



Reign of Utpala Dyansty with Special Reference to Avantiverman (855-883 A.D): His Irrigation Works and Agricultural Development-A Historical Study

Rashid Manzoor Bhat*

**Research Scholar, Department of History Annamalai University, Annamalai Nagar, Tamil Nadu, India*

*Corresponding Email: * rsdbhat@gmail.com*

Received: 26 July 2021 **Accepted:** 16 October 2021 **Published:** 26 November 2021

Abstract: In Rajatarangni, dynasties in ancient Kashmir that dated from the time of the Mahabhartha epic to the reign of Sangrama Deva are vividly portrayed. Of all the kings of ancient Kashmir, Avantivarman, who established the Utpalas dynasty in 1855 A.D., was the most magnificent. In terms of prosperity, he ruled during the rippling times of peace and plenty, which coincided with Kashmir reaching its pinnacle around a quarter of a century into his rule. The people had never been happier than they were in his day, nor had they been for generations. Therefore, Avantivarman rule represents a very wonderful era in Kashmir's history. A new period in that nation's history began with Avantivarman taking control of events in the valley. His rule not only provided respite to Kashmir's suffering people, but it also significantly restored the Karkota's former luster, as will be seen. Avantivarman, a descendant of the Kalyapala family and the grandson of Utpalas, who had played a crucial role in the final years of the Karkota monarchy, was previously mentioned. Avantivarman has the traits of intellect and heart that allow him to be recognised as one of the valley's most capable kings, while not being by any means a member of some aristocratic and distinguished family. The study's goal is to explain and analyze Avantivarman legacy and reign during the Utpalas Dynasty in Jammu and Kashmir. It also highlights his contributions during his time in power there. Fertile soil and abundant water availability in Kashmir have made agriculture the primary food and economic source for the region from ancient times. During Avantivarman's rule, both the people and the state's economic prosperity improved significantly due to political stability and beneficial peace conditions. Large-scale drainage and irrigation systems played an important role in this. All of these tasks were made easier by the irrigation minister (Suyya).

Keywords: Dhanya, Yava, Vitasta, Sindhu, Rajatarangni, Nilmatpurana.



1. INTRODUCTION

In the years 855-883 AD, Avantivarman was a great administrator who formed the Utpalas dynasty. In addition to that, he established the dynasty. He instituted reforms in an effort to bring law and order back to the state and regain control of the administration. He was successful in curbing the influence of the rural aristocrats known as Damaras, who were to blame for the civil wars that were raging within the country. Because of this, an emphasis was placed on irrigation, and in order to safeguard the state against flooding, the channel of the river that is now called the Jhelum River was modified. As a consequence of this, the economic well-being of the entire region improved, and his popularity as emperor grew as a result. Temples were built during this time of history, and Brahmans were given the right to practice their religion without restriction. Damaras, rural aristocracy who were the cause of internal difficulties, were under his influence, and he utilized this to his benefit. He used this to his advantage because Damaras were the cause of internal troubles. He took action in an effort to bring order back to the chaotic circumstance. In the subject of irrigation, he was responsible for a number of works that were considered to be groundbreaking. For example, he was able to control the floodwaters that were brought on by Wular (Mahapadma) by implementing the appropriate safety measures and keeping the water from reaching the crops. The cities of Avantipura and Suyapur were both founded by him during this time. During his rule, temples and monasteries dedicated to the Hindu gods Shiva and Vishnu, as well as Buddhist monasteries, were built. The Avantiswara and Avantiswami temples are two good examples of buildings that fall within this category. In addition, the discussion portion contains an explanation of the achievements, in addition to contributions to administration.

Research Objectives

The study aims to explain and assess the history and significance of the Utpalas Dynasty, with particular emphasis placed on Avantivarman. The specific objective of this study is to explore the development of agriculture by Avantivarman.

2. METHODOLOGY

For the purposes of this paper, primary and secondary sources were mostly used to gather the data for the present study. The information was gathered with the objective goal of reaching an unbiased conclusion. It was intended to be used to analyze the origins and accomplishments of the Utpalas administration with a particular focus on Avantivarman, the founder of the dynasty. The framework of the study was developed using the objectivity of historical and contemporary works, and an unbiased result was reached.

