observed for two nights. The Brahmanas and the Satvatas should be worshipped on the 12<sup>th</sup> and the 15<sup>th</sup>.”**

Volcanic fires are considered cosmic by nature and at Jawala {Khrew} the cosmic fire is worshipped as the form of the mother goddess. The present shrine, constructed by Dr. Bal Krishen in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, is perched on the top of a 200 feet high hillock approachable by flight of 360 *Devri* stone steps with more than a dozen landings. The octagonal shaped temple rests on a high base with small squarish sanctum sanctorum where a six feet high, black stone image is placed. It is said that the image turned black due to occasional flames, which sparked here from time to time. The flame at one time is said to have been 2 feet high and alight for about half an hour and was last seen in 1962. Goddess Jawala shrines exist in *Bharatvarsha* also, though very few, and are the self-created fires from the earth; mostly on a hill top. In Himachal Pradesh Jawala is worshipped in the Kangra valley. Jawala's are nature's phenomenon and no time frame of its manifestation can be made. There is no mention of this phenomenon-taking place at Khrew in any historical or religious scriptures of Kashmir. Mihir Kula {515-550 AD}, a Hun General, who ascended the throne of Kashmir, finds mention in the history of Kashmir for his cruelty, when he killed hundreds of elephants, not normally known to have existed in Kashmir, in the forests around the area east of and Tral, close to Khrew. His account also does not mention anything of this fire; closer to area where he hunted. Between 6/7<sup>th</sup> Century and beginning of 9th Century, a natural calamity seems to have occurred in Kashmir, though of what type is not known. During this calamity a geographical fault seems to have occurred near Varahkshetra {Varhamulla, Baramulla}, obstructing the flow of Vitasta resulting in increased water level all along. This could have resulted in a minor manifestation of Jawala {volcanic eruption} at Khrew. This does not find mention in Kalhan's *Rajatarangini* and may be it occurred after him {1150 AD} or it existed but did not find mention. Around 12<sup>th</sup> Century when the concept of *Kul Devi's* found roots in Kashmir, Jawala at Khrew was also started to be worshipped as *Kul Devi*. By far the goddess, is also form of mother Goddess {Uma, Parvati, Gauri} worshipped as *Kul Devi* by a cross section of Kashmiri's, mostly closer to Khrew {Pampur, Avantipur, Tral etc}, though lesser following than other *Kul Devi's*. Like other *Kul Devi's* she also became part of the worshipped pantheon of Kashmir. Various *Stotras*, *Shalokas*, *Bhija Mantaras* and *Mahatmaya* {*Bringesh Samhita* and in *Udharkosa*, grantha for *mantrodhara* {*Devi Rahasya*}} mention Jawala. **Jawala's Bhairava is Mahadeva.**

**Shailputri {Devi Bal, Nag Bal}**. *Nag's* {springs} have always been venerated from the time of Naga's and *Nag Bal* of Baramulla is one of them. Here is the shrine of **Shailputri**; *Shail* {*Shila*- Rock; *Putri*- Daughter; meaning daughter of mountains} and is the form of Uma / Parvati. Actually in the pantheon of *Bharatvarasha* she is one of the *Navdurga's*; **Shailputri**, *Brahmaputri*, *Chandraghanta*, *Kushmanda*, *Skandamaata*, *Kaatyayani*, *Kaalratri*, *Mahagauri*, *Siddhada*; who are to be worshipped, one by one, on nine days starting 1<sup>st</sup> with Shailputri. She is specially worshipped on the 9<sup>th</sup> of *Chaitra Shukla Paksh* {Bright Half}, on the final day of *Navratra's*, on *Navmi*. How and when this day has been adopted is not known but can be attributed to the time {12<sup>th</sup> Century}, when the concept of *Kul Devi's* took root. It is well understood that the *Kul Devi* concept took roots in the form of Shakti worship, represented by Durga and thus the place named after one of the forms of *Navdurga*. Located little away from the town on the road to Uri, literally on the banks of Vitasta, she is the *Kul Devi* of most of the people from Baramulla, Sopore and close by areas. There is *Shiv Linga* within the premises of the temple, while Goddess Shailputri idol is placed inside a small temple built in the centre of the *Nag* {Spring}, just like Raghnya. The worship is that of Mother Goddess and devotees recite *Panchastavi* at the shrine as part of the daily worship; common in most of the temples of Kashmir. There is no mention of Goddess Shailputri in Nilmat Puranam, various other *Samhita's* and *Mahatmayas*. Apparently she was adopted as *Kul Devi* due to geographical reasons.

