

# **Cultural Heritage Resources of the Neelum Valley: Challenges and Opportunities**



by

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## **ABSTRACT**

*The aim of this study is to document the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of Neelum Valley. Furthermore, it intends to examine the impending threats to these cultural resources and also explores the potential means to utilize them for social development of this conflict-ridden area of Neelum Valley.*

*The study confirms the antiquity of the area and determines chronological order through archaeological discoveries, which is noted to have begun from Pre- historic period 4th Millennium BCE, up to 18th CE. Archaeological sites, epigraphic records, ethno archaeology and cultural material reveal that the valley was inhabited by a civilization which had rich forms of cultural wealth. The intangible cultural heritage has been examined as reflected in crafts, cuisines, dresses, languages, traditional skills, wooden architectures, cultural spaces and continuity of traditions.*

*The study further underscores that these heritage resources are fading out due to the human vandalism in the form of unregulated tourism, cross border firing, war and excessive commercialization in the Neelum Valley. In addition to this, the natural causes of threats range from natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods, typhoons to effects of climatic changes. Ignorance about the heritage value and inappropriate protection measures can have a devastating impact on these cultural heritage resources. Effective protection and preservation of the cultural heritage resources will help promoting heritage tourism which will in turn, generate economic activities in the region. The practical implication of the study is the proposed options of heritage tourism across divide, to bring social development in the area.*

**QUAID-I-AZAM UNIVERSITY**  
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Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

**FINAL APPROVAL**

This is to certify that we have read the thesis submitted by **Ms. Rukhsana Said Muhammad** and it is our judgment that this thesis is of sufficient standard to warrant its acceptance by the Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, for the award of degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Asian Studies.

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## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my individual research, and that it has not been submitted concurrently to any other university for any other degree.

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I hereby recommend that the dissertation prepared under my supervision by **Rukhsana Said Muhammad** titled: **Cultural Heritage Resources of the Neelum Valley: Challenges and Opportunities** be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Asian studies.

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**Supervisor:**

**Prof. Dr. Muhammad Ashraf Khan**

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## Abbreviations

<b>AJ&amp;K</b>	Azad Jammu & Kashmir
<b>BCE</b>	Before Common Era
<b>ACE</b>	After Common Era
<b>Ca.</b>	Circa
<b>KPK</b>	Khyber Pakhtoon Khawa
<b>IsIAO</b>	Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente (Rome, Italy)
<b>INTACH</b>	Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage Trust
<b>ICOMOS</b>	International council of Monuments and Sites
<b>UNWTO</b>	United Nation World Tourism Organization
<b>WTO</b>	World tourism organization
<b>SEAMEO</b>	Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization)
<b>SPAFA</b>	Regional Centre for Archaeology and Fine Arts
<b>PD</b>	Planning & Development
<b>CPEC</b>	China Pakistan Economic Corridor
<b>IHK</b>	Indian held Kashmir
<b>CBMs,</b>	Confidence Building Measures
<b>SAARC</b>	South Asian Association for regional cooperation
<b>LOC</b>	Line of control
<b>GB</b>	Gilgit Baltistan
<b>FIR</b>	First Information Report
<b>ASI</b>	Archaeological Survey of India
<b>CPDR</b>	Centre of Peace Development & Reconciliation

<b>INV</b>	Inventory
<b>MANU TECH</b>	Manufacturing Technique
<b>THK</b>	Thickness
<b>L</b>	Length
<b>W</b>	Width
<b>IRD</b>	Internal Rim Diameter
<b>ERD</b>	External Rim Diameter
<b>ID</b>	Internal Diameter
<b>Surf</b>	Surface
<b>Descrip</b>	Description
<b>T/C</b>	Terracotta
<b>Ref</b>	Reference

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Cultural heritage is the legacy of physical artefacts and the intangible attributes of a group or society that are inherited from past generations, maintained in the present and bestowed for the benefit of the future generations. Heritage is not only manifested through tangible forms such as artefacts, buildings or landscape, but also through intangible forms. Intangible heritage includes voices, traditions and oral history. Popularly, it is perceived that cuisine, clothing, shelter, traditions, skills, religious ceremonies, and performing arts (UNESCO 2003:2 & Feather: 2006).

While dealing with the cultural heritage of any nation, community or people, it is always difficult to detach intangible heritage from the tangible heritage, as both find close relevance to each other. In this context Neelum Valley of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) is also no exception and its culture is the combination of both tangible and intangible heritage. The archaeological sites, historical monuments, rock cut caves and natural sites partly built by humans constitute the tangible heritage of Neelum Valley. Similarly, the oral traditions, languages, social practices, rituals, festive events, indigenous knowledge and craftsmanship of the Neelum Valley fall under the category of intangible cultural heritage. The distinction between tangible and intangible heritage is useful for the general understanding of cultural heritage (Walter, Jamieson: 2000). However, the two forms of heritage are often closely associated and are almost inseparable. For example, in Neelum Valley, the prominent Sharda Temple site is a tangible heritage. The rituals associated with this place, and temple construction techniques, which directly rely on the local knowledge of the people is the intangible heritage of Neelum Valley.

Heritage means things of great value including places, sites along with their immediate surroundings and environment, cultural material and artifacts that a community has inherited

and has had opportunity to manage for the benefit of present and future generations (UNESCO 1982:41). Moreover, heritage can be defined as anything that has been translated from the past or handed down by traditions. The evidence of the past, such as the historical and archaeological sites, and their unspoiled natural environment, are considered as the inheritance of present day society. In the case of Neelum Valley, research has found that the area has immense cultural wealth which acts as a source of identity and pride for the inhabitants of the valley. Subsequently, it has tremendous economic, social and cultural value as it provides an extensive opportunity for the promotion and organization of heritage tourism in the area.

Additionally, heritage can mean something that has been received by the present generation and therefore, cannot be recreated. For the same reason, present generations are obligated to take care of the heritage and pass it on to the future generations without decreasing its value and essence (United Nations 2007:6). In the process of exploration and documentation, it is very important to know about the current state of preservation of the heritage sites in Neelum Valley and identify the problems associated with them. Moreover, preservation and development opportunities in the conflict area can be explored, identified, chosen and implemented to help safeguard the precious heritage for the future generations.

Culture is a common word in many languages and is often used to convey some generally accepted meanings. It is an abstract and difficult concept. This is why 'culture' is an elusive term when we want to understand its exact meaning and scope. Different people define culture in a way that suits themselves and their understanding of its concept. UNESCO, an important organisation has defined the word 'culture' as the whole complex of distinctive, spiritual, material and intellectual and emotional set of features that characterize a society or a social group. It includes not only arts and letters, but also models of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value system, traditions and belief (UNESCO 1982: 41-42).

According to the meaning and types of heritage defined by UNESCO, it can be concluded that culture is a valuable heritage which defines and shows the prosperous civilizations of any communities or societies. This heritage has been passed down from generation to generation for a long period of time. Therefore, cultural heritage of Neelum Valley is worth being preserved for not only the future generations, but also as a tool of peace and social development in a conflict torn area.

In the context of Neelum Valley, cultural heritage sites have played an important role in the reconstruction of the unrevealed history of the region. The research adopted principle methods of survey documentation and salvage excavation. These were utilized to increase our knowledge of earlier human activities and to understand the cultural heritage of Neelum Valley. The study further explores the state of preservation, threats to heritage and the stakeholders' role in the safeguarding of these cultural heritage resources. The qualitative research was adopted to understand challenges and to devise opportunity of heritage tourism across the divided Kashmir. This study ultimately helps to bring social development in the region.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The preliminary study shows that the cultural heritage in Neelum Valley has not been fully documented and exploited for socio-economic development in this conflict ridden zone. Therefore, detailed study is required to develop a cultural profile of the area and identify challenges and threats to the heritage. Furthermore, there is a need to explore options for the utilization of these resources in order to establish sustainable peace and socio-economic development in the region.

The Neelum Valley maintains a multilayered treasure of rich cultural heritage both tangible and intangible. The traces of the existing cultural material from pre-history to present day have not been catalogued completely. The evidence of the ancient history of Neelum Valley

is entwined in natural tangible forms such as lakes, mountains, peaks, passes and archaeological remains. This fact is also corroborated by ancient texts, coins and rock inscriptions. These evidences indicate that this place was a center of attraction for pilgrims and travellers from distant places. There is a need to discover the linkages of the past traces through comparative study with other contemporary cultures in the adjoining areas of Neelum Valley.

Cultural heritage is also a fundamental source in tourism development for underdeveloped areas such as Neelum Valley where heritage remains neglected. These heritage resources can provide enormous opportunities for socio-economic uplift in the area and also offer the prospect of peace and stability. However, this option has neither been explored nor given priority. As we maintain that heritage tourism is important for economic development in the conflict zone of Neelum Valley. Therefore, we need to identify various threats to this heritage and explore options suitable for protecting and promoting these resources.

In addition, there are contradictions and conflicts among stakeholders about prioritization and preservation of the heritage. This conflict of ownership and interest negatively affects the management and interpretation of heritage resources. Therefore, the research intends to explore the possibility of heritage tourism as an opportunity that is urgently required for peace and development in the area.

## **Research Methodology**

For this research, this researcher has primarily opted for primary research by going to the field, recording each and every possible aspect of both tangible and intangible cultural heritage in the Neelum Valley of the AJK, and salvage excavations where possible. Efforts were also made to interview as many learned, educated and culture loving people of the valley with knowledge of the past history of the valley as part of the primary research. These tools were effectively utilized to increase our knowledge of earlier human activities and to

understand the cultural heritage of Valley. In order to reinforce efforts to go through the recorded information about the past events relating to the valley and the adjoining areas, all available and reachable literature was consulted and reviewed as part of secondary research. The research also included both qualitative and quantitative aspects of the research methodology. Efforts were made to record as many of the surviving signs of the past as possible and thus a large quantity of the data was collected, while it was ensured that the quality of the research does not suffer at the cost of quantity. This researcher also did not lose sight of the importance of the comparative study and made every effort to make serious and realistic comparison of the recorded heritage and cultural objects retrieved during survey and salvage excavations with already recorded and retrieved objects in the adjoining areas of Khyber Pukhtunkhawa, Gilgit-Baltistan, whole of the Kashmir including the sites across the line of control in the Indian held Kashmir.

## **Review of Literature**

The available materials of the research consist of Ariel Stein (1900), Charles Ellison Bates (1873) Malcolm John McEwen (2005) who wrote about the Valley of Kishenganga (present Neelum Valley) in Azad Jammu & Kashmir.

In 1882 when Ariel Stein started work on '*Chronicle of Kings of Kashmir*' he was attracted by ancient remains and the traditions of the valley. He reviewed Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* of 11<sup>th</sup> CE, which has authentic information about few archaeological sites in Neelum Valley. Being an archaeologist Stein described the structure ruins, constructional significance and the condition of Sharda Temple. He also cited the routes and sacred places where pilgrims stayed and performed the rites before reaching the Sharda Temple for final rituals. M.A Stein points out the records of *Kalhana* which describe the connecting routes of the area in the association of its narratives about historic *Sirahsila* fort. The ruins of *Sericella* fort are mentioned in the *Rajatarangini* in the context of King Jayasimha's expeditions (10th CE), from where many

battles were fought among princes to maintain their supremacy in Kashmir. He wrote about religious significance of *Ganesh Ghati* and its association with Goddess Sharda. Stein never visited the *Sirahsila fort* and *Ganesh Ghati*: he only viewed these sites from the village of *Karigam*. The *Karigam* village is located opposite to *Sirahsila fort* on the right bank across the river Neelum. Saraswati Lake another important archaeological site, which remained a central part of the Sharda civilization, was not discussed in the Stein's commentary. The reason could be that the Saraswati Lake was at a very higher altitude and difficult to access. However by following the indication provided in the text of Kalhana Rajatarangini this researcher explored Saraswati Lake which is situated on *Narda* peak in Neelum Valley.

During 1869-73 while compiling "*The Gazetteer of Kashmir*" Charles Ellison Bates visited the Valley of Kishanganga (Neelum) and pointed out some of the ancient sites of this area. The study commissioned for official purpose was meant to record geographical features such as villages, routes, passes, mountains and rivers and particulars of the inhabitants in Kishenganga. It also subtly touches upon architectural features of earlier archaeological remains of Sharda Temple. The Gazetteer also mentioned other historical monuments: watch stations, graves of Sufi saints and ancient Mosques in Neelum Valley. He gave descriptions of village Sharda, location of temple and fort situated on the left bank of *Madhumati* stream. The references in Bates (1873) and other preliminary reports in the field made it possible for the researcher to trace the unknown historical sites and structures with accuracy.

Moreover "*The Ancient Geography of Kashmir*" by Cunningham and *imperial Gazetteer of India about Kashmir and Jammu* was another source to improve the study of terrestrial features of valley of Kashmir. There was a detailed picture of ancient routes and passes of the valley and adjoining areas, which had remained a cultural backwater of humanity for millennia.

'*The Gardens of Gaia*' was written by Malcolm John McEwen who visited the Neelum Valley in 2005. McEwen mentioned about *Ganesh Ghati* site, Sharda Temple and *Seri Chakra* philosophy associated with Goddess Sharda. He states that diagram inscribed on stone slab is a depiction of the creation of the universe and remained sacred in various beliefs including Hinduism. Moreover nothing is descriptive regarding architecture of Sharda and other sacred sites in his commentary. The only focus of McEwen study was to explore the stone diagram of *Seri Chakra*.

A book "*Sharda*" (2005) was written by Abdul Ghani an educationist and historian who gave valuable information about various heritage sites in Neelum Valley. The contents of the book were limited to historical perspective of Sharda Temple and its affiliated sites. The author was not in a position to discuss archaeological significance of these sites.

K. Rehman unpublished Phd thesis (2012) *Language Shift in Neelum Valley: A Case Study of the Kundal Shai Language*, is a valuable piece of study of the dying languages in the area. The study gives an insight into the ethnic origins and diversity of languages in the area and contributed in exploring the intangible heritage of the Valley.

Historian Khurram Ghulam Qadir visited Sharda Valley in 1993 and wrote a paper *Sharda: An Ancient Monument*, published in Lahore Museum Bulletin. It was about the historical background and architecture of Sharda Temple. Furthermore this research was limited only to Sharda Temple and the author did not mention the associated sites of Sharda Temple. *The Paper Sarda Temple: A Legacy of the Stone Temples of Kashmir (Samad and Ahmad 2015) is gone through*

Many specific events are present in the ancient literature of Kashmir which help to sketch out earlier life of people in area. The ancient Sanskrit text *Nilamata Puranas* of 7<sup>th</sup> century CE was translated by Wed Kumari in 1969. The writer mentioned about ancient locations of Neelum Valley in the context of cultural heritage of Kashmir. The book deals with sacred

places, festivals customs, cuisines and rituals of the Kashmir which help to understand the historical back ground of intangible heritage of Valley.

Ahmad Hassan Dani mentioned in "*History of Pakistan through Ages*" about the origin of civilizations in the Himalayan region and adjoining areas. There is depiction of some ethnic groups which indicates the sources of early inhabitant of Neelum Valley. The book "*Human Records on Karakorum Highway*" (Dani 1995) helps to understand terrestrial features of connecting routes of Northern area of Pakistan and Silk Road which also has some link with Sharda Neelum Valley. Von Hugel the author of book titled '*Travel through Kashmir and Punjab*' adopted the route which was used by Chinese Pilgrims (Stein 1900). Furthermore, these available materials about social and cultural history of Kashmir help in the comparison of documented cultural material from Neelum Valley.

The book "*Korean Buddhist: cultural accounts*" (2012) translated by Wegehaupt & Vermeersch describes a famous Korean monk Hycho's records about the Kashmir Valley. During his journey he took route from Neelum Valley towards Gilgit Baltistan for his native land. That book is a valuable source to understand the free movement of travelers, monks and traders on the ancient routes, and cultural linkages of the valley with rest of the region, through connecting routes of the Silk Road.

The "*Rise of Civilization in India and Pakistan*" 1982 by Bridget and Allchin helped to make comparative study of Neolithic cultural material of Neelum Valley. The Excavation Report of Kalako-deray, 1989-1991 by Giorgio Stacul was another source to understand discoveries of Neolithic Cultural tools. This study by this researcher helped to establish relation between Gandhara (Khyber Pukhtoon khawa) Burzahom, Srinagar, and Tibet and documented prehistoric harvesting tools in Neelum Valley. Moreover the source of study included articles published in different Journals especially 'East and West'.



Another valuable source of my research was Sunil Chandra Ray's Book "*Early History and Culture of Kashmir*". The book deals with different topics from prehistoric to historical period. He also dealt with political, social, cultural and economic developments that took place in Kashmir. "*The Culture of Kashmir*" by S.M .Iqbal (1991) and '*Kashmir social and cultural history*' by G.M .Ratban (1968) presented a profound picture of cultural heritage of the region.

The book "*Kashmir and Central Asia* (1988) edited by Kaul Deambi is a collection of research papers which were discussed in the seminar on Kashmir and Central Asia-Cultural Contacts. The deliberations cover various aspects of cultural relationship between Central Asia and Kashmir. These papers help to understand the close cultural ties between Kashmir and the countries of the Central Asia existing from prehistoric times. The book *Central Asia and Kashmir: A study in the context of Anglo-Russian Rivalry* by K.Warikoo (1989) gives a detail description of Kashmir and its geographical proximity to Central Asia and the existence of overland caravan's routes linking the two regions. Kashmir played an important role in the process of Central Asia's intercourse with India in the political, commercial and cultural domains both in the ancient and medieval time.

Moreover, Kaul, Lal's (2009) book "*A historical survey of Kashmir: Through the ages (5000 B.C. To 1960 ACE)*" describes general social condition of the people, the custom they followed and various stages of the history of Kashmir Valley. In the same book a chapter on 'Cultural and Economic Heritage' helps to understand that how the natural resources were utilized for the uplift and economic empowerment of the common people in the region. According to this study Kashmir has developed very intimate cultural contacts with neighbors like Gandhara, Afghanistan, Iran, Western Turkistan or Soviet Central Asia, Eastern Turkistan or Sinkiang and Tibet even from prehistoric times. *Arts And crafts of Jammu & Kashmir: land people culture* (D. N. Saraf 1987) facilitates in the comparative study of

ethnology of the Neelum Valley and adjacent areas. Although all above mentioned books lack the direct study of heritage resources both tangible and intangible in Neelum Valley, they somehow help in understanding these aspects and facilitate us to reach some conclusion.

The papers presented by scholars in seminars and conferences on tourism and cultural heritage at various forums provided valuable input to understand option for heritage tourism. The various studies conducted by Regional Centre for Archaeology and Finance (SPAFA 1995), Asian Institute of Technology Bangkok, Thailand and the Vannarith Chheang (2013). Most important are the papers titled *Tourism and regional integration in South Asia*, the paper by Walter Jamieson “*The Challenges of Sustainable community, Cultural Heritage Tourism*” and “*Tourism and Cultural heritage in South Asia*”. These papers contributed in understanding the challenges in the preservation of heritage and integration of these resources as sustainable tourist destination.

Moreover, the Paper “*Tourism and Cultural heritage in South Asia*” and *Preserving and restoring monuments and historic buildings* (1972) published by UNESCO, provided valuable insight into options for preservation of Architectural heritage resources in conflict area.

The research also covers the policy papers developed by different academicians and analysts in the context of confidence building measures between India and Pakistan. The Special report on *Tourism and Peace building in Jammu & Kashmir* by Shaheen Akhtar and P.R Chari (2011) for United States Institute of Peace, underscores the viability of heritage tourism in peace building. Hasan Askari Rizvi (2008) & et.al *Making border irrelevant in Kashmir* also gave some strength to the concept of religious tourism across divide.

These papers and publications provide a general overview of the concept of heritage tourism in conflict area. However, the papers on the subject have inherent limitations, since the

Neelum Valley remained inaccessible to researchers owing to which the full potential of the heritage in terms of both the tangible and intangible, archaeological sites and natural resources was not available to these authors. Moreover, these resources were only recently surveyed and documented by this researcher under the Umbrella of Asian Civilizations. This researcher had greater access and opportunities of interaction with local communities, stakeholders, and diverse groups across Line of Control (LoC). The direct access to potential heritage sites, the stake holders involved and opportunities of broader interaction across divide enables this researcher to study the unexplored dimensions of heritage tourism across LoC in Kashmir.

## **Research Objectives**

The present study aims at exploring and identifying:

- Cultural heritage: tangible and intangible of the Neelum Valley
- To develop cultural profile of the area
- The challenges : man-made, natural for the safeguarding of heritage resources
- Heritage tourism as an opportunity for peace and sustainable development
- To gauge the acceptability of cultural heritage tourism in Neelum Valley

## **Scope of the Study**

The scope of the present research is to explore the cultural heritage resources of District Neelum Valley with special focus on Sharda Village and its adjacent localities. Sharda has remained an important center of knowledge and cultural heritage since antiquity. The study will focus on exploring the archaeological evidence from the locations already mentioned in the ancient text of Rajatarangini (Stein 1900).

The findings will be analysed, examined and organized to develop a chronological order of ancient history in the region. The study will also explore the ancient connecting routes of the

area i.e. Gilgit-Baltistan, Jammu & Kashmir and Khyber Pukhtunkhawa. Ancient coins, rock inscriptions and artifacts discovered in various locations around Sharda will be scrutinized. Moreover, these findings will be compared with the discoveries of the adjacent regions to trace historical and cultural links of the area. The study will also explore the prevailing cultural heritage in the area showing a continuity of traditions, cross-cultural links in the form of linguistic diversity, traditional cuisines, art crafts, wooden architectures, costumes and jewellery.

The research will be an on-site study of the wooden houses in Sharda, locally called *Larri*. These houses will be photographed in detail to make a thorough in-depth analysis of how wood is used for every need and protected from termite and other vagaries. Thus, an analysis of structural and functional values of the wooden houses will be presented and appropriate recommendations made.

Moreover, the research will explore the connection of cultural heritage with the natural resources such as sacred lakes, ponds, springs, rocks, caves, and mountain peaks. Finally, the study will examine the state of preservation of the above mentioned cultural heritage resources and identify the threats and challenges to these resources. The study outlines available opportunities to exploit these resources for the sustainable cultural heritage tourism in the area.

### **Significance of Research**

The research undertaken by this researcher will help promote heritage tourism which will also generate economic activity to benefit the local community. The research will explore the various challenges to the cultural heritage, which will help develop proper mechanisms for safeguarding of cultural heritage resources in area. The opportunity of cultural heritage tourism will help to attract international tourists and bring peace, as well as benefits the local community and their livelihood. Based on the research findings, an idea for the protection

and safeguarding of the heritage resources will be convenient to be developed. The case studies regarding the challenges to heritage will help chalk out an effective way forward programme which will ultimately help in the restoration and conservation of heritage properties in Neelum Valley.

### **Limitation of the Study**

The researcher intended to carry out a comparative study of cultural heritage on other side of Kashmir IAK, which could not materialise due to visa restriction. The researcher applied for visa few times but it was denied. The visit would have helped better understanding and evaluation of heritage resources on other side of LoC. Despite these barriers, the researcher was able to use social media to interact with the scholars across the line of control and explore commonalities in term of heritage and artefacts.

### **Case Studies**

Case studies will also be part of the research and some important cases will be included in the thesis as an integral part of the primary and secondary research.

### **Focus group discussions at National and International Level**

The research will also include focus group discussions making an integral part of this research. The outcome of these discussions will also help in focussing on otherwise missed part of the research, identification of actual problems relating to the heritage and suggesting best possible solutions and remedies.

### **General discussions, interaction and use of modern technology**

This researcher took advantage of the social media (Fb, Skype, WhatsApp, Twitter, etc) for getting as much information from concerned people as possible. Further, discussions were also held with the gender groups such as women and informal conversation with the

community members in connection with this research and their overall views are also reflected in this research.

## **Chapters**

To furnish a more detailed picture, the whole work has been divided in to four chapters. Chapter-1 covers the historic and political profile and physical features of the area called Neelum Valley, Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK).

The Chapter-II deals with the tangible cultural heritage of the Neelum Valley and focuses on archaeological sites and discoveries from various locations in the area. Additionally, the author has conducted a comparative study with already documented archeological discoveries in the region. These already discovered areas include Srinagar, in Indian held Kashmir (IHK) , Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), Khyber Pukhtunkhawa (KPK) and southern parts of AJK.

The Chapter-III explores intangible heritage in Neelum Valley which comprises of traditional outfits, jewellery, textiles, crafts making, celebrations, rituals, ethnic groups, languages and the stories and rituals associated with cultural area.

Chapter-IV covers the challenges in safeguarding the sources of cultural heritage and the possibilities for heritage tourism in the Neelum Valley for creating socio-economic development opportunities. This study is based on author's field research and case studies during year 2013-16 in Neelum Valley.

Conclusion and Recommendation is the last part of thesis.

## **CHAPTER I**

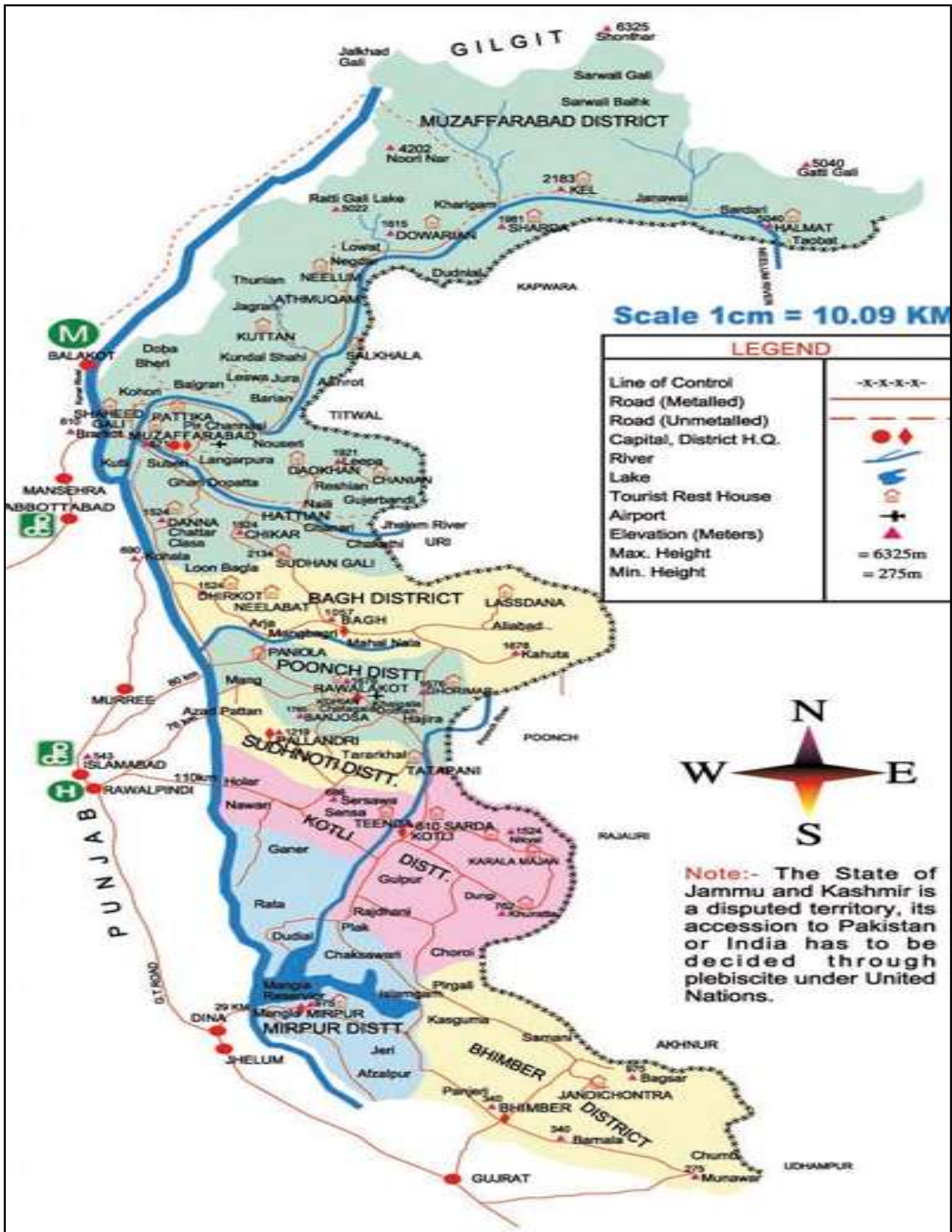
# **HISTORICAL, POLITICAL PROFILE AND PHYSICAL FEATURES OF NEELUM VALLEY, AZAD JAMMU AND KASHMIR**

### **1.1 Azad Jammu and Kashmir**

Azad Jammu and Kashmir is geographically carved as a crescent shaped feature in the western part of former State of Jammu and Kashmir. The lower Himalayan range extends to north and north western of Azad Kashmir (AJK). River *Tawi* and River Poonch in the east, separate it from Indian held Kashmir. In the south River Jhelum runs between Azad Kashmir, Pakistani provinces of Khyber Pukhtunkhawa and Punjab. Gilgit Baltistan is in the north of Azad Kashmir. The Line of Control, earlier known as Cease Fire Line, divides AJK from Indian held Kashmir in the east and north east (Map No. 01).

### **1.2 The Neelum Valley**

The Neelum Valley 34.5891°N and 73.9106°E, with an area of 3,621 sq. kilometers, physically occupies the south western corner of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. It stands as the largest District of AJK which covers almost 40 percent land mass of the state. The Neelum Valley is spread on either side of the Neelum River situated in the north east of capital city Muzaffarabad. At some places, the valley is politically divided by line of control along Neelum River (Kishen Ganga), in the east from Indian held Kashmir, District Kupwara. In the west, *Nangi Mali* mountain ranges separate the Neelum Valley from Kaghan Valley and the *Babusar* Pass joins it, with Gilgit Baltistan in the North (<http://www.ajk.gov.pk>, State Profile, accessed 15-8 -2016) (Map No. 02).



Map: No. 1 Map of Azad Jammu & Kashmir

Website: <http://www.era.govt.pk> (State Profile, accessed on-12-9-16).





Map: No. 2. Neelum Valley Azad Jammu & Kashmir (Source: Google Earth Pro)

### **1.3 Historical Background of Neelum Valley**

The political map of the State of Jammu and Kashmir changed after the division of the Subcontinent in 1947. The turmoil caused division of the former State of Jammu and Kashmir in two parts, Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and Indian held Kashmir (IHK). The Neelum Valley was part of District Muzaffarabad at the time of partition but later it was made a separate district in 2005 (ibid). Before the political division of the state of Jammu and Kashmir, the Kishanganga Valley (present Neelum Valley) was part of the Kashmir Valley while Kishtwar, *Badrawar*, Jammu, *Naoshera*, Poonch were part of the Jammu region (Bates1873:1). The Line of control (LoC) between two parts of Kashmir changed the demographic dispensation which diminished the role and importance of diverse cultural heritage and legacies of this area. Ancient chronicles, traveling accounts of pilgrimage, historical references and archaeological remains underscore the cultural and social legacies of this region (Stein 1900 & Bates 1873). In this study researcher uses both the post partition name; Neelum Valley and its ancient name Kishanganga Valley according to context.

