

**KAS'MIRA { KASHMIR } IN NILMAT PURANAM  
AND  
DATING OF EVENTS AND NAGA , ARYAN SETTLEMENTS**

**By  
Brigadier Rattan Kaul**

## **AUTHOR'S NOTE**

**As a teenager I trudged almost all places in the Kas'mira {Kashmir} Valley and got abundant pleasure in enjoying scenic beauty of the valley. The trudge took me to places like Sopore { Visvagaspura, Shivpur, Suyapur, Sopur}, Varhamulla {Varamull, Baramulla}, Wadipora, Handwara , Kupwara, Lolab, Bangas {All in North Kashmir}; Shangas, Pir Panchal Range and areas around it{South Kashmir}; Kangan, Wangat, Zojila, Harmukh {East Kashmir}, Manasbal, Andarwan, Mohan Marg, Mahapadamsar {Wular}, Bandipur, {North Kashmir} and many more. Each place had its own charm and it was the towns which led me to see religious places, meet people and make good friends. Teenage has its own charm and its own pitfalls; the impressions were long lasting and remained ingrained in my memory. Introvert, as I was then, the dilemma forced me to keep these impressions and emotions to my self. They, however, lingered. Varahamulla has a special place in my life, where I started my probation in the Army in 1961, then barely seventeen, which followed with some indelible impressions. The place had its own special place in my head and heart; the nearby green hillocks, the jog along the road to Devi Bal Mandir etc. After the training in the Academy was over I was given charge of more than hundred men {Roytal Gurkhas} on a border post opposite Pakistan in Mendhar Sector of Jammu and Kashmir Cease Fire Line. Barley nineteen, it took me away from my memories, impressions, with a task and a mission and a duty to perform. The entire gamut clouded my personal aspirations and could be expressed like; ...**

Silently I stood up and walked,  
For the next destination far away,  
Rows of Poplar filtered day light,  
My destination still not in sight .

World around me had frozen,  
Flowers and memories lingered,  
just a feel of void in my mind  
yet I struggled to move ahead.

Never did hopes leave me,  
I stood my ground valiantly,  
For the spring came back,  
A beautiful day again.

**Yes, the spring of memories rolled back but somewhat late. I had lost my impressions and longings and the only way to rekindle them was to trudge those places again and relive those precious moments. I did so when I was posted in South Kashmir {Nowgam} from Jun 76 to Aug 79}. I trudged those places in the town again and again, slipped back to old memories and here I found the way to express my thoughts, impressions; in the form of writing. Profession kept me busy for the decade plus, but the rekindled impressions and places remained etched in my mind. The moment I got chance I would pen these down and from those dreamy impressions they took shape in black and white. In the process I not only had discovered myself but lot of history of the Country of my birth. I had found my roots, I had relived those impressions, I had trudged those areas again, in search of my fulfilment. These have now taken the form of anecdotes and three major research papers on Kas'mira {Kashmira}; one you will read below is one of them.**

Season's and years passed,  
My pace not fast as before,  
Sweat did not oblige me then,  
Quietly I took a deep breath.

Now drops of sweat on my forehead,  
cool icy winds touching me gently,  
heralding beautiful day as it was,  
I stood up and quickened my steps.

**That is the life and the form it took.**

Now undisturbed were my dreams,  
The voice sounding sound of music,  
The affection lulling back to sleep,  
With tons of happiness in my eyes.

**- Rattan Kaul**

## Brigadier Rattan Kaul



As Major – 1965



As Brigadier- 1993

Brigadier Rattan Kaul was born in Srinagar and had his initial schooling there. After Military Training he was commissioned in 5 Royal Gorkha Rifles [Frontier Force]. Soon, barely nineteen, he was deployed on J&K Border in Mendhar Sector from 1963 to 66. He participated in 65 War against Pakistani's and had many brushes with the enemy including a direct hit of Napalm Bombs on his bunker by Pakistani Sabre Jets, burning his senior officer sharing the same bunker. In 1967 offered a lateral shift to IAS, which he declined. In Nagaland he, in a daring raid, caught Secretary to Mao Angami {Underground President of Nagaland and in news these days} from his hideout.

During Bangladesh War 71, he led his troops in a Khukri assault on 20/21 November 71, annihilating a complete Company of Pakistani Troops of 31 Punjab. On 8 December, he with his unit troops of approx 400 men landed by helicopters amidst over 2000 troops of Pakistani's defending Bangladesh Town of Sylhet, This was first ever such heliborne operation behind enemy lines by Indian Army. The unit broke the spine and resistance of the Pakistani troops, resulting in their surrender on 16 December, much before the main surrender at Dacca on 17 Dec 71. He was, however, seriously injured in this battle and remained in hospital for about 10 months.

In 1974 he was amongst top ten, second in order of merit, to be selected for Staff College, a year long professional course at Wellington. Apart from foreign assignment with his battalion, he has served in all corners of the country and held prestigious assignments. IN his pioneering professional work in North Sikkim heights {1700 Feet AMSL}, he on a mission was nearly buried in a snow avalanche. He commanded a brigade {Over 2500 troops} during militancy in Punjab. Though approved for promotion to the next rank of Major General, he left Army early, in 1966, to side step into Industry and served as Vice President Birla's. Soldier to the boot he has been awarded 14 medals for distinguished service and bravery. Also, he was decorated with COAS award for exceptional work in Punjab, where he is also remembered for his pioneer civic action projects in Khem Karan Sector.

An HRD, Management, Defence Analyst, he has been Instructor in Army's prestigious institutes {War College, Infantry School}, visiting lecturer to Airforce, Naval Officers College, IMS Indore {Now IIM Indore}. A renowned Defence Analyst, writer with four books to his credit and plethora of articles on Military History, Defence, Politics, Anecdotes, Poetry etc. He has many research papers on Army and now on Kashmir to his credit. Two of these, pertaining to Kashmir; Goddess Sharda at Shardi and Aryan Saraswat Brahmins of Kashmir have been well received and are on the world wide internet also. He was the one to bring the photograph of Sharda Temple at Shardi in Pakistan in 2004 for the first time in more than 70 years and share it with the community and Goddess Sharda's worshippers in India. This effort of his is as spring board to get this temple on the list of world heritage monument, even though it is now in Pakistan.

For the last few years his articles on way of life in Kashmir have a spark of his memoirs, personal thoughts and of values and heritage. He is proud of his lineage from great Kashmiri Historian Narain Kaul {17<sup>th</sup> / 18<sup>th</sup> Century} and his sixth descendant Bhawani Kaul {{1790 - 1867 AD}, a noted Administrator, writer during Dogra Rule. This article is his effort to connect Nilmat Puranam to the geographical, archeological and scriptural evidence to Kashmir Valley including chronology of Naga and Aryan settlers. g home the facts of the most sacred and venerated shrine of Goddess Sharda at Shardi.

## KAS'MIRA { KASHMIR } IN NILMAT PURANAM AND DATING OF EVENTS AND NAGA, ARYAN SETTLEMENTS

■ Brig Rattan Kaul

{ I owe this piece of heritage history to Nirrit, who on arrival in this world in US, inherited the heritage of Kas'mira, *sanskars* of Kaula's {*Aghoreshwara's* –Enlightened }, on either side and to remind him of his heritage. Translations of appropriate verses from Rig Veda, Nilmat Puranam and other ancient scriptures have been quoted to infuse curiosity. Many words like Kas'mira {Kashmir}, Kas'yapa {Kashyapa Rishi} etc have been spelled as they were in our scriptures – *Author*}

### PART I : KAS'MIRA IN NILMAT PURANAM

**The Vale of Gods – Kas'mira.** Sanskrit poet Kalidasa writes about Kas'mira {Kashmir} thus; {Translated} **“The place is more beautiful than the heaven and is the benefactor of supreme bliss and happiness. It seems to me that I am taking a bath in the lake of nectar here.”** Kalhan pays tribute to Kas'mira {Kashmir} in *Rajatarangini* {Verse 36 Book I} {*Rajatarangini* was written by the chronicler between 1148-50 AD}{Translated}; **“There even to this day drops of sandal ointment offered by the Gods are to be seen at *Nandikshetra*, the residence of Shiva”.** He associates *Nandikshetra*, area of snow-clad mountains of Dras, Mahadev, Baltal and Amarkanth{Amarnath} as abode of Shiva in Kas'mira. He further describes Kas'mira as {Translated}; **“ It is a country where the sun shines mildly, being the place created by Kas'yapa {Kashyapa Rishi}, for his glory – big and lofty houses, learning, Saffron, icy cool water and grapes rare in Heaven are plentiful here – Kailash {Here he refers to Shiva's abode in *Nandikshetra*} is the best place in the three worlds {Tri-lok}, Himalayas the best place in Kailash, and Kas'mira the best place in Himalayas”.** Ancient Greeks called Kashmir **“Kasperia”** and the Chinese pilgrim Huan-Tsang, who visited the valley around 631 AD, called it **“KaShi-Mi-Lo”**. Sir Walter Lawrence writes; “The valley is an emerald set in pearls; a land of lakes, clear streams, green turf, magnificent trees and mighty mountains where the air is cool, and the water sweet ...”. Sir Francis Young Husband, adventurer, who blazed trail across Himalayas writes about a temple in Kashmir: “..... built on the most sublime site occupied by any building in the world-finer than the site of Parthenon, or of the Taj Mahal, or of Saint Peters or of the Escorial.....perfectly open, and even plain, gently sloping away from a background of a snowy mountains looking directly out.....the snowy ranges which bound it-so situated in fact as to be encircled, yet not overwhelmed by snowy mountains-stand the ruins of a temple second only to the Egyptians in massiveness and strength, and to the Greeks in elegance and grace..... No one without an eye for natural beauty would have chosen that special site for the construction of a temple ...”

**Nilmat Puranam.** Our sacred religious scripture, Nilmat Puranam, is one of the famous Purana's that deals with the Valley of Kas'mira in respect of its creation, original inhabitants; *Naga's*, *Daitaya's*, *Pis'acas* and *Manus* {Aryans; Aryan Saraswat Brahmins}, style of living of *Naga's* and *Manu's*, religion, customs, festivals and topography. It peeps into the ancient history of Kas'mira, delves into many other aspects of the valley; its importance, customs of our ancestors, evolution of Kas'mira and its sacred rivers and lots more. In all there are 1453 verses, with the passage of time some verses and parts thereof are missing. **From its very composition it does not appear to be a work of a Rishi nor completed in one long sitting.** Nilmat Puranam is named after the King Nila {*Naga's* of the Nagar dynasty that ruled Kashmir in the beginning. More about *Naga's* and others read below}, however, at the end of the Puranam it reads {Translated}; **“This is *Vitasta Mahatmya*. This treatise named the Nilamata is complete.”** {The numerous *Mahatmya's* of Kas'mira are interesting sources of early historical geography and describe the topography of the valley, information regarding the ancient nomenclature and various other facets of Kas'mira. Among the 51 *Mahatmya's*, the *Vitasta Mahatmya* {**Nilmat Puranam**} is the longest one, divided into 35 *Patalas*. *Mahatmya's* 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 many early materials and local traditions and are thus valuable for a systematic study of Kas'mira. Nilmat Puranam **describes sixty-five rituals and festivals, which were celebrated, with great devotion, faith, pomp and show. Some of the rituals and festivals find mention in other Puranas also. Some of these are celebrated even today in Kas'mira only; like Kaw *Poonim* and**

*Yaksha Mavas {Kechi Mavas}*. It is generally thought that the Puranam talks of rituals and festivals of *Naga's* only and these being adopted by Aryan Saraswat Brahmins of Kas'mira, which is not so. Many of the rituals, festivals and days are common with those being followed by Aryans in *Bhatatvarsha*, or emanating from Veda's. Thus there is a mix of rituals those of *Naga's*, ones brought by Aryans and some even from the ones followed by *Dasayu's* {Original inhabitants of *Bharatvarsha*, as they are referred in Veda's} before Aryans came to *Bharatvarsha*.

There is an erroneous impression that Nilmat Puranam is completely *Naga* centric. It is not so. Admittedly there are certain places, rivers and few *Naga* Kings who are to be venerated. But Nilmat is full of mention of various God's and Goddess's, who manifested specifically in *Bharatvarsha* like Durga, Bhadrakali, and Shiva etc. This is an indicator that Nilmat, while keeping the *Naga's* in view, has specific rituals connected with the God's and Goddess's of *Bharatvarsha* and Aryan's. A specific mention of equating *Naga* King Nila with *Indira*, clearly connects it to Veda God's and Goddess's, wherein *Indira* holds the prime position of God of God's- *Indira*. Veda's talk about rivers, which have been imported in the Nilmat, like Ganga, Yamuna etc. Similarly *Gotra* heads like Vasishta, Pulastya, Agasta etc have been mentioned, who have been associated with the *Gotra's* of the Aryans, when they started along the Saraswati Bank Ashrams. Places like Mathura, Prayaga etc have been mentioned, which strengthens the argument Nilmat having Aryan and *Dasayu's* connection. There is also erroneous impression in Kas'mira that Nilmat lays down details of rituals connected with day to day life or important events like birth, *Yagnopavit*, marriages etc. A close study of Nilmat will show that mostly certain days/*tithi's* have been mentioned for certain rituals, which have nothing to do with personal events and are generic in nature. Kas'mira's Aryan Saraswat Brahmins follow the rituals etc as laid down in Laugakshi Rishi's Veda. For instance it lays down 24 rituals pertaining to birth of a boy; from birth to adulthood, out of which 8 rituals are still carried by us. In case of girls there are 8 rituals connected with birth to adulthood and mostly are adhered to even to this day. Use of Brahmincal calendar {Bright Moon and Dark Moon fortnight}, which was started in *Bharatvarsha* also indicates this umbilical cord to *Vedic* period and *Vedic* Aryans.

Kalhan, the great chronicler, has taken help from Nilmat Puranam in tracing four Kings/rulers or guardians of minor Kings; Gonanda I, Damodar, Queen Yasomati and her son Gonanda II, for his *Rajatarangini* {A trustworthy text of this great chronicle was unearthed in the hands of Rajanaka Ratanakantha in 1890 AD}. **Kalhan has quoted Nilmat Puranam in his memorable *Rajatarangini* in these words: "That land is Protected by Nila, the lord of all the *Naga's*, whose regal parasol is formed by the circular pond {of the Nilakunda} with the Vitasta's newly rising stream as its stick"{The circular pond of Nilakunda {Verinag} was turned into a octagonal one during the reign of Jehangir. Read below}.**

The author of Nilmat Puranam is not known or mentioned anywhere in the or any other scripture or chronicle. It is only from conjectures, analysis of Nilmat Puranam; contents, language, environment, detailed description of customs and religious factors included in the scripture that the epical work can be attributed to an Aryan Saraswat Brahmin of Kas'mira. Similarly the period when this was composed has brought differing views on its antiquity, ranging from 500 BC to 6-7<sup>th</sup> Century AD. An analysis of this factor, therefore, becomes necessary. One can, however, be sure that the language employed originally has remained somewhat intact during the course of centuries till the time the composition has been actually recorded in black and white. Also it is for sure that the narration is of high scholarly content and grammatically correct in nature.

