

# Neelamatam

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नमस्ते शारदा देवी कश्मीर पुरवासिनी



## Ancient Temples of Kashmir – Silent Witnesses to History

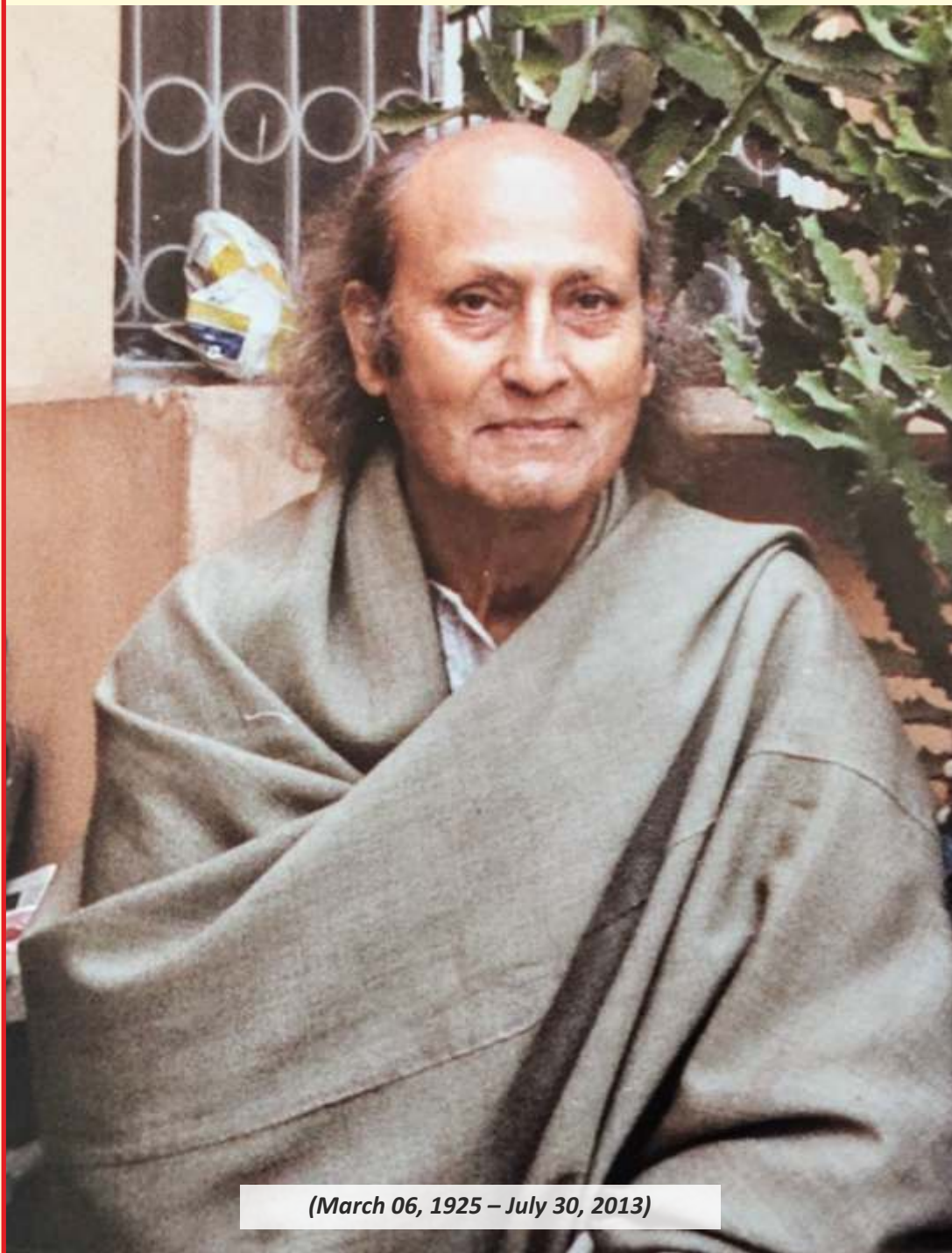


*Martand Temple ruins. (Reproduced from The Marshall Albums. Photo credit – Frederick Bremner)*

*(Ancient India has nothing more worthy of its early civilisation than the grand ruins in Kashmir. The massive, the grotesque and elegant in architecture may be admirable in parts of India, but nowhere is to be found the counter-part of the classically graceful, yet symmetrically massive, edifices than in Kashmir. – Dr Ernest Neve)*

# नीलमतम्

**NSKRI pays tributes to Ex-Chairman late Shri P N Kachru  
on his 97<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary – 6<sup>th</sup> March 2022**



*(March 06, 1925 – July 30, 2013)*

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## Shadipora Sangam

# The Prayag Teertha of Kashmir

River Vitasta of Kashmir finds mention in Rigveda, Kathasaritsagara, Natyashastra, Varahpurana and Mahabharata. In Mahabharata we read this:

**“If anybody bathes in the waves of the river Vitastā, with vow and fasts, for seven days he would become as pure as a hermit.”**

(Mahabharata Anusasana Parva, Chapter 25, Stanza 7)

The Vitasta Mahatmyas inform that Goddess Uma, Laxmi, Aditi, Sachi, Diti and Ganga along with their spouses had come to Satisar to witness the draining out of the water and killing of the demon Jalodbhava. Rishi Kashyapa had also requested them to bless the land. The Rishi approached Goddess Uma or Parvati first who in turn sought the concurrence of Lord Shiva. In Vitasta Mahatmyas, we read this:

**“Parvati requested her consort, Lord Shiva; “O, father of the World, I shall assume the form of a river but make a stroke with your spear near the abode of Nila, where, O Lord, while breaking the mountain was placed the pointed end of the plough. By that stroke, I shall flow to meet the great river, Sindhu.”**

The Nilamata Purana describes the sacredness of Vitasta River as under:

**“O chief of the kings, those men obtain fame on the earth, who go to the goddess Vitasta, endowed with various bridges, decorated with blue and red lotuses, filled with the sounds of the herds of the cows, resounding with the**

**bellowing-sounds, full of fish and tortoises, possessed of good bathing places, giver of the desired objects, possessed of the water which tastes like nectar, charming to the eyes of men and boon-giver like a mother.”**

In ancient and mediaeval Kashmir, Vitasta River was accordingly treated as sacred as Ganga. In the Kotitirtha Mahatmyas of Kashmir, we read this:

**“Here in Kashmir exists Sati (Goddess Parvati) herself personified as river Vitasta, who destroys all sins and by merely thinking about whom, one gets the same reward as is received by bathing in holy places of worship. The water of river Saraswati takes three days to purify a man, that of Yamuna takes seven while the water of Ganga purifies a person instantly, but the water of Vitasta has the power to purify even by a mere thought of it.”**

Also known as Vetha Truvah, the day was celebrated by making offerings of cakes made of rice flour while reading Slokas from Vitasta Mahatmyas. In the evening, the women would go down to the banks of the Vitasta and illuminate them with Diyas (earthen-ware lamps). Thus, for the Kashmiri Pandits, the Valley remains the land of Shiva while river Vitasta is not only a symbol of Goddess Sati (Parvati) but also the cradle of their ancient civilization. The festival of Vetha Truvah also finds detailed mention in Tuzik-i-Jahangiri as under:

**“On the night of Thursday, 19th, the**



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Kashmiris had lined up with lamps on both sides of Bihat (Vyath). It is an ancient custom that every year on this day, everyone, whether rich or poor, whoever has a house on the bank of the river, should light the lamp as done on Shab-e-Barat. I asked the Brahmans the reasons for this, and they said that this day the fountainhead of the river Jhelum was disclosed and the custom had come down from old days that on this date must take place the festival of Vyath Truvah. Vyath means Jhelum and Truvah means thirteenth: As this day is thirteenth of Shawwal, they light lamps. In this way, they call it Vyath Truvah. Undoubtedly, the lamp lighting was good. I sat in a boat and went round to see it.”

(Source page 167 and 168 of The Tuzuk –i–Jahangiri or Memoirs of Jahangir translated by Alexander Rogers)

About the confluence of rivers in

Kashmir, The Nilamata Purana mentions this:

“O king, the sacred places, the lakes, the rivers, the tanks, the various types of wells, all these come to the boon-giver Vitasta, on the bright thirteenth of Bhadrapada. Holy are all the confluences and the pools of the Nagas. One surely obtains the merit of the gift of hundred Suvarnas by bathing in them. Holy are these sacred places and specially so is the Vitasta. O king, the goddess Vitasta is stated to be purifying everywhere. O king, the sacred places, the lakes, the rivers, the tanks, the various types of wells, all these come to the boon-giver Vitasta, on the bright thirteenth of Bhadrapada. The Sindhu, the Trikoti, the Visoka, the holy and auspicious river Harsapatha, the holy Sukha, the Candravati, the Sugandha, the sin-destroying Punyodaka, the Kularani, the sin-removing Krsna, the holy



*Verinag Spring – the source of Vitasta River*

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**Madhumati and the holy river Parosni go to the boon-giver and celestial Vitasta."**

About the sacred confluence of Sindhu and Vitasta at Shadipora, Nilamata Purana writes this:

**"The wise say that by bathing in the confluence of Sindhu and Vitasta especially on the full moon day of the month of Prausthapada, one obtains the merit of the performance of Ashavmedha."**

Nilamata Purana mentions the sacredness of every lake, every river and every stream of Kashmir. About the sacredness of Erin stream that pours into Wular Lake, Nilamata Purana writes this:

**"One gets the merit of (performing) Asvamedha, especially on full-moon day, (by bathing) at the place where Hiranya (Erin) meets the holy lake Mahapadma (Wular)."**

The Vitasta River (Vyeth in Kashmiri Hydaspes in Greek) originates from Verinag spring situated at the foothills of the Banihal pass. It flows through the Kashmir valley. In its journey up to Anantnag town, 3 major tributaries viz. Sandran, Bringi and Arapath streams join it. As the river moves downwards to join the Wular Lake, it meets five important streams.

The Lidder being the first, joins Vitasta near Khannabal. Lidder brings the water of Sheshnag and Tarsar lakes from Pahalgam side. The Lidder stream is formed at Pahalgam by the merger of the Aru stream that comes from the Kolahoi glacier with the Chandanwari stream that originates from the Sheshnag Lake.

Next comes the Veshav stream, which joins Vitasta near Bijbihara. This confluence occurs just two Kms away from Bijbihara town and this place is known as Sangam in Kashmir. There is a bridge over the Vitasta River near this place. This bridge is also known as 'Sangam Bridge'. The origin of Veshav is Kounsernag Lake in Pir Panjal

range. Kounsernag is also considered the abode of Shiva. **The** Veshav stream passes through Aharabal, Shopian, Khudwani and Arwani area before merging into the Vitasta River.