3. DISCUSSION

Achievements of Avantivarman

The subsequent rulers of the Karkotas not only exploited the people and stole all of their money, but they also abandoned the people to the mercy of their self-centered and exacting officials, who took advantage of the masses for their own financial benefit by stealing from them. At the same time, there was neither a well-organized force nor an army



that was sufficiently armed to pursue territorial expansion. In light of these circumstances, the first and most important task for Avantivarman was to win the confidence of the people by establishing an organized machinery of government that was capable of restoring normalcy in the valley and looking out for the interests of the masses. This was a task that the previous rulers had neglected for many decades, so Avantivarman had to make up for lost time. Kalhana devotes a number of verses (ten to be exact) to clarifying his position in relation to his subjects. The lack of arable land was having significant repercussions for the economics of the nation, so the first assignment given to Avantivarman was to look for more of it. The waters of Mahapadma Lake had previously been drained out through proper channels back in the days of Lalitaditya, which had also offered some ground that was ideal for farming. Additionally, the valley had been ravaged by the floods that were caused by Mahapadma Lake. These passageways had been ignored during the reigns of the later Karkotas rulers, and for years, they had remained obstructed by boulders that had not been removed from the area. In addition to all of these unfortunate events, the nation had been hit hard by a severe hunger. To everyone's good fortune, the attention of the king was drawn to a Suyya whose family history was unknown and who had been raised by a Sudra lady. This Suyya was able to save the people from their predicament. Suyya was adamant that he could alleviate the plight of the people if he were granted the opportunity and resources necessary to put his plan into action. As a result of Avantivarman admiration for his self-assurance, the latter gave him unrestricted authority to carry out his strategy of removing the boulders from the Vitasta.

The Chronicler has provided a detailed description of his plots and machinations. Soon after, the river bed was cleaned up, and a dam was built so that the river's waters could be stored and used for agricultural reasons. Suyya also designed the confluence of the Sindhu (Indus) and the Vitasta (Jhelum) in Srinagar, which had its junction near the temple of Vainyasvami. Both rivers empty into the Indus River at this point. The river's gathered waters were sent to a number of villages for use in irrigation through a network of smaller streams; these streams were made secure by the construction of embankments at appropriate distances from one another. These as well as food-grain storehouses (Kundalas), which were created at a number of different locations, gave immediate help to the peasants, who now had more land at their disposal to cultivate with guaranteed supplies of water. Due to the tireless work he has put out, Suyya absolutely merits the high plaudits that are bestowed upon him in the Chronicle. The price of food grains, which had skyrocketed to as high as 1,050 dinars per Khari during the days of the famine, dropped to a stunning low of 36 dinars per Khari, from its previous staggeringly high of 200 dinars'. As a result, all of Suyya's ingenuity and ability in the field of engineering were put to good use by Avantivarman, and the valley was on its road to prosperity once more.

The fact that Avantivarman placed several of his close kin in positions of power is evidence of the political acumen he possessed. This action, to a greater or lesser extent, reduced the likelihood of rebellions on the part of his own blood relatives. His step-brother Suravarman was given the title of Yuvaraja, and his two nephews, Dhira and Vinnapa, were given important jobs in the finances division. Dhira was also given the title of Yuvaraja. After that, he gave Sura and his sons a number of royal prerogatives to take care of themselves. It would appear that the reign of Avantivarman brought a time of stabilization and prosperity to the kingdom, which had suffered significantly from internal conflicts during the reigns that came before it. He did not waste resources on pointless journeys outside of the



Valley, as his predecessor, Jayapida, had done, which had depleted the kingdom's resources. There is no indication of him even seeking to reclaim control of the areas that are near to his empire, and neither of these things are mentioned. It was undeniably a prudent course of action. During his reign, Kashmir attained remarkable heights in the fields of philosophy, art, and letters as a direct result of the peace and prosperity that this policy brought about. It is a testament to how selfless and devoted he was that despite the fact that he had a son of his own, he appointed his stepbrother Suravarman to the post of Yuvaraja, also known as the heir presumptive.