The town of Baramulla {Varahamulla, Varhakhshetra}, a corrupted name of Varahamulla, named after the Boar incarnation of Vishnu, was an important place in mediaeval times. The temple of *Adi-Varaha* {Primeval Boar}, destroyed by Sikandar *But-Shikan* {1389-1413 AD}, is said to have been one of the most splendid temples in Kashmir. A few architectural stones are still seen lying about at this place. The only object of interest, which it now contains, is the large human-faced Shiva *Linga*. Varahamulla {Baramulla} is identified, on the strength of local tradition, with the *Kotitiratha* situated half a mile away from the old bridge. *Kotitiratha* as per legend was resident to one crore *Devta's* hence the name *Kotitiratha* or as locals call it *Karoditiratha*. In fact Varahamulla has been a strong foothold, first of Buddhism and later of Vaishnavism in Kashmir. The village of Ushkar or Wushkur, situated at a distance of half a mile from Baramulla, is corruption of Huvishkapura, which, according to Kalhan, was the name of a city founded by Huvishka, the great Kushan King in the second century AD. It was a flourishing town in mediaeval times owing to its position on the principal trade route between Kashmir and North-western India. Lalitaditya {724-761AD} built here a shrine of Vishnu named Muktasvamin and a large Vihara with a Stupa built in the middle of the eighth century AD. Hsuan-tsang, the famous Chinese pilgrim who visited Kashmir in 631 AD, entered the valley by Baramulla route, and spent his first night at one of the monasteries here. At Fathgarh, a small village at a distance of nearly three miles from Baramulla, are the ruins of a large temple with a massive platform on which was placed a colossal Shiva Linga, a large fragment of which is still lying there. Then again are the ruins of temples of *Naranthal* village, about two and a half miles below Baramulla on the right bank of the river. The temple is of the late mediaeval era, not earlier than twelfth century. The temple of Buniar situated on the Jhelum Valley road, two miles above Rampur; by far the best preserved of all the larger Kashmir temples. The original image, which seems to have been of Vishnu, is now replaced by small Shiva *Linga's* originally brought from the bed of the river *Narbada*. River MP}. Then there is *Dhath Mandir* {Bandi Temple} situated on the Jhelum Valley cart road, midway between Rampur and Uri, about two miles below Mohura. On the hillside, a few yards to the southeast of the temple are remains of two smaller shrines, which, like the subsidiary temples in the courtyard, are replicas of the main temple. The aim of the above is to indicate that Varahamulla {Baramulla} had been focal point of Naga worship, followed by Vaishnavism and Buddhism. After the waning of the Buddhism it became a strong hold of Vaishnavism upto 8<sup>th</sup> Century and got the patronage of Karkota Dynasty {Lalitaditya {724-761 AD} and Jayapira {764-795 AD} followed by Avanti Varman {855-83 AD -Uptala Dynasty} the first Vaishnavite king of Kashmir and it is during his reign that many temples were dedicated to Vishnu. Great Shaiva philosophers and authors {Kayyatacharya Somananda, Muktakantha Swamin, Shiva Swamin and Ananda Vardhana and Batta Kallata} flourished during this period. The Vaishnav temples were not converted to Shaivistic shrines during this period {7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> Century}, but many of these seem to have been converted or made common places of worship of Vaishnavism and Shaivism in the next century. Possibly this phenomenon took place when Kashmir many more scholars of Shaivism flourished {Pradyumana Bhatta, Utpalacharya, Rama Kantha, Prajnarjuna Lachaman Gupta and Mahadeva Bhatta}. With the advent of 12<sup>th</sup> Century, the worship of Goddesses took more roots {Read above} and that is the time the shrine seems to have been converted to *Devi* worship from its Vaishnavitic and later Shaivistic roots. It is unlikely that this shrine had been targeted by Sikandar *But Shikan*, who possibly targeted the shrine of *Adi-Varaha*, due to the form of the god in the form of Boar {*Varaha*} for obvious reasons. The idol which was worshipped till recently; Goddess riding an Ox but it was the *Nag* {spring} which was the object of worship and idol installed later. Unfortunately this idol was damaged in 90's.

