



Genesis: And The Lord Created A Paradise Called Kashmir

Authors: P. Parimoo
Submitted: 20. July 2022
Published: 9. August 2022
Volume: 9
Issue: 4
Affiliation: Dina Chemicals and Fibres Ltd., Ahmedabad, India
Languages: English
Keywords: History, Religion, Ancient Civilisation, Kashmir Valley, Politics, Society, Culture
Categories: Humanities, Social Sciences and Law, News and Views
DOI: 10.17160/josha.9.4.836

Abstract:

The book, “Kashmiriyat at Crossroads; The Search For A Destiny”, by P. Parimoo is based on the diaries of his father, Late Pandit Dina Nath Parimoo. The book is filled with vivid descriptions of his first-hand experiences in Kashmir during the first half and the middle of the 20th century. It takes the reader to the early days of Kashmir with rich glimpses into the culture, history, society and economy of the valley through the accounts of an ordinary Kashmiri. “Genesis: And The Lord Created A Paradise Called Kashmir” is an excerpt from this book that throws light on the creation of the ancient civilisation that inhabited the valley and the historical events that followed.

JOSHA

josha.org

**Journal of Science,
Humanities and Arts**

JOSHA is a service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content



Genesis: And The Lord Created A Paradise Called Kashmir

P. Parimoo

parimoo_p@hotmail.com

Abstract

The book, “Kashmiriyat at Crossroads; The Search For A Destiny”, by P. Parimoo is based on the diaries of his father, Late Pandit Dina Nath Parimoo. The book is filled with vivid descriptions of his first-hand experiences in Kashmir during the first half and the middle of the 20th century. It takes the reader to the early days of Kashmir with rich glimpses into the culture, history, society and economy of the valley through the accounts of an ordinary Kashmiri. “Genesis: And The Lord Created A Paradise Called Kashmir” is an excerpt from this book that throws light on the creation of the ancient civilisation that inhabited the valley and the historical events that followed.



The region of Kashmir valley is claimed to have been swallowed several times by the seas and thrown up again by the revolting forces of nature. It is a story, fascinating in substance, that conforms to both the folklore and the scientific studies by geologists. Mighty Earth movements less than a million years ago caused cracks in the mountains surrounding the lake of Kashmir, allowing the lake waters to flow out but preserving the river bed, which forms the great reservoir of alluvial soil of the fertile Kashmir valley.

Man is supposed to have first appeared here about a quarter of a million years ago. Remains of early human handiwork have been found in a cave in Lolab, and near the Wular Lake, indicating human settlement nearly 250000 years old. Gradually, the inhabitants seemed to have made their way up the valleys of Punjab and Jhelum into Kashmir. The great lake Satisar, had drained and dried itself into a lovely valley, allowing a civilisation to lay its foundations. According to a Hindu legend, a *rishi* (saint) named Kashyap, ordered the Gods and demons to clear the lake for human habitation and it is he who organised and pioneered a Brahmanic society in the valley. The name Kashmir is possibly derived from his name, Kashyap. However, some experts have opined that the name Kashmir is derived from Kashuf Mir, the Islamic name for Kasyapa of Hindu history, who on Solomon's orders drained the valley of its waters. Both these versions are surprisingly similar to the scientific account of the birth of Kashmir except historians who suggest that King Solomon never visited Kashmir.

The valley was a lake of mammoth proportions, populated by mysterious aquatic creatures that are reluctantly yielding their secrets to geologists by way of fossils found in many places. The lake was surrounded by mighty mountains except a little gap in the mountain barrier at the northwest end where Vitasta, the Jhelum river, flows out through a narrow opening near the town of Baramulla. It then roars into the wilderness and on to the plains of Pakistan, where it meets the Indus River and both finally culminate their journey in the Arabian Sea. The geography of Kashmir is greatly shaped by the Jhelum river that roughly divides the valley into two unequal parts as well as the mountains that surround Kashmir. The oblong-shaped valley is located at an altitude of 5,200 feet above sea level. Surrounded by the Pir Panjal range on the southern side, the mountain ridges are as high as 15,000 feet. On the northern side lies the Greater Himalayan mountain range, some of the mountains, towering up to 18,000 feet.