### **1.4 Ancient Names of Neelum Valley**

The ancient name of the Neelum Valley was the Valley of *Kishanganga*, which is derived from the *Krishna*, *Sindhu*, *Mahganga*, *Kishanganga* and the River of Gold. The dwellers of the valley attributed these various terms to the river according to their beliefs. *Nilamata*, *Mahabharata* and various *Puranas* narrate the story of *Krishna* which is further elaborated by different authors; like Krishna was a tribal god, ethnic god of Rajput clans, vegetation deity and sun god. The Ganga means Goddess of the holy river respectfully, referred mother Ganga and also a deity in Hinduism (Kumari 1968: 150).

*Nilamata Puranas* (ancient literature) mention that *Sarasvati* and *Madhumati* streams merge with river *Krishna* near Sharda Temple in the Valley of Kishanganga. This tells us that

ancient name of the river was river of *Krishna* or *Kishanganga* (Ibid: 32-150). Kalhana *Rajatarangini* mentioned Neelum River as *Sindhu*, *krsnaganga*, river *Krishna*, in various contexts while unfolding the socio-cultural history of Kashmir (Stein 1900: 194-267). The term *Kishanganga* persisted over several centuries with slight variations which may be ascribed due to phonological transformations (Ibid). The tract of Neelum Kishanganga Valley is also known as *Karnau*, which is the old name of *KARNAHA*, presently Leepa Valley (Cunningham 1870:156). In 1892 when M.A Stein visited to explore the area of the Neelum Valley he also mentioned valley as *Kishen Ganga* (Ibid 280). In 1870 British Government published Gazetteer for the administrative socio-political orientations of Kashmir in which present Neelum Valley is cited as Valley of *Kishen Ganga* (Bates 1870:1).The river *Kishanganga* was named as ‘Neelum’ much later; around mid-20<sup>th</sup> century (Rehman 2014:5).A precious gem stone, the blue sapphire is found in North West mountain range of Neelum Valley. This blue sapphire is locally known as ‘*Neelum* stone’, which could be the reason of naming *Kishanganga* as ‘Neelum’. Since the name of the valley was changed after the division in 1947 (Revenue record accessed on-15-6-15).The possible reason is that old name *Kishanganga* was affiliated with Hindu religious mythology. The old name Valley of *Kishenganga* was unacceptable in new political scenario and so eventually was changed to Neelum (Khan 2014:15). *Sarasvati* (lake) is the identical names of Hindu Goddess and sacred stream *Madumati* (Stein 1900: 281-82). Such names in the valley which had similar religious identity like *Madumati*, and *Sarasvati* remains unchanged, as these places are physically away from main habitation and daily references.

## 1.5 Pre-history of Neelum Valley

The Prehistory of Neelum Valley has not been discovered so far. However, considerable research has been under taken in parts of the Indian held Kashmir. Historically, Neelum Valley has been included in the Valley of Kashmir (Bates 1873:1). The Prehistory of Indian held Kashmir is based on the archaeological finds at Srinagar Districts of Burzahom and Gofkral (Ray 1969:212). The first salvage excavation was made in 1959 by the Yale University, Cambridge and Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) in Srinagar, Kashmir. The tools characterized as harvester in the Neolithic collection of Burzahom are also common in other Neolithic sites of Central Asia. The third phase of Burzahom culture is linked with the construction of massive megalithic circle, red, grey, black burnish pottery and stone axes. The adjacent area along the river has exposed more than nine other sites of the Burzahom cultural period (Bridget, Allchin 1982:111). There were evidences of emerging contemporary developments Leobanr and Aligrama in the Swat Valley of Pakistan; Shango cave Mardan, Sarai Khola near Taxila. Discoveries from Swat and other sites testify that history of Kashmir can be traced from the Neolithic period (Sholi, L.S 1989:42 & Bridget, Allchin 1982:114, Allchin 1976:6-7).

In 1989-1991, the Italian Archaeological Mission discovered stone-hole sickles and terracotta beads beside other cultural materials in Kalako-deray Swat Khyber Pukhtunkhawa province of Pakistan which share resemblance with the harvesting tools discovered from Srinagar, Neelum Valley and Tibet (Pl No. 1.Fig.1-2). According to Stacul:

Dwelling-pits, notched and holed sickles, holed axes, Jade beads etc. from Swat sites of period IV, suggest links with 'Inner Asian' or 'Northern Neolithic' traditions, as was remarked by W. Fairsevis (1975:316-17-345), after the discovery of the Neolithic settlement of Burzahom in Kashmir.' In Burzahom it has been observed that a movement out of the Central Asia towards and into the subcontinents' (Fairsevis1975: 317). Such' northern'

connections have been only been attributed to long-distance trading or infiltrations of peoples, but also to a self-supporting cultural area around the great mountain chain (Stacul: 1987:124).The findings of Stacul from Kalako-deray Swat belong to the Neolithic period (Allchin and Bridget 1982:116). The variety of harvesting artifacts which were used for cultivation had been unearthed from Burzahom and Tibet. On the east, Sharda Neelum Valley AJK connects with Srinagar in IHK (Singh 2002:131). Similar artifacts; stone sickles, terracotta beads and pottery fragments; have been also recorded in village *Tehjian*, Neelum Valley AJK during a field survey in 2014 (Pl.No.1 Fig 3- 4). As comparative study of these findings done by Prof. Dr. Jonathan Mark Kenoyer Neelum Valley tools are dated to Neolithic period back to 3500 BCE, (Kenoyer, Mark, personal communication, 2014).

The documented ancient archaeological sites in the southern part of Azad Jammu & Kashmir broaden the scope of the research. In District Mirpur, *Chaterpari* AJK, a boulder is located that faces towards the east with cup marks along with variety of engravings on it. The inscribed details include horses with riders, dancing demons and zoomorphic signs. On the same place as the cup marks, boulders along rock cut basin show that site remained as a centre of rituals (Khan 2015:14) (Pl. No. 2.Fig.5-6).

There is ancient evidence of *Pir Chinasi*, a place situated on the water shed of Neelum River (Kishanganga) and Jhelum (Vitasta), Muzaffarabad, capital city of Azad Jammu & Kashmir. The boulder has thirteen palm impressions in different directions engraved with hand axe. The same types of palm impressions on boulders have been documented by Ahmad Hassan Dani and the German Archaeological Mission in Chilas. These prehistoric engravings of palm impressions are present on the both sides of river Indus (Dani 1983: 134). The above two sites *Chaterpari* and *Pir Chinasi* are considered as the earliest evidences of human life in Azad Jammu & Kashmir.

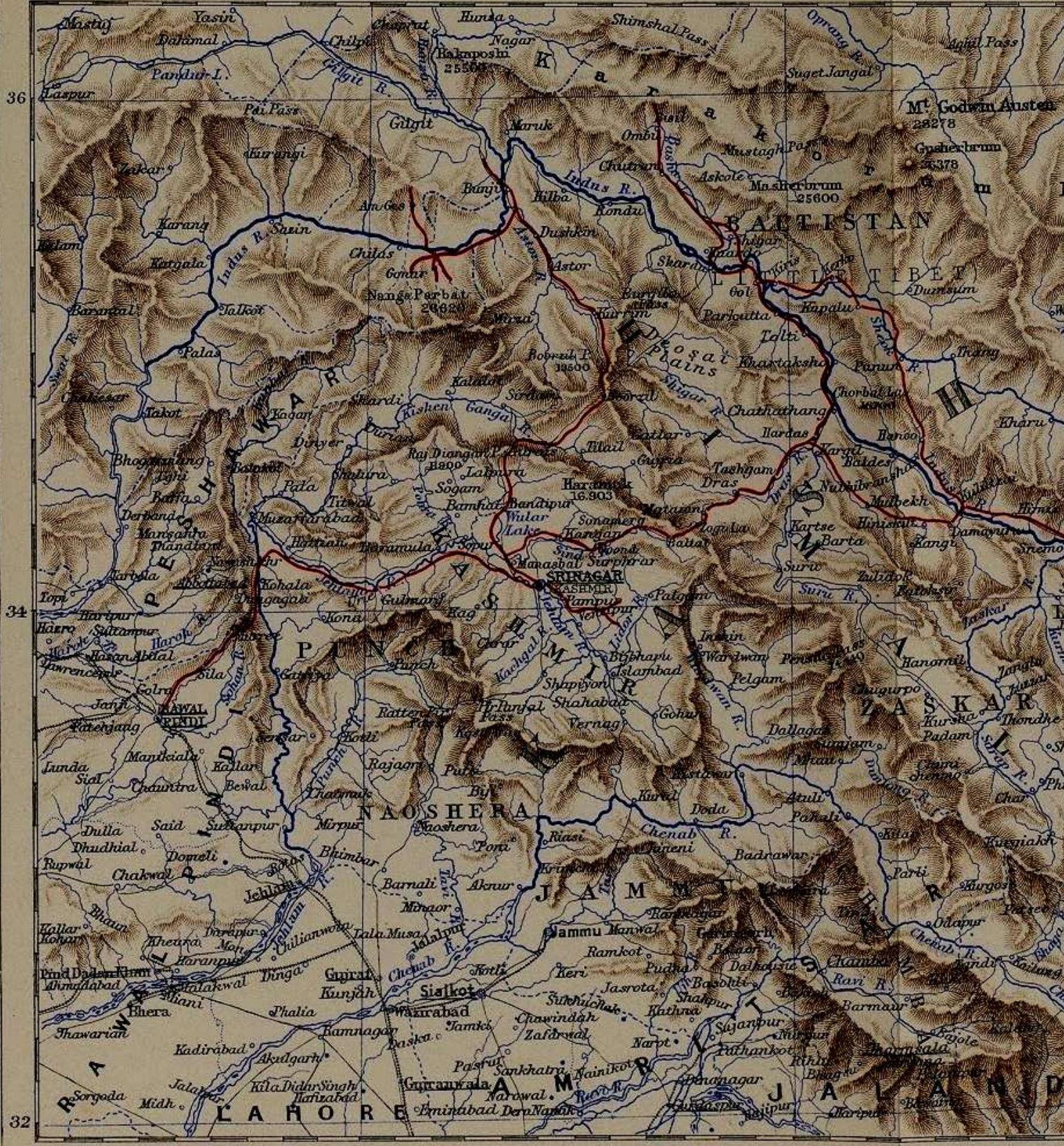
The megalith grave is ancient evidence documented opposite the Sharda Temple complex near the left bank or *Madumati* stream in Sharda village. It is a standing stone grave, circular in shape, measuring 6ft. and has seven stones in a circular arrangement. There are many other sites in Neelum Valley which exposed megalith graves along variety of cup mark boulders. There is a boulder with inscribed cup marks which are fourteen in number, and form a cross sign on it near the grave in Sharda village. A similar cup mark boulder is located in the east of Sharda Temple archaeological site and also on the rock boulder near *Ganesh Ghati* Sericella fort in Neelum Valley. Similar type of megalith graves have been documented by the German archaeological Mission and Ahmad Hassan Dani in Chilas and *Yasin*, (Gilgit-Baltistan) and *Asota* in District Swabi of Khyber Pukhtunkhawa which belong to 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BCE (Dani 1983: 209-210). Some experts are of the opinion that these cup marks are ancient proto-writing codes. There is noteworthy similarity between these cup mark boulders and those found in Europe. At both places these occupy or appeared on megalithic slabs and boulders surrounding pre-historic mounds and burrows (Vidale & Olivieri 1993:146). A site with 498 cup marks which was reported at *Dara Ki Chattan* in the *Chambal* Valley (India) dated to Paleolithic Period (Kumar 1996:162). Besides Sharda, cup mark boulders have also been found at *Pirchansi*, *Chaterpari* and *Bhurand*, revealing the most primitive evidence of human existence in Kashmir (Pl No.2. Fig.7-8). The cup-mark boulders in Kashmir are similar to the rock carvings of *Kandak Valley* and its surrounding areas in Swat.

The Cup-mark complexes are found in Central Asia, in Oceania and even in the North Americas; the cup-marks are common in the Arabian Peninsula, in the Near East, Central and northern regions of the African Continent, apparently this form of cup-marks expression belong to cultures of 'evolved hunter' and societies with mixed economies up to late proto historic times. In the Indo-Pakistani Subcontinent, cup-marks have been observed at the foot

hills and in the major valleys of the Hindokush and Himalayan belt (Olivieri&Vidale 2004: 163).

The Neelum Kishanganga Valley is in the shadows of Himalayan Range (Map No.03).These discoveries, such as pre-historic tools, cup-mark boulders along megalith, connect this area with rest of Kashmir and surroundings (Kenoyer, Mark, personal communication, 2014).

On the basis of ancient human settlements, and the comparative study of artefacts with other similar sites in the area, it is determined that lower Tehjian could be dated to Neolithic era.



Map No.3. Topographic map showing ancient routes (source: Google earth Pro) 76 Longitude East of Gr

Map No.3. Topographic map showing ancient routes (source: Google earth Pro).



## **1.6 Political Profile of the Area**

The historical, socio-cultural legacy of the former State of Jammu and Kashmir is prevailing in ancient texts, travelers' accounts and historical archives. In these historical documents Neelum Kishanganga Valley is not mentioned as a separate entity, but it is described in the overall geographical context of the Kashmir (Bates 1873:2-7, Neve1945:152-153). The earliest history of the Neelum *Kishanganga* Valley can be traced back to the reign of *Suryavanci* (solar) dynasty. Gonanda-I was the first to have established the rule in Kashmir. *Mahabharata* war occurred after twenty years into its first ruler's reign. During the reign of King Zain-ui-Abidin twenty-five kings of the Pandu dynasty were discovered written on a birch bark (Stein 1900:61, Sufi 1940:20, Parmu 1969:35).

### **1.6.1 Maurya Empire and Kushana Dynasties in Kashmir**

Maurya dynasty rule is considered to be the earliest prominent landmark in the history of Kashmir; King Asoka (272 -231 BCE) ruled from Taxila, presently in the province of Punjab. Asoka was a Buddhist and he is accredited with the building of a number of monasteries and stupas; he introduced stone architecture and sculpture in Kashmir (Stein1900:336, Smith 1914:164 & Sufi 1940:22)

Kushana Dynasty overthrew the Greek Kingdom of Bactria and established its rule in the Valley of Kashmir in the second century of the Christian era (Bano & Ahmad 1984:54, Parmu 1967:54-55). In 78 CE, Khadaphises-II was replaced by Kanishka who made Gandhara his capital, presently Peshawar, Khyber Pukhtunkhawa, Pakistan. He was a follower of Buddhism and constructed several Buddhist memorials in the Valley of Kashmir and patronized Buddhism. During King Kanishka reign the historic third council of Buddhism was held in Kashmir. Kanishka also laid the city of *Kanishkapuara* the modern *Kanispur* in the Valley of Kashmir. He was also the founder of Mahayana Buddhism and

instituted sculptures and *Jatakas* in monasteries. Death of King Jushka in 178 CE marked the end of Kushana rule in Kashmir giving way to Gonanda Dynasty. Gonanda III brought back Hinduism and destroyed thousands of monasteries in Kashmir and its adjacent valleys (Koul 1990: 23-25 Ray 1969: 36).

### **1.6.2 White Huns**

In 528 CE, the White Huns seized the throne of Kashmir which resulted in a steady decline of Buddhism in Kashmir. King of White Huns Mihirakula is known in the history of Kashmir as the cruelest ruler who conquered the Gandhara and murdered thousands of people in a single day. The king pushed one hundred elephants over the cliff of Pir-Panjol mountain range near *Aliabad Sarai*, Jammu to amuse himself by the cries of these elephants (Bano and Ahmad 1984:55, Sufi: 1940:26).

### **1.6.3 Hindu Rule**

In 580 CE, Kashmir was conquered by Pravarasena-II, who founded the city of Pravarapura, the present day Srinagar. Karkota Dynasty is a relatively authenticated history of Kashmir because during the reign of Karkota Dynasty, (627-663 CE) Chinese pilgrim Huien Tsang visited Kashmir (Ray 1969:42-44, Stein 1900:210). On the way back to his native country Huien Tsang took an ancient route which passed through a connecting route present in the Neelum Valley. During this period Kashmir was prosperous and relatively peaceful (Sufi 1940: 31, Ray 1969: 45). In 721 CE, King Lilitaditya Muktapida defeated Bhauttas of Baltistan on the bank of the Indus. He is known as the hero of conquests in the history of Kashmir. He is the most noticeable figure in Kashmir history who raised his kingdom to a pitch of grandeur it had never reached before. The Martand Temple ruins in Kashmir Valley, *Parihashpura* city in Srinagar and Sharda Temple in Neelum Valley stand as powerful evidence to his fame (Ray 1969:46-48).

A significant chapter in history of Kashmir is of Queen Didda who led the Lohara Dynasty (950-1003 CE). Queen Didda was a strong-willed woman and became the first female ruler of the Kashmir (Ray 1969:86-89). Kalhana narrates the reign of King Jayasimha who faced revolts of feudal lords and successions of rebellions. His confrontation with prince Bhoja from Sericella fort in Neelum Kishanganga Valley is an interesting narrative of the history of Kashmir (Pandit 1934: 692). After the death of King Rinchina Shah in 1324, his Queen Kota Rani assumed power for a few months. Kota Devi was the last Hindu sovereign of Kashmir as Minister Shah Mir deposed the Kota Rani and ascended the kingship of Kashmir as first Muslim ruler with the title of Shams-u-Din in 1341 CE, (Bates 1878:105, Stein 1900:210).

#### **1.6.4 Muslim Rule: Sultan, Mughals and Afghans**

Fights between the Brahmin Rajas and Buddhists coupled with mismanagement caused the decline of Hindu rule in Kashmir. The sovereign rule of Sultan Shammash-ud-Din and his descendants continued over Kashmir from 1324 CE, for two centuries until Mughal took over the valley of Kashmir (Rabbani 1986: 02). Few prominent rulers of Sultan Shams-ud-din names were Sultan Shahab-u-Din, Sultan Qutab-u-Din, Sultan Skinandar, and sultan Zain-ul-Abidin. During the reign of Shahab-u-din the famous Sufi Saint Syed Ali Hamdani arrived in Kashmir Valley along with his disciples.. Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin (1422-1474), reign, encompassing over 52 years, attained unparalleled personality among all the rulers of Kashmir. His sovereign rule was acknowledged with admiration and respect by all communities including Buddhist, Hindus, followers of Shivaism and Muslims. He introduced many crafts such as paper mashie, book binding, paper making, weaving and wood work. He also invited many artisans from Central Asia to train locals (Bates 1878:105, Ray1969:92-94). The King Zain-ul-Abidin visited and ordered to have the Sharda Temple repaired in the Neelum Valley.

Kashmir was ruled by Chak family (1553-1586 CE) Yousaf Chak was most prominent King of the dynasty. He was defeated by Mirza Qasim and thus Kashmir became a province of Mughal empire of subcontinent. Mughals ruled Kashmir for over hundred years and introduced the unique Mughal Architectural styles in Kashmir (Koul 1960:51, Bates 1878:106). The Mughal Architecture is reflected in forts, Gardens, private buildings, Sarai's (resting places) and stepped wells (*Bawolie*). It was customary for the rulers to leave the valley during winter and visit it during summer (Ibid). Ali Mardan Khan who was governor of Lahore and Kashmir for his convenience in travelling he built many resting places along the routes leading towards Kashmir (Bano & Ahmad 1984: 12 -13). In 1747 due to the lawlessness and contest between the last representatives of Mughals successors, Kashmir was passed on to Afghans in 1752 CE, and was ruled by various representatives till 1819.

### **1.6.5 Sikh and Dogra rules in Kashmir**

In 1814, Ranjit Singh attacked Kashmir and this marked the end of the Muslim rule which started in 1324 (Koul 1960:63). Raja Ranjit remained as a ruler of State of Jammu and Kashmir till the middle of 19<sup>th</sup> century. The war of 1845 broke out between the British and the Sikhs. Kashmir was passed to the new sovereign. Gulab Singh who was the founder ruler of Dogra dynasty in State of Jammu & Kashmir, and signed the treaty of Amritsar which is commonly known as "Sale of Kashmir" with British Government in March 1846.

Hari Singh from Dogra regime ascended the throne of Kashmir in 1925. He was the reigning monarch in 1947 when British were winding up from Indian subcontinent leaving the two countries Pakistan and India. In August, Maharaja's forces fired upon demonstrators who wanted Maharaja to accede to Pakistan, the armed intervention from tribals fuelled the turmoil. The rebels in Poonch declared an independent Government on October 24, 1948 and called it Azad (Free) Jammu and Kashmir (AJK). On October 27<sup>th</sup> Indian forces entered

Jammu, Valley Kashmir on invitation of Maharaja Hari Singh thus dividing Jammu and Kashmir into two parts Azad Jammu & Kashmir and Jammu Kashmir.

## **1.7 Physical Features of Neelum Valley**

Every region has its own topography and geography which significantly affects its inhabitants' ways of life. Historically, the Valley is naturally placed at the juncture of regional connectivity. Therefore, socio-cultural influences from the surrounding regions can still be seen in this area in various forms of diverse cultural heritage. The primary nature of the Neelum Valley is its formation of land, environment, and climate. The second nature is the features that came into existence due to the necessity of inhabitants in the past such as ancient routes, passes in mountains, and sacred places. The third nature is its socio-cultural context that could be replaced by new settlers, who travelled on these routes and left their imprints.

The following study deals with the Physical features such as ancient routes, mountains, passes, rivers etc. of Neelum Valley.

### **1.7.1 Ancient Routes**

There were three main routes guarded by gates for entry into Kashmir in the olden times. Diversion of these routes in a specified direction remained line of communication among Valley of Kashmir with rest of the region. The routes which were in the direction of east lead over *Zoji-la Pass* to Ladakh and Tibet. The northern route by present Karakorum highway (Gilgit Road) was used to access Baltistan which lead into the upper Kishenganga Valley; this route connected Neelum Valley with Skardu or Astor in the Indus. (Bates 1873:470-473, Stein 1900: 358).

The Jhelum Valley route was taken by Huien Tsang, a Chinese pilgrim, who first visited sacred places in Gandhara and Valley of Kashmir. Kashmir remained as a transit zone from

where he took northern route of upper Kishanganga Valley to Gilgit Baltistan on his return to his native place (et al.). In 759, and later, this route was followed by other Chinese and Korean monks who left their traveling marks in the form of rock inscriptions on the Karakorum Highway (Dani 1996: 70-81). The western route was preferred by pilgrims to visit sacred sites in Gandhara and Kashmir. This route originates from Hazara and crosses over river *Kunhar* at *Garhi Habibullah*, Khyber Pukhtunkhawa and entered Muzaffarabad via *Shaheed Gali*. From where it carved up into two routes; one along Kishenganga river to Sharda crossed over into *Gurez*, while the other route followed river Jhelum to *Uri* and Srinagar (Bates 1873: 409-410, Stein 1900:361).

The routes from Baramulla, Indian held Kashmir in the east and south east enter into Neelum Valley crossed over the mountain ranges of *Sham Sabari* and *Kafar Khan* range. This course connecting Neelum *Kishenganga* Valley with rest of Kashmir from south east along the *Kazinag Nullah* was also adopted by the travellers to the Sharda in Neelum Valley.

*Silvan Bahik* and *Kroras* Valley routes approaching from Kashmir Valley to Neelum Valley, descends directly to the Sharda along the *Madhumati* stream. This route was also used by the King of Kashmir *Zain-ul-Abidin* in 14<sup>th</sup> century, to visit Sharda Temple (Stein 1900: 405).

In the ancient times land routes connected Neelum Valley with *Kaghan*, *Chilas* through *Nori Nar* and *Babussar* Pass. Neelum Valley is in the south east of *Chilas* which is situated along River *Indus*. *Mini-merag*, a town, is the gateway into *Dard* region if approached from *Taobat* and *Kamri* Passes of the valley in the north east (Cunningham 1870:156).

Another important route linking *Kishanganga* Valley in west had religious significance for pilgrims. It originated a kilometer in the north of the Sharda Temple, on right bank of river *Neelum Kishanganga*, and runs along *Kankotri (Sarswati)* river (Cunningham 1870:156, Neve 1945:152-153).

### **1.7. 2. Habitation**

The population of District Neelum Valley is 106, 778, (according to the census report of 1998) and it consists of two tehsils Athmaqam and Sharda. There are several small bazaars feeding the peripheries of the district at intervals along the road while traveling from Muzaffarabad to the Neelum Valley. Jura, Kutton, Kundal Shahi, Jargran, Athumaqam, Salkhala, Kern, Nagdar, Dawarian, Dudnial, Tehjian, Sharda, Surgun Valley, Kel, Halmet, Tao-Bat and Gurez are the main places of the area.

Traditionally, the profession of Neelum Valley are subsistence farmers, combining animal farming and agriculture. The main crops are maize, wheat, lentils etc. In the winter, cattle are kept in the villages whereas in the summer, the folks take their cattle to the pastures and stay there for a period of two months. Additional income is earned from employment in government jobs; a few people run shops and carry out trading in local town bazaars (Rehman & Baart: 2005). A considerable number of men migrate to major cities of Pakistan and gulf region to find employment.

### **1.7.3 Topography and Climate**

Neelum Valley is blessed with a varied topography that is a usual mix of rugged mountain, green hills, caves, rocky deep water fords and high relief around the valley. It is said to be a treasure house of geological information due to the diversity of its geographical features. (Ghazanfar & Baig ; 1983). The climate is mountainous and sub-humid with most of the precipitation taking place during the winters. The reaches receive heavy snowfall. An area of more than three hundred and eighty five square km between *Titwal* to Kel on the right bank of River Kishenganga showed a tremendous range of rock units including Garnet, ferrous Chlorite schist and marble (ibid). Pegmatites near the village of *Phulawai* include a bluish green tourmaline and gem garnet (Jan, et.al, 1985:9-14). The area hosts one of the world's

most famous sapphires and also houses huge Ruby deposits located on *Nangi Mali*, Shounter Valley, and Kel. These also form a great source of state economy.

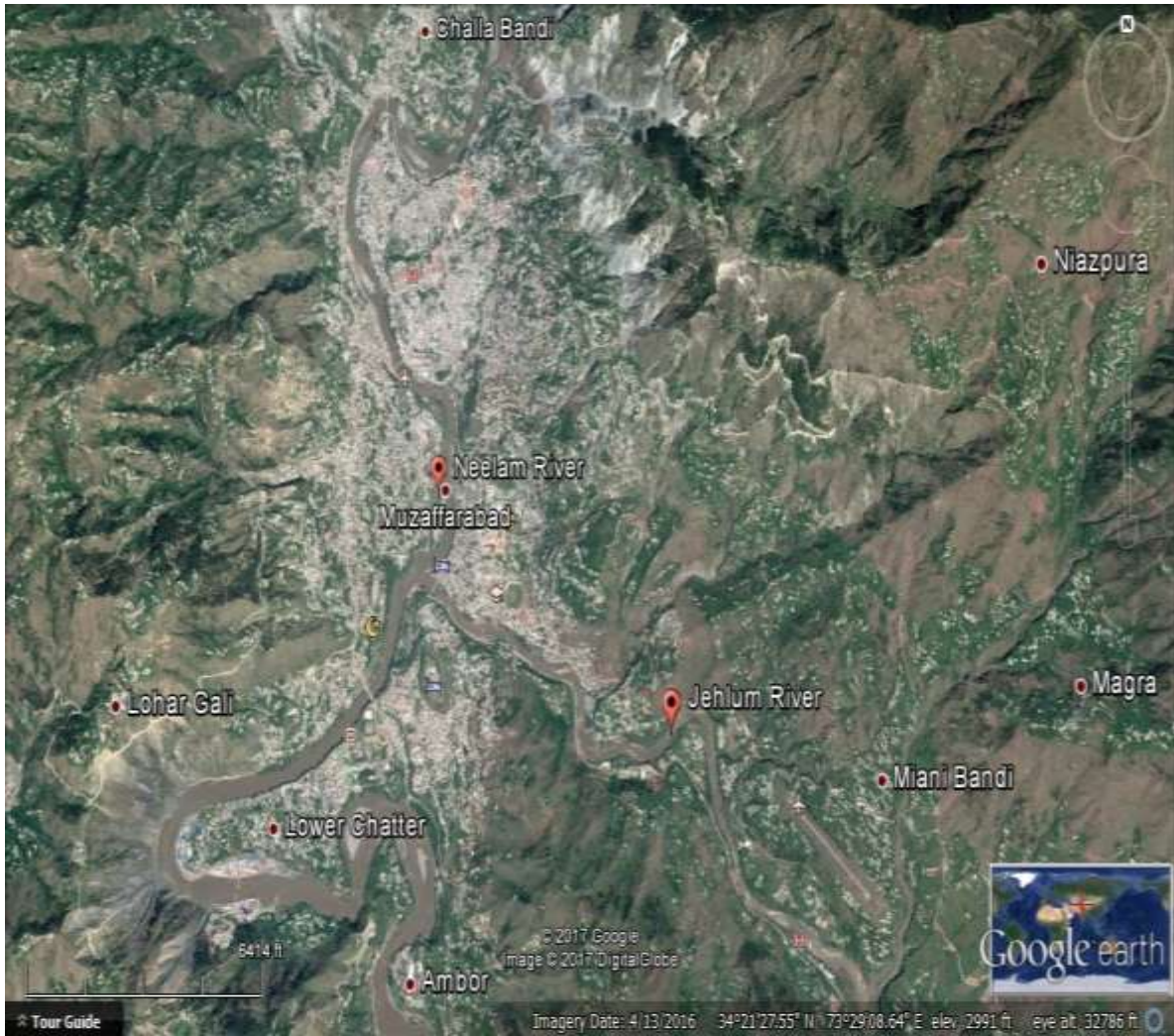
#### **1.7.4 River Neelum**

The river Neelum played a vital role in the evolvement of the communities in the Neelum Valley and provided resources for a self-sustaining culture for the people living on both sides of the river. The watersheds of the Himalayan offshoots in the north contribute waters into river Neelum. *Deosai* plain is among the greatest water sources of the river Kishanganga, which flows in North West of Kashmir (Bates 1873:02-09). The river is fed by ice water, streams and springs of the northern mountain ranges of *Karnah*, *Sharda*, and *lolab* Valley which collectively make it a furious river (Bano & Ahmad 1984:89) (Pl.No.3 Fig 9-10).

