

THE RENAISSANCE KING: ZAIN-UL-ABIDIN'S REIGN IN KASHMIR

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Abstract

Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin, popularly known as Budshah (The Great King), was a transformative ruler whose reign (1420–1470 A.D.) marked a golden era in Kashmiri history. Revered for his visionary leadership, he championed religious tolerance, cultural revival, and economic prosperity, earning him the title of "The Renaissance King." Zain-ul-Abidin fostered harmony among Kashmir's diverse communities, creating an environment of inclusivity and social cohesion. His reign saw a flourishing of arts, crafts, and literature, making Kashmir a hub of cultural excellence. He introduced administrative reforms, improved irrigation systems, and revitalized agriculture, significantly enhancing the region's prosperity. Budshah's patronage of artisans and scholars elevated Kashmir's status as a center of learning and craftsmanship. His emphasis on justice and welfare reflected his deep commitment to his people. This abstract explores the multifaceted achievements of Zain-ul-Abidin and their enduring impact, celebrating his legacy as a beacon of enlightened governance in medieval India.

Keywords: *reign, education, literature, King, tolerance*

INTRODUCTION:

The Kashmir Valley's history has been shaped by various dynasties and rulers, including the Shah Mir dynasty, Chak dynasty, and Mughal emperors, all of whom played important roles in the development of Islam. During Shah Mir's first Islamic dynasty's reign in Kashmir in the 14th and 15th centuries, many determined leaders emerged, but none surpassed Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin's legacy. Shahi Khan, also known as Bud Shah (Great King), dedicated his life to promoting religious harmony, compassion, and cultural revitalisation in his dominion. This dissertation aims to emphasise the significant accomplishments of Zain-ul-Abidin, the great emperor who ruled from 1420 until 1470 A.D. Examining his vision, governance, policies, and action plans reveals how caring and intelligent leadership can shape a nation's history.

During his 50-year rule, he provided outstanding service to the nation. He focused on improving the economy using strategic approaches. He treated individuals of other religions equally and allowed them to practise their ceremonies freely. He implemented agricultural reforms, increasing output and ensuring a steady supply of food for his people. To increase trade with other states, he upgraded regional infrastructure, including transportation lines. Under his direction, notable poets and professors from various fields were recruited, leading to advancements in the arts and literature.

The Zainagar Canal, designed for transit and irrigation, is one of his outstanding accomplishments in engineering. During his time in office, Kashmir maintained steady diplomatic relations with Iran and the Arab world. He understood the need of ensuring the safety of Kashmir's borders. To remedy this, he established a military academy to train young individuals for national defence. His army expanded his empire by annexing sections of Punjab and Tibet, in addition to defending Kashmir's frontiers. Sultan Zainul-Abidin's reign was widely regarded as a golden phase in Kashmiri history. Despite his passion and honesty, the ruler faced numerous problems during his reign. In the past, his brother revolted against him. Despite the revolt, Alexander successfully

maintained his throne. Although this wonderful leader passed away in 1472, no subsequent Sultan of such grace has been able to match his legacy in Kashmir. Jonaraja recounts the first 35 years of his rule in the *Rajatarangini* Dvitiya, while his student Srivara portrays the last 15 years in the *Rajatarangini* Tritiya.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- The purpose is to present a complete biography of Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin, stressing his exceptional leadership and contributions over his 50-year reign.
- To assess Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin's impact on Kashmir's political, cultural, and social transformations, as well as his policies that promoted intercommunal peace and religious tolerance.
- To describe Bud Shah's lasting legacy and impact on the history and character of Kashmir Valley.
- He implemented effective tactics to promote art, literature, and architecture.

METHODOLOGY

The historical research was descriptive in morality. Data was primarily gathered from secondary sources, such as books, scholarly articles, journals, and encyclopaedias, following extensive investigation. During his reign, Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin made significant contributions to the prosperity of Kashmir.