The third stream to join Vitasta is Rambiara **that emerges from Pir Panjal range and moves through Shopian district before it merges into the Veshav stream** near Naiyana about 2 km upstream from **Sangam near Bijbihara.**

The fourth stream to join the Vitasta River is the **Doodhganga stream**. It takes its origin on the eastern slopes of the Pir Panjal Mountain range of Himalaya below the Tatakuti peak. Flowing through the beautiful Yusmarg, Doodhganga is a gorgeous river known for its water that appears milky in colour. The Doodhganga and the Shaliganga streams arise from *Sang-e-safed* in the central *Pir Panjal* range merge with the 'Flood Spill Channel' constructed in 1904 which diverts flood waters from the Vitasta River at *Shivpora* towards the **Hokarsar** wetlands.

The fifth and major confluence occurs at Shadipora where **Sindh** stream joins the Vitasta River. The **Sindh** stream brings water of Panchtarni stream from the holy Amar Nath cave and then adds to it the water from the holy shrine of **Kheer Bhawani** brought by **Tulamula Nallah**. **Tulamula** Nallah joins the **Sindh** stream a little above the **Shadipora Sangam**. Panchtarini stream is formed by five small streams emerging from glaciers near the holy Amarnath Cave. Sindh stream is not to be confused with the mighty Indus or Sindh River. These are two different streams/ rivers. One being the mighty river originating from Kailash Mansarovar and going to Pakistan via Ladakh while the other being a small stream originating from inner Himalayas somewhere near Drass and joining the **Vitasta River** at Shadipopra near Sumbal. The water of **Kreink Nadi (Kanak Vahini)** as mentioned in Nilamata Purana and

Rajtarangini of Kalhana) which flows to the south of the temple complex of Naran-nag is formed by two tributaries flowing out from two lakes below Harmukh glacier. These lakes are known as **Nundkol** (referred to as lake Kalodka in Neelmat Purana and Rajtarangini) and **Gangbal** (referred to as Uttarmanasa in Neelmat Purana and Rajtarangini. Kalhana mentions Harmukutganga or Harmukha or Nandikheshttra or Nandisa repeatedly in Taranga I verses 36,113,148 and Taranga II verses 169 and 170). **Kreink Nadi** joins Sindh stream near **Kangan** in Kashmir. Finally, the Sindh stream merges into Vitasta at Shadipora. This confluence is known as Prayaag. At the merger spot, one can observe two distinct colours of water of mixing to create a single colour of the Vitasta River that flows down from Shadipora.

Below Shadipora, some more streams join the Vitasta River. The Pohru stream, originating from the Lolab Valley in North-South direction and flowing through the Kupwara district, joins the Vitasta River about 6.5 Km downstream of the Sopore town. The Ningle stream also joins the Vitasta River near Baramulla. This beautiful stream named as Ningle passes close to Gulmarg. It gets its water from the melting ice caps of the Alpathar Lake and Apharwat Lake in the summer season.

Then we have the Madhumati stream that flows through the town of Bandipore in Kashmir. Finding detailed mention in Kalhana's Rajatarangini, the Madhumati stream empties itself into the Wular lake. The Vitasta River also joins Wular Lake from one end and then exits from it from the other end. The Erin stream also joins Vitasta in Wular lake.

**The Kishenganga River joins Vitasta near Muzzafarabad town in POK.** Kishanganga originates from Krishansar Lake in the vicinity of Sonamarg in Kashmir. In Pakistan occupied Kashmir, it is known as Neelum. There are some more streams

flowing in Kashmir that join the Vitasta River. These can be listed as the **Sukhnag** stream near Dodhpathri, the **Ferozepur** stream near Tangmarg, the **Dagwan stream** from Marsar Lake flowing through *Dachigam National Park* and the **Arpat stream (Kol)** near *Tral*. *These small streams also join the Vitasta River. The Sansara and Romshi streams also merge into the Vitasta River near Kakapora before it reaches Srinagar.*

Kashmiri Pandits attach great sanctity to the confluence at **Shadipora** which is about 21 km from Srinagar city. Shadipora is approached through Srinagar-Baramulla Road. At Narbal, one has to take the right turn and go about 10 km via the **Bandipora** road to reach this village. To reach the exact confluence point boats are readily available at Shadipora Ghat on the Vitasta River.

Kashmiri Pandits believe that Vitasta at Shadipora is full of holy water brought from all the mountains, lakes, glaciers, streams and springs of the Kashmir valley. This blending of holy waters of all the lakes, streams, ponds and springs of Kashmir at Shadipora, imparts great sanctity to this ancient Teertha. Kashmiri Pandits call it **Prayag**. They used to consign the **ashes/mortal remains** of their dearest and loved ones to the holy waters of **Prayag** at Shadipora.

Kashmiri Pandits consider the Sindh stream as sacred Ganga and Vitasta to be another name of river Yamuna. This belief is also supported by verses 305-306-307 appearing in Nilamata Purana. I quote:

**"Bound by affection, Tapana's daughter, the goddess Ganga, due to great respect and devotion for the sage, augmented with her own part the Vitatsa, the best of the rivers, the destroyer of all sins. The Sindhu should be regarded as Ganga and the Vitasta should be regarded as the Yamuna. The place where the confluence of these two happens, should**





*Prayagitch Booen, Shadipora, Srinagar*

**be regarded as equal to Prayaga."**

There is a Chinar tree that stands on a small island exactly at the confluence spot. This Chinar tree is surrounded by water on all sides. One has to come to this Chinar tree in a boat and go up some steps to have a commanding view of the confluence. The Shiva-Linga, lying under the shade of this Chinar tree since ages, is also worshipped. The Prayag Chinar tree is considered mystical and sacred by Kashmiri Pandits. Even if the river is in flood, this tree never sinks. It is said that with any rise in water level around it, the Chinar tree, mysteriously rises in height. Kashmiris call it 'Prayagitch Booen'.

**About this Chinar tree and the confluence, Dr Shashi Shekhar Toshkhani says this:**

"Kashmiri Pandits believe it to be a magical tree which **"neither becomes taller, nor shorter, nor bigger"** – 'प्रेयागच बून्य, न थदान, न लोकटान, न बडान' as the **Kashmiri proverb says**. The Pandits believe that the tree has remained of the same size for centuries. The Chinar tree of Prayaag stands on a small island – 'just big enough to pitch your tent on' in the midst of the confluence. As Aurel Stein has pointed out, **the Nilamata Purana identifies the Sindhu River with the Ganga and the Vitasta with the Yamuna**. That is why the confluence has





*Bhairav Temple, Narayan Bagh, Shadipora, Srinagar*

been given the name Prayaag : '**Ganga Sindus tu vijneya Vitasta Yamuna Tatha.'**

**Across the river there is a Bhairava Temple in the area called Narayan Bagh. This ancient temple is believed to have been a Teertha and managed as an Agrahara during the rule of Hindu Kings. Agrahara was a grant of land and royal income from it, typically by a king or a noble family in India, for religious purposes, particularly to Brahmins to maintain temples in that land or a pilgrimage site and to sustain their families.**

### **DASHHAR AT SHADIPORA**

The Dashhar at Shadipora is something like the Maha Kumbh at Prayaag, Allahabad.

According to the Hindu mythology, Dashhar at Shadipora takes place when there is a celestial configuration of ten planets. This particular combination takes place after every 75 years. Last Dashhar observed at this place was in June 2016. Before that, it was held in 1941. In June 2016, about ten thousand pilgrims participated in the Dashhar. In 1941, Maharaja Hari Singh, the then ruler of the state of Jammu and Kashmir personally attended the Dashhar festivities at Shadipora. Elaborate arrangements were also made by the Maharaja's Government for the pilgrims. As per records, about one lakh pilgrims visited Shadipora for Dashhar of 1941.

During the Dashhar, pilgrims take a dip in the

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water at the sacred confluence of Sindhu and Vitasta apart from performing Shradha of their nears and dears who are no more in this world. While moving in this area in a boat, one gets a feeling of having placed himself to the caring openness of the Vitasta River. The feeling is similar to the boat ride of **Prayag near Allahabad**. I visited this place in 2012. I was pensive and thoughtful in the boat ride as my memory rolled back 30 years. I vividly remember drenching myself in heavy rains while consigning the ashes of my dear father to the holy waters at this confluence.

I conclude this post with the prophetic words of Aurel Stein. I quote:

**"Old Kashmir festivals mentioned in the Nilmata, you will understand how difficult it must be for a European scholar to learn about these rites, also how great the risk is nowadays of such old festivals and other ceremonies being lost for good under the sad changes which are taking place in Kashmir".**







# Chandika Devasthanan: A Sacred Shrine in the Village of Tengpuna, Kashmir

*Ancient Hindu shrines in Kashmir are under constant threat of oblivion either due to neglect or destruction. In order to save this heritage of ours the author has made an effort to bring to light Hindu shrines of Kashmir and put them in the historical context of Cultural mores and practices transmitted through oral traditions, which have played a primary role in shaping the Indian Cultural fabric.*

*The author is indebted to Late Shri Triloki Nath Bhat and Late Shri Srikant Bhat residents of Tengpuna for the valuable information provided in compiling this valuable data which will help in the preservation and propagation of our lesser-known shrines and also relate these with other shrines in the Indian sub-continent, thereby, interweaving the warp and woof of our cultural fabric.*

## Introduction

The origin of a civilized society in a country like India originates in the villages, where people of different identities interact for mutual benefit, self-sufficiency and autonomy. The article below is an effort to support this statement. All villages outwardly appear to be similar but each has, at its core, a soul which is as distinct as one's finger print from the other. There are, what is called, artist villages, epic villages, shrine villages, fringe villages and forsaken villages distinguished by their inhabitants and their traditions. Of these, in Kashmir the most distinctive are the shrine villages. In every such village there is a presiding deity recognized by people of all religions on the basis of faith alone.

## Co-ordinates of the Village

District Pulwama is situated 32 kilometers from Srinagar and is surrounded in the north by Srinagar, in the west by Poonch and Budgam and in the east by Anantnag. The district Pulwama came into being in 1979. It has a rich, cultural and historical background. The

ancient temples at Awantipur, Jawbari, Payar, Malangpora, Koil, Kakapora, and Narasthan and at other places, signify the rich cultural past. The legendary mystic poetess, Lal-Ded was born at Padmanpora, now Pampore. The district has some beautiful tourist spots and some of the famous places are Shikargah, Hurapora, and Tarsar Marsar etc. There are number of shrines associated with different villages. These shrines, which are there since times immemorial, have shaped cultural and ethical identity of the villages. In fact some of the important shrines associated with various deities have remained in oblivion due to religious prosecution, which left the Pandits as a miniscule minority. Some of the well-known temples which have so far survived due to the efforts of local communities in the district are Chandika Devi temple, Tengpuna; Mahakali temple, Tral; Aarishauri temple, Aarihal; Sadashiv temple, Rattanpora; Mangladevi temple, Monghama; Pingaladevi temple, Pinglish; Uma temple, Muran.



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## Chandika Devi in Hindu Mythology

According to Devi Mahatamya, in ancient times demon kings Shumbh and Nishumbh had captured the kingdom of Lord Indra and had thrown out the gods from the heaven. After intense prayers to gods, incarnation of power and strength, Chandika Devi appeared from the cells of the goddess Parvati. She assumed the form of a beautiful woman and Shumbh wished to marry her. On being refused Shumbh sent his chief demons Chanda and Munda to kill her. Kalika Devi born out of Chandika Devi's anger killed them. Shumbh and Nishumbh then tried to kill Chandika Devi but were slain by the goddess.