The Neelum River enters in to *Taobat* from Gurez Valley of Indian held Kashmir. The river curves along more than 200 kilometers of the Valley, sprawling along the Line of Control (LoC) and finally, at Muzaffarabad joins the River Jhelum (Vitasta) river. The Neelum River is about 245 kilometers long, which covers approximately 50 kilometers in the Indian held Kashmir and 195 kilometers in the Pakistan administered Kashmir. Year round the rains on higher altitude, slowly melting glaciers, streams and tributaries provide constant flow of water into river (Pl.No.3 Fig 11-12).

A number of foot bridges connected the population of *Gurez Valley*, *Sharda*, *Dasut*, *Dudnial*, *Karen*, *Buguna*, *Mirpura* and *Baran* on both the sides of river Neelum (Map No.04).





Map No. 04. Neelum and Jhelum Rivers (Source: Google earth Pro).

### **1.7.5. Mountain and Passes**

The Neelum Valley is situated under the shadow of mountain ranges in the east, west and the northwest. *Sarawali* is the highest peak of the state and forms the north east corner of the *Nanga Parbat*. Southern lands are connected to Pir Panjal, which forms geographic zone of the great Himalayan range (Bart 1909:1-2 & Bates 1873: 435). Neelum Valley is connected to other areas through mountain passes. This makes the Valley a cross road in the region (Ibid). Rajatarangini mentions the mountain ranges of Kashmir as unconquerable barriers for invaders. The watch stations located on these major passes have been cited by Chinese and Korean travellers (Ibid).

To understand the geography of Neelum Valley and its adjacent areas it is important to know about the mountains of Kashmir which are divided into three main ranges (Bates 1873: 435, Stein 1900: 393, Cunningham 1880: 70). *Pir-pantsal* (Pir Panjal) mountain range forms the south and south west boundary of Kashmir and *Banahal* Pass forms the lowest depression in the chain of the mountains, which starts from southern most part of the valley. Jhelum Valley (Vitasta Valley) is another important adjacent valley in the south east of the Neelum Kishanganga which comprises of eastern mountain ranges (Bates 1873: 447-451, et.al) (Pl.No.4 Fig 13-14).

Between *Sham Sabari* and the *Kafir Khan* Ranges, lays the *Leepa Karnah* Valley, which open on left bank of Neelum River at *Titwal*. *Shams Bari* range opens many linking routes towards the Neelum Valley (Pl. No.4 Fig 15-16). Historically the western pass and northwestern routes connected the valley with Central Asia and other connecting routes of the Silk Road (Cunningham 1880: 105-107, Stein 1900:401-402).

### **1.7.6. Watch Stations**

The mountain routes were watch stations, which is cited by Kalhana and his heirs as fortified walls and gateways. There were small forts on each of these watch stations and designated as

*Davara* or door which served the purpose of defense, customs and police administration (Cunningham 1880:71). The northern mountain routes were guarded through the hill fort of *Dugdthagata*, which lead in to the adjoining territories in the north, *Gurez*, Neelum Valley. This fort of *Dugdthagata* and its gate was mentioned as a northern gate by *Ou- K'ong* from where roads lead toward Gilgit Baltistan. This historical route was adopted by Prince Rinchina to enter into Kashmir through Ladakh (Rabani1985:122, Cunningham 1880:100). In the extreme north east and in *Kupwara* District, the old village of *Drang*, with its ancient name of *Huyasrama*, has a site of a frontier watch station towards Kishanganga where pilgrims would leave for Sharda in ancient times. This watch tower facilitated pilgrims and travelers from the north in crossing over mountain ranges from *Kapwara* to *Kishanganga* (Rabbani 1880:121).

### **1.7.7. Flora and Fauna**

The Neelum Valley is gifted with diverse and vast natural habitat which includes forests, pastures, rare herbs, shrubs and precious medicinal plants. The mountain slopes are covered with thick forests of Blue Pines, Cedars, Himalayan Deodar, fir, ash, maple, poplar, oak and birch bark, along with a variety of wild herbs. The walnuts, cherries, apples, apricots, pears, *amluk*, *harri*, figs, and all types of grapes are the novelty fruits of the valley (Pl.No.5 Fig 17-20).

The *Jargran*, *keran*, *Laswa*, *Nagdar*, *Sharda*, *Khel* and *Arangkhel* are the vast forests which house the diverse flora and fauna. *Shaunter* Valley, *Baboon Bheik*, *Nangi Maali* upper *Taobatt* are inhabitant by ibex, snow leopards, musk deer's, jackal fox, bears and leopards. In the lower valleys, cattle such as cows, oxen, sheep, goats, horses are domesticated animals. The valley and its higher pasture lands are frequented by the *Gujjar* nomads during summers with their livelihood, the herds of goats and sheep along with horses, mules and dogs. These

nomads collect precious herbs from the area. The famous herbs of the area are musk bala, *Kutth*, *Gucchi*, *Gaozaban*, *Kanees*, *patrees* etc. (Qamar et.al 2010:25-30) (Pl.No.6 Fig 21-24).

A great variety of mushrooms such as black *Gucchhi* and its various forms are also found. Baron Charles Von Hugel, an Austrian horticulturist who travelled to Kashmir, described the precious flora of the area. In his book "*Travels in Kashmir and Punjab*", he talks about vegetation on the bank of Jhelum River (Hugel 1870: 181).

In 870 CE, there was a famous Kashmiri monk Chudda, He practiced in medicinal herbs for fifteen years in the town of Dunhuang on the Silk Road. The medicines brought on sale in Dunhuang came from Greece, India, Arabia, Persia, Tibet and China. Chudda had joined the Buddhist monastery of Himalayan territory of Kashmir when he was child. He travelled along the Silk Road, Srinagar, Muzaffarabad including the Gandhara and northern areas, crossing near mountains of the Neelum Valley and also used to collect herbs (Murray1999:113-115). Some rare herbs from valley are *Kutth*, a Kashmiri cactus.

The paper Birch is one of the most important trees to the natives. The bark is employed for various purposes such as insulating the roofs of houses, writing paper, and packing paper; many of the Ancient manuscripts are written on birch bark. There are plants that are useful for hair-washes, and herbs with medicinal properties are almost innumerable. The most important of the aromatic plants is the *Saussurea Lappaait* which was largely exported to China and is used as incense in the Joss houses (Lawrence & Bart 1909:17).

The birch bark manuscript was also discovered from the Central Asia, which shows the close cultural relations between Kashmir and Turkistan (Pandit 1991:731). In Neelum Valley, the birch bark is still used in the ceilings of roofs and food items are packed in the bark to preserve it. Amulets are written on the birch bark by using saffron ink. The research highlights the importance of the valley for producing the most precious herbs from ancient times.

Geography played an important role in the evolution of a culture in a region. Neelum Valley is surrounded by high mountain ranges, passes and is linked with the surrounding area through the connecting route of the Silk Road. The earliest human evidences such as cup-mark, megaliths, inscriptions and other cultural material from Neelum Valley determines the Pre- history of the erstwhile State of Jammu & Kashmir.

## **CHAPTER 2**

# **THE TANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE RESOURCES OF NEELUM VALLEY**

### **2.1 Understanding of Tangible Cultural Heritage**

Cultural heritage is normally used to describe the things that contribute to the sense of identity of a particular population or community of people. It is considered as one of the most valuable heritages resources for socio-economic development of any region.

Tangible cultural heritage is the physical manifestation or existence of cultural expressions. Moreover, culture can be tangible in the form of buildings or artefacts, and intangible in terms of peoples' values and the ways of life. Monuments, traditional buildings, archaeological sites, Temples, historical cities etc., are examples of tangible heritage (United Nation: 2001).

For the tangible cultural heritage, the convention concerning the protection of the world's cultural and Natural heritage was adopted by UNESCO in 1972. For the purpose of this convention, the following shall be considered as tangible cultural heritage: monuments, architectural works and works of monumental sculptures, paintings, elements of structures of archaeology, nature sites, inscriptions and cave dwellings. The works of man or the combined work of both nature and man and the area including archaeological sites are of outstanding universal value from the history aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological point of view (Ibid).

According to this definition of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Neelum Valley has a rich cultural heritage which can be divided into two wider categories, one is tangible and the other is intangible (UNESCO 1982:41-42).

These heritage resources are present in the form of historical monuments, archaeological sites, natural landscapes, lakes, traditional houses, languages, arts and crafts.

In terms of tangible heritage, it can be further classified as either immovable or moveable heritage. Archaeological sites including Sharda Temple, rock cut caves, forts and shrines in the Neelum Valley are classified as immovable heritage. The moveable heritage includes those objects which can be moved or shifted from one place to another, like the artifacts unearthed from trial excavation such as copper coins, pottery, terracotta pipes, documented wine presses and hero stone slabs in Sharda, Neelum Valley. Before coming to the topic, it would be helpful to take a glance of the archaeological sites along the river and in the Sharda valley (Maps No.5 & 6).



Map No.5: Archaeological Sites in Sharda along river in Neelum (source: Google Earth Pro)





Map No. 6: Archaeological Sites in Sharda, Neelum Valley (source: Google Earth Pro)

## **2.2 Previous Research on the Cultural Heritage of Neelum Valley**

The Cultural heritage resources of Neelum Valley in general remained undocumented due to the difficult terrain and it being in the conflict zone. The previously documented archaeological work doesn't contain any substantial material on the cultural heritage of the Neelum Valley. However, significant research has been carried out in the Indian held Kashmir on the east of the LoC, Kaghan Valley, Khyber Pukhtunkhawa and Gilgit Baltistan. Enormous work has been done by Sir Aurel Stein, German Pakistani Expeditions 1979-89, Prof. Karl Jettmar ( University of Heidelberg), Volker Thewalt and A. H Dani in Gilgit Baltistan. Many European scholars discovered lost languages and literatures in their studies which are still ongoing (Zabern 1989: 9-10, Dani 1985: 29 -34). However, neither the German team, nor the Pakistani researchers were given permission to excavate these sites; they only recorded the findings above the ground. The documented rock carvings, wooden architectures, ancient scripts and ethnology helped to develop a chronological order and interpretations of the socio-cultural links of the Gilgit Baltistan with rest of the region including Neelum Valley.

There is extended history of researches on the heritage of Gandhara which began from the colonial period in the 19th century. Various Archaeological missions, of both national and international organizations have concentrated on different aspects of cultural heritage which is spread over the vast regions of Khyber Pukhtunkhawa and northern Punjab, Pakistan (Rehman 2011: 5).

Since 1955, research and excavations have been carried out by the Italian Archaeological Missions (IsMEO) in collaboration with the Department of Archaeology and Museums Pakistan in Swat Valley. Apart from the occupational layer dating from historical times, the study also involves the proto historic periods III, IV, VII and VIII during 1989-91 which developed chronology of the area (Stacul 1993: 69). The findings of the Gandhara

archaeological sites helped interpret the artefacts; prehistoric tools, winepresses, cup marks and inscriptions which have been documented from the Neelum Valley.

In 1935, the Pre-historical archaeological site of Burzahom Srinagar was discovered by H De Terra and TT Peterson of a Yale-Cambridge expedition team. The various excavations during 1960-71 were conducted by TN Khazanchi at the Burzahom site. The archaeologist unearthed a variety of cultural material and provided an insight into the ancient era. R. S. Fonia had served as the superintending archaeologist in Jammu & Kashmir from 1985 to 1997 and his drafted final report was published by Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) in 2017. This report has brought to fore different stages of evolution in Kashmir from 3000 BC to 1000 BC (Mirani 2017:15). The findings of the report link the Neolithic (New stone age) Burzahom site, to its contemporary Indus Valley civilization. This research also establishes its regular links with the surrounding regions including Kishenganga Valley through connecting routes of the Silk Road (Allchin, Bridget 1982:111-112).

However, before discussing the explored and documented sites of Neelum Valley, it would be appropriate to glance upon the earlier contributions in identifying heritage resources of former State of Jammu & Kashmir, now split into Azad Jammu & Kashmir and Indian held Kashmir.

Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) under General Cunningham initiated folding maps, plans of the archaeological sites in 1848, in former State of Jammu & Kashmir; most of these explored sites later came under Indian held Kashmir.

In 1868 a group headed by Liteutenant R. E. Cole, was sent to the Kashmir Valley for exploration of Kashmiri Temples. The group added valuable contribution by publishing the architectural details, plans, drawings and photographs of these archaeological sites, but Sharda Temple was missed by them due to inaccessibility owing to the difficult terrain,

climate conditions and socio-political instability of the area as Stein had mentioned in his commentary (Stein 1900).

“*The Gazetteer of Kashmir*” compiled during 1869-73 by Charles Ellison Bates was meant to record geographical features such as villages, routes, passes, mountains and rivers in the Neelum Kishenganga and particulars of the inhabitants. It also subtly touches upon architectural features of the earlier archaeological remains of the Sharda Temple and other historical monuments; watch stations, graves of Sufi saints and ancient Mosques in the Neelum Valley. Aurel Stein published his monumental work in two volumes i.e the translation of *Kalhan's Rajatarangini* and reviewed it with detailed notes, identifications of sites, places with geographical and historical background. Writing about Kalhana's work, Stein stated;

This was earliest and most important of the Sanskrit chronicles of Kashmir and an exact identification of the very numerous old localities mentioned in it and it was indispensable for a correct understanding of the narrative.

In September 1892, Sir Aurel Stein explored the land of the Neelum Valley during his journey to the northern part of Kashmir. He took an old pilgrimage route from north of *Kamraz* to *Sitalvan* pass and entered area opposite to *Dudnial*, a village in the Neelum Valley. He gave details about the routes and sacred places where pilgrims stayed and performed the rituals before reaching the Sharda Temple. He described in details the structure remains, constructional significance and state of preservation of the Sharda Temple and referred to the records of *Kalhana* which mentions the connecting routes of the Valley in the connection of its narratives about the siege of *Sirahsila* fort. The ruins of historic *Sericella* fort which are mentioned in the *Rajatarangini* in the context of King Jayasimha's expeditions (10th CE), and described *Sericella* fort from where many battles were fought among princes of Kashmir to maintain their supremacy. He wrote about religious significance of Ganesh Ghati and its association with Goddess Sharda. Besides reviewing the accounts of *Kalhana*

*Rajatarangini*, Stein also mentioned the work of other scholars; Buhler, Alberuni, Abu-i-Fazal, Peterson and revised their connotations about Sharda *Devi* as the Goddess of learning and fine Arts as well as its mythical connection with the *Saraswati* Lake. Stein's work serves as a great reference point for the scholars to reconnect with the ancient history of the region.

The river Kishenganga was crossed by Stein on a make-shift wooden raft in October, 1892 and it was at same point and on a similar type of wooden plank raft that the team of Taxila Institute of Asian Civilizations led by Prof. Dr. M. Ashraf Khan crossed the river after about 120 years later for Archaeological survey of the Neelum Valley in October 2013.

Stein had never visited the *Sirahsila fort* and *Ganesh Ghati* and had only viewed them from the village of *Karigam* located opposite to these sites (Stein1900:281). He also did not discuss *Saraswati* Lake, another important archaeological site, which remained a central part of the Sharda civilization. In October 2014, this researcher explored *Saraswati* Lake situated on the Narda Mountain by following the indication provided in the text of *Kalhana Rajatarangini*.

The extensive visits and research in the Neelum Valley conclusively helped in documenting the broader heritage resources which were not recorded earlier, thus filling the gaps and bringing out important conclusions in developing the chronology of the area on the basis of material evidence.

### **2.3 Present Research**

This first ever planned archaeological exploration was mostly carried out in Tehsil Sharda Neelum Valley where more than a hundred archaeological sites have been documented. The documented archaeological sites include Sharda Temple, ruins of *Sericella* Castle, *Ganesh Ghati*, rock inscriptions, rock cut caves with inscribed symbols, Dogra fort, old Mosques, round graves, and cup-mark boulders. The findings of explored sites contain: wine presses,

copper coins, commemorative stones, Ganesh sculpture, harvesting tools, pottery fragments, terracotta pipes, metal anklets, and miniature vessels.

The documented built heritage consists of vernacular architecture, Mosques, wooden houses and Shrines. The study explores the missing links of the history in context of the archaeological discoveries which helped develop the chronology of Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

## **2.4 Documentation of Archaeological Sites in Neelum Valley**

During the archaeological survey of 2012-16, the researcher has explored a number of Archaeological sites: rock cut caves, carved head of *Ganesh*, temple, rock inscription, ruins of ancient settlements and old graves. These sites and the artefacts discovered from these locations have a great potential to identify the heritage and develop chronology of the area. The comparative study of these documented sites with already discovered sites in the adjacent areas help to understand the geographic and cultural links of the Valley with the rest of the region. The following are details of these heritage sites and also the artefacts discovered from various sites in Neelum (Map no.7).

### **2.4.1. Site No 1. Tehjian Lower**

#### **Location**

The village *Tehjian* is located on the both sides of river Neelum at a distance of about 20 Kilometers from district headquarter Athmaqam. The site lies at 34°43'.19.36 .48" N and 74°08 1825" L, elevation 1825m above sea level. It is a mountainous area, with a small hamlet with few fields, which are used for the cultivation of seasonal crops. The buildings are constructed in wooden and mud. The people with fair complexion belong to the *Kosher* ethnic group. The word of *Tehjian* is cited as "*Tejvana*" in ancient literature of *Rajatarangini* (Stein 1900: 281)



Map No.7: Archaeological Sites in Tehjan, Sharda, Neelum Valley  
(Source: Google Earth Pro)

## **Measurements**

Area of the mound: W: 1.9 m, H: 2 m

Northern wall of chamber: W: 4.8 m, H: 0.35 m

Southern wall of chamber: W: 6.6 m, H: 1.32 m

Eastern wall of chamber: W: 4.23 m, H: 1.14 m

Western wall of chamber: W: 4.8 m, H: 1.14 m

**Period:** Neolithic period

## **Description**

This mound is located in the centre of the village on the left bank of river Neelum some 500 meters far in the north. Tehjian has been mentioned in the ancient text of Rajatarangini as a siege of Gautama (Stein 1900: 281). The rectangular irregular mound housed a few ancient graves under the shadow the cluster of trees locally, known as *birm minch* in Kashmiri language. These indigenous *birm minch* trees are considered as sacred and colorful flags are hoisted by the local inhabitants for granting wishes (Pl. No.7 Fig: 25-26). The oral history of the area describes that these burials belong to followers of Mir Sayyid Ali Hamdani, the most revered preacher and saint of Kashmir. The ritual of hoisting colorful flags is the continuity of ancient beliefs and common practice in other religions such as Buddhism, Jainism and Hinduism (Khan 2014:45-46). *Tehjian* lower is a Neolithic settlement from where pre-historic cultural material like terracotta beads and stone sickles have been collected by the researcher during a field study (Pl. No.7 Fig :27-28).

## **Finds**

### **Terracotta bead**

The bead is in red ware and texture is rough with grey and white inclusions. The edges are somewhat damaged but the bead is in a good state of preservation. The bead is in a bi-conical shape with a hole of uniform diameter. The diameter of the bead is 5.5 cm, while the diameter



of hole is 1.5 cm and height is 4 cm. The bead is comparable with artifacts un-earthed from *Kalako-dheray*, Swat, by Italian Archaeological Mission (Stacul: 1989-91).

### **Sickle**

The length of the artifact is 10.6 cm, width is 5 cm, and thickness is 0.4cm, the diameter of the hole is 0.5 cm. The uniformity and shape of the sickle suggests that it might have been drilled by a mechanical tool. The stone sickle is a Neolithic harvesting tool, comparable with the stone artifacts discovered in the Neolithic sites of Burzahom (Allchin and Allchin 1982:115) Gandhara, Tibet, Korea and Swat (Stacul 1989-91:88-90).

The discoveries of rectangular stone Knives, Jade blades, pit dwellers, burial of dogs in graves alongside their owners is also found in the Neolithic culture of North China. The Burzahom Neolithic and the Neelum seems as an indigenous adaption because of environment of the mountain Valleys. The variety of harvesting tools shows that the communities depended upon sources of agriculture and hunting for their livelihood. The similarity of trade tools from this region of Kashmir shows profound contacts with Tibet and Chinese world (Bridget, Allchin 1982: 116).

The half-moon and stone Knife (axes) tools were used for the reaping of grains. The majority stone knives are half-moon shaped, but square and triangular stone knives are also found there. Wheel tooth axes or spindle wheels help in the rotation of the spindle to convert cotton or wool into a thread (Allchin, Allchin 1982:116). Comparative study of these artefacts with other sites suggests that lower Tehjian could belong to Neolithic era which goes back to 3500 BCE. The cultural material suggests that the site was a significant agriculture area and was urbanized similar to other developed centers in the region.

## **2.4.2. Site No 2. Danna Tehjian**

### **Location**

The site *Danna Tehjian* lies at 34°43'.19.36 .48" N and 74°08.1825" L, elevation 1825 m above sea level, located in the Neelum Valley, north-west of Muzaffarabad. The site *Tehjian* is situated on both sides of River Neelum and is also known by another name *Dhana Mandkaro*.

The village *Tehjian* is also associated with the story of the *mystical muni Shandilya* who practiced the ritual to sight Hindu Goddess Sharda. *Muni Shandilya* succeeded to attain his desire of sighting Goddess Sharda. Shandilya was pleased by being invited to Sericella by the Goddess herself to her place of abode. *Sharda Mahatma*, an ancient religious text mentions that *muni Shandilya* started his travels from the forests of *Rangavati, Drang* to the place of siege of Gautama at *Tehjian* and then further moved on the right side of river for Sericella complex (Stein 1900: 280). This religious tradition was adapted by pilgrims as *Tehjian* remained one of the prominent pilgrimage routes during visit to Sharda Temple. The pilgrims took the ritualistic bath as part of cleansing in sanctified stream on the confluence of river Neelum. As per lore in the sacred pond of village *Tehjian* the sage Shandilya is said to have undertaken the holy bath mentioned as "*Tejavana*" in ancient literature of Rajatarangini (Stein 1900: 281). It is also established that the site is the same as mentioned in ancient text of Kalhana Rajatarangini and the sacred place Tejavana as a sage of *Gautama*.

### **Finds**

#### **Stone wine presses (*Kunda*)**

**Material: Lime stone**

### **Measurements**

*Kunda* No.1: L: 2. 5m, W: 0.8m, D: 0.45m, H: 0.35m

*Kunda* No.2: L: 0.9m, W: 0.6m, D: 0.3m, H: 0.45m

## **Period**

Ca.1st-4th century CE

Condition: Good

## **Description**

One of the field terraces exposed a series of wine presses during cultivation as reported by owner of the site. These stone presses looked like a basin or water tank and are called *Kundas* in local language. On one side of the *Kunda* (presses) is a three inch wide outlet for the flow of liquid from one press to another during the processing (Pl. No.8 Fig.:29). The *Kundas* are well carved; by a sharp tool. They have rectangular shape, with rough exterior surface and smooth interior chambers.

### **2.4.2.1 Comparative Study**

These discovered presses or *Kundas* from Tehjian Danna *are* comparable to stone basins which have been recorded by the Italian archaeological missions in Swat. More than twenty basins or presses were recorded from *Jabba, Kalaka \Dheri, Kandak, Kotah, Jambil, Rani gat* and *Asota*, (Olivier 2011:136). These artefacts were found near the Buddhist Monasteries, and were used to manufacture liquor/wine for the monks. Many features recommend a close connection between Buddhism and the customary consumption of wine or grape juice in the Swat and adjacent area. The tank basins or wine presses were established near most sacred Buddhist sites but never inside their premises. Complexes of these rocks cut basins were also found near the Buddhist monasteries of *Butkara 1* and *Saidu Sharif*, Khyber Pukhtun khawa, Pakistan, which were used for wine making. The non-alcoholic boiled grape juice remained in use, during the Buddhism period in various parts of adjoining areas. In Swat many areas near old springs or sacred sites are also interpreted as wine presses (Olivier 2011: 135-136,159- 162).

The presses from the Neelum Valley may be dated to 1<sup>st</sup> -2<sup>nd</sup> century CE, when Swat was a prosperous center of Buddhism and Kashmir was under the rule of King Huvishka. The *Huvishkapura* present-day Baramulla, was a thriving town, located on the main trade road between Kashmir and Central Asia. The route from Baramulla leads toward District Kupwara and was linked with Tehjian, which remained famous for its variety of grapes and center of socio-economic activities (Stein 1900:429). The wine making could be a trade because there is evidence of traditional migrations of nomads (*Gujjars*) from ancient time till today. They had been carrying the services of sale of herbs, honey, and lamb wool. These presses were also recorded in different locations of Neelum Valley including *Rawota Athmaqam, Khel, Nagdar* and *Gurez Valley*. In *Khel* these artefacts occupied higher altitude near stream or springs and also in the foot hills of *Hari Parbat* peak in *Khel*.

Traditionally, in Hinduism, these type of rock cut basins and presses were also used to store rain or springs water. Mostly these rock artefacts were reported from areas where devotees climb on mountains to visit their sacred sites to take ritualistic baths. There is a possibility that these small reservoirs were also used for ritualistic purposes in later Hindu periods.

These sorts of wine making presses were common in Greek and Roman world and were even used in Palestine during Hellenistic and Byzantine periods (Leviy 1995:458). In Korea during eighteenth century BCE, to 668 CE, this type of stone and wooden presses remained in the use of upper class residences and royal palaces. The rock was dug out to form a water tank which was placed in temples to store water for the people attending religious ceremonies (Seok-2002: 79- 200). There are evidences of rock basins within the vicinity of Hindu Temples in Srinagar, which are used for religious rites. In the Neelum Valley, people still use wooden tanks and basins for different purposes; washing clothes, processing wool for traditional textile and storage of grains which is continuity of indigenous traditions (Pl. No.9 Fig 30-33).

### **2.4.3. Site No 3. Khel Patt (Tehjian)**

#### **Location**

This site lies at , 34°43'.19.36 .48" N and 74°08.1825" L, elevation 1825 m above sea level, and located 30 km west of Tehsil Sharda and 20 km south west of Athmaqam The village of *Tehjian* is located 4.5 km north-west of the *Khel Patt* site, and consists of thick forest and is far away from the main population of Sharda.

#### **Measurements**

Area of the rock: W: 12 m, H: 18 m

Large cave: W: 2.1 m, 2 m

Small cave: W: 1 m, H: 1.9 m

#### **Period**

Ca. 4<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> century CE

#### **Description**

The significant discovery of the *Khel Patt* site in *Tehjian* village are the rock cut caves. The place is also known as *Shish pheri*, an indigenous Kashmiri word which means running water. The *Khel patt* is a disproportionate rock having caves partly man-made with a variety of inscribed signs. The main compartment is in the center of the rock boulder at a height of 3m from the ground level and the size of this sacred chamber is approximately 4 x 5 meters (Pl.No.10 Fig :34).

#### **2.4.3.1 Sacred Symbols**

The rock boulder itself looks like *yoni* and there are also inscribed signs of *yoni* on the façade of boulder which is a strong symbolism of Hindu mythology. That sign of *yuni* represents the Hindu Goddess of *Shakti*, which symbolizes the creativity of female energy. The union of lingam and *yoni* represents the indivisible two-in-oneness of male and female, the passive and active time from which all life originates. The façade of the rock cut cave is

also engraved with partially damaged and vague zoomorphic figures. There are other inscribed signs on the boulder that are in the form of wheel of law (teaching of Buddha). The engraved symbols of the wheel of law have also been reported from the Buddhist sites in Gandhara and India. Similar signs on the rock cut caves have been recorded from Shatial, Gilgit Baltistan. The tradition of this type of rock sanctuaries and inscribed wheels of law (Dharma, Chakra) for sacred places had been dominated from *Ajanta Alora Caves* (Dani 1985:34).

There is a possibility that this culture spread out via Gandhara to Neelum Kishenganga Valley in later periods through connecting routes. *Liddervina* is a revered place on other side of divide in Indian held Kashmir, where pilgrims used to stay and then come to *Khel patt* Tehjian village. First, the pilgrims used to visit the rock cut caves and perform a customary rite of cleanings known as *Tejavana*. Stein cited this abode near the confluences of hill tributary which emerges from the south-east and falls in to Kishenganga. The route along the *Nullah* was adopted by people of Sharda from the various parts of Kashmir and the surrounding areas (Stein 1900: 282). The area mostly consists of thick forests and is far away from population.

It is believed that the water from *Khel patt* rock cut cave boulder flows in the form of drops in all seasons with same amount and has never dried. The locals use it to bathe under the spring of the rock cut cave which remedies curable skin diseases. All the area in the front of the rock is covered with white lotus which is also significant (Pl. No.11 Fig: 35). Nomads used to take shelter in the rock cut caves during harsh weather in the Neelum Valley, Gilgit Baltistan and adjacent Valleys and have left their marks on these boulders which are continuity of ancient ways.

#### **2.4.4. Site No 4. Nagdar**

##### **Location**

The site of *Khazana Mati*, locally known as Nagdar, lies at 34°40'.47.53" N and 73°53'.46.28" L , elevation 2225 m above the sea level. The *Nagdar* village is situated at the distance of 8 km in the north-west of village Neelum, Tehsil Athmaqam where an ancient script has been documented during the field survey of 2012-14. The Nagdar is linked in the south-west by the towns of *jatri*, *jhart*, and *phat*. The *kalowala dera* village is situated in the west, and *karka* village is in the north-west of the site and further towards north is the *Baboon Bhik*. Kaghan Valley is located at four-hour walking distance from the *Baboon Bhik*. In the north-west, there is *Chilas* and the *Babussar Pass*, which was centre of connecting routes in ancient times. The writings are inscribed on a rocky hill in the north-western edge of a *Nullah* known as Nagdar (Pl. No.12 Fig: 36-37).

##### **Measurements**

Rock boulders (complex): W: 3.6 m, H: 5 m

Total number of alphabets in first group: 20

Size of each alphabet: W: 8.8 m, H: 16.5 m

Size of second group/ boulder: W: 6.7, H: 5.5 m

Inscribed covered area: 0.45m.

Diameter of lotus flower: 10 cm.

Third group/rock boulder; inscription: l: 0. 82 m.

*Trisula*: l: 26 cm.

Diameter of *Trisula*: 11.5 cm

##### **Period**

Ca.4<sup>th</sup> century CE,

## Description

There are three different groups of inscriptions on the same boulders. The surface of the rock, bearing the inscriptions, has turned rusty in colour due to oxidation. These inscribed words are apparently deep; it looks as if they have been engraved with sharp tools. Some words are complete and few partially damaged. The writing apparently resembles with the rock inscriptions found in Gandhara, Chilas, Gilgit-Baltistan .