**First** the pre BC authorship. Gautam Budha {May 623-547 BC} is mentioned as incarnation of Vishnu in the Nilmat Puranam, even though the verse is in 'future tense' {Verses 709-715}. Verses 709-710a states thus {Translated}; **"O Brahman, the God Vishnu, the lord of the world, shall be {born as} the preceptor of the world, Buddha by name, at the time when the Pusa { Nakshatra } is joined with the moon, in the month of Vaisaksha {Baisakh}, in twenty eighth Kali Age"**. Verses 710b-12 also {Translated}; **" Listen from as to how his worship should be performed in the bright-half, from that period onwards, in future. The image of Buddha should be bathed {with water rendered holy} with all medicinal herbs, all jewels and all scents, in accordance with the sayings of the Sakyas {Buddhist Monks/Scholars}. The 'dwellings of the Sakyas' {Vihara's} should be whitewashed with care"**. Based on these the antiquity of the scripture is taken as pre BC effort, which is not so. The contents of the verses quoted above are so phrased that it talks of an era in future tense, much earlier than the actual birth of Budha and words 'shall be born' have been used.. There were no *Sakyas* or *Vihara's* or these nomenclatures before the birth of Budha. They came up after he had renounced the worldly ties and taken to meditation. *Sakyas* and *Vihara's* increased in numbers, in *Bharatvarsha*, much after Budha and even after King Ashoka { 273-232 BC }. *Sakyas* initially came to the valley in trickle, their numbers increasing at the fag end of BC era. Similarly dwellings of *Sakyas* {Vihara's} came up in good numbers from 1<sup>st</sup> Century AD onwards, though for a century or so. The verses talk of white washing of 'dwellings of *Sakyas*' {*Vihara's*}, therefore indicators are of an AD effort. . There is also no mention of Adi-Shankara {Of 5<sup>th</sup> Century BC}, who for Brahmins was on equal footing with that of Budha. It also does not speak about King Gopaditya {417-357 BC}, who established *Gopadiri Agrahara* {Shankaracharya} or King Kanishka {100 AD} who gave

impetus to Buddhism in the valley. Now about the script used in the scripture. The existence of Kharosthi script {Khartoshi- written from right to left} numerals on Motif Tiles found at Harwan Excavations depict inscriptions in Kharosthi {Khartoshi}. These afford reliable clue to the date of the tiles and the script in vogue during that time i.e. Kharosthi {Khartoshi} script. **The inscriptions of the script, found at Harwan, being in fully developed form, indicates that the script must have been in vogue for considerable period in Kas'mira from earlier period,** which ceased to be in vogue by about 5th Century AD in North-Western India including Kas'mira, where it had flourished. Though it is difficult to assess this period, taking it that the script was invented somewhere in 9th Century BC, though assessed to be earlier, safely its usage in Kas'mira can be 8th Century BC to 500 AD **{Interestingly Rig Veda for the first time was written in Kharosthi {Khartoshi}}.** With the contents and manuscripts found, it is evident that the Puranam was not written in Khartoshi {Kharosthi}. Other subtle indicators are that pre BC era had lot of stress on eating of wild game, which is not mentioned in Nilamat Puranam, a practice which declined closer to AD era, as cultivation of Rice and Barley picked up, which do find mention in the scripture.

Now about it being an AD effort. Analysis of the contents, grammar used in this scripture and the language clearly indicates it having been written in highly grammatical Sanskrit and thus an AD effort. If it was a Pre BC effort it had to be in Khartoshi {Kharosthi} with the expressions, sequences and phrasing being of different nature. Buddhism started in Kas'mira from the time of Ashoka, who extended full control over Kas'mira, which continued till end of 100 AD with Kushan dynasty {Kanishka, Huska, Juska, Abhimanyu, Vibhisana I, Indrajit, Ravana, Vibhisana II}. It continued further for a while till about 300 BC and thereafter Buddhism was on a downslide till about 515 AD, when Mihir Kula {515-550 AD}, a Hun General, ascended the throne. {Mihir Kula finds mention in the history of Kas'mira for his cruelty, when he killed hundreds of elephants in the forests east of Tral and more or less elephants became extinct in Kas'mira during this period . However, Verse 889 talks of elephants {Translated}; “{The water should be brought} from a sacred place situated near by, placed either on the back of an elephant or in a conveyance drawn by horses or bulls or men}” indicating that some elephants did exist, but option of horses or bulls indicates to their dwindling availability. A flicker of renaissance of Brahmanism started around this time and when Pravarsena {6<sup>th</sup> Century AD} ruled the valley, the period can be taken as the era of full revival of Brahminism in Kas'mira. Pravarsena installed *Sri Chakra* at *Chakrashwar*, established present city of Srinagar, built first *Nav Setu* {Bridge} near *Maisuma* over Vitasta and gave impetus to Brahminism. Nilmat Puranam does not directly talk of *Sharika* but mentions *Puja of Durga* {Translated}; **“Weapons should be worshipped at night in the temple of Durga. O descendant of Kas'yapa, after taking bath in the morning and after worshipping all {the things} mentioned . Verses 767-769).** King Gopaditya {Early 7<sup>th</sup> Century}, sixth in line after Mihir Kula, expelled Brahmins {During Mihir Kula's reign as many shameless practices are ascribed to them} who had gone wayward and invited Brahmins from outside and this was also the time Buddhism had decayed with earnest desire of then rulers to give impetus to Brahminism.. Thousands of monasteries were burnt and thousands of villages that supported those monasteries were given over to the Brahmins **{It is during this period that Brahmins and Naga's joined together to kill Budhists in larger numbers. This indicates continued dwellings of Naga's till about 7<sup>th</sup> Century}**. Brahmins having succeeded in establishing their supremacy, though gradually, set themselves in right earnest in strengthening themselves and their position. Many superstitious observances and practices were invented and scripture writing became important to revive the religion. Re-conversions from Buddhism to Brahminism were order of the day. Scholarly works of Brahminism picked up good points of Buddhism and incorporated in their rituals and scriptures. Brahminism in Kas'mira began its growth and this period saw many Kas'miri scholars {Budhists as well as Brahmins} like Kumarjiva {Later part of Chin Dynasty 384- 417 AD}, Shakyashi Badhri {405 AD}, Ratna Veera, Shama Bhatta on the scene. Most importantly, Chandracharya, a Sanskrit Grammarian, had come on the scene to give impetus to Sanskrit, which started developing after Khartoshi {Kharosthi} was passing into oblivion. The time was ripe; Budha and Buddhism had spread and decayed but Buddha's stature remained, Brahminism started to spread again in Kas'mira. Sanskrit for writing scriptures had spread and the rulers were either Brahmins or inclined favourably towards Brahmins. During 627 – 761 AD Karkota Dynasty {Founder Durlabha Vardhana} established its roots and most importantly brought *Vaishnavite* Philosophy to Kas'mira, which flourished further during the rule of Lalitaditya Muktapida {697-733AD - Karkota Dynasty}. This *Vaishnavite* philosophy is evident from the contents of the Puranam. It is evident that verses connected with Budha in Nilmat Puranam have been included to fall in line with the accepted *Vaishnavite* belief in the incarnation {*Avatra-ship*} of Buddha in the rest of India in 6<sup>th</sup> Century. This is also confirmed by King Lalitaditya Muktapida's reign{697-733AD}, wherein he being a King of *Vaishnavite* Philosophy tolerated Buddhism also and never allowed remaining *Sakya's* and *Vihara's* to be converted. The aim of the above is to place the environment, which was fit for the conceptualisation of Nilmat Puranam.

The contents of the scripture has brief mentions of Buddhist or vegetarian habits in rituals, which indicates of wanning and not ascending Buddhist philosophy; an AD era event. At places drinking on some of the festivals is mentioned, this can safely and surely indicate era of its writing to Gopaditya's/ Pravarsena's time, as Brahmins had adopted shameless methods, which even forced Gopaditya to expel them and bring in

Brahmins from outside. *Bhadrakali Puja* started in *Bharatvarsha* somewhere at the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> Century AD, though Goddess *Bhadrakali* had manifested earlier but rituals connected with her *Puja* had taken a back seat during the spread of Buddhism for obvious reasons of Buddhists reluctance to adhere or talk of such rituals connected with *Bhadrakali*; animal sacrifice.. There is specific mention of *Bhadrakali Puja* in Nilmat Puranam {Verse 674; **On that very 9<sup>th</sup> {Caitra, Chaitra}, the purified man, observing fast, should worship Bhadrakali with plenty of flowers, incense and grains. Verse 675; Bhadrakali who rules over the gods, should be worshipped on all the 9 days, {but} he who worships her on that {9<sup>th</sup> }, obtains success in his undertakings**}, which would have been included when *Bhadrakali Puja* had gained ground; somewhere in 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> Century. However, the effect of Buddhist philosophy of no animal sacrifices or meat is evident from these verses, which can be attributed to era closer to waning of Buddhist era rather than Pre BC era, when sacrifices were order of the day. This was so not only in Kas'mira but whole *Bharatvarsha* also. There is also mention of visit to courtesans by sporting men on certain days/functions. From various chronicles, such system is an AD era ritual, more so when Brahmins, even Kings, had adopted wayward methods of this nature, which were prominent during Pravarsena's and Gopaditya's time {Read Above}, resulting many of them being expelled from the country. There is also no mention of another Adi Shankara {805 – 837 BC} or his *Shaivite* rituals, philosophy in the scripture, which precludes it to be 9<sup>th</sup> Century effort. Nilmat Puranam does not give us clear-cut monism; it has just paved the way for the Monistic Shaiva Philosophy of Kas'mira, thus confirming its writing during the later *Vaishnavite* period {6<sup>th</sup> Century}, when this philosophy had just started taking rounds. **Thus lower limit of the date of writing of the Puranam may be eighth century AD and the upper one about the sixth century AD, as Buddha, who finds mention for being worshipped as incarnation of Vishnu began from about 550 AD.** The textual study of the work shows that some alterations and additions may have been made in it after the ninth or tenth century AD in order to incorporate few rituals of the monistic Shaivite Philosophy of Kas'mira. **Had Nilmat Puranam been composed during or after the ninth century AD there would have been more mention of monistic shaivite philosophy. In fact there is lot of mention of Lord Shiva and his consort, few rituals connected with Shiv- Parvati Pujan.**

. The absence of the term '*Avatara*' and the use of the term '*Pradurbhava*' for incarnation of gods, non-mention of Kalki, Krishna's consort Radha and the sacred leaf of Tulsi, mention of Buddha as an incarnation of Vishnu in a spirit of catholicity and the incorporation of its various verses into the Brahma Purana long before the time of Lachman Dev {1279- 1293 AD} further indicate its date as above. {Lachman Dev, son of a Kas'miri Brahmin, was adopted by Ram Dev {1258 to 1279 AD}. His wife Ahila constructed a *muth*, which was called *Ahlmar* {Present day *Gund Ahlmar* near Ganpatyar}. His son Simha Dev {1293 – 121305 AD} succeeded him}. **It is possible that a Buddhist Scholar converted to Brahminism in 6<sup>th</sup> Century is the author of Nilmat Puranam and wanted to remain anonymous due to his earlier religious inclinations. It is also indicated by other subtle contents, importance of Purnima's and admixes of Brahmical, Naga and Buddhist rituals.** Dr Buhler, a German Scholar who travelled in *Bharatvarsha* and Kas'mira during mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century, goes the credit of saving its manuscripts, states on page 41 of his Report, "**It great value lies therein that it is a real mine of information regarding the sacred places of Kashmir and their legends which are required to explain the Rajatarangini and that it shows how Kalhan has used his sources**". The Nilmat Puranam was first published in 1924 with the joint effort of Professor R L Konjilal and Professor Jagdhar Zadoo {Professor Jagdhar Zadoo is credited with recreating and translation of many scriptures and was a scholar in his own right. Many of his works are displayed in various Libraries and S P S Museum Srinagar}. Some of the items that may interest any present day reader are :-

- A circular pattern drawn on the ground on which a 'Kas'mira' bridegroom has to stand {*Yuog*} before leaving his house, on entering the house of the bride for his marriage and finally on return stand with his bride is a direct descendant of '*Bhumisudha*' mentioned in the Nilamat Puranam.
- Of the items of dress, mention may be made of '*Pravarana*', which seems to be the same as '*Pravara*' mentioned in the *Mahabharata* as a cloth offering protection against cold. Kas'mira '*Pheran*' is most probably derived from '*Pravarana*' as mentioned in Nilmat Puranam.