**Bhadrakali as Kul Devi.** The worship of Bhadrakali in Kashmir was neither sudden nor out of nowhere. The evolution of Bhadrakali worship in Kashmir is nearly as old as the entry of Aryan Saraswat Brahmins in Kashmir. Naga's, the original inhabitants of Kashmir, were 'supposed', according to the Nilmat Puranam, to reside in the lakes and springs of the valley, their settlements closer to lakes and springs, the major source of water which became the sites of veneration also. Even now names of places like Verinag, Anantanag, etc; mostly in South Kashmir, show traces of ancient Naga beliefs. That Naga's were eminently popular deities in the valley, is testified to by Kalhan's *Rajatarangini* that Kashmir was a land protected by Nila; the lord of all Naga's and in Nilmat Puranam "Naga's are boon-givers and devotees of *Vasuki* {The serpent Deity}". Kalhan in *Rajatarangini* speaks of annual festivals in honour of Naga Mahapadma, tutelary deity of the Wular Lake and Serpent King Taksaka. When Nilmat Puranam appears to have been composed, Naga's and their rituals were present but amalgamated rituals of Aryan Saraswat Brahmins had taken prominence. Though Nilmat Puranam calls Uma higher than *Sarva* and the mother of all gods, Lakshmi is raised to the highest position by saying that all the Goddesses are her forms. However, next to worship of Uma, **Bhadrakali Worship** gets prominence. Verses 674 and 675 {Translated}; "On that very 9<sup>th</sup> {*Chaitra Navami*}, the purified man, observing fast, should worship Bhadrakali with plenty of flowers, incense and grains. **Bhadrakali who rules over the gods, should be worshipped on all the 9<sup>th</sup> days, {but} he who worships her on that {9<sup>th</sup>}, obtains success in his undertakings**". The importance of these days, which happens to be the beginning of the new year, *Navreh*; the most auspicious new year day of the Aryan Saraswat Brahmins of Kashmir starts with worship of **Bhadrakali**.

Again in Asuj Ashtami Verse 816-19a of the Nilmat Puranam speaks thus; "Then, on the 8<sup>th</sup> {Asuj}, the artisans, having undergone fast, **should worship Bhadrakali** in proper manner, with valuable incenses, garlands, clothes, lamps, jewels, eatables, fruits, herb-roots, meat and various sorts of vegetables, and by gratifying the fire and the Brahmanas. {**Bhadrakali** should be worshipped} also with leaves of Bilva, Sandalwood, purified butter, drinks of various types and grains and by decoration of the earth, dancing and singing and the observation of vigil at night." No other Goddesses worship has been described so elaborately, which also indicates that almost every family {Purified Man} would be having in-house Bhadrakali idol/image and many temples of Bhadrakali existed at that time. Analysis of the two sets of worship ritual of Bhadrakali in Chaitra and Asuj clearly indicates that apart from Uma, Bhadrakali took the role of principal deity of Naga's as well as Aryans. She was the *Kul Devi* of Kashmir inhabitants. Bhadrakali was the benign and universal form of *Devi* in Kashmir upto 7<sup>th</sup> Century AD, somewhat different from the role Goddess had gained in *Bharatvarsha*. The worship was all along the valley and not restricted to any particular pocket during this period. It is with the installation of Sri Chakra by King Pravarsena in 6<sup>th</sup> Century AD that *tantric* or *Shakti* tinge to the Goddesses was being given and certain other forms of Goddesses manifested, Kali being one of them. In the next few centuries *Tantric* worship took roots in Kashmir. Acharaya Abhinav Gupta {933- 1015 AD} was an ardent Bhadrakali devotee. He and other Shaivite scholars of that time also eulogised Kali, which had a specific role in the *Tantra Shastra*. With plethora of Tantric and Shakta philosophy coming during this time the common man assumed Bhadrakali and Kali being the same goddess. With the evolution of *Kul Devi* worship concept, the role of Bhadrakali, erroneously also got mixed with that of Kali, diminished and many of her temples converted to the newly manifested Goddesses/*Kul Devi*'s. However, the Bhadrakali worship remained strong in the valley and in North Kashmir majority of Aryan Saraswat Brahmins worshipped her as *Kul Devi*. This belt mainly consisted of areas around Handwara, Kupwara, Gushi, Tikir, Magam, Bumai etc and continued to be so till the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Areas of Baramulla {Varahamulla} ardent worshippers of Bhadrakali converted to Shailputri worship, when her temple was established. Similarly areas of Sopore {Suyapur, Sopur} also fell of the worship map when Bhairava worship took roots and they had the *Nandkishwar Bhairav* of Seer Jagir as their deity.

From the study of Nilmat Puranam it is evident that there must have been many places of Bhadrakali worship in Kashmir. However, with the passage of time these appear to have either diminished or converted to other Goddesses and religious inclinations from Buddhism to Shaivism. Even the manifestation of strong Kali worship in medieval period with advent of monistic Shaivism and *Tantra* Worship took away a chunk of her dedicated devotees and worshippers. There are many smaller *tiraths* dedicated to Bhadrakali. However, like other *Kul Devi*'s, she too has a single major *tirath* dedicated to her; at Bhadrakal, near Handwara. **{For more on the Worship of Goddess Bhadrakali and her abode in Kashmir read separate article available on the net under " Goddess Bhadrakali Worship and Abode in Kashmir}**.