According to Ahmad Hassan Dani:

The rock inscriptions of Chilas are late Brahmi script 3rd to 4<sup>th</sup> century CE. These writings were engraved by pilgrims, monks and missionaries who are closely related the script used in middle India, rather than proto Sharda script (Dani 1983: 230).

In *Shatial*, Gilgit Baltistan, Dani reported rocks bearing inscriptions in late Brahmi which gave the names of the Buddhist monks and other missionaries who moved about for the propagation of their religions. Most rock carvings belong to Buddhist period on the routes from Gandhara to Kashmir, Chilas and its adjoining areas (Dani 1983: 6).

The Brahmi inscriptions of 4<sup>th</sup> century CE has been discovered near the locality of *Harwan* Buddhist stupa in Srinagar, Kashmir (Ray 1969:216). In the east of Sharda Village there are evidences of ancient routes which connect the Sharda archaeological site and the ancient centre of Kushana in Srinagar. On the western side of Neelum Valley is situated Kaghan Valley which further connects to Swat Valley. In Neelum Valley the area from where rock inscription were documented is adjacent to Chilas and further links to Babussar pass which remained junction of Gandhara, Kashmir and Chilas since centuries.

A late Sharda inscription (9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> CE) documented from Kashmir *Smasth* and which was engraved on schist stone and the copper scroll bearing *Kharosthi* inscription belonged to the late Kushana period. . The birch bark scripts preserved between two stones layered in mud and Brahmi inscription of 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> century CE, engraved on schist slabs were also



reported from same place (Nasim 2002:04). In Attock a variety of *Kharosthi* writings engraved on slabs were found, which belonged to Kanishka period (Dani 1981:37). The *Kharosthi* inscriptions recorded from ancient Gandhara have characteristics of the later Kushana period. These inscriptions were concluded as later period of *Kharosthi* script before the Brahmi were replaced in Gandhara (Khan Nasim et.al 1999-2000:03). The bulk of the epigraph scripts in Brahmi, *Kharosthi*, Proto Sharda, *Nagari*, and Persian were also recorded by the Italian archaeological missions (IsIAO) in Swat Valley, Pakistan.

Gilgit-Baltistan has rich archaeological remains including rock carvings. In the past, the area was visited by travelers, missionaries and traders who left their mark in the form of engravings. There are many documented rock inscriptions which have been deciphered as the names of the monks and traders. These travelers who had come from far off places and passed through this route inscribed their names and drew religious symbols on these boulders (Dani 1985: 29 -34). In Chilas the first recorded inscription was engraved in *Kharosthi* script and belonged to first century CE. They have names of the persons who came here from Samarkand on their way to China. There is a poorly drawn Chinese inscription on an isolated rock. Brahmi inscriptions of fifth century CE have also been recorded by A. H. Dani from same place (ibid).

According to Prof. Omkar Koul, the experts analyzing had concluded the documented rock inscription of Sharda Neelum Valley as following

One letter for the sound [b] is same as in Sharda; two letters representing the sounds [s] and [r] are also similar to the Sharda script, while other letters are proto-forms. Another thing revealed that each letter in the line represents a *bij mantra* which is very common in all the earlier scripts. In the third row at the end, the symbol like a flower represent *astadal* (having eight leaves), followed by the symbol for *Trishaku Bhairav*. In the Second row, the last symbol represents a motif. Sharda script was developed around 8th century. The rock inscriptions appear to be proto-forms of the Sharda script. At least two letters are same and others have changed shapes. The shapes of the letters are somewhere between the *Kharosthi* and the Sharda script. It is difficult to find out the exact period when the script was developed (Koul. Omkar, email, personal, September, 2015).

It is significant to cite here another plaque which has been documented during the archaeological survey of 2012-14 from, District Kotli southern part of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. There inscribed are a variety of ritualistic scenes and symbols on the dressed slabs of pond locally known as *Bawolie*. The documented plaque has fragments of sacred water pond unearthed during mining in barren area. It is concluded that site might have been intentionally hidden due to some reasons; possibly some socio-religious change in the region. The inscription was forwarded to experts for opinion and Dr. Michael Weitzel, Prof. Sanskrit department; Harvard University concluded it as following:

The inscription starts with an auspicious mark followed by svasti; the usual start of inscription or even in alphabet. A few words can be read, but they don't make sense yet. At the end we may have adate Pa (m) cama s'odi=5<sup>th</sup> day of the bright half of the month,-but the year is missing, unless it is hidden in ..dhati. However, the inscription can be roughly dated: it uses the old prsthmatra vowels for-e-and -o-but also the later 'swallow' type -o-.The older vowels went out of fashion around 1400 CE, so I guess the inscription is quite old from 1400CE (Weitzel. Michael, email, personal, December 15, 2015).

Besides ancient script, there have been inscribed symbols on the rock boulders along the *Nullah Nagdar* in Neelum Valley. These various documented ciphers have great connotation in the proof of various cults, which existed in the region since centuries. The various groups of *Trisulas* and lotus pattern have been recorded on the surface of the boulders. One of the groups comprised of *Trisulas* of different sizes, eight petals lotus flower and cross signs. The third group on same boulder consists of two *Trisulas* with faded inscriptions and smashed ciphers not easy to recognize (Pl. No.13 Fig: 38-39).

The lotus pattern is an important emblem in Buddhist and Hindu religious beliefs. In Gandhara, the *Trisulas* Pattern has been engraved on the pedestal of Buddha stone sculptures. These types of lotus, *chakra* and *Trisulas* have been documented in northern area, Chilas, along Silk Route which also represents the prevailed veneration of Vishnu and Shiva sects side by side in the area. *Trisulas* is also a depiction of Buddha, law and community, and also signified monastery, teachers and people (Dani1983:220) (Pl. No.13 Fig: 40-41).

The *Ganesh Ghati* boulder in Neelum Valley exposed Swastika and cross signs besides few faded symbols near a rock cut cave which are comparable with the Chilas rock inscriptions. In the later period new symbols; Nestorian Christian cross symbol of Swastika along, *Kharosthi* inscription inscribed on the rock boulders of Gilgit, Hunza were also recorded. According to Dani, it seems that site was used for Hindu cremation (Dani 1996: 70-81, 34-149). Based on the conclusion of Prof. Dani, this researcher opines that Ganesh Ghati might have been reserved for cremation of the Hindus.

Language is one of the basic segments of human progress. Recent discovery of the rock inscription in the higher mountains of the Neelum Valley (Kishenganga) confirm the existence of a developed ancient script linking this area with rest of the region. The inscriptions also reinforce the cultural connections amongst civilizations in the Trans-Himalayan region.

#### **2.4.4.1 Reverence of Ancient Script in the Neelum Valley**

Sharda script originated in Kashmir between 7<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> centuries CE and was extensively used in upper South Asia. This script was documented in Jammu and Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan and Swat Valley. The Sharda, Neelum Valley was recognized as *Sharda Peeth*, a center of learning and the Sharda script is strongly associated with this place. Chinese monk Huein Tsang writes that Kashmir is a place of learning where Buddhist literature is produced in Sharda Brahmi, Sanskrit and *Kharosthi*. These manuscripts and inscriptions have also been preserved in Tibetan and Chinese translations (VN Drabu 1989: 27). In 11<sup>th</sup> CE, a monk from western Tibet *Rinchen Bzang* settled in Kashmir for thirteen years to acquire religious and other knowledge. He also mentioned that Kashmir was given the name of *Sharda Pith* or the seat of learning. This statement confirms that Kashmir had not lost its position as the place of Buddhist learning even in Hindu rule (ibid, 27-28).

T. N. Ganjoo who was over 95 years of age and has retired from University of Kashmir, Srinagar is considered to be an authority on Sharda script. In 1946, T. N. Ganjoo accompanied by Swami Vidhaya of Srinagar, visited the Sharda Temple in Neelum Valley. He mentioned that there was no other script in Kashmir except Sharda script because epitaphs in graveyards are inscribed in Sharda language According to T. N. Ganjoo:

In 10<sup>th</sup> century CE, Alburueni, the author of book *Al-Hind* arrived in Kashmir and mentions that thousands of books were written in Sharda script. The chronological history of Kashmir was written by Kalhana in 11<sup>th</sup> century CE. Before starting work on *Rajatarangini*, he travelled throughout Kashmir for many years to gather information and related the text of ancient scriptures with the original places. In 13<sup>th</sup> century CE there was no other script in Kashmir except Sharda script because inscriptions on epitaphs in graveyards are written in Sharda language. Jain *Rajatarangini* narrates in 14<sup>th</sup> century CE, that when conversion started in Kashmir, Sikandar Sultan of Kashmir destroyed books and libraries of Sharda language. Another great historian Sharmendra wrote in his book *Lakprakash* that there is drastic change during Mughal rule when Persian was adopted which completely uprooted the Sharda script.

The epigraphical findings such as rock engravings, rock inscriptions and numismatics have been recorded during field survey 2012-15 in Neelum Valley. Both engravings and paintings are occupying the standing rocks at different locations in the valley. Painted engravings on the rock cut cave near Sericella fort and inscribed symbols on *Kel par* rock Tehjian have been recorded. The category of movable epigraphy has also been recorded in area. These scripts were found on the birch bark, preserved in a stone box and unearthed from *Mitawali Seri*. The *Mitawali Seri* of *Surgun* village has also uncovered a statuette of a portable panda which remained as a ritualistic object in Chinese Buddhism. Writings on the birch bark are considered as a specialized form of expression, which mostly belonged to the Buddhist era.

The Taxila Archaeological Museum, housed birch bark depicts *Kharosthi* inscriptions from the Jaulian Buddhist Monastery, which is not local specie (Marshal 1931:233). There is great likelihood that these birch barks were brought from the Neelum Valley to Taxila during the Buddhist period.

Epitaphs on a number of houses and shops in Sharada script were reported in the old city of Muzaffarabad, which were mostly either destroyed or removed during the renovations and reconstruction after the earthquake of 2005 (Rehman, Khawaja, personal communication, October 20, 2015). In Neelum Valley and Srinagar epitaphs on graves are found written in both the Sanskrit and Sharada characters.

Some other rock inscriptions and scripts have been reported in Neelum Valley.

## **Finds**

### **Commemorative Stone Slab No. 1 (Badan Pura, Nagdar)**

Two Commemorative stone pillars which were discovered from the *Badan pura*, Nagdar are vital discoveries and revealed interesting details of the remote past. The site *Badan pura* is located 3 kilometers west of the *Nagdar Nullah*. The stone pillars were found during the illegal digging by a local farmer.

**Measurements:** Stone Pillar No. 1: L: 15 m; Th: 7.6 cm.

Upper most compartments: W: 0.25m.

Lower part: W: 23cm.

**Period:** Ca.4<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> century CE

**Material:** schist

**Condition:** Good

### **Description**

This stone pillar depicting a standing figure under an arch, with her right hand on her waist and left hand rose in a gesture of singing/dancing. The pointed arch appears to be the trademark at Sharada temple followed all over Neelum Valley during the Ca.4<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> century CE. Two Corinthian pillars on both sides with the detail of capital, shaft and base. The round protection shield held by the figure is 8 inches in dia and contains six petals and rosettes of geometric design. The lower most part of the slab has a small undiniahws niche. The figure

had bangles in arms, ear rings, and necklace. The stone pillar has an inscribed design of a lotus flower at the upper part of the shaft with prominent and sharp cuts. The lower part of pillar was obviously fixed in the ground. There is a possibility that the stone pillar was fixed at some prominent place to commemorate heroes (Pl.No.14 Fig 42-a, b).

### **Commemorative Stone No. 02**

**Measurements:** Stone Pillar No.2: L: 1.03 m; W: 0.42 m; Th: 0.12m.

**Period:** Ca.4<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> century CE

Materials: Grey Schist

Condition: Good

### **Description**

This commemorative pillar has an engraved standing male figure – probably a warrior, along with other details of motifs and belongs to Ca.4<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> century CE. In the upper most section, a figure is standing under the architectural setting of pointed arch, holding sword in the right hand and a shield in the left hand, wearing typical helmet of the Persian soldiers and typical Kushan dress. The low relief carving of the circular design is skillfully treated with piercing of iron tools. The figure appears to be a warrior wearing the Kushana dress as a loose elaborated attire; fitted trouser and robe. There is an ornamental embroidered tapering cap on the head of figure. Chinese pilgrim Huein Tsang during his journey of Kashmir in the middle of seventh century noted that people wore a loose and short garment. (Pathak 2008:17). The sculptures and brick tiles of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE, were unearthed from *Harwan* Srinagar the figures on these tiles are dressed in close-fitting trousers or *pajama* and *Turkoman* cap (Ray 1969: 256). This type of cap and dress is still used by the inhabitants of the Neelum Valley with slight variations in design. This study strengthens the hypothesis that the Neelum Valley had historical cultural links with Central Asia through connecting Silk Routes. Nagdar

village was an important gateway towards the west and was the first to receive this influence which is reflected in various forms even today (Pl.No.14 Fig 43-a, b).

#### **2.4.5 Site No. 5. Sharda Temple**

**District:** Neelum Valley

Tehsil: Sharda

Nature of the Site/Area: Mountainous

**Coordinates:** 34°47'.13.55" N and 74°11' 24.36" L , elevation 1889m

#### **Location:**

The Sharda Temple is located in Tehsil Sharda on the left bank of the river at a confluence of the *Madhumati* stream and river Neelum. *Kankotri* or *Surgun* stream, which brings water of *Saraswati* Lake, join the river on the right side, a few kilometers far from the place known as *Sharda Sangam*. The Sharda Temple located on a high land facing south west from where one can view the whole of Sharda town including *Narda* Mountain in the north, cliff of *Sericella* and Ganesh Ghati in the south west. In the north the Neelum Valley road joined Sharda village towards *Khel*, *Jaunvi*, *Phalvi*, *Helmet*, *Taobat* and the *Gurez* Valley. In the south on the left bank of river this road linked *Dudnial*, *Dawarian*, *Lawat*, *Nagdar*, *Kern* and Athmaqam follows towards Muzaffarabad, the capital of Azad Jammu & Kashmir .

#### **Measurements**

Plinth of main temple: W: 7.3m, H: 7.3 m

Projection wall thickness: 0.67m.

Entrance stairs of temple: 2.5 meters wide.

Outer boundary western wall fortification: L: 8m, H: 4m

Eastern wall door: H: 2.1 m; W: 1.6; Th: 0.9cm

#### **Period**

7<sup>th</sup> century CE,

## Description

The construction of Sharda Temple is unique due to its material and architectural style which is comparable to other stone edifices of Kashmir Valley. The Sharda Temple architectural plan is a square room erect on a platform with one door on west. The two columns on each side of the entrance door resembles with Doric style of Greek Architecture. The three sided walls of temple mirrored Pyramidal *Shikara* of Kashmiri style of architecture. This kind of construction raised on high platform was extensively used in many parts of Kashmir and northern India (Brown Percy 1942: 189-192). The southern, eastern and northern walls of temple have a three-cornered design with extended details forming a pattern of a blind arch. The four corner pillars along two blind niches not only support and maintain stability but also keep the majesty of the huge edifice. These trefoil recess arches with giant three-cornered pediments are also known as tribeated style of architecture (Neve 1947:80-81) (Pl.No.15 Fig: 44-45).

Sharda Temple was without any roof structure since 1870, when Charles Bates visited the site as he mentioned that top of the temple has covered with the temporary material for its protection (Bates 1870:338). The oldest photograph of the Sharda temple indicates a wooden plank that had been placed on the top of the temple. This photo was taken by Ariel stein in 1892 during his visit to Neelum Valley, which was published by Borden library, United Kingdom, (Pl.No.15 Fig: 46-47).

The façade of Sharda Temple carried the lintel style in which two vertical stone slabs were placed on one horizontal stone. The remaining stone slabs on the upper most rows of the walls are alleviated in position and the lintel stone indicates that Sharda Temple had a plane or pediment top (Pl.No.16 Fig: 48). From the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE onward, the lintel style, wedge-shaped pediments roof and wooden structures replaced the stone construction. Tribeated method of architecture has followed wedge shaped roofing instead of round or oval and was



extensively used in India before the Muslim era in subcontinent (Croix 1926: 142) (Pl.No.17 Fig: 49).

The construction materials of the Sharda Temple are heavy dressed stone slabs, lime mortar and river pebbles. Plaster filling and cement patches indicate that the renovation of temple had taken place in the later period's .The earliest construction material of Sharda Temple is the schist stone boulder which was rare in the Valley. Later outer walls of temple were altered for the display of ritualistic cult statues during the period of Jainism (Stein 1900:287, Bates 1873:383).

The double grand pillars of the Sharda Temple at the entrance are a combination of rectangular and square chiseled stone structures and the top stone attached with the roof is slightly irregularly round. The south eastern door pillars of the structure are misplaced which is also mentioned by the Stein and Bates. According to former researchers the two stone square pillars of single stone capital were present in the northern side but were lost in the southern side (ibid: 283&339). It was probably lost with demolition of the outer boundary wall the temple (Pl.No.18 Fig 50-51).

There is a trefoil arch chamber or cell which has a base shaft in the middle of the northern outer boundary wall. The chamber housed two lingams of moderate size which indicate that the site was used by the believers of Vishnu and Shiva cults in different periods (ibid & Khan 2014: 59). There is a gateway in the eastern fortified wall of the Sharda Temple, which was sealed permanently in later period with stones and river pebbles. That eastern doorway remained in the used of pilgrims during the performance of religious rites in the old days

#### **2.4.5.1. Comparative Study**

The architectural characteristics of Sharda Temple are comparable to Martand Temple in Srinagar which was constructed during the reign of King *Lalitaditya* in 7<sup>th</sup> century CE. The King *Laliditaya* (724-760 CE) period was revolutionary in terms of the architecture of

Kashmir. He introduced both Brahmanism and Buddhism related religious buildings (Brown 1942: 189-192). It can reasonably be inferred that Martand Temple followed the architectural traditions of the Sharda temple. The Hindu Temple was of common style which adapted from 5<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> century CE. The basic projected square plan of Temple consisted of an entrance framed with elaborate door way and a circular path closely connected to Nagara style of Architecture (Meister: 1979:204). The *Nagara* style of architecture was applied for the construction of Hindu Temples in north India and Kashmir area. Buddhism was largely replaced by Hinduism during 4<sup>th</sup> -5<sup>th</sup> century CE and subsequently, Buddhist shrines converted in to Hindu Temples (Meister 1979:204, Ray 2004:45). Another popular style of architecture in Kashmir was *Vesara*, which was also employed for the construction of temples in the salt range, Punjab (Brown 1942:185-188).

Sharda Temple is comparable with *Mandhol* Temple in District Poonch. It is a square shrine, with an eastern opening door and *Shikara designs* on the other three walls. Besides Kashmiri *Shikara* design, the temple reflected later Gandhara style along with some Greek elements. These grand columns and pillars are ornamented in Corinthian style with elaborate design of acanthus leaves. This highly decorated style was developed around the 5th century BCE, which is also considered as a supportive element for the façade and roof (Neve 1945:81-82). The *Burand* Temple complex ruins in Kotli and *Deera* Temple, *Rawalakot* are a continuity of the Sharda Temple architecture style in Neelum Valley.

#### **2.4.5.2 Outer Gateway of Sharda Temple**

The Sharda Temple is approached by a 63 stone slabs stairway, which leads towards the ancient-most entrance structure: the gateway of Sharda Temple site. This gateway structure has Greek influence, which is reflected in the outer, blustered double grand pillar and a base shaft. The construction technique of this grand gateway structure is different from that of the

main Sharda Temple which is a combination of round, quadrangular stones (Bates 1870:339) (Pl.No.19 Fig: 52).

In the gateway structure there are two trefoil niches which are used for placing oil lamps, figures or other objects of rites. The stones pillars are firmly fixed with each other from top to bottom. Close examination shows that the two niches are made of two different stones and joined with each other through joinery – a technique widely used in Greek Temples. The joinery construction technique provides strength to the structure to survive over the centuries (Pl.No.20 Fig: 53). During the 8th century CE, this building style was extensively used in Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh. Its use still continues in various parts of Jammu Kashmir with little change (Croix 1926:141-142). It is clear that this outer gateway ruin is not a portion of Sharda Temple but its earliest edifice which might have been destroyed due to human vandalism or natural damage (Pl.No.21 Fig: 54-56).

#### **2.4.5.3 Seri Chakra Slab of Sharda Temple**

The interior of the Sharda Temple is presently without any ritual cult statues or sculptures. There was a stone slab in Sharda Temple during the visit of Charles Bates in 1872. He mentioned about an unpolished stone slab that lies in the middle of the temple floor and was believed to be associated with *Seri-chakra* philosophy of Sharda civilization (Bates 1873: 339). This stone slab is known as *Sharda Khund*, associated with the Goddess Sharda (*Sharika*) in the narratives of legends across the divide. Traditionally, Kashmiri Pundits worshipped the deity in their natural forms like boulders, lakes and springs. It is believed that Goddess *Sharika* is inscribed naturally on boulders as a *Seri chakra* smeared in vermilion (Pandita, Ravinder, Communication, Skype, October 10, 2015).

In 2005, a scholar Malcolm McEwen visited the Sharda, Neelum Valley to explore *Seri chakra* philosophy of the Goddess Sharda. Researcher McEwen states that the design inscribed on stone slab is a depiction of the creation of the universe and remained sacred in

various beliefs including Hinduism (McEwen 2009:17-37). During the visit of Ariel Stein in 1892 the stone slab (Seri Chakra) was missing from the Sharda Temple. It is widely reported that *Seri Chakra* of Sharda Temple is in fact the *Sri Yatra*, means 'Place to visit'. It has a great religious significance for Kashmiri pundits, who visited the Temple prior the divide (ibid). This archaeological evidence corroborates the historical records and myths related to Sharda cultural heritage.

The field survey and salvage excavation of the adjacent areas of the Sharda Temple, revealed that a grand structure existed there. The unearthed cultural material of terracotta pipes, bricks, coins, pottery fragments confirmed that the area was inhabited by distinct populations in different periods of time. There is need of further exploration and excavation in the adjacent parts of Temple to un-earth new discoveries and further understand the different settlements that had existed in the area.

#### **2.4.5.4 Finds from Sharda Temple**

**Object:** Ganesh

**Material:** Grey Schist

**Size:** L: 30.5 cm, W: 30.5 cm, Th: 15.2 cm

**Condition:** It is in fragmental form and the preserved portion of sculpture is in good condition.

#### **Description**

It is in fragmental form and it seems from viewing the ventral side of sculpture that it might have been detached from some sort of panel. Most probably the head looks detached from the pillar, as a capital. The trunk of the elephant rises towards the upper side and the figure appears to be decorated with ornaments. The carving reflects the use of ample craftsmanship.

The skillfulness and innovation is visible from the treatment of various parts. The minor details of the eyes and trunk were expertly done (Pl.No.22 Fig 57 a, b).

### **Coins**

Four copper coins were discovered from the surface of the temple during the survey. Three of the coins were found on the north-western wall of the temple, while the fourth coin was discovered near the south-eastern wall of the Temple. One of the coins belongs to Ardoxsho of Kushana style of the second century CE (precisely 140 – 180 CE) with *Sharda* legend Sri on the obverse and a standing figure of Kuishana style on the reverse (Pl.No.23 Fig: 58). The remaining three coins belong to the Muslim period i.e. one to the period of Muhammad (8<sup>th</sup> century CE) with Arabic legend Muhammad, the other belongs to Shah Period (14<sup>th</sup> century CE) with Persian legend Shah. The fourth coin is badly defaced and the legend thereon is not legible.

### **Pottery**

A good number of red ware potsherds, plain and simple form of various shapes and sizes have been collected from the surface and slopes near Sharda Temple.

### **Terracotta Bricks**

A large number of terracotta bricks in fragmental and deteriorated condition have been collected from the surface of the site and the nearby areas of Sharda Temple. The bricks probably belonged to the the earlier building at this site that might have belonged to the the Buddhists e.g. monastery, etc.

### **Terracotta Pipe**

**Size:** L: 25, W: 9 cm, Th: 2cm

**Condition:** It is in fragment form and the preserved portion is in good state.

### **Description**

A terracotta pipe with rope designs on the exterior and interior surfaces, red and slightly sandy in texture.

#### **2.4.6 Site no 6. Sirahsila Fort**

##### **Location**

The *Sirahsila* fort lies at 34°47' .20.23 " N and 74°10' 38.73" L and 2096 m above the sea level is located about three kilometers north east of the Sharda Temple in Tehsil Sharda Neelum Valley. The structure of fort is located on the mound in the east of the village *Yumheri* near the right bank of river Neelum. The village of *Khawaja Seri* is 3 kilometres towards south east and the *Kishen Ghati* village is situated in the north east of *Sirahsila* fort.

##### **Measurements**

North-south: L: 67m; East-west: W: 12.80m; Wall structure: Th: 0.18m

Stairs: W: 0.90m, H: 0.30m; *Ghati* rock: H: 1.52m, W: 3.04m..

Female bust relief: W: 1.21m, H: 2.1m

##### **Period**

Ca.8<sup>th</sup>- 10<sup>th</sup> century CE,

##### **Description**

The literal meaning of *Seri-cella* is 'The rock head' which was mentioned by Kalhana Rajatarangini, owing the shape of the rock jetting out elephant head like structure (Stein 1900:282). The fort is rectangular in plan, built in the stone masonry of schist and river pebbles: both types of the material are available in the surrounding area of the river and hill. The structural stones of the fort are scattered everywhere on the site which can be approached by a series of steps from the river bank. The adjacent sites of the fort are the ruins of yum-temple which occupies the top of the mountain and is surrounded by thick forest (Pl.No.24 Fig: 59).

### **Historical & Religious Significance of fort**

The *Seri-cella* site has a historical importance and was a centre of happenings from where many battles were fought for the supremacy of Kashmir (Stein 1900:209). The most known historical event was associated with the Prince Bhoja rebellions against the army of King Jayasimha's (Stein 1900:209, Bates 1890:340-342). The *Kalhana Rajatarangini* described the story of three princesses of Kashmir *Bhoja*, *Lothian* and *vagra Raj*. The prince Bhoja was a strong descendant of the throne and was supported by the other tribes' chiefs. He remained in the Sericella fort and resisted King Jayasimha's army which camped along the side of *Madhumati* stream in south side of the Sharda Temple (ibid: 212-284) (Pl. No.25 Fig: 60). On the left bank of *Madhumati* stream there was a huge complex of buildings which had been erected to control the movement of prince Bhoja on the order of King Jayasimha's in 11<sup>th</sup> century CE, (Stein 1900:209). Prince *Bhoja* was confined in the *Sericella* fort for a long time, and eventually escaped from the fort to seek help from the *Dards* in the Northern area mountains, presently, upper Gurez Valley (Map No.8).



Map No.8: Archaeological Sites in Nagdar, Sharda, Neelum Valley (source: Google Earth Pro)



#### 2.4.7 Site no 7. Ganesh Ghati (Neelam Valley)

**Period:** Ca.8<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> century CE

##### **Location**

The *Ganesh Ghati* archaeological site is 34°47'.20.23" N and 74°10' 38.73" L and is 2096 m above the sea level, situated at the distance of six kilometers from the village *Khawaja Seri* on the left bank of river Neelum near the mound of Sericella fort.

##### **Description**

*Ganesh Ghati* is famous due to its naturally carved head of an elephant on rock which occupied a steep high mound, five kilometers far from the Sharda archaeological site. The rock cut caves and cup-mark boulders are also present in the surroundings of *Ganesh Ghati*. A partly damaged female statue and Ganesh head was carved out from rock (Pl. No.26 Fig 61-62). The symbol of Swastika is inscribed on the façade of the same boulder. This site has been mentioned as a memorable siege and a place of worship known as a *Syayambhu* ridge resembled with an elephant head (Cunningham 1892:264). The sacredness of the elephant Ganesh-head had remained vital in the various religious cults of Buddhism, Jainism, and Hinduism in Kashmir. According to Alice Getty:

The most celebrated *murtis* of Ganesha are found in Kashmir, where there are three famous and most powerful formless stones which from ancient times have drawn pilgrims to their shrines. One of these, which is near the village of Ganesh-bal, is in the river Lidar near its right bank, and is still an important place of pilgrimage. Another rock in Kashmir which has been worshiped from most ancient times as a symbol of *Ganesh* under the name of *Bhimasvamin* is at the foot of the hill *Hari-par bat* near Srinagar. The most remarkable of these *svayambhumurti* in Kashmir is the one on a cliff along the Kishenganga Known as *Ganesh- Gati*" (Gettyok 1971: 22-23).

Ganesh images have been reported from the ritual water tank of *Behal Bawolie* village *Kohirutta*, *Kotli* district of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. Another form of *Ganesh* worship in the rural areas of Kashmir that remained popular was that in the beginning of harvesting or before cultivation of the new season, the pastoral societies sought blessings of the deity. This

type of *Ganesh* images were usually found on dangerous places, mountain slopes, on crossing of rivers, as the location of *Ganesh Ghati* in Neelum Valley (Ibid).

#### **2.4.7.1 Ghuffa Rock Cut Cave**

There is located a rock cut cave on the left side of the Ganesh head boulder, locally known as *Ghuffa*, meaning cave in Hindi. It exists on the top most portion of the boulder and is covered with bushes. It is not visible from distance. The site was used by the ascetic for meditations and pilgrims during their visit to the Sharda Temple (Stein 1900:341) (Pl.No.27 Fig 63-64).

In 2005, when Malcolm John McEwen visited the Neelum Valley to explore the *Seri chakra* inscribed stone slab, he also visited the *Ganesh Ghati* site and later shares his experience as below:

The most interesting place was *Ganesh Ghati* (cliff of Ganesh) certainly a natural extrusion but to some extent the feature may have been carved. I have visited inside the rock cut cave above the cliff. The back wall of this cave was blocked off by the effects of climate change over the last 68 years making it difficult to observe correctly. The water seepage contained limestone which over the years had been deposited (McEwen 2009:17-37).

The rock cave exposed Swastika and cross signs besides a few faded symbols. In Brahmin lore Swastika is an auspicious symbol and represents the wheel of the world which protects people from bad and evil. These inscribed symbols are comparable with rock engravings of Gilgit, Chilas and Hunza documented by A. H. Dani (Dani 1996: 70-81). There are also symbols of Swastika and Nestorian Christian cross. It seems that the site was used for Hindu cremation (ibid: 88-34-149). The sign of Swastika has been widely used in the Indus valley civilization which represented specific ritual symbols (Kenoyer 1998:18). Swastika is an old symbol of nature and remained in many cultures and civilizations across the boundaries.