1. Educational Reforms

Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin prioritised education and promoted its development over the kingdom. Maulana Kabir influenced him to pursue a quality education and contribute to the advancement of education for marginalised populations. He had a significant impact on education by establishing a university near his palace in Nowshera. He implemented educational changes in several locales, including Srinagar and Sheikh Ismail Kubrawi's hospice. He worked to create hostels, colleges, and institutions for underprivileged kids. Sultan Bud Shah constructed a library with a large collection of literature in his royal house to satisfy his enthusiasm for reading and learning. He despatched representatives to other nations to collect unusual books and manuscripts. He taught his people important skills like bookbinding and papermaking to enhance their livelihood.

Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin established the "Dar-ulu loom" institute, which was overseen by his instructor, Maulana Kabir. Maulana Gazi became the principal of a new madrasa near Islamabad. Funds from several communities were distributed to cover expenses for these institutes. His financial support for women's education demonstrates his understanding of their crucial role in societal and national development. He was proficient in several languages, including Tibetan, Persian, and Sanskrit. Zain-ul-Abidin authored two Persian compositions, one about pyrotechnics and another on the world's vanity and transitivity. In addition, he composed Persian poetry under the pen name Qutb. Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin emphasised the importance of education. He left a lasting impact on education by consistently striving to enhance learning in all areas.

2. Economic Development

Bud Shah, who ruled from 1420-1470, took several steps to boost Kashmir's economy. He aimed to modernise the tax system as a top priority. He focused on streamlining taxes to improve financial stability and predictability. This action increased disposable income and strengthened the economy. Sultan suggested an action plan focused on promoting commerce and business. He promoted the creation of trading centres and marketplaces to foster commercial operations. Merchants and dealers gained from the increased flow of products and services. His sovereignty was related to advanced farming techniques. The initiatives attempted to increase agricultural productivity by implementing modern irrigation systems and farming methods. These operations led to higher agricultural yields, leading in improved food security and trade surplus. A successful agricultural sector not only supported locals, but also boosted the regional economy.

During the Sultan's rule, craft education played a crucial role in boosting the region's economy, social mobility, and culture. During his reign, he built institutes to teach trades such as calligraphy, woodworking, metals, papermaking, and carpet weaving. The educational technique of masters imparting their skills to apprentices guaranteed that made products were both utilitarian and artistic, in addition to a comprehensive curriculum and attention on quality. Craft education facilitated cross-cultural interaction, provided women with employment opportunities, and helped preserve traditional knowledge. The economic impact was significant, transforming localised crafts into high-demand commodities both locally and nationally. Craft exports became an important source of income, contributing to economic diversification and cultural diplomacy.

3. Religious Harmony

Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin was a remarkable and caring leader. Unlike his forebears, he advocated for mutual respect and tolerance among other religions. One of his notable accomplishments was the elimination of the Jizya tax, which non-Muslims had to pay. This gesture not only reduced financial strain, but also highlighted his dedication to equal treatment for all. Bud Shah granted Hindus the freedom to build and maintain their own temples and religious practices. Recognising and appreciating different religious rites was a pioneering gesture that facilitated inclusivity at the time. His support for Sufi saints who promote tolerance and love emphasised his commitment to religious concord. His notion of justice went beyond Islam, pledging fair treatment for non-Muslims as well. Zain-ul-Abidin prioritised equality and justice during his administration, instilling confidence and security in people of all faiths. His efforts to promote religious unity have left an indelible mark on Kashmiri culture, fostering a sense of mutual tolerance and diversity.

4. Literary Translation

Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin supported literature translation to bridge cultural gaps and promote information sharing. He specialised in translating manuscripts and books from Persian to Sanskrit and vice versa. He directed the translation bureau to complete the biography of Zain-ul-Abidin, also known as Zaina Charit. He rewarded Hindu intellectuals and treated them with equal respect as Muslim experts. Sanskrit-proficient Hindu academics were granted prominent roles in his court. Zona, a recognised researcher of Hindu translation, worked in the translation office and helped spread knowledge. In Kashmir, Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin is known for his contributions to translation and cross-cultural studies. exchange. His legacy reflects intellectual vigour during his reign.

