

**DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION AND LITERATURE WORK DURING**
THE PERIOD OF SULTAN ZAINUL ABIDIN IN KASHMIR**Dr. Ram Ratan Sahu**

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ABSTRACT

The present article is an attempt to highlight the development of education and literature work during the period of Sultan Zainul Abidin in Kashmir. Zainul Abidin was one of the most enlightened Muslim kings of Kashmir. He was a great linguist, scholar and a poet. He was proficient in Persian, Sanskrit, Arabic and Tibetan and a munificent patron of learning poetry music and painting. He caused the Mahabharata, the Ramayana and the Rajatranagini to be translated from Sanskrit into Persian. He also had some Persian works translated into Sanskrit. He extended patronage to learning and as a result there was a great influx of scholars and men of learning from other countries. The Sultan established numerous schools, colleges, and a residential university. He spends huge sums in building a big royal library and sent his men to India, Persia, Iraq and Turkistan to procure books and manuscripts. The literacy activities of the king encouraged all the classes of people to receive education. The Muslim period is believed to be a glorious period in the field of education. During this period Persian language flourished in the valley due to presence of Sedates and Sayyedds who came to Kashmir from central Asia for the purpose of proselytization. With the result Persian language became the language of court. New Maktabs (Arabic word for elementary school) and Patshals (Hindi word for elementary school) were opened. Where Persian and Sanskrit were taught. Srivara says, "even women, cooks and porters were poets, and the books composed by them exist to this day in every house. If the king be a sea of learning and partial to merit, the people too became so. The meritorious king Zainul Abidin, for the purpose of earning merit built extensive lodging house for the students and the voices of the student's studying logic and grammar arose from these houses. The



king helped the students by providing teachers, books, houses, food and money and he extended the limits of learning to all branches Even the families which never dreamt of learning produced men who through the favour of the king became known for their erudition There was not a branch of learning of arts or literature or fine arts which was not studied”.

He was surrounded by a galaxy of learned men, local as well as foreigners. These included, among other, Mulla Ahmed, his poet latureate, Sayyid Mohammad Rumi, Qazi Sayyid Ali Shirazi, Sayyid Mohammad Sistani, Moulana Kabir, Mulla nadiri, Sayyid Mohammad Madain, Jonaraja, Srivara, Yodhabhatta, Bodha Butt, Mulla Hafiz, Mulla Qazi Jamal-ul-Din, Sayyid hussain Qummi Razavi, Maulana Qazi Mir Ali Bakhari, Notho Soma Pandith and Malik Haidar Chadaura.as Zainul Abidin was found of holding frequent discussions with these schoolars, he made arragements for their residence at the capital of Nowshahra itself. Grants of land and some other privileges also were liberally bestowed on them. Jonaraja writes, “possessed of merit and appreciating merit in others, the king encouraged learning, and the stream of learning which had run down like a canal which breaks through a gap, now began to flow smoothly one more”.

Key words:- Sanskrit, Kashmiri, Persian, Literature, Education.

INTRODUCTION:-

Under the glorious reign of sultan Zain-ul-Abidin (1420-1470) there was a tremendous progress in the field of education in the valley. He established a university at Nowshera, which was the symbol of his love for learning. Regarding the contribution rendered by Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin in the field of education.

1. **G.MD Sufi writes:-** Zainul Abidin spend huge sum on the collection of a library for his university. He sent out agents to different parts of the world to secure books and manuscripts for his library which is said to have vied with the leading libraries of the time in central Asia and Persia and existed for about a century till the day of Sultan Fateh Shah.
2. **PNK Bamazi writes:-** Zainul Abidin’s love for letters is well known in Kashmir. He realized that learning, for which Kashmir was noted from the earliest time, needed to be encouraged so



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that the land of Sarda might again shine forth as the fountain of knowledge and learning. For this purpose he established numerous schools, colleges and a residential university. His interest in the intellectual growth and development of his subjects was keen and unflagging and he extended his patronage to scholars in as unstinted a measure as he did to artisans and craftsmen.

3. **M.L Kual writes:-** Zainul Abidin established a translation bureau in which Persian works were rendered into Sanskrit and Sanskrit works into Persian. Mulla Ahmad, who was a scholar in both Persian and Sanskrit, translated the Mahabharata and Kalhana's Rajatringini into Persian at the instance of the Sultan. Srivara translated Yusuf-u-Zulaikha of Jami into Sanskrit. All this made knowledge accessible to those who knew either Persian or Sanskrit.
4. **Srivara writes:-** The meritorious king Zainul Abidin for the purpose of earning merit built extensive lodging houses for students and voices of students studying logic and grammar arose from these houses.