Sura, who served as his prime minister, was a shrewd administrator who was directed in the performance of his responsibilities by a Sanskrit poem that meant: Now is the moment to be charitable because good fortune is fleeting by its very definition and it is still around. How can there ever be another opportunity to do good when bad luck is constantly just around the corner? The fact that Kalhana mentions the numerous temples built and towns founded by the king and his court sheds light on the prosperous circumstances that the people lived in. Sura built a temple of Siva and His consort at Suresvariksetra at Ishabar, on the eastern bank of the Dal Lake, and also a mathu calling it, after his own name, Suramatha. Kalhana mentions these facts, which shed light on the prosperous circumstances that the people lived in. He established Surapura, which is now known as Hurapor and is located close to Shopyan. Within Surapura, he placed the watch post that had previously been located on the Pir Panjal pass. His family, including his wife and kids, replicated his achievements by constructing a number of temples and mathas. The town of Avantipura, which was founded by Avantivarman, may be found at a location known as Vivaikasara on the right bank of the Vitasta. This location is located 27 kilometers away from Srinagar along the highway that connects Srinagar and Jammu. Before he ascended to the kingdom, he erected the temple of Visnu Avantivarman at this location; afterwards, he built the temple of Siva Avantesvara there in its place. Their remains, despite the fact that they are not as large as Lalitaditya's constructions, are nonetheless among the most impressive examples of ancient Kashmir architecture and are adequate evidence that their builder had significant means. At the sanctuaries of Tripuresvara, Bhutesa, and Vijayesa, he commissioned the creation of pedestals fitted with silver conduits.

The king and his prime minister continued to maintain friendly relations with one another. The king held his minister in high regard because of his minister's unwavering devotion to the king. The minister was always one step ahead of the king's desires, and without the king's knowledge, he was fulfilling those desires as rapidly as possible and at whatever cost. When Avantivarman went to worship at Bhutesa one time, he discovered that the priests had placed an offering of utpalashakha (a wild growing vegetable known as Kashmir supal-hak) at the base of the god's idols. This utpala-shakha was placed there by the priests. The king inquired as to the reason for such a meager offering, and the priests informed him that a Damara by the name of Dhanava, who was a friend of the minister Sura, had taken away the villages that belonged to the shrine, and as a result, they were unable to afford to make any offering to the god that was more significant than this one. The king was angered by this, but out of respect for the minister, he refrained from expressing his disapproval and instead pretended to be ill before leaving the worship service. When the minister saw the real reason for the king's sudden departure from the devotion, he immediately called Dhanava into his presence and severed his head. The rage of the monarch



was eventually calmed down, and when the minister asked how he was doing, the king responded by saying that he was OK and then went back to worshipping. At that time, a man who went by the name Suyya showed up.

Development of Agriculture

After Lalitaditya, in the development of Agriculture Avantivarman (885-883 A.D) with the help of Suyya, the irrigation minister tried to regulate the waters of the Vitasta and to drain the whole valley. It was for this reason that Avantivarman was the most likeable of all the characters. Avantivarman is the greatest name in Kashmiri history. During his rule, Kashmir was transformed by an agrarian revolution. Up to that point, the arable land and products available to feed the population were insufficient. Frequent flooding exacerbated the situation even further. After the death of Lalitaditya, the valley was once again ravaged by floods, but Avantivarman and Suyya were able to save it. Prior to his appointment as irrigation minister, Suyya would tell his friends and colleagues that he had a plan to protect the valley from repeating floods, but he didn't know how to implement it. King Avantivarman was soon summoned to the king's personal presence after hearing his words and dedications. Suyya appeared before Avantivarman as soon as he heard the news. Avantivarman appointed him irrigation minister and gave him access to all of the state's resources after seeing his confidence.

