

# The Glorious Reign Of Sultan Zain-Ul-Abidin Bud Shah (A Great Muslim Ruler Of Kashmir 1420-1470 A.D.)

<sup>1</sup>Dr. Nadia Mehrdin , <sup>2</sup>Dr.Aneela Saleem , <sup>3</sup>Dr.Fayyaz Hussain , <sup>4</sup>Dr. Arooba Masroor Siddiqui , <sup>5</sup>Hejab-i-Zahra Sandhu , <sup>6</sup>Yasmin Akhtar , <sup>7</sup>Tayyba Rasool

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor , Department of Kashmiryat Punjab University, Lahore, Pakistan.

<sup>2</sup>Assistant professor (Urdu), Institute of Urdu language and literature, Oriental college, Punjab University, Lahore, Pakistan.

<sup>3</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Punjabi, Government College University Faisalabad, (Correspondence)

<sup>4</sup>Assistant Professor Iqbaliyat, LCWU.

<sup>5</sup>Lecturer in English, University of Sialkot.

<sup>6</sup>PhD Scholar, Institute of Punjabi and Cultural Studies, Punjab University, Lahore, Pakistan.

<sup>7</sup>PhD Scholar, Institute of Information Management, Punjab University, Lahore, Pakistan.

## Abstract

This research work explores the transformative reign of Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin, also known as Bud Shah, during the 15th century in Kashmir. Through an in-depth analysis of his governance, policies, and action plans over the span of 50-year (1420-1470 A.D.), this paper illuminates the profound impact of this great emperor on the history of region. Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin's visionary leadership is scrutinized in various dimensions, including economic development, religious harmony, literary translation, craft education, infrastructure, healthcare, and foreign policy. The research, based on descriptive historical analysis from secondary sources, highlights the comprehensive nature of his contributions, such as educational reforms, economic policies fostering trade and agriculture, religious inclusivity, promotion of craft education, architectural endeavors, healthcare advancements, and diplomatic strategies. The study underscores the enduring legacy of Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin, portraying his rule as a golden age that significantly shaped the cultural, economic, and political landscape of Kashmir.

**Keywords:** Zain-ul-Abidin, Bud Shah, Accomplishments, Great emperor, Extraordinary policies.

## Introduction

History of the Kashmir Valley is a roller coaster ride under the effect of multiple dynasties and rulers who imposed a central role in the establishment of Islam e.g. Shah Mir dynasty, the Chak dynasty, and the Mughal emperors, each adding to the region's rich historical narrative.

The reign of Shah Mir's first Islamic dynasty over Kashmir, spanned during the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries produced a number of dedicated leaders, but none could match the remarkable legacy left by Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin. His real

name was Shahi Khan but popularly knows as Bud Shah (Great King) due to his tireless efforts to transform the territory into a bastion of religious concord, compassion and a revitalization of culture.

The purpose of this paper is to highlight the profound contributions of the great emperor known as Zain-ul-Abidin, who reigned from 1420 to 1470 A.D. By delving into his vision, governance, policies, and action plans, it is possible to learn more about how a compassionate and wise leadership can leave a lasting impact on history of a nation.

During 50-year span of his rule, he served his nation exceptionally. His focal point was the improvement of economy via a series of strategic measures. He equally treated people from different religions and let them perform their rituals freely. He executed agricultural reforms that resulted in the enhanced productivity of the region and so a stable supply of food to his people. As part of his efforts to enhance trade with other states, he improved regional infrastructure by upgrading transportation routes. Advancement of the arts and literature was made possible through the recruitment of famous poets and scholars from different areas under his leadership. The Zaingair Canal, which he built for transportation and irrigation, stands out as one of his many notable achievements and a significant feat in the field of engineering. Kashmir was able to maintain stable diplomatic relations with Iran and the Arab world while he was in power. He was well aware of the need for the safety of Kashmir's borderlines. To address this, he constructed a military institution where young individuals received training as a tool of national defense. His army not only defended the borders of Kashmir, but also annexed parts of Punjab and Tibet to expand his territory. It is certainly not an exaggeration to state that the reign of Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin was a golden age in the history of Kashmir.

He faced many challenges during his rule despite of dedication and utmost honesty. He was once rebelled by his own brother. However, he managed to put an end to the insurrection and hold onto the throne. This great leader left the world in 1472, but the history of Kashmir has not been able to glorify another Sultan of such grace since then. In the Rajatarangini Dvitiya, Jonaraja narrates the first 35 years of his reign; in the Rajatarangini Tritiya, Jonaraja's pupil, Srivaraian, describes the remaining 15 years.

## Research

## Goals

- To provide a detailed narrative of the life and efforts of Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin, highlighting his extraordinary leadership and contributions during his 50-year rule.
- To evaluate the political, cultural and social changes that Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin brought about, along with his policies that improved Kashmir's intercommunal peace and tolerance for different religions.
- To describe Bud Shah's long-term legacy and ultimate impact on the history or identity of Kashmir Valley.
- To mention his wise strategies in the promotion of art, literature, architecture and so on.

