

CHAPTER 12

ANCIENT JAMMU & KASHMIR AND LADAKH



ANCIENT KASHMIR

Learning, lofty mountains, saffron, icy water and grapes: things that even in heaven are difficult to find, are common there.

[Rajatarangini, tarang:1, verse:42]

Millions of years ago, the valley of Kashmir was a vast mountain lake known as Satisaras. Due to some volcanic eruptions beneath the mountains, the formation of the lake took place as well as its subsequent drainage. However, tradition ascribes the drainage of this vast lake to Kashyapa—a sage.

We know about the people who lived in Kashmir as early as 1.5 million years ago. Today, we know them as hunter-gatherers. The name comes from the way they got their food. These nomadic people lived near the foothills surrounding the vast lake. They did not know how to cultivate the food. They were dependant on wild fruits, nuts, roots etc. to fill their stomach. They also killed wild animals and ate their flesh. They were known as nomads, as they were constantly moving from one place to another in search of food and shelter.

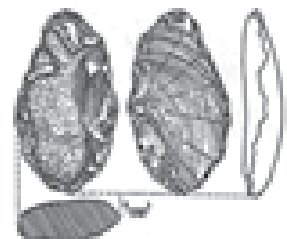
In the Liddar valley of Pahalgam and at many other places, archaeologists have found some tools which were made and used by hunter gatherers. These tools like axes, blades, burins etc were made of stone, wood and bones.

Look at the image. Can you guess how people used this stone tool for different purposes during stone ages? Ask your teacher.

Living at Burzahom, 5000 years ago:

Towards a Settled Life

Historians and archaeologists have found some very exciting things in Jammu and Kashmir. Let's go back some 5000 years ago.....



Stone Tool from Pahalgam



Adeel's Picnic

Adeel and his classmates went on a picnic to the Wular lake. They were astonished to see such a big water body. They asked their teacher about it. He said, it is the largest fresh water lake in Asia. Do you know that long years ago entire Kashmir valley was a big lake known as Satisaras? Adeel asked, "Sir, where did the people live then?" There were no human habitations as the whole valley was under water. It was drained out and people then started to live in it.

Near the Shalimar garden in Srinagar, there is a place called Burzahom. For thousands of years, no one thought there was anything special about the place.

Almost a hundred years ago, historians from different countries came to Burzahom. They saw some very big rocks standing there. The big rocks that people had put up are called megaliths. Who put these megaliths? Why? Archaeologists are interested in such things. They thought that there might be something under the ground. So they began to dig.

After many years of careful digging and study, they made an exciting discovery. People have lived at Burzahom almost 5000 years ago! At Burzahom people made their homes by digging under the ground. The rooms looked like pits. They were open at the top and had steps dug in the mud to go in and out. There were also ways to go from one room to another. Ash was also found in some of the rooms. This meant that people so long ago had an idea of fire. They may have used fire to cook food, for light, to keep warm or to scare away animals.

Can you imagine how far back is 5000 years? How did people live then? What did they eat and wear? Difficult to imagine, isn't it? Think and discuss in class.

When it rained or snowed, people would have covered their homes. The rooms at Burzahom were covered by roofs made from the bark of trees. These trees are called *burze* in Kashmiri (birch in English). Now you can guess why this place is called Burzahom.

Burzahom is very special. It helps us to understand how people lived thousands of years ago.

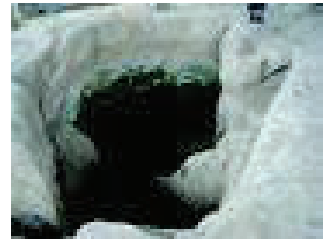
Many other wonderful things were found there... shiny beads, painted pots, jars, arrows, necklaces, bangles, needles, wheat, barley and *masoor daal* were important. Stone and bone tools were also found at Burzahom. These were used by humans in their day to day life for many purposes. Bones of people, dogs, and stags (*barasingha*) were found from burials.

Can you guess what is drawn in black colour on this red pot? Do you think these are horns? Discuss with your teacher.

The source of living for people at Burzahom was hunting and collecting food. They also knew how to cultivate and grow many crops.



The Megaliths of Burzahom.....
about 5000 years old.



People dug pits to make
their homes underground at
Burzahom



Things found at Burzahom



Clay tiles from Harwan,
Srinagar (Courtesy: SPS
Museum, Srinagar).