Approximately three miles below Baramullah, Suyya's quick thinking correctly deduced that the Vitasta (Jhelum) had overflowed its banks and inundated the valley (ancient Varamullah). It had been raining down from the hillside on a regular basis. Clearing and extending the river route was all that was needed to solve the situation. It was, however, a difficult assignment in and of itself. Suyya, on the other hand, chose a fairly straightforward technique to accomplish her goal. A boat loaded with government funds carried him to his intended destination, where he cashed out the money and sailed away. In Yaksadara (near Khad-anyar, below Baramullah), he hastily tossed some (a small amount of) money into the river and fled. Some others assumed he'd gone insane and were consequently strangely curious about his tactics. There was, however, a way for them to make some money from this. Because of this, several people jumped into the river, dragging pebbles and boulders out of the water as they sought for money. Many people made a fortune cleaning the river of all the heavy and bulky debris by following Suyya's "foolish" procedure for two or three days at a time. Afterwards, this famous engineer constructed a dam of stones at a suitable location and removed the silt from the river bed. The river had already been sufficiently deepened. In order to prevent boulders from falling into it in the future, embankments were erected on both sides of it at the same time. The dam was demolished after a further seven days of activities. In the end, new riverbeds were built in areas where floods had previously caused breaches, so well and so successfully that the streams flowing to oceans set off in haste as though eagerly longing for the sea after their detention was accomplished.

In order "to make the irrigation system of the valley more effective, a network of canals were constructed & irrigation facilities were provided to those areas which were dependent on rain. The Nur canal about 13Km long takes its water from river Vitasta (Jehlum) at Shadipur & then flows into the Wular Lake irrigated Anderkot Village. It is the model of the canal that was constructed by Suyya during Avantivarman's reign. The Nandikul Canal takes its water from the Nullah Anantnag at Lassipur. It is 30 Km long &



irrigates 8000 acres of land in the northern area of Anantnag. After providing irrigation facilities to each & every village lands, Suyya took the samples from each village & noticed the time taken by each sample to dry up. By this method he got an idea of the time for which irrigation was required by each village land and accordingly arranged the supply of water to it. After taking these wonderful measure, the valley was not only saved from food famines but the production increased to such an extent that according to Kalhana the price of Dhanya(Rice) came down to 36 dinner per Kharwar, the Lowest Prince the Valley had ever witnessed. Prior to Avantivarman the normal price used to be 200 dinners per Kharwar leaving aside 1500 dinnars per Kharwar during the time of famines. So Kalhana calls Suyya (Anapati) lord of food. The all hard work was done by Suyya but the credit goes to Avantivarman who provided all facilities to his irrigation minister & never ever such type of facilities were provided by any king to his able ministers.”

4. CONCLUSION

The period of time that Avantivarman was in charge of the country was marked by relative prosperity and internal tranquilly. The arts of peace blossomed throughout his reign, and he ensured that the rights of all people were honored. He was meticulous in his attention to detail about everything that could improve the general welfare of the populace. During his rule, Kashmir was spared the devastation caused by both natural disasters and those caused by humans. This kindhearted prince passed away while listening to the conclusion of the Bhagavad-recitation Gita's on the third day of the bright half of the Asada in the year 3959 Laukika, which corresponds to the month of June 883 A.D. He was buried close to the shrine of Jayetheswara in Triphar. During the later Karkota era, the kingdom endured significant political and economic difficulties, both of which contributed significantly to the kingdom's decline. Every effort that could be mustered went into making the kingdom powerful and unified. In later stages, the situation was brought under control. In addition to the building of new temples, specific privileges were bestowed upon the Brahman caste. After the death of Gopalavarman in the year 939 A.D., the dynasty was soon brought to an end.

5. REFERENCES

1. Andrabi, D. S. D. A. (2017). Industrial Development: Socio-Economic Changes in Kashmir Society (1339-1551. A D.). American Research Journal of History and Culture (ARJHC), 3(1), 01-07.
2. Bamzai, P. N. K. (1994). Culture and political history of Kashmir (Vol. 2). MD Publications Pvt. Ltd...
3. Saxena, K. S. (1974). Political History of Kashmir.
4. Rashid, Y., & Ahmad, P. (2016). Tradition and dissent in ancient Kashmir (AD 6th to 12th century) (Doctoral dissertation).
5. Prashar, P. SCULPTURE OF ANCIENT KASHMIR WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO RAJATARANGINI OF KALHANA.
6. Bhat, R. M. (2022). Shawl Industry in Kashmir from 1846-1907 with Special Reference to the Dogra Rule, Source: Proceedings of the South Indian History Congress 38 (2018), pp. 554-557.



7. Pandit, T. N. (2004). KASHMIRIYAT: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL VIEW. Kashmir and It's People: Studies in the Evolution of Kashmiri Society, 4, 175.
8. Kapur, M. L. (1992). The history and culture of Kashmir. Anmol Publications.