**Kas'mira**. The narration in Nilmat Puranam starts with enumeration of the importance of Kas'mira during the Mahabharata war, in the form of conversation between King Janamejaya and Vyasa's pupil Vaisampayana {Vyasa wrote Mahabharata, is considered a Rishi and his pupil Vaisampayana answers King Janamejaya's questions. **Puranas are written in the descriptive form wherein two persons converse in question and answer style as is in the case of Nilmat Puranam**}. The King {Janamejaya}, a later descendant of Pandava's, asks him as to why king of Kas'mira did not participate in Mahabharata war since Kas'mira **occupied an important place in the world at that time** and why support of King of Kas'mira was not sought either by Pandu or Dhrtarastra, while kings of various other countries, great heroes, came to the great **Bharata war** {Mahabharata} of his forefathers? {*Two words Bharata and Kas'mira figure in the narration of Nilmat Puranam right from the beginning*}. The reply is that the king of Kas'mira, accompanied by his army, did attend the *Svayamvara* to fight Madhava, son of Vasudeva. A fight between him and Vasudeva took place and

consequently he was ‘thrown down’ {Killed} by Vasudeva in the combat. Out of respect for Kas’mira, coronation of his pregnant queen Yasomati was done by Vasudeva, so that posthumous child rules Kas’mira. The queen gave birth to a male child who was named Gonanda {Mostly mentioned as Gonanda II}. This era nearly coincides with Mahabharata war and Kalhan too begins his accounts in *Rajatarangini* around this era and writes about installation of Queen Yasomati on the throne of Kas’mira {Kashmir}, as the guardian of her son King Gonanda II, by Lord Krishna. The importance of Kas’mira requiring Vasudeva himself to coronate a woman is best narrated in Nilmat Puranam saying {Translated} **“O best amongst the kings, the goddess Uma is the same as Kas'mira. What was formerly, an enjoyable, heart-enrapturing lake for six Manvantaras {Each Manvantara {Manu} is said to comprise 122,688,000 years} since the beginning of the Kalpa, became a beautiful territory in this Manvantara.”** As per scriptures it was only in the later part of the last {Seventh *Manvantara*} that the mountains near **Varahkshetra** {Varhamulla, Baramulla; *Varhamulla* literally pig's snout}; was broken open by the plough of Ananta {Naga King} to let out the water and the valley reclaimed. He {Vaisampayana} then praises the beauty of Kas’mira {Translated}; **“ O protector of men! all sacred places, which are on the earth, are there. Thronged with the hermitages of the sages, it is pleasant in heat and cold and is auspicious..... Not dependent on rains, enjoyable, holy, beneficial for living beings, endowed with the qualities {of producing} all grains.....”** Addressing King Janamejaya, he talks about the lakes and rivers of Kas’mira {Translated}; **“The holy region of Kas'mira is possessed of all the sacred places. There are sacred lakes of the Naga's and the holy mountains; there are holy rivers and also the holy lakes; there are highly sacred temples and also the hermitages attached to them. In the centre flows, making as it were the parting of the hair, the Vitasta - the highest goddess visibly born of the Himalaya.”** The name of Kas’mira does not occur in the Vedic literature. In Rig Veda {Read Below}, there is a hymn, which mentions the name of Vitasta {Wyeth, Jhelum}. **Among the epics, we find the name of Kas'mira in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. The Mahabharata refers in several passages to Kas'mira and their king, but in a way, which merely indicates that the valley was situated in the hilly regions to the north of India.**

## **PART II : KAS'MIRA NAME, SACRED RIVERS SINDHU, VITASTA { WYETH, JHELUM }**

**Kas'mira Name.** We all know that Kashmir is named after Kas'yapa, but not the genesis of Kas’mira name, which is amply enumerated in Nilmat Puranam {Verses 223- 227}, wherein Vishnu tells Naga King Nila about the code of conduct of those who will live alongside *Naga's* in Kas’mira {Translated}; **“The men will worship the *Naga's* in whose territory they shall dwell..... Those men in this country, who will follow the good customs laid down by you, will be endowed with animals and grains. **“Prajapati is called Ka, and Kas'yapa is also Prajapati. Built by him this country will be called Kas'mira. Because water called Ka was taken out by Balarama {the plough-wielder} from this country, so this will be called Kas'mira in this world.”** It is not Kas'yapa *Sar* corrupted to Kas’mira, as we believe, but phonetics of Kas’mira to Kashmira to Kashmir. *Satisar* is associated with Goddess Sati {Uma, Parvati}.**

The sacredness of Kas’mira would be incomplete without the mention of three main water bodies of the valley; **Sindhu {Sindh}, Vitasta {Wyeth, Jhelum} and Wular {Mahapadamsar}**. All of them finally become part of one water body; Vitasta. **Sindhu {Indus}** and **Vitasta** have been held sacred from the time Aryans settled along Saraswati Bank Ashrams and find mention in our ancient religious scriptures. Great River Sindhu {Indus}, venerated from ancient times, has been a prominent river acting as boundary between Central Asia and then *Bharatvarsha*. Aryans, while immigrating to *Bharatvarsha*, had crossed this great river, which is considered the base for Indus valley civilisation. Both these rivers {Sindhu and Vitasta} get mentioned in Rig Veda. Sindhu {Indus}, mythical river Saraswati and River Sarayu get special mention, many times, in Rig Veda, thus {Translated}; **“Let the great Streams come hither with their mighty help, Sindhu, Saraswati, and Sarayu with waves. Ye Goddess Floods, ye Mothers, animating all, promise us water rich in fatness and in balm {Rig Veda 10:64:9}”.** **Sindhu** river is also called **“heavens bearer, Sindhu {Rig Veda 10:65:13}”**. Similarly Vitasta’s sacredness gets equated with Ganga and Yamuna in Rig Veda.

**Sindhu River[s].** Rig Veda is resplendent with the praise of Sindhu {Indus}; its flow as recorded in Rig Veda gives its own story {Translated}; **“Sindhu in might surpasses all the streams that flow. Varuna cut the channels for thy forward course, O Sindhu, when thou rannest on to win the race. Thou speedest o'er precipitous ridges of the earth, when thou are Lord and Leader of these moving floods...Sindhu, unto thee the roaring rivers run. Ou leadest as a warrior king thine army's wings what time thou comest in the van of these swift streams {Rig Veda 10:75:1-4}”.** In Nilmat Puranam Sindhu gets mentioned thus; **“Ganga Sindhu tu vijneya Vitasta Yamuna tatha”**. In Kas’mira we have different rivers named Sindhu or Sindhu Ganga. In *Harmukhganga Mahatmaya*, the stream flowing towards Narannag, {Called Nund Kol}, which joins

Lower Sindh near Kangan is referred as Sindhu Ganga,. In *Nandikshetra Mahatmaya* Lower Sindh, emanating from Baltal area is referred as Sindhu Ganga. {*Harmukhganga* and *Nandikshetra Mahatmaya's*, scriptures pertain to Gangabal and *Nandikshetra tiratha's* respectively}. Present day Kishanganga River, now flowing through POK and in front of our sacred Sharda Temple, is also referred as *Maha Sindhu* in *Sharda Mahatmaya*. Prefix of *Maha* to this river is because of its steep banks and gorges through which it flows, which makes it a big and swift {*Maha*} river. **Thus in Kas'mira there are three rivers with the name of Sindhu.** *Sindhu* {Indus} mentioned in Vedas emanates from Tibet, crosses Ladakh Range, flows through Sakardu and Chilas {South of Gilgit} and passes through Pakistan. Its journey is tortuous, through high snow clad mountains, gorges till it meanders through plains of West Punjab {Pakistan}; exactly as per the description in Rig Veda, quoted above. However, in Kas'mira any mention of Sindhu had to be with reference to any important landmarks close to the valley and these were Gangabal {*Harmukh*}. Since Sindhu, in Kas'mira scriptures was referred as closely associated with *Nandikshetra* in the North, the first such river in the region in that direction got referred to as Sindhu {Also called as **Sindh; Lower Sindh**}.

**Vitasta.** Similarly river Vitasta was also in the *mantras* of the Aryans and its degree of sacredness gets equated with Ganga and Yamuna in Rig Veda thus {Translated}; "Favour ye this my lord, **O Ganga, Yamuna, O Sutudri, Parusni and Sarasvati: With Asikni, Vitasta, O Marudvrda, O Arjikiya with Susoma** hear my call {Rig Veda 10: 75" 5}". Scriptures enumerate that after Kas'yapa saw Kas'mira populated he {Translated from Nilmat Puranam} **"worshipped the god S'ankara and induced the goddess Uma to purify this country by the gift of water. She - the in destroying one - is renowned as the river Vitasta"**. Once goddess's went to see Kas'yapa, he induced them to be rivers by saying "The beautiful country named Kas'mira has been created by me. O possessed of pure smiles, cherish that (country) by gift of water." Kas'yapa thus got Goddess's to take the form of rivers of the vale; Goddess Lakshmi as Vis'oka; Goddess Aditi, the mother of God, as Trikot; Goddess Saci, wife of Indra, as Harsapatha etc. Most of the Rivers whose evolution is mentioned in Nilmat Puranam cannot be identified, as over the period their names have either changed or become extinct, though few retain their Nilmat Puranam names like; Vaitarni, Harshapatha, Vishoka {Now called Vishow}, Gotami, Mahuri, Sind {Sindhu}- Lower Sindh, Madhumati {Called Bandapore Nala, though Madhumati name in later chronicles is ascribed in *Sharda Mahatmaya* to a river, in Kishanganga Valley, which joins Kishanganga River at Shardi {Sharda Temple}. Madhumati River quoted in Nilmat Puranam is near Bandapore and is tributary to Wular Lake {Mahapadamsar}}. The legend for Kas'yapa inducing Goddess Sati {Uma, Parvati} to be river **Vitasta** in Kas'mira is equally interesting. He worshiped **S'ankara** {Shiva} for inducing Sati as the river, which **S'ankara agreed** and said to Goddess Sati; **"Do as has been said by Kas'yapa."** As per the advice of **S'ankara Sati** took the form saying {Translated}; **"O father of the world, I shall assume the form of a river in the Nether World. Make a stroke with your spear near the abode of Nila {Nila Kund – Verinag}, where, O lord, while breaking the mountain, was (placed) the point of the plough. By that stroke of the spear I shall come out of the Nether World and shall follow the way made with the plough up to the place where there is the great river Sindhu."** S'ankara himself named her as **Vitasta**, because he had excavated with the spear a ditch measuring one Vitasti, through which the river had come out. The goddess Yamuna gave her own identity and purity in the name of Vitasta. Goddess Ganga, for her great respect and devotion for Kas'yapa, augmented Vitasta with her own part the in the form of Sindhu {Sindh, Lower Sindh}. Thus in Kas'mira Sindhu {Sindh, Lower Sindh}, as per the scriptures, is the form of Ganga and the Vitasta as Yamuna. The place of their confluence, Shadipur {Prayaga} is regarded as equal to Prayaga {Allahabad}. Nilmat Puranam gives lucid reasoning for the Vitasta to continue its name after absorbing Sindhu at Prayaga and said to Ganga {Translated}: **"O possessed of beautiful colour, at Prayaga {Allahabad}- as thereafter river is called Ganga- my name is appropriated by you and in Kas'mira your name has been appropriated by me {River after Shadipur Prayaga is called Vitasta {Verse 308}."** Thus receiving good rivers in this way, the goddess Yamuna {Vitasta} became united with the Ganga {Sindhu}. **The water of Vitasta mixed with that of Sindhu is like milk mixed with nectar, beauty associated with elegance and knowledge associated with good nature.** One wonders as to why Vitasta becomes more turbulent, after its calm journey beyond Varahshetra {Varhamulla, Baramulla}. The route to be followed for Vitasta was to be treaded by a plough under the supervision of Kas'yapa, which many times he entreated her to follow. This repeated persuasion to follow the ploughed route irritated the Goddess, when she reached beyond Varahshetra {Varhamulla, Baramulla}, thereafter became swift with rage with accompanied murky colour. This is best narrated by the following verse of Nilmat Puranam {Translated}; " Kas'yapa spoke to her: **"O beautiful one, you must necessarily go by the way made with the plough, otherwise the whole country will be turned into a lake. Persuaded again and again by Kas'yapa, that excellent river went in anger through the way made with plough. So, though clear, she is seen as a dirty one at that place {Verse 311-13}."** Thus Vitasta and Sindhu {Lower Sindh, Sindh} took their places in the Land of Nila; Kas'mira. Vitasta's sacredness is best narrated by the following verse attributed to Kas'yapa {Translated}; **"Assuming the form of a river called Vitasta, O**

**goddess, the daughter of the mountain, you are not a river but an ascetic lady, wife of Sarva, even higher than Sarva {Verse 314 Nilmat Puranam}.”**

The reference to main Sindhu River comes up again in Nilmat Puranam, as Ganga in the form of Sindhu {Sindh, Lower Sindh} had merged with Vitasta and Vitasta had appropriated her name at Prayaga {Shadipur}. Sindhu {Sindh, Lower Sindh} would like to regain her name when Vitasta completes her journey through Kas'mira. This conversation between Ganga {Sindhu} and Yamuna {Vitasta} rivers is best narrated in Verses 309-310 of Nilmat Puranam {Translated}; **“Then the Ganga said to her, "O beautiful one, I must again appropriate your name when I am designated as Sindhu.”** This geographically happens at the confluence of the two rivers; where Jhelum {Vitasta} joins Indus {Sindhu}, in Pakistan. The journey of Vitasta thus ends and she gets merged with great river Sindhu {Indus}. The combined name after this confluence is Sindhu {Indus}. One is surprised that more than two millenniums ago our ancestors knew the route of the rivers beyond Kas'mira and this information found its way into the naming and renaming of these rivers in various scriptures. One thing is noteworthy; irrespective of the number of Sindhu's in Kas'mira, all merge with Vitasta; Sindhu Ganga {Nund Kol} merging with Sindhu Ganga of *Nandikshetra* {Sindh, Lower Sindh} near Kangan, Sindhu {Lower Sindh, Sindh} merges at Prayaga {Shadipur} and finally Maha Sindhu {Kishanganga} merging at Domel, now in POK.

**Vitasta {Wyeth- Jhelum}**. River Vitasta has been called variously; as 'Vitasta' in the Vedas, 'Hydaspes' of Aryans and Central Asian's and 'Bidaspes' of Ptolemy {Approx 87-150 AD}. . Sharf-ud-din, historian of Taimur {1336-1405AD}, calls it 'Dendan' or 'Gamad', Mughal emperor Jehangir {1605 - 27 AD}, in his memoirs, called it 'Bebat'. The river is also known as 'Wyeth'. When the Muslim invaders conquered and settled in Kas'mira, they built their palaces on the banks, on the sides of the canals excavated from Vitasta. Among these *Maar Canal {Nala Maar}*, constructed during the reign of Zain-ul-Abidin {1420-70 AD}, is still remembered {This canal, which was also used as an inland-waterway till fifties, has been filled couple of decades ago}. The calm flow of Vitasta, however, had not brought peace to the zealot's heart of his father, Sultan Sikandar {1389-1413 AD}, better known as Sikandar *Butshikan*, who ravaged and razed to the ground magnificent monasteries and stone temples along the banks of the river. But Vitasta did pacify and lend peace of mind to the Sikandar's younger son, Zain-ul-Abidin. When Akbar {1556-1605 AD} visited Kas'mira for the first time, his procession was taken out along the river Vitasta. Records Shuka, a contemporary historian, {Updated *Rajatarangini* from 1514 to 1586 AD} about his procession {Translated}: **“Now Jalaludina {Akbar} came to see the kingdom of Kas'mira, decked with saffron, walnut, fruits and flowers. The wives of the citizens hastened to have a glimpse of the King. One woman pointed out the King to her dear female friend who was quite eager to see him; another exclaimed with a flutter that she had seen the leader of the army; another woman with threats to her child covered her bosom and went. After the people of Kas'mira had seen the King, a continuous festivity was held in every house”**. During his stay, Akbar participated in the festivals of our community and on 13th of *Bhadoo* {Vikrami Samvat}, also known as *Vitasta Triyodashi {Truvah}*; celebrated as birthday of Vitasta {Jhelum- Wyeth}, he ordered illuminations all over the city and participated in the festivities. Jehangir, who called it 'Bebat', was very fond of this river. He, in his memoirs, has written {Translated}; **“Source of the river is at Verinag in 'Kashmir' and the story goes that a very large snake haunted the spot. A snake was guarding the source of river”. The waters, he wrote, were so clear that if a small poppy seed were dropped in it, it would be visible so. Much so he called this spot “heaven on earth”**. In 1612 AD, he {Jehangir} enclosed the gushing waters of the blue-water spring in an octagonal basin at Nila Kund {Verinag}. In the Moghul building spanning the spring he had the famous picture gallery of Moghul potentates, princes and allies. Tearfully, Jehangir left Verinag and Kas'mira, when he had paid his fourth and last visit in 1627 AD, and died on his way over the steep rugged Himalayas with the wish that he wanted **‘Nothing but Kashmir’** on his lips. On the bank of Vitasta in Srinagar city, founded by King Pravarsena II (79-139 AD), Jehangir's queen Nur Jehan re-constructed a mosque, *Pathar Masjid*, opposite Shah Hamdan's mosque. However, Nur Jehan had got sculptured and chiselled stones for this *Masjid* after dismantling flight of steps, linking Shankaracharya temple to the river Vitasta, near the temple of Goddess *Tripursundari* {Now called Durga Nag}. This *masjid*, an old *Baudh Vihara* was converted into a *Sunni Masjid* during Fateh Khan's rule {1510-1517 AD}. However, *Sunni's* did not use this mosque, as it had been rebuilt by a Shia woman; Nur Jehan. There is also a legend that when asked about the cost of construction of the *Masjid*, she pointed towards the gems studded in her shoes, indicating that costs hardly made any difference to her. This angered the *Ulema* and they decided not to use this *Masjid*; honoured till this day. Sikh commander, Phula Singh, during brief rule of Sikhs {Early 19<sup>th</sup> Century} declared *Pathar Masjid* as the property of the state, as it was built out of the dismantled material of a temple of a high architectural merit. That is how it passed on as a state property till this day. Shah Jehan completed the work of his father at Verinag, by building aqueducts. He, however, loved Dal Lake {*Mahasarit*} more than he loved Vitasta. During later Sikh regime, which was heralded in 1819 AD, Sikh Subedar Colonel Mian Singh, a popular governor, increased frequency of river processions; a sight to see. Dogra rulers, whose sway began in 1846 AD, carried on the tradition of these

processions. Maharaja Pratap Singh {1885-1925 AD} organised halts of these processions, for and from Varhamulla {Baramulla}. He would cruise up in a royal boat that had a becoming retinue. Maharaja Hari Singh {1925-1947 AD} continued this practice for many years. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, President Rajendra Prasad, Sadar- e- Riyasat {Head of the State, as Governor of Kashmir Dr Karan Singh was called}, Prime Ministers of Kashmir, Russian leaders Khrushchev and Bulganin were taken out in spectacular river processions along Vitasta, which had become must for visits of dignitaries and especial days of the State.