What do these things found at Burzahom tell us about the people who lived there? The bows and arrows tell us that they used to hunt. The ash found there tells us that they used fire. The painted pot, beads and arrows tell us they were skilled in making many things.

Though we can find out some details about the people who lived at Burzahom, there is still a lot that we do not know. For example, the grains found at Burzahom tell us that the people ate wheat, barley and *masoor daal*. But we don't know whether they cooked these the way we do today.

Like Burzahom there are many other places where people lived during those times. At Gufkral and Kanispora we find things similar to those at Burzahom. Ask your teacher about the people and their lifestyle who lived at Gufkral and Kanispora.

New Kingdoms and their Cities: Stories, Crafts, Archaeology

Some 40 years ago, archaeologists found something very interesting at Semthan, near Bijbihara. They believe that the people who lived here some 2500 years ago were not living like the people who resided at Burzahom, some 5000 years ago. The things that they found at Semthan were different from those found at Burzahom. Can you guess why they were different? What were the new things? Isn't it interesting to know?

Let's go back to some 2500 years ago. The earlier lake was now drained. The people who lived on higher places started to move down and occupied the low lying areas. People discovered a new material from which new agricultural tools could be made. The new metal was iron. It was easy for a blacksmith to melt the iron ore and make different tools which could help farmers to cultivate their fields in a better way, for example, axes (*kulhadi*) and iron plough (*hal*). People started growing rice, in addition to wheat and barley. Farmers began sprouting rice first and then planting its seedlings in the fields, as we do now-a-days. In this way, more plants could grow and people got more rice. These two changes helped people to grow more crops on more land.

This was the time when Emperor Ashoka of the Maurya dynasty was ruling over northern India.

Kalhana writes in his *Rajatarangini*, that there was a king in Kashmir whose name was Ashoka. He laid the foundation of a town called *Srinagari*. It was probably the present day Pandrethan area near Pantha chowk in Srinagar. He also built many stupas, viharas and chaityas (Buddhist religious buildings) in different parts of Kashmir.

When Emperor Ashoka's rule was over, many foreigners came and captured parts of north-western India. Among them Shakas, Palavas, Indo-Greeks and Kushanas were important to name a few.

Some of these foreigners also entered and ruled Kashmir for centuries. We do not know much about the Indo-Greeks who came to Kashmir. They lived for some years at Semthan. We find their coins in many parts of Kashmir.

Kushanas ruled over Central Asia and north-western India around 2000 years ago. They also ruled over Kashmir for some decades. The *Rajatarangini* mentions the names of Kushana rulers—Hushka, Jushka and Kanishka.

Kanishka was the most famous ruler of Kushana family, who ruled around 1900 years ago. He organised a Buddhist assembly somewhere in Kashmir, where scholars met and discussed important matters. A new form of Buddhism, known as Mahayana Buddhism now developed.

Kushanas were the best known rulers who controlled the famous Silk Route. This was an ancient highway, which was primarily used to transport silk from China to Rome and other countries. Kanishka linked Kashmir with the Silk Route. Kashmiri craft items were also transported to west through this trade route.

How Kushanas lived in Kashmir? What were they eating? How they built their homes? These details can be understood from many places where they lived.

There are many places found in Jammu and Kashmir where Kushanas lived. These are known as archaeological sites. These sites were found at many places like Harwan in Srinagar, Kanispora in Baramulla, Semthan in Anantnag district and Ambaran in Jammu district etc.

The people during Kushana period cultivated wheat, barley and rice. Some of them were traders, merchants, artisans and craftsmen. Craftsmen became very important during this period. They made many craft items of clay like terracotta (fired clay), tiles, small figurines, beads, seals etc. Clay



Clay tile from Huthmura, Anantnag (Courtesy: SPS Museum, Srinagar). Can you see the river and the trees?

tiles were found at Harwan and other places. These are mostly rectangular in shape. They are decorated by day-to-day life scenes. Humans, stag, elephants, horses, birds, grapes, flowers etc. are shown on them.

The people at Semthan made small figurines of clay. Animal and human clay figurines were perhaps toys. The potter also made clay pots known as pottery. Some of these have decorations stamped on them. The houses they lived in were built of small pebbles and mud. They also used burnt bricks, like we use now-a-days, to build their homes. These houses were perhaps covered by roofs made of hay etc.

The people during Kushana times also minted money. Coins made of gold, silver and copper were found from many parts of Kashmir.