**Kali {Mahakali} Worship in Kashmir.** Kali is first described in *Devi Mahatmaya* written around 600 AD, where she is said to have emanated from the brow of the Goddess Durga {Slayer of Demons during one of the battles between the divine and anti-divine forces}. In this context, Kali is considered the 'forceful' form of the Goddess Durga. Other Goddesses who are less 'forceful' form, such as Parvati, Sita and Sati, are also said to emanate Kali, or even become her, to defeat enemies. Another account of the origins of Kali; that she originated as a mountain tribal goddess in the north-central part of *Bharatvarsha*. The Vedas {which were written much

before the Puranas}, however, associate the name Kali with the most horrifying, black tongue of the seven flickering tongues of Agni, the god of fire.

Upto 600 Century AD there was no Kali worship in Kashmir. With the advent of Shakta Worship and tantric nature of Shaivism taking roots from 8<sup>th</sup> Century onwards, Kali worship also took roots. At that time there was a distinct separation of Kali worship from other Goddesses, which slowly starting getting mixed with Durga, Bhadrakali and even other Goddesses. Nilmat Puranam does not mention Goddess Kali or her worship. In fact Verse 657-59 calls '*Mahasanti* as the destroyer of bad dreams of Kali' and in one verse {975} Kali is mentioned as a Naga Chief. **Aryan Saraswat Brahmins of Kashmir celebrate her day on Pausa Krishna Paksh Navmi.** However, Verse 485-86 of Nilmat Puranam mentions this for the day: "**Sraddha should be performed with vegetables on the 8<sup>th</sup> of the dark-half of Pausa {Krishna Paksha Ashtmi}**". Worship of Kali and her eight other forms took more roots in 9<sup>th</sup> Century onwards with worshipers like Shaivite philosophers Somananda, Abhinav Gupta and Jayaratha. *Panchastavi*, a popular scripture, does mention **Kali**. There were few temples dedicated to Kali or Mahakali, but her worship was a must for *tantric* worship. So much so even other *Kul Devi's*, erroneously though, were presumed as forms of Kali. The reason was that Kali is manifested form of Durga and Durga's role in Kashmir was combined with other Goddesses. With the advent of *Kul Devi* worship from 12th Century, less common people going in for pure *tantric* worship, Kali in form of Mahakali worship started, though restricted to special days only and seldom associated with *Kul Devi's*. However, Kali was invoked during the ninth day of *Navratra's*; possibly ritual imported from *Bharatvarasha* in later centuries. **In recent times there were only two major Mahakali Mandir's at Srinagar and Vadora.** The former called as Kalishri temple, associated with Abhinav Gupta before he left the city, on persuasion by his disciple, to move to North Kashmir for his *tapasya*. *Kalishri {Kali}* temple was demolished and converted into an Estrada {Platform} on which Syed Ali or Shah Hamadan recited *Quran* and offered *namaz* five times a day and where a *Masjid {Khanqah-e-Maula}* now stands, Without going into details the priest of the Kalishri temple got converted to Islam and was called Shyk Baba Wuli {Sheikh Baba Wali}. The numerous idols are reported to have been immersed in the deep spring, which remains covered today and even cleaners of the area around it are blindfolded so as not to allow them to have a peep by mistake.

**Other Goddesses.** With the evolution of *Kul Devi* worship, the pantheon of Goddesses in Kashmir reduced considerably. Only the main form of the consorts of the *trinity*; Lakshmi, Parvati and Saraswati held fort. Even Goddess Uma, a form of Mother Goddess Kashmir, got relegated to a minor role. Similarly Vitasta, the river given the pedestal of the benefactor of Kashmir got restricted to a single day worship. Amongst the Goddesses Parvati remained the basic form of all the Goddesses but not directly worshipped except on *Shiv Ratri*. Her consort, Shiva, in comparison to other two of the *trinity*; Vishnu and Brahma led the field of the Gods. It is peculiar type of worship in Kashmir, as compared to other parts of *Bharatvarasha*. The Goddesses predominantly worshipped are not Goddesses directly but their form, which have manifested in Kashmir only. These *Kul Devi's* carved geographical area of devotion and many parts of the valley, away from these areas, were devoid of their influence for some time. But then local Gods, Goddesses, myths, lore's and even saints took over. Goddesses mentioned briefly in Nilmat Puranam took their place and become *Kul Devi's* in the garb of *Gram Devi/Devta's* for these clusters, villages and settlements. Even *Nag's* {Springs}, sources of rivers, ancient rocks/*shila's* and caves became places of veneration. **Where Aryan Saraswat Brahmin of Kashmir held fort is their devotion to the religion is that they carried the religious beliefs of Naga's, Buddhism, variants of Vaishnavism and Shavism with sincerity. Adopted reasonable beliefs of each and slowly discarded the maze of *agams*, which could have confused his religious worship mode. They did not hesitate to accept variants of Shaivism including *Tantra* but finally common man realised that he was no scholar but a *karmic* man and had to draw a line between his responsibility towards worldly and scholarly duties. He proved that he was a learned man but not a scholar, a devotee but not a preacher. So what if he had to adopt a mix of religious teachings for his religious duties.**