Sultan Zainul Abidin took great interest in the spread of education in Kashmir. He established "Dar-ul-Uloom" or University and placed it in the charge of Mulla Kabir. A large Madrasa was founded near Islamabad and Mulla Gazi was made its principal. The revenues of several villages were assigned to meet the expenses of the University. Among these may be mentioned Soma Pandita, who held a high post in the translation Bureau which was established under the auspices of the university. It was here that books were translated from Arabic and Sanskrit into Persian and Kashmiri. Soma Pandita was head of education department and wrote an account of Sultan Zainul Abidin's life in his book "Zania Charita" Bodhi Bhat, another eminent scholar, translated several Sanskrit works into Persian. A history of Kashmir was compiled in Persian entitled "Bahr-ul-Asmar" or The Sea of Tales" by Mulla Ahmed. Zain-ul-Abidin also built up a big library which existed until the time of Fath Shah. He sent out agents to different parts of the world to secure books and manuscripts for his library. The king helped the students by providing teachers, books, houses, food and money and extended the limits of learning in all the branches.



Under Zainul Abidin's patronage, education became so wide spread Kashmir that, it is said even women, cooks and porters become poet and began to compose books. The Sultan's own contribution in the field of literature has already been referred to. Beside him, Jonaraja wrote the history of Kashmir upto 1458 in Sanskrit verse. It is a continuation of Kalhana's Rajatarangini. After the death of Jonaraja, his work was taken up by Srivara. Nothosoma Pandith wrote zaina Charit in Kashmiri, describing the life and achievement of the Sultan. Another biography of Sultan in Kashmir was penned down in the form of a play by Yodhabhatta under the title of Zaina Prakasa. Bhattavatara, who had studied Shahnama of Firdousi and other Persian works, wrote Jainavilasa, containing the sayings of Sultan. Mulla Ahmad and Mulla Nadir were also great historians. Each one of them wrote a history of Kashmir in Persian. Mansur Mohammad contributed a work on medicine. The Sultan's fondness for books led to the building of a big royal library. He sent men to India, Persia Iraq and Turkistan to purchase books and Manuscripts. For the rate of books, he was always ready to pay handsomely.

“Altogether, Zainul Abidin's reign was the Augustan era of later Kashmir- Sanskrit literature”.

LITERATURE:-

Zainul Abidin's reign was a great age for literary activities. He extended generous patronage for the promotion of learning, and his court was adorned with a large number of literary luminaries. As in other sphere, so in the field of literature, one easily discerns the unmistakable traces of his broad humanistic outlook. He pursued an enlightened language policy and patronized Persian, Sanskrit, and Kashmiri in equal measure.

PERSIAN:-

A large number of Persian scholars followed to his court from various centres of Persian culture. The two Maulana brothers, Maulana Mir Mahammad Rumi and Mulana Ahmad Rumi, who were proficient in several branches of learning, came from Rum and settled in Kashmir. They became recipients of the Sultan's great favors and rewards. The other celebrities were Qazi Jamal, Maulana Kabir, Sayyid Muhammad Luristani and Sayyid Muhammad Sistani. They were



men of wit and intelligence, expert in the art of subtle speech and versification. Qazi Jamal was accredited to the office of high Qazi of Kashmir. Maulana Kabir had been the sultan's tutor in his early days. He had proceeded to Herat for higher education and knowledge. He was however persuaded later by Zainul Abidin to return to Kashmir for heading the prestigious institution of higher learning at Nowshahr.

Beside original compositions in Persian, a number of important Sanskrit works were translated into Persian. The names of Mahabharata, Hatakesvara Samhita, and the puranas deserve special mention.

SANSKRIT:-

Sultan Zainul Abidin extended his generous patronage to Sanskrit learning and recalled scholars who had fled to escape religious persecution under his predecessors. The outcome was the revival of ancient traditions ushering in a period of renaissance of classical Sanskrit learning and literature.

Several scholars flourished in Zainul Abidin's time. The most celebrated were Jonaraja, Srivara, Pandit Nottasoma, Avatar Bhatta, Yadha Bhatta and Narahari, Jonaraja, also called Jyotsnakara, was the Sultan's court-poet and wrote commentaries, and a historical work called Rajatarangini after the classical Sanskrit style of Kalhana,. Though lacking in originally, he was "a scholar of considerable attainments". The Rajatarangini is Jonaraja's magnum opus. It is the most important contemporary. Source of information about Zainul Abidins' reign. Besides Rajatarangini, he also wrote commentaries, on the Kiratarjuniya of Bharvi in 1419 AD, the Srikanthacarita of Mankha, and the Prithvirajavijaya, a historical poem of Rajanaka Jayanaka. The ease and mastery with which he handles various figures of speech and other embellishments of traditional style show him a literary artist of great accomplishments. Srivara was another great luminary enjoying the Patronage, confidence, and intimacy of the Sultan. He was a great scholar of Sanskrit well versed in Hindu religion and philosophy. Srivara was the disciple of Jonaraja. His chief work is the Jaina-Rajatarangi, a chronicle of kings, written in Kavya style. Srivara was proficient in Persian also and, carrying out the orders of Zainul Abidin, he translated Mulla Jami's