After Kushanas, there was a change in the rule of Kashmir. Hunas, who were also foreigners, seized the throne of Kashmir and ruled there for many years. Mihirakula was the most famous king of Huna family. He is still remembered for his cruel acts. He favoured Shaivism and destroyed some of the Buddhist buildings in Kashmir. Huna coins were recovered from many parts of the Kashmir valley.

Lalitaditya—Empire Builder of Kashmir

Have you ever visited the Martand temple in Anantnag or the ruins at Parihaspura in Pattan? These big buildings or monuments were built by Lalitaditya Muktapida. More than 1200 years ago, Lalitaditya of Karkota family ruled Kashmir from 724 to 761 CE. He was a grandson of Durlabhavardhana, who laid the foundation of Karkota family in Kashmir. Hieun Tsang, a Chinese traveller, visited Kashmir during Durlabhavardhana's rule and found remarkable religious toleration prevailing everywhere with Buddhism existing side by side with other religious beliefs.

Lalitaditya expanded the kingdom and made it an empire. His reign was marked by conquests over a considerable portion of the Indian mainland and large tracts of Central Asian regions. After conquering the smaller states around the kingdom of Kashmir, he is reputed to have conquered the Kanauj, Punjab, Tibet, Badakshan and nearby territories. He fought against Yashovarman, the powerful ruler of Kanauj and defeated him. He raised his country to a pitch of glory it had never reached before.



Martand Temple, Anantnag

Buddhism, Saivism and Vaishnavism received Lalitaditya's patronage in equal degree. He was a Shaivite and built many religious places for the people of many religious faiths. He treated all religions equally.

Lalitaditya was a great builder. He built the grand temple of Martand, to worship the sun god. He also constructed many buildings at Parihaspura, which are now in ruins. Parihaspura was his capital city.

Avantivarman- (855-883 CE) was a peace loving king who did not fight wars. Instead he devoted his resources for the welfare of his subjects. During his time agriculture was the main occupation of the people in Kashmir. The growth in the production of crops was hampered by the devastating floods of Jhelum and the overflow of the Wular lake. These floods resulted in the destruction of the crop fields and scarcity of staple foods in Kashmir. Avantivarman, with the help of his ministers took many steps for improving the condition of the peasants in Kashmir. He took measures to improve irrigation facilities, dredging of Jhelum river and digging canals to save the country from recurring floods. In this work the king was assisted by Suyya, who had good engineering skills. He managed to remove the blockings in the Jhelum near Baramulla and led the waters flow smoothly out of the valley. The improvement in irrigation facilities lead to the expansion in agriculture.

Avantivarman was also a great builder. He got constructed two lofty temples in his capital city Avantipora.



Avantesvara Temple,
Avantipora



Avantisvamin Temple,
Avantipora



A coin of queen Didda, 10th
century, Kashmir

Women Rulers of Kashmir

The history of ancient Kashmir is very interesting as it saw the rule of many female rulers. Sugandha was one of them. Sankaravarman and Sugandha had a son whose name was Gopalavarman. After the death of Sankaravarman, Gopalavarman, who was still a child succeeded his father. Sugandha, his mother acted as a guardian to the infant king. After the death of Gopalavarman, queen Sugandha herself assumed the royal powers in 904 CE and ruled until 906 CE. Didda was another powerful female monarch of Kashmir. She started her rule in 981 CE and continued on the throne of Kashmir till 1003 CE.

Decline of the Hindu Rule

After the death of Didda, her nephew Samgramaraja ruled Kashmir from 1003 to 1028 CE. The three centuries of the rule of the Lohara dynasties over Kashmir comprised a period of conspiracies and fights for throne. It was a period of political unrest and there was no development anywhere. However, it was only Harsha (1089-1101), the last king of the first Lohara dynasty, who seems to have some sense of ruling. He was a good poet and ruled ably for sometime. Soon he fell to the conspiracies of other throne contenders. The royal treasury had already emptied because of lavish expenditure on his personal luxuries. The need for money turned the liberal king into a cruel oppressor. He plundered the costly treasures from all the temples. The divine images in the temples, except a few, were despoiled. He also raised taxes to secure more wealth. The rule of the successors of Harsha comprised a further period of decay and destruction.

By the time Sahadeva (1301-1320 CE), ascended the throne of Kashmir, Islam had already entered the valley and many people had accepted the new faith. The establishment of the Muslim rule thus spelled the end of the Hindu rule in Kashmir.