**Jhelum- Wyeth Name.** The River is generally now known as Jhelum, after a place called Jhelum, now in Pakistan. The River flows through this town, which came into prominence during Jehangir's time, when he was held prisoner at this place by one of his Governors Mahabat Khan. Miru Pandit, whose ancestors had migrated from Kas'mira to *Bharatvarsha* during first exodus, was in command of Nur Jehan's bodyguards and showed his military skill by being part of the group, which freed Jehangir. The name Vitasta can be traced through medieval times and even upto Mughal Kings. It appears that the name Jhelum got tagged somewhere during the middle of Mughal reign and took roots during Afghan Rule, as the area of Jhelum was part of the Mughal Empire and then passed onto Afghans. Since Jehangir called it Bebat, in his memoirs, it is unlikely that the name has changed during his reign. It is possible that infrequent use of Jhelum name may have started during the reign of Jehangir, as while in captivity he had seen this river from close quarters at Jhelum. Its usage must have got more common during Shah Jehan's reign {1627 -59 AD} and thereafter. The name **Wyeth** can be ascribed to Kashmiri language, roughly meaning 'Large {broad} Hearted'. Kashmiri language slowly emerged from *Ubrahmbasha* at the end of 11<sup>th</sup> Century; however, this name can be ascribed to later period during Muslim rule, when Kashmiri also incorporated certain amount of Persian language.

Of deep blue colour, river Vitasta {Jhelum- Wyeth} joins the **Mahapadamsar {Wular Lake}**. Before joining Mahapadmsar {Wular Lake}, the river takes many turns, and this change of course keeps its pace in check. It is also believed that from the patterns the river forms, a certain type of embroidery, which is typical of Kas'mira, was born; full of loops and curves. Flowing a total course of 450 miles {720 Kilometres}, out of which 84 miles {133 Kilometres} are within the valley of Kas'mira. During the journey of Vitasta many more rivers; Vishoka, Rambh Ara, Romish, Dud Ganga, Lidder, Aral, Stunt Kol {Pronounced as Chunth Kol}, Aran, Pohru and many others, constitute its other tributaries in Kas'mira. To admire best the sinuous serpentine beauty of the Jhelum, one gets its magnificent view from Shankaracharya Hill. "*A hundred miles of snow-clad mountain peak / On either side uprear their heads to heaven./ And, flecked with light and shade and yellow foam, Broad-bosomed Jhelum wends his stately way*" {C.R. Tolle Machesmall}.

### **PART III -THE LEGENDS OF MAHAPADAMSAR {WULAR LAKE}**

**Legend of Mahapadamsar {Wular Lake} in Nilmat Puranam.** As Vitasta meanders from its abode of Nila Kund {Verinag}, many rivers, mostly sacred, join it. The waters of lakes like Dal, Manasbal, Anchar and many more also join it enroute. Sacred Madhumati River, a sacred river in the valley near Bandapur {Bandipur} { now called Bandapur Nala {Bod Kol}} {Another stream by the same name is associated with Sharda Temple *Tiratha*} joins at the Northeastern edge of Mahapadmsar. **In Nilmat Puranam, Madhumati River is mentioned as tributary of Vitasta and not of Mahapadmsar.** Vitasta enters Mahapadmsar {Wular Lake} from the direction of Southeast and finally continues its onward journey in the direction of Southwest, flowing through the legendary towns of Suyapur {Sopur, Sopore} and Varakhshetra {Varhamulla, Baramulla}. There are many Kings and legends that get associated with Mahapadamsar, starting from Nilmat Puranam. The legend enumerated in the Nilmat unfolds with a conversation between King Gonanda II and sage Brhadasva {Also Badaravasa}, who narrates the name of *Naga's*, who had their abode in Kas'mira. It is a treat to read these names, as many of them find use even today, as modern first names. One of the names of a *Naga* is interesting; **Pandita**. There are Pandita's in Kas'mira, and one wonders if they are the descendants of the *Naga's*! There are many other names, which are also mentioned as *Gotra* Heads of our community, corroborating assertions that many *Gotra's* of Kas'mira can be traced to *Naga's*, the original inhabitants of Kas'mira.

Area of Mahapadmsar was the abode of one Naga King Sadangula and not a lake and had been and was lying vacant. He {Sadangula} was banished to the mountains of Drava by King Nila for 'his unlimited lustre and carried away women' and is best narrated from this conversation between King Nila and Mahapadma {Snake King}{Translated}; " O best among the *Naga's*, having banished him from here, I allotted to him a place on Usiraka - the best of the mountains - in Drava. Through a device I appointed him there as a guardian of the territory and won over the people of Kas'mira through affection. Sadangula - the lord of the *Naga's* - has been settled by me on an even road. Honoured by the people, he lives there happily. At my request, Hari {Shiva} himself has given him protection there {Nilmat Puranam Verses 1001-4}".

To trace origin of Drava country; one of the groups of Saraswat Aryans strayed North of the valley and settled there. They had identical beliefs, rituals as that of the group who came directly to valley. The country{s} was called Darda or Drava and people as *Dard's* {The area is now in POK and is called *Dardistan*}. The spill over of changes in religion and beliefs from the valley covered this area as well. *Dard's* have a long history; Ptolemy {Approx 87-150 AD} in his book '*Almagast*' has used the word *Daradrai* for *Dard's* of the Western Himalayas. Before embracing Islam, they were the followers of Buddhism and Hinduism. At present their major concentration are in *Dardistan (Dardesa)*; the area to the North of Kashmir Valley, especially Neelam Valley; Shardi {Chilas, Naili, Neelam}, Upper Kishanganga {Kel, Seri} Gurez and Tilel Valley. The valley of Kishanganga, part of a feudatory state, was known as *Drava* derived from *Duranda* {Corrupted name of a local feudal lord}.

Mahapadma had come to King Nila to seek a new place of habitation in Kas'mira for him and his large family of dependants and dependants of his dependants. Son of Vinita {Formerly a bird- Garuda} having come to know Mahapadma was living in Kas'mira, used to attack and eat up hundred of his sons and their families. King Nila spoke thus to the Naga Mahapadma {Translated}; "O best among the Bhujagas {King of Serpents}, all the *Naga's* have made their abodes here. There is no place {left} where you may dwell, O best among the Naga-chiefs. O Naga, the lord of undying ones, I do not see even a little space, which has not been thus fully occupied by the *Naga's*. Moreover, you are surrounded by a big family. But at this time, the beautiful territory of Sadangula is vacant. Here I give you, as your habitation, the beautiful **city named Candrapura**, of the king Visvagasva, in the beautiful territory, which belonged to Sadangula. **Turn that into a lake.**" The area of Mahapadamsar was then named Candrapura ruled by King Visvagasva {**Kalhan also mentions a large city {Candrapura} submerged under the Wular {Mahapadamsar}**}. King Nila also tells Mahapadma that Sage Durvasa, disguised as a mad man, had not got proper reception when he visited the habitation of Sadangula and had cursed; **"It shall turn into a lake."** As per King Nila he was the only one who knew this curse, as Durvasa had told him about this curse, as a favour. He {Nila} advises Mahapadma not to delay but with an instruction {Translated}; "O Naga, make your abode there. Do not delay. But {you should} importune the king Visvagasva - the protector of the earth. You should make request to that king, in disguise If due to greed, he would not give when requested to give, in disguise, he as a king, would be disgraced for not doing that which he must do." It is interesting to note that Sage Durvasa, eccentric, figures in this legend in a similar form as he appears in great epic Kalidasa's **Shakuntalam**, where he curses Shakuntala. Shakuntala, deep in thought of her husband Dushyant, forgets to greet Sage Durvasa, who curses her that **"The man in whose thoughts she was, will forget her"**.

Mahapadma assumed the form of an old Brahmin and went to the city Candrapura. He looked at the compassionate king Visvagasva and made request to him as **"Lord Vishnu had made to Bali"**. Mahapadma said to the King {Translated}; "O compassionate king, give me that much dwelling place at Candrapura, which may be sufficient for my big family." King Visvagasva promised him place in Candrapura, asking Mahapadma to occupy that much space, which may be enough for Mahapadma and his family. Having accepted the gift Mahapadma turns to his own form and spoke to the king amidst his ministers {Translated}; "Go away from this city, along with your collection of money and other things, accompanied by your cavalry, elephants and chariots and surrounded by your own men. O Lord of men, the city is sufficient for me along with my family. It will turn into an extensive lake, very soon." The king went away along with his citizens, horses, elephants and host of ministers, and constructed **another beautiful town at a distance of two Yojanas to the West of his own city naming it Visvagasvapura. Though this city cannot be fully identified, however, Sopur {Sopore- Suyapur} is roughly at that distance in the West of the lake. In all probability Visvagasvapura is no other than Suyapur; renamed Sopur later.**

The legend says Mahapadma flooded the city and lived there with his enlarged family. The lake was called Mahapadamsar and its dimensions and characteristics as given in Nilmat Puranam are {Translated}; **"One Yojana long and one Yojana wide, is highly beautiful and pleasing to the hearts of the good. Due to the influence of Mahapadma, {that lake is} devoid of wicked crocodiles."** The dimensions given are much lesser than it's existing one, indicating many more changes. One thing is certain; periphery of the lake was habitated and many interesting relics and monuments of the past have been found in these areas; mostly now under water or in ruins.

**Legend Narrated to Zaina-ul- Abdin.** Historian Jonaraja, who updated *Rajatarangini* from 1150 AD to 1459 AD, states that King Zain-ul-Abdin was anxious to build a monument, as had never been built before by any king. After much deliberation he decided to construct an island-palace in the middle of the Mahapadamsar, but appreciating mammoth magnitude of the task, he sought the advice of wise men of his time regarding ways and means of its accomplishment. They all encouraged his efforts by narrating the legend, which though starts with Mahapadma as in Nilmat Puranam, but differs in content and sequence of events. The ancient name of the lake of Mahapadamsar, named after great Serpent Deity Mahapadma, was a city in ancient times and was presided over by the snake deity. Passage of time and the security given by beneficent rule, brought luxury and

vice among the citizens, which grew with such an alarming rapidity that Mahapadma resolved to destroy the entire city, including its inhabitants. But, among the residents of the doomed city was a humble and virtuous potter, whom the deity {Mahapadma} resolved to spare. He appeared to him in a dream, warned him of the impending fate of the city and told him to save himself. Next morning the potter related the warning to the citizens, but was laughed at. As soon as the potter left the city, the waters began to rise until the entire countryside was overwhelmed by one tremendous deluge. To quote from Jonaraja's *Rajatarangini* {Translated}; **“The terrified children who stood, at first when the water was low, at the feet of their mothers, soon, as the water began to rise higher, got into their laps, then clung to their breasts, next jumped upon their shoulders, and finally sat upon their heads, as if they were their embodied vital breaths. The flood covered the quaking limbs of women as if it were an affectionate lover embracing his beloved whose limbs are trembling with emotion.”** After Mahapadma had wreaked vengeance upon the sinful city, he established his permanent residence in the newly formed lake. “The Lord of the Snakes was in reality Kaliya, who, being trampled upon by the feet of Krishna, bore the mark of a lotus on his head, and from that time onwards bore the appellation of Mahapadma and the lake as Mahapadamsar”. Zain-ul-Abdin's wise men then wound up their story by an assurance that he {Zain-ul-Abdin}, being an incarnation of Hari {Shiva}, could do as he pleased in the domain of his vassal subject Mahapadma and that his efforts would assuredly be crowned with success. He, therefore, set about vigorously for accomplishment of his purpose. Large cargo boats were filled with boulders and sunk at the spot selected. The island was named Zaina Lank after him and still retains that name. He also built a small mosque at one corner of it, the ruins of which are still in existence. The legend differs from that of Nilmat Puranam in that Mahapadma himself submerges his own city. There is no mention of city as Candrapura of King Visvasva.

**Potters Legend.** Another legend is also talked about. Around 2600 BC King Sandiman of Kas'mira founded a city on both the sides of the Vitasta, at the foot of the northern mountain ranges in Kuihama near present day Mahapadamsar. He built buildings, tall and graceful temples furnished with golden and silver images. This city was called **Sandimatnagar**. About 6 Centuries later in the reign of Sundersena {2082-2041 BC. Dates disputed}, this place became a den of immorality. The people forgot God, wallowed in wine and debauchery, worshipping mammon and woman. The king sided with profligate persons. When such conditions reached a climax, a potter of this city named Nand Gupth, a man whom the people hated because of his piety, was inspired and preached against the sinful ways of the people. They mocked and laughed at him. According to the local tradition, the potter was inspired in a dream that he should tell all the citizens to leave the town, and he with his family should climb the hill, but not look back till he reached the top. Next day before *Brahmamuhurat* {before dawn}, with his potter's wheel on his back, he climbed the hill. When he reached halfway, he cast a look at the city but found no change. When he reached the top, **the earth shook, a fissure appeared in the earth, water gushed forth and swamped the whole city.** During the same earthquake a knoll of the hill at Varahkshetra {Varhamulla, Baramulla} near Khadanyar tumbled down, choking the outlet of the river Vitasta and consequently the water level rose high at once and drowned the whole city together with its king and the inhabitants. This caused a flood to deluge the valley also. This submerged city is now the site of Mahapadamsar. The potter, however, found half of his potter's wheel turned into gold. The place on the hillside where the potter had stopped was named Shukracharya. The hillock, on the top of which is the shrine of Baba Shukur Din, is called *Krala Sangor* {potter's hillock}, also called *Ziarat* of Baba Shukur Din, also referred as *Shukur Sabun*, a Sufi saint. The name Sandimatnagar, in this legend, bears somewhat close resemblance to the place of Sadangula, which was given away to third Mahapadma {Verse 988-89 Nilmat Puranam}. There is one major lacuna in this legend. Use of 'nagar' with Sandimatnagar in pre BC era is not supported by any document, legend, place name etc in Kas'mira.

**Bosangiri Legend.** There is also a well-chronicled story that there was a big town where Mahapadamsar {Wular Lake} stands, where King Prahlad had built *Prateshwara* temple and was called *Bosangiri* {Between Khuihama and Sopore on a hillock {Giri} called *Bosan*}, which got submerged. Other name of the Bosangiri hillock given in later Kas'mira chronicles is mentioned as *Sherehkot*. In spite of best efforts it has not been possible to establish full identity of the King Prahlad. He is not mentioned by Kalhan and hence has to be post 1150 AD. King Sehm Dev reigned upto 1160 AD and was succeeded by his son Parma Dev who reigned and died in 1172 AD. Parma Dev has been described variously in many chronicles; Parmanuka in Jonaraja's *Rajatarangini*, Parmandi, Parmanda Deva in Tapar Inscription {S.P.S. Museum, Srinagar}, Parma Deva and Para Deva in the coins etc. It is likely that he was King Prahlad, who constructed the temple during resurgence of Shaivism in Kas'mira and at a time when Shaivism was at its peak. A large assortment of architectural fragments of a temple; such as fluted columns, stones from pilasters, jambs, etc are scattered round about on an island in Mahapadamsar, which tends to prove that there was a temple on the island also. This hypothesis is further strengthened by the presence of a big Shiva Linga, which is partly submerged, on the east side of the island. There are indications to show that there were series of steps on all sides leading down to the

water, though the principal landing seems to have been on the eastern side. **The direction of stairs are important, as they are towards the main lake, indicating that at the time of the construction of the temple, the level of Mahapadmsar {Wular Lake} was much below the stairs, which may have been used to enter the temple. It also indicates that the area around and on the sides of the stairs was dry.**

However, R C Kak, in his book “Monuments of Kashmir” attributes construction of a temple on an island nearer to the submerged temple to Zain-ul-Abidin; **“for none of his successors on the Kashmir throne was capable of such a colossal task.”** Jonaraja wrote *Rajatarangini* covering 1150 to 1459 AD period, when he was alive during Zain-ul-Abdin’s time and covered each every event of Zain-ul-Abdin in great detail till 1459. Same was the case with Shrivara, who carried *Rajatarangini* till 1487 AD, 17 years after the death of Zain-ul-Abdin. Both of them and **Shah Nama**, which gives paeans of the King, do not mention about the construction of the temple, which would have been a major event of Zain-ul-Abdin’s reign. Jonaraja vividly covers Zain-ul-Abdin’s visit to Mahapadmsar and his construction of a palace but is silent on any construction of the temple. The temple has had to be an effort of a Hindu King, without any doubt. Interestingly Mahapadmsar {Wular Lake} and existence of this temple figures during Zain-ul-Abdin’s time also. Jonaraja does mention about Zain-ul-Abdin’s intention to raise a monument as never before; a *Lank* {Island} created in Mahapadmsar {Wular Lake}, as he had done in *Dal Lake*, would be a feat by itself. He ordered the boatmen and the divers to locate a spot of minimum depth in Mahapadmsar {Wular Lake}, where it could be raised without much effort. All of them suggested the spot where the temple existed, as when water receded in the lake to its lowest level in winter, the stones of the temple became visible through the crystalline waters of the lake. He took a boat and personally examined the spot and ordered the divers to make an attempt at finding any relics inside the temple in the water. The divers plunged into the lake and with utmost care made their way into the temple, wherefrom they pulled out two bronze idols. Zain-ul-Abdin then selected the very site for developing an island and a palace {Now in ruins}. It is apparent that the two idols had to be that of God and his consort {*Shiva* and his consort *Parvati*; as *Shiva* is also called *Partheshwar*, *Prateshwar*}. It has not been possible to find final disposal of these idols but these could possibly have been installed in nearby town of Suyapur {Sopur, Sopore} in a *Mandir* or a new *Mandir* constructed. None of the *Mandir*’s in the area have bronze idols of such antiquity nor is the location of these idols known, however, legend in Sopore says that the *Shiva* temple constructed on the banks of Vitasta {*Wyeth* -Jhelum} dates back to time when idols were found from Mahapadmsar {Wular Lake}. Zain-ul-Abdin built ‘Zain Lank’ near the ancient *mandir* and built a palace called *Zoon Dub* {Moon Balcony} but was normally referred as *Razdan* {*Raz* or *Razah* – King; *Dan* – Hearth}. The ruins of this palace still exist on the Southern edge of the lake. Admittedly Zain-ul-Abdin was tolerant but not to the extent quoted. He did not allow reconverting of *Masjid*’s, which had been converted from *Mandir*’s, though he allowed some of the temples to be rebuilt by the community and not by him. **For reasons best known to him, I found R C Kak’s book tainted with bias in praise of Muslim rulers and monuments, more so pertaining to converted monuments of Aryan Saraswat Brahmin’s of Kas’mira.**

**Sorcerer and Mahapadma Legend.** It is said that during the reign of Jayapida (753-784 AD) a Dravidian sorcerer intended to exorcise Mahapadma from here in order to water some arid region in the plains. Jayapida in a dream beheld an apparition of Mahapadma, who besought him to save him from this sorcerer and promised to show him a mountain of raw gold. In the morning the king made enquiries and found out this sorcerer. 'How can you dry this lake which is deep', the king asked. 'Your Majesty, I shall show on the spot', said the sorcerer. They both went to the shore of the lake and the sorcerer, by darting arrows in different directions dried the lake. The king saw Mahapadma and his family in a form half human and half snake, struggling for life in the mire. The king ordered the sorcerer to fill the lake again and dissuaded him from taking away the serpent. The snake appeared again in a dream to the king and said 'Your Majesty has exposed my family; I shall not show you raw gold but a raw-copper mine from which can be made coins'.

#### **PART IV - MAHAPADMSAR TO WULAR, ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDS, GEOLOGICAL INDICATORS / CHANGES AND DATING OF EVENTS/ SETTLEMENTS**

**Mahapadamsar Name Dating from Nilmat Puranam.** Kalhan in *Rajatarangini* has started the history of Kas’mira from just before the great Mahabharata war and the first King mentioned by him is Gonanda I {2448 BC - date disputed}, whose initial year of reign he places in 653 *Kali- Yuga era*, the traditional date of the coronation of King Yudhishtra, the eldest brother of the *Pandvas*. On Gonanda I being killed, Lord Krishna crowned his pregnant queen and her son later became the King under the name of Gonanda II. It can be assumed that Gonanda II reigned during early part of 25<sup>th</sup> Century BC {2425- 2400 BC. Again dates are disputed}. The conversation quoted in Nilmat Puranam is between King Gonanda II and sage Brhadasva; so the antiquity of the event of naming the lake Mahapadmsar should roughly be pre this period. There may be doubt of antiquity and date of events, merely based on ancient scriptures or as quoted in *Rajatarangini*. A detailed and extensive

archaeological survey of Kas'mira valley during the last century has revealed Neolithic {Of the later or more advanced Stone Age} settlements in Kas'mira and that too widely distributed from Anantnag to Pampore, Gurhoma Sangri near Mahapadamsar {Wular Lake} and many other places, with high density of settlements in Southern Kas'mira. These surveys show that the valley was pulsating with the Neolithic people and their descendants as the time elapsed; Neolithic people around 2800 BC, hand made pottery introduced round about 2400 BC, Iron around 1800 BC followed by Megalithic period {1600 ± 200} with introduction of rice. These Neolithic settlements are none other than that of original inhabitants of Kas'mira; the *Naga's* followed by *Daitaya's*, *Pis'acas* and later in Megalithic period by *Manu's* {Aryan Saraswat Brahmins of Kas'mira}.

Nilmat Puranam, in the narration between King Gonanda II and sage Brhadasva, categorically calls it Mahapadamsar. The appellation of Mahapadamsar could not have come to Kas'mira during the Buddhist period {500 BC – 6<sup>th</sup> Century AD}, as it is a Brahmin appellation. Therefore, it has to be pre 500 BC. Archaeological evidence of Neolithic period {Of the later or more advanced Stone Age; that of *Naga's*} found in the area dates around 2600 ± 200 BC. It is not that all the Neolithic settlements date back to the initial period. They came in a trickle and this continued for nearly thousand years. The settlements found are either the abandoned ones or destroyed by the vagaries of nature and thus have come to light. There would have been more such settlements, which continued for further centuries and developed along with the Megalithic settlements {1600 ± 200}. The naming of Mahapadamsar during Megalithic period {Advanced stage of lithic {stone} period} is relevant, dating to about 1600 ± 200 BC. These settlements dating to Megalithic period are that of *Manu's* {Aryan Saraswat Brahmins of Kas'mira}. Thus the settlements of *Naga's* in Kas'mira started during the Neolithic period {2600 ± 200 BC}, peaked around the beginning of Megalithic period {1600 ± 200}; for nearly thousand years. This period also saw *Daitaya's* and *Pis'acas* also settling down in the valley, though in different directions and away from the *Naga* settlements. The Aryan settlements, again, like *Naga* settlements, have started around 1600 ± 200 BC and peaked around 1300 BC. From various excavations it has been seen that Neolithic settlements were topped with megalithic settlements proving that *Naga's* and *Manu's* {Aryan Saraswat Brahmins of Kas'mira} has established their settlements alongside at many places.

9<sup>th</sup> Century Suyapur {Sopur, Sopore} town has been named after Suya, at the point where river Vitasta leaves Mahapadamsar basin. Suya, a great engineer during Utpal Dynasty {9<sup>th</sup> Century}, cleared obstructions in Vitasta from *Sar* {Wular Lake} basin at Varahkshetra {Varhamulla, Baramulla}. After Suya's effort, it is claimed that the *Sar* {Lake} was named as Mahapadamsar, named after then ruler Avanti Varman {Utpal Dynasty; 855- June 883 AD also called Mahapadama {**The devotee of the lotus feet; Vishnu**}, hence name Mahapadamsar. {Avanti Varman founded Avantipur; build two temples of Shiva and Vishnu, now in ruins}. However, Mahapadamsar appellation quoted in Nilmat Puranam is ante Avanti Varman, therefore, the appellation name attributed to Avanti Varman does not hold ground. The name could have found origin from Mahapadam {*Maha*- Giant; *Padam* - Feet} or Lord Shiva {*Mahadev*}, also referred as *Neelpadam*. Surprisingly the lake as seen from the mountains around it, looks like a Giant {*Maha*} Foot {*Pada*}.

Mahapadamsar is referred as **Bolor** by Al-Biruni {960-1031 AD}, an Arab Scholar who came to *Bharatvarsha* with Mahmud of Gazni in the beginning of 11<sup>th</sup> Century, visited Kas'mira in 1030 AD and has written about Kas'mira in his book. Al-Biruni stayed in India for a number of years, wrote a book, which gives account of social, political and economic conditions of then India {He is also credited with giving a new appellation to *Bharatvarsha*, for the first time, in recorded travelogue- **Land Of Snake Charmers**}. He was killed in a battle in 1031 AD; just a year after visiting Kas'mira in 1030 AD. He describes position of Goddess Sharda's shrine's at Shardi “ **in 'Inner Kas'mira' about two to three days journey towards the mountains of Bolor**”. **Bolor** referred to by him in his chronicle has been interpreted as the mountains overlooking Mahapadamsar; 'Wulor' or 'Wular Lake'. The phonetics of 'Wulor' in Arabic is somewhat closer to 'Bolor'. Al-Biruni visited Kas'mira when Shavisim, religious fervour and new language *Upbrahmbasha* was high and is attributed to Sanskrit/*Upbrahmbasha*. The lake, with its big dimensions and the extent of water, gives rise to high leaping waves in the afternoons, called **Ullola** in Sanskrit; meaning stormy leaping, high rising waves. 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> Centuries saw resurgence of Shavisim in Kas'mira and scholar's from *Bharatvarsha* visiting Kas'mira, who could not continue their religious inclinations in their places due to various reasons including advent of Islam, even settling down and found Kas'mira an ideal place. Many of these scholars were from South and coastal areas. Being familiar with sea, they would have been impressed with the dimensions of the lake's and the high leaping waves and may have been instrumental in coining word **Ullola** for Mahapadamsar. Its corrupted form saw its transition as '**Bolor**' by Al-Biruni and over the centuries corrupted further to 'Wulor' or 'Wular'. This appellation finds way in many chronicles of 15<sup>th</sup> Century including accounts concerning Zain-ul-Abdin. The origin may also be attributed to a Kashmiri word '**Wul**', which means a gap or a fissure, appellation that must have come also during this period. The word **Wul** {Gap or fissure}, is also indicator of its origin to a fissure or gap created. If the progression of languages in Kas'mira is analysed, it will be found that during the first millennium AD *Upbrahmbasha* gave way to Sharda script at the end of first millennium, Kashmiri language slowly emerged from *Upbrahmbasha* at the end of 11<sup>th</sup> Century. A systematic literature in *Kashmeeri* of this period starts from 'Mahanay Prakash' written in 13<sup>th</sup> Century by Siri Kanth in *Vakh* form, which was later

used by mystic Lal Ded to convey her *Vakhs*, referred as Lal *Vakhs*; a mix of *rishi-sufi* cult sayings {Lal Ded was disciple of Sidhi Kanth {Also Siri Kanth, Sidhi Sri Kanth, Sidha Mol}. He was also the family priest of Lal Ded's parental family. Wular for **Wul** possibly became common around 12<sup>th</sup> Century. Thus the appellation Mahapadamsar must be dating during the period of *Manu* settlements {1600 ± 200 BC} and remained through 6<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> Century and can be traced upto 10<sup>th</sup> Century, without any change.

**Temples and Architectural Remains in Mahapadamsar.** In the domain of architecture, the charm of Kas'mira, apart from its magnificent natural scenery, lies in its temples and fine arts. Wrote one European art critic: **"Ancient India has nothing more worthy of its civilization, than the grand remains in Kas'mira, the massive, the grotesque the elegant in architecture, may be admired in many parts of India, but now here is to be seen, the counterparts of the classically graceful, yet symmetrically massive edifices of Kas'mira, and in beauty, and position are immensely superior."** The rivers and springs of Kas'mira have also been held sacred and over the period thousands of temples had come up over the ages along the banks of rivers, rivulets and springs. We have many temples along the Vitasta banks in Srinagar, Suyapur {Sopur, Sopore} and Varahkshetra {Varhamulla, Baramulla}. Some of the lakes big or small too have temples either on their banks or now inside the water. Manasbal Lake has a temple, which is now surrounded by water. Surely when this temple was constructed, the water of the lake must have been much below the base level of the temple, indicating a geographical phenomenon of increased water level after the temple was constructed. Mahapadamsar too has ruins of many such temples, many submerged deep inside, and it is folklore that when the water of the lake reduces one can see top of a temple emerging above the water level. Jonaraja giving account of Zain-ul-Abdin's visit to Mahapadamsar {Wular Lake} mentions about it. An island was created and was named Zaina lank after Zain-ul-Abdin its builder, and still retains that name. In 1874, Dr. Vincent-Smith discovered on this island a stone slab bearing Persian inscription that mentioned the name of Zain-ul-Abdin and date A.H. 847 {1442-43 AD}.

The place where the island was reclaimed had a temple, built earlier. A large assortment of architectural fragments of temples, such as fluted columns, stones from pilasters, jambs, etc. are scattered round about the site, which proves that there was once a temple on the island. This hypothesis is further strengthened by the presence of a big Shiva-linga, which is partly submerged, on the east side of the island. There are indications to show that there were series of steps on all sides leading down to the water, though the principal landing seems to have been on the east side. The other structure on the island is a small domed chamber of brick masonry. This is partly built of temple materials. The stringcourses on top of the walls consist of projecting wooden beams and entire surface of the chamber seems to have been coated with painted plaster. Externally the walls were adorned with shallow arched recesses, typical of a temple in Kas'mira. Built of large blocks of limestone, similar to those used in the mediaeval temples of Kas'mira. Even the mouldings are similar to those found in ancient temples. This also indicates existence of another temple, which may have been demolished by earlier Muslim kings and material or part of a converted temple. A small mosque built by Zain-ul-Abdin is at one corner of the island, the ruins of which are still in existence. On the North-Eastern shore of the lake is situated the village of **Garur**, where there is a temple of mediaeval period. It is 4 feet 2 inches square internally, and 7 feet 3 inches high from basement to cornice. The roof, undoubtedly pedimented, has disappeared and the base is buried underground. The temple faces North- West and stands on the bank of a spring. The steps, which lead down to the water, are missing; may have been washed away by the swirling waters entering Mahapadamsar during floods. There is a small pointed niche in the walls, which contains a sculptured relief bearing a three-headed Shiva. The other two figures of this sculptured relief cannot be identified. These remains, pertaining to medieval period, point out either to the extension of the city, now a lake, which may have existed right up to this area or alternatively shifting to this area after the old area was submerged.

**Geological Indicators.** Over millions of years ago a revolution in the physical geography of *Bharatvarsha* occurred with series of earth movements and as a result of the lateral thrusts Himalayas were born. In the process several plications, fractures and over thrusts resulted, known as the Main Boundary Himalayan Range, estimated to have sprung sixty million years ago. Subsequent to the formation of the continental landmass and upliftment of the Himalayas, there were further occurrences in Kas'mira, which resulted in the uplift of the Pir Panjal, giving rise to a vast lake in the Kas'mira called the *Karewa* lake (*Satisar* of the Nilmat Puranam). Proof of this phenomenon is also confirmed by the finding of fossilized fruits of water nut {*Trapa bispinosa*} at Botapathri near Gulmarg and other places at an altitude of over 3000 meters; which grows only in water and that too not above altitudes of 1700 meters {Approximately 5500 Feet}. Opening of a geological fault finally drained this lake out, when it emerged as the Vitasta after which clay deposits in the exposed lake sediments in the valley called Karewas {*Uddars* in *Kas'miri*} remained. Thus mythological traditions supported fully by research of geologists confirm that the valley originally was a huge lake and its waters were blocked near Varahkshetra {Varhamulla, Baramulla} and fault opening out at Khadanyar {Baramulla}, which presumably occurred about 85,000 years ago; a remarkable coincidence between the legend

and the scientific facts! Read Nilmat Verse {Translated} **"O best amongst the kings, the goddess Uma is the same as Kas'mira. What was formerly, an enjoyable, heart-enrapturing lake for six Manvantaras...."**. With reclamation of marshes and small water bodies, settlement and extension of agriculture, tree vegetation got firmly established by the time and after the advent of man. In the words of Sir Francis Young Husband, **"The huge lake must have been twice the length and three times the width of the lake of Geneva, completely encircled by snowy mountains as high, and higher than Mount Blank, while in the immediately following glacial period, mighty glaciers came wending down to the Sindh, Lidder, and other valleys even to the edge of water."** This is perhaps the only known find of such a settlement in *Bharatvarsha*. However, the five fresh water bodies, the Dal {*Mahasarit*}, Nagin, Anchar, Manasbal and the Mahapadmsar {Wular}, formed mainly during the recent geological period and are not the remnants of the *Karewa Lake* {*Satisar*}.

**Dating of Events and Settlements.** There may be doubt of antiquity and dating of events on the reason of scientific proof of habitation of the valley. A detailed and extensive archaeological survey of Kas'mira valley during the last century revealed Neolithic settlements {Of *Naga's* and later of more advanced Stone Age} {2600 ± 200 BC} in Kas'mira and that too widely distributed from Anantnag to Pampore, Gurhoma Sangri near Mahapadamsar {Wular Lake} and many other places. Silt beds, pits have been discovered in sections, indicating a settlement of early Pit dwellers whose date has tentatively been fixed at around 2800 BC confirming presence of Neolithic followed by Megalithic {Of *Manu's* {Aryans} of Advanced stage of lithic {stone} period} {1600 ± 200 BC} people. These surveys show that the valley was pulsating with the Neolithic people and their descendants as the time elapsed. The Neolithic culture is indicated by the discovery of ground and polished stone axes, hoes, pestle, and bone implements. As per the survey, including carbon dating of Burzhom excavated sites, various other artefacts of that era, it has been found that Neolithic people came to the valley around 2600 ± 200 BC ; hand made pottery introduced round about 2400 BC, Iron around 1800 BC and Rice also came to Kas'mira with Megalithic period {1600 ± 200 BC}. Some of the Neolithic sites, first excavated at Burzahom under the shadow of the Mahadev peak, 16 kilometres North-East of Srinagar were found capped by later Megalithic complexes, beginning 1600±200BC, which indicates continuity of dwellings by *Naga's* and *Manu's* {Aryans} of these sites including that of Mahapadmsar during both periods. Interestingly the founder of Kas'mira's hermitage {Kas'yapa} described as in these Verses roughly are the areas where Neolithic {*Naga*} and Megalithic {*Manu* {Aryan} settlement traces have been found {Translated}; **"See, O king, these are those peak - Brahma, Visnu, and Mahesvar. That which is Naubandhana peak is S'ankara { Mahadev peak!}. The one on its right side is celebrated as Hari and the left one as Brahma. .... To the north of that which is proclaimed as Visnupada in Kramasara, Brahma - the best of the gods - himself erected a hermitage. The venerable sage Kas'yapa constructed a hermitage in the western half. Mighty Mahadeva himself erected a hermitage at the spot where Visnu stood and obtained victory at that time {Verses 184-188}.**

The artefacts excavated at Gufkral, near Tral, include stone and bone tools indicating dependence on wild game; a characteristics of tribal's, aborigines; in this case *Naga's*. From the data collected at various excavations it is established that in the Neolithic period {*Naga's*}, the early man of Kas'mira, took up agriculture on limited scale but depended on fishing and hunting. Cultural level similarity has been seen with the present areas of Punjab, Pakistan and *Bharatvarsha* and not with Mongoloid or Central Asian's . The earliest level of Burzahom is dated to 2400 to 1800 BC, at Gufkral to 2400 BC; stage man had not come up in cultural evolution. The legend given in the Nilmat Puranam mentions strong rivalry and fighting between *Daitayas*, *Naga's*, *Pis'acas* and *Manus* {*Aryans*} till the last race prevailed. Even though the archaeological site at Gufkral has given enough evidence of human culture going up to the stage of "Prolific temple building and flourishing sculptural art", yet no structure going to 1300 BC has so far been discovered archaeologically. The earliest such structure at Harwan near Srinagar, assigned to the Kushan and later periods {4<sup>th</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> Century AD. Similarly the Buddhist establishment at Ushkur (*Huviskapura*) near Baramulla is of the Gandhara period { 4<sup>th</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> century AD}. Kalthan in his *Rajatarangini* states that a large settlement or a city was located around Gopadari, the present day Shankaracharya hill in Srinagar. From about 1300 BC to about 100 BC no evidences of any large-scale human settlements have been found archaeologically, which indicates settlements of *Naga's* and Aryans {*Manu's*} in smaller distributed smaller groups.

**Dating of Early Human Settlements in Kas'mira.** We now come to yet another interesting subject that of appearance of the Neolithic man. There is frequent mention that this appearance started about 5000 to 6000 years ago, era which bears an extraordinary correlation with the *Laukika* or *Saptarishi* era according to which the current year is 5081 {2005}. This almanac is followed even today in Kas'mira. **How and why this calendar was evolved and used even today will remain a mystery to be unfolded, as these have not been supplemented by any excavations, scriptures; neither in Kas'mira nor in *Bharatvarsha*.** Kalthan has used this calendar in his *Rajatarangini* and so have Jonaraja, Srivara, Prajya Bhatta and Shuka. Similarly all the other ancient manuscripts and books written in Sanskrit have followed it. According to the great oriental scholar,

Buhler, *Kali Yuga* commences from *Chaitra Sudhi 1 of Kali Samvat 25 (expired)* or the year 3,076-75 BC. According to a recent study of Vedic cosmology, the present *Kali-Yuga* is said to have begun on Friday, February 18<sup>th</sup>, 3102 BC. In an interesting development, scholars have come to the conclusion that Lord Krishna was born on 24 September 3230 BC, lived a life of 125 years 7 months and 6 days. In the current year his death anniversary falls on *Chaitra Shukla Paksha Ekam* {9<sup>th</sup> April 2005}. In terms of years this comes to 5235 years back, which does not co-relate either with *Laukika* or *Saptarishi* era or commencement of *Kali Yuga*. One thing is clear that Krishna born in Mathura, died near Hiran River {Dwarika, Gujrat}. In Aryan scriptures the original inhabitants are called *Krishna Yoni's Dasayu's*, *Krishna Yoni* referring to dark skinned inhabitants {It is Akbar, who ordered that Lord Krishna's paintings or idols be given bluish tinge, commonly found now; otherwise lord Krishna in all the folklores was referred to as *Kale Krishna*}. *Triya Yuga* is believed to have ended after the death of Lord Krishna. These near correlations appear to be extraordinary and cannot easily be brushed aside. These dates however do not correlate to Gonanda Dynasty {Gonanda I {2448 BC - date disputed} as propounded by Kalhan. He also places 653 *Kali- Yuga era*, the traditional date of the coronation of King Yudhishtra, the eldest brother of the *Pandvas*. Assumption that Gonanda II reigned during early part of 25<sup>th</sup> Century BC {2425- 2400 BC- Again dates are disputed}. However, in *Bharatvarsha* excavations at Harappa and many other places have been thrown up and the first in the series are Harappan Civilization at their height between 2600-2500 BC, which collapsed around 2000-1900 BC. The height of the civilization also coincides with the Neolithic man in Kas'mira. This evolution of Neolithic man {*Naga's*} in Kas'mira, as per research, seems to be a sudden outburst and does firmly indicate that Neolithic culture was evolved in the valley around 2600 ± 200 BC. Even in Nilmat Puranam the conversations are between Gonanda II - sage Brhadhasava and Vaisampayana {Pupil of Vyasa, who wrote Mahabharata} - King Janmejaya, a later descendant of *Pandava's*. Interestingly the later conversation is pre King Nila. This indicates the origin of the *Naga's* as the tribe's of Northern India and that the *Naga* Kings where from the stock of original inhabitants of *Bharatvarsha*. Even the King's can be identified as; Gonanda's from a stock of other than *Pandava's*, while Janmejaya is descendant of *Pandava's*. Same sage Brhadhasava also figures with King Nila, when he tells him of his {Brhadhasava's} curse to Visvagasva {The King of Mahapadamsar} before Mahapadama turned it into lake. This must be analysed in view of the fact that traces of human settlements of later period of Harappan civilisation have also been found in Kas'mira as well as plains of Jammu, Himachal Pradesh and Northern parts of undivided Punjab. Subsequently conservative dating of Aryan Immigration to Indus valley is given in 1300 BC, Saraswati Bank settlements somewhere around 1200 BC, composition of Rig Veda around 1200-1000 BC and settlements of Ganges Valley in 1000 BC. Verse 359 sings praises of Nila, the Naga King and his name having been mentioned in Veda's {Translated}; “ **O Nila, the Vedas have sung about you - the eternal one - as the essence of the Vedas, the object of worship in the fire, the fulfiller of the desires of those who seek salvation and those who are ambitious { of material gain }**. He {Nila} is compared to God Indira {Protector}of the Aryans {Verse 369 Translated}; “ **You are the refuge of the *Naga's* as Indra is of the gods. O pious one, know that I am full of devotion for you”**. This also points out that around 1300 BC, when *Manu's* {Aryans} entered Kas'mira , the Neolithic people were headed by Nila

Thus Neolithic immigration in the valley are *Dasayu* aborigines/tribal's; *Dasayu* term used by Aryans in Rig Veda for indigenous people of *Bharatvarsha*. The period of Aryan immigration fits into the Megalithic period {1600±200BC}{*Manu's*{Aryans} in Kas'mira, which in terms of scientific proof seems to find firm ground with the findings of artefacts of Megalithic people capping over the settlements and artefacts of Neolithic people. **Neolithic men in the valley were primitive, as evidenced by survey and research in the valley, folklore or mention of these in scriptures as *Naga's* fits in well to this description**. This amply indicates side by side settlements of *Naga's* and *Manu's* {Aryans}. This also fits on the belief that due to their co-existence, *Manu's* {Aryans} adopted many of the rituals and customs of *Naga's*, though the later picked up Aryans way of living. The terms used for the people who settled in Kas'mira valley, as mentioned in Nilmat Puranam, are *Naga's*, *Daitaya's*, *Pis'acas* and *Manus* {Aryans}, appearing in that order, till finally Aryans prevailed, *Naga's* merged with them while the settlements of the remaining two {*Daitaya's* and *Pis'acas*} developed away from them and so also their differing attributes, bordering hostility.