Yusuf-u-Zalaikha, a romantic masterpiece in Persian literature, into Sanskrit, and named it Kathakautaks. The adaptation of the Persian story to the requirements of Sanskrit style and idiom has been remarkably accomplished by srivara in his work. Kathakautaka “Stands almost unique in the contribution of Kashmir to Sanskrit poetry.” Srivara also compiled a subhashitavali, an anthology containing extracts of verse from than 350 poets whose names are given. It represents poets from all over India though most of them were Kashmiris’. Yodha Bhatta had acquired great proficiency in Kashmir and in Sanskrit, and was a master of Vedic literature. He was also well versed in Persian, and had thoroughly studied the Shah-nama of Firdouse. Mention may also be made of pandit Nottasoma who, although essentially a scholar of Kashmir, was also proficient in Sanskrit. Narahari was an eminent medical scientist and his Rajanighantu, a medical glossary, is believed to have been composed during Zain-ul-Abidin’s reign in 1450 AD. Sriva alias Srivaks was a musicologist and a scholar of Sanskrit. Under Zainul Abidin, he engraved official inscriptions on copper plates. He also composed a work entitled Sangit Sangrah for the ruler of Kishtwar, Narendra Seha, possibly sometime after the death of Zainul Abidin.

KASHMIR:-

THE Kashmir language and literature covered an important stage of development under Zainul Abidin’s patronage. It was recognized as a medium of instruction in higher studies and popular Sanskrit and Persian, works were translated into Kashmiri. Some original works of both historical and literary value were also composed. The most distinguished scholars who flourished in the Sultan’s Court were pandit Nottasoma, Yodha Bhatta, and Avatra Bhatta. Nottasoma was a poet who wrote in Kashmir verse a work entitled Jainaclarita, a biographical account of Zainul Abidin. Yodha Bhatta also was a poet. It is only Kashmir composition written in the Sultan’s time which is available to us. Written in fine literary style, the theme of Banasurkatha revolves round a puranic legend about the love of Usha and Anirudha and the consequent fight between Lord Krishna and Banasura. Although the story has been taken from the Harvansha Purana, the work is of high poetic value. Its vocabulary is overwhelmingly Sanskritic. The work is particularly important, for it shows the state of Kashmir language at a point when it was developing from the Prakrit-Apabhramsa stage into a modern Indo-Aryan language. Another great luminary was, as



already noted, Sheikh Nur-ud-din. Though chiefly a sufi of a high order, the Sheikh also contributed to Kashmir literature, for his sayings are specimens of sublime sufistic thought clothed in charming verse. It is indeed, significant that Avatara Bhatta wrote his work after the death of the great Rishi and yet his style is rather archaic, and that of the latter quite modern. It can however, be explained by the fact that Nur-uddin's Verses passed in oral traditions before they were finally reduced to writing at a much later date, and remained in a constant process of change. The inclusion of Sita Kantha, the author of Mahanayaprakasa, in the list of luminaires of Zainul Abidin time is a more exercise in speculation. He is now generally believed to have flourished in the 13th century.

EDUCATION:-

The reorganization of the educational system was an important aspect of Zainul Abidin's scheme of reforms. Its merit lay not too much in its meaningful expansions as in its reorientation on a secular pattern. Zainul Abidin granted freedom of education by throwing it open to all men of merit, without distinction of caste or creed. The Islamic courses of study generally included in medieval times subjects like the study of the Quran Tafsir (interpretation of Quran), Hadis (tradition), fiqh (Muslim Jurisprudence), Ilm-ul-Kalam and Ilm-ul-Tawhid (Dogmatic theology). Besides these training in horsemanship, swordsmanship and archery was also imparted. In Zainul Abidin's time a few more subjects were added to the list. Great emphasis was laid on the study of logic and grammar. Facilities for the study of literature, arts, mineralogy, history, and science were also made available. With the lifting of the ban on Hindu learning, religion and philosophy, their studies were recommenced. Zainul Abidin rightly understood the importance of the vernacular language and in addition to Persian and Sanskrit, Kashmiri was also made the medium of instruction. Arrangements were made for the preparation of the translation of existent works in the three languages. Srivara writes "Holding that a man can receive instruction only in the language which he knows and not in other languages, the king caused translations of the various shastras (subjects) to be made by those who knew Sanskrit the vernacular (Kashmir), and the Persian. It is, indeed, remarkable that the Muslims' also studied works on Hindu religion and



philosophy through the Persian translation. Among others, Vrihatkathasara, Htakesvara, Samhita, and the Puranas are particularly mentioned.