#### 2.4.8 Site No 8. Yam-har

**Period:** Ca.8<sup>th</sup>- 10<sup>th</sup> century CE

##### **Location**

The *Yum-har* ruins, 34°47'.20.23" N and 74°10' 38.73" is traced in the village *Yum-hari* Sharda, Neelum Valley. The *Yum-hari* village is written as *Kassian* village in local revenue record. The *Sericella fort*, *Ganesh Ghati* and *Yam-har* pond all are located in the vicinity of *Yum hari* village on a mound, covering an area of approximately 100 meters. The nearest place is known as *Ganesh Ghati* which consists of more than a dozen houses of Kashmiri speakers.

##### **Description**

The *Yum har* temple was reported by Khawaja Abdul Ghani, a school principal and local resident of the village in Neelum Valley. The remains of the temple were uncovered in 2016 by the locals while digging near the *Ganesh Ghati*. The construction material of the *Yum har* temple is dressed schist stone slabs. Only main steps of the temple have been exposed while the remaining structure is still under debris.

This place was mentioned in *Rajatarangini* as Stein wrote: "Few kilometers far from *Ganesh Ghati* there was a sculpture in a temple which was dedicated to *Yuma* God" (*Rajatarangini Ashlok* 1164 -78). *Yum* is a word of ancient Kashmiri *Yum Har* means: 'Death Giver'. Approximately, 1500 yards far from *Yum* temple site, there is a water pond known as *Mukhtaseri Bawolie* (pond). *Mukhtaseri* is a Kashmiri word meaning golden pond. *Rajatarangini* also referred to this as a sacred pond (ibid).

According to Khawaja Abdul Ghani "There is a ritual related to this *Mukhtaseri Bawolie* that folks used to bring their weak animals for drinking water to get better health". *Ganesh Ghati*, *Mukhtaseri* has also remained an alternate pilgrimage site, as devotees used to take bath in the water of *Mukhtaseri Bawolie* (*Yum-hari* pond) for abolutions, before entering into the

*Yum har* temple. Stein mentioned that devotees took sacred baths on *Mukhtaseri* which is situated between *Madhumati* and *Sericella* fort (*Rajatarangini*, Ashlok 1164- 1174 -78).

This *Yumari* village and the adjacent mound exposed a variety of cultural material including utensils with delicate designs, mud bowls, and melted iron items. It seems that the *Yum-har temple*, *Ganesh Ghati*, *Sericella* fort and other archaeological ruins adjacent to the mound were part of a single complex in the ancient time which needs to be studied further through excavation.

#### **2.4.9 Site No 9. Rainsah walli**

**Period;** Ca.8<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> century CE

##### **Location**

The *Rainsah walli* site 34°47'.20.23 " N and 74°10' 38.73" L and 2096 m above the sea level is 3 Kilometers far from *Sericella* fort complex. The place is locally known as *Rainsah walli Nullah* which is flowing down from *Rainsah walli* village.

##### **Description**

There is a troika of cup-marks inscribed on a boulder near the *Rainsah walli Nullah*. This water spring is approximately 12 metres high facing towards the west. Three angles or troika has significance in the Sharda Civilization such as three lake ideas associated with Sharda Temple and the troika of inscribed stone slab *Seri-chakra*. In the hill of *Bhimbetka* District *Raisen*, Madhya Pradesh there is older painted rock-shelter belonging to the Nanga cult. The contemporary inhabitants of the area ritually poured milk on the cup-marks and regarded this as fertility symbol (Jacrrbson 1980:65, 82). There is a natural cavity along the cup marks in *Pernem* village where an oblong stone venerated as a divine image is located and is marked with red pigmented stone which is considered as a manifestation of the Goddess *Bolhai*; a local expression of the mother Goddess (Kosambi 1987:48-49). The inhabitants of the *Rainsah walli* village in Neelum Valley belong to the *Naga* (serpents) clans. Kashmir has rich

history of the *Naga* (serpents) civilization. Many springs are associated with *Nags* or serpents which have a religious significance in Jainism. The folks of that village used to wear pointed caps that apparently look like snakes (serpents) which reflected their clan's identity and also acted as a continuity of ancient traditions (Pl.No.27 Fig 65-66).

#### **2.4.10 Site No 10. Dogra Fort Sharda**

##### **Location**

The site of Sharda Dogra fort lies at 34°47' .28.55 " N and 74°11' 24.96" L 1836 m above sea level and the fort is located on the left bank of river Neelum, in Tehsil Sharda. The *Madhumati* stream passes from the south east of fort and joins the river 150 meters away. The fort occupies a small irregular mound in the south east of the Sharda Temple. The surrounding area of the fort is occupied by distinctive architecture of wooden houses. This village is mostly inhabited by Hindko speakers.

**Measurements:** L: 30.7m, W: 35.3m; Wall: Th: 1.5 m; Bastion: H: 9.1m

**Entrance of the bastion:** W: 0.82m; Number of loopholes in Bastion: 16

##### **Period**

Dogra Raj Period, 18<sup>th</sup> century CE

##### **Description**

The fort is a square-shaped enclosure with four bastion towers in each corner. The preserved bastion is octagonal in shape and is located on the south eastern corner. The other three bastions are no more surviving. The bastion consists of two stories and covered roofs. The wall of the bastion has loopholes for viewing and firing. The defensive wall of the fort is on the frontal side and is rectangular in shape. There are remains of an entrance in the northern exterior wall of the fort. The material of the construction is river pebbles, wooden planks and mud. The large wooden logs of deodar were used in the roof of the fort. The interior side of the roof is layered with birch bark and is plastered with mud.

The fort along with the watch bastion was built on strategically important locations as a track originates from Kashmir to Chilas (Bates 1873: 338). There is also a direct route from the right bank of Neelum River on the opposite site of fort along the *Surgun Nullah* which leads to Gilgit Baltistan. In the past, the fort was a complex of barracks and small garrisons consisting about over few dozen soldiers with an officer were deployed here (ibid: 339). During the Afghan period, wooden barracks were situated near the Dogra fort on the left side of *Madhumati* stream to control the movement of people (Stein 1900:341). The ruined structure of the Dogra Fort belongs to the 1830's (Pl.No.28 Fig 67-68). According to Stein: A square rubble-built structure which stands almost opposite to the temple, on the left bank of the *Madhumati*, was erected in Maharaja Gulab Singh's time, to guard the valley against the inroads of marauding *Cilasis* who, in the Surgun valley, had a convenient route to descend by. I found there a small garrison of Dogra and Sikhs, some forty men, belonging to irregular Khaildar troops (ibid: 284).

#### **2.4.11 Site Nagdar Kunari**

##### **Location**

The Nagdar village lies at 34° 40'. 59- 25.6" N and 073o 54'.11.4" E and, 2096 m above the sea level. *Baboon Ka Kutta* stream is on the north of this place which connects with Kaghan Valley (Bates 1890:618). Nagdar has a number of hamlets at various altitudes interconnecting with each other with narrow pathways in the alpine layout. *Kunari* is one of small habitats situated about a kilometer away in the north from main Neelum road, on the right side of the river. A number of Islamic sites: Shrines, Mosques and graves were documented by this researcher from Nagdar village during field survey of 2015-16.

## **Description**

The site is commonly known as *Nagdar Kunari*, which is situated on a slope hill at the distance of 10 kilometers in the North West of Neelum village. The *Nagdar Kunari*, village is famous for centuries old graves which are associated with Sufi saints commonly known as Three Syed's. Every year, these graves of Three Syed's are ceremoniously mud plastered by the womenfolk at the start of spring. After the 2005 earthquake, the local people took steps to protect the graves by placing tin sheds and wooden planks. People gather here from far off and seek spiritual blessings at these shrines (Pl.No.29 Fig 69-70).

It is narrated by residents of the village that in 1398 CE, King Timur Lang beheaded these Sufi saints and they were buried here. Timur Lang's account of his invasions of the adjoining region of Central Asia, Afghanistan, Kashmir and India authenticate the narrative that thousands of people were killed during his campaigns. The victims among other religious and scholarly people included Sufi saints who were beheaded because apparently they opposed King Timur Lang's acts of violence. Kashmiri historian K.Warikoo states in his book 'Central Asia and Kashmir':

The fourteen century saw the establishment of Islam in Kashmir at the hands of Syed Sharaf-ud-Din (popularly known as Bulbul Shah) of Turkestan. The subsequent development of Islam in the valley owes a lot to the activities of the hundreds of Sufis and Syeds who travelled over long distances to reach Kashmir as a result of King Timure lane atrocities in their homeland (Warikoo 1989: 91).

Besides the fact that Neelum Valley was somewhat away from the reaches of the King's endeavours as Kishenganga Valley at that time was politically and economically less attractive for invaders from west. The graves at Nagdar are on the entering route from Kaghan across the difficult mountainous terrain.

A few kilometers away from the shrine of Three Syed's there is another shrine complex that exists on the eastern slopes of the *Nagdar* Mountain and is known as *Chaebani Ziarat* or a *Ziarat Gali*. This shrine of *Chaebani* in *Nagdar Kunari* is also associated with the *Dargah* of another reverent Sufi saint known as *Qalandar Baba*. This shrine was revered on both sides of the LoC, in Kashmir and surrounding areas prior to division. People from all communities visited this shrine but after division another *Ziarat* of *Qalandar Baba* was built on east of LoC in a village known as *Boore* in the Indian administered Kashmir. During the war of 1972 some land of *Boore* village was occupied by Indian forces and the population is shifted to village *Booroebala* in Pakistan administered Kashmir. The two villages *Boore* and *Booroebala* are separated via *Nullah Boore* between the administered parts of two countries.

The *ziarats* or *Mazars* as they have become places of veneration and hence are most frequently visited. This is reflective of the highly respectful position that the buried person holds for the people. These graves are simple mud structures without any head stones and the area around these shrines is covered with a thick forest of pine, with colourful flags hoisted on top of the trees. In the Manikyal town of Gilgit Baltistan similar types of graves of the five *Shuhadas* (Martyrs) have been documented by A.H Dani. These old graves have decorated coffins and wooden head posts (Dani 1995: 32-104).

There is another old elaborated ornamental wooden grave which exists in Nagdar, associated with an unidentified Sufi saint. The grave is occupying an ancient mound on the right bank of *Nullah Nagdar* five kilometres far from Neelum village. Although the foundation of grave is that of river pebbles, mud and stone blocks, the upper structure consists of wood planks and logs. There is a variety of designs including lotus and *Diya* (small oil lamps of clay) patterns which are engraved which is the continuity of the traditional style of the area. Local inhabitants inform that the wooden structures have been renovated using exactly the same engraved patterns over the known periods (Pl.No.29 Fig 71-72).



Similar type of ancient simple mud graves with head stones are in Hunza, *Tangir*, *Darel* and Gilgit (Dani 1989: 56). In Swat, Kohistan and Gilgit wooden graves may also be found known as coffins. There are elaborate ornamental carvings on them beside geometrical and floral motifs which are common in Muslim monuments. There are also carved wooden mosques and *ziarats* (graves of holy people as places of reverence) at *Dassu* and the adjoining areas which were introduced here from Kashmir Valley. Although, these structures are built in the recent years yet they are the carriers of the older traditions. Kohistan is the region which makes a real divide between the Himalaya, Hindukush and Karakorum (Dani 1995: 32).

In Neelum Valley, at the south of Sharda Temple and the left bank of *Madhumati* stream at a distance of about two Kilometers, there is an ancient graveyard (that mostly consists of standing burials). Amongst these there is a grave in Islamic tradition shadowed by an ancient *Chinar* tree. According to the oral history of the valley, this tree was planted by Syed Jamal-ul-Din, one of the disciples of Syed Ali Hamdani, who was later buried in Sharda (Stein 1900: 284). The tradition of plantation of trees on a child's birth still exists in Central Asian regions of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and in Neelum Valley of Kashmir. In the beginning of the fifteenth century the Sufi saints of *Reshi* orders arrived in Kashmir from Persia, Central Asia and north and inhabited in the area which had already infused with the traditions of the Hindu ascetic and Buddhist renunciation (Warikoo 1989:92).

It is most likely that Sufis, Muslim scholars and the Syed saints migrated from Central Asia and settled in the various parts of Kashmir. Since Neelum Valley is nearer to the Central Asian approach towards Indian subcontinent, and it also shared similar environment to that of Central Asia, these people made this region their abode. Several Syed families that still live in the area are highly revered. For centuries these clans of Sufi Syed's spread knowledge in

the area, both religious as well as basic education, and had a very important impact on the socio-cultural life of the valley which still exists in various forms of cultural heritage.

#### **Site no. 2.4.12 Kosab Pura Mosque at Nagdar**

##### **Location**

The Kosab *Pura* site in Nagdar village is situated at a distance of 2 kilometers from Nagdar *bazaar* on the right side of the river Neelum. Nearest is the village *Budanpura* from where, the researcher documented commemorative stone and rock inscriptions.

##### **Description**

In the Kosab *Pura* there is a wooden Mosque that stands prominent on the right side of the Nagdar *Nullah*, at the distance of 5 kilometers from Nagdar *bazaar*. This ancient Mosque is also mentioned in the Gazetteer of Kashmir and Ladakh 1890 (Bates 1870:285). Besides having traditional architectural features of the adjoining places the mosque has rich engraved designs and decorations with Central Asian influence. This type of Mosque is the continuation of the mosque architectural structures existing in Gilgit Baltistan, Srinagar and other parts of Kashmir.

The Kosab *Pura* mosque is built on a high plinth. It consists of a central main prayer hall, small *hojjra* (small open room attached to the hall), with a decorated arch and L shaped verandah on its eastern and northern sides. The western side of the mosque enclosure is occupied by the prayer chamber which is rectangular in plan. The flowing water stream is the main source of water supply near the Mosque. The eastern side of the verandah is closed by blind wooden arch screens and entrance has a wooden door, while the southern side is open. The trefoil pointed arches are typically of Central Asian type. There are three blind arches with decorative geometrical patterns on the west and five on the northern side. The partitions of veranda have different geometrical and floral carvings on each side. The base shaft, capital pillars of the central hall are beautifully decorated in Corinthian style along acanthus pattern.

The pillars are highly decorative with different designs along the supportive brackets (Pl.No.30 Fig 73-74). In Gilgit Baltistan and Hunza, brackets are mostly missing in the building structures and the beams rest directly on the pillars. In some cases, particularly in Baltistan the eastern façade of mosques show a row of arches; sometimes these arches rest on slender, tapering pillars placed on highly decorated cornice. On the other hand in Swat, Dir and Kohistan, massive brackets capitals are seen. These types of supportive brackets were also used in the cornice of the Buddhist stupa, which not only hold the structure but also serve a decorative purpose (Dani 1989: 50-51).

#### **2.4.12.1 Material**

The basic construction material for the foundation and for the walls is the stone boulders and pebbles. These stone blocks are held together with the support of wooden beams. The wooden *Mahrab* of the mosque is decorated facing west towards *Nullah* Nagdar. On the ceiling of the main hall instead of wood there is use of the bark of an indigenous tree, locally known as *Bhoj pathar* (bark of a tree). The bark is fixed with ceiling in such a manner that in the first look one cannot guess the type of material it is. The bark of *Bhoj pathar* has worth in keeping warm during harsh climates and snowy weather and it also saves wood from decay.

#### **2.4.12.2 Ornamentation of the Mosque**

The most significant feature of the mosque is the wood engravings and artistry which is evident from its exquisite motifs. This ornamentation is on various parts: façade, wooden doors, pillars, roof, and ceiling of the structure. These delicate designs of wood carvings in the mosque structure also reflect the workmanship of Kashmiri artisans. The engraved motifs of cypress tree and garland decorations are a continuity of Mughal theme of ornamentation along typical Mughal column (Dani 1989:58-60). The prayer chamber is exquisitely decorated as in the main gateway, depicting floral geometrical wooden panels with fine *Jali*

(openwork carving). This ornamentation is applied on the walls, ceilings, and soffits of arches (Pl.No.30 Fig 75-76).

There is a variety of wooden panels bearing composite flowering plants, geometrical patterns, on plain wooden background. The star like patterns filled with miniature decoration spread out on the ceiling of the veranda in the form of encircling motifs. There are plenty of inverted lotus string cases in engraved wooden panels of the mosque structure. Similar types of lotus patterns were frequently used in the Buddhist art of Gandhara. Identical decorative vocabulary was utilized in the building architecture of Gilgit Baltistan, directly derived from the Kashmiri monuments of Shah Hamdan. The art of wood carvings, *Panjira* and *Khatam Banda* were originally brought to Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan and adjoining regions by Shah Hamdan (Warlkoo 1989: 91-93 & Dani 1989:48-60).

The carved door frame of the prayer chamber shows circular creepers, embossed patterns, interconnecting squares, rectangular and bracket motifs in old style. The upper part of the door frame has geometric motifs within the broad pointed arch of the old style. Few engraved designs, lotus, acanthus leaves and chain motif of this mosque are found similar to the wooden engraved graves (coffin) in Nagdar village a few kilometers far from this place.

#### **2.4.12.3 Origins and Continuity of Design**

Originally the Kosab pura Mosque had a towering spire which has been completely demolished during the renovation that took place in 2015 and an additional tin roof tower was added. In the Kosab pura Mosque, placement of the main pillar below the roof holds the whole upper structure of the Mosque, which consists of wooden logs and stones. The round stone of different sizes were placed one by one in a way to create a huge spire over the roof of the Mosque. This technique of making spire is similar to the finical umbrella of Buddhist stupa structure. In the 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> CE, this method had been used in the construction of harmica *Chattra* of the Buddhist stupas in Gandhara which is a representation of the Buddha sacred

tree. The *Chattra* spire, railing harmica of the stupa had greatly influenced the later architectural designs (Dani 1989:51). There are a number of tombs and Mosques in Gilgit Baltistan, Kashmir Valley and the adjoining areas of Neelum with this type of towering spire. This towering spire construction is also known as eastern style where the roof has in its centre, a towering pyramidal spire, mostly seen in Gilgit, Hunza and Baltistan. In Swat, Dir and Kohistan all the mosques have flat roofs, which are of a western style of architecture. According to Ahmed Hussain Dani:

This type of spire in the area is a copy of the Buddhist relic's chamber, if this is correct then the tall spire is a stylised form of the receding umbrella that one sees on the top of the stupa. The popularity of such spires in this region also emphasises the survival of local Buddhist element in the architectural style (Dani 1989:51).

This tower like tapering spire is obviously derived from Kashmir, where from the first time; it is seen in the building associated with the name of Shah -Hamdan. This famous Sufi saint of 14<sup>th</sup> - 15<sup>th</sup> century CE was responsible for the spread of Islam in the Valley of Kashmir, Gilgit Baltistan and Neelum Valley. The hundreds of followers of Shah-i-Hamdan settled in various parts of Kashmir. Apart from the services to religion and spreading Islam, they established academic institutions, along with arts & craft centres (Warlko 1989: 91).

The ruins of the earliest Mosque of Neelum Valley have been identified in village *Salkhala* which was built by Baba Abdullah around 1500 CE. People of the area have strong confidence that Baba Abdullah was also a Sufi saint of the *Reshi* order from Center Asia who played an important role to spread the message of Islam and to initiate the construction of the first mosque in the area. Though it is difficult to date the original construction of the Salkhala Mosque, the material structure of this mosque is stone, mud plaster and wood. The 16<sup>th</sup> century Kashmiri mosques were built by mud and wooden structure derived from the conventional architecture of adjoining region. Similar types of Mosques are in Gilgit

Baltistan near *Sher Qila* fort and *Shakyal* Mosque near the old fort which is the combination of mud logs and engraved wooden structure (Ray, Sunil Chandra, Dani 1989:55).

At first glance, the *Kosab pura*, Nagdar Mosque bears resemblance to a traditional Kashmiri Mosque; however, close inspection reveals that its features have been shaped by years of architectural history in the region. The wooden engravings, motifs and architectural features of *Kosab pura* Mosque are a continuity of earliest designs of the region. These elements are present in the form of a huge spire of roof, brackets of stupa harmica, trefoil Mughal arches; use of indigenous materials such as birch bark and of Central Asian designs. The architectural motifs, wood carvings, arts and crafts which are still in fashion, strengthen the notion of the Central Asian influence on the ways of life of this land.

#### **2.4.13 Wooden Houses of Neelum Valley**

The *Larri* or *Nanaz* is a Kashmiri word used for these wooden houses which are apparently very simple structures but fulfill almost all the requisites, necessary for human dwellings. The documented wooden houses in Neelum Valley are over hundred years old. The architectural details of one of the houses are given here.

The two story house is situated in the village Sharda facing west, and has large opening on upper half of northern and southern wooden walls. The ground floor has a big hall with adjacent rooms. It is used for cattle and storage of wood and grass. The height of the ground floor structure is 1.90 meters and the length is 8.75 meters. The side wall width is 7.70 meters. There are small holes of 20 by 20 centimeters for ventilation in western wall. The stairs, of eight steps lead to the second floor. Each stair is one meter in length and 28 centimeters in width, along with a wooden railing. The second floor is used for living purposes with verandas in the western and southern walls, rooms and separate Kitchens for summers and winters (Pl.No.31 Fig:77-78). The western veranda facing towards river Neelum comprises summer fire area, a grainery and extended washroom. The veranda has

five pillars made of the wood used in raw form or without finishing. The Width of the veranda is 1.7 meters and its length is 6.8 meters. The height of the second floor wall is 2.60 meters. The door is 2 meters in height and one meter in width. The floor of the house, walls and doors all are made up of raw wood. These big wooden jars are used for storage of corn and lentils. The diameter of the wooden grain jar is 2.7 meters and height is 2 meters. The washroom, measuring 1.5 x 1.5 meters. The veranda has a single door which opens into a gallery. The gallery leads into other rooms and the winter fire area, which is mud plastered and has a chimney. There are two rooms on both the sides of fire area. In one wall of each of the rooms, a small hole of about 20 x 20 centimeters for ventilation is present. There are no windows in this area owing to the extremely cold weather during winter season.

The fire area is rather warm and is used to sleep during winter season. The upper most floors have a single hall without any partition and are opened on two sides under a triangular shaped slanting roof for the crossing of air. This is designed purposely so that the air passes through the storage of dry vegetables, summer fruits, apples, walnuts and other herbs which are stored for consumption in winter.

#### **2.4.13.1 Main architectural features and the function of the wooden houses**

Most of the houses in Neelum Valley consist of double or triple stories; the ground floor is used for cattle, the second floor for living area, and the third floor for the storage of winter edibles. The main material used in the construction of the houses is simple, undressed wooden logs or planks. All the houses have a veranda or balcony and windows for light and air. Furthermore, the wooden dwellings skillfully maintain kitchens and washrooms, though wood is vulnerable to fire and water. Fire also burns in the kitchen of each house which is in its inner most quarters (Pl.No.31 Fig 79-80).

The main architecture features of their structure functionality along with aesthetics of its dwellers are as following:

#### **2.4.13.2 Plinth**

Selection of land to build a house is important for stability of the house. Structure of every house is raised on a plinth of stones, essential for its stability and also to save it from moisture and termites. Stone plinth, in this context also strengthens the foundation of the structure, because in the entire valley the foundations of a house are not laid on soil. Instead, strong stone bases are provided to construct an edifice.

#### **2.4.13.3 Ground Floor**

The wooden houses are multi-storied structures and each section serves some purpose of utility. The lower most (that is, the ground floor) is reserved for animals that satisfy most of their basic needs. Ground floor consists of two chambers with a small hall. It is enclosed from all sides, except small windows for light and ventilation, and also to keep the cattle warm in winter and safe from the extremities of the cold weather. Provision of fodder and the process of milking is also done there.

Ground floor is designed to provide hygienic atmosphere to the livestock, for which a ventilator in the form of a window is provided, whether it be first floor or basement. It lets fresh air and light, otherwise, there is no source either of the two. But usually, there is only one window, and its size is kept very small, to keep the cattle flock warm in extreme colds, because in winter they are kept there while in summer the space is only used at night. Every facility is maintained in this floor to provide fodder, so wooden mangers are almost fixed in an organized way, even if the livestock is larger in number. Mostly six or seven cows along with goats are kept by each owner, so Bara is spacious enough to accommodate the animals easily and maintain cleanliness of the area as well.

This floor is divided into two portions; dwellings of cattle and the area to keep fire wood along with fodder that may be grass or herbage.



#### **2.4.13.4 Second Storey**

Purpose of keeping residential areas in the second story is to live separate from animals while not getting completely apart from them. Inner part of this story is a compact unit , enclosed from all four sides, but pierced with small windows for ventilation and light. This arrangement keeps a house warm with presence of only one furnace in the kitchen, almost in the center of the house.

The gallery or veranda on three or four sides of the house is very beneficial, both in the winters and summers. It keeps the inner structure away from direct link from extremities of the weather and is also useful for other purposes, like drying of wet cloths, facilitating fresh air and sunlight that is essentially required for healthy living. All these benefits are provided by the verandas, because they have no open courtyards. The summer kitchen is also maintained on one side of the corridor. In a corner of the gallery, another hearth is built in the manner of the inner kitchen, with mud plaster covering. Thus the family can enjoy the summer breeze along with food.

#### **2.4.13.5 Upper Story (Attic)**

The upper most story which is the attic, was created by the gable of the roof is also most valuable because it serves the function of preserving food for rainy days and also acts as an insulation barrier between the house and the surrounding cold winds. The attic too, is extremely useful and technically constructed for reservation and storage of meat, fruits and vegetables, along with cheese, to save these for snowy days of the winter, while preserving their nutrient value as well. The attic is open from both sides to let fresh air cross the floor to accelerate the drying power of the food, set therefore preservation. So, each story has a distinct value and is constructed for a different purpose (Pl.No.32 Fig 81-82).

#### 2.4.13.6 Kitchen

Among the rooms surrounding the gallery, a central room is allocated for the kitchen. It is usually most spacious, having a fire place for cooking food and an open cupboard, where utensils are arranged in rows of compartments. The oven or furnace is surmounted by a projected mantle on which cooking items are kept. A slanting projection slopes down from its cornice that provides shelter too because a chimney is placed in its inside that opens out by piercing through the gable of the roof. It is a perfect outlet for smoke (Pl.No.32 Fig 83-84).

The fire place is surrounded by low heighted wooden chairs to sit and enjoy the warmth in cold weather. The kitchen serves multifarious purposes: beside being a place for cooking food, serving and eating, it functions as a seating room in winter, especially for the womenfolk. After cooking food, other daily toils like embroidery, spinning wool, basketry, etc. are also performed there because it is the coziest section of the house. They use *Namda* or felt carpet for floor sitting; animal skin is also used for the purpose because in winter, kitchen also serves the function of a sleeping room, for being warmer than the entire house. Sometimes a *Charpai* (A type of bed) is placed as the kitchen is also a multipurpose central place. It is surrounded by bedrooms that may be four or six, according to size of the house.

One room, which is longer, serves the function of a pantry, reserved for storage of kitchen accessories and keeps a small amount of fire wood for daily use only. Otherwise, fire wood is placed in a separate room on the ground floor, where the cattle are kept. Grains, rice and pulses are kept within wooden containers, formed by hollowed wooden trunks. Herbs and dried vegetables are placed within home-made baskets, and oil prepared from butter is also kept there.

The most amazing part about kitchen is that the whole structure is wooden. Wood ignites fire in the cooking oven but the house is not set a blaze. To overcome the threat of blazing, a thick layer of mud plaster is applied at the fireplace and in its vicinity for the safety of the

entire wooden structure. It is very well said that necessity is the mother of invention; hence that very plaster is also thickly applied on mantle, as a safety measure. To strengthen it, herbs and wild plants are chopped and mixed into mud, enhancing its binding power.

#### **2.4.13.7 Washroom**

The washroom is an essential part of each house, and is located in the veranda, projected outside, built on the cantilever principle. It is usually a small square room keeping a bucket of water and a small seat to sit and take bath or perform ablution. It is suspended outwards, not placed inside the house to avoid spreading of moisture in the structure.

Moreover, in olden houses, where pipe system was not introduced, channels of wooden planks were used to throw away liquid waste. But after the mighty earthquake of 2005, many modern elements were introduced in the remote areas, thus plastic pipes are now used for the purpose.

#### **2.4.13.8. Construction Techniques**

Construction techniques of the houses are actually based on the age old system of building bridges on Cantilever principle. The entire structure is laid on massive piers, erected on layers of logs to make these strong enough to withstand weight of the edifice. For ordinary pillars simple tree trunks are used. The strong vertical posts or piers are surmounted by a horizontal, laid crosswise like headers and stretchers. Similar system was applied for building walls as well as superstructures (Brown 1988:85). This style of construction is columnar and tribated, not arcade, as vertical posts are covered with horizontal beams. Either planks of wood are used or logs attached firmly with mortise and *Tenon* method, using *dovetail* joints. Usually logs of wood are split apart with the help of a saw, forming planks or vertical posts called *thum*, chiseled at the upper ends and fitted into horizontal beams, called *batta*, making a T-shape construction.

The entire structure is built around that T-shape, fitted so tightly that it interlocks the two pieces. It is locally called *Chul* system. It is further crisscrossed with smaller beams, covering the entire ceiling. The T-shaped vertical and horizontal columns and beams are the base on which the whole structure of the house is built. To provide greater solidity and to protect the *thum* from termites, it is fixed within a stone base called *Chukka*. The stone block is hollowed from the inside and upright wooden posts are fixed within it, not directly pressed into the ground.

Moreover, the structures are built on higher up plinths. These are multi-storied structures with their truncated apex and gabled roofs ascending in tiers of pyramidal form, with overhanging eaves to protect lower sections from rain water or snow. Rafters of the gable and overhanging eaves are covered with planks of wood and then further provided water proof surfaces, as Brown observes multi layers of birch-bark locally called *Bhoj Patter* (Bates 1870:370). It is placed in three, four or five layers, covering the entire space of the gables, forming ridges and recesses.

Slopes of the gables and their understanding plains serve as snow and water conductors because snow does not rest for long on the slanting spaces and it will fall gradually, not abruptly, and these can also be easily replaced when damaged. At some places, needles of pine are sometimes mixed with mud mortar and placed like frills at edges of the gables; it also works as a water conductor that allows water to fall drop by drop and protects the inner side from seepage and decay.

For refined houses, logs are square shaped and their interstices are filled with either bricks or tile work, or developed into niches. *Dovetail* joints are occasionally used while simple stouter wooden pins are usually applied to join logs (Brown 1988: 85). Some of the houses contain arches which are false for not having load bearing capacity. Their usage is decorative, only forming fence of veranda. It adds an element of beauty to the simple structures.

#### **2.4.13.9. Material**

In Neelum Valley wood was easily available and so was used for the construction of houses. The houses are based on simple undressed wooden logs or dressed planks. The woods used are *Fig, Pine, Shisham, Kail* which is locally available, but most frequent is that of Cedar (Deodar).

#### **2.4.13.10. Origin**

The history of refined wooden houses construction goes back to the period of King Zain-ul-Abidin, which is considered the Golden age of wooden art, craft and architecture in Kashmir (Gosh 2009: 32). Tracing the origin of the structure, one finds that it is based on Yurt, which is a form of Mongolian tent constructed on the same vertical post and horizontal beam system, with a circular ring at the top providing some covering. This is an influence of Central Asia, also known as *Pamiri* style of construction. Many features of Central Asian culture are also adopted here.

The influence of Kashmiri style architecture spread in many surrounding areas; the lantern roof of the wooden architecture is visible even in the decorative elements used to adorn rock carved chambers in Bamiyan Valley in Afghanistan (Mumtaz 1989: 30). It is recorded historically that Shah Hamdan moved to Kashgar from Kashmir by passing through Gilgit Baltistan, a introduced the Kashmiri style architecture there (Dani 1995; 41). The houses of Kashmiri speakers are well designed and well planned as compared to the other inhabitants of the valley. This also reflects their unique cultural link with the Central Asian traditions.

#### **2.4.13.11 Aesthetics**

From an aesthetic point of view, these houses are generally devoid of ornamentation; their plain wooden planks have a rather simplest structure and provide beautiful contrasts of light and shade. Overhanging eaves truncated, superimposed structures, undulating the surface of birch-bark on the roof-gables of the houses, break monotony or rigid formality of the

structures and create attractive passages of light and shadow. Similarly, the veranda is further bedecked with perforated grills of parapets formed by small wooden strips, arranged into a variety of patterns, while the parapets along with their upper fringes are shaped into patterns by placing of wooden strips in vertical and horizontal arrangements. Some houses have wooden engravings on the doors and windows with geometrical designs, and a variety floral and leaf patterns (Khan 2014:24). The interesting part about these structures is that their utilitarian objects are mostly wooden and shoe-stands are placed in their corridors and they are also wooden (Pl.No.33 Fig: 85-86).

#### **2.4.13.12 Environmental Friendliness**

Most amazing is that the wooden houses of Neelum Valley are environment friendly. These can withstand earthquakes of Richter scale 8.7 that cannot be guaranteed by even stone structures. The reason behind this is scientific engineering. A stone or brick structure can fully collapse with jolts because it has no elasticity, whereas, the way beams are placed, these go on rotating, causing less damage. This was proved in the mighty earthquake of 2005. Excessive destruction was caused by concrete and stone structures, and very less by the wooden. Here, the architect is nature's child whose culture is molded by centuries of experience.

These houses are also saved from insects not by any auxiliary help of insecticides but by their daily toils. Smoke emitted from kitchen along with evaporated oil serve the function of insecticides because they provide a bitter covering to the surface of wood and an insect dares not bite it. The wooden architecture helps us in the understanding of human life in the past and provides evidence of indigenous human skill required to utilize these resources. There is a need to explore and preserve intangibles heritage which is fading out due to human vandalism and in the wake of commercialization in the area.

In conclusion we must say that uifurther researches in term of archaeological explorations and excavations are more than a necessity here, so that the true cultural profile of the valley could be developed, which would definitely provide a sound base for determining chronological events that took place between the Neolithic Period and the Early Medieval Period here.

## **2.5. Private Collection of Artifacts from Neelum Valley**

**An Axe** (Pl. No. 34 Fig.87)

**Location:** Khawaja Seri East

**Material:** Iron

**Size:** L: 6.5cm, W: 1cm, Th: 2.54cm.

### **Description**

It is an iron axe, with an elongated body as well as an expanded and squeezed head. It seems that, judging from its present state, it is made up of crude iron. It is provided with a hovel for wooden shaft. It is presently in the private collection.

**An Anklet:** (Pl. No.34 Fig.88 a.)

**Location:** Khawaja Seri East

**Material:** Copper

**Diameter:** 7.6 cm.

### **Description**

The anklet has linear engraved design. It has been reported from a grave worn by a dead person. This clearly shows Gandhara grave culture.

**Dish** (Pl. No 34 Fig.88.b)

**Location:** Dosout

**Material:** Terracotta

**Size :** Dia: 24.8 cm, W: 24.8 cm x H: 4.5 cm

**Description**

It is deep dish like basin with thick texture and everted rim. Wheel made and flat base.

**Cooking Pot** (Pl.No.35 Fig.89)

**Location:** Yumheri

**Material:** Terracotta

**Size :** W ; 20.8 x H: 20 cm

**Description**

Cooking pot in red slip, slightly over baked. The texture is slightly gritty and sections vary thickness from thin to medium. The body has incised lines with alternative zig-zag slit patterns in between. The base is round; everted rim and wheel made.

**Miniature Vessels** (Pl.No.35 Fig. 90)

**Location:** Mundkar village

**Material:** Terracotta

**Quantity:** 14

**Description**

14 number of handmade miniature vessels, relatively in variable sizes and thin textures; a few of them are slightly damaged but the remaining are in good state of preservation. All of them have inverted rims, round bases and fine texture.

**2.6 Recommendations for Further Research**

The survey conducted by this researcher in the Neelam Valley has confirmed the potential of further exploration of the area. We have already come across Neolithic culture at Tehjian, while we have succient cultural material from t earlier medieval period. There is a gap between pre-historic periods and the earlier medieval period. This gap can only and conveniently be filled, if more explorations and excavation are carried out in the Neelam



Valley in general and the Tehjian in particular. At *Reshna*, Dudnial there is an ancient mound where old Jars had been dug out by the locals. They are similar in concept as the Gandhara graves (Dani 1995: 33). During the salvage excavation 2012-14 adjacent to the Sharda Temple in Neelum Valley, this researcher also documented a variety of cultural material including terracotta pipes and bricks (Pl.No.36-38 Fig. 91-93). The discovery of these pipes and bricks is very significant, as it means that the area was an urban settlement. These terracotta pipes belonged to first century CE, which could have been used for drainage or carrying water, but this notion is yet to be determined and confirmed (Pl.No.39-40 Fig. 94-95) . It is important to mention that the kinds of Terracotta pipes and bricks were also unearthed in various locations in *Gurez* Valley: along *Shounter Nullah*, *Kel* also discovered from *Gander-bal* and Bandipora in Indian Held Kashmir (Rising Kashmir: 2017). These sites are located on an itinerary which remained an ancient route from Kashmir to Central Asia.

## **CHAPTER: 3**

### **THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF NEELUM VALLEY**

#### **3. Intangible Cultural Heritage**

The concept of cultural heritage has gradually converged into two major categories: intangible and tangible heritage. UNESCO had produced a working definition of intangible cultural heritage in its October, 2003 convention which calls for the need of consideration towards the intangible form of cultural heritage. The definition of intangible cultural heritage in the UNESCO convention of October, 2003 highlight: Intangible cultural heritage can mean the practices, representations, expressions, human knowledge, indigenous ways, local skill as well as artifacts and objects. Intangible heritage also depicts cultural spaces associated with communities, groups in some cases individual activities as a part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage is transmitted from generation to generation. It is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history. Intangible cultural heritage has provided them with a sense of identity and continuity and this enables them to have strong cultural diversity and human creativity (UNESCO 2003:2).

This definition refers to numerous forms of intangible cultural heritage, such as oral traditions, expressions, languages, crafts, rituals, practices, festivals, knowledge and traditional skills. According to this definition the various forms of intangible cultural heritage are present in the existing communities of Neelum Valley. The intangible cultural heritage has been reflected in crafts, cuisines, dresses, languages, and cultural spaces. Peoples' ways of life have been closely connected to natural resources such as herbs and water. These expressions of intangible heritage are sources of human wisdom, social cultural and economic conditions. Intangible heritage has provided the inhabitants in Neelum Valley with

cultural identity. Many rituals are associated with the cultural and natural places that have been important for the communities or groups since the past. Many specific events are present in the ancient literature of Kashmir which helps to sketch out the earlier lives of people in the area. In this study, the researcher has explored the intangible heritage, such as traditional outfits and jewellery, crafts, textiles, cuisines, festivals, rituals; stories associated cultural spaces, languages and ethnic groups of Neelum Valley.

### **3.1. Celebration of Events and Festivals**

The physical features of Kashmir and its adjoining area had had great influences on the society, culture and history of the area. *Nilamata Puranas* ancient Sanskrit text mentions customs and rituals of Kashmir to welcome and commemorate spring; snow falls, harvesting of fruits and new crops. These celebrations are a portrayal of a cheerful and peaceful environment of the Valley. There was a custom of drinking wine on the new snow fall day which is unknown for the inhabitants of the plain areas (Kumari 1969:44-45). Neelum Valley has been carrying forward the legacy of these cultural celebrations. People welcome the spring cultivation season and melting time of snow when flowers start blooming. They visit their relatives' places, exchange traditional cuisines, offerings on shrines for the land fertility and new crops.

The *Rajatarangini* mentioned that the inhabitants celebrate festivals when crops had ripened in the fields. They prepared a variety of traditional foods as a ritual for more prosperity (Ray 1969:249- 250 Koul 1960: 180-184). *Nilamata Puranas* mentioned about the famous celebrations of the sowing of barley seeds, locally known as *Bofau*, which are held in Hunza, a place in the vicinity of Kashmir (Kumari 1969:109). The historical pass of *Shimshal* was the route of Hunza, Gilgit Baltistan, which remained an ancient route of the Silk Road between China, Kashmir Valley and Neelum Valley.

*Nowruz* is a festival celebrated since centuries and *Baisakhi*, a Hindu festival, which becomes synonymous with *Nowruz*, also remained as an important event in Jammu & Kashmir (Saraf 1987: 40). In Neelum Valley and Gilgit Baltistan, on the occasion of *Nowruz*, different food items are prepared with a combination of rice, milk and *ghee* as offerings to the Sufi saint shrines for seeking blessings. These traditions are a continuity of ancient beliefs in the region. In the remote past, special foods were prepared with combining butter, barley and pulses as festive dishes and offerings to deities (Koul 1960:121). Historically the festival *Nowruz* had more significance in the fertile mountains, river valleys and regions of present day northern Iran and Central Asia where this festival is celebrated on the arrival of spring after cold bleak winter. This festival is celebrated as a secular or cultural festival by the people of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Turkey, Afghanistan, Iran, and Gilgit Baltistan and Srinagar.

### **3.2. Traditional Cuisines**

The inhabitants of Neelum Valley enjoy a variety of traditional foods which are indigenous with respect to ingredients and preparation. Noticeable dishes are prepared with a combination of different vegetables such as karam, *kuri*, tomato, *saag* and *paneer* (Pl.No.41: Fig 96-97). The *paneer* is type of condensed milk locally known as *Kurn* in which milk and yogurt are boiled on low heat and placed under the sun to dry. Dairy products such as cheese, *ghee* and butter are abundantly used in the preparation of food. *Sheera* is one of the winter cuisines prepared by the combination of the herb *Ratan Jo* along with honey, corn flour, milk, butter. *Kehwa* is an excessively used drink besides the herbal salty pink tea known as *Masloon* in the local language.

The famous Chinese pilgrim Huien Tsang wrote that the area was abundantly rich in fruits including grapes, apricots, peers, apples, plums and dry fruits. He further elaborated that vegetables including rare herbs are an essential food item and are considered as healthy food

during winters. Condensed milk, curd honey and dried meat are also used by inhabitants in Kashmir. A variety of wild herbs on the mountain slopes and meadows of the Kashmir Valley are used as medicinal plants (Koul 1960: 180-184). In Neelum Valley one of the indigenous Kashmiri vegetables is *shilhwakh* which grows three thousand and fifty meters above sea level, immediately after the melting of snow on the hills in early spring. Wild vegetables such as *konji*, *longro*, *karam*, *bathova*, *khahoo*, *kalatri*, *malairooti* and *kuth* are common. These are plucked by folks during summer (Pl.No.41 Fig 98-99).

The inhabitants also preserved pumpkins, chillies and tomatoes for winter; they are left hanging on the upper decks of houses, where cross ventilation is available for drying. Usually the uppermost portion of house is planned such that it is open from both sides for passing air. The home-made pickles are prepared with the use of indigenous parsleys which work as anti-bacterial ingredients instead of vinegar.

Moorcroft writes in the Gazetteer of Kashmir and Ladakh that there are more than twenty varieties of grapes in Kashmir. In the month of October, people had preserved grapes in shallow earthen vessels for the winter. In the spring, they are used in the manufacture of wine, vinegar and brandy (Moorcroft 187:51). Marco-polo in the thirteenth century mentioned grape wine as a popular drink in Kashmir besides rice, fish, and pulses (Ray 1969:251-253). Neelum Valley is also famous for different types of grapes. *Rawat* village unearthed a number of mud containers and stone pressers and therefore, it is possible that people use to concealed eatables underground for preservation. In Poonch areas till 1970's people used the same method for preservation of corn and vegetables for hard weather.

A variety of rice was cultivated in Neelum Valley since long and it still forms the main constituent of daily diet in the homes of Kashmiri speakers. The Rajatarangini also mentioned that rice was an essential food of the people in Kashmir, beside barley lentils and shrubbery (Ray 1969:249).

In Neelum Valley the continuation of the traditional living style has preserved the cultural identity of the inhabitants as well as maintained the balance between natural resources and need-based usage of the same. It was due to less commercial influence that this was possible. This also brings forth an aspect of a sustainable socio-economic existence in the Valley.

### **3.3. Folk Music**

The *Sufuina Kalam* (devotional music of the Muslim mystics known as Sufis) and classical music were patronized by the Muslim Sultans of Kashmir. In Neelum Valley *Sufuina Kalam* is sung by individuals or in groups on special occasions: *Eids*, *Urs* and marriages. The *Kalam* of Mhajoor, Sheikh *Noor Din wali*, *Lala Ded* and *Hubba Khtoon* remain popular and have been handed over from one generation to the next. The *Kalam* is transmitted by the locals who frequently visited the annual festival or *Urs* in Kashmir Valley. *Hoor* is a typical Kashmiri song of marriages sung by females in the form of couplets, mostly based on the famous Kashmiri poetess *Hubba Khutoon's* poems. Womenfolk sing while working in paddy fields or during other household activities. One of the themes of the women's expressions or poetry is about conflict in the area. These songs are a reflection of pain and suffering, mostly in the memories of divided families. The folk songs of the area are steeped in antiquity, traditions and identity of the people in Jammu and Kashmir, and these traditions need to be preserved.

### **3.4. Ethnology of the Neelum Valley**

The different ethnic groups in Neelum Valley exclusively maintained the uniqueness of their attires, skills, crafts and living styles which shows multi customs in the inhabitants of the region. The textures of these textiles might have changed from hand-woven to machine-made but the layouts and stitching is still unique as compared to the traditions in the other parts of AJK. The areas nearest to Muzaffarabad in the south of valley have contemporary trends in

dress style. In remote areas such as *Kel*, *Helmet*, *Tao butt* and *Gurez*, the attire, crafts reflects more ethnic look. In Neelum Valley people produced several other articles by using locally available natural resources for domestic usage. This reflects self-sustainable environment of the area.

### **3.4.1. Costume Making Techniques**

Traditionally, in Neelum Valley the women folk used to make their clothing items themselves which includes: *pheran* (Persian word means: clothes), caps and beaded jewellery. The embroidery on clothes and caps is combination of red, yellow, orange and blue threads and has patch work of geometrical and floral designs (Pl.No.42: Fig 100-101).

The most fascinating outfit is *pheran*: a loose embroidered garment mostly available in black, for all inhabitants. This traditionally styled attire is unique in design, color schemes and motifs. The embroidery around the neck, sleeves, cuffs, and border of *pheran* (only for female) consists of floral patterns of multicolor threads. The dress code of the Kashmiri speakers is a little different from that of the Hindko ethnic group such that they used to wear simple black *pheran*. Besides *pheran*, the women folk used factory made garments, only in black, with a combination of colorful floral patterns (Pl.No.42: Fig 102--103).

The headdress is another fascinating wear of the areas as a variety of embroidered caps are worn by men, women and children. The make and type of these caps are varied according to age, status, occasion and season. The famous headdress of females is called '*Ksava*' in local language. This clothing accessory is extremely regarded and is worn by the elder ladies of the households. The '*Ksava*' is also stitched and prepared for brides in colorful patterns (Pl.No.43: Fig 104-107). There is another cap with a long flap and is used by the Kashmiri speakers on special occasions. This is termed as '*lachka*'. It is a combination of threads and beads. Similarly, in remote areas of this region colorful, casual and simple style caps made

from a combination of cloth, beads and threads are used by the middle aged women (Pl.No.44: Fig 108-109).

The Kashmiri dresses of the earliest times have been mentioned in the ancient text of *Nilamata Puranas*, *Rajatarangini* and in the accounts of the Chinese travelers. The cultural material unearthed during the excavation at various places also added significant aspects of earlier attires in the region. From Harwan, Srinagar, the sculptures and brick tiles of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE, have exposed the presence of ornamentation on attires. The female figures are portrayed in loose robes with unique jewelry items. On the other hand, the male figures are shown in fitted *Pajamas* or trousers and embroidered *Turkoman* caps, which reflects the influences of the Central Asian culture on Kashmir (Ray 1969: 256, Dani 1996: 70).

The well-known Chinese traveler Hiuen Tsang admired the wears of inhabitants during the mid of 7<sup>th</sup> century CE. He mentioned that people carried a loose and short garment which was eye-catching in design, layout and pattern (Pathak 2008:17). He matched the style of the loose garments with the Chinese attire, which is dropped till the ankles whereas the length of the *Phern* is just beneath the knees. That word 'Phern' which is derived from Persian word *Pairahan* means clothes that are worn by both the male and female inhabitants of Kashmir Valley (ibid).

The documented cultural material and the inscribed figures on the commemorative stone pillars from Nagdar Neelum Valley are important to mention here. The low relief stone pillar depicting a standing figure shows an outfit consisting of a close-fitting trouser, a robe and a *Turkoman* cap. The particular Kushan costume of the engraved figure is fitted with body above the waist and is flung in lower part of the body. The discovered artifact is an obvious indication of the cross cultural links of Neelum Valley with Central Asia. The influences of Central Asia remained in the socio-cultural life of Kashmir and its adjacent valleys for a long



time (ibid: 70). In Neelum Valley, the inhabitants are still using the Kushan style of clothing with little alteration which is a continuity of the Central Asian cultural tradition in the region

### **3.4.2. Jewellery Making Techniques**

The research also revealed that the traditional jewellery items still carry these cross cultural influences in the area. Silver was mostly shaped into jewellery. This reflects the amazing skill of the craftsmen in the region. Silver jewellery is customarily famous in this area as it is the main item of bride accessories and used as a wedding gift to the girls on their marriage ceremonies. This rarely used form of jewellery which exists in many forms such as necklaces, wristlets, bracelets, amulets, anklets and ear pendants. The chiselled designs on these articles include cross signs, budding lotuses, floral and geometric patterns. The metallic coins of different rulers are an additional item of jewelry used in the making of necklaces (Pl.No.44: Fig 110-111).

Many elderly women told this researcher that the jewellery items gifted to them during their marriages had been brought from Srinagar, which remained a famous centre of Jewellery designs. In Sir Partab Singh (S.P.S.) museum Srinagar, there is a low-relief stone engraved panel on display, which reveals the *Jatakas* stories of the Lord Buddha. In one of the *Jatakas* scenes, the figure of mother *Mayadevi* along with other women folk carried *Dej-hor* traditional jewellery items. *Dej-hor* contains an egg shaped two-part ear-pendent supported with a strong thread tied to the headdress with a pin (Shali 1990: 115 & Saraf 1987:152). This was the most famous customary article used by the women folk in Kashmir and now it is rarely seen elsewhere. However, in the *Khawaja Seri* village of Neelum Valley, the women folk of the Kashmiri ethnic group still wear this *Dej-hor* on special occasions. This confirms the continuity of the traditions that have been surviving in the area through centuries (Pl.No.45: Fig 112-115).

In Neelum Valley, the women folk commonly used to wear a necklace which is known as *Duldo* and is a combination of colorful beads. That is a form of causal indigenous items of jewelry which were made by nomads and the locals with the blend of colorful patterns. The trend of making numerous tiny ornamented braids with seasonal flowers or beads is famous among the women in Neelum Valley. Rajatarangini mentioned an event of the 11th century, relating to the rebellious prince Lothian, when brought in to court of King Jaysimbhia. It is narrated that the prince's braided hairs were without any ornamentation; this indicates the remote style of self-beautification in Kashmir.

The first Queen of Kashmir, Didda Rani introduced a variety of designs in bronze Jewellery (Sahar, Jaitl 1990: 203-210). The Kalhana's Rajatarangini often refers to the wristlet with the following names: kankana, anklet, earrings and armlet. The large beaded necklace and anklets were popular among the inhabitants during the 7th century; (Stein 1900:207). In the 10<sup>th</sup> century King Harsha introduced more ornamental methods in garment making and jewellery (Saraf 1987:39). The archaeological findings from Sharda confirm the fashion of the anklet as uncovered from one of the graves during illegal digging. Since immemorial times, the people of Kashmir have adorned themselves with precious stones and ornaments and the inhabitants of Neelum Valley have followed these traditions.

### **3.4.3. Textiles: Namda, Gabba and Chadder**

Literary and archaeological evidence depicts olden wears of the inhabitants in Kashmir. In 632-635, Kashmiri seasonal attires including woolen blankets and embroidered *Shawls* (cloaks) were described by Hiuen Tasng during his visit to the Valley (Ray 1969:251-253). The craftsmanship in the land of Kashmir was introduced during the rule of King Zain-ul-Abidin in the 14<sup>th</sup> century; he invited many artisans of indigenous arts and crafts from Central Asia. These artisans trained the locals in many crafts such as *shawl* making,

embroidery and weaving besides other creative skills (Kaumandi 2005: 241) (Pl.No.46: Fig 116-117).

The traditional textiles of Neelum Valley are rich, consisting of a variety of embroideries on *Gabba and Namda* (types of rugs). Carpet making, wood work, *Chadder, Lois* and *pattu* making are major crafts which are mostly found at *Dawarian, Sungum, Kel* and *Halmet*, Neelum Valley. The fibre making is a domestic activity of the women folk during winters since ancient times. Lamb wool is the raw material which is used to make woollen threads on spin wheel and men folk weave on looms. They have been producing fine kinds of *Lois, pattu, blanket, chadder* and stuff for the traditional robe (Pl.No.46: Fig 118-119).

Originally, the plain *Namda* came from Yarkand (Central Asia) and was then embroidered in Kashmir (Sahar, 1990: 73&Saraf 1987:96). Later, the people of the region learned and developed this technique which is still vogue in Neelum Valley. *Namda* is a piece of felt made of both wool and cotton. The wool or cotton is evenly spread over a mat before being rolled and pressed underfoot for felting. After that, the felted piece is milled, washed and dried. *Namda* are made in different shapes including round, rectangular or even oval and then are embroidered with woollen yarns with the help of a hooked needle.

The *Gabba's* (a sort of woollen blanket) are dyed in different colours, stitched and patched together in long chain stitches to form symmetries of patterns and designs on them (Saraf 1987:95). In Neelum Valley, initially *Gabba*-making was a household craft in which women helped their male embroiderers in stitching together pieces of used *lois*. Later the women also made cushions and bed covers with needle work in stem stain chain stitches for common use. *Chadder* and *Lois* making is also a craft activity. These were shaped on looms in various designs by the locals. The common designs of *chadder* are stripes and quadrangles with mixture of black, brown, grey and white color. The technique used is twilling or plain

weaving against the border which is dyed in red, yellow, green and other bright colors. *Phulkari* is one of the crafts applied on the borders in the dark and white geometric patterns. Nomads locally known as *Gujjars Bakarwal* (goat carriers) set out from summer pastures to the lower plains. They carry a variety of crafts including: small sailing cloth tents, *Lois*, blankets, sacks which are prepared by these *Gujjars* folks, and are very rich in design and colors. They provided yarns and goat hair to the weavers to make blankets, shawls and other textiles. This is also a source of livelihood based on the indigenous resources.

#### **3.4.4. Crafts Making; Basketry and other Crafts**

Kashmir is unique in the sense that **the** inhabitants have a great aesthetic understanding which is visible in the form of crafts such as straw work, basketry and other minor crafts (Saraf 1987:160). The straw made mats are common in all mountainous Valleys of Kashmir including Neelum Valley. Traditionally, Kashmiris used to decorate the floors by the tree leaves or by simple mud plasters and later it was developed into mat making. These mats were made of straw taken from the dry grass of rice (ibid). Mat making is a domestic art of Neelum Valley, mostly produced during the winter season and the usage of these mats is limited to the houses. In the 16th century, Mirza Haider Daughlat introduced another art of matting known as *Phandhi* in which dry grass was used to weave (Iqbal 2005: 122-123). This craft, *Phandhi* making is also common in Neelum Valley, Jammu and other parts of AJK (Pl.No.47: Fig 120-121).

In Indus Valley civilization from Mohenjo-Daro site (3000 BCE) archaeologists discovered a pot which has an impression of a weave mat on it. Similarly, in Burzahom impressions of a weed mat have been noted on the excavated pottery which reflects that mat making is an ancient practice of the region (Sahar, Jaitl 1990: 155).

In Neelum Valley, interiors of houses usually have floorings, which are decorated with hand-woven rugs, headrests and quilts. The other articles are wooden low seats locally known as

*Peeras* which are weaved in thin leather pieces. The inhabitants also utilize leather of goats for making other household items including weaving of chairs, beds and other objects of daily use (Pl.No.47: Fig 122-123).

Women in Neelum Valley use basketry for different purposes according to their needs during work in field or plucking of vegetables and fruits. Women also made different durable caskets like *toakaras* in indigenous plants *changaries* to keep breads in wheat and rice straw. Traditionally, the goat and cow hide was recycled to make bags and flasks which were used to carry flour, lentils, rice and milk. Terracotta pot is used to process, yogurt to extract butter and *lasi* a local drink. The grass sandal was common in different cultures especially as it was used by Buddhist monks in the area (Sahar 1990:157-158). In Neelum Valley, people crafted sandals out of indigenous plant stuffs: dried grass, wild plants and rice straws. Various methods are involved in the making of these sandals which is commonly known as *pullan*. The straw sandal is still crafted in the remote areas of Jhelum Valley, Poonch, southern part of AJK and Gilgit Baltistan. Animal skin shoes were also common in the valley besides wooden and grass sandals.

#### **3.4.4.1. Kangri Making**

The kangri making is another indigenous craft activity of the folks in the area which is particularly in use among Kashmiri speakers. It is a traditional fire pot combination of straw work, willow branches and mud pot known as *kanger* in local culture. In winter people filled *kangri* with hot charcoals to carry inside their loose garments or in blankets to keep themselves warm. People used to carry it everywhere and were popular as an indigenous heating arrangement other than wild herb baskets (Pl.No.48: Fig 124-125).

*Kangri* is also used in other colder parts such as Jhelum Valley, *Leepa*, and Gilgit Baltistan. In 1980's the *Kangri* fire pot was common among Kashmiri speakers in Muzaffarabad, Kashmir Valley and the inhabitants of the surrounding mountainous Valleys. *Kangri* is also

an intra Kashmir trade item imported from the Indian held Kashmir where *kangri* making is a flourishing industry.

#### **3.4.5. Wood work**

Kashmir is a land of forests; walnut trees grow abundantly in the areas which are commonly used in the making of wooden items. Woodwork is an ancient craft of Kashmir in which floral and geometrical designs are made on wood from carving (Saraf 1987:106-107). Wood engraving and designing has been also taken place in Neelum Valley. The *khatambandi* and *pinjira* (lattice work) is used in the decoration of frames of windows and door. In these, small pieces of wood fitted in to frames in geometrical designs (Pl.No.48: Fig 126-127).

The wooden utensils prepared by local artisans are still used in many parts of valley including *Khawaja Seri, Lawat, Kel, and Gurez Valley*. There are two types of wooden serving dishes which are mostly used by the Kashmiri ethnic group. One type of dish is known as '*shanikh*' which is slightly high with a stand and looks more or less like a dish on stand. The other type of wooden dish is a flat timber platter. The woody servings dollops are crafted in different sizes are still made by local artisans. This is an indigenous craft and also an economic activity. The inhabitants of Neelum Valley and Kashmir Valley also used to wear wooden shoes similar to the Chinese foot wear which is a continuity of remote traditions(Pl.No.49: Fig 128-129).

Arts and culture are the main tools against stagnation of the society and it connects the divided communities of Neelum Valley and the Valley of Kashmir. Thus, this cultural identity of the people of Jammu and Kashmir needs to be preserved.

#### **3.4.6. Brass Utensil**

Brass utensils also remained in the use of the inhabitants since centuries, however in present times their use is quite limited. The researcher documented specimens with engraved

calligraphic patterns with the combination of flora and intricate peacock designs from Sharda, Neelum Valley (Pl.No.49 Fig 130-131).

### **3.5 Anthropological and Ethnographic Studies**

Different clans inhabit in the lengths and breadths of Neelum Valley. These clans and sub-tribes are locally referred to as *qoom*, *kabila*, *bradari* and *zaat*. Each of these ethnic groups residing in Neelum Valley belongs to one of the following: Hindko, Kashmiri, *Shina*, *Bakarwal* and Settler *Gujjars* (Pl. No.50: Fig 132-133). *Khawaja Seri*, *Malik Seri*, *Tehjian*, *Halmat and Sardari*, *Shund Das* are villages of Kashmiri speakers (the revenue record approached June 25, 2015). Bates states that the clans of Neelum Valley comprised of *Dar*, *Butt*, *Gujjars*, *Wani*, *Malyar*, *Awan*, *Sufi*, *Kulgan* (Bates 1873:141). These clans are further divided into *Lone*, *Mir*, *Syed*, *Malik*, *Sheikh*, *Konshi*, *Pukhtoon*, *Khawaja*, *Raja*, *Qureshi* etc. (Rehman 2012:05). The spoken languages of Neelum Valley are Hindko, Kashmiri, *Gojri*, settled *Gojars*, the *Bakarwal*, *Shina* and *Gurezi Shina* (Pl. No.50: Fig 134-135).

Hindko is a major spoken language in Neelum Valley, locally known as *Parmi* by the dwellers other than the Kashmiri. However, the use of Hindko has not been documented in any part of Kashmir. In traditional literature, the Hindko language in Neelum Valley, is referred to as *Pahari* (Bates 1873: 15). According to Khawaja Rehman, a renowned linguist: “*The Hindko dialect spoken in Neelum Valley is more closely related to the dialect of Hindko spoken in the Kaghan Valley, Mansehra (KPK)*”. This shows the historical, cultural and linguistic links of Neelum Valley with the adjacent areas.

Kashmiri is the second largest language and is spoken by the majority of ethnic Kashmir's. The large villages where Kashmiri is the mother tongue include *Halmat*, *Sardari*, *Shund Das*, *Tehjian*, *Malik Seri* and *Khawaja Seri*. In the upper Neelum Valley near *Nekro*, Kashmiri speakers are in majority with few families of *Shina* speakers. Almost all the residents' of the

village *Khawaja Seri, Tehjian* are also fluent in Hindko beside Kashmiri (Pl.No.51: Fig 136-137).

Gujjars is the third largest ethnic group in Neelum Valley and they speak *Gojjri language*. There are two variants of Gujjars: settled Gujjars and nomads or *Bakarwal*. Settled *Gojars* are believed to be the earliest settlers of valley and they belonged to migrant pastoralists. It is believed that they came to Neelum Valley in search of summer pastures for their goats and sheep. The *Bakarwal* are those *Gujjars* who still raise goats and sheep and maintain their pastoral traditions. As such they are not permanent residents of Neelum Valley, but come up from Punjab plains and lower regions of AJK, during the summer.

Although the *Gojars* are the third largest ethnic group in area, but the third most widely spoken language is Shina. Though Shina is only spoken in three villages, there are two clearly different varieties of Shina: *Gurezi Shina* and the Shina of *Phulawai*. *Gurezi Shina* is spoken in Taobat, the last village of Neelum Valley (which is about 215 km from Muzaffarabad) and in the adjacent village of Karim-abad (Pl.No.51: Fig 138-139).

Majority of the inhabitant groups in the region are distinguished by physical structure and appearance (Stein 1900: 429). The distinct physical characteristics of the local inhabitants have been described by the visitors. Kashmiris have retained their physical and ethnic characteristics due to isolation and a self-sustaining environment. Kashmiri language belongs to the Dardic group according to George Grierson:

Kashmiri language belongs to the Dardic group and not to the Sanskrit; though it must be admitted that Sanskrit has had considerable influence on the present Kashmiri language. It is now definitely known that Pushto is the member of the Iranian family, and Kashmiri too belongs to the Iranian family. Hence, there is an affinity between Pushto and Kashmiri. It must be pointed out that the language spoken in Kashmir is "*Koshur*" and the land is *Kashir* (Sufi 1940; 75).

The ethnographical territories adjacent to the Valley of Kashmir can be traced from the records of Rajatarangini. The adjoining hill-state of south and west were occupied by the *Khasas*. This clan inhabited the area from Kishtwar to the south-east in the Vitasta Valley.



Bombas who were in the north of Vitasta and Kishenganga Valley (Neelum Valley) remained neighbors of *Khasas* or *Khakhas* (Stein 1900: 430). In Gilgit Baltistan, an inscription gave the names of *Khasa* tribe kings in Brahmi inscription which confirmed the *Khasa* rule from fifth century CE in the vicinity of Neelum Valley (Dani 1985:29).

According to Kalhana, the upper Kishenganga Valley (the present Neelum Valley) above Sharda was occupied by Dards. These were then seen as neighbors of Kashmir. The Dards reign extended up to Chitral in the northwest, Yasin, Gilgit, and the regions closer to Kashmir in the south east. The *Bhauittas* were settled in the north east and east of Kashmir. These were the descendent of Tibetan race. Presently they are called *Butt* who live in Drass, Ladakh and adjacent areas (Stein 1900:431). The term Drass was used by Herodotus who described it as a land of Dardikae in the *Gurez* Valley of Hindukush. During the rule of King Lalitaditya, Kashmir opened up to outside influences from across its borders. The development of various dialects in Ladakh, Baltistan, Gilgit and Kashmir Valley show a close alliance with the Tibetan and Dardic languages. Therefore, it was the outcome of close political and cultural contacts with those areas (Drabu1989:29-26).

In the Gurez affinity areas of NeelumValley, the inhabitants are of the Dard descent: an Indo-Aryan race believed to have originally migrated from Central Asia to Ladakh and the adjoining Valleys of the Himalayas. They speak Shina: an indo Aryan Language, which is also major language of Gilgit Baltistan. *Gurez* Valley is divided by Line of Control (LoC), and major part of which is on the other side of LoC. One of the union councils comprising of over fifteen villages is on the Pakistani side with *Minimerg* larger of these villages. The villages falling in Neelum Valley from ancient Gurez region are *Pulavahi*, *Junahavi*, and *yam ghar*, *Dhaki* (Pushto speaker), *Tanghdar*, *Marnath*, *Sahanhnahar*, *Sardari*, *Shundass*, *Halmet*, *Suthi* (Naseer abad), *Nukroha Taobat* and *Machhil*. Khawaja-Seri, Dudhanyal, Kern, and Tanghdar are large villages of Kashmiri speakers.

The diverse languages in the Neelum Valley represent a multi colored cultural landscape as each of the languages are spoken by an ethnic group with a unique cultural identity and way of life. No single clans among these have a clear dominant majority. Due to the separation from the southern part by the line of control, most of the clans are culturally and genetically isolated.

### **3.6 Folk Stories**

Almost every culture assigns great importance to the water and for certain cultures, a particular water source is considered holier. In the context of Neelum Valley where diverse communities had lived side by side, the waters resources became syncretistic over the centuries. There are a number of such cultural places such as lakes, *Bawolie* and springs which are associated with particular communities and groups. The human activity on these places as individuals or in groups is the segment of cultural heritage: intangible or tangible, which existed in area since centuries and has passed on from one generation to the other. These cultural places have significance in a historical and religious context for the Kashmiri Pundits living in NeelumValley before partition.

### **3.7 Sacred Lakes**

Historically, the lakes in Kashmir are known in two categorized and termed as *Dal* and *Sar*. The lakes situated in the plains or lower grounds are called *Dal* such as Wular and Manasbal lakes. Whereas, lakes or spring originating on higher altitudes or mountain tops are termed as *Sar*: *Konsanag*, *Shishnag* and *Verinag*, which relate to *Nag* or serpents. These mountain lakes were believed to be abodes of divinities or sacred deities (Bates 1873:12). Ancient chronicles refer to several sacred streams, springs and lakes. Legends added that originally land of Kashmir was a lake known as *satisaras* or the lake of Goddess Durga (Pundit 1934:11). In Neelum Valley there are three lakes which were believed to be sacred: *Narda* or Sharda,

Saraswati (*Chitian*) and Vagedevi (*Nareal*). They are directly associated with cultural heritage legacies of Sharda civilization.

The Saraswati Lake is situated in the foothills of Narda Peak approximately 4267.2 meters above the sea level among the higher northern mountain ranges in area. The *Narda* Peak remains covered in snow almost around the year, only the lower mountain range becomes visible from mid-August to September.

This lake was visited by the researcher in September, 2015 and subsequently confirms the three lake idea of holy trinity associated to Sharda Temple. Saraswati is the most difficult to reach as the lake is not visible due to the circle of the mountain peaks all around the site. It exists in a bowl shape and the surrounding edge of the mountain is covered with huge boulders of gypsum. Water gushing beneath these boulders and snow crevasses make the access rather impassable. The lake has only one outlet in the west which carries the water in the *Surgun Nullah* and finally joins the river Neelum on the right side, a few kilometers far from Sharda Temple. It is mentioned in the ancient text of *Rajatarangini* that water from the Saraswati lakes is drained towards western falls in *Nullah Sumgum* (Stein 1900:282). The place where *Saraswati* water merges in to river Neelum along water of *Madhumati* is considered a sacred place for the Sharda pilgrimage (Pl.No.52: Fig 140-141).

Kalhana *Rajatarangini* mentions Saraswati Lake as a sacred abode of the Goddess Sharda, according to R.S Pundit: “Where the goddess Saraswati herself may be seen in the form of a swan in a lake on the peak of the Bheda Mountain which is hallowed by the rise of the Ganga.” (Pundit 1934:11).

*Nilamata Puranas* refers to two sacred Saraswati rivers in Kashmir, one which joins the river Kishenganga (Neelum) near the bank of the Sharda archaeological site. The other is *Madhumati* river identified as *Bandipora Nullah* which finally joins river Vitasta (Jhelum) in Indian Held Kashmir. The place *Sandal* is mentioned by *Nilamata Puranas* river which flows

near the Temple of Goddess Durga on the bank of Madhumati which is unidentified (Kumari 1969:35). Madhumati stream is found in the south of Sharda Temple. Presently there is no place named *Sandal* in the near vicinity of the Temple site.

During a visit to Saraswati Lake on the Narda Mountain in Neelum Valley, the researcher observed that the main water source of the Lake appears to be the melting snow which covered its eastern and northern rims throughout the year. The water gushing into the lake on its eastern bank, beneath the rock appears rusty. The elderly locals narrate that according to their ancestors, “*Miraculous water of Saraswati Lake appears dusty as it comes out beneath the rock of Narda Mountain and slowly turns blue*” (Mir. Farooq, personal communication, September 15, 2015).

The *Nilamata Puranas* mention that *Saraswati and Madhumati* merge with river *Krishna* in the Valley of Kishenganga, which reflects that the ancient name of the river (Neelum Valley) was river of *Krishna* or *Kishen Ganga*. In Hinduism *Krishna* was known as dominant deity of sun, flora, rain and storm and Ganga denotes the Goddess of holy rivers and mother *Ganga* (Kumari 1968: 150). This water course of the *Madhumati* stream on the left bank of Neelum Valley still exists as tributary to Neelum River (Stein 1900:282). The historical record confirms that earliest name of river was Kishenganga which is derived from the *Krishna*.

In the Srinagar; there is a place called the *Amaranth* cave which is sacred in Hindu mythology. The nearest stream of *Amaranth* cave is known as *Panchtamri* (five rivulets). At that location *Amravati* stream also joins the water of *Panchtamri* and place is known as *Sangam*. On the confluences of *Panchtamri*, pilgrims used to take a ritualistic bath before sighting the *Amaranth* cave (Pandita. Ravinder, personal, telephone June 12, 2016). That place *Panchtamri and Amaranth* is comparable to the *Sharda Sangum*. In ancient times, the *Sharda* pilgrims took a ritualistic bath at the *Sharda Sangum* place, situated near the confluences of *Surgun* Stream, *Madhumati* and River Neelum in Neelum Valley.

There are two other lakes in the vicinity of *Saraswati* which are *vagedevi* and *Narda* lakes which occupy a cluster of mountain peaks which form a troika and compliment the idea of trinity associated with the Sharda cultural heritage. Abdul Ghani accompanied with a group of civil society members visited *Narda* Lake situated on *Narda* Mountain in 2004. He mentions in his book *Sharda* that: “*There appears to be a staircase leading into Narda lake which is constructed with dressed chiseled slab stones which are similar to the stones used in the construction of Sharda Temple*”(Ghani 2006:33).

The similarity between the stones used in construction of lake and those used in *Sharda* Temple strengthens the idea that *Saraswati* Lake and *Sharda* temple could be of the same period. The revered sites of *Saraswati* and *vagedevi* lakes are located at long distances but are still sacred for the community of Kashmiri Pundits on the other side of LoC, who want to visit these areas. The local community has respect for these waters, due to which the names of these water bodies have remained unchanged since centuries.



Map no.9: Saraswati Lake, Narda Mountain in Neelum Valley

### 3.7.1 Stories related to Hari Parbat Lake and Mountain

*Hari Parbat* is highest mountain range in the in the AJK, positioned at a distance of about sixty Kilometers from Tehsil Sharda in the *Shounter* Valley of *Kel*. *Hari Parbat* is a prominent peak of this higher mountain range in the north east of *Narda* Peak. It has huge religious significance and is associated with lord *Shiva* in the Hindu mythology. The peak which is visible from far off is referred to as *Chatta Kattha* which means white cliff. According to Hindu mythology these snowy lofty mountains are the abode of lord *Shiva* (Ghani 2006:38).

There is a lake at *Hari Parbat* that locals identify as *Chatta Kattha* Lake. The ancient name of the lake is '*Har Lake*', which is also known by devotees as '*Chatta Sar*', referring to white for fair complexion of lord *Shiva* (Bates 1873:12). *Madhumati* and *Doodganga* reveal two different aspects of river *Kishenganga* in Hindu mythology. *Madhumati* signifies the stream of divine nectar and *Doodganga* is a white color rivulet. In the vicinity of Srinagar city there is a stream pronounced as *Chattbal* which owes its name to the nearest stream *Doodganga*. This also strengthens the notion that the local name *Chita Kattha* which was given to *Hari Parbat* means: white cliff as *Chita* refers to whiteness of snow or milk (Ahmad & Bano 1984:30-31).

There is another *Hari Parbat* hill which is located in the middle of Srinagar but it is not as high as *Chatta Kattha* at *Shounter*, Neelum Valley. *Hari Parbat hill* of Srinagar has number of historical and religious sites. A fort built by the Mughal which was reconstructed in 1808 CE, by the Afghan ruler. The shrine of the native Muslim saint *Makhdoom sahib* and *Gurdwara Chhti Padshai* are also located on the same mountain (Saraf 1987:28). A *Hari Parbat hill* is very low compared to the *Hari Parbat Chatta Kattha* at *Shounter*, Neelum Valley. The people on both sides of the divide claim, that the, *Hari Parbat* hills in their respective parts of Kashmir, are revered or have greater religious significance. These offers

as subject of further research for scholars to establish a cultural link of Hindu period (Pl.No.52: Fig 142-143).

*Hari Parbat* hills, *Hari Parbat* and *Saraswati* Lakes are to be seen in the connotation of veneration and adoration, which was relished then. In the hoary past, the pilgrims used to make a reverential bow both towards the *Narda* mountain range, which housed *Saraswati* Lake and the *Hari Parbat* Mountain where *Hari Parbat* Lake is located in the *Shounter* valley.

### **3.7.2 Stories related to springs and Bawolies**

The geographical history of Kashmir was closely interwoven with the mythology and the religious belief of its inhabitants. This is evident from the ancient worship of the *Naga*'s, who was believed to have their abodes in the innumerable springs (Ahmad & Bano 1984:32). In Neelum Valley there are number of water ponds which are considered to have healing powers. *Mukhtaseri Bawolie*, *Nagdar Bawolie Surgun* water spring and *Sharda Sangum* spring are popular among the local folks. It is believed that the waters of these ponds cure some diseases. In the *Surgun* Valley there is a *Bawolie* which has two springs; one of these waters has a whitish appearance and the other is muddy. The whitish water is sweet in taste and is considered very digestive and pleasant. The muddy water appears to have sulphur content and is useful for skin problems. Therefore, these water sources are revered and well managed. Another tradition is the use of spring to make good quality yogurt. The locals of Neelum Valley put milk in earthen vessels and place it over night in the oozing waters of spring. The yogurt turns out extremely delicious.

Most of these springs are said to have a snake or serpent living near by the spring. According to local myths it is the guardian serpent of the spring and people do not harm the serpents even if seen. This is the continuity of ancient traditions of the adoration of serpents in Kashmir.



The Sharda *Sangum Bawolie* water is located on the right bank of River Neelum near the Sharda Junction. The significance of Sharda *Sangum Bawolie* is due to its location at the confluences of Neelum River and Surgun *Nullah*. The *Bawolie* is made of dressed stone and contains sulphur which makes it a hot water pond. This site is a sacred spot for the Kashmiri pundits who considered it more blessed than all the *Bawolies* of the area. In older times, pilgrims visited this point and performed the *Shraddha* ritual. The *Bawolie* is only visible when the water subsides in the winter season. The locals take the water from this pond as a remedy for skin diseases and this is the continuity of ancient beliefs.

### **3.7.3 Sharda Pilgrimages Rituals**

During Sharda pilgrimage the pilgrims took ritualistic baths: first on the confluences of river Neelum and *Nullah Tehjian* which carried water of *shish-pari* known as *Tajavana*, and a second bath near *Ganesh Ghati*. Devotees prayed in the temple and took a third bath on the confluences of river Neelum and *Madhumati* stream site locally known as Sharda *Sangam*. Moreover same day late night they took their last bath of *Ashtami* on the junction where *Surgun* meet with river Ganga (Ghani. Abdul, personal communication, September 17, 2015). *Tehjian* which exists as a large village today had remained a prominent pilgrimage venue and had a religious significance in the context of Sharda cultural heritage.

This researcher conversed with the author who collected fables of Kashmiri Pundits, who had resided in Sharda Neelum Valley prior to divide of 1947. According to this lore:

There was a sanctified pond at the *Tehjian* route where devotees would take a bath as part of the physical purification ritual. This ritual is associated with ascetic *sage Shandilya* who stayed here and bathed in this pond which according to myth, is invested with divine qualities. At the end of the pilgrimage an important ritualistic bath was taken at lower land of Neelum Valley known as Sharda *Trivani Sangam*. It was the holy unifications of three

waters; Kishen Ganga, *Madhumati*, *Saraswati* via *Surgun Nullah* (Pandita. Ravinder , personal telephone November 17, 2015).

There was another sanctified pond within the premises of Sharda Temple, where devotees used to take a ritualistic bath. The four corners of sacred pond have four specific names donated with miraculous and spiritual powers, associated with Sharda culture heritage. The pond was considered sacred and according to religious belief devotees would only be allowed to put their feet in the pond. The water could be carried away from the pond for bathing.

A devotee Sh. Jagar Nath Dhar mentioned in an oral history narrated by him that: “Once he was stricken with severe pain in one of his arms and he miraculously recovered as soon as he took a bath from water of this Pond ”(ibid).

The old pilgrimage finished during Queen of Kashmir, Kotla Devi era, because the 9<sup>th</sup> century never mentioned about such activity. In the east of the Neelum Valley complex there is an ancient route which connected via *Michal*, Baramulla to Srinagar. From this eastern route King Zain-ul-Abidin Bhat Shah visited Sharda, Neelum Valley (Stein1900:284). There is another route which was adopted by travelers originating from Srinagar, *Purana-danda*, and *Bandipora* village. In the north, this territory connects through a wooden bridge across river and enters in to *Surgun* Valley via *Kel*. Therefore, it shows that pilgrims took a route from *Khel* to the *Surgun* Valley and after visiting the *Saraswati* Lake returned back to *Khel Seri* from the same route. According to one of the Kashmir Pundits:

My father narrated that Shri Dharjoo Dhar Sahib had narrated him a story that when he was a conservator of the forest at Kishenganga, he used to go to the Sharda shrine on every Ashtami: a baba Ji used to climb to Narda hill which was always covered with clouds (ibid).

At the Sharda Temple before partition a Shiva lingam was displayed, on the *Ashtami* night (devotees prayed in temple and took ritualistic baths). An aged nude priest used to sit and chant. The pilgrims requested him to fulfill their wishes; the old priest would chant “*He will*

*give who is giver*". It is said that when Muslim women visited him for blessings he would cover his body and these woman also presented offerings in the form of fruits, wheat etc. (Lone, Aziz, personal communication, June 22, 2015). Even today the *Bakarwal* (Nomads) give offerings of wool in the sacred lakes as they believe it increases the production of flock and wool. Thus it has become a syncretism practice and also continuity of ancient traditions. River Kishenganga, lakes, streams, ponds and springs were revered waters of Neelum Valley. The waters of some lakes, springs and streams were considered holy and effort was made to keep these water sources clean and pollution-free by the local population.

In conclusion, we can say that Neelum Valley has rich forms of intangible heritage which includes art, crafts, festivals, celebrations and stories rituals associated with some of the cultural places. In broader tourism, planning these heritage assets can allow for their utilization in the branding and promoting of cultural tourism in Neelum Valley.

## **CHAPTER 4**

# **CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES TO CULTURAL HERITAGE RESOURCES OF NEELUM VALLEY**

### **4.1. Introduction**

Cultural heritage resources of a neglected and underdeveloped area can become the chariot for development and change. Neelum Valley being in the conflict zone has remained underdeveloped despite its potential to become a tourist destination. There are different elements threatening the resources of the valley there by depriving it from utilizing the same for economic development of the valley and benefit of the people. These real threats need to be addressed. Further, the overlaying claims by various stakeholders over natural and cultural sites pose challenges in implementation of workable solutions to the problems arising out of a host of threats such as climate changes, human vandalism, encroachment and environmental decays.

Cultural heritage of Neelum Valley has a potential to attract a large number of people across the Line of Control (LoC). Many advanced and emerging countries of the world have used culture heritage or tourism as a pillar of economic development and change (SEAMEO-SPAFA: 1997). United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) underlines the significance of heritage tourism. Heritage tourism becomes pivot in supporting communities in their quest for peace and sustainable development (Wells, Lyony 2012: 44-56). It is important to ensure that heritage tourism sustains and benefits local community culturally, socially and economically (Tatsufumi 2009, Cheatham 2013:42). Scope of Tourism in Neelum Valley at this stage lacks the diversity and branding of its full scope and potential.

Cross LoC heritage tourism is the viable option which can strengthen the peace process in the entire region.

## **4.2. Challenges**

In the Neelum Valley, there is lack of realization on the part of stakeholders about the importance of natural and cultural resources as potential tools for development and prosperity. Their inaction in the safeguarding of these resources is multiplying the existing threats and challenges to the heritage. The multitude of other threats to the resources, its management and resultant challenges stem from the isolation of the area due to the conflict situation. The major threats and challenges include: natural disasters, unregulated tourism, mine-blasting near heritage sites, lack of capacity of the concerned responsible institutions, illicit trafficking, illegal diggings, encroachments, and responsibility shift of the stakeholders, armed conflict and above all absence of sense of ownership for these heritage sites by the local people and the government alike.

### **4.2.1. Natural Disasters**

Lower Valleys, between major watersheds, have faced floods and landslides since centuries but subsequently, the climate change has accelerated for the past couple of decades, so did the frequency and severity of floods and landslides in the Valleys (Ahmad 2015: 5). Due to the climate change, caused by the melting of glaciers and unusual cloud bursts, the danger of severe flooding is growing in the lower Himalayan Valleys of Kashmir (Shakeel, Mohsin 2015:15-16). Sometimes floods help in the formation of new fertile lands for agriculture, but at the same time they have the potential to cause severe damage to the population in mountainous valleys or settlements along rivers sides and even the cultivated lands.

The historic records revealed that Jammu & Kashmir faced the earthquake of 1885 CE, which was followed by floods of 1909 CE and 1957 CE. During the earthquake of 1515 CE, the water of the river Jhelum (Vitasta) changed its course, activated a huge landslide which

caused unlimited damage to the dwellers of the area (Dawn 2014:12, Ahmad 2015: 5). The history of the valley provides us with ample information about the natural disasters in the past and particularly during the 9th -11<sup>th</sup> century CE. Citing Stein (1898), Roger Bilham (2013:6) mentioned natural calamities, floods and landslides which caused destruction in Kashmir and its adjoining Valleys along river Neelum and Jhelum.

In October 2015, terrible floods engulfed the regions including Srinagar, Neelum & Jhelum Valleys, Azad Jammu and Kashmir. According to Saleem Beg (2015), more than two hundred historical monuments and archaeological sites were damaged, along with the human loss in Jammu Kashmir and adjoining valleys of river Jhelum. Similarly, the flood of September, 1992 had devastating effects on natural heritage of the region. It destroyed vernacular architecture; houses, temples, old bridges, historic monuments on the both sides of the divided Kashmir (Khan 2014, *ibid*). The devastations caused by floods in 2010 also altered the course of *Madhumati* and *Surgun Nullah* and destroyed the landscape setting along the banks of these streams. The water levels rose to over fifty feet along the river banks. Deforestation, shelling across the LoC and the devastating avalanches during winter of 2015-16 increased the frequency of these avalanches in the region and caused heavy damages in the villages of *Lawat*, *Khawaja Seri*, *Kel* and the *Gurez Valley*.

The earthquake of 2005 also caused irreparable loss to the cultural heritage resources on either side of the LoC. While from the loss caused by the earthquake, human vandalism added to this loss. Precious archives related to the Kashmir history housed in Khurshid Hassan Khurshid (KHK) Library in Muzaffarabad were robbed and destroyed. Muzaffarabad Red Fort Museum which housed great number of artifacts including coins, statues and stone tools, mostly discovered from the Neelum Valley were also looted by raiders, thieves and dealers (G. Zahoor , personal communication, June 18, 2015).

#### **4.2.2 Unregulated Tourism**

In November 2002, India and Pakistan got engaged in peace initiatives. The most important outcome of these initiatives was the cease fire along the LoC, including the Neelum Valley which was directly affected by the hostilities. Subsequently, the peace enabled government to allow domestic tourism in the Neelum Valley and a large number of tourists flocked to the Valley from all over Pakistan (Chari, et.al 2011:4-16). Though this new tourism flow, based on economic activity, created considerable opportunities for the locals in the Valley but at the same time it turned out to be the foremost challenge in terms of its impact on environment and natural & cultural heritage resources of the Neelum Valley (Shakeel, Mohsin 2015:15-16). The negative impact of the unregulated tourism was soon to be seen as hundreds of vehicles entered the Valley carrying unprecedented numbers of tourists. This tourist flow caused serious threat to self-sustaining indigenous culture and ecology.

After the implementation of cease fire, guest houses are rapidly being constructed to replace the old cultural wooden houses. (Khan 2015: 5-12).

The commercialization is also harming the indigenous agriculture and production of local species of rice and other edible crops. Prior to the onslaught of tourists in the Neelum Valley, horses and mules were used on link routes in recent past. Water mills were found every two miles along the river and *Nullah*. The water mills are being replaced by carbon emitting engines. The streams and springs are being polluted with detergents and septic tanks and thus polluting the rich soil and water resources. It has also been observed that due to environmental degradation, some rare birds have vanished from the area and trout fish is also vanishing which was abundant in the river (Pl. No.53: Fig 144-147).

### **4.2.3 Lacking the Capacity**

The planning for socio-economic development is initiated by the government. The functionaries responsible to carry out the projects lack the capacity to undertake the execution of the projects due to incompetence and lack of professionalism.

The first ever survey and documentation of archaeological sites in Azad Kashmir and subsequent presentations by this researcher to different forums on importance and safeguarding of the heritage created some realization amongst public representatives. Civil society offered the support to the voices for protection and promotion of heritage resources. Media also highlighted issues pertaining to encroachment of archaeological sites in the Neelum Valley. It was for the first time that Ministry of Finance allocated funds during 2015-16 for safeguarding of some of the important heritage sites. However, the Department of Tourism and Archaeology failed to submit any project for the safeguarding of heritage sites within the given time frame, which caused the lapse of allocated funds (Akbar. Latif, personal communication, May 14, 2016). It reflects the mismanagement and lack of capacity on part of the officials responsible for the protection of these heritage sites.

Neelum Valley is also gifted with diverse and vast natural habitat which includes forests, pastures, rare herbs, shrubs and precious medicinal plants (Qamar 2010:25-30). Nomads migrate seasonally and extract rare herbs in great quantity and smuggle these out of the Valleys without leaving enough plants for re-growth and regeneration. This causes extinction of certain species of rare herbs. No effort has ever been made to stop these unlawful activities even though considerable number of staff from Forest Department and other law enforcement agencies are given authority to prevent the illegal extraction of herbs and other endangered species.

The UNESCO is keenly contributing in aid to states affected by the calamities (ICOM: 2002). After the earthquake 2005 and floods of 2014, many surveys have been carried out in Indian



held Kashmir (IHK) to assist the loss of heritage sites, but no such action was taken in the (AJK) including Neelum Valley. Former Director General of Tourism and Archaeology, Indian held Kashmir, told this researcher during his visit to Islamabad, Pakistan that:

In the aftermath of 2014 floods in Kashmir, with the technical support of ICOMOS (International council of Monuments and Sites) and Prince Clause Fund, Belgium, the INTACH chapter Jammu and Kashmir undertook detailed documentation and condition assessment of archaeological sites and historical buildings. Experts came out with recommendations for preservation and for appropriate interventions (Beg. Saleem , personal communication, March 2 2017).

After the earthquake of 2005, it was a great opportunity for Tourism and Archaeology department, Govt. Azad Jammu and Kashmir to seek help of international donors' agencies for safeguarding and restoration of archaeological sites. Due to lack of capacity and non-professionalism the concerned people could not present their projects for the safeguarding and restoration of Archaeological sites and historic monuments in AJK.

#### **4.2.4. Mine Blasting near Heritage Sites**

Mine blasting without following the standard guidelines has devastating impact upon the natural and cultural heritage resources. Mines are used to construct roads, buildings and extract precious stones in the Neelum Valley. The impacts of mine blasting also cause vibration in the built heritage and at time the standing structures crumble. Recently, many case studies have been conducted by the researcher which shows that this activity of precious stones extraction has been applied near the natural sites like lakes and water springs.

Mine blasting for construction of unplanned link roads to the hamlets and extraction of valuable cultural material from the earth near the archaeological sites has also significant consequences. These activities cause damages that include the loss of vegetation, pollution especially near water resources, erosion of the lands and disturbed natural settings of the lands.

#### **4.2.5 Case Studies**

Due to non-implementation of the Antiquities Act, 1986 of the Government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, no effective measures could be taken to curb the menace of illegal diggings of the archaeological sites and illicit trade in antiquities and these illegal activities are going on unchecked. Illicit trafficking of the artifacts from the Neelum Valley is one of the greatest threats to the cultural heritage resources. Frequent instances of artifact smuggling have been reported in the area. The antique dealers collect precious artifacts from local population or dig out from the valley for financial benefits. This research documented very interesting case studies of illicit-trafficking of artifacts from the Valley. The following case studies are enough to assess the damage caused by the illicit-trafficking from the heritage resources of the Neelum Valley.

##### **4.2.5.1 Illicit Trafficking of Artefacts from Neelum Valley: Case study 01**

In 2012, the researcher initiated archaeological explorations of the Sharda Temple and its associated sites under the umbrella of Taxila Institute of Asian Civilizations, QAU. The civil society of the Neelum Valley welcomed the research program and facilitated the researcher. After the documentation of cultural heritage by the research team, an attempt was made by antique smugglers to move precious artifact (Wine presses) out of the Neelum Valley. This theft and smuggling attempt was done on behalf of an influential functionary. The artifacts were shifted from *Danna* Tehjian village by the staff of Qamar Zaman the then minister for health and AKMIDC, in full knowledge of local administration. The artifacts were transported to Muzaffarabad city about 150 kilometers away from the Neelum Valley. The civil society of Neelum Valley took up the matter and resisted the smuggling of the artifacts. The media highlighted the issue forcing the influential functionary to back track. The superior court intervened and took notice under Antiquities Act 1986. Later, the superior court directed Archaeology and Tourism Department officials to register the case under Antiquity

Act against the alleged persons. The case is still pending in superior court because the Archaeology Department is not pursuing the case properly. The artifacts are still lying in the premises of guest house of the Department of Health, Muzaffarabad.