The earliest and the only book on ancient Kashmir, *Raj Tarangini*, was written by Brahmin Kalhana in the middle of the 12th century AD. He has documented historical events of Kashmir from the 8th century onwards. Gonanda, the first king of Kashmir, has also been mentioned often in the *Mahabharata*. This indicated that the Kashmiri society evolved at an early time from a tribal and a nomadic society into a well organised society governed by a king. In 232 BC, Emperor Ashoka conquered Kashmir and promoted Buddhism amongst the Brahmanic society. He was succeeded by his son, Jaluka, who asserted himself as an independent king of Kashmir. He was not a zealous Buddhist and once again, this led to the revival of Brahmanism in Kashmir. Several kings ruled Kashmir after Jaluka for another 300 years until the Kushan tribes from Central Asia conquered vast stretches of land in the northwest and western parts of India.

Kanishka, the most distinguished of the Kushans, annexed Kashmir to his empire during the 1st century AD. As a committed Buddhist, he propagated Buddhism all over the world by sending preachers to far off countries. During this time, Buddhism became the state religion of Kashmir. He also held a crucial conference of Buddhist Sanghas in the present day Harwan close to the Mughal gardens of Srinagar. The agenda was to collect, collate and finalise the fundamental Buddhist principles. The conference also aimed to write a commentary in keeping with the Sarasativadi Buddhist thought. The three main treatises of Sarasativadi were written during this time. Of these, only Mahavibhasa Shasta, written in Chinese, exists today. The satisfactory outcome of the conference prompted Kanishka to hand over the valley to the Sangha to build *viharas* and erect stupas to spread Buddhism within and beyond Kashmir. This act angered the Brahmins resulting in a conflict between the Brahmins and the Buddhists that lasted for several centuries.

The first assault on the Buddhists of Kashmir was organised by Raja Nara. His severe treatment against the Buddhists forced the famous Buddhist scholar and preacher, Nagarjuna, to flee to South India. From here, he took the Buddhist philosophy to Sri Lanka where he earned the same status as Padma Sambhav did in the Himalayan regions of Tibet, Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan. Kanishka was succeeded by two more kings of the Kushan dynasty that did not make any significant contributions. Eventually, the Kushan Satraps retreated to the state of Gujarat and their descendants continue to inhabit this region. The last of the Kashmir rulers could not control the upsurge of local rulers who ultimately returned to power and once again, Brahmanism asserted its might. In this frenzy of Brahmanical revival, several Buddhist *viharas*, the religious and cultural centres of



learning, were destroyed along with the monasteries. Now, Shaivism of Brahmins became the new mantra of Kashmir.

Sixth century AD saw the fall of the Gupta Empire which had a suzerainty over Kashmir and a Hun general seized the valley. The cruel Hun rule didn't last long, for soon the local nobles managed to get back the original Gonanda dynasty to the throne of Kashmir. During this period, King Vikramaditya of Ujjain, exercised hegemony over Kashmir and it is believed that he may have helped the Kashmiri rebels get rid of the Huns. When the famous Chinese traveller, Hieun Tsang visited Kashmir in 631 AD, King Durlabh Vandhana of the Kashmiri Karkot dynasty was in power. According to Hieun Tsang's writings, the Kashmir state was very strong on all accounts. The king was tolerant and rather partial to Buddhists. There were about 100 monasteries and around 5,000 Buddhist monks in Kashmir at that time. Hieun Tsang was accorded the status of a state guest and was provided with court officials to copy religious texts for him. While in Kashmir, Hieun Tsang studied the *sutras* and the *shastras* as well as other Buddhist scriptures.

