

# LALITADITYA MUKTAPIDA: A GREAT SUCESSOR OF KARKOTA DYNASTY

<sup>1</sup>Zahid Iqbal Sheikh, <sup>2</sup>Hilal Ahmad Tantray,

<sup>1,2</sup>Research Scholar

<sup>1</sup>Department of AIHC & Archaeology APSU Rewa M.P,

<sup>2</sup>Department of History Rabindranath Tagore University Raisen M.P

Email - <sup>1</sup>sheikhzahid0001@gmail.com, <sup>2</sup>hilalmohiuddin9906912265@gmail.com

**Abstract:** *With the ascendancy of the Karkota dynasty, the Hindu Kingdom of Kashmir reached great heights of power and prestige. Its influence and fame spread far and wide, in the process, attracting respect and receiving tribute from neighboring states/kingdoms. Lalitaditya Muktapida is credited with the extensive conquests not only in the Himalayan regions adjoining to the valley of Kashmir but also in the distant plains of India. And He was successful in controlling the trade routes between Kashmir and Afghanistan. It was during his rule that the celebrated Chinese traveler Huein Tsang visited Kashmir and stayed there for two years between 631 and 633 CE. Huein Tsang was provided all the facilities to study Hindu scriptures in Sanskrit and was treated with courtesy. He was extended great hospitality that was due to a foreign traveler wanting to study the Kingdom of Kashmir.*

**Key Words:** *Kashmir, Gandhara, Dardas, Adisthanas, Martand, Huein Tsang, Panch Mahashabda, Garbagriha, Yasovarman, Karmasthanas.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

This paper is an outcome of indepth study and observation based on the art and architecture, military conquests, temples etc of the Lalitaditya Muktapida. This study encompasses the existing general condition of his temples, and their Geographical Locations, his conquests over Central and Eastern India. His control over Karkoram ranges controlling the overland Caravans routes from India to China. And study of his administrative reforms

Lalitaditya Muktapida of Karkota dynasty rose to power in (724 -761) CE. He was fifth ruler of Karkota Dynasty who ascended the throne after Tarapida. Lalitaditya was the greatest king among the Karkota rulers, who lifted the country of Kashmir to pinnacle of fame. Giving a fillip to art, culture and architecture, the well being of his people remained his lifelong passion. Though a Shaivite himself. He was sympathetic to the philosophy of Buddha, whose influence in Kashmir at the same time was substantial. Karkota dynasty's greatest King. Lalitaditya Muktapida was born around the turn of the eighth century, as the third son to Durlabhaka Pratapaditya -II, who was the grandson of Durlabh Vardhana. After the death of Pratapaditya, his eldest son, Chandrapida, became the King of Kashmir at a very young age. Chandrapida was known as a courageous king, with a simple disposition after ruling for just seven years. He suddenly passed away. This ensured that the next in line of succession, Tarapida ascended to the throne. His ascension resulted in mis-governance as he lacked courage and administrative acumen. His sudden death after eighteen months of rule over Kashmir ended his brief reign, paving the way for Lalitaditya to take over the Kingdom of Kashmir at the age of 20 years.

Lalitaditya faced many challenges immediately upon ascending the throne of Kashmir. Around this time, the Arab invaders from the West had started pushing towards Asia and had occupied the provinces of Swat, Multan, Peshawar and the kingdom of Sindh to the South. Lalitaditya faced many challenges immediately upon ascending the throne of Kashmir. Around this time, the Arab invaders from the West had started pushing towards Asia and had occupied the provinces of Swat, Multan, Peshawar and the kingdom of Sindh to the South. Mohamad Bin Qasim, the Arab General who had captured Sindh in 712 CE, was now eyeing the Kingdom of Kashmir and through it, he intended to expand his territories to Central Asia. The local rebellions launched by Daradas on the outskirts of his Kingdom and Bhuthias of Ladakh to the North, who were under the loose suzerainty of Tibet, were the other challenges that Lalitaditya had to contend with immediately. Lalitaditya's first, but the most important expedition was against Yasovarman, the ruler of the central India with Kanauj as its capital. Numerous causes have been enumerated by Kalahans responsible for this expedition but the imperialistic design must have been probably the main cause. After the war it is said a dispute arose between Lalitaditya and Yasovarman over the contents of the treaty, leading again to war in which Yasovarman was not only defeated but also dethroned. The various territories like Punjab, Kangra, Jalandhar and Kanauj came under the direct control of Lalitaditya.