The settlements of *Naga's* in Kas'mira started during the Neolithic period {2600 ± 200 BC} and peaked around the beginning of Megalithic period {1600 ± 200}; nearly for thousand years. This period also saw *Daitaya's* and *Pis'acas* also settling down in the valley, though in different directions and away from the *Naga* settlements. Verses 915 – 983 give the names of various Naga Kings, with prominence to Nila and Vasuki. These are followed by Ananta, Padma's {2} and also mentions Pandita. The number of Naga Kings mentioned indicates that the *Naga's* were fairly dispersed into hamlets, head being called as King. The density of these hamlets seems to be fairly more, all across the valley except in the West. Mention of *Naga* Kings Nila, Vasuki as the most important ones indicates *Naga* hamlets being grouped under a King. Nila and Vasuki must have been controlling larger groups of hamlets and their own hamlets must be fairly large to enable them to exert influence over other hamlets. Even between Nila and Vasuki, more mention of Nila in the Puranam indicates his more importance in comparison to Vasuki. Ananta, who is also a Naga King, has been mentioned

many times for the evolution of Vitasta and is revered in Verse 779 {Translated}; “. **Having painted in the centre Brahma and hooded Ananta, one should paint {the figures of} the guardians of the directions established in their respective directions.**” This indicates importance of Ananta of another bigger hamlet of *Naga's*. Similarly Verses 984-985 gives out the Naga King's in charge of various directions except the West {Translated}; “ **Bindusara for East, Srimadhaka for South and Uttarmanasa for North.**” This also indicates grouping of hamlets direction wise and for coordination separate *Naga* heads were designated. Absence of a Naga being nominated for West indicates that the {Naga's} hamlets did not exist in the West and possibly occupied by *Daitaya's* and *Pis'acas*.

The Aryan settlements, again like Naga settlements must have started around 1600 ± 200 and peaked around 1300 BC. It may be of interest to know that all the settlements of humans {*Naga's*, *Daitaya's*, *Pisa'cas* and *Manu's*} were vibrant and only Aryan {*Manu*} settlements co-existed with *Naga's*; mostly in the Southern portion of the valley. This is the reason for mixing of religious and cultural rituals of the two and finding mention in Nilmat Puranam. The other two settlers { *Daitaya's*, *Pis'acas* } did also exist but in different directions in Northern area's and there was little or no interaction with *Naga's* and Aryans. It is not that *Naga's* disappeared suddenly. Slowly but steadily they too mixed with Aryans, in terms of habitation and cohabitation. Where ever this happened the settlements flourished in more density of humans. There have been some isolated Naga settlements and they continued till about 6<sup>th</sup> Century AD. They with *Manus* {Aryan Brahmins} joined in killing of Buddhists during the period of Mihir Kula to Gopaditya {6<sup>th</sup> Century AD}. Possibly full integration and conversion of *Naga's* also took place around this time. Physical characteristics of *Naga's* can still be found amongst the denizens of certain hamlets in South Kas'mira; Antimony colour skin, short statured women, differing physical characteristics of face and nose so different from pure Aryan race.

Here is mention of Kas'mira and its origin in *Baharistan-i-Shahi* quoting; ‘Chroniclers of the rulers of the domain of Kashmir, while recording in Kas'miri language the events connected with their rule and also the affairs of people high and low, have written’; “ that in distant past the land we call Kashmir had remained **submerged in water for two thousand years**. In those days, it was called Kashyap Sar. In its neighbourhood there dwelt a married hermit from India named Kashyap. He made supplication to God Almighty for dry land where he could pray. Then God Almighty sent three angels {Druhina, Upendra, and Rudra} commanding them to drain off the water to make dry as much of land as was required by him. The land which they dried was named by them Kashshile {sic}, which means a '**chiselled stone.**' It is said that subsequently {a person ?} Bekdarat {?} by name sowed many kinds of seeds in the muddy soil and raised crops, and developed the place extensively. A large number of people came from Bharata to settle on this land. Their king, the exalted Raja, is Turkshil {sic}; Turkshil {sic} means '**unmatched in fortune and dignity.**' *Baharistan-i-Shahi* is the first fully detailed history of *Kas'mira* in Persian, written anonymously in 1593 AD and completed in 1614 AD. The contents are definitely Muslim biased indicating a Muslim author. For early history of *Kas'mira*, the author seems to have relied mostly on the chronicles of our community chroniclers existing at the time of its writing. The aim of quoting *Baharistan-i-Shahi* is to give more insight into legendary evolution of *Kas'mira*.

## **PART V – SCRIPTURAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL EVOLUTION OF VITASTA, CHRONOLOGY OF MAHAPADAMSAR AND DATING OF EVENTS AND SETTLEMENTS**

**Scriptural and Geographical Evolution of Vitasta.** Nilmat Puranam mentions that Kas'yapa having drained Satisar, made Goddess Uma to take the form of Vitasta. Geologically there is no denial of the fact that *Kas'mira*, many thousand years back, was a vast lake and was drained giving rise to *Karewas* {*Uddars* in *Kas'miri*}. The drainage of the lake would have been along fault lines and once the *Karewas* settled and dried up, water from the mountains flowed down towards the *Karewas* and formed various streams, rivers, rivulets; many termed as holy rivers in Nilmat Puranam. The rivulets, rivers etc that flowed in between *Karewas* and over a period of many centuries, formed a riverbed for water to flow. The river course of Vitasta, if carefully analysed, is through gaps in these *Karewas*, a natural phenomenon of water to find route through low lying ground. Again in the formation of this riverbed between *Karewas*, Nila Kunda {Verinag} is the beginning point. The source of Vitasta is in the shadow of Pir Panjal range, in the form of a spring, which lets out the water through a naturally formed subterranean duct. The water of Nila Kunda spring, as it flows through this bed, is joined enroute by other rivulets and streams. So technically and geographically Vitasta starting from Nila Kunda is the mother river, as mentioned in Nilmat Puranam, is correct. This geographical phenomenon must have taken shape over millenniums and completed pre 3000 BC, though it is difficult to fix exact time frame. Name Vitasta finds mention in Rig Veda {Rig Veda 10: 75: 5}; possibly associated with the time of Neolithic man {Harappan Civilisation – 2600 ± 200 BC}{*Naga's*} in the valley. This name **later** percolated to Aryans, when they immigrated to *Bharatvarsha* and firmed in, to be mentioned in the *mantra's* of Rig Veda.

The riverbanks of the entire length of Vitasta would indicate its basic top water level is much lower than its bank tops. This can be attributed to the fact that at some time the flow of the river was much more than what

it is now and confirms geographical obstructions in its flow existed somewhere down the line. We have **one such recorded** event of such obstruction in 9<sup>th</sup> Century during the reign of Avanti Varman {Utpal Dynasty; 855- June 883 AD}, when Suya cleared the obstruction. Chroniclers record **that near Yaksadara {Dyargul – near Varahkshetra {Varhamulla, Baramulla}}, large rocks had rolled down from the mountain, lining both banks, obstructing Vitasta**. Suya dragged out the rocks and the level of the river lowered and regulated the water of Vitasta.

There is also the earthquake theory having rocked the valley in earlier times, thus making faults and drainage lines. Before joining Mahapadamsar {Wular Lake}, Vitasta course is full of turns, curves and this course keeps its pace in check but nowhere its course turnings are acute. **Mythical Saraswati River is reported to have dried up somewhere between 1200-1000 BC, attributed to creation of geographical faults in the Northern Belt of Bharatvarsha, including Kas'mira. The dating coincides with composition of Rig Veda along Saraswati Ashrams, indicating that Saraswati River existed at that time. This fault may be either due to movement of Continental Plate or an Earthquake, which forced many rivers to realign and absorb the waters of Saraswati. Many other fresh water bodies were also formed during this geographical change.** Now for some distinct geographical features of the river pertinent to Mahapadamsar {Wular Lake}.

- At present Vitasta enters Mahapadamsar {Wular Lake} from the direction of South at a place called Banyar. Sindhu {Sindh} River joins Vitasta at Shadipur, water of Manasbal joins Vitasta near a place called Nesbal; some distance short of Mahapadamsar.
- Vitasta exits towards Suyapur {Sopur, Sopore} in the South-West; near Tarzoo. The angle of exit is **nearly perpendicular** to inlet point; **normally this does not happen in the course of a river**.
- Between the entry and exit are marshes and huge Haigam Jhil {Lake}.
- The exit course of Vitasta from Mahapadamsar has hillocks on the Northern side, which has compelled the exit course of the river to skirt it.
- Such an angle of entry and exit of Vitasta has nowhere been observed in its 84 miles {135 Kilometres} in Kas'mira. This also indicates that Mahapadamsar is later water body and when it was formed, Vitasta did not feed it. **Nilmat Puranam nowhere mentions Vitasta having given birth to Mahapadamsar or its waters entering the lake.**
- The marshes, low lying areas and Haigam Jhil are a major indication that Vitasta's course in this area was through Haigam Jhil, continuing its further course from the Northern edge of Haigam Jhil to join its present course near Suyapur {Sopur, Sopore}. This is also confirmed by ravines, dry watercourse bed from Shadipur extending in Southwest direction right up to Haigam Jhil. While travelling along road to Varahkshetra {Varhamulla, Baramulla}, one can see long, linear, extended low-lying hillocks with marshes, waterbeds to their West. These are more pronounced from Pattan to Suyapur {Sopur, Sopore}. These indicators are that Vitasta subsequently changed its course to enter the lake. The exit of the river thereafter is along the grain of the ground; dictated by the hillocks in its North. Numerous estuaries, small existing islands in the area of Tarzoo, Ningli are pointers in this direction.
- Geographical features of Vitasta, in the vicinity of Mahapadamsar, will give indications of the time frame and evolution of Mahapadamsar, correlating it with scriptural evidence.

**Physical Features of Mahapadamsar {Wular Lake}**. Asia's biggest fresh water lake, at present, is 13 miles long {20.8 Kilometres} and 6 miles {9.6 Kilometres} wide; an area of nearly 200 Square kilometres. The maximum depth of the lake is 40 Metres {133 Feet}; **this bottom level is considered as the lowest point in the valley of Kas'mira**. Compare this when the lake was formed; one Yojna by one Yojna. To the North, North-East right up to South-East of the lake are mountains while Southern portion is plain and low-lying. The area of the lake, if dry, would look like an extensive deep bowl with tiered levels like in *Karewas {Uddars}*. These physical features of Mahapadamsar, narration in scriptures, chronicles, geographical and archaeological evidence will enable formulating the evolution and chronology of Mahapadamsar

**Scriptural And Geographical Evolution of Mahapadamsar {Wular Lake}**. It has been geographically established that five major fresh water bodies; the Dal {*Mahasarit*}, Nagin, Anchar, Manasbal and the Mahapadamsar {Wular} were formed mainly during the recent geological period and are not the remnants of the *Karewa* lake {*Satisar*}. There are other geographical, physical features of Mahapadamsar, as available today, from various scriptures, Nilmat Puranam in particular, chronicles, folklore and legends. Each one of them has certain relevance for evolving chronology of the evolution of Mahapadamsar {Wular Lake}.

- When Sadangula, as per Nilmat Puranam, was forced to leave the area it was dry and was a '**city named Candrapura, of the king Visvagasva**'. Naturally there would have been certain structures etc constructed during the reign of this King, which got submerged. The other legend is that of a city called Sandimatnagar, which got submerged during the reign of Sundersena {2082-2041 BC}. These can be called as **First Segment of Relics**.

- As per legend Mahapadma converted it into a *sar*. This is supposed to have taken place when both *Naga's* and Kas'yapa had settled humans {Aryans} in Kas'mira.
- Narration of Mahapadamsar legend in Nilmat Puranam is conversation between Brhadhasva {Badaravasa} and King Gonanda II. Apparently this time phase is much after Kas'yapa had entered the valley and had settled Aryans in consultation with Naga King.
- The dimensions of Mahapadamsar as given in Nilmat Puranam are; One Yojna long and one Yojna wide.
- Nilmat Puranam has been written around 6<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> Century and the description given about Mahapadamsar held good till 7<sup>th</sup> Century, when it was written. Even if it is taken that Nilmat Puranam was written in BC era, its writing has to be much later than Rig Veda {1200-1000 BC}.
- In 9<sup>th</sup> Century Suya cleared obstruction at Varahkshetra {Varhamulla, Baramulla}, which indicates that there had been obstruction in the river Vitasta and naturally the level of water would have risen all along including that of Mahapadamsar. After his effort the water level must have come down considerably. **Therefore, there has to be increase in length and breadth of the lake between 6<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> Century and 9<sup>th</sup> Century AD. At best this could have happened in end of BC era, as chronicles reasonably cover AD era of the valley. No scripture has mentioned or dated any natural calamity during this period causing river obstruction.**
- When water level goes down in the lake; otherwise or during winter, top of a Temple is seen. The chronicler of Zain-ul-Abdin {Jonaraja} has also confirmed this. This is *Prateshwara* temple built by King Prahlad {12<sup>th</sup> Century}. Finding of idols inside the submerged temple indicates that the water level was much below the level of the base of the submerged temple, which rose suddenly and gave no chance for retrieval of these idols. **This indicates another natural calamity during which the water of the lake rose suddenly; somewhere between 10<sup>th</sup> {After Suya} and 12<sup>th</sup> Century. Again there is no mention of any natural calamity in any scripture or chronicle.** This can be called **Second Segment of Relics**; which remain submerged closer to the top level of the *sar*
- Ruins of a temple have been located, nearly in level with the water level of the lake. These can be considered post 12<sup>th</sup> Century, probably constructed between 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Century once the *Prateshwara* temple got submerged. This can be attributed to effort to build a new one in place of submerged temple and called **Third Segment of Relics**.
- Naming of Mahapadamsar to Wular attributed to Kas'miri word '**Wul**', which means a gap or a fissure, an indicator of its formation due to a fissure created by a natural calamity.