In another legend Chamunda emerged as Chandika from the eyebrow of Goddess Kaushiki. After killing Chanda and Munda, the goddess took the slain heads of the demons to Goddess Kaushiki who blessed Chandika and bestowed upon her the title of Chamunda.

The Siddh peetha of Chandika Devi is located at Neel Parvat, Hardwar on the right bank of river Baner in District Kangra and in village Simli, 6 kms from Karanprayag. According to Bhiringisa Samhita there are 22 sacred places of Durga in Kashmir.

## The Shrine Village

Village Tengguna is located around two kilometers from the district headquarter Pulwama on Pulwama- Koil road. The literal meaning of the word Tengguna according to the locals is place of mound. Pulwama, Pathan, Koil, Machpuna, Tenghar and Mughalpur villages surround it. Village Tengguna is prominent in the nearby villages for the shrine of Chandika Devi. Her abode is on the top of the mound. The temple of the Chandika Devi is made up of stone, wood and bricks and consists of a cella, a circumambulatory path covered with a conical sloping roof. The temple complex is covered with a mud wall. In the compound of the temple, on the right side is the Pitha of Ma Chandika Devi. Pitha is not covered. According to the village traditions the Goddess never approved of any structure to be built. The temple mentioned was built a

distance away from the original Pitha.

The temple had 40 kanals of land and was looked after by the Jagatmata Shri Chandika Devasthanan Committee. Before the migration of the KP's the president of the committee was late Brij Nath Bhat. Presently Pt. Triloki Nath Bhat is its President.

An idol of Ganesh and three headed Vishnu besides many lingas were in the temple. Three headed Vishnu of the height of two and half feet was stolen in 1971. The image of Vishnu was found at Thakurpur, Pakharpora. The black marble, one and a half feet idol of Chandika Devi was purchased from Jaipur in 1960. The idol was also stolen in 1965. At Thakurpur an idol of eighteen-armed Mahisasuramardani was found in 1983 and the idol was installed in a new temple built at the foot of the mound on the bank of Batkol stream, also called Banjarkol. The source of the stream is Banjar nag, which is considered very pious by the villagers. Kheer<sup>2</sup> was offered to this spring on religious occasions, especially on Ashtami. Every year a havan<sup>3</sup> was performed in the premises of the Chandika Devi temple on Badrepad Shuklpaksh Ashtami. The devotees attended it from far off places. The author has had the privilege to attend the Havan thrice. Late Pandit Ragav Sharma and Late Pandit Mahishwar Nath were the priests of the temple. Both were residents of village Kakapora. Pandit Mahishwar Nath expired in 1985. Just behind the temple of Chandikadevi is a small pit<sup>4</sup> under an apricot tree. As per the local folk legend, in the ancient times a saint took the water of this temple in a Kamandalu and dropped the same in a locality where all of a sudden, a spring emerged out which is presently known as Manz-nag.

Many sadhus and saints stayed in the village. Mahatma Shivjee Kak (2005 Bikrami Samvat) originally from the city used to stay in the village and offered puja and performed havan at the sacred shrine of the goddess on the hillock. He had a number of followers in the village.

According to Pandit Radha Krishan Bhat, an octogenarian, the shrine at the top of the mound was an open shrine. It was covered with wooden planks, which acted its compound

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wall. There were sculptures of various gods including Vishnu, Ganesha etc. He recollected his childhood when people were very scared of this place because of its sanctity and people used to bow before the shrine at the foot of the mound and only the spiritually elevated used to visit the shrine proper.

Most of the land attached to the Tengpuna village was the Jagir of Dasgir Sahib, Khanyar. Pir Ahmed Shah used to visit Tengpuna once a year to collect the revenue from the tenants who were both Hindus and Muslims. There were many families of Pandits also possessing land. The mound of Tengpuna village was very significant for the villagers because, on one side of it was the graveyard and on top of the mound was the sacred shrine. In the pre-partition era before 1947, the villagers thought that it would be in the interest of both the communities to demarcate the area. The village elders of both the communities discussed it and came to an amicable compromise in which the Muslims took 2/3 lands and 1/3 was given to Hindu Pandits.

### **Faith and Folklore**

One who used to go into the Shrine of Maa Chandika was blessed. Motilal Bhat teacher of Rainawari, Srinagar was issueless. He was posted in Pulwama and somebody told him to seek the blessing of Maa Chandika. He offered puja and was blessed with a son. Thereafter he was a regular visitor to the shrine. When he was transferred from Pulwama he used to visit the shrine on the Mahayagya held annually.

Qadir Sheikh<sup>5</sup> of Tengpuna used to go for early morning prayers. One day while he was on his way to offer Morning Prayer, he found a girl washing her face at Banjar Nag. He was surprised because at such early hour at about 3.30 morning everybody used to be in deep sleep, but at the same time thought she might be Kaushal, daughter of Pandit Lal Kak Bhat. Later, in the morning he went to Pt. Lal Bhat's house and told him about the morning incident. Lal Bhat said that his daughter was too young to go alone early morning to the spring. Qadir Sheikh then realized that the girl was none other than the Mother Chandika. Thereafter, he

developed a great faith on the shrine.

The present temple of Tengpuna was constructed in 1965. Pt. Shrikanth Bhat, Pt. Maheswarnath Bhat and Pt. Keshavnath Bhat looked after the construction work. A mason of the Koil village was constructing the roof and he was assisted by Abdul Gaffar Sheikh and Mohammad Sheikh the labourers of Tengpuna. The mason urinated in the temple premises, which was not allowed by his co-workers. The labourers had a great faith in this shrine and warned him of the disastrous consequences. Soon after when he was about to work on the construction of the roof, he fell down from four feet height and became unconscious. He was taken to Pulwama hospital for treatment but he could not regain his consciousness. On being advised by villagers his wife took yellow rice to the temple and requested Devi to cure her husband. While she was praying to the Goddess her husband regained consciousness in the hospital. The mason too became a devotee of the Devi.

Haji Mohd. Bhat of the village Tengpuna had great faith on the shrine and on the occasion of yearly havan he used to give donation in cash and kind. It was the first Navratra and Haji Bhat's wife, Ashi, came out of his house around midnight to refresh herself. She saw a girl on a lion coming down from the hillock. The girl took a bath in the stream. Ashi followed her. After that, the mystic girl and lion went back to their abode. Haji Bhat's wife was fascinated and at the same time was mum. In the morning she narrated the episode to her family while taking tea. The moment she completed the story, she was paralyzed and after a while she breathed her last.

There are many reported incidents of Muslims paying their tribute/ respects towards the shrine. In one of the incidents, Ghulam Mohd. Wani (Moma Fakir) once came to the president of the shrine board Sh. Brijnath Bhat and told him that there were bones scattered near the shrine. Hearing this he called upon Triloki Nath Bhat and other members who went to the shrine. All of them collected the bones and threw them away from the shrine.

Later, Trilokinath Bhat approached Moma Fakir and enquired about this selfless devotion towards the shrine. Moma Fakir recalled an incident of his youth when he was a labourer of Samad Wani. Near the Tengpuna mound was his land and Moma Fakir, during night, used to irrigate the fields. One day he was taking rest in the field and fell asleep. In the dream, he saw a number of people in the shrine. A small girl was standing on a throne with her hair open. Besides her there were many royal people. He could also identify Sad Sahib of Rangmulla among the devotees. He was called in the court and the goddess told him to take care of the shrine. This dream had a great impact on him and he became an ardent devotee of the goddess and he used to go to the shrine occasionally and clean the premises of the shrine.

There were 40 Hindu families and 250 Muslim families in the village and both were living amicably and the village was an example of peace and harmony. The aftermath of the 1990 violence left everything topsy-turvy. The temple on the top of mound was burnt in 1992

and the small temple, which was a concrete structure, was also demolished in phases and the famous and elegant murti of Mahishasurmardini was stolen. The idol was later on recovered by the police and kept in the custody of Police Station, Pulwama. The murti of Goddess Durga resurfaced in Manhattan, USA in 2010 and thereafter was spotted in Linden-Museum in Stuttgart, Germany. The murti was handed over by visiting German Chancellor Angela Merkel to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 5th October, 2015.

### Epilogue:

We need to assemble our reminiscences, which constitute the warp and woof of our social fabric, which has become essential for preserving our ethnic identity before it is irretrievably lost. The villages of Kashmir with their identity are integral Indian pockets of our culture, who are sadly, endangered by the terrorism. The efforts should be to homogenize the cultural fabric. Lest it be consigned to the dustbin of history.



