

## ZAIN-UL-ABIDIN'S REGIN: A GOLDEN ERA OF PEACE, PROSPERITY AND PROGRESS IN KASHMIR

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### ABSTRACT

*Zain-ul-Abidin, also known as Bud Shah, was a notable king of Kashmir who ushered in a period of peace, prosperity, and benevolent rule for nearly half a century. He was a liberal ruler who established peace in his kingdom and promoted the welfare of his subjects. During his reign, Muslim rule firmly established its roots in Kashmir, and he became the harbinger of new thoughts and ideas. He encouraged the arts, literature, and music, and his court was a hub of culture and creativity. Zain-ul-Abidin was deeply committed to the development of Kashmir and took great interest in the developmental programs in all aspects of life. He undertook tours to different parts of the country to find out the condition of the people and how his officers were carrying out the administration. Zain-ul-Abidin's legacy is still remembered in Kashmir today, and he is revered as one of the greatest kings of the region. Hence an attempt has been made in this research article to trace the social, cultural and political development of the region during the period of Sultan Zain ul Abidin.*

**Keyword:** Education, Religion, Cannel, Welfare, Prosperity, Benevolent, Revolution

### Introduction

Shahi Khan, also known as Zain-ul-Abidin, was a popular ruler of the Kashmir Sultanate. During his reign, he focused on improving the economic conditions of his kingdom and promoting religious harmony. He was a tolerant ruler who allowed people of different religions to live peacefully in his kingdom. One of his major achievements was the construction of the famous Shah-e-Hamdan Mosque in Srinagar, which became a symbol of religious harmony and tolerance. He also supported the arts and literature, and many

renowned poets and scholars flourished during his reign. Shahi Khan was also known for his administrative skills and his efforts to improve the governance of his kingdom. He introduced several reforms and established a network of officials to ensure the efficient functioning of the government. Despite his many achievements, Shahi Khan faced several challenges during his reign, including a rebellion by his own brother, who tried to overthrow him. However, Shahi Khan was able to successfully quell the rebellion and maintain his grip on the throne.

Shahi Khan died in 1470 A.D. and was succeeded by his son, Sultan Hasan Shah. He is remembered as one of the most enlightened and tolerant rulers of the Kashmir Sultanate and his legacy continues to inspire people to this day. His reign describes a historical figure named Zain-ul-Abidin, who was noted for his abilities from an early age and was welcomed as the ruler by both Hindus and Muslims. He ruled for nearly fifty years, bringing peace, prosperity, and benevolent governance to his people. The first thirty-five years of his reign are chronicled in the *Rajatarangini Dvitiya* by Jonaraja, while the subsequent years are described by Jonaraja's pupil, Srivara, in the *Rajatarangini Tritiya*.

Despite the passage of nearly five hundred years, Zain-ul-Abidin's reputation remains strong in popular imagination, and he is still referred to by his subjects as Budshah (the Great King). Historian Mohibul Hasan has lauded Zain-ul-Abidin as the greatest of all the Sultans who sat on the throne of Kashmir. It's interesting to learn about Srivara's physical appearance and personality traits. It sounds like he was a man who took his religious beliefs seriously and was dedicated to his family. His devotion to his wife, Taj Khatoon, is admirable, and his religious practices show a strong commitment to his faith.

Although he was not known for conquests like his grandfather, Zain-ul-Abidin was protective of his territory and defended it from external threats. He had a strong army and

sent them to Gilgit and Baltistan many times to retain the desert as part of his state. He even personally participated in one of these campaigns. During his rule, he also conquered the whole of Punjab and added Western Tibet to his dominion between 1460-1470 A.D. In Western Tibet, he rescued a golden image of Buddha from destruction in Saya-Desha above Leh on the Indus. Zain-ul-Abidin had an impressive diplomacy and maintained excellent relationships with most of his contemporary kings within the neighborhood, especially in Central Asia and mainland India. The available records suggest that he even had good relations with states as far as Mecca.

Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin was a just and wise ruler who protected and expanded his kingdom while maintaining peaceful relationships with his neighbors. When he came to the throne, corruption was widespread in the country. To tackle this issue, he set up an efficient spy system that kept him informed about the conduct of his officials of all ranks. According to Srivara, his Hindu historian and author of Zainatarangni, the Sultan was able to know "all about his subjects except their dreams". Zain-ul-Abidin was lucky to have trustworthy and able followers like Helmat Raina and Ahmad Raina, who helped him in implementing his policies. He also appointed his brother Mohammad Khan as his chief minister. To deter theft and other crimes, he issued a common order that held the headman of the village or town responsible for any theft that occurred in their area. Zain-ul-Abidin was known for his benevolent rule and is often referred to as the "Benevolent King". He encouraged the development of arts and literature in Kashmir and is credited with the construction of several public buildings, including mosques, gardens, and bridges. He also established hospitals and dispensaries for the welfare of his subjects.

### **Education**

Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin was known for his interest in education and his efforts to spread it throughout his kingdom. He received a good education himself under the tutelage

of Maulana Kabir, and he was particularly interested in promoting the education of the poor. One of Zain-ul-Abidin's major contributions to education was the establishment of a school near his palace in Naushehar. The school was placed under the supervision of Maulana Kabir, and the Sultan himself occasionally attended lectures there. Zain-ul-Abidin also supported education in other places, such as the hospice of Sheikh Ismail Kubrawi, where he helped to build schools, colleges, and hostels for poor students. Zain-ul-Abidin was also a lover of books and learning. He set up a large library in his palace and sent agents to neighboring countries to collect manuscripts and copies of books. He was also responsible for promoting the development of various skills, such as papermaking and bookbinding, among the natives of his kingdom.

Aside from his interest in education, Zain-ul-Abidin was also a scholar and a poet. He was proficient in several languages, including Sanskrit, Persian, and Tibetan. He even had the Mahabharata and Rajatarangini of Kalhana translated into Persian on his orders. Zain-ul-Abidin is also credited with writing two works in Persian: one on the manufacture of fireworks and another on the vanity and transitoriness of the world. He also composed poetry in Persian under the pseudonym of Qutb. Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin was a ruler who had a deep appreciation for knowledge and education. He worked tirelessly to promote learning and scholarship in his kingdom and left a lasting legacy in the field of education.

### **Art and Craft**

One of the notable contributions of the Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin was in the field of carpet weaving and embroidery. He invited skilled craftsmen from Samarqand, which was known for its rich tradition of carpet weaving and embroidery, to train his subjects. This led to the development of a flourishing carpet weaving industry in Kashmir, which produced some of the finest carpets in the world. The Sultan also encouraged the

development of silver and copperware, papier mache, woodwork and carving, and Khatam band, which is a form of marquetry. He introduced the art of making pashmina shawls, which were woven from the wool of the Himalayan mountain goat and were highly prized for their softness and warmth.

The Pashmina shawls of Kashmir became famous throughout the world and are still highly valued today. Another significant contribution of the Sultan was the establishment of the first paper industry in India in Kashmir. The Sultan introduced the art of papermaking, which was then unknown in India. The paper produced in Kashmir was of high quality and was in great demand throughout the region. Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin's contributions to the arts and crafts of Kashmir were significant and enduring. His patronage of the arts led to the development of a thriving handicraft industry, which continues to flourish in Kashmir to this day.

### **Religious Policy**

Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin, also known as Budshah the great king of Kashmir, was a ruler who promoted religious tolerance and coexistence in Kashmir during his reign from 1420 to 1470. He was the son of Sultan Sikandar Butshikan, who was known for his policies of religious persecution and forced conversions. Zain-ul-Abidin, however, took a different approach and sought to promote harmony and mutual respect among people of different faiths. He abolished the Jizya tax, which had been imposed on non-Muslims, and allowed Hindus to build their temples and follow their own laws. He also supported Sufi saints who preached a message of love and tolerance, and encouraged interfaith dialogue and understanding. Under his reign, Kashmir flourished both culturally and economically. He is credited with promoting the arts, literature, and music, and creating an environment of peace and prosperity that attracted scholars, poets, and artists from across the region. He is also credited with inspiring the genesis of Kashmiriyat, a unique cultural ethos that

emphasizes religious harmony and a distinct Kashmiri identity. Zain-ul-Abidin is remembered as a ruler who embodied the ideals of religious tolerance and mutual respect, and whose legacy continues to inspire people in Kashmir and beyond to work towards a more peaceful and harmonious society.

### **Public Works**

Budshah, or Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin, was a great ruler who founded many towns, built magnificent palaces, and constructed artificial islands in lakes and rivers. He also showed great concern for the welfare of his people, building dispensaries and providing free medicines, preventing illegal taxes, and promoting agriculture through the development of irrigation systems and the building of canals. His reign saw significant progress in the fields of education, literature, art and craft, public works, and agriculture. While he faced challenges, such as a famine and floods, and rebellion from his own sons in his later years, his legacy as a benevolent ruler who improved the material prosperity of his people lives on to this day. He is remembered with genuine reverence and gratitude, and his name is still spoken with admiration in Kashmir.

### **Conclusion**

Zain-ul-Abidin's significant contribution to Kashmir was his encouragement and patronage towards the common people, which led to a tremendous development in the Valley. He transformed Kashmir into an industrial garden and made significant progress in education, literature, art and craft, public works, agriculture, and irrigation. Zain-ul-Abidin possessed a broad and tolerant outlook and ruled with equity and justice, improving the material prosperity of his people. His benevolent rule demands special homage as he lived in a period with no worthy and enlightened contemporary to emulate. Zain-ul-Abidin was deservedly surnamed Budshah or the great king, and his name is still remembered with

genuine reverence and gratitude six centuries later. His tomb at Zaina Kadal is a testament to his acts of benevolence, and even today, cart pullers and boat rowers sing in chorus in his memory.

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