

## RELIGIOUS WORSHIP ERA'S IN KAS'MIRA {KASHMIR} NAGA'S - ARYAN'S TO KUL DEVI'S

**“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.”**

- {Translated} Sanskrit Poet Kalidasa

{ This piece of our religious history is for my Grand-Daughter Praharshita, which gives a peep into way of life of *Naga's*; *Manus* {Aryans} , their connection with original inhabitants and immigration to various parts of *Bharatvarsha* and Kas'mira; Vedic Religion and evolution of a mixed culture and religion of *Naga's* and Aryans in Kas'mira. Which transited through Buddhism, Shaivism and finally to *Kul Devi* worship. }

### Kas'mira - The Vale of Gods And Evolution

**The Vale of Gods.** Ancient Greeks called Kas'mira '**Kasperia**' and the Chinese pilgrim Huen-Tsang, who visited the valley around 631 AD, called it "**KaShi-Mi-Lo**". Sir Walter Lawrence writes this about Kas'mira; "**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 Kas'mira: "..... 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.....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 ...". Kalhan pays tribute to Kas'mira 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 wrote *Rajatarangini* when Shaivism, more so in Shakta Worship form, was at its peak and immediately after Abhinav Gupta had left an indelible mark on the religious inclination of Aryan Saraswat Brahmins of Kas'mira. {**Abhinav Gupta was born around 940 AD and might have lived even beyond 1015 AD, when he is believed to have entered Birwa caves reciting Bhairavastava. Though the date of his entering Birwa {Magam} Caves, never to return, is not fully established. He, during his life and after had been extolled as "*Mahamahesvara*" by Kas'mira authors, which precisely means the "great devotee of Siva", or the "Supreme - Self" in Shaivistic parlance**}. Kalhan associates *Nandikshetra*, area of snow-clad mountains of Dras, Mahadev, Baltal and Amaranth 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**". *Rajatarangini* basically being history of the Kings of Kas'mira, Kalhan very briefly mentions religious aspects and the religion practised in Kas'mira from the time of Naga's upto his time. He, however, did narrate various Gods, religious activities of the Kings or construction of important temples or installation of idols. It may be thus construed that Shaivism had been the prime wing of the Brahmin religion in Kas'mira. Not so, as the Kas'mira Brahmin built upon the native inhabitants, the Naga's and other races i.e. Daitaya's, Pis'acas. It is therefore essential to establish evolution of Kas'mira, the line of original inhabitants both of *Bharatvarsha* as well as Kas'mira, dating them, religious inclinations of Naga's at various stages, migration of Aryan Sarswat Brahmins into the valley of God's, development of various cults, beliefs and worships in Kas'mira.

**Evolution Kas'mira {Kas'mira}.** 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 uplift of the Himalayas, there were further occurrences in Kas'mira, which

resulted in the uplift of the Pir Panjal range; giving rise to a vast lake in the Kas'mira called the *Karewa* Lake {Satisar of the Nilmat Puranam- More about Nilmat Puranam later}. 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 River Vitasta {Jhelum; Wyeth} after which clay deposits in the exposed lake sediments in the valley called *Karewa's* {*Uddars* in *Kas'miri*} remained. Thus mythological traditions, fully supported by research of geologists, confirm that the 'valley' originally was a huge lake, its waters blocked near Varahkshetra {Varhamulla, Baramulla} and fault opening at Khadanyar {Baramulla} draining the water, which presumably occurred about 85,000 years ago; a remarkable coincidence between the legend and the scientific facts!

### **Original Inhabitants of Bharatvarsha and Kas'mira**

**Original Inhabitants of Bharatvarsha and Aryans.** Civilised human inhabitation in the Indian subcontinent {*Bharatvarsha*} is traced to the Palaeolithic and Neolithic period dating from about 3000 to 1500 BC  $\pm$ . This civilization is considered to be at par with the other civilizations of the world. Traces of Indus Valley Civilisation were first discovered in 1921 - 22 and archaeologists, keeping in view the already well-established Vedic chronology, concluded that the Indus Valley Civilisation belonged to the period between 3250 BC and 2750 BC and was pre-Vedic. These excavations also pointed to a highly complex civilization that first developed some 4,000-4,500 years ago. Subsequent archaeological and historical research has now furnished us with a more detailed picture of the Indus Valley Civilization and its inhabitants. There are some more indications from excavations and finds, mostly in present Gujarat Coastal areas; that this civilisation could be earlier than the currently concluded Indus Valley Civilisation and indications of human "civilisation" in *Bharatvarsha* being earlier than 3000 BC; roughly in the band of 4000-4500 BC. However, arrival of *Homo sapiens* {Human Beings} in, from the African Continent, *Bharatvarsha* is attributed to much earlier period; before 4000-4500 BC. In this "indefinable period- 4500 to 2750 BC", historians feel that *Bharatvarsha* was peopled by men with dark skin: known as Dravidians and Moundases. Initially humans in *Bharatvarsha* were restricted to specific areas and there were little or no major movements from one place to another. Excavations at Harappa and many other places have thrown up that Harappan Civilization {Indus Valley Civilization} were at their height between 2600-2500 BC, also part of Neolithic period, which collapsed around 2000-1900 BC. Traces of the Indus valley civilization discovered at Ropar in Punjab and Rangpur and Lothal in Saurashtra, Bharatpur in Rajasthan, Banawali, Kalibangan are proof of the existence of the Indus valley civilization. {Harappa is a site on the west bank of Ravi; Kalibangan is a site on the right bank of Sutlej; Amri is a site on the west bank of Indus {close to the Arabian sea}; Banawali is located 15 kilometers northwest of Fatehbad {Haryana}, near the Saraswati river and about 120 km east of Kalibangan; Lothal and Rangpur are sites below the Rann of Kutch}. Harappa being the main source of knowledge of Indian civilization, historians call this civilization as the Harappan culture. Harappan like sites have also been located in Northern Portion of Western India, North India and even in Jammu areas. Recently another site of later Harappan Civilization has been unearthed at Sanauli {Near Meerut- Uttar Pradesh}. These sites, later capped with Aryan settlements, were basically that of indigenous inhabitants of *Bharatvarsha*, called Dasayu's {Dark Skinned} by Aryans. Dasayu was the term used by Aryans in Rig Veda for indigenous people of *Bharatvarsha*. In many Aryan scriptures the original inhabitants of *Bharatvarsha* are called 'Krishna Yoni Dasayu's'; *Krishna Yoni* referring to dark skinned inhabitants {It is Akbar, who ordered that all Lord Krishna's paintings or idols be given bluish tinge, commonly found now; otherwise lord Krishna in folklores was referred to as *Kale Krishna* and old idols of Lord Krishna and other Gods/Goddesses were black}.

Even during the later period {Neolithic period {2600  $\pm$  200 BC}. Of the later or more advanced Stone Age}, there were movements within the region and mostly towards the North. This phenomenon was followed by immigration and establishment of Aryan settlements, spread over centuries during the Megalithic period {1600  $\pm$  200. Advanced stage of lithic {stone} period}, along the Saraswati River Banks and other areas. The place of origin of the Aryans has been variously sought in Europe and Asia. Aryan race is presumed to have branched off at different periods; Northwest and Westward into Europe and Southward into Persia and *Bharatvarsha*. They entered *Bharatvarsha* through the fabled Khyber Pass, after initial hostile attitude, as the time passed, intermingled with the local populace {Dravidians and Moundases} and assimilated into the amalgamated social framework. They adopted the settled agricultural lifestyle of their predecessors and established small agrarian communities. During this period many original inhabitants of

*Bharatvarsha* migrated from one part to other and not all original inhabitants of the areas having Aryan settlements moved out or were pushed out. Some stayed and served the Aryans, others moved to live in the forests and the jungles of Northern portions of *Bharatvarsha*. However, it is well known that Aryans kept the Dravidians and Moundas at lower pedestal than their own. Before the arrival of the Aryans, there were other communities in extended *Bharatvarsha*; Sino-Mongoloids and Austroloids. There were also other foreign immigrations and invaders from East/North, who arrived in *Bharatvarsha*, from time to time. With the passage of time, the most basic division of *Bharatvarsha* society is that of Aryans and Dravidians. According to this division, nearly 65% are Aryans, 25 – 27 % Dravidians and rest others. North Indians, mostly, are the descendants of Aryans and the South Indians are Dravidians. However, there is no clear-cut line, as the original inhabitant stock is also found all across *Bharatvarsha*; North, Central and Western *Bharatvarsha*. There is not much material or indications available about the religion of the original inhabitants of *Bharatvarsha*. In fact no such common denominator has been established that could be termed as religion of ancient *Bharatvarsha*. As in other parts of world, day-to-day essentials; water, fire, air, food etc, became the objects of veneration, not worship.

As per common belief Saraswati River {Saraswati also means ‘abundance of lakes; *Sars*} along whose banks Aryan settlements came up, dried up in stages and by around 1600 BC it finally dried up, though not confirmed scientifically, and became a mythical river. As is known majority of Aryan settlements were first created along the mythical river Saraswati and areas north of it. It is not that they {Aryan} settlements were along Saraswati River only, they were dispersed extending up to Indus and *Hindu Kush* in the North West, the region of the seven rivers, “*Sapta Sindhu*”, with its centre in the Saraswati valley and covering a great part of North and Northwest India ranging from Indus to Ganga and to Sarayu {Central Uttar Pradesh}. In the early centuries of **Later Vedic Period** also called **Brahmanic Period** (1000-500 BC), Aryans migrated across the Doab, a large plain that separates the Yamuna River from the Ganges including Kas’mira. **This Vedic Hymn in praise of many rivers of North India, Doab Plains {Satudri {Satluj} and Vipas {Beas}} and Yamuna-Ganga Basin clearly indicates that Aryans were familiar with these rivers in the *Bharatvarsha*, which could have been possible only if they had intimately been connected with these rivers; like settlements along these rivers. “Favour ye this my lord, O Ganga, Yamuna, O Satudri {Satluj}, Parusni and Saraswati: With Asikni, Vitasta {Jhelum, Wyeth}, O Marudvrda, O Arjikiya with Susoma hear my call {Rig Veda 10: 75- 5}.”**

With passage of time Aryans and amalgamated people of *Bharatvarsha* developed language and made significant progress to have basis of a religion. Admittedly Aryans had a major role in this development. These development factors were to play a fundamental role in the shaping of *Bharatvarsha* culture. Cavalry warfare, introduced with the introduction of horse in the subcontinent by the Aryans, facilitated the rapid spread of Aryan culture across North India and allowed the emergence of large empires. Language became the basis and the unifying factor of the vast majority. The religion, that now took root during this era, with its rich pantheon of Gods and Goddesses and its storehouse of myths and legends, became the foundation of the Hindu religion, as the time passed, which arguably became single most important common denominator of *Bharatvarsha* culture. Hinduism and the caste system are believed to have been established as a result of close co-existence of Aryans and original residents of *Bharatvarsha*; the Dravidians. The Aryans referred to indigenous inhabitants as Dasayu’s {Dark Skinned} in their chronicles and scriptures.

The Aryans did not have a script, but they developed a rich tradition. They composed hymns of the *Vedas*, the great philosophic poems that are at the heart of Hindu thought. As the Nobel Laureate, Rabindranath Tagore expressed it, “**The hymns are a poetic testament of a people’s collective reaction to the wonder and awe of existence....A people of vigorous and unsophisticated imagination awakened at the very dawn of civilisation to a sense of inexhaustible mystery that is implicit in life.**” These {Vedas} were composed orally, sung and preserved as *Shruiti* {voice heard by generations} and *Smriti* {remembered; again by generations} and finally compiled, as language/ scripts developed. As regards when Vedic Hymns were composed Max Muller opines: “**Whether the Vedic hymns were composed 1000 or 1500 or 2000 or 3000 years BC, no power on earth will ever determine.**”

**Dating Earliest Inhabitants of Kas’mira.** To analyse the original inhabitants, religion and its development since *Satisar* or Kas’mira was inhabited, there is need to date the original inhabitants and their arrival in Kas’mira, in this case Naga’s, and later induction of other races and Manu’s {Aryans}. Appearance of humans in Kas’mira is ‘attributed’, mostly ‘**claimed**’ as Aryans, to about 5000 to 6000 years ago, correlating with *Sapatrishi Samwat* {Era}{5082 {2006}}. Survey, Archaeological evidence, carbon dating of many ancient human dwelling sites in Kas’mira has, however, found that Neolithic people

settlements {Of the later or more advanced Stone Age scientifically attributed to that of **Naga's** {Aborigines} **and not Aryans**} came to the valley around 2600 ± 200 BC. All these Neolithic settlements did not date back to the initial period. They came in a trickle and this settlement process continued for nearly thousand years. The settlements found in the survey were either abandoned ones or destroyed by the vagaries of nature. There would have been many more Neolithic {Naga} settlements, which continued to develop for further centuries but have not been located or traced as yet. Many of these settlements were capped with or developed along with Megalithic people {Advanced stage of lithic {stone} period, attributed to Manus {Aryans}}, dating 1600±200 BC.

Nilmat Puranam, the oldest scripture of Kas'mira which gives a lot of information about Kas'mira, its inhabitants and much more, uses terms Naga's, Daitaya's, Pis'acas and Manus {Aryans}; inhabitants appearing in Kas'mira, in that order, till finally Aryans prevailed. These races can be identified as the people, in that order; during Neolithic settlements {Original inhabitants Naga's followed by Daitaya's, Pis'acas} and Megalithic period {Manus {Aryans}}. Thus 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} coinciding with arrival of Manu's {Aryans}. **Neolithic people {Naga's; Aborigines} were primitive as evidenced by archaeological and geographical survey and research in the valley. Folklore or mention of these in scriptures as Naga's fits in well to this description and findings.** The Daitaya's and Pis'acas also settled down in the valley, though in different directions and away from the Naga settlements. The Aryan settlements started around 1600 ± 200 BC and peaked around 1300-1000 BC. **From excavations and archaeological survey it has been seen that many Neolithic {Naga} settlements were capped/topped with megalithic {Aryan} settlements, indicating that at many places Naga's and Manu's {Aryan Saraswat Brahmins of Kas'mira} had established their settlements alongside each other.** This fits in well with the belief that they co-existed and with this co-existence, Manu's {Aryans} adopted many of the rituals and customs of Naga's and latter picked up Aryans way of living. While there was amalgamation, to a large extent, of Naga's with Manu's {Aryans}, remaining two races {Daitaya's and Pis'acas} developed away from them, resulting in their differing attributes, beliefs, customs and attitude; bordering hostility. This is also confirmed, in later centuries, by their {Naga's and Aryans} amalgamated beliefs, rituals and forms of worship and different from inhabitants of Northern areas {Currently in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir}, believed to be that of Daitaya's and Pis'acas.

The origins of original inhabitants or aborigines {Naga's} in the form of immigration of Neolithic People to 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, Naga King of Kas'mira, depicted as son of Kas'yapa, 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 Nilmat Puranam}.** 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*. These physical characteristics of Naga's can still be found amongst the denizens of certain hamlets in South Kas'mira; Antimony colour skin, short stature women, differing physical characteristics of face and nose so different from pure Aryan race. Even the stock of King's can be identified; Gonanda's from *Bharatvarsha* from **other than Pandava's**, while Janmejaya, another King of later era, **descendant of Pandava's**. It may be of interest to know that Aryan blood has been found, confirmed by DNA lineage test carried all over Asia, in the majority of men of North and Western India, Pakistan, Afghanistan. Iran and other parts of Asia. However, the ratio was much lower in the case of women of North and Western India and even Pakistan. This is attributed to the fact that Aryans brought fewer women than the men folk and later married the local women and hence the disparity in DNA results.

**Dating of Aryan Entry to Kas'mira.** The height of the Harappan civilization in *Bharatvarsha* also coincides with the appearance of Neolithic man in Kas'mira and firmly indicates that Neolithic culture was evolved in the valley around 2600 ± 200 BC. These dates however do not correlate to Gonanda Dynasty {Gonanda I {2448 BC - date disputed}, which is the beginning of *Rajatarangini* by Kalhan and termed as the arrival of Aryans in the valley {More of it later}. **Apparently there is discrepancy in the chronicled history compiled later, folk lore and matching with archaeological and geological finds.**

In the process of migration an enterprising batch of Aryans went back to the mountains in the north and to Kas'mir Valley of whose beauty and salubrious climate they had heard from their forefathers, who used to go there during summer. They sought the protection of Nila; the Lord of the Naga's and begged his permission to settle permanently in the Valley as his subjects. Nila listened to their tale of woe

sympathetically, but promised the requested permission on the condition that they conformed to the social usages and customs of the Naga's. They, Aryans, agreed to these conditions when the Naga chief permitted them to reside permanently in the Valley. Thus immigration of this Initial group of Manus {Aryans of Megalithic period} kept pace with their movements in other parts of *Bharatvarsha* and to Kas'mira during Megalithic period; roughly around 1200 BC±. This period of Aryan immigration fits well into the Megalithic period {1600±200BC}{Manu's {Aryans}} in Kas'mira, which in terms of scientific proof finds firm ground with the findings of artefacts of Megalithic people {Aryans} capping over the settlements and artefacts of Neolithic people {Naga's}.

At what point of time this important immigration into the Valley of Saraswat Aryans (comprising Brahmans, Kshatryas, Vaishas and Shudras) took place is not impossible to deduct. It, however, was not in one go but spread over centuries. **The beginning of the *Sapatrishi* or *Laukika* Era is assumed to be the time when the Aryans entered and settled in the Valley, after getting permission from Nila, the lord of the Naga tribe who were already settled there.** Kalhan begins the *Rajatarangini* from this time as is evident from the description of the installation of Queen Yasomati on the throne of Kas'mira as the guardian of her son King Gonanda II. The *Sapatrishi* or *Laukika* era is still in current use in Kas'mira. Buhler, a noted scholar on Kas'mira, was the first to work out commencement of *Laukika* Era in terms of Christian Era to the year 3076-75 BC. *Laukika* era or *Sapatrishi Samvat* is to be found in all handbooks of *Bharatvarsha* chronology. Aryan Saraswat Brahmans all over *Bharatvarsha* and Kas'mira have held on to and followed this calendar tenaciously for the last 5082 years {2006 is 5082 *Sapatrishi* Era}. With the results of various surveys, carbon dating, archaeological finds, excavations, artefacts, common usage of the era in *Bharatvarsha*, Indus Valley Civilization excavations, excavations and survey results in Kas'mira, it is evident that *Sapatrishi Era* is indigenous to *Bharatvarsha* connected with pre Harappan civilisation in the Indian subcontinent {*Bharatvarsha*} tracing back to the later period of Palaeolithic period. Apparently as the time elapsed, this period was taken as the base for *Laukika* Era {*Sapatrishi*}. Arya Bhatta, an ancient Brahmin writer on Astronomy, born in Kusuma-Pura (Modern Patna) in 5<sup>th</sup> Century BC {550 -476 BC}, author of *Arya-Siddhanta* is the calculator of this era, which was widely accepted and used in *Bharatvarsha* and Kas'mira. The earlier calendar in *Bharatvarsha* was with a cycle of 60 years, 27 *Nakshatras* and twelve months 2,700 years. Notes by Greek historians Pliny and Arrian suggest that, during the Mauryan Dynasty {322 -185 BC}, the calendar used in *Bharatvarsha* began in 6676 BC. It is very likely that this was earlier *Sapatrishi* calendar with a beginning of 6676 BC. As per Arya Bhatta's (550 -476 BC) calculations and tradition, *Mahabharata* war is said to have occurred in 3138 BC, about 34 years before the transition of *Dwapar Yug* to *Kali Yug*. Arya Bhatta, stated that *Kaliyuga* started 3600 years before, when he was 23 years old, making the start as 3102 BC. *Surya Siddhanta*, a document evolved roughly around same period, states that sun was 54 degrees away from **vernal equinox** when *Kali Yug* started on a new moon day; Ist Day of Chaitra Shukla Paksh {Bright Half} corresponding to February 17/18, 3102 BC, at *Ujjain*. **It is said that *Kali Yug* could not begin as long as Lord Sri Krishna was touching this Earth with His holy feet and it was only after He left this mundane world that marking the end of *Tritya Yug* and the commencement of *Kali Yug* commenced** {*Kaliyuga Raja*. Vrittantam, Bhagwat III Chap. III}. *Kali Yug* thus started on the 17/18<sup>th</sup>, Friday, February 3102 BC at 14:27:30 hours., when Sri Krishna passed away. There are some minor differences in dates when 20 February 3102 BC or 18<sup>th</sup> February 3102 are also talked about in this regard. From all confirmatory astronomical calculations *Kali Yug* is believed to have begun when Krishna "died" at the age of 125 on Friday 17/18 February 3102 BC. The commencement of *Laukika* or *Sapatrishi Samvat* has indirect connection with *Kali Yug*. *Sapatrishi's* were in *Magha Star*, 75 years prior to *Kali Yug* and remained there for next 25 years after *Kali Yug* had commenced. It is on Ist Chaitra Shukla Paksh {Bright Half} of 3076 BC that the *Laukika* or *Sapatrishi Samvat* commenced 25 years later, when *Sapatrishi's* {Ursa Major} moved into *Poorva Nakshatra* in 3076 BC.

The difference in what was being adopted before Arya Bhatta's calculation has connection with the present *Laukika* or *Sapatrishi* era as well and a remarkable coincidence of 60 years cycle for 60 years that is 3600 years. That is *Sapatrishi Samvat* was a repetitive one after expiry of 60 years cycle for 60 years i.e. 6676 BC less 3076 BC = 3600 years, commencement of current *Sapatrishi* Era. Around 500 AD, a major review of the Indian calendar was attempted. Varahamihir, a Kas'mira Aryan Saraswat Brahmin {560 AD} and others used the *Nakshatra* references that the *Sapatrishi's* {Ursa Major} were in *Magha Nakshatra* at the time of the Mahabharata War. While Arya Bhatta declared the War to have occurred in 3137 BC, Varahamihir assigned it 2449 BC. This discrepancy arose perhaps from the different assumptions regarding the *Nakshatras* {27 or 28; actually 27 with overlap} in the calculations of the two astronomers. Commencement of the current *Laukika Era* or *Sapatrishi Era* is thus placed on *Chaitra Shudi 1* {First day of Bright Half of *Chaitra*, also the New Year {*Navreh*} of Aryan Saraswat Brahmans of Kas'mira} of the, of

*Kali Samvat* 25 (expired) or the year 3076-75 BC. *Laukika* Era or *Sapatriishi*, is 25 years less than commencement of *Kali Yuga* {3102 BC + 2006 = 5108}, while current *Sapatriishi* Era is 5082, a difference of only 25 years}. **It was essential to dwell on genesis of *Laukika* Era, to derive the date of entry of Aryans into the valley.**

It is apparent that the *Bharatvarsha* inhabitants of later centuries and Aryans adopted this *Samvat* for their lunar calculations, which was so essential for their day to day worship, rituals and routine. While migration of Aryans in earlier and later centuries took place before the time of Arya Bhatta {5<sup>th</sup> Century BC}, Aryans too used this *samvat* for their record, calculations etc, after it had been introduced in *Bharatvarsha* in 5<sup>th</sup> Century BC. ***Laukika* or *Sapatriishi* Era thus calculated in *Bharatvarsha* by Arya Bhatta and has no co-relation with the entry of Manu's {Aryans} in Kas'mira.** It may be that this *Samvat* relates to calculation of the era when the first inhabitants moved into Kas'mira; in this case Neolithic people {Naga's}, which is estimated to be between 3000 to 1500 BC ±. This era also fits in well to the upper band of Neolithic period, which has been also authenticated by archaeological and geographical surveys. In any case the *samvat* was calculated in 5<sup>th</sup> Century BC and could have earliest been applied or used from 5<sup>th</sup> Century BC only and it would have been difficult to calculate and connect it with the entry of Aryans, which would have happened at least a millennium back from this date {5<sup>th</sup> Century BC}. By this time {5<sup>th</sup> Century BC} both Naga's as well as Aryans were inhabiting Kas'mira and had amalgamated with each other.. The reason as to why the earlier *Sapatriishi Samvat* of 6676 BC was not adopted as then scholars, astronomers may have found that *Bharatvarsha* was not inhabited then. If this era {*Laukika* or *Sapatriishi Samvat*} had been evolved earlier than 500 BC, somewhere around 1500-1700 BC and in Kas'mira, it could have been associated with the entry of Aryans in the valley. *Laukika* or *Sapatriishi Samvat* reckoning calculated around 500 BC is to be found in all handbooks of Indian chronology and thus this *Samvat* was adopted by Aryans as well as Naga's in Kas'mira approximately from that time onwards. **Our community may feel that required antiquity to Aryan entry to Kas'mira has not been given by not connecting *Sapatriishi samvat* to entry of the community into the valley. One must understand that all the indications, surveys, archaeological excavations in *Bharatvarsha* and Kas'mira point out that the Aryan entry into *Bharatvarsha* dates to megalithic period {1600±200 BC} and any effort to try to give more antiquity to our entry in the valley may as well be counter productive; that we are not from the Aryan race. However, we must feel proud that this *samvat* may as well be the era of entry of original inhabitants in Kas'mira; that of Naga's. We do accept and acknowledge their existence and as *marg darshak's* to Aryans in Kas'mira. In any case even the Aryans entry to Kas'mira is around 3606 ± years earlier.** Two other two most prevalent *Samvat's* are *Vikrami Samvat* and *Sakabda* or *Saka Samvat*. The latter is obtained by deducting 135 years from the former. In 2006 AD, *Vikrami Samvat* is 2063 while *Saka Samvat* is 1928. The present European calendar came into vogue around 7<sup>th</sup> Century AD in *Bharatvarsha*, who since ancient times, has been following the lunar calendar.

**Wide Dispersal of Kas'mira Inhabitants.** During the period discussed above, 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. *Nilmat Puranam* mentions this dispersal in a verse; **"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 *Nilmat Puranam*}."** This attributed to different settlements of Neolithic {Naga's} people, whose way of life and ethics developed differently and thus their different attributes. The Aryan settlements, which seem to have started around 1600 ± 200, peaked around 1300 BC. Aryan {Manu} and these 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 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 *Nilmat 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.