*Mahishasurmardini, Kashmir*



*Sketch of Ganesha by the author*



## First P.N. Kachru Memorial Lecture

### Profile of Speaker - Scholar Prof. Ratan Parimoo

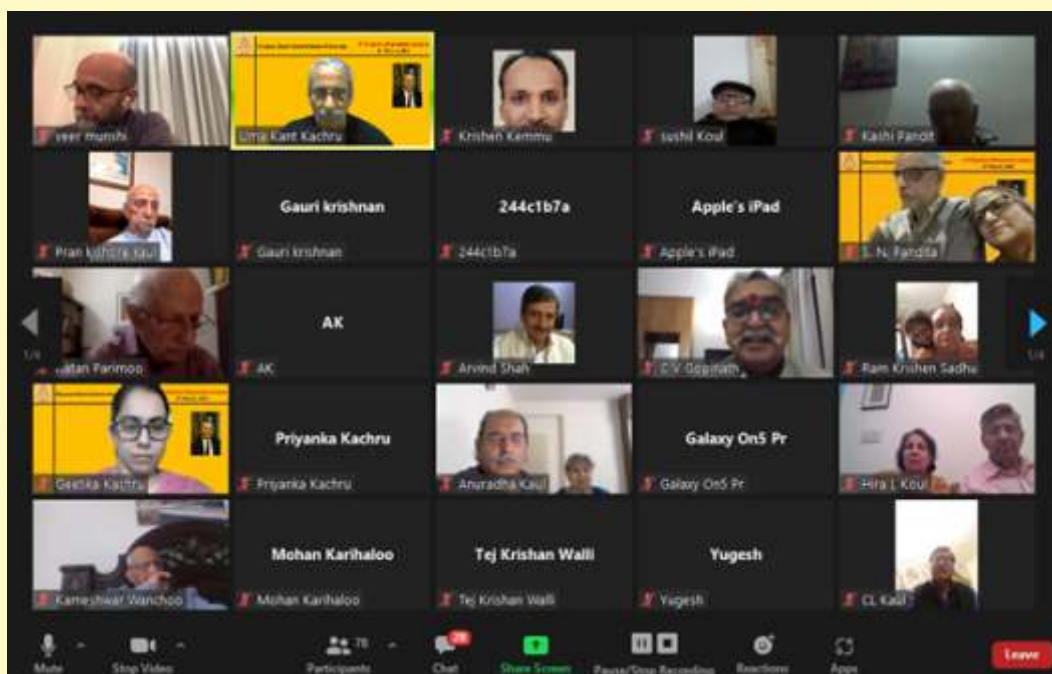
Prof Ratan Parimoo, is an eminent artist, art historian, and a pedagogue. He was born on 16 June 1936 in Srinagar, Kashmir in a Kashmiri Pandit family. Since 1951, he has made Vadodara in Gujarat his home. He is married to an equally eminent Gujarati artist, Naina Dalal. He has dedicated his entire life to producing art, teaching Indian and western art history and theories to scores of art students, engaging in seminal research and critical writing. He is one of the pioneering art historians of post-independence India whose work is internationally known through publications he has authored and edited. He has trained hundreds of art professionals and continues to crusade on with new research with child-like enthusiasm. He is a true embodiment of the spirit of Creative Arts in Modern India, straddling both, ancient and modern with ease. Prof Parimoo received Commonwealth Scholarship to study Art History at the Courtauld Institute of the University of London during 1960-63. He earned his PhD from The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda in 1972 – the first ever from an art institution. He served as the Head of the Department of Art History from 1966 to 1991 shaping the teaching of Art History as an independent discipline in India during his tenure. He was the Dean of the Faculty of Fine Arts from 1975 to 1981 and retired from teaching in 1996. After a decade he was invited to lead the Lalbhai Dalpatbhai Museum in Ahmedabad, where he worked from 2007 to 2019 as its director where he successfully reorganised the galleries of the LD Museum, the NC Mehta collection and published three ground-breaking collection catalogues on Jain, Rajasthani, Pahari and Mughal paintings including the Kasturbhai Lalbhai collection of Indian drawings from the world-famous Tagore family collection. They are well acclaimed examples of Catalogue Raisonné on Indian Miniature Paintings. Prof Parimoo is widely acknowledged as the pioneer of New Art History in India having introduced European methodological framework alongside Indian aesthetic theories of Rasa and Alamkara for the analysis and interpretation of Indian art. From Indian textual sources he has drawn on Buddhist, Puranic and regional texts for the interpretation of sculpture and painting. He has expanded the scope of Indian art history by developing upon the scholarship of Ananda Coomaraswamy, Stella Kramrisch, W G Archer, Karl Khandalawala, B N Goswamy, C Sivaramamurti, U P Shah, M A Dhaky and Kapila Vatsyayan. He pioneered research and art criticism of Modern Indian art when it was still an untrodden path. Through his teaching and writings, he has convincingly demonstrated how stylistic analysis of Heinrich Wölfflin, Alois Riegl et al and content interpretation or iconology based on symbolic meaning of Ervin Panofsky, semiotics of Roland Barthes and hermeneutic reading of representation by Ernst Gombrich could be applied to Indian art. Today, codes of visual culture introduced in the last fifty years at the Department of Art History in Baroda and elsewhere in the nation bridge the gap in the practice of writing on Indian art.



Prof Ratan Parimoo

## P N Kachru Memorial Lecture

### Pictures of Participants



## Photo Gallery of Memorial Lecture




YAMA (ONE OF THE ADITYAS)

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THE RECENTLY EXCAVATED PLINTH, SOUTH SIDE, SOLAR DEITIES



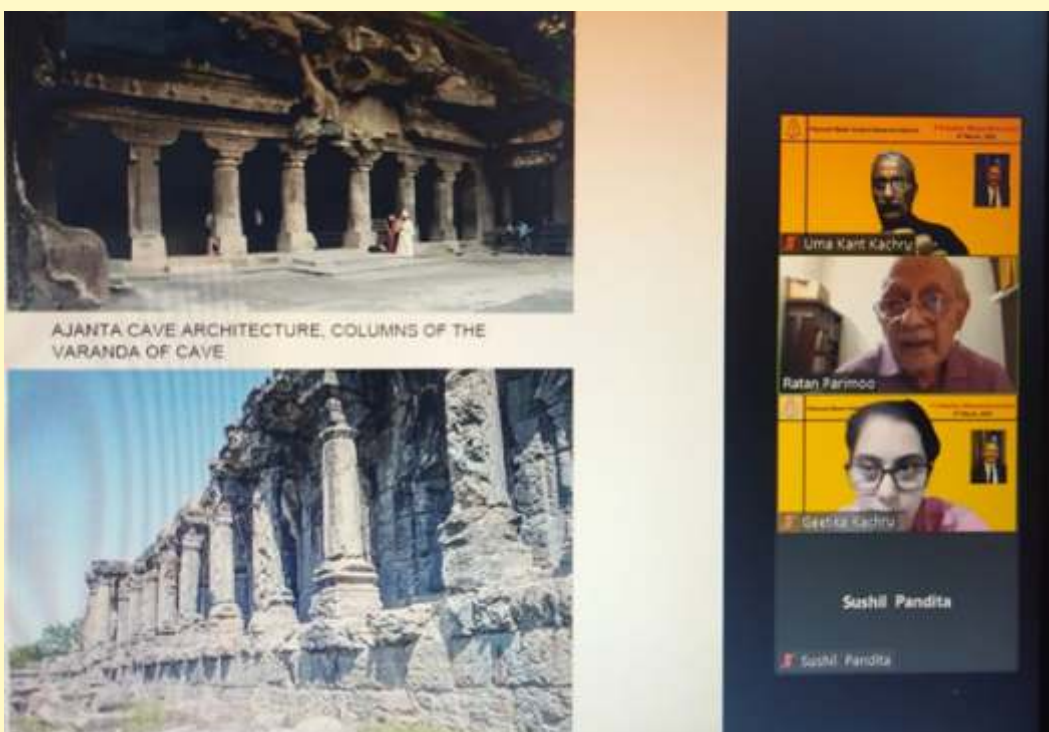
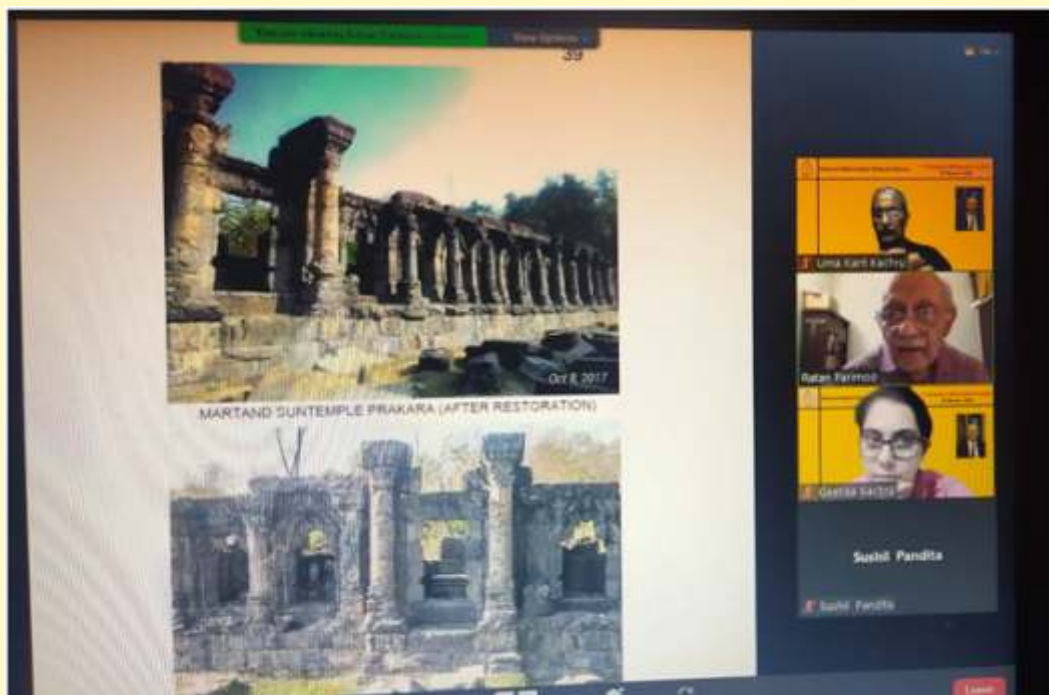


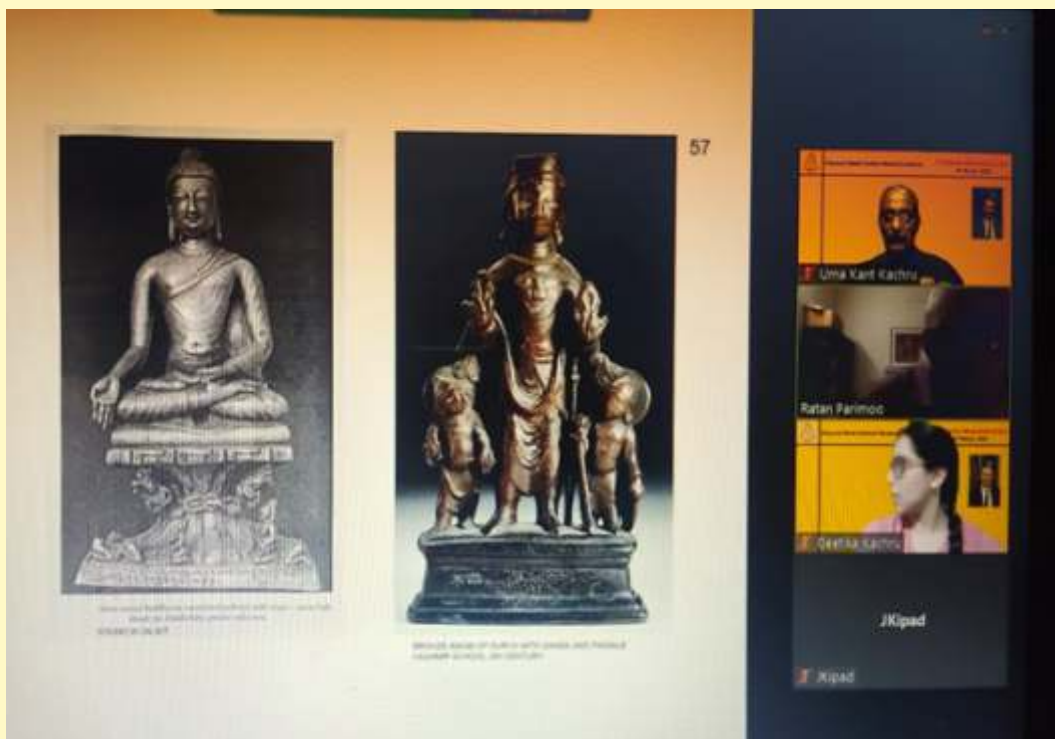
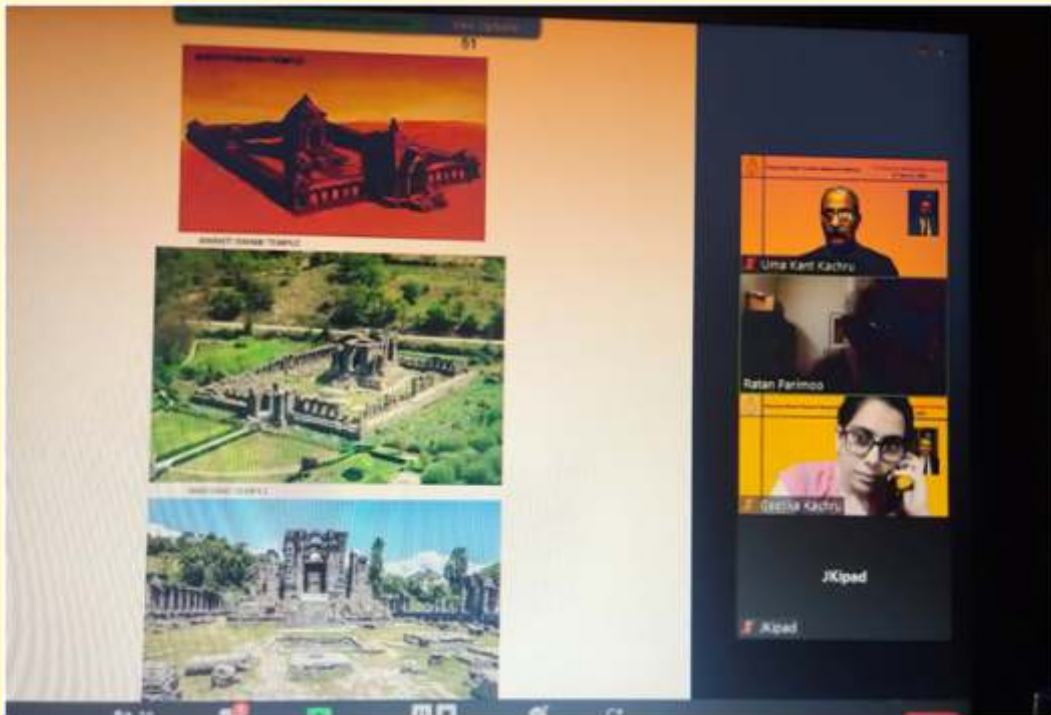
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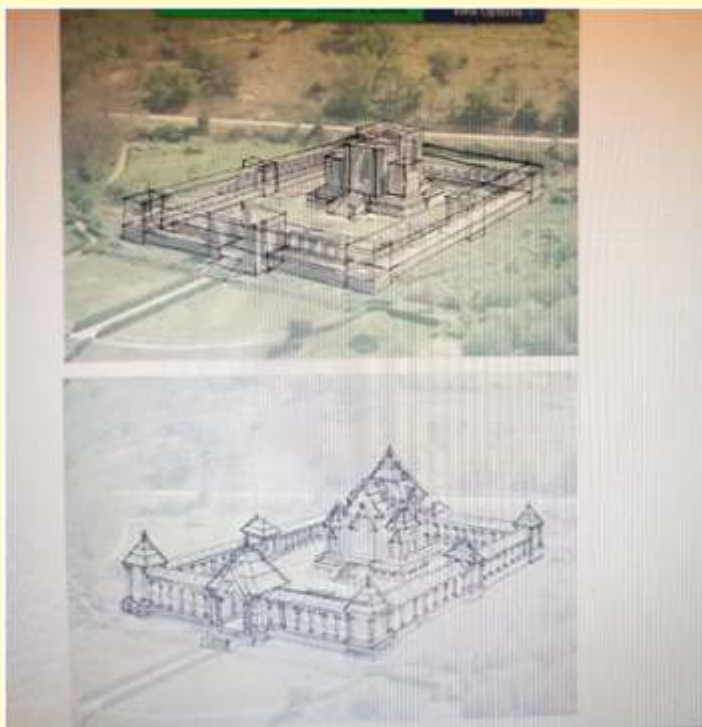
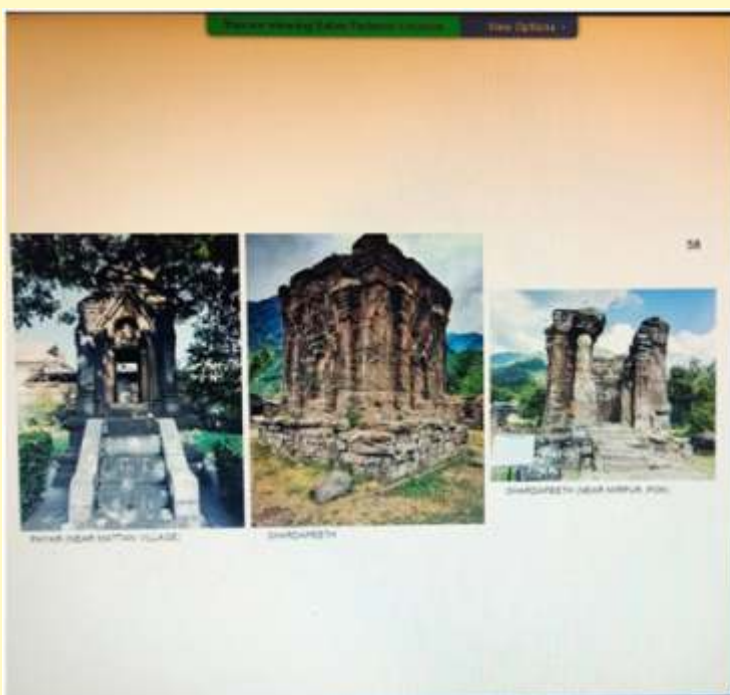














**Pictures Courtesy : Kashmir History &  
Archaeology Through the Ages. Photo Credit : Shadi Lal Shali**



*Avantipura Temple ruins.*



*Pandrethan Temple*



*Mamleshwar Temple, Pahalgam*



*Ancient Siva Temple, Payar*

**Pictures Courtesy : Illustrations of  
Ancient Buildings in Kashmir. Photo Credit - John Burke**



*Martand Temple ruins*

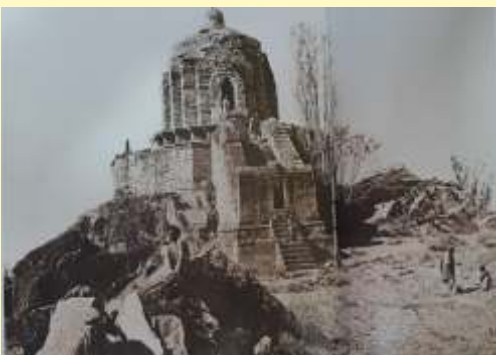


*Temple ruins on road between Uri & Naoshera, Kashmir*



*Temple Pillar outside  
Jama Masjid, Srinagar*

**Pictures Courtesy: Frederick Bremner**



*Shankracharya Temple, Srinagar.*



*Martand Colonnades on the northern side*



# Temples and Shrines of Kashmir

The valley of Kashmir is known not only for its beauty and bounties of nature but also for its magnificent, majestic and splendid temples of the past. History is witness to the richness of the architectural, cultural and historical heritage of Kashmir which is referenced not only in the chronicles like *Nilamata Purana*, *Rajatarangini* and *Mahatmyas* but also in the works of renowned authors and historians and travel accounts of travellers, both Indian and foreign. The splendid temples of Kashmir of the past not only show the rich cultural past of the Kashmiris but also reflect the architectural beauty of these temples, even in the state of ruin. Though there were influences from the neighbouring regions because of exchanges on cultural, religious and other fronts, yet the artisans of Kashmir are known to have developed and perfected their own architectural style - the Kashmiri style of architecture. According to Pandit PNK Bamzai, "From bygone ages, the inhabitants of the Happy Valley have been known throughout the world as accomplished artisans, possessing an artistic bent of mind, influenced to a very great extent by their beautiful natural surroundings. ... Kashmiris have been known to outsiders as Shastra Shilpina or architects on account of their well-known skill in building."<sup>1</sup> According to Archeological Survey of India, "The available ancient temples of Kashmir form a homogeneous group, without any far-reaching evolutionary changes, confirming

conservatively to the form and tradition already developed in the eighth century AD or even earlier. Differing largely from the general architectural movement of the rest of India, the temples of Kashmir have their distinctive local character and architectural features in their high-pitched and straight edged pyramidal roof in two tiers, triangular pediments enclosing trefoil niches, disposition of the walls, peripteral and cellular layout, and pillars and pilasters of a peculiar style in several instances,"<sup>2</sup> A glance into history shows that since time immemorial the length and breadth of the valley had been dotted with innumerable temples, shrines and places of worship. Though the exact number of the sacred places in the valley in ancient times is not known, yet one can have a fair idea of the innumerable sacred places from the writings of Kalhana and other authors. According to Pandit Kalhana, the legendary author of 12<sup>th</sup> century chronicle, *Rajatarangini*, "*Chakra Bridivjeysyadi Keshveshanbhushitay, Tilanshopi Na Ya t r a s i t P r e s h y a s Teerthaybhahishkritah.*"<sup>3</sup> Translated, it means, 'The land of Kashmir, which is honoured with Chakradhar (Chakdhar), Vijeshwar (Bijbehara), Vishnu Dhams and Shiv Dhams, has no place which is without a shrine or a place of worship'. Prajyabhatta in his *Rajatarangini* makes a mention of 45 Shiv dhams, 60 Vishnu dhams, 3 places of Brahma, 22 Shakti Peeth, 700 Nags and millions of other spots in Kashmir. The Sanskrit Shloka pertaining to this

information is quoted in *Shri Amarnath Mahatmyam*.<sup>4</sup> Aurel Stein, giving reference to Kalhana, also mentions about Kashmir as a country “where there is not a space as large as a grain of sesamum without a Tirtha.”<sup>5</sup> Further says he, “Kashmir has since early times been pre-eminently a country of holy sites and places of pilgrimage of all kinds. These objects of ancient local worship have always played an important part in the historical topography of the Valley and the adjacent mountain-regions. It is hence no small advantage that there are abundant materials at our disposal for the special study of this topographiasacra of Kashmir.”<sup>6</sup> According to Lawrence, “There is hardly a river, spring, or hill-side in Kashmir that is not holy to the Hindus, and it would require endless space if I were to attempt to give a list of places famous and dear to Hindus.” Further, he quotes *Ain-i-Akbari*, which says, “The Hindus regard all Kashmir as holy land. Forty-five places are dedicated to Mahadeo, and sixty-four to Bishen, three to Brahma, and twenty-two to Durga. In seven hundred places there are carved figures of snakes, which they worship.”<sup>7</sup> Dr. Neve says, “The Hindus of olden days had the gift of choosing very fine positions for their religious buildings.”<sup>8</sup> *Nilamata Purana*, also known as *Kashmira Mahatmya*, an ancient text of 7th century, gives us information about Kashmir's history, geography, religion and folklore. According to Georg Buhler, the work is a real mine of information regarding the sacred places of Kashmir and legends which are required to explain *Rajatarangini*. About the shrines and places of worship, Pandit RC Kak writes, “According to Brahman tradition every lake and river and spring of the valley has a divine origin and a sacred mission to fulfil -

viz., washing away the sins of the faithful. The Vitasta is, above all, the sacred river, and is said to contain within its waters all that is holy in the world. Indeed, Kashmir itself is considered to be the holiest of all the holy lands; it is called the Rishibhumi, 'the land of the sages', Sardapitha, 'the eternally pure seat of the goddess Sarada'.”<sup>9</sup>

The above lines about the sacred places, quoted by Kalhana in his *Rajatarangini*, matched the ground reality during his time. However, history tells us that things changed in the centuries that followed. After the advent of Islam in the valley in 14<sup>th</sup> century, the Muslim rulers resorted to religious persecution which impacted the local indigenous population, with a history of 5000 years, in a big way. The majority Hindu community, now called Kashmiri Pandits, was reduced to a minority because majority of them were forcibly converted; many of them, to avoid persecution, fled their land of birth and the rest of those who resisted were killed. This fact is recorded by Walter R Lawrence, who says, “having glutted his vengeance on Hindu temples, Sikandar turned his attention to the people who had worshipped in them, and he offered them three choices, death, conversion, or exile.”<sup>10</sup> Similar fate was met by the ancient magnificent temples, shrines and places of worship of Kashmir. Large number of these temples and sacred placed of worship were converted into ziarats and graveyards - hence lost forever. Though it is immaterial to talk about the number of the temples and shrines converted, yet, it is worthwhile to name some of the important ones. History records the conversion of Jayapida Mandirs (Amritkeshav, Chatratmakeshav and Sheeshashaikeshav) near Sumbal; Kalishree Mandir at Khankah, Srinagar; Lokeshwari Mandir at Maharaj Ganj,



Srinagar; Mahashri Mandir in Srinagar; Bijbehara Mandirs (Vijyeshwar, Kalsheshwar and Mein Mutt) at Bijbehara; Bhimakeshav Mandirs at Bumzu and Prahaspore Mandirs (Muktakeshav and Prahaskeshav) near Baramulla. Sikandar Butshikan destroyed the Jayapida Mandirs and Zain-ul-abidin used its material to construct the embankment of river Jhelum at Sopore.<sup>11</sup> Sultan Qutb-ud-Din destroyed the Kalishree Mandir and the foundation of the mosque of Khan-kah-Maula was laid with its material.<sup>12</sup> Ever since Kashmiri Pandits have been worshipping a *Shila* of Maha Kali (Inset01) at the place. Lokeshwari Mandir was converted into a graveyard of kings of Kashmir<sup>13</sup> and remains of the old temple used in a wall around the premises.<sup>14</sup> Sikandar Butshikan destroyed Mahashri Mandir and used its material for laying foundation of Badi Masjid.<sup>15</sup> Bijbehara Mandirs were destroyed by Sikandar Butshikan and material used to build Vijeshwar Khankah. Mandirs of Bhimkeshav were converted into the Ziarat of Baba Bamdin Sahib and shrine of Rishi Rukh-ud-din Sahib.<sup>16</sup> Prahaspore Mandirs were destroyed by Sikandar Butshikan and the material used for embankment of river Vitasta.<sup>17</sup> History also records the acts of vandalization, destruction and razing to ground of many architectural marvels of the past, as a result of which only a few of the innumerable temples mentioned in *Rajatarangini* survived. The ruins seen today at the sites of their origin is a testimony to the extent of vandalization and devastation wrecked on these temples and shrines. It suffices to make a mention of just two of these marvels of architecture, namely, Avantipora Mandirs (Avantesvara and Avantisvamin), Anantnag (Inset02 and 03) and Martand Mandir, Anantnag (Inset04).

Sikandar Butshikan destroyed these magnificent temples. According to Lawrence, the complete ruins of Avantipora temples could have been effected by use of gunpowder by bigoted Sikandar, whose Idol breaking zeal procured him the title of But-Shikan or 'Iconoclast'.<sup>18</sup> Referring to the destruction of ancient temples of Kashmir, it is stated that, "Unfortunately, most of these pious foundations were destroyed, some substantially and others completely, by a few iconoclastic rulers, the chief being Sultan Sikandar."<sup>19</sup> As regards the razing to ground of some marvels of the past, it is recorded that we have no traces of Padmaswami Vishnu Mandir, Pampur; Ambarher Mutt near Ganderbal; Durlab Swami Mandir, Zaina Kadal; Harteshwar Mandir, Vechar Nag; Megh Mutt, Borus village and Vishweshwar Mata Mandir, Drogjan. There are, however, some Icons of faith, seen in isolation at some places, which suggest that they must have been part of some massive Mandir or shrine in ancient times. These include the Shivalinga at Borus, Anantnag; Shivalinga at Kanli Bagh, Baramulla and Murti of Lord Brahma (Inset05) at Seeri, Baramulla. There are also some ancient temples, shrines and places of worship which have escaped the wrath of the intolerant rulers and also survived nature's fury during their long period of existence and are, therefore, extant today. These include Bandi Mandir, Buniyar Mandir, Mamaleshwar Mandir, Naranthal Mandir, Pandrethan Mandir, Payar Mandir, Shankarcharya Mandir etc. It is, therefore, grace of God that in spite of the havoc wrecked on the sacred shrines of the past; many escaped the wrath of the intolerant rulers. The remaining sacred shrines and the new ones that were built in the subsequent years came down to us as

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our Temple Heritage.

Kashmiri Hindus (now Kashmiri Pandits) are lucky to have inherited this Temple Heritage from their ancestors. It is, therefore, no surprise to see them worshipping and paying obeisance to their gods and goddesses at these holy places, a practice which they have been following generation after generation. In fact, their devotion to the holy places is so great that the members of the community consider life incomplete without an association with a temple, shrine or a place of worship. As is known, religious places play a pivotal role in the society and act as the places of socio-religious activities, where, besides showing reverence and respect to their gods and goddesses, devotees also have a social and religious awakening. This explains why a number of temples and shrines came up outside the valley after the ethnic cleansing of the community from the valley in 1990. After having got uprooted from their place of birth, Kashmiri Pandit devotees felt a void in their lives. To fill this void and to have a purpose of life, they built new temples and Ashrams at their new found places. It is important to point out here that the phenomena of desecration, damage and attacks on the places of worship of Kashmiri Hindus was prevalent not only during the five hundred years of Muslim rule but also was seen during the Qabaili Raid in 1947 and then at regular intervals in the post independence era. In 1947, Qabailis gutted Dhooni Mata Mandir, Bumai and caused damage to many local temples including the famous Buniyar Mandir. Thereafter, the zealots systematically targeted many temples and shrines in the valley and succeeded in desecrating and damaging some places of worship and / or grabbing the temple land and property. Media reports indicate that the number of temples and shrines

desecrated or damaged in the Valley in 1986 AD exceeded 80 and the number in 1992 AD exceeded 50. Fortunately, however, we are still left with many ancient and new temples and shrines, which have escaped the wrath of the zealots. In the changed circumstances, the biggest challenge before the Pandit community is to ensure not only the protection and safety of the temples and shrines in the valley and the properties attached to them but also proper up-keep of these sacred shrines. The best way to safeguard the Hindu shrines and shrine properties is through the passage of the Hindu Temples and Shrines Bill at the earliest. The efforts of various community organizations spearheaded by Prem Nath Bhat Memorial Trust (PNBMT) over the last few decades are yet to bear the desired results. Passage of this bill is going to be an important Confidence Building Measure (CBM) for the beleaguered Kashmiri Pandit community.

My in-depth analysis of the extant temples and shrines in the Valley reveals the following interesting facts:

❖ Since time immemorial, Kashmiri Hindus have been worshipping both Shiva and Shakti because they consider Shiva and Shakti as inseparable. We, therefore, have most of the sacred shrines dedicated either to Shakti, with a Shivalinga also installed within the sanctum sanctorum, or to Shiva, with a Shivalinga installed as the main Icon of faith in the *Garbagreha* (sanctum sanctorum). However, there are also a few dozen shrines dedicated to Lord Ganesha (at Baramulla, Bumai, Ganivann, Ganpatyar, Seer Jagir etc.); half a dozen shrines dedicated to Lord Ram (at Akingam, Baramulla, Srinagar etc.); a shrine dedicated to Lord Krishna (Gadadhar Mandir); a few shrines dedicated to Hanuman Ji (at Hari Parvat,

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Hari Singh High Street etc.); one to Surya Devta (Martand); one to Lord Brahma (Pushkar Tirtha, Badgam) and a dozen or more shrines dedicated to Bhairavas (Anandeshwar, Bahukhatkeshwar, Dev Raza Bhairava, Mangaleshwar, Nandkishor, Puranraza etc.).

❖ Each of the extant temples, shrines or places of worship has a unique location. So, we find temples, shrines and places of worship on mountains (Swami Amarnath; Harishor; Sarishor; Mahadev etc.); on hills and hillocks (Shankaracharya Mandir; Sharika Bhagwati, Hari Parvat; Zeshta Bhagwati, Zabarvan Hill; Sharda Devi, POK; Jwala Bhagwati, Khrew etc.); in / on springs (Kheer Bhawani, Tulamulla; Vechar Nag Tirtha; Durga Nag Mandir; Pokhribal Asthapana etc.); in the forests (Naran Nag; Kapatesvara etc.), on riverbanks (Ganesh Mandir, Ganpatyar; Gadadhar Mandir; Mahakali Asthapana; Raghunath Mandir etc. on Vitasta); on the confluence of rivers (Prayag - confluence of Vitasta and Sendh; and Sangam – confluence of Vitasta, Vyetha Vuthur and Rambiar) and at many other places (Ram Chander Mandir; Rishi Pir Asthapana; Sheetalnath Mandir etc.).

❖ Many of the inherited shrines are the result of divine intervention i.e. have a divine origin and are, therefore, called *Shaktisthals* or *Shakti Peeths* (places of divine power). Some of the *Shakti Peeths* that can be mentioned are Sharika Peeth (Chakrishor); Ragnya Peeths (Kheer Bhawani, Tulamulla, Tikkar, Manzgam etc.); Zeshta Peeth (Zeethyar); Jwala Peeth (Khrew); Bhadrakali Tirtha etc. Also included in the list are *Shivasthals* with divine origin. These include Swami Amarnath; Harishor; Sarishor; Thajwor; Mahadev etc. Some of these *Shiva-Shakti sthals* find a mention in ancient texts like

*Nilamata Purana* and *Rajatarangini*.

❖ Most of the sacred shrines with divine origin are centred on nature's creations. One finds a *Shila* or an Icon of faith in the form of a tree [*buuen* (chinar), *bran* (elm), *brimij* (celtis Australis), *deodoar* (deodar) or *tul kul* (mulberry)] or part of a mound, each representing a manifestation of *Shakti*, the power of Shiva. Some of these *Shiva-Shaktisthals*, with the nature's creation, are Swami Amarnath Tirtha (Svayambu Ice Lingam); Sharika Bhagwati, Chakrishor (*Shila*); Jwala Bhagwati, Khrew (*Shila* and *Jyoti*); Sharda Devi, POK (*Shila*); Mata Ropa Bhawani Asthapana, Manigam (*buuen*); Wasuki Nag Tirtha, Badgam (*buuen*); Dev Raza Bhairava Asthapana, Nuner (*bran*); Bargashakha Bhagwati, Anantnag (*brimij*); Bhadrakali Tirtha, Handwara (*deodar*); Tripurasundari Asthapana, Khanbarnen (*deodar*); Mata Kheer Bhawani, Tulamulla (*tul kul*) etc.

❖ At many sacred shrines, devotees have been worshipping natural phenomena. These sacred shrines include Swami Amarnath Tirtha, Anantnag; Gangajattan Tirtha, Beerwah; Mata Asthapana, Narnag; Kheer Bhawani, Tulamulla; Lidder Sendhai, Anantnag; Jwala Bhagwati, Khrew; Tri Sandhya, Anantnag etc. At Amarnath Guffa an Ice Lingam forms naturally every year. The Ice Lingam waxes and wanes with the moon, reaching its maximum on Shravan Purnima. The Tirtha of Gangajattan remains dry throughout the year except on *gangiu euutham* (Ganga Ashtami) in the month of *beuuderpeth* (Aug-Sep) when there occurs a natural waterfall for an hour or so, a period during which devotees have a *Snan* and perform *Puja*. At Mata Asthapana, Narnag, Handwara, the *Pratima* (image) in



the Holy Nag, according to the locals, changes its position on a weekly basis. At Mata Khir Bhawani, Tulamulla, the colour of the Holy water changes naturally. At Liddar Sendhai Tirtha, Kokarnag, the Holy water appears and disappears from 15<sup>th</sup> *vahek* (Apr-May) to 15<sup>th</sup> *haar* (Jun-Jul), after which it flows continuously for some time and then disappears till the new cycle begins. At Trisandhya, Anantnag, the Holy Nag remains dry almost all-through the year, except the month of *zeeth* (May-Jun) and *haar* (Jun-Jul), when water in the Nag appears and disappears many a time. Initially water starts oozing out in small quantities for a few days and then suddenly appears and fills the Holy Nag. Devotees wait for this moment and when it comes, they recite three times Samdhya, Samdhya, Samdhya - hence the name 'Tri' meaning 'three'.

❖ Many of the sacred Tirthas are in the form of natural *Guffas* (caves). These include the shrines of Amarnath Guffa, Beeru Guffa, Bumzu Guffa Mandirs, Dhanishvar Tirtha, Chandanwari Guffa, Harishor Tirtha etc.

❖ Many *Shiva-Shaktisthals* of the Valley have the status of a *Tirtha* (pilgrimage) – a place where manifestation of divinity has occurred and where devotees go on a *Yatra* (pilgrimage). Some of the *Tirthas* where devotees go on pilgrimage or congregate on auspicious days during the 12 months of a calendar year are Shailputri, Baramulla (*Ram Navam* in *tsitiur* i.e. Mar-Apr); Guptganga, Nishat (*Vaishaki* in *vahek* i.e. Apr-May); Zeshta Bhagwati, Zeethyar (*peuuntsam* in *zeeth* i.e. May-Jun); Sharika Bhagwati, Chakrishor (*Navam* in *haar* i.e. Jun-Jul); Pushkar Tirtha, Beerwah (*Mavas* in *haar* i.e. Jun-Jul); Kapalamochan Tirtha,

Shopian (*Shravan bah* in *shravan* i.e. Jul-Aug); Amarnath Tirtha, Shankaracharya Mandir and Thajwor Tirtha, Bijbehara (*Shravan punim* in *shravan* i.e. Jul-Aug); Harmukat Ganga, Gangajattan and Uma Nagri (*euutham* in *beuuderpeth* i.e. Aug-Sep); Mata Ropa Bhawani Asthapanas (*satam* in *euushid* i.e. Sep-Oct); Isht Devi Mandirs (Deepavali on *Mavas* in *kartik* i.e. Oct-Nov); Sharda Mata Asthapanas POK, Gushi, Kalusa and Yechhikoot (*satam* in *poh* i.e. Dec-Jan) and Mata Kali Asthapanas, Khan Kah (*euutham* in *poh* i.e. Dec-Jan); Soomyar Mandir, Habba Kadal (*Sumri Mavas* in *maag* i.e. Jan-Feb) and various Shiva Mandirs across the valley (*Shivaratri* in *phagun* i.e. Feb-Mar).

❖ Some of the sacred *Tirthas* and rivers of Kashmir bear the same name as that found outside the Valley and include such names as Ganga, Sindh, Godavari, Prayag, Sangam, Pushkar, Kapalamochan and many others. We, therefore, have the famous *Tirthasthans* as Gangabal (also known as Harmukat Ganga); Gangajattan, Beerwah; Godavari Tirtha, Kulgam; Prayag Tirtha, Shadipora; Sangam (the confluence of Vitasta, Vyetha Vuthur and Rambiar rivers near Bijbehara); Pushkar Tirtha, Beerwah; Kapalamochan Tirtha, Shopian etc.

❖ Many of the inherited sacred places are the result of the efforts of many Rishis, Rajas and devotees. These sacred places have been built by righteous people to propitiate their deities or show reverence to saints and seers and are, therefore, Spiritual Energy Centres (places where saints and seers were blessed because of their Sadhana). Some of these Spiritual Energy Centres are Ropa Bhawani Asthapanas; Rishi Pir Asthapanas, Ali Kadal; Bhagwaan

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Gopinath Ashram, Kharyar; Swami Nand Lal Ashram, Hushroo; Ishwar Ashram, Ishbar etc.

❖ There are about fifty *Mahatmyas* which have come to light because of the effort of Georg Buhler and Sir Aurel Stein with the assistance of Kashmiri scholars. A *Mahatmya* is a text, written record or a religious document, which gives details of a *Tirtha* and describes its history, legend associated with it, important aspects, routes to be followed to undertake the pilgrimage, rites to be gone through and the benefits a pilgrim would derive by undertaking the pilgrimage. Some of the important Mahatmyas listed in the monumental work of Kalhan's *Rajatarangini*, that can be mentioned here, are Amarnathmahatmya, Dhyanesvaramahatmya, Harmukatagangamahatmya, Kapalamochanamahatmya, Kapatesvaramahatmya, Kotitirthamahatmya, Pushkaramahatmya, Ragnyamahatmya, Shardamahatmya, Trisamdhyamahatmya, Vitastamahatmya etc.<sup>20</sup>

❖ *Kashmiratirthasangraha* is a monumental work on the ancient Hindu shrines of Kashmir which has been produced by Pandit Sahib Ram Kaul, one of the greatest Kashmiri Sanskrit scholars, who lived during the reign of Maharaja Ranbir Singh (1858-85). The work was used by Aurel Stein to identify many places in the valley.

❖ There are a number of sacred shrines in the valley that have legends associated with them. The shrines (together with the legend in brackets) include the sacred shrines of Amarnath Guffa (revealing of Amarkatha by Lord Shiva); Sharika Bhagwati, Hari Parvat (Devi taking the form of a *haer* or *Myna* to kill a demon); Bhadrakali

Bhagwati, Handwara (slaying of demon); Kapalamochan Tirtha (Getting rid of Brahma's *Kapala* in Kapaleshwar Nag); Mata Kheer Bhawani (Shifting of Mata Shyama from Sri Lanka); Kanimeuuj (Foot print of the hoof of a Holy cow); Gautam Nag (Penance of Gautama Rishi); Lok Bhawan (Lord Vishnu blessing a dumb girl); Mamaleshwar Mandir, Pahalgam (Ganesha as a gatekeeper preventing the entry of Lord Shiva) etc.

❖ There are a number of sacred shrines in the valley that have 'bal', meaning Shakti, as a suffix to the name. These include Bhawanibal, Akingam; Devibal, Anantnag; Devibal, Badipora; Devibal, Logripora; Devibal, Manzgam; Devibal, Raithan; Devibal, Ratnipora etc.; Nagbal, Anantnag; Nagbal, Khiram; Nagbal, Kremshor; Nagbal, Sagam; Nagbal, Shopian (Kapalamochan) and Pokhribal Asthapana, Srinagar etc.

❖ There are a number of sacred shrines in the valley that have 'yar' as a suffix to the name. These shrines are located on the two banks of river Vitasta, as it flows through the city of Srinagar, with thirteen shrines on the right bank of Vitasta and three shrines on the left bank. Starting from the first shrine, the shrines on the right bank are Shurahyar, Badiyar, Ganpatyar, Mallayar, Kharyar, Sapruyar, Soomyar, Madanyar, Sheshyar, Qaziya, Kutwalyar, Razdanyar and Batayar and those on the left bank are Purshyar, Drabiyar and Sehyar.

❖ Sheetalnath Mandir has a historical importance in that it has served as the centre of political awakening for the community. Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru have delivered their speeches here. Martand Newspaper, representing the voice of Kashmiri Pandits those days, was launched from here.

❖ Records indicate that some temples and shrines are managed by Archeological Survey of India, some by state Archeological Department, some by Dharmarth Trust and many others by local bodies. There are, however, a number of sites of religious importance which have been left unattended and unprotected;

❖ Though most of the ancient temples and monuments of the valley are protected monuments under the care of Archeological Survey of India for the last so many decades, yet nothing tangible seems to have been done over the years to protect and restore the monuments or prevent them from further neglect and decay.

❖ There are many other interesting facts about some of the sacred shrines of the valley. These are:

- ☛ Shankaracharya Mandir is the oldest constructed Shiva Mandir in the valley;
- ☛ Swami Amarnath Guffa is the ancient natural shrine associated with Lord Shiva;
- ☛ The biggest Shivalinga on Sheshnag (Inset06) is in Pratap Singh Samadhi Mandir, Rambagh;
- ☛ Shiva Mandir, Pampore has a unique thin and tall Shivalinga (Inset07) installed in its sanctum sanctorum;
- ☛ The thousand eyed Svayambhu Shivalinga in the Shiva Mandir at Kapalamochan Tirtha, which was damaged post 1990 militancy, has been reconstructed and re-installed (Inset08);
- ☛ The Sahasramukhi Shiva (Shiva with 1000 faces) housed in the sanctum sanctorum of Shiligram Tirtha, Anantnag is reported to have been damaged post 1990 militancy;
- ☛ The Shivalinga in the Shiva Mandir,

Zeethyar is the one that has been shifted from Ganpatyar Mandir;

- ☛ Dashnami Akhara Mandir, Badshah Chowk houses the *Pratima* of Panchmukhi Shiva (Inset09). Hanuman Mandir, Hari Singh High Street also houses a Panchmukhi Shiva in the sanctum sanctorum;
- ☛ Hanuman Mandir, Hari Singh High Street houses the *Pratima* of Panchmukhi Hanuman (Inset10);
- ☛ Martand Mandir (also known as Martandeshwar) is the only temple in the north dedicated to Surya (Sun-God), the other two sun temples are at Konark in Odisha and Medhera in Gujarat;
- ☛ A rare sixth century single faced Shiva sculpture (Inset11), found recently during the dredging work carried out in the reservoir near Harwan garden, is said to be the only one of its kind found in the valley. The rare sculpture is probably the reminiscent of an ancient temple which might have existed in its vicinity;
- ☛ Shankarpal (Inset12), deep inside Dachhigam Forest Reserve Area, is the famous sacred rock on which Acharya Vasugupta (9<sup>th</sup> century) found the secret teachings of Trika Philosophy inscribed on it in the form of *Sutras*, popularly known as the *Shiva Sutras*. To show reverence, devotees have been visiting the sacred shrine on *shravan punim* (15th day of the moonlit fortnight of *shravan* i.e., Jul-Aug);
- ☛ A number of sculptures, discovered a few years back during the house construction work carried out at Bhakhihakar and Gunipora, are housed in the Mata Mandir in the premises of the Shiva Mandir, Handwara;



- ☛ A unique Matka (huge clay pot or vessel), popularly known as *Bheem Ka Matka* (Inset13), is a great attraction to the devotees and visitors to the 1000-year-old ancient Bandi Mandir, also known as Dhatha or Datta Mandir (probably Sanskrit *Daataa* – giver, generous, liberal, benefactor) near Bandi, Uri, J&K. The legend links the temple to Pandavas and the *Matka* to Bheema, who used to fill it with water from the vitasta. Interesting aspect of the *Matka* is that it retains its water level irrespective of the water taken out;
- ☛ Prior to 1947 devotees used to go on a pilgrimage to the Sharda Tirtha (now in POK) on Sharda Ashtami in *poh* i.e., Dec-Jan. After partition, this *Yatra* is now restricted to the three Sharda Mandirs in the valley located at Gushi, Kalusa and Yechhikoot in Budgam district;
- ☛ Vejibror Mandir, Bijbehara is famous for housing the famous stone, known as *kah-kah-pal* (*kah* in Kashmiri means eleven and *pal* means stone), in its compound. The conch shaped stone, tapered on either side with a provision for positioning of index fingers weighs 90 Kilograms and has been an attraction to the devotees and visitors of the Mandir.<sup>21</sup> The importance of the stone is that it cannot be lifted by an individual but is easily lifted by eleven persons with their index fingers only.<sup>22</sup> The author, however, did not find the stone in the premises during his visit to the Mandir in 2008.
- ☛ During the renovation work undertaken sometime back at Durga Nag Mandir, Srinagar, an ancient Devi Mandir and a small Holy Nag were

discovered beneath the main Mandir. Both the ancient Devi Mandir (Inset14) and Holy Nag (Inset15) have been restored since.

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Maha Kali Asthapan



Avantesvara Mandir



Avantiswamin Mandir



Martand Mandir



Lord Brahma, Baramulla



Shivalinga on Sheshnag



Shivalinga, Shiva Mandir, Pampore



Shivalinga, Kapalamochan Mandir



Panchmukhi Shiva, Dashnami Akhara Mandir



Panchmukhi Hanuman



Shiva, Sarband, Harwan



Shankarpal, Dachhigam



Bheem Ka Matka



Devi Mandir, Durganag



Holu Nag, Durganag

# *Messages for* **Neelamatam**

1. Dear Kachru ji, Namaskar. Permit me to congratulate you on the publication of Neelamatam special issue on Kashmir Theatre. I can call it a historical document for the reason that the subject matter of the articles, the presentation, the rare photos and the personal touch here and there all put together make it a rare document that speaks of the literary and artistic taste of the publisher. Maybe it serves as source material for in-depth researches in this genre of literature. You have done enviable service to the culture and history of Kashmir rising above small constraints and prejudices.

I am highly thankful to my dear friend Shri Avtar ji Mota for writing an excellent and professionally perfect review of my translated work titled Baharistan-i-Shahi. Nothing better could be written to introduce the work to our younger generation. Of course, much labour and perseverance have gone into producing the translation. My one particular aim in undertaking this labour of love was that our younger generation should not remain as ignorant of the true history of our community as were those among us to whom this and other works like this (like Tohfatul Ahbab: A Muslim Missionary in Medieval Kashmir) were not available for no fault of theirs but of circumstances in which they lived and died. I am beholden to Mota ji for writing the review and to you for giving it space in the Neelamatam. Warm regards!

– **Kashinath Pandit**

2. Respected Kachru Sahab,  
Thank you very much for bringing out the December issue. The articles are thought provoking and so are the writers who are eminent in their own fields.

You have carried on the mission started by Respected P.N. KACHRU AND SURINDAR PANDITA SAHAB. I am very well aware how much efforts it takes to publish such magazines. My prayers for your efforts. – **V K WATTAL**

3. Dear Editor, Yet another excellent compilation and presentation of very informative and thoughtful articles in the above latest issue of Neelamatam. Greetings to all the contributors. Conversation with Shriman Pran Kishore ji is superb and quite revealing one. Finally, a large number of old B&W pics have brought out very interesting foot prints of the past and added glamour to the issue. I hope the next issue is now scheduled for release on the 'P N Kachru Memorial Lecture Day' in March 2022 with memorial articles as well. Best wishes!

– **S K Handoo**

4. A very welcome focus on theatre in Kashmir. Thank you. – **B B Pandit**

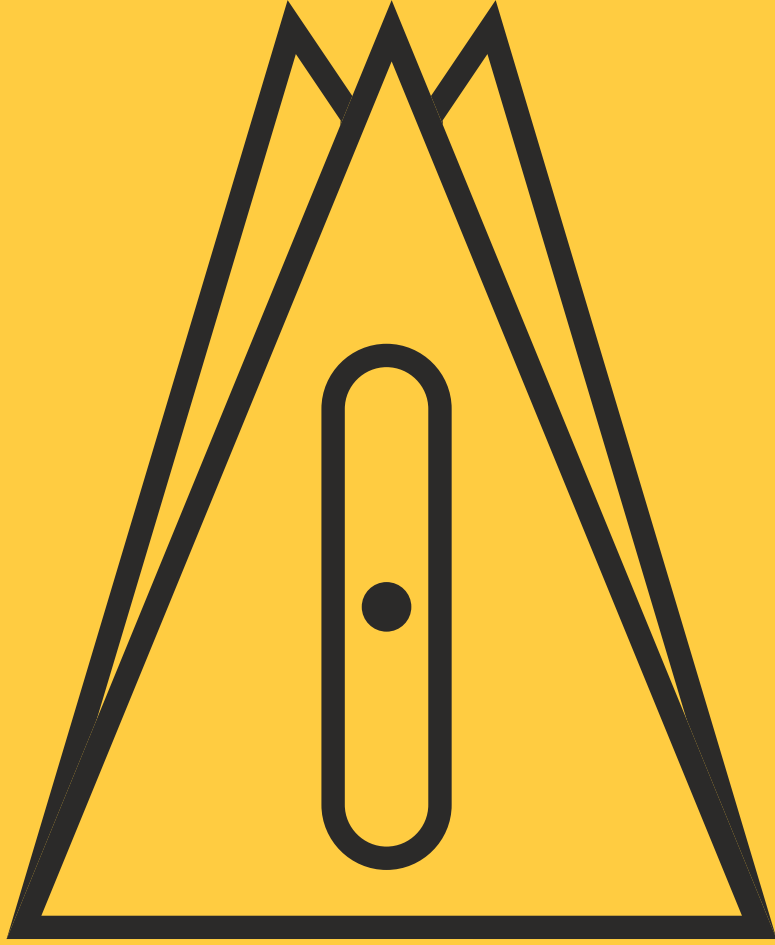


## P N Kachru Memorial Lecture – Viewer Comments

1. It was a very enlightening lecture by Prof. Parimoo on the architecture of Martand Sun temple. An extensively researched work. Kindly convey my felicitations to Prof. Ratan Parimoo. – **Pran Kishore Kaul (as conveyed on phone)**
2. Prof Ratan Parimoo has done such an extensive and elaborate research work that was evident from his presentation. Very impactful and informative lecture. Kindly convey my congratulations to him. – **Prof. Ratan Lal Shant (as conveyed on phone)**
3. Thoroughly enjoyed the brilliant and scholarly presentation on Martand temple of Kashmir. I have done quite an extensive study on ancient temples of Kashmir but the detailed research and intricate observations of the ruin remains of Martand Sun temple by Prof. Ratan Parimoo is commendable especially knowing the fact that very sketchy information is available about such an ancient temple structure. His intricate analysis of the architectural design nuances vis-à-vis the Greek architecture is noteworthy. His presentation, highlighting the differences in the two architecture styles, defies the Western Indologists claims. Also worth appreciating are the comparisons of the architectural features of Martand temple with other temples like Avantipora temples with Kashmiri style of architecture, temples of Ajanta and those in Madhya Pradesh and the south. As an admirer of Prof. Parimoo's works and achievements, I find this study another landmark in his journey. – **CL Kaul**
4. Very well organised program. His lecture was very illuminating. Befitting tribute to Shri P N Kachru – **Prof Sudhir Sopory**
5. Listened to your lecture. Found it wonderful for several reasons. Perhaps the only attempt to perceive the monument as a part of the Indian sculptural/architectural tradition and to create a rightful place for it. Your attempt to reconstruct it in the light of stylistic conventions and the zeitgeist of the era was very convincing. It was extremely enlightening. I am sure, the audience must have found it very stimulating – **Prof. Deepak Kannal**
6. The talk yesterday by Prof Ratan Parimoo was highly educative and a proper research paper behind which enormous hard work would have gone. Please thank Prof Sahab on our behalf for setting high standard for future lectures. – **MK Pajan**
7. Well organised memorial lecture. Excellent content & presentation. Large attentive participation. Well received. Kudos to team NSKRI – **Dr S K Handoo**
8. It was so nice to listen the scholar on contribution of P N Kachru ji in the field of art in Kashmir. It was very enlightening to listen to his presentation on Martand Sun temple architecture. Thanks – **Dr KN Pandit**
9. Namaskar Bhaiya, I liked the session very much. Quite enlightening and interesting. We get to know our roots and I liked the fact that the Martand temples were not influenced by Greek architecture as being claimed by westerners. Thanks – **Ayushman Kachru**
10. This was really awesome Mosaji. It strengthens the pride in our culture – **Arti Karihaloo**
11. After initial technical glitches & introduction, I joined the meeting. A very nice exposition of Sun temple after painstaking research. Restoration work done is very praiseworthy. We have seen, heard of Ajanta, Dilwara temples. May be an opportunity becomes available for visiting the temple to bow for incessant energy whole universe gets from Sun. Avanti Pur & Anantnag r same or different? – **Shri O.P. Arya**
12. Lecture was ok but the ancient structures were also Buddhist structures destroyed by Hindus and then again by Muslims. – **Prof. Rattan Lal Hangloo**
13. Thank you for the link. I missed the lecture but now listened to the presentation by the very learned Prof Parimoo. I guess, first time I saw an illustration of how grand the Martand would have looked before it's demolition. This paper should be brought out in print. Thank you again for posting the link. – **Vinod Vishen**

Tribute by Kohsheen - Great-Grand-Daughter of P N Kachru





ज्ञानं अन्नं

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