## Methodology

This historical research was descriptive in nature. After a thorough research, the data was collected mainly from secondary sources including books, scholarly articles, journals, and encyclopedias.

Consider the following remarkable accomplishments of Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin during his reign in transforming the Kashmir territory into a prosperous land.

### I. Educational Reforms

Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin was well known for his keen interest in education and his initiatives to spread it throughout the territory. Under the guidance of Maulana Kabir, he himself obtained a quality education and specifically served his potentials in advancing the education for marginalized communities. He made a remarkable impact on education by founding a university in the vicinity of his palace in Nowshera. His educational reforms continued in diverse locations from Srinagar to the hospice of Sheikh Ismail Kubrawi. He made efforts to build hostels, colleges and schools for unprivileged students. The Sultan Bud Shah was a passionate

reader and to quench this thirst of reading as well as learning, he established a library with massive collection of literature in his royal residence. He even sent his representatives to other countries for the assemblage of unique books and manuscripts. He also introduced various useful skills among his people such as binding of books and paper making to improve their livelihood.

Endeavors of Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin didn't stop there; he made an institute known as "Dar-ul-Uloom" and gave it under the administration of his respected tutor Maulana Kabir. Another Madrassa was opened near Islamabad and appointed Maulana Gazi as its principal. The funds from various villages were allocated to cover the expenses of these institutions. His efforts to promote education in women by giving them financial support indicate that he recognized the important role that women could play in the advancement and development of a society or a country.

He was fluent in many languages such as Tibetan, Persian and Sanskrit. Zain-ul-Abidin wrote two works in Persian: one on fireworks and the other on the world's vanity and transitivity. In addition, he also wrote Persian poetry under the pen name Qutb. Ruler Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin had a great regard for learning and education. He established a long-lasting legacy in the area of education by working persistently to improve learning throughout his realm.

## **2. Economic Development**

During his governance from 1420-1470, Bud Shah implemented a number of actions which were meant to improve economic growth in Kashmir. One of his primary ambitions involved an extensive reformation of the taxation system. He worked hard to deliberate and streamline taxes to create a more stable and predictable financial state. This step enhanced the disposable income and fostered reliability of economy.

Sultan also proposed an action plan that was based on the promotion of trade and business. He encouraged the establishment of trading centers and marketplaces, creating an atmosphere that was conducive for the commercial activities. As a result, merchants and traders profited due to an increased flow of goods and services. His sovereignty was also linked to evolving farming techniques. The policies were aimed at increasing agricultural production, such as introducing the latest irrigation systems and cutting-edge farming methods. Due to these activities, agricultural yields increased, resulting in food security and trade surpluses. A thriving agricultural sector not only sustained the locals, but also bolstered the region's economy.

Craft education was essential for increasing the region's economy, facilitating social mobility, and enhancing its culture during the Sultan's reign. Special institutes were established to educate crafts like calligraphy, woodworking, metalworking, paper making, and carpet weaving throughout his reign. Along with a thorough curriculum and an emphasis on quality, the teaching approach, in which masters imparted their knowledge to apprentices, ensured that the manufactured products were not only functional but also artistic. Beyond merely developing skills, craft education promoted cross-cultural interaction, gave women access to the labour force, and was essential for the preservation of traditional knowledge. The economic impact was enormous, turning regional crafts into commodities in high demand both locally and nationally. Craft exports developed as a major source of income, facilitating upward economic diversification, and cultural diplomacy.

## **3. Religious Harmony**

Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin was indeed a great and kind leader. In contrast to his ancestors, he adopted a radical attitude, encouraging mutual respect and tolerance between followers of

different religions. One of his major achievements was termination of the Jizya tax, which non-Muslims had to pay. This action not only minimized financial stretch but also demonstrated his commitment to equal treatment for all.

Bud Shah went one step further and allowed Hindus to construct and maintain up their temples as well as follow their own set of religious rules. This pioneering gesture of acknowledging and respecting rituals of different religion promoted inclusion at the time. His advocacy for Sufi saints who taught tolerance and love highlighted his dedication to religious harmony even more.

His philosophy of justice exceeded the boundaries of religion, promising that non-Muslims would also be treated fairly. The dedication of Zain-ul-Abidin to equality and justice became an imperative aspect of his rule, fostering confidence and a sense of security among people of all religious backgrounds. His impact as a leader who promoted religious unity still persists in Kashmir, where it has shaped the cultural ethos and created a distinct identity centered on respect for diversity and mutual respect.