**Evolution and Chronology of Mahapadamsar {Wular Lake}**. In 21<sup>st</sup> Century, with the advancement of science, it is difficult to propound theories based only on scriptures, folklore, chronicles, unless supported by scientific proof. Religious scriptures are mostly later works, having been preserved as *Shruti* {voice heard} and *Smriti* {remembered} and finally compiled at later stage. Nilmat Puranam is one of the oldest scriptures, which Kalhan has also mentioned in his memorable *Rajatarangini* and restructured contents from Nilmat Puranam in these words {Translated}: **"That land is Protected by Nila, the lord of all the Naga's, whose regal parasol is formed by the circular pond {of the Nila Kund with the Vitasta's newly rising stream as its stick"}.**

- Vitasta River finds mention in Rig Veda and thus geographical phenomenon of its birth is pre Rig Veda and pre 3000 BC. Vitasta name is pre Vedic era and may be during the time of Neolithic man {Harappan Civilisation - 2600-2500 BC} in the valley, percolating to Aryans and thus mentioned in the mantra's of Rig Veda.
- During Neolithic period {2600 ± 200 BC} Mahapadamsar was not a lake but a low lying plain of the valley, amply proved by Neolithic {*Naga*} settlements in Kas'mira including one at Gurhoma Sangri near Mahapadamsar {Wular Lake}, capped with Megalithic settlements {Aryans} dating 1600±200BC. This fits into place of **"Candrapura, of the king Visvasvasva"** Kalhan also mentions a large city {*Candrapura*} submerged under the lake.
- Even in Nilmat Puranam the conversations are between Gonanda II - sage Brhadhasva and Vaisampayana {Pupil of Vyasa, who wrote Mahabharata} - King Janmejaya, a later descendant of *Pandava's*. Interestingly the later conversation is pre King Nila. This indicates the origin of the *Naga's* as the tribe's of Northern India and that the *Naga* Kings were from the stock of original inhabitants of *Bharatvarsha*. Even the King's can be identified as; Gonanda's from *Bharatvarsha* and from a stock of other than *Pandava's*, while Janmejaya is descendant of *Pandava's*. Same Brhadhasva yet figures with King Nila, when he tells him of his {Brhadhasva's} curse to Visvasvasva {The King of Mahapadamsar} before Mahapadama turned it into lake. This must be analysed in view of the fact that traces of human settlements of later period of Harappan civilisation have also been found in Kas'mira as well as plains of Jammu, Himachal Pradesh and Northern parts of undivided Punjab.
- The Manu's were last to settle in Kas'mira and are from the stock of Aryans settling down in the valley around 2600 ± 200 BC. In between the two era's others {*Daitaya's*, *Pisa'cas*} also arrived in the valley.

From the relations between these two classes and *Naga's/Aryan's*, it is apparent that they did not belong to the area's of either class. One cannot rule out that they may have been from Northern Asia or even fringes of Eastern portion of Central Asia, thus difference in their physical and other attributes.

- The area of Mahapadamsar surrounded by mountain range from North to South-East, must have looked like a vast deep bowl, with tiered rising segments of land.
- Sacred Madhumati River {Now called Bod Kol; Bandapur Nala} quoted in *Sharda Mahatmaya* emanating from Mountains of Bandapur, has earlier been a tributary of Vitasta, roughly joining it nearer to Haigam Jhil.
- The evolution of Mahapadamsar in its form, as described in Nilmat Puranam, appears to have taken place during Megalithic period around **1200-1000 BC, the time when Aryans had settled in Bharatvarsha and had moved to other areas including Kas'mira. This can also be when the mythical Saraswati River dried up due to a Geographical Fault or an Earthquake {Read Above}**. This also is confirmed by the 'curse' of Sage Durvasa, **"It shall turn into a lake."** In our mythology a 'curse' always refers to a catastrophe; could be an earthquake or a geographical fault or diversion of Madhumati River, when the area of Candrapura caved in to around 40 Metres {133 Feet} deep {The maximum depth of the lake}, which created part of Mahapadamsar and submerged **Candrapura**. Sacred Madhumati River would have filled the lake and submerging **{First Segment of Relics'}**.
- Once submerged, the habitation settled on the tiered dry area around the lake extending right up to **Garur**, close by of which Megalithic settlements dating 1600± BC at Gurhoma Sangri have been traced. This state of the lake remained so till 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> Century when Nilmat Puranam was written {At best end of BC era}. The time when other water bodies of Kas'mira {Dal {*Mahasarit*}, Nagin, Anchar and Manasbal} were formed could be also during this period **{1200-1000 BC} or later**.
- Nilmat Puranam quotes its then dimensions as **"One Yojana long and one Yojana wide"**; these are lesser than even its present dimensions.
- Nilmat Puranam Verses 1001-24, which gives legend of Mahapadamsar, nowhere mentions that Vitasta lends her sacred waters to Mahapadamsar. This confirms that the course of Vitasta **was not through Mahapadamsar** at the stage of its initial evolution. With other geographical indicators probably its course was through Haigam Jhil at that stage.
- Between 6/7<sup>th</sup> Century when Nilmat Puranam was written {At best it could be end of BC era} and beginning of 9<sup>th</sup> Century, a geographical fault seems to have occurred near Varhamulla, which obstructed the flow of Vitasta {Possibly few centuries earlier}. As a result the water level rose all along, which included Mahapadamsar and covered the dry area around it. Therefore, there has to be increase in length and breadth of the lake between 6<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> Century and 9<sup>th</sup> Century AD. At best this could have happened in end of BC era {Chronicles reasonably cover AD era and no scripture or chronicle has mentioned of any natural calamity}. Obstruction due to mountains towards North, East and Southwest would have channelled its enlargement to include tracts closer to Sopur, Ningli, Tarzoo, Haigham Jhil and areas east of it, being low lying area. It is at this stage Vitasta, which flowed closer to Haigam Jhil, having created a subterranean channel also joined the water mass and indirectly contributed to the waters of Mahapadamsar.
- After Suya's effort during Avanti Varman's reign {855- June 883 AD}, obstruction was removed and the water level went down considerably. The erstwhile habitation **possibly shifted to close by area founded by Suya; Suyapur**, now called Suyapur {Sopur, Sopore}, as Nilmat Puranam mentions; **"shifted two Yojna's to the West"**. **Suyapur could well have been called Visvagaspura during ancient times prior to 9<sup>th</sup> Century.**
- The islands of Ningli, Tarzoo and near Haigham Jhil are as a result of the water level of Vitasta and Mahapadamsar going down after the removal of obstruction during 9<sup>th</sup> Century. With this Vitasta must, changed its course and fed the lake
- Being an old and ancient habitation area, settlements sprang up again including Prateshwara temple built by King Prahlad {12<sup>th</sup> Century}.
- The water rose again, as the tributaries to Mahapadamsar had increased including Vitasta and one of those days' flash floods again increased the volume, submerging the temple. Finding of idols inside the submerged temple indicates that the water level was much below the level of the base of the submerged temple, when the temple was constructed, which rose suddenly and gave no chance for retrieval of these idols. This could have been between 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Century. This is confirmed by **'Second Segment of Relics.'**
- The frequent events of Mahapadamsar had forced the habitation to settle at safer places. However as a religious fervour another temple was re-constructed on the islands formed. Garur can also be part of this segment. These can be termed as **'Third Segment of Relics'**;

**Epilogue.** A reading of Nilmat Puranam has been curtain raiser to the history of Kas'mira, Sindhu {Sindh}, Vitasta and Mahapadamsar. In recent years archaeological and geological survey reports on Kas'mira and various sites of Kas'mira appeared. Question was correlating details known from Sacred Scriptures {Nilmat Puranam in particular} with the scientific data, to make it convincing and prove their relevancy. Admittedly survey reports give closer time frame than that from scriptures. This is mainly due to events that occurred centuries earlier remembered and compiled at a later stage. In this aberrations do take place in time frame or events, not that they do not in scientific surveys. An effort has been made to correlate events leading to the naming of Kas'mira, Vitasta and Sindhu {Sindh}, time frame of human habitation and finally evolution and chronology of Mahapadamsar as under: -

- Name Kas'mira is attributed to Prajapati, who is called Ka and Kas'yapa is also Prajapati. **“Built by him this country will be called Kas'mira. Because water called Ka was taken out by Balarama (the plough-wielder)....”** It is not Kas'yapa *Sar* corrupted to Kas'mira but phonetics of Kas'mira to Kashmira and then to Kashmir. *Satisar* is associated with Goddess Sati {Uma, Parvati}
- Though appearance of humans in Kas'mira is attributed to about 5000 to 6000 years ago, correlating with *Saptarishi* {5080 {2004}}, Survey, carbon dating has, however, found that Neolithic people {*Naga's* followed by others} came to the valley only around 2600 ± 200 BC. Many of these settlements were capped by later Megalithic people {*Manus* {Aryans}}, dating 1600±200 BC.
- Nilmat Puranam uses terms *Naga's*, *Daitaya's*, *Pis'acas* and *Manus* {Aryans}, appearing in Kas'mira, till finally Aryans prevailed. These races can be identified as the people, in that order, during Neolithic {*Naga's*, *Daitaya's*, *Pis'acas*} and Megalithic period {*Manus* {Aryans}}. During this period concentration of the first three {*Naga's*, *Daitaya's* and *Pis'acas*} seems to be at different places in different directions, with *Naga's* mainly in South Kas'mira. **“In the centre of the Sea of Sand, there is an oasis six yojana's long. There dwell highly terrible *Pis'acas* belonging to the side of the *Daitaya's* {Verses 210-212}.”** This can be attributed to different settlements of Neolithic people, whose way of life and ethics developed differently and thus their different attributes. Aryan's mostly settled around and alongside *Naga* sites and hence closeness of Aryan's to them and Nilmat Puranam being *Naga* centred. *Naga's* as group continued till 6<sup>th</sup> Century AD, when they joined hands with Aryans to kill Buddhists. Later the groups seem to have merged with the Aryan's; habitation as well as co-habitation.
- Stone and bone tools excavated at Gufkral, near Tral, indicate dependence on wild game, fishing and hunting; a characteristics of tribal's, aborigines; in this case our *Naga's*.
- The time of appearance of humans in Kas'mira is taken as a sudden outburst during Neolithic period. The origins of original inhabitants or aborigines {*Naga's*} of Kas'mira can be attributed to then *Bharatvarsha*, who were mostly *Krishna Yoni Dasayu's* {Dark Skinned}. Study of ancient scriptures including Veda's refers to two Kas'yapa's; one *Krishna Yoni* {Dark Skinned} and another fair skinned {Aryan}. These verses of Nilmat Puranam {345-50} indicates King Nila of *Krishna Yoni*{Dark Skinned}; **“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}.** Nila is also depicted as son of Kas'yapa.
- It is apparent that *Daitaya's* and *Pis'acas* are later entrants to Kas'mira after *Naga's*. This could be possibly at the end of the Neolithic period {Before 1600± BC}. Though details of their physical features are not mentioned in the Puranam, their trace settlements in the Northern portion of the Valley indicate their entrance from the North and their origin being from Neolithic People of Mongoloid or Central Asian origin cannot be ruled out.
- Initial group of Megalithic period are *Manus* {Aryans}, their immigration keeping pace with their movements in *Bharatvarsha* and in Kas'mira during Megalithic period 1600±200 BC {Roughly around 1200 BC}.
- Geographical phenomenon of formation of Vitasta must have taken place pre 3000 BC, though difficult to fix time frame. Vitasta name is ante Rig Veda; possibly associated with the time of Neolithic man {Harappan Civilisation - 2600-2500 BC} in the valley. This name later percolated to Aryans and others in *Bharatvarsha*.
- Kas'yapa **“worshipped the god S'ankara and induced the goddess Uma {Sati, Parvati} to purify this country by the gift of water..... renowned as the river Vitasta”.** S'ankara himself named her as **Vitasta**, because he had excavated with the spear a ditch measuring one Vitasti.
- **“Ganga Sindhu tu vijneya Vitasta Yamuna tatha”;** Sindhu {In Kas'mira Sindh- Lower Sindh} is incarnation of Ganga while Vitasta is incarnation of Yamuna.
- In Kas'mira there are three Sindhu's; stream flowing towards Narannag { Nund Kol} as Sindhu Ganga, Lower Sindh emanating from Baltal {*Nandikshetra*} referred also as Sindhu Ganga, Kishanganga River referred as *Maha* Sindhu. However, *Sindhu* {Indus} mentioned in Vedas emanates from Tibet, flows through Ladakh Sakardu and Chilas { Gilgit} and passes through Pakistan.

- The name **Wyeth**, roughly meaning '**Large {broad} Hearted**' can be ascribed to Kashmiri language. Jhelum name for Vitasta is connected closely with King Jehangir, and its usage got more common during Shah Jehan's reign {1627 -59 AD}.
- Nilmat Puranam Legend lucidly covers the events concerning Mahapadma turning Candrapura into a lake, one yojna by Yojna. Archeologically during Neolithic period {2600 ± 200 BC} area of Mahapadamsar was a low lying plain of the valley, proved by Neolithic settlements at Gurhoma Sangri, capped with Megalithic settlements dating 1600±200BC. The event of the formation of initial Mahapadamsar and naming can be dated to **1200-1000 BC** {During Megalithic period}. This cause is likely to be an earthquake or a geographical fault, when the area of Candrapura caved in to around 40 Metres {133 Feet} deep {Maximum depth of the lake} **{May be when mythical Saraswati River also dried up due to a Geographical Fault or an Earthquake {Read Above}}**. This state of the lake remained so till 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> Century or at best end of BC era. when Nilmat Puranam was written.
- Dal {*Mahasarit*}, Nagin, Anchar, and Manasbal were formed during the recent geological period and are not the remnants of the *Karewa* Lake {Satisar} {Between 1200-1000 BC}.
- A city Sandimatnagar turned into a lake during the reign of Sundersena {2082-2041 BC- dates disputed} is talked about. Co-relation to Nilmat Puranam legend is restricted to closeness of time frame; too early and not supported by archaeological surveys.
- Vitasta was not a tributary of Mahapadamsar, confirming course of Vitasta was probably through Haigam Jhil and changed subsequently.
- Between 6/7<sup>th</sup> Century and beginning of 9<sup>th</sup> Century, a geographical fault seems to have occurred near Varahkshetra {Varhamulla, Baramulla}, obstructing the flow of Vitasta resulting in increased water level all along. Probably Vitasta, joined the water mass at this stage and contributed indirectly to the waters of Mahapadamsar.
- *Prateshwara* temple got submerged, when water rose suddenly. This indicates a natural calamity; somewhere between 10<sup>th</sup> {After Suya} and 12<sup>th</sup> Century.
- Ruins of another temple have been located, nearly in level with the water level of the lake on the islands formed. These can be considered constructed between 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Century, probably once the *Prateshwara* temple got submerged.
- The transition of the name to Wular, dating to 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> Centuries, could be from Sanskrit word **Ullola**, meaning high leaping waves, possibly by scholars from south. The origin can also be Kas'miri word '**Wul**', which means a gap or a fissure. Its corrupted form Wular must have come about when Kas'miri language emerged from *Upbrahmbasha* around 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> Century.
- **Suyapur could well have been called Visvagaspura during ancient times prior to 9<sup>th</sup> Century.**

In this paper effort has been made to validate Geographical and Archaeological data with that of Nilmat Puranam or may be vice-versa. It has amply been proved that while time frame in our scriptures was not quoted in the today's time data/scale; the events had definite co-relation with actual happenings. May be that natural events have been turned into mythical ones, or may be these mythical happenings did occur due to higher spiritual power of our ancestors sages. Who knows! Nilmat Puranam, our sacred scripture, comes out tall, with its contents, the rhythm and the events. Only our ancestors were capable of creating such an epic.

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**Last but not the least, it is the love for Nirbhay, which made me to study and write this piece of our heritage history on his arrival in this world.**