## 2. Military Conquests:

Kalhana describes Lalitaditya as a very powerful ruler, who asserted his supremacy far beyond Kashmir and the adjoining states. Kalhana has represented him as a great conqueror, whose reign was mostly passed in expeditions abroad. The numerous foreign expeditions of Lalitaditya and his ultimate disappearance on one of these forays towards north reminds one of the Greek Conqueror, Alexander the Great who was of a similar disposition and in that respect Lalitaditya may be called Kashmir's Alexander. His first expedition was directed against Yasovarman, the ruler of Kanyakubja (Present Kanauj). After defeating Yasovarman, Lalitaditya marched to conquer the whole of India, from Bengal and Orissa in the east to Kathiawar and Kambojas (Afghanistan) in the west. The territories such as Kangra and Punch were also the feudatories of king.

By that victory Lalitaditya not only made himself master of Kanauj, but also acquired the theoretical right of suzerainty over the vast conquests of Yasovarman. In order to effectively assert these rights, Lalitaditya marched towards the east attacking king Jivitagupta of Bihar and West Bengal (Gauda) and reducing him to vassalage, advanced up to the sea coast of Orissa. At this moment (cir. 735-36 A.D.) a call for help reached Lalitaditya from the Deccan. Indra I Rashtrakuta had abducted the Chalukyan princess Bhavagana from Khaira (Gujarat) and forced her to marry him. After his death in 735 A.D., the 'Ratta queen' was soon in difficulties. With her secret connivance Lalitaditya crossed the passes into the Deccan without resistance, found the Chalukyas friendly allies and overran the Rashtrakuta territories. Karka II (Kakka, Kayya) of Lata (Southern Gujarat) was brought to Kashmir. On his way home Lalitaditya passed through Gujarat, Kathiawar, Malwa and Marwar shaking the tottering power of the Maitrakas of Valabhi and of the Mauryas of Chitorgarh and made them to acknowledge his supremacy. These extensive conquests made the kingdom of Kashmir, for the time being, the most powerful empire that India had seen since the days of the Guptas. After gaining these outstanding victories in the south, Lalitaditya turned his attention to the territories bordering on the north of Kashmir. As mentioned, his kingdom extended to the farthest point in the Karakoram range controlling the overland caravan routes from India to China. He led a victorious army through the Dard Desha (Dardistan) to the Tukhsra country (Tukharistan of the later historians). It cannot therefore be difficult to understand that the Kashmir armies under Lalitaditya gained an easy victory there. After these expeditions Lalitaditya turned his attention towards the Tibet and Ladakh, which were also brought under suzerainty by imperial the army. It is because of his extensive conquests Lalitaditya is known as "Samduragupta" of Kashmir.

## 3. Administration:

Lalitaditya was not only famous for his extensive conquests but his real fame rests on his achievements at the home front. He was primarily an administrator and statesman. His administrative reforms, his great works of architecture and public welfare, his love for learning, patronage of scholars and his great virtues as a human conqueror rank him among the greatest kings of Kashmir. He was an able and eminent administrator. He introduced some very important reforms in the central administration of the country. As before his accession, the business was carried on by eight chief officials or "Karma Sthanas", but due to the immerse in administrative work He created Five new functionaries for the smooth running of administration. viz., Mahpratiharpida (High Chamberlain), Mahasandhivigrahika (Chief Minister), Mahashvashala (Minister of Horses), Mahabhandagra (Keeper of Treasury), Mahasadhna bhaga (Chief Executive Officer). These Five officers or "Karmasthanas" were collectively called as "Panch Mahashabda". This title was also assumed by the officers who presided over all the five officials. Mitrasarman initially a Samdhivigrahaika was the first person to be appointed to this high office.