Kashmir—the Wonder that was!

Kashmir occupied the place of pride in having a large number of libraries of Sanskrit documents, during ancient times. Kashmir is the only region in the Indian subcontinent having a recorded history of her own in the form of *Rajatarangini* written by Kalhana. It was regarded as the home of Sanskrit learning. Kashmir has produced a number of great scholars like Abhinavagupta who was a great poet and Shaiva philosopher who wrote *Tantraloka*. He raised Kashmir Shaiva philosophy (*Trika Shaivism*) to its highest level. Kashmir was regarded as the greatest seat of learning during ancient times.

ANCIENT JAMMU

The history of Jammu region comes into limelight with the discovery of the stone age tools in the Nagrota and Koota areas on the banks of Tawi and Bein rivers. Also, some stone tools were recovered at Nandni, near Samba. These consisted of flakes, core and bifacial hand axes etc.

The area around Akhnoor is very important from the archaeological point of view. From Manda many tools of the Indus Valley Civilization were discovered.

Adjoining Akhnoor city, on the banks of Chenab river is located the ancient Buddhist site of Ambaran. Some very interesting things were found from this site. Archaeologists have found Buddhist stupas, walls of a Buddhist monastery, pots, bowls and beads from this site. The most interesting things found from this site were different parts of a human statue made of clay, like hands, feet and ears. From the things exposed at Ambaran, archaeologists believed that the people lived at this place some 2000 years ago.

Many archaeologists say that Ambaran was a very important place in ancient Jammu. Not only was Ambaran an important Buddhist place, but many historians think that it was also an important trade town.

A trident inscription found in the Shiva temple at Suddha Mahadeva, Udhampur mentions the name of a king Vibhunaga and his son. The language of the inscription is Sanskrit belonging to 3rd or 4th century CE.

Although the literary sources do not mention the ancient Jammu region, however the geographical area was important as many rivers like Chandrabhaga (Chenab) and Devika found mention in some Vedas and Puranas.

The Madradesh region, mentioned in many texts, also included the Jammu region. This was inhabited by several tribes like the Darvas and Abhisarasetc.

The Chinese pilgrim Yuan Chwang (Hieun Tsang) visited Kashmir valley some 1300 years ago. He gives an accurate description of the routes by which he entered the valley and left it. He visited Rajapuri (Rajouri) too and mentions Taka-desa lying between the Chenab and the Satluj i.e the region of Jammu.



The stupa with red, burnt bricks, Ambaran



Beads found at Ambaran

About the foundation of the town of Jambupura (present day Jammu) by Jambu Lochan, the story is thus related: Jambu Lochan, on becoming the king wished to found another town as his capital. Once when he was hunting, he crossed the Tawi and saw a tiger and deer drinking water from the same pond. He was surprised to see it. His ministers told him that the soil of the place excelled in virtue, and for that reason no living being bore enmity against each other. **(Source: *Rajadarshani* by Ganesh Das Badhera).**

The literary sources of the Jammu region are few. However, the story of the past of this region has passed to us through oral traditions and Vansavalis. *Rajatarangini* of Kalhana mentions Babbapura (the present day Babor) in Jammu. From oral traditions we come to know that Agnibaran was the first ruler of Jammu, who came from Ayodhya through Nagarkot (Kangra) and settled at Kathua. His successors were Bahu Lochan and Jambu Lochan. Bahu Lochan founded the town of Bahu on the left bank of Tawi and Jambu Lochan founded Jammu.

For many generations afterwards we get a long list of the rulers of two dynasties—Rai and Dhar, but without any historical records. This finally brings us down to the early part of the 11th century CE where we get the first historical mention of the region under the name of Durgara. This occurs on two Chamba copper plate inscriptions.

How the name Jammu came about....

1. According to one tradition there is a cave known as Jamwant Gufa on the bank of the Tawi river attributed to Jamwant (King of Bears), hence the name Jambu or Jammu came into being.
2. Some people believe that because of the availability of the enormous Jambulin (Jamun or Jamnu) tree in the region, the Jammu came into being.

Others believe that the name Jammu is derived from the name Jambu Lochan, the legendary king of Jammu

ANCIENT LADAKH

The earliest historical references of the Ladakh region are mentioned in connection with the coming of Buddhism to Ladakh. Before the development of Buddhism in Ladakh, the local population worshiped spirits and mountains, in other words was practising the animistic Bon religion (Tibetan religion).