The most distinguished ruler of the Karkot dynasty, Lalitaditya, ruled the Kashmir valley from 724 to 761 AD. His conquered territories included parts of South India, Kathiawar in the west, Bengal in the east, and Ladakh in the northwest. He demonstrated his secular thought by extending official protection to Buddhism which was under severe attack from the Brahmins. Lalitaditya proved to be a great administrator and built temples and towns that still continue to amaze us. It is believed that many artisans of Egyptian, Iraqi, Abyssinian and Greek origin had migrated to Kashmir owing to highly unsettled conditions in their countries because of the Arab Muslim conquests. The prosperity of the Valley offered chances of high remuneration to these foreign artisans. This could explain the unique architecture of some of the temples, including Martand, that was built during his reign and suggest strong Greek and Egyptian influences. Lalitaditya's great dynasty died a slow tragic death in the middle of 9th century AD, owing to the gross incompetence of his successive generations.

Two Kashmiri women have left an indelible mark on the valley's history because of their beauty combined with the highly perfected art of court intrigues, statecraft, and political manipulations. The first was Jaya, who created a new dynasty called Uptalas followed by Didda, who called the shots on Kashmir governance for nearly 50 long years. Ultimately, she sowed the seeds of decay and the demise of the Hindu rule in Kashmir.



Jaya was a poor but beautiful girl who was widowed at a tender age. The king happened to encounter her and was smitten by her beauty and charm. He brought her to his court only to die soon after. The King's son, the heir to the throne, also fell to the charms of this woman. As the favourite courtesan, Jaya used her coquetry, her beauty, and her intellect to gain prominence in the Kashmiri court. Although not a queen, she exercised the power of a kingmaker. The growing influence of Jaya benefited her brothers who soon became a force to reckon with within the court of Kashmir. Jaya's only goal was achieved when one of her brother's grandsons was crowned King. This heralded a new dynasty of rulers in Kashmir. King Avantivarman (855-883 AD), a gift from the dying Jaya, founded the Uptala dynasty. This was considered the golden period of Kashmir where development of drainage systems was carried out on a large scale. He consciously contributed to the conservation of nature by forbidding the hunting of migratory birds. The King also laid the foundation of new towns such as Avantipura and Sopore king, however, his successors could not live up to his legacy.

Didida, the second most powerful woman of the valley, was a Kashmiri princess who rose to power in 949 AD after her marriage. She governed the state through many manipulations and much has been written about her beauty and viles. Her debauchery and tyranny were accompanied by occasional outbursts of great religious piety. However, the insatiable lust of Didida could not be satisfied by any man, noble or coarse. She changed her lovers as she changed her moods and her discarded lovers could not be let loose for the fear of exposing her clandestine affairs. They had to be disposed off in a ghastly ways to prevent any suspicion raised towards the queen. There is no reliable count of her victims, however, her stories put to shame the similar deeds of the Russian, Catherine the Great.

Didida died in 1003 AD, leaving behind a morally bankrupt court in absolute disarray. While on her deathbed, she nominated a minor boy from her maiden family as the successor to the throne. This led to the creation of Lohara, a Khashtriya dynasty, around the same time when the shadow of Mohammed Ghazni-the Afghan plunderer of Hindustan, was looming large over Kashmir. The following 200 years did not add to the development of Kashmir as it was ruled by insignificant and indolent kings who could contribute little to the greatness of their forebears. The seeds of rot sown by Didida had come to fruition and the court existed without a direction or a purpose.

Around 1320 A.D, two foreigners came to Kashmir. One was a Buddhist refugee from Ladakh named Renchen, and the other was a Muslim nobleman named Shah



Mir. Both of them were well received and bestowed with the best traditional Kashmiri hospitality. They were given land grants near Lolab valley and Baramulla. In 1320, a Turkish Mongol invaded Kashmir and the residents of the valley were not prepared to resist the magnitude of the attack. The king fled and the Mongol army set loose on the defenceless people that were subjected to rape, plunder, and arson for several days. With the entire country in disarray, Renchen grabbed the opportunity and allied with Shah Mir to murder the heir to the throne. Renchen seized power and married the deceased heir's wife, Kota Rani. He wished to be accepted as a Hindu and so he showed great reverence to the Hindu gods. However, his request was not acceptable to the Brahmins and a frustrated Renchen converted to Islam and Kashmir had its first Muslim king.

Renchen died soon after and Shah Mir swiftly overcame the feeble resistance of the people to become the king of the valley. This is when the crescent started flying high over Kashmir. Shah Mir was succeeded by his grandson, Shihabudin, who proved to be a capable ruler, and significantly repaired the damage done to the economy of Kashmir. A grandson of Shihabuddin, Sikandar, was crowned king of Kashmir (1389-1413) but he failed to make any substantial contributions. Eager to be remembered, he forcibly converted his subjects to Islam. Defacement and desecration of ancient and priceless monuments became his passion. Fortunately, he could not damage more than the roofs and idols in the walls, and left behind ruins that speak of the glory of these ancient marvels. This earned him the title of Sikandar-but-Shikan, Sikandar the idol destroyer. Ironically the prime perpetrator of his destructive addiction was his chief minister Sub Bhatt who was a Kashmiri Pandit. Bhatt converted to Islam to secure his official standing and, the name of 'Saif-u-Din, An opportunist, he outdid his predecessor in destroying the heritage of his own ancestors and the massacre of Hindus as well as the remaining Buddhists.

During this period, large droves of Islamic scholars and preachers migrated to Kashmir from Iran and Afghanistan. Amongst them was the prominent Mohammed Hamdani who brought with him several hundred of his Sayed followers. Under the guidance of Saif-u- Din, the policy of religious bigotry was followed by Sikandar's successor, Ali Shah. During the rule of the two sultans many temples were razed and replaced with mosques. Ali Shah was followed by the messiah of Hindus, 'Sultan Zain ul Abidin' (1420- 1470 A.D) who was affectionately called Badshah-Padshah. Soon after ascending to the throne, Zain ul Abidin set out to revive the crumbled economy of Kashmir. Handicrafts like carpet weaving, copper sheet working, and wood carving were introduced and promoted. All restrictions against Hindus were removed. The country flourished once again and the sultans



capped this with successful military campaigns. In the meantime, Muslim courtiers like the Sayeds, Dars and Chaks were busy securing their own positions in the royal court. During this time, the defeated Mughal generals of Humayun marched towards the weak Sultanate of Kashmir. The shaky Mughals soon lost control and once again, the Sultanate came to the fore for a short period.

When Akbar ascended the throne of Delhi, he consolidated his empire and rescued Kashmir from the anarchy of the sultans in 1589 AD. Akbar, the Mughal emperor, reportedly visited Kashmir thrice. His successors Jahangir and Shah Jahan loved Kashmir and bestowed it with fine examples of Mughal art and architecture. Srinagar city, referred to as *Shehar e Khaas*, was gifted by nature with a beautiful lake, the Dal Lake. The Mughals developed a string of gardens namely Nishat, Shalimar, Chashma Shahi, Pari Mahal, and Nasim that retain their magical beauty even today. The death of Aurangzeb was the beginning of the end of the Mughal dynasty. Each successive emperor became a powerless symbol of the steadily decaying dynasty. This decline of Mughal power in Delhi affected the politics of Kashmir. As the remnants of the Sultan dynasties and the Muslim chief courtiers could not come to a compromise they made a historical blunder by inviting a known marauder, Ahmad Shah Abdali, to invade Kashmir. It was similar to inviting a wolf to the sheep's meadow. One Afghan governor after another was sent from Kabul to plunder and squeeze out whatever they could. None was spared from the most savage and brutal methods of torment and merciless exploitation.