5. Craft Education

During his reign, Sultan Zainul-Abidin fostered creativity and innovation in Kashmir by promoting artisan education. The Sultan emphasised the need of preserving and improving regional handicrafts, encouraging the development of various craft skills. The techniques taught included stone polishing, stone cutting, carpet weaving, paper making, bottle making, calligraphy, window cutting, metalwork, book binding, and gold beating. The Sultan encouraged technological and cultural interaction by encouraging foreign artists and craftspeople, particularly from Iran and Central Asia. Persian artisans taught local weavers new skills, including the use of looms. Paper production and book binding skills learnt in Samarqand enhanced local craftsmanship. His policies transformed Kashmir into a thriving centre of artistic and technological innovation, resurrecting traditional crafts and promoting the creation of new enterprises. The Sultan's comprehensive approach to artisan education left a lasting impact on the region's cultural heritage.

6. Infrastructure

Additionally, Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin made noteworthy and unforgettable contributions to innovative infrastructure, forever changing the geography of the Valley of Kashmir. The Sultan demonstrated his dedication to the region's prosperity during his revolutionary reign from 1420 to 1470 by constructing mosques, canals, sophisticated irrigation systems, and historic tombs. The Jamia is the finest example of his commitment to creating lavish architecture. Under his direction, the Srinagar Masjid was completed, a massive, gigantic undertaking. He created beautiful islands like as Sona-Lank, Rupa-Lank in Dal Lake, and Zain-Lank in Wular Lake to commemorate his architectural vision. The Sultan built a tomb for his mother, dubbed "Budd shah's Domet," demonstrating his value for family bonds. The construction of bridges, such as the Zainakadal Bridge, facilitated trade and connection, boosting the Valley's economy. Zain-ul-Abidin's attention to Kashmir's infrastructure not only enhanced its visual appeal, but also had a lasting impact on the Valley's cultural and architectural history. During Sultan's rule, the Zaingair Canal was constructed, which greatly improved agricultural prosperity in Kashmir. The canal efficiently channels water for irrigation, changing barren plains into rich fields, supporting agricultural expansion, and improving the region's economy.

7. Health Care System

He made genuinely revolutionary contributions to the healthcare system. The Sultan fostered an atmosphere that encouraged the use of herbal cures by supporting a large number of Hakims and Vaid, or traditional healers. Notably, the Sultan was personally healed by a Vaid named Shri Bhatt, who went on to become an advisor to the royal court. Dispensaries offering free medical advice and care were established throughout the valley. Sultan Zainul-Abidin promoted the Hakim migration from Central Asia and mainland India, which

improved healthcare even more. Apart from prioritising his subjects' physical health, this benevolent leader recognised the importance of their mental and emotional welfare. His contributions to the medical field validate his standing as a leader who actually cared for the well-being. The Kashmiri people benefitted from a comprehensive approach to governance.

8. Foreign Policy

The Great King's exceptional foreign policy had a lasting impact in Kashmir. Zain-ul-Abidin's reign introduced diplomatic skill and cultural exchange to the valley, which had previously been surrounded by natural barriers. His innovative approach expanded Kashmir's reach to Tibet, Khurasan, Mecca, Gilan, and beyond, starting from northern India. This extensive network was cultivated during a rare moment of interior tranquilly, free from external distractions. Zain-ul-Abidin chose peace over force to defend his territorial claims. He improved the army's efficiency by encouraging open communication with others. During his tenure, he strengthened borders through military and diplomatic efforts. Zain-ul-Abidin interacted with diverse cultures, both foreign and Indian. During a time when many countries sought wealth through war, Zain-ul-Abidin stood out for his ability to communicate effectively and promote peace. His reign is regarded as one of the most calm and pleasant periods in Kashmir's history. Despite his military skills, he only took on missions that posed a genuine threat to maintain his commitment to peace.

CONCLUSION

In summary, Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin became a versatile leader whose 50-year reign is seen as a model in Kashmiri history. His administration demonstrated an unflinching devotion to the welfare of his people through cultural achievements, educational reforms, and economic success. A peaceful and prosperous society was a result of the Sultan's emphasis on religious tolerance, support for universal education, and astute economic policies. His enduring influence on healthcare, craft education, and infrastructure bears witness to a monarch who genuinely cared about the well-being of his citizens. Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin's diplomatic skills preserved Kashmir's boundaries and facilitated cultural connections with faraway places. His reputation continues to be remembered as a visionary leader who played a significant role in Kashmir's history.

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