Rock carvings found in many parts of Ladakh indicate that the area has been inhabited since ancient times. Ladakh's earliest inhabitants consisted of a mixed Indo-Aryan population of Mons and Dards, who find mention in the works of Greek historians and the geographical lists of the Puranas.

The inscriptions of Ladakh reveals that the rulers of the region would call themselves as the descendants of Nyatri Tranpo, the first king of Tibet who ruled around 2000 years ago.

The firm historical records from Ladakh come from the 1st century CE onwards. At this time Ladakh was a part of the Kushana empire. Kushana Emperor Kanishka constructed a stūpa at Sani named as Kanika in Zanskari valley. The recovery of a Kharosthi inscription of Wema Kadphises near the Khalatse bridge shows that in around 2000 years ago, Ladakh was a part of the Kushan Empire.

Buddhism was introduced in Ladakh by king Surendra of Kashmir. He also constructed a vihara beyond Zojila pass at Saurasa or present day Suru. During Kushana rule, Buddhism grew very fast in Ladakh. Fa-hien gives us a picture of the flourishing state of Buddhism in Ladakh. Buddhism was later patronised during the time of Dharmaraja and Lotsava Rinchen Zangpo.

As far as the development of art and architecture is concerned, Ladakh witnessed the engraving of the images on rocks at many places including Mulbek, Drass, Padum, Shey, Sangku, Kartse, Paskyum, Tumel, Sani etc. These include images of Buddha etc. This period also coincides with the time of Dharmaraja (Lhachen Spal-gi-goan) corresponding to 8th century CE. Buddha's teachings were in a flourishing state. Dharmaraja is also credited with the construction of first palace in Ladakh. Its ruins are on the top of the present Shey palace.



The Monastery at Alchi in Ladakh

An important stage in the history of Buddhism in Ladakh is considered as 11th century CE. Lotsava Rinchen Zangpo became the most respected spiritual teacher of the land and the personal lama of the local royal family. Rinchen Zangpo left the worldly things at a very young age of 13 years. He was sent to Kashmir by king Yeshe Od to study Buddhism along with other youth. During the time period of Lotsava, Yeshe-Od was ruling the country. He took steps to promote Buddhism by patronising many scholars.

Rajatarangini

Rajatarangini means a 'River of Kings.' It is a very famous book on the history of Kashmir written by Kalhana pandit in Sanskrit language. It gives details of what was happening in Kashmir and about its kings and queens from the earliest times. Kalhana finished writing it in 1150 CE. His work was continued by other historians after him.

Nilmatapurana

It is a text which talks about the culture of ancient Kashmir. We find the earliest mention of the lacustrine origin of the valley and its drainage. It also refers to many religious places.

Vansavalis

From remote times it has been customary in the royal families to keep a careful record of their lineage in the shape of **Vansavalis**.

Rajdarshani

It was compiled by Ganesh Das Badehra in 1847. It deals with the history of Jammu region.

Alchi

A famous village of 85 houses on the left bank of the Indus in the Kardari of Saspol (Ladakh). There is one of the oldest and beautiful monastery situated in this village known as Alchi monastery. The poplar tree outside the entrance of monastery is believed to have been original walking stick of Lama Lotsava Rinchen Zangpo.

Hemis

It is the oldest and the richest monastery of Ladakh, 49 kilometers from Leh and belongs to Drugpa Kargyud sect which was founded by Lama Stagtsang Raspa under the patronage of King Senge Namgyal in 1630 CE. Rinchen Zangpo's time is regarded as a glorious period in the history of Ladakh as it saw the emergence of Buddhism, literature, arts and architecture. Ladakh has more than 37 monasteries dotting different parts of the Ladakh division.

Imagine

You are a newspaper reporter. You have just been asked to interview a team of archaeologists who worked at Burzahom. Prepare a list of five questions you will ask them.

Let's recall

1. What material was used to build the roofs of houses in Burzahom?
2. Where do we get the first historical mention of Durgara?
3. Mention the names of ancient Buddhist monasteries in Ladakh?

Let's Discuss

4. Mention the names of ancient women rulers of Kashmir.
5. Name the tribes that inhabited the Jammu region in ancient times?
6. Who was Lotsava Rinchen Zangpo?

Let's Do

7. Make a list of important historical sites in Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh.
8. Make a table mentioning few rulers of ancient Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh.