

SUYYA THE LARD OF FOOD IN ANCIENT KASHMIR {ANNAPATI}

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Abstract: - The land of Kashmir is bestowed by nature in all spheres. The people of this land from ancient times were known by their hard work braveness and intelligence. Men with all merits of life used to live in the land from ancient times; one among them was the great hydraulic engineer of Avantivarman Suyya. With his engineer tactics he drained the blocked water of vitista and reduces the chances of floods in the valley. With his ability and work the people of Kashmir started the agricultural work in newly founded land. Therefore among the Kashmiri people he becomes famous as Annapati. The town sopore then suyyapura, which Suyya built on the banks of vitista, commemorates his name.

I'm Suyya, I'm Kashmir:

I'm not merely a legend:

I'm the nation's egalitarian spirit:

My signatures are on the riverbed of the vitista: My passion was to drain the valley, restore the country to former glory, change future destiny of motherland.

Key words: - Avantivarman, jehlem, famine, flood, embankment, food

Introduction:-

With the accession of Avantivarman the territory of Kashmir saw a period of prosperity. It was certainly because of his wise policies. The peace and prosperity, which it ensured, raised Kashmir to its great heights in the realms of philosophy, art and literature. It was believed that the king distributed all previous treasuries and hidden treasures among the poor and the needy. The king devoted himself to setting things right in the administration of the country. He honored learned men and the artists. He bought scholars from abroad and began to spread education and learning in the countryⁱ. Avantivarman had an able Prime Minister, Sura, a wise administrator who was guided in his duties by a verse in Sanskrit, meaning:

“This is the time for granting benefits, while fortune, fickle by nature, is present. Why should there be again time for benefits, while misfortune is always imminentⁱⁱ

The king Avantivarman had cordial relations with his Prime Minister. The Minister was always anticipating the king's wishes and without speaking to him, was meeting them quickly and at any cost. According to the literary source of the valley, it is believed that for ten years in the reign of Avantivarman the killing of all living creatures was prohibited. At that time the Shad fish (Pathina) left the cold water without fear, and coming to the river-banks sunned their backs in the autumn sun. In the time of Avantivarman, the illustrious Bhatta Kallata and other holy men (Siddhas) descended to the earth for the benefit of the peopleⁱⁱⁱ.

Suyya the holy men descended to the earth for the benefit of people:-

The birth of Suyya is woven in mystery. When a baby, he had been left by some unfortunate women in a covered earthen pot on the road side and was picked up by a Chandala woman, named him Suyya. While sweeping there she got him nourished in the house of Sudra women, who named him after that of his adapted mother. He grew up into an intelligent youth and having obtained some education, became a private teacher. As he was sharp and intelligent, there was always a cluster of sensible men around him. When people complaining in their conversation of flood calamity he said; “I have got the knowledge for preventing it “. The excess of floods and breaches developed in dams constructed by Lalitaditya holding water back had inundated much area of Kashmir. This ruined the agricultural prospects of the people. To top it a big earthquake destroyed a big chunk of the population. A part of the mountain fell into the river at Khadanyar and stopped the water of the Jhelum. The valley resembled that in the days of Kashapreshi or Hazrat Suleiman. The floods became violent and submerged the area upto the Bijbehara^{iv}. Agriculture land was submerged and houses were washed by floods people lost their lands and famine occurred. A Khirwar of Paddy cost one thousand and fifty Tankas. The people of valley starved to death. King Avantivarman tried his best to help the victims of the famine. He did everything possible for construction of embankments and drainage of water. He spent thousands on it. But he could do precious little in the face of natural calamity. He was bewildered and anxious. He thought of several options but no one worked.

When king Avantivarman heard through his spies, that a man Suyya is saying, he got the knowledge to prevent the floods. The king had him then brought up and questioned him about his saying. He peacefully replied in the royal presence “I have got the knowledge.” There up on the Lord of earth, though his courtiers declared him (Suyya) crazy, the king however, wished to watch the results of his doings. The king placed his treasures at his disposal. Suyya took many pots full of money in a boat and started towards Madavarayya the southern district of the valley called district of the Nandaka. Suyya dropped pot full money into water at the village Nandaka which was submerged in the flood, he hurriedly turned back^v.

The councilors of Avantivarman said “the man Suyya is surely a mad man”. The king on the other side watched these proceedings interestingly. While reaching Kramaraya the locality called Yaksadara, he threw with both hands money dinnara into the water. The famine stricken people of village jumped into the river near Dyara-gul to search dinnars and in doing so removed the rocks which were in the bed of the river and cleared the passage of the water^{vi}. After he had in this manner artfully drained off the water for two or three days. The intelligent broke the obstruction and made a way in the river for drainage of water. The flood subsided and dry land appeared. Avantivarman was convinced of his intelligence and hard work. He appointed Suyya as his minister for agriculture.

Suyya and Agriculture in Kashmir:

As a man of intelligence Suyya placed the department of Agriculture. We come to know from Rajatarangini that the low agricultural production hardly fulfilled the needs of the Kashmiri people mainly due to the devastating floods caused by the inundations in the Mahapadma resulting into famine. Suyya as a minister constructed embankments at various places for flood control. Suyya repaired old canals and the bed of Jhelum dug deep at many places. At the places where the flow of water was forceful he constructed concrete embankments. He constructed many riversides and many canals and broke like ketakaul, which slowed down the flow of the Jhelum to control floods. The Sindhu river which previously met near Trigam in the Larpargana thus turning a large track of cultivable land into a swamp. Suyya changed their confluence to the present place near Srinagar and regulated the course of the river in such a way that it flowed right through the Mahapadma lake. This dried much land around Srinagar. In a similar way the course of other important tributaries also were regulated, with the result that thousands of acres of land were reclaimed for Agriculture. All these steps taken by Suyya increased the agriculture production in Kashmir. Keeping out the water by means of circular dykes, he gave to these villages the appearance of round bowls Kunda. Hence the people called these villages which are amply provided with all kinds of food stuff by the name of Kundala^{vii}.

Important improvement also was made in the irrigation system which had a great bearing on the cultivation of rice – the staple food of Kashmir. After examining the different classes of land he procured a supply of river water for the villages, which thus were no longer dependent only on the rainfall. After watering all village lands he took from each village some soil and ascertained, by observing the time it took to dry up, the period within which irrigation would be required for each soil, respectively. Suyya then arranged supply of water on permanent basis for the size and distribution of the watercourse for each village. The system of irrigation which Suyya developed was more extensive than today’s much land which is now allowed to lie waste on the mountain slopes, on the Udar plateaus and in the lowlying grounds near the marshes was then under cultivation. The yield of crops was so high that instead of one thousand and fifty tankas a Khirwar of paddy sold for 36 tankas only. According to Kalhana neither Kashyapmar nor Sankarsana bestowed these benefits which virtuous Suyya produced with ease in that land.

Conclusion:-

The analysis of the data provides much information about the economic conditions of Kashmir during the reign of Avantivarman. During his time wide-ranging drainage and irrigation works were undertaken and the valley was freed from the danger of floods. The hydraulic engineer Suyya assisted the king in all these beneficent works. The reign of Avantivarman is famous for bringing agricultural revolution in the valley.

References:-

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