Of a number of educational institutions which flourished under Zainul Abidin's patronage, the University of Nowshahr was the most prestigious one. Moulana Kabir a great Kashmir scholars. Who received his higher education in Herat, was the head of this institution. The Maulana was assisted by a galaxy of eminent scholars. The University of Nowshahr became the chief Centre of higher learning, and the whole literary and intellectual activist of the kingdom revolved round it. It was located close to the royal place, and the Sultan is mentioned as having paid frequent visits there to benefit from the erudition of Maulana Kabir. A large endowment comprising several villages was created under the trusteeship of the Maulana for meeting the expenses of the university the institution is reported to have flourished till the middle of the 17th century. Another Centre of learning was the hospice managed by Shaikh-Ismail Kubraviya which became so celebrated as to attract students from such far off places Herat and trasnoxiana. The Sultan also set up a college at Zainagiri near the royal place for diffusion of learning in the kingdom. Another educational institution was established at Sir in Dachenpor, near Islamabad (Anantnag), with Mulla Ghazi Khan as its principal. Zainul Abidin's passions for the promotion of learning is reflected in his donation of six lakhs of rupees to the chief of a neighboring friendly principality of Sialkot foran institution named Madrasat-ul-ulam Equally enthusiastic was also his queen who donated her most valuable necklace for the cause of education.

Zainul Abidin's age witnessed significant development in the field of medical and technical education as well. Abul Fazl tells us that the Sultan often personally administered medicinal remedies. Shirya Bhatta, the Royal physician, was unrivalled in the science of medicine in his age, and the special favors which he received from the Sultan were a source of great encouragement to the study of medicine. Shirya bhatta successfully cured a malignant boil from m which the Sultan had painfully suffered. Both Ayurvedic and unani system of medicine were in vogue. A medical manual was compiled by Mansur bin Muhammad bin Ahmad bin Yusuf bin Ilyas entitled kifayah-i-Majahidyya. The author mentions in the preface that he was attracted to the court of a Sovereign by his justice and generosity. This Sovereign has been identified with



Sultan Zainul Abidin in Kashmir. Narahir was one of the most distinguished figures associated with the science of medicine. He composed his medical glossary called Rajanighantu in Kashmir in 1450 AD. Details are available of the different kinds of diseases and their remedies. Some of the diseases, it is curiously adverted, could also be cured with the effect of music. There is reference to the import of mid wives into Kashmir. It is suggestive of the introduction of not only maternity wards in hospitals but also of expertise for training in mid wifely.

Zainul Abidin made official arrangement for imparting training in technical skills. Particular references to the import of expertise are available. We have the Sultan procured one or two experts from each category of technicians and artisan from Samarqand. He particularly mentions the papermakers and carpet – weavers. Two intelligent persons were also sent to Samarqand. One received training in book binding. While the other in paper makings. A special boat-designer came from Gujarat. Every traveler to Kashmir was subjected to an enquiry if he knew anything worth-while. If found proficient in any skill, he was obliged to train one or two persons officially deputed for the purpose. It is quite obvious that the persons so deputed, after receiving instructions, trained other men in different arts.

The Sultan extended educational facilities to all without distinction of caste, creed or social status, a fact which would bring credit to any modern government. Hostels were established for providing free accommodations to students. Education was free and the students were given stipends and books free of charge. They were also sometime sent abroad for technical training at government expense, and during their absence, their families were given sustenance allowance by the state. The result of this educational re-organization was that even “the families which never dreamt of learning, forced men, who through the favor of the king, became known for their erudition.” But nothing seems to have been done in the field of female education.

The advancement of higher learning was greatly aided by the establishment of a big library, which Zainul Abidin built with much effort. He sought learned works both in Sanskrit and in Persian wherever they were to be found. He restored to the native land many of the Sanskrit works which had been taken away by Hindu scholars while fleeing from Kashmir to



escape religious persecutions under his father. Srivara writes “he (Zainul Abidin) caused the Parana’s, books on logic, the Mimansa and other books to be brought from distant lands, and distributed then to the learned”. He also send his men to Iraq Persia, and Turkistan for procuring rare Persian works or their transcribed copies and he paid them generously for their labors. He also received on his own request several manuscripts from his friend Shah-Rukh, the Timuird ruler of Khurasan. The great library is said to have perished in the political disturbances which rocked the kingdom under the later Shah Mir rulers.

Conclusion:

The great ruler, (Badshah of Kashmir) Sultan Zainul Abidin of shahmir dynasty, who ruled for 50 years. He is remembered and revered for his unparalleled qualities. He is held in high esteem for his service to the nation in field of education and literature department. He is specially remarkable for the versatility and genius for his work. His period is known as the golden era of Kashmir. Because of the glorious contribution his name is still remembered with genuine reverence and gratitude.

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