Aryan's mostly settled around and alongside Naga sites and hence closeness of Aryan's to Naga's and *Nilmat Puranam* being Naga centred. Naga's as group continued to be as a group in Kas'mira till 6<sup>th</sup> Century AD, when they joined hands with Aryans in killing of Buddhists during the period of Mihir Kula to Gopaditya {6<sup>th</sup> Century AD}. There have been some isolated Naga settlements which continued till about 6<sup>th</sup> Century AD. They with Manus {Aryan Saraswat Brahmins of Kas'mira} joined. Possibly full integration and conversion of Naga's also took place around this time. Stone and bone tools excavated at Gufkral, near

Tral, indicate their dependence on wild game, fishing and hunting; a characteristic of tribal's, aborigines; in this case our Naga's. The time of appearance of humans in Kas'mira while is taken as sudden outburst, it is not that Naga's disappeared suddenly. Slowly but steadily they mixed with Aryans, in terms of habitation and cohabitation. Where ever this happened, the settlements flourished with more density.

### Veda's ,Vedic Religion and Vedic Gods/Goddesses.

**Rig Vedic, Brahmanic and Later Vedic Period.** The earliest history of the Aryans in *Bharatvarsha*, is called the Rig Vedic Period {1700-1000 BC}, named after the religious praise poems, oldest pieces of literature in *Bharatvarsha*. In mid of Rig Vedic Period {1700-1000 BC} and early centuries of Later Vedic Period or **Brahmanic Period** {1000-500 BC}, Aryans migrated across the Doab, which is a larger plain separating Yamuna River from the Ganges, even to River Sarayu in present day Uttar Pradesh, as mentioned in this Rig Veda Hymn; **“Let the great Streams come hither with their mighty help, Sindhu, Saraswati, and Sarayu with waves; Book 10; 64- 9”**. This civilisation thrived in these areas what is now called Indo-Gangetic Civilisation, encompassing most of the present day North India. While the Rig Veda represents primitive religion of the Aryans during the Rig Vedic period, the religion of the Later Vedic period is dominated by the **Brahmans** or priestly book, composed sometime between 1000 and 850 BC. The Brahman dominated later Vedic society and every aspect of Aryan life came under the control of priestly rituals and spells. In history, as we understand it, the Later Vedic Period is the Epic Age. Epics, great literary heroic epics of *Bharatvarsha* culture, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, were composed in the Later Vedic Period, between 500 and 200 BC respectively kept as *Shruti* {voice heard by generations} and *Smriti* {remembered; again by generations}. Both these epics deal with heroes from this period and demonstrate how Aryan cultural values, as we can understand them from the Rig Veda, were transformed by mixing with Indus Valley Civilisation cultures. These poems of Rig Veda, epics and later scriptures are a period of cultural mixing in that the culture of Aryans gradually mixed with indigenous cultures, the war-religion of the Aryans still preserved in parts of Rig Veda, slowly became more ritualised and more meditative. This was also the beginning {**Brahmanic Period** {1000-500 BC}}, when religion started taking firm roots. **Aryan Gods and Goddesses mixed with a new pantheon of local deities and forms started taking roots during the next few centuries, specific religious scriptures in praise of these Gods and Goddesses composed and written. A new line of Gods and Goddesses came up for a religion, which was to follow; Hinduism. By 200 BC, this process of mixing and transformation was more or less complete and the culture we now call "Indian" was fully formed.**

**Veda's.** Aryan beliefs and daily life are described in the four Vedas, collection of poems and sacred hymns and have become most ancient sacred literature of Hinduism. This collection of hymns, poems and ceremonial formulas represent the beliefs of several Aryan tribes. Initially the Vedas were considered so sacred that they were only transmitted orally from one generation of Brahman to other. The passages of the Vedas were **‘eventually’ written in Sanskrit**, we believe, near the end of the third century BC and primarily consist of four collections called the Rig Veda, Sam Veda, Yajur Veda, and Atharv Veda. Collectively, these are referred to as the *Samhitas*. The first three *Samhitas* were used in the *Vedic* period by the priestly class as ritual handbooks. Rig Veda containing 1,028 poetic hymns, used by the *hotri* {Priests who used to lead a body of Aryans while on move on a mission. *Rig-Veda* was recited by the *hotri*, who called on the gods by reciting the hymns aloud}. The hymns vary in style and length and praise a pantheon of gods. Although Indra, the God of war and weather, is the most frequently mentioned, there appears to be no hierarchy. Agni, the God of fire, is the second most prominently mentioned deity. The Rig Veda, the oldest of the four Vedas, started being composed around 1500 BC and codified around 600 BC. It is not known when it was finally committed to writing, but this probably was at some point around 300 BC. Rig Veda was originally written in *Khartoshi* {*Khartoshi/Kharoshti* script was from right to left and is attributed to Aryans}. As Vedic language took roots amongst the Indo Aryan Race, *Kharoshti* {*Khartoshi*} became the script of the *Gandhari* {North-western India} and developed into ‘Vedic *Bholi*’ {Sanskrit in its complex form} in the region, along with *Brahmi*. It also spread northwards to Central Asia and Kas'mira. The existence of *Kharoshti* {*Khartoshi*} numerals on Motif Tiles were found at Harwan Excavations {Outskirts of Srinagar {Kas'mira}} and the script ceased to be in vogue in North-western India, where it had principally flourished till around 5th Century AD. In Kas'mira the time the tiles were made {300 AD} indicates that the script must have been at the highest pitch of popularity at that time. Though it is difficult to assess the period, taking it that *Kharoshti* {*Khartoshi*} 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. Sam Veda consisted

of various portions taken from the Rig Veda and were utilized by the *udgatri* chanters {Priests who sang the verses in rhythm}. Of all the Vedas, Sam Veda contains the most musical hymns and are actually sung according to a set melody. The word ‘*samkara*’ or ‘*sankara*’ is a combination of two words; ‘*sam*’+ ‘*kara*’. ‘*Sam*’ means good and ‘*kara*’ means ‘doer’ and therefore ‘*samkara*’ means doer of good deeds. According to another interpretation, ‘*sam*’ means the ‘*sam*’ of ‘*samadh*’ or the state of complete self-absorption or self-realization. According to this interpretation, the word ‘*samkara*’ means the cause of union or self-realization. The word ‘*sam*’ also means harmony, as in the word ‘*sam/veda*’ or ‘*sama/Ved*’. There is no clue to the date of the compilation of Sam Veda Hymns, nor has the compiler's name been handed down to us. Yajur-Veda was used by the *adhvaryu* priests {Priests who specialised in specific sacrificial *yajna*'s}. This work contains specific sacrificial formulas which were recited during that form of ceremony. Atharv Veda, is attributed to a sage {*Rishi*} Atharvan and consists of number of hymns and magical incantations. Some scholars believe that this scripture may have originated with the pre-Aryan culture of indigenous people, as it deviated from the basics of other Vedas and was not at first readily accepted. Eventually it too was adopted as a ritual handbook by the Brahmins. **To my mind probably after the composition of first three Veda's, Atharv Veda is the outcome of amalgamated ethos of Aryans and Dasayu's and Atharv Rishi himself had imbibed the rituals of Dasayu's/ Dravidians.**

**Vedic Literature.** Although the Rig Veda is still considered the most important of these ancient texts, it was still never very popular. Much of this comes from the fact of its composition by and for religious aristocracy. In contrast, the Atharv Veda, composed around 1000 BC compiled perhaps as late as 500 BC, written down much later than the rest of the Vedas, around 200 BC, was very popular. This can be attributed to varied contents of magical incantations, thus getting major following amongst the Dravidians and Aryans. Atharv Veda frequently refers to many lesser functional gods considered useful in the daily lives and simple rituals of the ordinary Aryan that did not need the mediation of priests. How far back the national and religious Vedic period, so called, extends; “**It is impossible to tell**” confesses Prof. Max Muller; nevertheless, he traces it ‘to a period anterior to 1,000 BC,’ and brings us ‘to 1,100 or 1,200 BC’, as the earliest time when we may suppose the collection of the Vedic hymns to have been finished.’

The Vedas were followed by *Upanishads*, a continuation of the Vedic philosophy and were composed between 800 and 400 BC. They elaborate on how the soul {*Atman*} can be united with the ultimate truth {*Brahman*} through ‘contemplation and mediation, as well as the doctrine of *Karma*-- the cumulative effects of a person's actions’. This was followed by other *Grantha*'s, *Purana*'s, *Greh Sutra*'s and other scriptures.

The epic *Mahabharata*, attributed to the sage Vyasa, was written somewhere 540 - 300 BC *Mahabharata* tells the legends of the *Bharatas*, a Vedic Aryan group. The *Ramayana*, attributed to the poet Valmiki, was written somewhere during the first century AD, although it is based on oral traditions that go back six or seven centuries earlier {700 – 800 BC}.

The Vedic literature that has come down to our times is attached to various schools or *shakhas*, more so in Kas'mira. ‘*Ashvalayana Rig Veda*’ manuscripts have been found in Kas'mira. Similarly ‘*Mauda Athar Veda*’, according to some scholars, existed in Kas'mira. Also ‘*Charayaniya Katha Yajur Veda*’ existed in Kas'mira while ‘*Bhallavi Sam Veda*’ is said to have been prevalent in Karnataka and parts of North India including Kas'mira. The aim of giving these *Shakha*'s of Vedas is to bring home that variation in these scriptures exist from one area to another and one should not be surprised to find differing contents in Kas'mira in comparison to Karnataka or for that matter even Tamil Nadu. But surely these variations are not major and mainly incorporate local tradition, deities and requirements. {I was surprised to find Hymns *Shiv Sankalp* in our Kas'miri *Panchang*, purportedly attributed to *Yajur Veda* and in each of six hymns Shiv {*Shiva*} is the centre of veneration. Hymn: “***Yata-Jagrato-duram udeti Devam, tado suptasy tathay-aeti. Doram-gamam jyotisham jyotir-ekam, tanme manam: Shivam-Sankalpam- asto***”. Yajur Veda, as composed, does not ever mention Shiv as one of the Aryan Gods. Whether it is the Yajur Veda of a Kas'mira School that has these hymns, unlikely or the *Panchang* composers have taken reader for granted for their ignorance- Author}.

**Vedic Religion and Gods.** Initial Vedic Religion is concerned mainly with the worship of gods that are largely personifications of the powers of nature. The hymns are mainly invocations of these gods, meant to accompany the oblation of *Soma* juice and fire sacrifice of melted butter. It was thus essentially a polytheistic religion, which assumes a pantheistic colouring only in a few of its latest hymns. **The gods mainly stated in the Rig Veda; thirty-three in number**, divided into three groups of eleven and further distributed in **Earth, Air, and Heaven**; the three divisions of the Universe. That they {Aryans} were

considered to have been originally mortal is implied in the statement that they acquired immortality by drinking *Soma* or by receiving it as a gift from **Agni {Fire}** and **Savitr** {Another God of Rig Veda. Savitr also finds mention in basic Hinduism *mantra; Gayatri Mantra*}. The gods were conceived as human in appearance, some appear equipped as warriors, especially **Indra** and others described as priests; especially **Agni** and **Brhaspati {Guru; Jupiter}**. The home of the gods is heaven, the third heaven, or the highest step of **Visnu** {Vishnu; this God of **Rig Veda** possibly transited to Vishnu of Hinduism but in the Rig Veda form he is just a god and not the supreme God as in current day Hinduism}, where cheered by draughts of *Soma* they live a life of bliss we find the deities Aditi {Consort of Visnu; Rig Veda Book 7; 49 – 5. **Hymn**: “Agni, to these men's hymns, from earth, from heaven, bring Mitra, Varuna, Indra, and Agni, And Aryaman, and **Aditi, and Vishnu**. Saraswati be joyful, and the Maruts”) and **Prajapati** identified not only with all the gods, but with nature as well. The *Vedic* gods may most conveniently be classified as deities of heaven, air, and earth, according to the threefold division suggested by the Rig Veda. The celestial gods mentioned are; **Dyaus, Varuna, Mitra, Surya, Savitr, Pusan**, the **Asvins**, and the goddesses **Usas** {Usha; Dawn}, and **Ratri** {Night}. The atmospheric gods are **Indra, Apam Napat, Rudra, Maruts, Vayu** {Air}, **Parjanya**, and the **Water**. The terrestrial deities are **Prthivi, Agni**, and **Soma**. Among the terrestrial deities are certain rivers that are personified and invoked in the Rig Veda. Thus the Sindhu (Indus) celebrated as a goddess in one hymn {“**Varuna cut the channels for thy forward course, O Sindhu, when thou rannest on to win the race. Rig Veda Book 10; 7- 2, 4, 6**”}, and the Vipas {Beas} and the Sutudri {Sutlej}, sister streams of the Punjab, in another {“**Like two bright mother cows who lick their youngling, Vipas and Sutudri speed down their waters. Rig Veda Book 3; 33**”}. Nilmat Puranam also talks of River Vipas {Beas} in Verse 107 thus {Translated}: “{**There is}) the auspicious Vipasa {Vipas; River Beas}, the pacifier of sins and giver of eternal bliss....**”. The most important and oftenest lauded is, however, the River Saraswati. Complete Hymn listed in Rig Veda Book 6; 61 and Book 7; 95 are in her praise as Goddess River. Their principal divinity was Indra, the god of war and thunder, whose power was capable of destroying the walls of cities, burning them down in order to conquer and pillage them. The contents of initial portion of Rig Veda would indicate and reflect confrontationist attitude and Indra was mainly used to destroy opposition. This can be attributed to their efforts to settle down, in the initial centuries, even at the cost of Dasayu’s, as early Aryans called dark skinned original inhabitants of Bharatvarsha. Invocation of Indra as God of thunder can also be attributed to the fact that Dasayu’s feared thunder.

**The most important *mantra* of the Vedas, which is considered the 'root' or all Vedas, is the *Gayatri Mantra*. It is so called because it is in *Gayatri* meter that is a triad comprising of 3 units of 8 letters each {The word '*Gayatri*' itself has spiritual connotation}.**

A peculiar feature of Rig Veda is the invocation of pairs of deities whose names are combined as compounds, each member of which is in the dual. About a dozen such pairs are celebrated in entire hymns and about a dozen more in detached stanzas. By far the largest number of hymns is addressed to the couple **Mitra-Varuna**, though the names most frequently found as dual compounds are those of **Dyava-Prthivi** {Heaven and Earth}. There are also a few more or less definite groups of deities, generally associated with some particular god. The Maruts, who attend on Indra, are the most numerous group. The smaller group of the Adityas, of whom Varuna is the chief, is constantly mentioned in company with their mother **Aditi**. Their number as stated in Rig Veda is seven and eight with the addition of *Martanda*. One passage {Rig Veda Book 2; 27- 1) enumerates six of them; Mitra, Aryaman, Bhaga, Varuna, Daksa and Amsa. Surya was probably regarded as the seventh.

**Vedic Goddesses.** Goddesses play an insignificant part in the Rig Veda. The only one of importance is Usas {Usha; Dawn} {Hymn: “**Dawn on us with prosperity, O Usas, Daughter of the Sky. Rig Veda Book 1; 48- 1**”}. Next comes Saraswati, celebrated in two whole hymns {Book 6; 61; Book 7; 95: } as well as parts of others, and *Vak* {*Vakh*; Speech.. Rig Veda Book 10; 71 and 125}. One hymn each are addressed Prthivi {Earth. Hymn: “**bearest the tool that rends the hills: Thou rich in torrents, who with might quickenest earth, O Mighty One. Rig Veda Book 5; 84-1**”}, Ratri {Night. Rig Veda Book 10; 127- 1. Hymn: “**With all her eyes the Goddess Night looks forth approaching many a spot: She hath put all her glories on.**”}, and Aranyani {Goddess of the Forest. Rig Veda Book 10; 146}. Others are only sporadically mentioned. The wives of the great gods are still more insignificant, being mere names formed from those of their consorts, and altogether lacking in individuality: such are Agnayi, Indrani, Varunani, spouses of Agni, Indra, and Varuna respectively.

**Importance of Some Vedic Gods.** **Vishnu**{Visnu} occupies a subordinate position in the Rig Veda, being celebrated in only five or six hymns. The only anthropomorphic traits mentioned about him are

the strides he takes and the description of him as a youth vast in body, who is no longer a child. Vishnu {Visnu} is also mentioned in Sam Veda and hymn in his praise in Book 8; 4 of Sam Veda. **Indra** alone is invoked in about one-fourth of the hymns of the Rig Veda, far more than addressed to any other deity; for he is the favourite national god of the Vedic people. **Indra is praised as the protector, helper, and friend of his worshippers. He is described as bestowing on them wealth, which is considered the result of victories.** His liberality is so characteristic that the frequent attribute *maghávan* {Bountiful} is almost exclusively his. Some ten hymns are addressed to **Surya**. Since the name designates the orb of the sun as well as the god, Surya is the most concrete of the solar deities, his connexion with the luminary always being present to the mind of the seers. Beside Indra, **Varuna** is the greatest of the gods of the Rig Veda, though the number of the hymns in which he is celebrated alone, apart from **Mitra**, is small; numbering hardly a dozen. Varuna is mainly lauded as upholder of physical and moral order. He is a great lord of the laws of nature. He established heaven and earth and his law holds heaven and earth apart. He made the golden swing, the sun to shine in heaven; he made a wide path for the sun; he placed fire in the waters, sun in the sky and *Soma* on the rock. The comprehensive group called *Vísve Deváh* {All-Gods} also occupy important position as a group, for at least forty entire hymns are addressed to them. It is an artificial sacrificial group intended to include all the gods in order that none should be left out in laudations meant for the whole pantheon. There is also mention of **Prajapati**, more so in Yajur Veda and termed as overlord. This is not specific but used as a term as the holly one above them all; more of a salutation in recognition of certain super powers. Three hymns are addressed to **Yama**, the chief of the blessed dead. He is associated with Varuna, Brhaspati, and especially *Agni*, the conductor of the dead, who is also called his friend and his priest. He is not expressly designated as god, but only a being who rules the dead. Thus we see that *Vedic* Gods, except for the name of Visnu {Vishnu}, are different from the Gods and Goddesses of Hinduism in later years/centuries. In fact except from Heaven, Fire {*Agni*}, Air {*Yayu*} and Water, which are objects of veneration in Hinduism also, none of the Gods or Goddesses find their way in the worshiped pantheon of later day Hinduism. However, the rivers mentioned in the Veda's did get recognition of being holly, some all over like Ganga, Yamuna, Saraswati while others on geographical lines.

Many Aryans accepted the Great Sage **Saraswat Muni** (son of *Rishi* Dadichi), living on the banks of Saraswati, as their *Guru*. There were about 60,000 (*Shatsahasara*) Brahmins who were his disciples, later called Saraswats or Saraswat Brahmins. When a severe famine, which lasted for about 12 years, hit the region and the crops were not enough to feed everyone, the survival of the Saraswats was at stake. When they could find no apparent solution to their vexing problem, at the advice of their *Guru*, who was pragmatic, they started to feed on fish from the Saraswati River for survival. Thus they became the only fish-eating Brahmins ever known. This settlement was in the land between the Saraswati and *Drishadvati* rivers. {Ghaggar River which reaches the Hakra branch in Bahawalpur {Pakistan}, is traditionally identified with the Saraswati river { Sir Auriel Stein's explorations in the Valley: Ancient India by Sir M A Stein 1949}; 25 Harappan sites were discovered in the 'region beginning right from the Pakistan border {eastwards} up to midway between Hanumangarh {called *BhaTner* or *Bhattinagara*} and Suratgarh in the Saraswati valley and about 25 kilometers east of Bhadra {All in Rajashtan} called *Drishadvati* valley'. The migration happened not overnight but spread over centuries. The last of the exodus, as described above, was in about 350 BC due to a wide spread famine, which lasted for 12 years. These Saraswats migrated in **three** directions, mostly followed the river routes and migrated to the Southwest {Sind}, North {Kas'mira}, East {Bihar}. This also caters for the fish eating habits of Aryan Saraswat Brahmins not only of Kas'mira but of other places too.

Religion and philosophy in the later Vedic period became more confirmed with elaborate sacrifices and amalgamation with philosophy, rituals of original inhabitants of *Bharatvarsha*. The doctrines of *Karma*, *Maya*, *Atma*, and *Mukti* were established. Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswara {Shiva} became the important gods who were worshipped. In India, a thousand years would pass before there was a noticeable change in the religious thinking. A new kind of spirituality and with it a new way of looking at the gods came due to the teachings of the Brahmans {the priests et monks of *Bharatvarsha*}. These men who refused to commit any act of violence, demonstrated by the example of their saintly life that; **'the gods were not there to kill all living things, but instead to help the weak and to inspire the human race to live in a new spirit of conciliation and a search for perfection'**. This new faith found one of its principal tenants in the **theory of the reincarnation cycles of the lives of souls, which are sent back to earth until they are judged to be worthy of going up to heaven and becoming immortal, like the gods. From this evolution of spirituality was born successively; Hinduism with a pantheon of Gods and Goddesses, Buddhism and Jainism, which replaced the Vedic religion.** As the time passed many differing forms of Gods and Goddesses, mostly pertaining to geographic areas in *Bharatvarsha* manifested. This stage came not with the

Aryan scriptures alone but new scriptures in praise of Gods and Goddesses being composed. Gods and Goddesses started taking a definite shape and sculptures made for their worship. Many remained as cosmic deities and even the same God or Goddess being venerated in many forms {*Roop*}. These forms differed and so also their religious veneration, depending upon a particular demographic area. These forms first in thought process and refined further took sculptured forms on rocks, then idols and replaced by metal idols; surprisingly mostly black. **Was it availability of black coloured metal or the new Gods/Goddesses being ‘created’ by indigenous Brahmans {Dasayu’s, Dravidians}? Answer is both. Gods/Goddesses took the indigenous hues of the inhabitants and transformed into reality with the available metal. Enterprising as they were, they even found the alloys and mix which gave black hue, like *Ashtadattu* {Black alloy made from eight metals}.**

### **Nilmat Puranam And Earliest Religion in Kas’mira**

**Nilmat Puranam.** The Aryans settled alongside the Indus Valley Civilisation and along the banks of Saraswati River, extending up to the Indus {Sindhu} Basin. As the mythical river Saraswati dried up and their numbers rose, they migrated to other areas including present day Punjab {India and as well as Pakistan} and further to the plains of Yamuna – Ganga- Saryu Rivers. An enterprising batch went back to the mountains in the north to reside in the Kas’mira Valley of whose beauty and salubrious climate they had heard from their forefathers, who used to go there during summer. They sought the protection of Nila; the King of the Naga’s who then ruled over Kas’mira and sought his permission to settle in the Valley permanently **as his subjects**. Nila listened to their tale of woe sympathetically, **but promised the requested permission on condition that they conformed to the social usages and customs of the Naga’s**. They agreed to these conditions and Naga chief permitted them to reside in the Valley. Initially the period was about six months in a year, as Aryans moved out during cold and snow period. Their permanent move into the valley connected with Naga rituals to be adopted by them is best narrated by the following passage {edited} from Nilmat Puranam. **“After the passing away of the four ages, the Manava’s {Aryans}, as usual, had gone out for six months. An old Brahman, Candradeva did not accompany them. Troubled by the Pis’acas, he approached the Naga King Nila and begged of him to ordain that Manava’s {Manu’s; Aryans} might henceforth inhabit Kas’mira without the fear of emigration. Nila complied with this request on the condition that the Manava’s {Manu’s : Aryans} should follow his instructions revealed to him {Nila} by God Kesava {Shiva}. Candradeva lived for six months in the palace of Nila and was initiated into the mysteries of rites or ceremonies prescribed by Nila. In Chaitra {March}, when the emigrant population of Kas’mira {Manu’s: Aryans} came back, he related the whole incident to Virodaya - King of Manava’s {Manu’s: Aryans}. The lengthy dialogue held between Nila and Candradeva, later narrated to Aryan King describes sixty-five rites ceremonies and festivals many of which are similar to those mentioned in other *Puranic* works and observed in many parts of *Bharatvarsha*, while a few are peculiar to Kas’mira only.**

Our oldest religious scripture, Nilmat Puranam, is one of the famous *Purana*’s that deals with the Valley of Kas’mira in respect of its ancient history, evolution of Kas’mira, original inhabitants; Naga’s, Daitaya’s, Pis’acas and Manus {Aryans; Aryan Saraswat Brahmans}, the style of living of Naga’s and Manu’s, then religion, customs, festivals and topography, 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 Kas’mira in the beginning}, 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 {Eulogy of a deity or a place of worship} 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. Amongst the known 51 *Mahatmya*’s pertaining to Kas’mira, the *Vitasta Mahatmaya* {**Nilmat Puranam**} is the longest one, divided into 35 *Patalas* {Chapters}. *Mahatmya*’s generally set forth different legends connected with various places of pilgrimage, 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 and faith. Some of the rituals and festivals find mention in other *Purana*’s also some are celebrated even today in Kas’mira only; like *Kaw Poonim*{Full Moon {*Puranmashi*}dedicated to Crow {*Kaw*}{Full Moon of *Margisha* {Magh} month} and *Yaksha Amavas* {*Khichri Mavas; Amavasya* 15<sup>th</sup> of Dark Half of the *Pausha month*}. It is generally thought that Nilmat 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 now followed by Aryans in *Bharatvarsha* 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*.

**Veda Connection of Nilmat Puranam.** There is an erroneous impression that Nilmat Puranam is completely Naga centric; 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, Shiva, Hari {Vishnu}** 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 Indra also connects it to **Veda** God's and Goddess's, wherein Indra holds the prime position of God of God's. **Hymn {Nilmat Puranam}** “ **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 Indra {Protector} of the Aryans {Verse 369 Nilmat Puranam. 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 indicates that when Manu's {Aryans} entered Kas'mira, Nila headed the Neolithic people. It also 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*.

Veda's talk about rivers, which have been imported in the Nilmat, like Ganga, Yamuna etc. Similarly *Gotra* heads like Vasishta, Pulastya, Agastya etc have been mentioned and who have been associated with the *Gotra*'s of the Aryans, when they started along the Saraswati Bank Ashrams. Places like Mathura, Prayaga etc too have been mentioned, which strengthens the argument Nilmat having Aryan and Dasayus connection. A close study of Nilmat Puranam will show that certain days/*tithi*'s have been specifically mentioned for certain rituals. Use of Brahminical calendar {Bright Moon and Dark Moon fortnight}, which started in *Bharatvarsha*, also indicates this umbilical cord to pre Vedic era, 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}.**

Vitasta {River Wyeth, Jhelum}, the main source of water of the valley is mentioned in detail, including its origin, role as goddess and equation with Yamuna. Vitasta name is ante Rig Veda; possibly associated with the time of Neolithic man {Harappan Civilisation - 2600-2500 BC} in the valley. River Vitasta is also mentioned in the *mantras* of the Aryans and its degree of sacredness gets equated with Ganga and Yamuna {In Nilmat it is equated with Yamuna and Sindhu {Lower Indus} with Ganga} in Rig Veda thus {Translated}; “**Favour ye this my lord, O Ganga, Yamuna, O Satudri, Parusni and Saraswati: With Asikni, Vitasta, O Marudvrudha, O Arjikiya with Susoma hear my call {Rig Veda 10: 75” 5}**”. This name of Vitasta and other rivers later percolated to Aryans and others in *Bharatvarsha*.

**Nilmat Authorship.** The author of Nilmat Puranam is not known or mentioned anywhere in Nilmat 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. The language employed originally has remained intact during the course of centuries, narration is of high scholarly content and grammatically correct in nature.

**Dating of Nilmat Puranam Composition.** Kalhan (12th Century A.D.) refers to Nilmat Puranam as a work of great antiquity. In the Puranam, 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 *Tulasi*, 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 King Laksmidhara {1104-1154 AD}

indicate its early date. **Some scholars claim it to be composed during BC era. Now analysis of it being composed/written during BC era.** Gautam Buddha {May 623-547 BC} is mentioned as incarnation of Vishnu in the Nilmat Puranam, even though the verse is in 'future tense'. Verses 709-710a and 710b-12 talks about 'Buddha being born' as incarnation of Vishnu and how his worship is to be performed on Buddha Purnima. Based on contents of the verses these 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 Buddha and words 'shall be born' have been used. There were no *Sakyas* {Buddhist Preachers} or *Vihara's* {Buddhist Monasteries} or these nomenclatures before the birth of Buddha. 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 Buddha 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*} which would have come up only after Buddhism had spread in the valley, indicator of an AD effort. There is no mention of Adi-Shankara {of 5<sup>th</sup> Century BC}, who for Brahmins was on equal footing with that of Buddha. It also does not speak about King Gopaditya {417-357 BC}, who established *Gopadiri Agrahara* {*Shankaracharaya*} or King Kanishka {100 AD} who gave impetus to Buddhism in the valley. **Now about the script used in the scripture.** With the contents and manuscripts found, it is evident that the Puranam was not written in *Khartoshi* {*Kharosthi*}. *Kharosthi* script {*Khartoshi*- written from right to left} ceased to be in vogue by about 5<sup>th</sup> Century AD in North-western India including Kas'mira, where it had flourished. If it was a Pre BC effort it would have been in *Khartoshi* {*Kharosthi*} script with the expressions, sequences and phrasing being of different nature. Other subtle indicator; pre BC era had lot of stress on wild game, a practice which declined closer to AD era due to spread of Buddhism and as cultivation of Rice and Barley picked up and are not mentioned in Nilmat Puranam

**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. Buddhism started in Kas'mira from the time of Ashoka, who extended full control over Kas'mira till end of 100 AD, continued further for a while till about 300 BC and thereafter 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, not normally known to have existed in Kas'mira, 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. Inhuman trait of Mihir Kula could not stand for long. He adopted Brahmanism and established famous Maheshwar temple, known now as Mamleshwar temple at Pahalgam}. A flicker of renaissance of Brahmanism started around this time and can be taken as the era of full revival of Brahmanism in Kas'mira when Pravarsena {6<sup>th</sup> Century AD} ruled the valley. {Pravarsena installed *Sri Chakra* at *Chakreshwar*, established present city of Srinagar, built first *Nav Setu* {Bridge} near *Maisuma* {Srinagar} over *Vitasta* and gave impetus to Brahmanism}. 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 Nilmat Puranam**. King Gopaditya {Early 7<sup>th</sup> Century}, sixth in line after Mihir Kula, expelled Brahmins {as during Mihir Kula's reign, 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 Brahmanism. **It is during this period that Brahmins and Naga's joined together to kill Buddhists in larger numbers. This indicates continued dwellings of Naga's till about 7<sup>th</sup> Century.** Thousands of monasteries were burnt and thousands of villages that supported those monasteries were given to Brahmins as *Agraharas* {*Jagirs* for the financial support of the Brahmanical places of worship}. Brahmins succeeded in re-establishing their supremacy, though gradually, set themselves in right earnest in strengthening themselves and their position. Scholarly works of Brahmanism picked up good points of Buddhism were incorporated in their rituals and scriptures. Once again Brahmanism in Kas'mira began its growth and this period saw many Kas'miri scholars {Buddhists 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, Chandracharaya, a Sanskrit Grammarian, had come on the scene to give impetus to Sanskrit, which started developing after *Khartoshi* {*Kharosthi*} was passing into oblivion.. 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 {724-761 AD - Karkota Dynasty. Lalitaditya, the third son of the Karkota King Partapaditya II, succeeded his brother Tarapida in 724 AD. His mother was the mistress of a rich merchant. Attracted by her beauty, Partapaditya married her. Kalhan says the marriage was a result of their mutual consent and the agreement of the merchant}. This Vaishnavite philosophy is evident from the contents of the Nilmat Puranam. It is evident that verses connected with Buddha 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. King Lalitaditya's reign, as a King of Vaishnavite Philosophy tolerated Buddhism also and never allowed remaining *Sakya's* and *Vihara's* to be converted. **The aim of this narration of resurgence was to bring home the point that it was during this period Nilmat was composed and written.**

The contents of the scripture has brief mention of Buddhist or vegetarian habits in rituals, which indicates of waning 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 around Mihir Kula's time {515-550 AD}, 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 4th Century BC, though Goddess **Bhadrakali** had manifested earlier but rituals connected with her *Puja* had taken a back seat during the spread of Buddhism. There was renaissance of the **Bhadrakali Pujan during AD era**. There is also mention of visit to courtesans by sporting men on certain days/functions. From various chronicles, such system was an AD era ritual, more so when Brahmins, even Kings, had adopted wayward methods of this nature. There is no mention of Adi Shankara's {May/Jun 805 – May Jun 837 AD} Shaivite rituals, philosophy in the scripture, which precludes it to be 9<sup>th</sup> Century effort. **The aim of the above is to place the environment, which was fit for the conceptualisation of Nilmat Puranam.**

**Rituals and Written Form of Nilmat Puranam.** All indicators and contents it is apparent that Nilmat Puranam was written during the later Vaishnavite period {6<sup>th</sup> Century}, when this philosophy had just re-started taking roots. **It is possible that a Buddhist Scholar converted to Brahmanism in 6<sup>th</sup> Century is the author of Nilmat Puranam and wanted to remain anonymous due to his earlier religious inclinations. This is also indicated from other subtle contents; importance of *Purana's* and admixes of Brahmanical, Naga and Buddhist rituals.** However, it must be understood that the date band pertains to writing only, while the contents, mixed rituals would have been in vogue for centuries for the author to reduce them to writing. The author possibly could not have made a fiction of realistic and actual rituals and way of life. Many of the rituals mentioned had started with Naga inhabitants but after Veda's had been composed, these rituals and way of living firmed up and got modified as the Aryans settled down in Kas'mira, adopted Naga culture and created a conducive atmosphere with Naga's to make them incorporate and accept parts of their {Aryan} way of life, rituals and forms of worship. The Gods and Goddesses quoted in Nilmat are not from Veda's, but a new line which developed with the mixed civilisation of original inhabitants of *Bharatvarsha* and Aryans; some where around 500 - 400 BC. This is the period {400- 200 BC} that major portion of the way of life, rituals and forms of worship, as mentioned in Nilmat manifested in *Bharatvarsha* as well as Kas'mira. Many changes and additions in these crept in during later centuries {100 BC – 400 AD} and found their way in the written Nilmat Puranam, which by now represented compendium of way of life, rituals and forms of worship encompassing a broad band of 400 BC to 400 AD. Thus the writing of the Nilmat Puranam can be dated to around 500 BC.

The textual study of the work shows that some alterations and additions **may have** been made after ninth or tenth century AD in order to incorporate few rituals of the monistic Shaivite Philosophy of Kas'mira. **Dr Buhler**, a German Scholar who travelled in *Bharatvarsha* and Kas'mira during mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century, goes the credit of saving Nilmat Puranam manuscripts from going into oblivion, states in his Report, **"Its great value lies therein that it is a real mine of information regarding the sacred places of Kas'mira 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}.

**Religious Philosophy Contents.** Concerning religious life it shows not only the other cults adopting the Naga deities but also the Naga cult bringing the deities of other cults into its fold. *Bhava Mahadva* and *Sambhu* which are names of Shiva; *Guha* and *Kumara* which are names of Shiva's son; *Narayana* and the four *yugas*; *Vasudeva*, *Sankarsana*, *Anirudha* and *Pradyumna*; the epic heroes *Rama*, *Lakshmana* and

*Yudhishthira* all appear in the Naga list of the Nilmat. On the whole the Nilmat reveals the spirit of compromise and synthesis in the field of religion. The Brahmanic deities, the Naga's, the Pis'acas and the Buddha, all receive their due share of worship from 'inhabitants of Kas'mira'. It would be going too far to suggest that it contains the tenets of the Monistic Shaiva philosophy of Kas'mira only. It is clear that the cult of Vishnu, Brahma, Shiva, Surya, Durga, Bhadrakali, Naga's, Buddha etc flourished side by side in the time of the Nilmat. Vaishnavism no doubt occupies a prominent place in this work but there is no indication of the creator of the creator; Brahma. Uma, the Goddess is the mother antagonistic attitude towards other cults.

**Gods and Goddesses of Nilmat.** The theology of the Nilmat is replete with numerous Gods and Goddesses. The trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva play due role but there are others like Indra, Varuna, Yama, Kartikeya, Baladeva; Asvina, Visvedeva's, Vasu's, Yaksa's, Naga's, Gandharva's, Prthivi, Surabhi, Sita, Sati {Sati – after whom the lake was named}, Laksmi, Durga, Bhadrakali, Uma, Syama, Bharati, Prajna, Mati etc. The tendency of describing one deity as the highest among others at one time and transferring the same epithet to the other at another time is clearly perceptible in the praises of Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, Nila and the Goddesses Bhadrakali, Uma and Laksmi. At some places, Vishnu is praised as the best amongst the gods; unfathomable, the highest, the eternal, the refuge of all gods, the lord of the gods, cause of the causes of the world, the lord of three worlds, worshipped by Shiva, praised by Brahma. Later the focus suddenly shifts to Shiva. In fact there is lot of mention of Shiva and his consort but few rituals connected with *Shiv- Parvati Pujan*.

### **Earliest Religion of Kas'mira**

**Aboriginal {Neolithic} Beliefs.** The earliest inhabitants of Kas'mira probably cherished some aboriginal beliefs, the details of which are not traceable now. The snake-cult or Naga-worship seems to have been established in the valley from a remote period and undoubtedly had been one of the earliest religions of the land. In the third century BC, Buddhism seems to have made some headway, converted a large number of people and overshadowed the Naga cult, which ultimately sunk into oblivion. Among Hindu Gods, Shiva either originated or entered the valley sometime before Buddhism made its entrance around 3<sup>rd</sup> Century BC, followed by Vishnu, Surya and other Brahminical gods and goddesses from *Bharatvarsha*. A brief history of the different types of religious cults and beliefs of early Kas'mira, may be sketched as follows.

Kas'mira was one of the principal centres of serpent-worship in India. Though detailed evidence is lacking, there is no doubt that snake-worship prevailed in the valley from a very early period; possibly from the later Neolithic period and beginning of Megalithic period. Regarding the exact date when the snake-cult was prevalent in the land, no direct testimony is available. **But there are reasons to believe that in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Centuries BC**, it might have been the principal religion of Kas'mira. In the Mahavamsa, it is said that Ashoka's adviser *Moggaliputta Tissa* sent Majjhantika, his disciple, to preach Buddhism in Kas'mira {3<sup>rd</sup> Century BC}. When he reached the valley, he found that *Aravala*, the king of the Naga's, was ruling over it. *Aravala* was destroying the corns of the country by hailstorm. Majjhantika, however, due to his remained unaffected from rains and storms. This made the Naga king furious who sent lightning and struck rocks against the Buddhist monk in order to kill him; all in vain. Convinced of the great powers of Majjhantika, Naga king *Aravala*, together with his followers, submitted before the monk and accepted Buddhism. This was followed by the conversion of large number of Naga worshippers of Kas'mira and Gandhara {Northwest Frontier and Afghanistan} into Buddhism. Huen Tsang, who visited Kas'mira in 631 AD, also writes that Kas'mira was originally a 'dragon' lake. A very detailed and vivid account of how the *Arhat* {Buddhist Monk} Madhyantika {apparently Majjhantika} rescued the valley of Kas'mira from the Naga's, established the religion of Buddha and settled 500 *Arhat's* in the country, has been preserved in the Chinese *Vinaya* of the *Mula-Sarvasti-Vadin* sect. The Tibetan scholar *Bu-ston*, who composed his famous history of Buddhism in the 14th century AD, points out that "when Madhyanti {Buddhist Monk Madhyantika apparently Majjhantika} went to Kas'mira to preach Buddhism, he found the Naga's 'presiding' in the valley. They at first gave a tough opposition to Madhyantika, but at the end, the Buddhist monk succeeded in subduing the Naga's". That Naga-worship prevailed in early Kas'mira receives confirmation not only from the accounts of Ceylon, China and Tibet but also from literatures and scriptures found in *Bharatvarsha*. It may not be true that the entire inhabitants of Kas'mira then were Naga's only. Aryans had since moved in and had mixed well, culturally and socially, with Naga's. Any mention of merely Naga's must, therefore, be construed as the mixed society of Naga's and Aryans. Motivated by the breadth of cultural ethos, the Aryans having come into contact with the aboriginal Naga worshippers were not ruthless in extirpating and decimating the contents and contours of their faith. Instead they assimilated their {Naga}

faith and modes of worship without resorting to religious persecution. It goes to the credit of Aryans that, as promised to Naga King Nila, they stood by their undertaking of adopting Naga way of life in Kas'mira.

**Naga Worship Ritual.** The Naga's were 'supposed', according to the Nilmat Puranam, to reside in the lakes and springs of the valley. What is meant that the Naga settlements were closer to lakes and springs, the major source of water. With the draining of water from Satisar and formation of *Karewa's* {*Uddars* in *Kas'miri*}, the sources of perennial water had reduced to available at lakes, small or big, and springs. Naturally these also became the sites of veneration. Even now names of places like Verinag, Anantanag, etc; mostly in South Kas'mira, show traces of ancient Naga beliefs. That the Naga's were eminently popular deities in the happy valley is also testified to by Kalhan's Chronicle *Rajatarangini* that Kas'mira was a '**land protected by Nila, the lord of all Naga's**'. Verse 983 of Nilmat Puranam {Translated} says thus of Naga's; "**All the Naga's are boon-givers, all are obedient to Nila and all are great favourites of the high-minded Vasuki {The serpent Deity}**".

Even when Buddhism had undermined the Naga beliefs, one of its kings Gonanda III {3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> Century AD?} is said to have reintroduced the pilgrimages, sacrifices and other worship in honour of the Naga's, as they had been before. Kalhan in *Rajatarangini*, written by the chronicler between 1148-50 AD, speaks of the annual festivals in honour of Naga Mahapadma, the tutelary serpent deity of the Wular lake and Great Serpent King Taksaka; '**Frequented by dances and strolling players and thronged by crowds of spectators**' which was celebrated on the 12<sup>th</sup> day of the dark half of *Zyeshtha*. Kshemendra {It is presumed that he was born during the period when King Ananta Raja (1028-1063 AD) ruled Kas'mira} also refers to this as '*Taksak Avatra*' festival in his *Samayamatrka* (*Samayamatrka*, ii, 88). Thus the Naga-cult prevailed in the valley throughout the Hindu rule and even afterwards, somewhere upto 6<sup>th</sup> Century. It was not solely Naga Cult but mixed one, which by now had assimilated parts of Buddhist rituals and way of life. Abul Fazal, the chronicler during Mogul King Akbar's time, tells us that during the reign of Akbar {1556-1605 AD} there were 45 places dedicated Shiva, 64 to Vishnu, 3 to Brahma and 22 to Durga, but there were 700 places in the valley where there were carved images of snakes in Kas'mira, which the inhabitants worshipped. Meat seems to have been a popular item of diet of that era otherwise there would have been no necessity of 'strongly prohibiting' eating of meat for five days dedicated to the worship of Vishnu, as mentioned in one of the verses of Nilmat Puranam. Wine was also recommended as a drink on new snowfall day and *Iraman Jari Pujana*, which was a ritual in normal course with Aryans in the form of *Soma* Juice.

Even the Naga deity Nila is described as the lord of the gods, the creator of the creator, illuminating Brahma. Uma is the mother of all gods, higher than *Sarva*, and Lakshmi is raised to the highest position by saying that all the goddesses are her forms. The idea that the whole world is God or a manifestation of God is also present in the Nilmat. The whole earth is a form of the Goddess *Sati*. The earth, the water, the air, the sky, the fire, the sun, the moon, and the 'sacrificer', all these are regarded as eight forms of *Shiva*. Here we find that connection with Veda's is re-established. Aryans too venerated these elements and had elevated them to the pedestal of Aryan Gods and this includes the 'sacrificer', who forms the important element of Yajur Veda, containing sacrificial ceremony hymns.

Most of the rites prescribed by Nila are concerned with popular deities. There are some festivals, which are particularly connected with the worship of Naga or serpent. Nila was worshipped on the first snowfall. He and Naga's were 'propitiated' with drinking of wine on the *Iraman Jari Puja* {New Snow Fall Day; In Kas'miri *Navsheen*} festivity, which took place on first snow fall, generally during December. Another ceremony called *Varuna Panchami* was held on the fifth day of *Bhadra* and was connected with the worship of king Nila. A large number of temples, built near some of the famous springs and undoubtedly early origin of the pilgrimage centres clearly point out the popularity of the Naga-cult in ancient Kas'mira. There is specific mention of Bhadrakali Puja in Nilmat Puranam {Verse 674 Nilmat Puranam; "**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 in *Bharatvarasha*; somewhere in 5<sup>th</sup> Century BC. From the contents it appears that Goddess Bhadrakali was not only worshipped in *Bharatvarsha* but also in Kas'mira by Naga's as well as Aryans. It is, however, difficult to enumerate or deduce as to which Gods or Goddesses from the pantheon mentioned in Nilmat were exclusively worshiped either by Naga's or by Aryans. The list appears to be common, indicative of equal stress by both communities.

## Religious Era's of Kas'mira

**General.** Aryan's laid foundation of Vedic Era, which laid initial foundation of a religion which was to develop in later centuries; Brahmanism, what is also now called Hinduism. Brahmanism did not come on its own but started in the later Vedic period or **Brahmanic Period** {1000-500 BC}, with the amalgamation of Vedic and indigenous culture. During 800- 600 BC many religious codes were codified, composed and written later, new names of amalgamated Gods/Goddesses formed up and a distinct religion of Brahmanism took roots in *Bharatvarsha*. By 600 BC the Triad of Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma had replaced Vedic Gods, with predominance of Vishnu as the supreme of God's. With the passage of time priority within the triad, in *Bharatvarsha*, changed from one to another, Shiva also getting prominence. For Brahma, it was least, possibly due to his creation attributed from the naval of Vishnu, who at most of the times was also called the "creator". This era also percolated down to Kas'mira through immigrants; Aryans as well as Naga's. There are **five** different periods pertaining to variant eras of subsequent religion, in Kas'mira, which are important for purpose of this evaluation. **First**, when Aryan Saraswat's settled in Kas'mira and Vaishnavite Brahmanism took shape mixed with Naga rituals; **Second**, advent of Buddhism; **Third**, Shaivism taking firm routes and **finally** changes that took place during the subsequent centuries.

**Vaishnavite Brahmanism.** The cult of Vishnu seems to have existed in Kas'mira from a very early period. Lack of material, however, prevents me from tracing its origin and early character. Vaishnavite Brahmanism mixed with rituals of Naga's and not so strong Shaivite faith formed the religion of mixed inhabitants of Kas'mira, till appearance of Emperor Ashoka along with 5000 Bikshus {300 BC} to propagate Buddhism {**Though Ashoka is mentioned to have come to Kas'mira, many scholars feel that he did not visit Kas'mira and the spread of Buddhism is attributed to Bikshus specifically ordained and given this task by him. In fact artefacts, Vihara's or any relics of that period do not confirm or deny his visit. In fact another Ashoka ruled Kas'mira in 250 AD and many time historians have mixed up the two kings**}. In later centuries Vaishnavite faith, Buddhist and Shaivite thoughts co-existed with worshipping of Triad; Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma and their Consorts; Parvati or Uma {Consort of Shiva}, Lakshmi (Consort of Vishnu) and Vagheshwari or Saraswati (Consort of Brahma). Each manifestation of these Goddesses had a benedictory role; not mixed with roles of other Goddess Consorts. In the Vaishnavism of Kas'mira, we find a synthesis of different Vaishnava cults, which were current in ancient *Bharatvarsha* too. In it seems that the faith of Vedic Vishnu, the system of *Pancaratra* School, religion of the *Satvats* and faith in the cowherd god Gopala Krishna to have mingled. Rama was worshipped as an incarnation of Vishnu, but there is no definite evidence of the existence of Rama-cult in early Kas'mira. In *Mahabharata* a Kas'mira clan is named in and Nilmat Puranam, a Vaishnavite work, declares Kas'mira as the seat of *Cakradhara- Cakrin* {Vishnu}.

**Progress till 9<sup>th</sup> Century.** Apart from Nilmat Puranam, which frequently mentions *Vishnu* and his worship, the other earliest historical reference to the worship of Vishnu occurs in the pages of the *Rajatarangini*, where it is said that an image of Vishnu *Jayasvamin* was consecrated by King Pravarsena II {End of the 6<sup>th</sup> Century AD}. A flicker of renaissance of Brahmanism in Kas'mira started when Pravarsena {6<sup>th</sup> Century AD} ruled the valley, an era of full revival of Brahmanism when the Buddhism had not fully waned. {Pravarsena installed *Sri Chakra* at *Chakreshwar*, and established present city of Srinagar. {The present city of Srinagar was founded under the name of Grinagari by Emperor Ashoka {3<sup>rd</sup> Century BC} established between Zabarwan Hills and Pandrethan {Eastern and Southern outskirts of present day Srinagar}. Later, according to Kalhan, Magadh King, Ashoka {different from Ashoka the Great} annexed Kas'mira in 250 AD and built new city of Shri Nagri, five kilometres from the present Srinagar city which stretched from Harwan to Zewan {Again outskirts of Srinagar City and further south of Pandrethan. Four centuries later Pravarsena II moved his capital farther down the river Vitasta, calling it Pravarpura. Gradually the younger city not only deprived its older rival of all its importance but also Ashoka's city came to be known simply by the appellation of 'Puranadhishtan' {old Capital. Pandrethan, on the outskirts of Srinagar is the corrupted name of Puranadhishtan}. This name was still in use as early as the time of Huen Tsang, who visited Kas'mira in 631 AD. It is in the later centuries the city of Pravarpura, after Lalitaditya {8<sup>th</sup> Century} established another new capital Parihaspura, Pravarpura like Puranadhishtan reverted back to be called as Shri Nagri. This continued as Jayapira {764- 95 AD} tried to construct new capital at Anderkot called Jaya Pura, Avanti Varman {Utpal Dynasty; 855- June 883 AD} during his reign shifted the focus away from Pravarpura to Awantipur and later Shankar Varman {883-902 AD} shifted to Pattan, then called

Shankarpura-Pattan. Incidentally *Baharistan-e-Shahi*, a muslim history of Kas'mira written during 1593-1614 AD, refers to Srinagar as *Shahr-i -Kas'mira*, which later became *Shahr* for rural people while referring to Srinagar}. Once the Buddhism waned it was the Karkota Dynasty {627 – 761 AD} {Founder Durlabha Vardhana, who came from Kanoj, who brought fresh Vaishnavite philosophy to Kas'mira. The kings of the Karkota dynasty were followers of Hinduism and worshipped in general gods like Vishnu, Shiva and Surya; all belonging to the Hindu pantheon}. Vishnu worship flourished further during the rule of Lalitaditya, a great devotee of Vishnu. At Huskapura {Uskar; Ushkar or Wushkur of Baramulla District} he built a splendid shrine of Vishnu *Muktasvamin* and made an offering of some villages to Vishnu {The name is a corruption of Huvishkapura, which, according to Kalhan, was the name of a city founded by Huvishka, Kushan king in the second century AD}. In the town of Parihasapura {Close to Shadipur, the confluence of Lower Indus and Vitasta on the Karewas {*Udhars*} of Paraspore and Divar; situated at a distance of 23 Kilometres from Srinagar on the Baramulla road}, which the monarch constructed in honour of his adored deity, he built the glorious silver statue of Vishnu *Parihasakesava*. He built four Vishnu temples and a Buddhist *Vihara*. Kalhan gives their names as ***Parihaskesava, Muktakesava, Mahavaraha, Govardhanadara*** and ***Raja Vihara***. His queen Kamalavati also put up a large silver image of Vishnu in one of the temples built exclusively by her. Nonetheless, some of the monarchs of this dynasty {Karkota} also gave liberal patronage to Buddhism. Some of the later Kings of Karkota and of Utpala dynasty {855- 939 AD} also adhered to the faith of Vishnu. Avantivarman (855-883 AD), the first King from Utpala Dynasty is termed as the first Vaishnavite King of Kas'mira, who built the shrines of Vishnu *Avantisvamin*, even before he became a king. Lastly, Suyya, the irrigation minister of Avantivarman built Vishnu temple at the 'new' confluence of Sindhu and Vitasta {Shadipur - Prayag of Kas'mira} of *Hrsikesa Yogasayin*. The popularity of the cult of Vishnu in the valley during the 8th and 9th centuries is further attested to by a number of images discovered from various ancient ruins. These include Vijabror{Vijeshwara; Bijhbeara}, three-faced Vishnu figures carved on the walls of the *Martanda* temple, relief sculptures of *Chaturbhuj*a Vishnu and Vishnu seated from the ruins of Andarkot {Near Sumbal. At a distance of a mile from it is situated Andarkot, known originally by the name of Jaya Pura, the capital of King Jayapida} and four-headed Vishnu images from Avantipura and the surroundings. The development of Vaishnavism in Kas'mira, from the 10th Century onwards, continued at slower scale, which includes patronage and temple constructions by Queen's Sugandha {904-906 AD} and Didda {958-980- as regent for Abhimanyu II and later as ruler 980 AD to 1003 AD} founded a series of Vishnu shrines. The iconoclast King Harsha {1089-1101 AD} destroyed a large number of temples including famous *Parihasakesava* but his successor Uccala {1101- 1111AD} put up a new image. Amongst the later Hindu kings who professed *Vaishnavism*, historian Jonaraja {1389- 1459 AD. *Rajatarangini* started by Kalhan upto 1150 AD, was updated from time to time; Jonaraja updated it upto 1459 AD} mentions Rama Deva {1252-1273 A D} who renewed the Vishnu temple at Utpalapura and Udayan Deva {1321- 1323 and 1326-41 AD} who gave all golden armaments in his treasury to Vishnu. Abul Fazal, the chronicler during Mogul King Akbar's time, tells us that during the reign of Akbar {1556-1605 AD} there were 64 major places dedicated to the worship of Vishnu, in Kas'mira.

**Spread of Buddhism.** Buddhism made initial inroads in *Bharatvarsha* as well as Kas'mira for the period 300 BC to about 200 AD. In Kas'mira it can be said that it reached its peak during Kanishka's time. It did not 'materially' alter the religion of the inhabitants of Kas'mira. Verses 709-710a of Nilmat Puranam holds Buddha as the incarnation of *Vishnu* and mentions him 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 Pusya {Nakshatra} is joined with the moon, in the month of Vaisaksha {Baisakh}, in twenty eighth Kali Age”**. Verses 710b-12{Translated} lays down the form of worship of Buddha on his birthday, Buddha Purnima; **“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 Sakya’s {Vihara’s} should be whitewashed with care”**. Buddhism started in Kas'mira from the time when Ashoka {273 – 232 BC} 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}. Accounts of Chinese travellers/scholars to this region claim Buddhism had spread in Kas'mira just fifty years after Gautam Buddha {May 623 – 547 BC} i.e. around 500 BC. Chinese scholars believe that Madhyantik {Majhantik} disciple of famous Buddhist scholar **Anant** was the first man to preach Buddhism in Kas'mira. {Anant, famous Buddhist scholar and a monk who lived in Ayodhya. It is after him the important fast of *Anant Chaturdeshi* {*Bhadra Shukla Paksh*- Full Moon Fortnight} is undertaken by women throughout *Bharatvarsha* and Kas'mira. When he visited his

disciple in Kas'mira, spring where he meditated, was named after him; the present day Anant Nag. This very Buddhist preacher, Madhyantik {Majhantik}, is supposed to have introduced the farming and cultivation of world famous saffron in the valley and not the Iranians, as we are made to believe}. Famous Chinese traveller Huen Tsang {7th Century; 631 A D} records that it was during Kanishka's reign {King Kanishka {25-60 AD, Kushan Dynasty}, city of 'Kanishkapur' was raised, which today known as 'Kanispur', which falls in the district Baramulla. During Kanishka's reign Kas'mira was linked with a vast empire of extended *Bharatvarsha*. He organised fourth and last Buddhist council attended by about five hundred Buddhist scholars at *Kundal Vanvihara* {Jalandhar; some say at Harwan in Kas'mira. However, archaeological finds positively indicate Jalandhar} and donated entire Kas'mira to *Sangha* {Collective Buddhist Organisation}, build many *Vihars* and raised *Stupas* {Buddhist Monuments}. Buddhism continued for a while in Kas'mira till about 300 AD. There are Kas'miri Buddhist missionaries such as Shakyashri Badhra (405 AD), Ratnavera, Shama Bhatta {5th Century AD} etc. who went to China and Tibet to preach Buddhism there. The first organized crusade against Buddhists in Kas'mira was made by Raja 'Nara', who is said to have harassed and terrorised Buddhists to such an extent that famous Buddhist Scholar Nagarjuna had to run away from Kas'mira. Buddhism thereafter was on a downslide till about 515 AD, when Mihir Kula {515-550 AD}, a Hun General also called terrorist king, ascended the throne. He devastated *Viharas*, *Chaityas* and *Mutts* and killed Buddhists ruthlessly. But even under such terrorism Buddhism in Kas'mira remained alive, in small pockets. In seventh-eight century AD Buddhism got official '**protection**', during the time of Lalitaditya {724-761AD}. A huge Buddhist monastery was built during his reign. He gifted 84,000 *tolas* {*Tola* is nearly 12 Grams} of gold for its construction, which was named as '*Raja Vihara*'. He served both Brahmins as well as Buddhists in Kas'mira. One thing is noteworthy that the Buddhism in Kas'mira propelled a new wave of Buddhist Scholars of Kas'mira, who propagated Buddhism in far off places like Gandhara {Afghanistan}, Tibet, China. Admittedly there were conversions to Buddhism but few centuries later there were re-conversions. Composite religion of Aryans and Naga's had not materially changed and they willingly imbibed some good parameters of Buddhism. It is said that because of Nagarjuna's tremendous scholarship and preaching, Kas'mira's traditional Naga cult of Naga's was almost wiped out' though it partially revived later. Buddhism in Kas'mira brought changes in composite culture of the Kas'mira inhabitants; Naga's and Aryans. Animal sacrifices became lesser and eating of meat was looked down upon. It is also believed that human sacrifices, which were still carried out by Naga's were stopped. In spite of this customs, traditions and form of worship did not radically change. In fact the revival of Naga cult was the result of tremendous hard work by a Brahmin named 'Chandadeva' during this time {**Chander Dev. Not to be misunderstood with Brahman Candradeva, who was instrumental in getting King Nila's permission to allow Aryan's to settle down in Kas'mira throughout the year. Read above**}.

**Buddhism on Wane.** After this, Buddhism because of its inherent weaknesses, started decaying morally, however, there was selective adhering to their customs/rituals by others in Kas'mira; Aryans, Naga's. Kalhan writes that Shankar Varman's {883-902 AD} wife Sugandha was nurtured in the *Nishpalaka Vihara*. But soon Kshem Gupta {950-958 A D}, a *Shaivaite* King razed the *Jainendra Vihara* and with its stones he built a massive temple dedicated to lord Shiva {Acharya Abhinav Gupta {933 – 1015 AD}, the famous *Shaivaite* scholar and literary of Kas'mira was most important *Shaivite* scholars of this time}. During the reign of Lohara dynasty {1003 – 1273 AD}, there was brief attempt to revive Buddhism in Kas'mira. One can have ample references about this fact in the literary writings of Kshemendra and Somadeva. *Vaishakha Purnima*, the day Buddha was born or attained '*Bodhi*' and '*Mahanirvana*' used to be celebrated and Buddha's statues and *Chaityas* - *Stupas* used to be decorated with flowers and paintings. This tradition continued almost till eleventh century AD. Kshemendra {10 -11th Century AD} started writing of his famous treatise '*Aydhankalaplataon*' on the auspicious day of *Buddha Purnima*{Kshemendra's work on Buddha's philosophy *Budhavandana Kalpalata* written in 1052 AD is well known}. Scholar Somdeva (1027 A D) brought out this fact {Quote}; "*Samvatsare Saptavinshe Vaishikhasya Sitodaye Kriteyam Kalpalatiki Jinjanmotsave*" {Translation: This writing of treatise *Kalpalata* was started by the author on auspicious day of *Vaishakha Purnima*}. By the time of King Harsha {1089-1101 AD} the Buddhism in Kas'mira had set and had come under the influence of Kas'miri *Shakatmata* and slowly was breathing last.

There are well-chronicled descriptions of Buddhists monuments established in the valley from 300 BC onwards. Some of these Buddhist monuments, which are generally talked about are; Kanishka's city Kanishkapur known as Kanispur {Baramulla}; 3<sup>rd</sup> Century Hushkapura {The name is a corruption of Huvishkapura, which, according to Kalhan, was the name of a city founded by Huska {Huvishka}, Kushan king in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century AD; Harwan – Srinagar; Pandrethan near Srinagar. *Vihars*; Jalora Vihara

{Zainageer; Sopore}; Stupa's in Malangpura, 3 Kilometres from Avantipur, Parihaspura, Anderkut {Anderkot; Near Manasbal Lake}, Ahen {Sumbal} and Raithan.

**Shiva Worship in Kas'mira.** Though Nilmat Puranam is basically a Vaishnavite work, *Bhava Mahadeva* and *Sambhu* {names of Shiva and *Guha* and *Kumara* {names of Shiva's son's} find mention in the Puranam. Verse 184 of the Puranam {Translated} speaks thus; “**See, O King, these are those peaks - Brahma, Vishnu, and Maheswar {Shiva}. That which is Naubandhana peak is Shankara {Shiva}**”. It would be going too far to suggest that Puranam contains tenets of the Monistic Shaiva philosophy of Kas'mira. It is clear that the cult of Vishnu, Brahma, Shiva, Surya, Durga, Naga's, and Buddha etc. flourished side by side during the time of the Nilmat. Shiva worship can be attributed to the later era of **later Brahmanic Period** {1000-500 BC}, with the amalgamation of Vedic and indigenous culture. It came to Kas'mira around 500 BC, but could not overtake the worship Vishnu, which had stronger following. Worship of Shiva, his abode thought and perceived to be in Himalayas/Kailash, took stronger roots in mountainous and hilly areas before spreading in Yamuna – Ganga Basin. In the course of its spread it had to compete with the emerging Buddhism. For next few centuries it was the Vaishnavite worship, which remained predominant. With waning of Buddhism and before arrival of Adi Shankara {May/June 805 – May/June 837 AD} there was a sort of resurgence of Shaivite Philosophy in *Bharatvarsha*. Once Adi Shankara was on the scene; with his teachings, constructions of *Mutts/Peeth* {Puri {Orissa}, Srinegri {Tamil Nadu}, Jyotirmath {Badrinath} and Dwarka {Gujrat}} and Kamakothi Peeth} Shiva worship increased and started in *Bharatvarsha* and started spreading towards North including Kas'mira and Gandhara {Northwest Frontier and Afghanistan}.

The Shaivite religious philosophy of later Kas'mira is rooted in Kas'miri Shaivism, a school that originated around 400 AD near *Kailash* in Himalayas. The first teacher of this school was Tryambak Aditya, a disciple of sage Durvasa. Around 800 AD Sangam Aditya, the sixteenth descendent in the line of Tryambak Aditya, settled in Kas'mira and started propagating Shaivism with earnest. Many centuries after Tryambak Aditya, Somananda {8<sup>th</sup> Century AD}, fourth descendent of Sangam Aditya, extracted the principles of monistic Shaiva philosophy from the scriptures and incorporated them in his own work, *Shivadrishhti*, which gives the origin and is first philosophical treatise on Kas'miri Shaivism. The other scholars were; Eraka Natha, Sumati Natha and Vasu Gupta. Around last part of 8<sup>th</sup> Century, Vasu Gupta found seventy-seven terse sutras etched on stone near Mahadev Peak, as revealed to him in a dream, which he named the *Shiv Sutras*. These teachers {Somananda, Eraka Natha, Sumati Natha and Vasu Gupta} established four different schools named; *Pratyabhijna* School, *Krama* School, *Kula* School and *Spanda* School respectively. Over the centuries and with the influence of different Shaivite scholars, certain other deviations and agams {Doctrines} took place and shape Shiva worship in Kas'mira which includes the combined worship of Shiva and his consort called Shakti. These, as discussed below are; Shakta Worship, Trika Shastra, Tantra Shastra. Aim is to give brief insight into these variations in Shaivism of Kas'mira.

**Shakta Worship.** In *Shaiva Sidhanta* **Shiva is All**, and His divine energy, **Shakti**, is inseparable from Him. The religious practices of Aryan Saraswat Brahmins of Kas'mira {Popularly known as Bhatta or Kas'mira Pandits} revolved around the worship of **Shiva** and **Shakti**. All other deities {gods and goddesses} of the traditional Brahmanical pantheon were worshipped as various manifestations of Shiva and Shakti. Shakti is represented as female and Shiva as male. This depiction has its source in the folk-narrative sections of the Puranas, Shakti personified in many forms as the consorts of the Gods. Shakti is the Divine Mother of manifest creation, visualized as a female form, and Shiva is specifically the Unmanifest *Absolute*. The forms of the Goddess include, Durga, Bhadrakali, Uma, Gauri, Ambika, Parvati and Bhairavi. As *Rajarajeshwari* {divine queen of kings} she is the presiding Deity of *Sri Chakra Yantra*. She is also worshipped as *Mahavidyas*, manifestation of highest knowledge. Some Shakta's {followers of Shakti} view these as individual beings; most revere them as manifestations of the singular *Devi*. There are also numerous minor forms of Goddess, in the category of *Gram Devi* {Village Deity}. Kas'mira, Shaivism was preceded by *Shaktism*, and if we say that Kas'mira is more the land of Shakti than Shiva, we are but within our proper bounds; because even now wherever you go you find the shrines of Devi {Shakti} spread over, worshipped and maintained more than the temples of Shiva. **There are two broad forms of Shakta worship viz the Shri Kul and Kali Kul. Kularnava Tantra {Defining Shri Kul worship} is the authoritative Agam {Doctrine} for Shri Kul and the Mahanirvana Tantra for Kali Kul {Defining Kali Kul worship}**. It is well known that Abhinav Gupta, the renowned Shaivite Scholar of Kas'mira and Sidha Natha {alias Shambu Natha} eulogized '*Deities of Karmanya*' {Gods and Goddesses who shape destiny} mentioned in *Kularnava Tantra*. The practitioner and *Sadhaks* {Preachers} of this doctrine reach top of spiritual climb

and becomes a *Kauli*; an *Aghoreshwara* {Enlightened}. He cuts off all Karmic bonds {Worldly duties}; there is no death or rebirth; neither *Mangal* nor *Amangal* {Good or bad}; no pain or pleasure for him. In his mortal body he is Shiva and when he dies he remains on the 'astral plane' and carries on his wishes from this plane through the medium of other persons. *Kaulas* {Enlightened} and line of such *Kaulas* continued in Kas'mira, with few advanced *Sadhaks* {Preachers/Scholars} directing the *Karma* {Worldly duties} while people in general carried on general *Kulapuja* {Worship of *Kul Devi's* {Family Deities}}. In the process of transition and refinement of Shaivism in Kas'mira, Kali/Bhadrakali Bhakti and **Shakta** worship followed, after initial burst of devotion, with admixture of *Tantra*. Once Shaivism took roots, *Shakta* and Kali/Bhadrakali worship {more so in her form of Bhadrakali}, started upwards during the time of Abhinav Gupta, an ardent *Shakta* worshipper and *Kali Bakhta*. Bhairavas and Ganas are also divine companions and they are also worshipped with Shiva or *Shakti* on important festivals, such as *Shivaratri*. The shrines dedicated to Shakti in Kas'mira are Tripurasundari, Jwala, Shailaputri, Sharika, Sharda, Raghyna and Bhadrakali.

***Trika Shastra***. The philosophy of Kas'miri Shaivism is generally called *Trika Shastra*, since it is a philosophy of the Triad: Shiva, Shakti, and *Nara* {the bound individual self}. The literature of the *Trika* System of Kas'mira comprises of three categories; *Agama Shastra*, *Spanda Shastra*, and *Pratyabhijna Shastra*. This comparatively younger philosophy has tried to explain ambiguities which the ancient scholars have failed to resolve. Like *Advaita Vedanta* it is monistic, like Vaishnavism it is theistic, like *Yoga* it is practical, like *Nayaya* it is logical and appealing like Buddhism. Kas'mira Shaivism is, therefore, idealistic and realistic in essence, strongly advocating a pragmatic approach to life. Thus the *Trika* philosophy of Kas'mira Shaivism advocates how a human being, engrossed in the inferior objective energy of Shiva, can be taken upwards viz. towards the supreme energy through his cognitive energy. A galaxy of many scholars, such as, Bhatta Kallata {9th Century}, Utpal Deva {10<sup>th</sup> Century. Also known as Utpal Acharaya} and Abinav Gupta refined this philosophy. Abhinav Gupta wrote account of monistic Kas'mira Shaivism in his extra-ordinary work '*Tantraloka*'. He says that three Siddhas {masters of perfection} namely '*tryambak*', '*aamadak*' and '*srinaath*' came to this mortal world under the control of '*Srikanth Natha*'. These three *Siddhas*, who were proficient in the monistic, the dualistic and the monistic cum dualistic Shaiva philosophy respectively, established three separate schools of Shaivism, as discussed above. On this scriptural foundation arose the school known as Kas'mir Shaivism *Trikashasana* {*Trika* System}.

***Tantra Shastra***. A further modification to Kas'mira Shaivism took place in the form of *Tantra Shastra*. *Tantras* are taken as to be revealed by Shiva through his five mouths namely *Ishana*, *Tatpurusha*, *Sadyojata*, *Vamadeva*, and *Aghora*. These very five mouths represent his five energies namely *Chit Shakti* (consciousness), *Ananda Shakti* (Bliss), *Ichha Shakti* (will) *Jnana Shakti* (knowledge) and *Kriya Shakti* (Action) respectively. When these aforesaid five energies of Shiva unite in such a way that each of these takes hold of the rest simultaneously, they reveal sixty four *Bhairava Tantras* which are purely monistic. This very approach explained in these *Tantras* is also part of *Trika* philosophy. *Veda*, *Shaiva*, *Vama*, *Dakshina*, *Kaula*, *Matta*, and *Trika* are the seven *Acharas* {systems} recognised by Kas'mira Shaivism. The most popular among the seven *Acharas* is the *Trika* system. *Trika* means trinity of *Nara*, *Shakti* and *Shiva* as is given in *Tantras*. *Nara* means an individual, *Shakti* means the Universal Energy and *Shiva* means the Transcendental Being. Thus a soul recognizes himself as Shiva by means of the realisation of his *Shakti* - the powers of God-head. *Trika* system advocates the practical path towards complete self-realisation of three energies of Shiva namely *Para*, *Parapara* and *Apara*. *Para* energy is subjective energy and regarded as the supreme. *Parapara* energy is cognitive energy and is called as intermediate. *Apara* energy is objective energy and it is known as inferior energy.

**Patronage During Later Centuries**. Shankar Varman {883-902 AD} with famous scholars like Vasu Gupta during his time gave impetus to their Shaivite Philosophy by constructing temples dedicated to Shiva. Perhaps it would be well to remark here that vandalism of a serious kind had already begun in pre-Muslim times, as some of the materials used in the construction of Brahmanic temples, built by Lalitaditya, were removed from his erstwhile capital site of Parihasapura. The three temples named by *Rajatarangini* constructed during Shankar Varman's time and dedicated to Shiva are; *Shankara Gaurishvara* {temple near Pattan, built by Shankar Varman}, *Sugandhesa* {near Srinagar; named after Sugandha, his queen} and *Ratnavardhanesa* {Built by Ratnavardhana, his minister of which no credible trace has so far been found}. During the reign of Akbar {1556-1605 AD} it has been recorded by his biographer Abul Fazal that there were 45 major places dedicated to the worship of Shiva, in Kas'mira. There are numerous important Shiva

Shrines like *Amareshvara* {*Amaresvara* shrine of the same name i.e. present-day *Amburher* near Srinagar and **not Amarnath**}, *Vardhamanesa* {Ganpatyar}, *Vijayeshvara* {Vijebror}, *Someshwara* {Habba Kadal-Srinagar}, *Harsheshvara* {Khonmoh}, *Mahadeva* {Harwan Range near Srinagar}, *Bhuteshwara* {Naran Nag, Wangat Temples near Kangan}, *Haramukheshvara* {The top of Harmukh Range, above Gangabal Lake; worshipped as abode of Shiva} and many more.

### Religious Worship– Post 11<sup>th</sup> Century

**Routine of Common Brahman.** Kas'mir Shaivism, reached its peak in 10<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> Century AD and continued to be so till the next century {12<sup>th</sup> Century}. During the reign of Gopa Deva {1171 to 1180 A D} the Brahman's gained a great deal of supremacy, but were thwarted by the *Lavanyas* who sided with the king. During the reign of Rama Deva {1252-1273 A D} some Bhatta's {Brahmans} who had helped in his investiture as king, having been insulted by him, conspired to install somebody from amongst *Khasas* on the throne of Kas'mira. But their conspiracy did not long remain a secret and an orgy of destruction and plunder was let loose upon them. Some were killed and others suppressed with atrocious mercilessness, and to save themselves the cry was raised everywhere 'Na Batoham.' {I am not a Bhatta} {Bhatta is acronym for Aryan Saraswat Brahmin of Kashmir}. This was the turning point of the forms of worship of common man in Kas'mira. With the passing phase of scholars, common man slowly moved away from the *Sadhak* {Preacher} type of worship and restricted himself to the normal daily *Puja* of the deities. This is the time worship of local deities in the form of Shakti's named as *Kul Devi's*; mostly on geographical locations, took stronger roots. This was the time {12<sup>th</sup> /13<sup>th</sup> Century} various *Stotra's* {*Sholaka's* in praise of deity} and *Bhavani Sahasranama* {Thousand Names of the Goddess, Bhavani} were composed. {It may of interest to our readers that ancestors of many of the scholars who gained prominence in Kas'mira between 8<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> Century's came from plains with then ruling kings; like Vasu Gupta}. With the advent of Muslim rule in 14<sup>th</sup> Century, Brahmanism in that form could just maintain its philosophy, could not proliferate and conversions took away big chunk of its followers in the valley. With advent of Islam *Sufi-Rishi* order also took roots making a strange combination of Shaivism, *Tantra*, and Shakta Worship with admix of *Sufi-Rishi* cult.

The religious ceremonies of Kas'mira's Aryan Saraswat Brahmins had undergone tremendous transformation during millennium plus {400 BC - 1300 AD}. It started with the worship of Vishnu {Cakrin}, admix of Naga Cult/rituals, a brush of Buddhism and then Shaivism. Finally the Shaivism underwent changes in the form of monistic worship, Shakti cult {Shakta Worship}, *Trika* and *Tantra*. This religious philosophy spread across *Bharatvarsha*, mostly North *Bharatvarsha*. Peculiar female deities manifested and so did their worship. Lot of religious scriptures, *Mahatmaya's*, *Agams* evolved and composed but were restricted to highly religious class of Aryan Saraswat Brahmins of Kas'mira but common man could not adhere to these, more so in daily rituals. People in Kas'mira, in general, abandoned plethora of worship doctrine and devised simplistic ways of worship and daily ritual of visiting temples. Admittedly Shiva {*Shambu*} took precedence over Vishnu and Brahma, but his worship remained restricted to pouring of milk water or water on his *Linga* at the family or local temple and special worship on selective days like Shivaratri etc. However, the days attributed to various Goddesses, not Gods, increased with rituals connected to their specific worship days. In short finally it was worship of the Devi, in other forms, most of whom had manifested in Kas'mira as *Kul Devi's* {Family Deity}.

**Evolution of Kul Devi's.** From the days of Naga's and later Aryan culture, plethora of forms of Gods and Goddesses were object of veneration in Kas'mira. Mostly they were geographically located near combined habitation areas {Villages}; peaks, rivers, spring, idols, Naga's etc; and became wider range of local area objects of worship or deities {*Gram Devta/Devi*} with least commonality with other habitation areas {Villages}. Each household had a specific place, object or a deity of worship, unspecific in most cases, as the deity of the household; *Greh Devi/Devta*. Over the centuries much did not change in Kas'mira, except, many such deities, places became extinct and numbers reduced. However, a function in honour of *Greh Devta* called **Gada Bhatta**, during the dark fortnight *Pausha* remained and became an annual ritual. The spectrum of deities till about 8<sup>th</sup> Century became mixed; that of Naga's, Buddhists, Vaishnavite and Shaivism. Around the end of 8<sup>th</sup> Century Somananda {8<sup>th</sup> Century AD} extracted the principles of monistic Shaiva philosophy from the scriptures. Other scholars added more dimension to the Shaivatic worship. The religious practices revolved around the worship of Shiva and Shakti. By the end of 9<sup>th</sup> Century, plethora of religious scholars had come to Kas'mira and the place became centre of religious learning for *Bharatvarsha*, mainly Monistic Shaivism. They also brought the concept of specific Shaivite *Gram Devta/Devi Pujan* with them, which initially did not find favour with common man, as it was different from their normal way of

worship over the centuries. Worship philosophy advocated by Abhinav Gupta {940-1015 AD?} and Sidha Natha {alias Shambu Natha; 11<sup>th</sup> Century} was different, though there are common points in simplistic **Shiva-Shakti** of Shakta worship of common man. With the passing phase of scholars, common man restricted himself to the simplistic normal daily *Puja* of the deities. This is the time worship of local deities in the form of Shakti's took strong roots; named as *Kul Devi's* {Deity of the clan}, mostly on clan {*Gotra*}, geographical locations, nearer to cluster of habitation and a new set of deities emerged.

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

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

***Firming of Kul Devi Worship.*** Another turning point reinforcing revised form of worship of *Kul Devi's* by common man in Kas'mira was when during 12<sup>th</sup> / beginning 13<sup>th</sup> Century various *Stotra's* {*Shaloka's*}, *Bhija Mantra's* {Seed or Basic *Mantra's* in Verse Form} and *Mahatmaya's* in praise of deities; mostly *Kul Devi's* were composed. *Mahatmaya's* {Eulogising of deities in verse form} generally set forth the different legends connected with various places of pilgrimage, the merit to be appeared by their visits and the rites to be performed in each of the sites. They contain lore's, legends and local traditions. Composed *Stotra's* {*Shaloka's*} were the verses invoking the Gods/Goddesses and *Bhija Mantra's* {Seed or Basic *Mantra's* in Verse Form} in their praise in musical mode. Many manuscripts of these scriptures have been found; mostly in 19<sup>th</sup> Century. A compendium of *Mahatmaya's* named *Bringesh Samhita* was composed by one Brahmin scholar Bringesh Bhatta of a South Kas'mira village containing mythological, spiritual, religious and tantric backgrounds regarding different *tirthas* of Kas'mira {Bringee village and Bringee Nallah is known after his name}. Whether it contained contents of extant *Mahatmaya's* also is not known but *Samhita* covered most of the *tirtha's* of Kas'mira. Many of the manuscripts have been recovered though many are either lost or had been recomposed by later scholars. *Bringesh Samhita*, from the analysis of recovered manuscripts, seem to be work of the later part of 18<sup>th</sup> Century, whose contents spread around beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> Century in Kas'mira, as it also contains details of *Amarnath Yatra*, which had been found around 1750-75 AD. It was in the last quarter of nineteenth century that Dr Buhler's collected some 16

*Mahatmaya's* and later M A Stein collected some more. 51 *Mahatmaya's* have been traced in Kas'mira; most of them are from *Bringesh Samhita* pertaining to shrines, which had come up during beginning of 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium AD, till date of composition of *Samhita*.

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