## 4. Architecture:

Lalitaditya's chief glory lies in his building activities. The stone art and architecture underwent through drastic changes during his reign. New techniques and strategies were employed, due to which many significant construction came into being. Kalhana has mentioned in his book Rajtarangni that Lalitaditya established the towns of *Sunishchitapura*, *Darpita-pura*, *Phala-pura*. M. A. Stein located Phalapura near Parihasapura, *Parnotsa*. Stein identified this town with modern Poonch. Lokapunya town, near modern Larikpur on Annantnag-Veerinag road, Lalitapura (Letapur) where He built a grand temple, *Parihasapura*, this city became Lalitaditya's residence for a brief period and at Hushkapura (Ushkur), it is said that he had built a Buddhist Vihara.

According to Kalhana, Lalitaditya commissioned shrines dedicated to various aspects of Vishnu, including Keshava, Nṛhari Aditya and Muktasvamin. He constructed the Jyeshtharudra stone temple, which was dedicated to Lord Shiva. Kalhana mentions that Lalitaditya built a shrine of Aditya (the sun god) in Lalitapura, and granted the land of Kanyakubja and its villages to this shrine. In addition, He laid the foundation of Martand Sun Temple. Which is known to be the masterpiece of his architectural works. It is situated at the distance of 5 miles from the town of Anantanag in the Indian union territory of Jammu and Kashmir. Being on the top of a plateau, at whose feet stretch the broad verdant plains of Kashmir intersected by a network of rivers, lakes and canals, in closely planted grooves of trees, and encircled by snow-clad mountain ramparts. The temple of the sun, as Martand originally was,

commands, a superb view, such as the eye rarely lights upon. The temple has a colonnaded courtyard, the primary shrine is in its center and it is surrounded by 84 smaller shrines, stretching to be 220 feet long and 142 feet broad total. The temple turns out to be the largest example of a Peristyle in Kashmir, and is complex due to its various chambers that are proportional in size and aligned with the overall perimeter of the temple. The roof was no doubt pyramidal for a portion of the sloping moldings of its pediment was still to be seen on the one side. The walls of the gateway are profusely decorated internally and externally. The temple proper is 63 feet in length 36 feet in width at the eastern end and only 27 feet in width at the western side. It contains the three chambers: Ardhmandapa (Half temple), Anatarala (Middle temple) and Garbagriha (Innermost). Images of many Gods and Goddesses are carved on the walls of the Anatarala which enhances the beauty of this temple.



**Figure 1.** Martand Temple main entrance outlook 8<sup>th</sup> century C.E.



**Figure 2.** Standing Pillars of Martand Temple 8<sup>th</sup> century C.E.

## 5. CONCLUSION:

As understood that the role played by Karkotas especially by Lalitaditya Muktapida in the history of Kashmir is remarkable. He was strongest ruler of this dynasty, that is why He is called Samudragupta of Kashmir. Some of the main conquests He made were upto Bengal that made Kashmir the most powerful kingdom after the time of the Guptas. The Martand Temple in Anantnag district of union territory of Jammu and Kashmir preserves the memory of king Lalitaditya. These details are described in the Rajtarangni of Kahlhana. During his reign, he encouraged the developments in the fields of art and architecture. Karkota ruler was at its peak during the reign of Lalitaditya, but unfortunately the dynasty was proceeded by weak rulers which were not capable to unite the scattering kingdom after the death of Lalitaditya. They lost the glory of the kingdom and the dynasty was replaced by the Utpala dynasty.

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