#### **4. Literary Translation**

One of Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin's most notable projects was to support translation of literature with the goal of diminishing the knowledge gap across various cultural contexts. Manuscripts and books were translated from Persian to Sanskrit and vice versa, with extraordinary skill under his patronage. Under his exclusive direction, the translation bureau completed the biography of Zain-ul-Abidin, which is known as Zaina Charit. He lavished rewards on Hindu scholars and showered the same respect over them as Muslim scholars. Sanskrit-proficient Hindu scholars were given important positions in his court. Zona, a respected scholar of Hindu translation, also held

a job in the translation bureau and contributed to the spread of knowledge. In Kashmir, Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin is remembered as a champion of translation and cross-cultural intellectual exchange. He left behind a legacy that demonstrates his rule was intellectually vibrant

#### **5. Craft Education**

Throughout his magnificent reign, Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin brought about an era of creativity and innovation in Kashmir by making significant contributions to craft education. Understanding the value of preserving and improving regional handicraft, the Sultan encouraged the acquisition of diverse craft skills. Among the noteworthy skills introduced were those related to stone polishing, stone cutting, carpet weaving, paper making, bottle making, calligraphy, window cutting, metalwork, book binding as well as gold beating. The Sultan promoted a technological and cultural exchange by actively supporting foreign artists and craftspeople, especially those from Iran and Central Asia. Persian artisans taught new skills to the local weavers, such using looms. The art of paper making and book binding, acquired from Samarqand, further enriched the local craftsmanship. His policies turned Kashmir into a thriving hub of artistic and technological innovation by reviving cultural crafts and fostering the growth of new industries. The Sultan's all-encompassing approach to craft education set the stage for a long-lasting legacy in the region's cultural heritage.

#### **6. Infrastructure**

Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin also made significant contributions for infrastructure creativity that will never be forgotten, permanently altering the Valley of Kashmir's topography. During his revolutionary rule from 1420-1470, the Sultan built historical tombs, canals, refined irrigation systems, mosques, etc., demonstrating his commitment to the prosperity of region. His

devotion to building opulent architecture is best demonstrated by the construction of the Jamia Masjid in Srinagar, a huge monumental feat finished under his supervision. In addition, he designed blissful islands that still stand as memorial to his architectural vision: Sona-Lank, Rupa-Lank in Dal Lake and Zain-Lank in Wolar Lake. In addition, the Sultan built a tomb for his mother, fittingly called "Buddshah's Domet," showing his respect for family relationships. The building of bridges, such as the significant Zainakadal Bridge, improved trade and connectivity and boosted the Valley's economy. In addition to improving Kashmir's visual appeal, Zain-ul-Abidin's careful attention to the region's infrastructure left an enduring legacy that reflects his significant influence on the Valley's rich cultural and architectural history. The construction of the Zaingair Canal during Sultan's reign was another accomplishment, contributing significantly to the agricultural prosperity of Kashmir. This canal was designed efficiently to channel water for irrigation, played a crucial role in transforming barren lands into fertile fields, fostering agricultural growth, and enhancing the overall economic landscape of the region.

## **7. Health Care System**

His contributions to the healthcare system were truly visionary. The Sultan supported many Hakims and Vaidas (traditional healers), generating an environment in which herbal remedies flourished. Notably, a Vaid by the name of Shri Bhatt healed the Sultan personally, earning a position as a royal court advisor. Dispensaries were set up all across the valley, providing the public with free medical advice and care. The Hakim migration from mainland India and Central Asia was encouraged by Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin, which further enhanced the state of healthcare. In addition to giving his people's physical health top priority, this kind ruler understood the value of their mental and

emotional well-being. His contributions to the healthcare system confirm his reputation as a leader who genuinely cared about the welfare of the people of Kashmir and served as evidence of a comprehensive approach to government.

## **8. Foreign Policy**

The Great King left an indelible mark on Kashmir through his remarkable foreign policy. After a time of strong natural barriers enclosing the valley, Zain-ul-Abidin's reign brought about an age of diplomatic skill and cultural interaction. His imaginative method extended Kashmir's contacts to Tibet, Khurasan, Mecca, Gilan, and beyond, extending from northern India. This vast network was encouraged in an infrequent period of internal tranquility, free from outside incursions. Zain-ul-Abidin refused to use force in defense of his rightful claims to territory, instead choosing to pursue peace. To emphasize that he was a lover of peace, he only embarked on missions in the face of a real threat, despite his military prowess. He changed how the army worked by being smart about it and focusing a lot on dialogue with others. While he was in charge, he made the borders stronger using both the military and dialogue powers. Zain-ul-Abidin connected with different places, both foreign and Indian, to create a mix of cultures. At a time when many countries wanted to get more wealth through battles, Zain-ul-Abidin's way of handling things is remembered for how good he was at talking and desiring for peace. People think the time he ruled was one of the best in Kashmir's history because it had a peaceful and friendly culture.

## **Conclusion**

It can be concluded that Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin emerged as an all-rounder leader whose 50-year rule stands as a model in the history of Kashmir. His governance, marked by economic prosperity, educational reforms, and cultural advancements,

showcased an unwavering commitment to the well-being of his people. The Sultan's emphasis on religious tolerance, promotion of education for all, and strategic economic policies contributed to a harmonious and thriving society. His lasting impact on infrastructure, craft education, and healthcare attests to a ruler who cared deeply about the holistic welfare of his subjects. Furthermore, Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin's diplomatic finesse not only protected Kashmir's borders but also promoted cultural exchanges with distant regions. The enduring echoes of his legacy continue to resonate, portraying him as a visionary leader whose reign remains an integral chapter in the rich tapestry of Kashmir's history.

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