This unabated savagery continued for 70 long years. The social, economic, and health conditions of Kashmir severely deteriorated and soon, diseases and floods consumed the valley. This is derisively referred to as the Pathan Raj in Kashmir even today. The descendants of the great noble families who had invited the marauder, Ahmed Shah Abdali, were now sinking under poverty. One of the families, the Chaks, resorted to crime as Galwans, the highway robbers or horsemen. On the other hand, the Dar family ended up as small-time vegetable farmers. Pandit Birbal Dhar, a nobleman in the Afghan court, could no longer tolerate the barbarity of the Afghan rule. Along with other courageous Pandits and Muslims, he managed to rope in the valiant Maharaja Ranjeet Singh who had made many unsuccessful attempts to attack Kashmir. Eventually, he invaded Kashmir in 1819 and defeated the Afghans near Shupyan thus, laying the foundation of Sikh rule in the valley. However, they were not better leaders than their Afghan counterparts. As a result, the death of Maharaja Ranjeet Singh in 1839 led to internal feuds among the Sikhs.



British India was waiting for such an opportunity and with the help of some smaller kings, struck a decisive blow to the Sikh power. The conditions of Kashmir after a hundred years of Afghan tyranny and the Sikh misrule can be well imagined. Personal accounts of travellers from the time portray a grim picture. Lashing of starving artisans and flogging of unpaid labour was common practice. A German traveller, Baron von Schonberg, has written:

"I have been to many lands but nowhere the conditions of human beings present a more saddening spectacle than in Kashmir."

According to him, the scenes in Kashmir reminded a person of the history of Israelites under Pharaohs, when the Israeli slaves were flogged by their pitiless taskmasters. The Sikhs were vanquished in 1845 by the British and Maharaja Ghulab Singh got "the territory of Kashmir and territories to the north" for a sum of Rs 75,00,000/- as his reward. Thus, the Dogra dynasty came to power in Kashmir in 1846. The new state was now known as Jammu and Kashmir. Gen Zorawar Singh of the Dogra army launched several campaigns over the Karakoram and conquered Ladakh, Askardu, Zanskar, Gilgit and Chitral for the newly formed Jammu and Kashmir State. Sensing the great strategic value of Gilgit and Chitral vis-a-vis the growing power of Russia in central Asia, the British took over the administration of both lands. Both cities were invaded and occupied by Pakistan 1947, when the British left India. Maharaja Ghulab Singh was succeeded by his son, Maharaja Ranbir Singh (1857-1885). During his reign, a rudimentary cart road was built connecting Jammu city in the south through the mountainous range of Banihal with Srinagar. However, this was only for the private use of the ruling dynasty.

Kashmir continued to reel under the effects of a hundred years of inhuman Afghan torture and Sikh misrule. However, gradually reforms started taking place. For the first time in its history, Kashmir got a written penal code. Maharaja Ranbir Singh was succeeded by Maharaja Pratap Singh in 1885 and his rule continued till 1925. Maharaja Pratap Singh was the third ruler of the Dogra dynasty and he initiated the first steps towards the modernisation of Kashmir. These included building road networks from Srinagar to Jammu over Banihal, the opening of Gulmarg and Pahalgam as tourist resorts and the construction of a hydro electric project Mohra. The author, D.N. Parimoo was born during his benign rule.



About the Author

Pandit Dina Nath Parimoo, born in Srinagar, was an educationist working with the Jammu and Kashmir Government. He was posted at various locations across the State during his service, including Leh, Kargil and Badgam, where he spent several years as the District Education Officer. P. Parimoo compiled his father's rich experiences in the form of "Kashmiriyat at Crossroads; The Search For A Destiny". He spent his early years in the valley before moving to Mumbai to work as a textile engineer. As part of his profession, he spent several years in Germany before retiring as General Manager of Reliance Industries Ltd., Ahmedabad, India. P. Parimoo was particularly interested in the history of religions and authored two more books on the history of Kashmir before his untimely demise.