Sub-Section 25(vii) of the Antiquities Act 1975/76 of AJK does not permit selling, smuggling or gifting the historical objects to any one since it is state property (Act 1975, 2002:4-7). A large number of artifacts theft by smugglers and illegal diggers and were smuggled out of the state. This was the first time in Azad Jammu and Kashmir that the issue of preservation of cultural heritage came into light.

After the survey and documentation of archaeological sites the public awareness rose to a large level which enabled civil society to resist illegal excavations and theft of artifacts. Civil society of the Neelum Valley formed *Sharda Save Committee* for protection of heritage sites. Sharda Save Committee approached the local administration to enforce the antiquity act and stop theft of artifacts by government officials. The local administration officials were found unaware of the implementation of Antiquity Act. This case is still under process. The researcher has come to know that case was not pursued by Department of Tourism and Archaeology. The apparent cooperation of Archaeology Department officials with smugglers (influential minister) and their inability to play their due role in protection of cultural resources is a core challenge to the preservation and protection of the archaeological sites.

#### **4.2.5.2 Illegal Digging at Rawota village: Case Study: 02**

During this research, a number of cases involving illegal digging by antique dealers using the metal detectors came to light. One of the cases was reported from an archaeological site in Neelum Valley in March 2015, when an antique gold statue was stolen through illegal digging from an archaeological site of the village *Rawota* located on left bank of the river Neelum; five kilometres away from Athmaqam, the district head quarter of Neelum Valley. The picture of stolen statue appeared on social media. A local activist shared photo

with the researcher and reported the matter of illegal digging and theft of the gold statue to the local police. Police apprehended six villagers along with the antique pitcher which contained the unearthed material but later freed them. As usual Archaeology and Tourism Department showed no concern about the issue of illegal digging near archaeological site.

The researcher visited the said site and collected the evidence: antique pitcher fragments and lid of a container from the place where illegal digging had taken place. From the site of digging, fragments of a pitcher were found which contained statue that has been allegedly stolen. The broken unearthed pitcher was tightly closed with a seal of stone buried in ground. (Pl.No.54: Fig 148-151).

This researcher informed the police officials of the district about the illegal diggings, who were reluctant to lodge FIR against the culprits without official complaint from the Tourism and Archaeology Department. The Director General Archaeology and Tourism has already admitted in the media that the Department of Archaeology is working without relevant expertise and department has no Archaeologist to deal with this matter and they rely on outside expertise such as TIAC for technical advice (Dawn, April 14,2015).

#### **4.2.5.3 Encroachments near Archaeological Sites Case study 03**

During recent years, opening of Neelum Valley to the domestic tourism has posed new challenges to protection of important tourist destination sites such as the Sharda Temple and its associated archaeological sites. Some natural and heritage sites in Sharda are threatened due to encroachments and constructions of hotels and guest-houses in close proximity of these important ancient sites. During the present research, the researcher recorded case study of an illegal encroachment of Sharda Sangam archaeological site.

In January 2016, an illegal construction started on *Sharda Sangam*, an important archaeological site associated with the Sharda Temple. This site was encroached upon by a government official. Heavy machinery was deployed for this illegal digging and construction. Media highlighted the issue but again no action was taken by the Archaeology and Tourism Department. The researcher submitted an application to the Chief Secretary Government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and also to the area commander of the army. The researcher, in her application, requested the authorities to intervene and stop the encroachment and illegal construction near archaeological site. The researcher asserted that the *Surgun Nullah* Junction is an ancient site where Pundits from all over Kashmir performed final ritual bath during their visit to the Sharda Temple and that the *Surgun Nullah* carries the water from Saraswati Lake. In the opening of Neelum Valley for cross LoC tourism, the destruction of cultural heritage sites will have a negative effect on the image of the country and its institutions. In response to these applications, the action was taken by local administration and section 144 was imposed to stop new construction along the river banks in the Neelum Valley (ibid).

It is important to note that a total of 72 *Kanal* and 16 *Marla* land belongs to the Sharda Temple archaeological site, which was allotted to the Temple in 1947 after the division of the state of Jammu & Kashmir. Out of this land 8 *Marla* land comprising the main stairs area and outer boundary walls of the Sharda Temple has been allotted to the Department of Tourism and Archaeology (G. Syed, personal communication, October 23, 2016). The surrounding area of the Sharda Temple has already been encroached on the southern and western sides of the temple. A Mosque and various shops have been constructed on the land of Sharda Archaeological Complex. Several houses and hotels have also been built on the encroached land on the left side of bridge near main bazaar Sharda. The outlets of these hotels and the

washrooms of adjacent houses are already polluting the water of *Madhumati* stream and river Neelum at various locations in the area.

Apart from the Antiquities Act, the Land Revenue Act of 1974 also does not allow to use any archaeological site. The state government can cancel any allotment of land any time. Keeping in view the importance of the Sharda Temple as cultural heritage and its associated sites (i.e. *Sharda Sangam, Madhumati* stream & hot spring water area), the government could exercise this legal provision to take the archaeological sites back from encroachers. A contingent of army is present in the close proximity of the main Sharda Archaeological site. It has helped protect the site from vandalism to some extent. But it is the duty of the Tourism and Archaeology Department to protect the site from further encroachments. Several archaeological sites of Neelum Valley are being vandalized through encroachment by influential persons.

#### **4.2.5.4 Responsibility Shift of Stakeholders: Case Study 4**

The overlaying interests of the stakeholders create friction and conflict of interests while identifying, planning and addressing the issues pertaining to resource management in Neelum Valley. This situation has created an atmosphere of neglect and shrugging off the responsibility designated to each of many stakeholders.

The stake holders which are directly responsible for heritage resource management including archaeology & tourism department, forest officials, local administration and law enforcement agencies lack the very basic understanding of their own jurisdiction regarding safeguarding and protection of cultural heritage. The hierarchy of these departments is incapacitated by nonprofessional attitude.

No serious efforts have been made to safeguard heritage resources of the valley by these concerned departments. Evidence indicates severe negligence and avoidance of professional duties regarding this issue. The case study exposes the contradiction or conflict among

various stakeholders regarding safeguarding of the heritage sites. This case study also underlines the proactive role of civil society regarding the potential threat to an important archaeological site of the Sharda Temple.

In 2004 a resident of the area namely Abdul Ghani had submitted an application to Ombudsman Office Muzaffarabad. He highlighted the importance of the site and requested the Ombudsman to intervene and direct the Department of Archaeology and Tourism to stop all illegal diggings and encroachments on and around the heritage sites. Both Archaeology and Forest departments instead of taking concrete steps tried to forward different excuses including lack of professional expertise by these departments and firing from across the line of control, etc. Despite directives from the Ombudsman to the Archaeology & Tourism Department for protection of the heritage sites, no action has so far been taken on the directives. However, action by the local administration on an application of the researcher, section 144 was implemented which also proved very helpful. The action by the local administration also proves that they have the capacity and authority to take effective steps and also override the directives of other departments for the safeguarding of the heritage sites.

#### **4.2.6. Conflict**

Conflict and frequent skirmishes along the LoC in Neelum Valley restrain the activities for safeguarding or protecting the heritage resources. Threats and intermittent firing from across the line of control have also adversely affected the area, its people and all other activities. While the inaction and lethargic approach of the concerned governmental organizations could largely be attributed to the lack of interest on their part, they also the firing along LoC gave the government institutions the pretext to ignore these heritage sites and taking shelter behind the firing. The destruction of heritage during war in the Neelum Valley dates back to division of state and in some cases even prior to the division. The famous Sharda Temple was almost

destroyed during the Sikh invasions when the Rajas of *Karnah* ruled as an independent chief in the Neelum Valley. Under one of these rules, Sharda Temple was said to have been used for the storage of gun powder, the explosion of which blew off the original roof of the Temple monument (Stein, 1900:284).

There have been considerable intervals of peace in the Neelum valley such as one from 1972 to 1988 and again from 2002 to 2014. The occasional firing and small skirmishes along LoC did occur prior to 1990, but it did not affect the socio-economic conditions of the people as much as it did after the eruption of heavy fighting along LoC during 1990 insurgency in Indian Held Kashmir. The cross LoC firing on the villages along LoC forced local community to leave their homes and shift to safer areas. The indigenous Kashmiri wooden architecture in *Bugna* and *Nagdar* village was destroyed due to firing. *Athmaqam* bazaar is under the shadow of dominant Indian army posts located on high mountain tops on left bank of river. The area, being the center and trading hub of the valley, attracted heaviest fire disrupting trade, shops, beside health unit, colleges, and administrative offices (Urfi Arif, personal communication, December 2, 2015). This bazaar had craft market which housed considerable number of traditional wood engraving and other crafts. These shops were hit by the firing directly from across LoC.

This firing continued for several years near the market in *Athmaqam*, *Keran* and *Kel* forcing many skilled workers to migrate from the area and quit traditional businesses. Government did not compensate the artisans nor gave them any incentives to continue their traditional craftsmanship.

The most fertile land clustered by rich forests and paddy fields starting from village *Marble* to *Tehjian* on the right bank of river was directly under heavy small arms and artillery fire. This left bank of the river includes the territories of *Barian*, *Jura*, *Kundal Shahi*, *Athmaqam*, *Karen*, *Nagdar*, *Lawat Dawarian*, *Changhan* and *Dudhanyal* (Mughal. Jalal, personal



communication, February 16, 2015). Prior to eruption of hostilities, about 80-100 tons of walnut were produced and sold from the valley which provided livelihood for many farmers. Apart from cattle and sheep farming; paddy fields, wheat, corn and lentils were produced in the valley. The wool produced was either sold or used to make *Namda* and *Gabba*, indigenous woollen textiles. These woollen items provided sustainable livelihood and had a domino effect on socio-economic evolution of society.

There was a sharp decline of indigenous crafts during the time of skirmishes in the area as people stopped ornamentation of wooden houses and women folk ceased to wear colorful traditional dresses. During prolonged periods of relative peace, large quantities of sheep wool were produced which were used in the making of blanket, *Lois* and *Chadder*.

#### **4.2.6.1 Impact of Conflict on Intangible Heritage**

Traditions and celebrations of the people in the Valley were gravely affected by the hostilities on LoC. Marriage celebrations and famous festivities such as *Nowruz* and *Dhamal* on annual gatherings at Shrines were discontinued. Languages also became victim of conflict since the movement across LoC or within Valley during peaceful times promulgated folk songs and linguistic heritage. During the clashes on LoC, the weddings and events of celebrations lost the colors and velour which affected the language and traditions necessary for the progress of a language. Recently a combined study conducted by Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK) University and University of Kashmir, Srinagar in (IAK) concluded that this division affected languages of the region. Koshur is second major spoken language and a linguistic bond between two sides of Kashmir (Rehman Khawaja, personal communication, August 16, 2016).

According to Professor Khawaja Rehman:

The Line of Control (LoC) has adversely affected the minority languages of Azad Kashmir and the Neelum Kishen Ganga valley in particular. Moreover, people living on the either side of LoC have developed linguistic differences. These differences have evolved to such an

extent that they are now speaking different varieties with difficulty in understanding each other. As a result of this division, members of some divided families have adopted different languages as their mother tongues. They lost their ancestral language and as a result became alien for their relatives in J&K.

Most of the communities are multi-lingual and no single clan in the Neelum valley is in clear majority because of the separation by the line of control therefore, the languages are also split evenly over the ethnic divides but these are overlapped by a common language which is Hindko.

#### **4.2.6.2 Sense of Insecurity**

The self-sustaining socio-economic ways of life were shattered during the fourteen years of continuous firing along LoC in the valley. The area beyond *Nauseri* was cut off from the state capital and the road travel was not possible. Movement of vehicles was also not possible. People had to walk hundred or more kilometers carrying utilities and consumables on their back mostly moving in dark night to avoid casualties (Ibid). Long walls were erected along the road to make the vehicle and on-foot movement safe from fire. This also created a sense of insecurity and trauma amongst the local population. The hopelessness and bleak future prompted local population to align their hopes and sympathies with outcome of the ongoing insurgency across LoC. People were unable to work in the fields to sow and harvest. In *Nagdar* and *Neelum* villages, considerable number of farmers died and got severely injured every year during this period (Javad. Mir , personal communication, October 5, 2017. The women were the major victims because they had to tend the cattle and cut the grass and harvest and thus becoming target of the firing. Even gatherings at marriages and funeral attracted fire and resulted in loss of human lives. During peak periods of firing, people dwelled in the shelters which every house had constructed nearby. In some cases, children were born in these caves and shelters. This period divested the ways of life and socio-economic existence.

Cultural heritage resources in Neelum Valley face challenges from natural and manmade vandalism in the safeguarding and preservation of heritage. Natural disasters include flood, earth quake and avalanches. Illegal-digging, encroachment, mining, looting, lacks of awareness, mismanagement and arm conflict cause severe threat to the survival of cultural heritage resources. The research indicates that some threats have emerged recently, while others have been there since ages. The threat to the heritage resources has been causing irreparable lose to rich cultural heritage resources of the area. Damage to the heritage and heritage sites is adversely affecting the socio-economic development of the area generally and state of Jammu and Kashmir particularly. Protection and preservation of the cultural heritage resources will help promoting heritage tourism which will in term generate economic activities in the region.

## **OPPORTUNITIES IN NEELUM VALLEY**

### **4.3. Introduction to Opportunity**

The Neelum Valley is the largest district of Azad Jammu and Kashmir in terms of area. It is rich in both natural and cultural heritage resources. It is located at the juncture of north south corridor linking Gilgit Baltistan with rest of Pakistan and divided by the Line of Control in the east from the volatile valley of Indian administered Kashmir. The Neelum Valley has great potential to utilize its heritage resources for socio-economic development. The insecurity due to conflict in the Neelum Valley and Cross LoC firing for the last three decades caused socio-economic deprivation and stagnation which needs to be addressed through a conscious effort.

In the last few years, the Governments of Pakistan and India have showed interest in starting heritage tourism across the Line of Control. Travel and trade initiative that began in 2005 and 2008 respectively is an example of agreement on both sides to devise mechanism to bring peace in this conflict torn area (Chari, et.al 2011). The opportunity to explore heritage

tourism as a tool to bring peace and harmony in the region is a viable option. The cultural heritage tourism initiative across divide will have a domino effect on safeguarding heritage sites and devising conservation strategies to protect natural resources including forests, biodiversity and ecology in the Neelum Valley, Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

#### **4.4. Understanding of Heritage Tourism**

Heritage encompasses landscape; environment, monuments and artifacts passed from one generation to the other and have the potential to be used as a tool to improve social and economic conditions. The cultural heritage particularly archaeological sites, historical buildings, vernacular architecture and artistic expressions are portrayed as tourism products (UNESCO, 1972; Chheang, 2013:12-14). The Neelum Valley possess vast natural resources and cultural heritage sites which have never been identified and utilized for developing a vibrant and eco-friendly tourism industry in the area. This realization provides great opportunity to use these cultural heritage resources for socio-economic uplift of this area which remained underdeveloped for decades due to natural and manmade disasters. United Nation World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) underlines the significance of heritage tourism as follows:

Tourism involves movement of people among various cultures and civilizations often countries or places outside their usual environment. The movement of people across cultural and social spectrum fashions tolerance, social and economic improvement. The tourism industry is one of the most dynamic and fast growing economic sector in to world (UNWTO: 2016).

Heritage tourism becomes pivotal in supporting communities in their quest for peace and sustainable development (Wells, Lyony, 2012: 44-56). It is important to ensure that heritage tourism sustains and benefits local community culturally, socially and economically (Tatsufumi 2009: Cheatham, 2013: 42).

According to the World Travel and Tourism Council and World Tourism Organization (WTO), “Heritage tourism has the potential to bring people together and create opportunities for individuals to learn and understand each other, fostering mutual respect and tolerance” (WTO: 2014). Heritage tourism plays an important role in cross cultural exchange bringing people closer from different cultures. It helps to learn about different languages, life style and traditions (SEAMEO-SPAFA, 1995).

Many areas on both sides of LoC in the Kashmir remain isolated for extended period of time every year due to inaccessibility in extreme weather and difficult terrain conditions. These areas are more prone to disasters and have limited access and underdeveloped infrastructure. Most of the families and tribes living along LoC in these isolated areas are divided. Traditions and mutual celebrations such as Eid, annual gatherings at shrines, marriage gatherings and other occasions of mutual festivities have been affected due to the divided social groups across LoC. Heritage tourism can revive and boost the cultural and traditional ways of life of people across divide in Kashmir.

#### **4.5. Opening of Tourism in Neelum Valley**

In January 2004, South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) conference was held at Islamabad. In this meeting, a number of confidence building measures CBMs were initiated between two parts of Kashmir to normalize the situation, create friendly relations and encourage the peace process. These dialogues (Vajpayee- Musharraf) include the cease fire on borders, opening of natural routes across the LoC via Rawalakot, Poonch and Muzaffarabad Uri-Srinagar, meeting of divided families and starting of trade and tourism ventures (Akhtar, 2011:4-16).

After the implementation of these CBMs and the cease fire, socio-economic condition started improving in the area. Neelum Valley was given the status of a district with the administration infrastructure placed at Athmaqam where educational and health units were

built. Communication infrastructure took place and Muzaffarabad to *Taobat* road was reconstructed. Hundreds of locals got jobs in construction projects. Travel time from Muzaffarabad to Athmaqam and Taobat shortened, and now travellers could take personal vehicles up to Taobat. After earthquake (2005), foreign NGOs and foreign experts were allowed in the valley for a short period for rehabilitation of projects which infused new hope among people.

In December 2005, the then Prime Minister of Pakistan, Shaukat Aziz, while visiting Poonch, announced that AJ&K would be opened for tourism to exploit the area's full potential and to help generate economic opportunities for the people (Daily Nation: 2005). The Neelum Valley was embracing the benefits of peace and normalcy and in a short span of time several government and private tourist resorts were established in the area to accommodate the tourists. New construction of road and communication infrastructure in Neelum Valley brought the influx of tourism. The most affected areas of *Karen* and Neelum village were ideal for developing tourist resorts owing to the scenic beauty, site seeing and trekking opportunities.

#### **4.6. Benefits of Heritage Tourism in Neelum Valley**

Neelum Valley in Azad Kashmir had remained a significant hub of regional connectivity in the past. Due to conflict, this area became delinked from rest of the region. Cross LoC heritage tourism will provide an opportunity for the Neelum Valley to materialize its potential in regional connectivity. Intra-regional cooperation can promote land connectivity for tourist destinations coupled with complementary location for tourists as it can attract more tourist arrivals to such connected and diverse destinations (Grunely, war and Perry, 2001 Timothy, 2000). It will contribute to build trust and confidence among the regional countries in promoting other fields of cooperation. Azad Kashmir, especially the Neelum Valley, offers great trans-regional complementary tourist destinations as it sits along major connecting

routes linking north south and east west. More importantly, in the wake of revival of Silk Route, it could become a resourceful tourist destination.

The cross LoC heritage tourism will further promote the already flourishing tourist industry and help to manage the heritage assets of the area. The heritage tourism across divide not only can help to protect and safeguard these resources but also help to establish sustainable peace in a conflict zone.

Heritage tourism is a form of alternative tourism which has potential to bring sustainable and positive peace (Sarkar, George 27-41: 2010). The heritage tourism across divide in Kashmir can effectively address several other aspects in this conflict area. Tourism in the Kashmir across divide will ultimately support local communities (Chari, Chandran, et.al. 2011). Integration of natural and cultural resources to achieve peace through cross LoC tourism will pronounce an opportunity for sustainable development on both sides of LoC filling the voids and denying space to uncertainty and violence. It will also empower the stakeholders and broaden the range of options.

The option of cross LoC tourism in the Valley will give hope to the local population across divide and help reduce tensions in the region. The peaceful environment and normalcy would encourage people to adapt normal lives and continue their traditional ways of life based on agricultural farming and traditional craftsmanship which would revive, strengthen and promote local economy. It would also help reforestation and conservation since local community will find it beneficial to protect its natural resources.

The Line of control divided and isolated many remotes areas on both sides. Number of hamlets and villages along Neelum Valley remain inaccessible due to extreme weather condition or difficult terrain over a quarter of the year. These areas are more prone to disasters, have limited access and lack of communication infrastructure. Furthermore, many of the families living along LoC are divided. This opportunity of cross LoC will not only help

to reconnect the divided families but also promote the dividing shared traditions including linguistic links. These people have been sharing the same heritage, cultural and historical legacies for centuries.

In the absence of any industrial development and declining agricultural productivity, the mainstay of the AJK economy, the tourism industry, can play an important role in expanding livelihood opportunities especially in remote areas of the Neelum Valley. Unique historical, geographic importance and rich heritage give the Neelum Valley for opening it for cultural heritage tourism. People of the Neelum Valley have suffered immensely due to conflict in the past. Cross LoC cultural and heritage tourism in the Neelum Valley will revive cultural connectivity and will open socio-economic development opportunities in this conflict affected area. It will also contribute in developing a counter narrative for promoting peace in the region.

On May 18, 2017, Abdul Basit, Pakistan high commissioner to India, while answering questions on opening of Sharda heritage site for the state subjects of Jammu & Kashmir replied, “Government of Pakistan is developing an infrastructure in the area and planning to restore the heritage sites for the tourism across divide”. Cross-LoC cultural heritage tourism in Neelum valley will open avenues for political, social and economic boom to entire population of the valley. Measure to assimilate and brand cultural heritage sites promote diverse tourist destinations in the Valley. It is likely to give a boost to economic activities on either side and provide local population with economic incentive to establish services, auxiliary industries and revive the local art & crafts.

The economic benefits of cross LoC tourism will positively influence political impasse. The tangible results cross LoC for tourism will broaden the scope of peace initiatives and improve people-to-people contact between the two sides. Trade and travel initiative across LoC which began in 2005 and continues despite set back to the relations between Pakistan



and India is a visible example of workable solutions through such initiatives. Tourism, as an industry, with its several ancillary branches, will be a major boom for the region. In long term, it will address the important problem of unemployment and prevent the youth from radical path.

A number of emerging prospects in the region also call for exploring viable solutions to issues effecting socio-economic conditions in these conflict areas. Neelum Valley, which lies along Logistic auxiliaries of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), has tremendous potential for peace and socio-economic uplift by opening up for trans-regional heritage tourism. Neelum Valley remained gateway to the ancient Silk Road which can be incorporated again as a tourist destination along the new Silk Route.

The field study conducted by the researcher during 2012-16 reveals that the community played a pro-active role toward safeguarding its heritage. This fact strengthens the aspect of acceptability of tourism among local community and adaptation of archaeological and ancient heritage sites for branding the cross LoC tourism destinations.

#### **4.7. Potential Aspects of Heritage Tourism in Neelum Valley**

The scope of the heritage tourism is multi-dimensional which offers rich and diverse cultural heritage resources in both tangible and intangible forms. Traces of this broad cultural material from pre-history to present day have been catalogued. This narrative of remarkable cultural wealth is multi layered as various civilizations and religions lived through various phases of history and left their marks. Ancient written records confirm the legacies from the layered history of this area which are entwined in natural tangible forms such as mountains, peaks, passes, ancient routes, lakes and archaeological remains. Ancient texts prove that the valley remained an important center of attraction for people of diverse religions, scholars, sages, mentors and cultural backgrounds. The valley was located on the crossroads of connecting routes converging on the Silk Route from the east, south and

southeast. Monks, pilgrims, travelers and traders from far and wide visited or passed through this valley.

In the backdrop of modern understanding that heritage can significantly contribute towards socio-economic development and to create opportunities in conflict affected areas the potential aspect of natural and cultural resources in Neelum Valley are described below.

#### **4.7 .1 Use of Natural Resources**

The natural resources which could be attractive for tourist are divided into four categories. The potential natural resources which can be exploited to promote cultural heritage tourism across the divide can be categorized as archaeological route, natural-based route, cultural route and agriculture route.

##### **4.7 .1.1 Archaeological Route**

These routes connect Neelum Valley with Kashmir Valley from Kupwara, Indian administered Kashmir. Aurel Stein adopted this route when he visited the Neelum Valley in 1892 for documentation of Sharda Temple. There are significant archaeological ruins on these routes beside remnants of Pre-historic era. Nearly six kilometer descends from *Saran* mountain top, there is a village *Reshna*, situated on the left bank of the river Neelum. An ancient mound occupied with round standing burial and variety of pottery fragments scattered everywhere. Next is *Dudnial*, another well-known village that is situated on both sides of river. Aurel stein crossed the river Neelum from village *Dudnial* and camped at *Nagdar* village which is gateway to northwest regions. This route can be declared as archaeological route on either side of LoC and should be opened for the scholars, researchers and archaeologists to explore ancient history of the region.

##### **4.7.1.2. Natural-based Route**

The natural routes connecting Neelum Valley with rest of regions have remained in use for centuries. These natural land routes were used by trade caravans, monks and travelers. The

passes in the high mountain ranges such as Shounter, Burzal, Babusar, Tanghdar, Tootmar and Drass-Kargil facilitated the movement across the high mountain ranges. These passes are as important as the archaeological ruins and have been in use since the settlements began. In Rawota village where Kishenganga Valley is connected with Valley of Kashmir, the ruins of ancient watch tower on mountain pass along with several winepresses lying in filed terraces. This shows the significance of the natural routes. These places provide attractive branding material for these tourist destinations. Similar routes and sites provide an opportunity to be integrated in overall tourism destinations map of the valley so that every nook and corner of the area can benefit from diversifying tourist destinations.

#### **4.7.1.3. Cultural Route**

*Mukhtaseri Hyhom* is mentioned as a sacred site where pilgrimages performed rituals before starting their visit for Sharda Temple from different parts of Kashmir (Stein, 1900: 344). In the Neelum Valley, this site is now identified as *saran* mountain range known as *Ladie* top. *Mukhtaseri Bheik* is woodland with vast stretches of grassy lands and a rock allied with lord *Ganesh*. On the other side of this mountain peak is situated Kupwara District of Indian held Kashmir, which was once known as Baramulla trade route. This place is known as *Band Hook* by native Muslims and *Ganesh Pal* by Kashmiri pundits (Pundit, Omkar, personal communication, March 2, 2015). During annual pilgrimage to Sharda Temple, the devotees stayed over there for night and perform ritual *Pooja*. One of the most famous rituals is to prepare sweetened fried bread and offer to *Ganesh* god. In the legendary work, archaeological site is important for devotees as Sharda *Mahatmya* mentioned that the place is associated where Goddess Sharda danced for an austere *Muni sandilya* who practiced hard to get sight of goddess (Ibid). In summer, nomads stayed with their live stocks and performed rituals by tying animal hair on the trees surrounding to the *Ganesh* rock boulder. They believed that this practice enriched animals stocks. *Ganesh Pal* is situated on pilgrimage trek

which started from *Laderwan* to Sharda Temple which was at the distance of one day trek (Stein, 1900:280-282). This cultural route has great potential for reviving the traditional, pilgrimage route for the devotees of goddess Sharda. Moreover, it can have significant attraction for the general tourist across the divide.

#### **4.7.1.4 Agricultural Route**

The Agricultural routes include the places which were used for rice cultivation and fruit plantation. One of the relatively unknown areas of Neelum valley with vast tourism potential is the Surgun Valley. The Surgun is at an altitude of 9,000 ft. above sea level and lies on the northern border of Gilgit Baltistan. It has houses, unique flora and medicinal herbs on the mountain top. In the south, the rugged areas *Chowkibal*, Karnah Gali and Leepa Valley, which are the best red rice producing areas, can be linked with surroundings areas. Similarly, a number of small hamlets in the valley grow rare vegetables and wild eatables. Knowledge from the locals can be shared across the areas divided by the LoC. This may also help

#### **4.7.2. Reviving Composite Heritage (Visit Religious Sites)**

A number of heritage sites on both sides of LoC are revered by people across the divide. In Neelum Kishenganga Valley ,Sharda *Peeth* and its associated sites have great reverence .Sharda attracted not only Kashmiri pundits: *Acharya*, *Gurus* and *Gautama*'s but also some renowned Muslim Sufi saints such as Syed Jamal-ud-Din and Baba Abdullah who came to the Valley to visit this site. A disciple of Syed Ali Hamdani by the name Syed Jamal-ul-Din came to the Neelum Kishenganga Valley in 1430 during the rule of King Zain-ul-Abidin Buddha Shah. He remained in this Valley till his death. His grave is on the left bank of Madhumati stream few kilometers south east of Sharda Temple (Stein, 1900:282-84).

Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin Bud Shah (1420-1470 AD), a revered king, visited Sharda Temple and also visited Syed Jamal-ul-Din's shrine. It is narrated that until late the pilgrims who visited Sharda also visited the tomb of Syed Jamal-ul-Din (ibid). The centuries old Banyan tree

overshadowing the shrine of this Sufi saint is the only plant of its kind in the Neelum Kishenganga Valley. It is said that this plant was brought from saint's native place, Uzbekistan. During Sharda Ashtami night (a ritualistic bath in Hindu religion) the visiting devotees and Sadhus used to visit Syed Jamal-ul-Din's tomb to seek blessings. Similarly, Muslims used to visit Sharda *Mai's* shrine. This was a tradition which ensured syncretism and tolerance in a diverse religious and cultural environment.

There are saintly abodes which were visited by Muslim pilgrims from valley prior to divide until mid-80s. Visitors from Indian side of *Kernah* Valley were allowed to visit *Tharah Sharif* shrine located in AJK along LoC in Leepa Valley.

Hindus are required to undertake pilgrimages once during their life time. It is believed that *Chard-ham* or four holy pilgrimage destinations (Badrinath, Kedarnath, Ganotri and Yamunotri) lead to moksha, the lead from samsara (cycle of rebirth) (Cheatham, Elliot: 2013, 59). So Pundits living in Indian held Kashmir hope to visit these sites once in their lifetime to perform their religious duties. Mir Tariq, Journalist Daily newspaper in Indian held Kashmir, told the researcher during his visit to Islamabad, Pakistan that:

Kashmiri pundits and other civil society organizations of state of Jammu & Kashmir demand the opening of Sharda shrine in Neelum Valley for religious tourism so they could have *Darshan* of this old temple. In this way, the annual yatras of the shrine could be revived.

Sharda Temple and its associated sites received pilgrims from all over Kashmir. The annual visit or *yatra* was conducted before partition during the months of August and September. This place is still revered by locals as shrine of Sharda *Maiee* (elderly lady). Similarly, People of Neelum Valley have great reverence for shrine of *Hazrat Bal* in IHK. Even today, the people from west of LoC send offerings to *Hazrat Bal* through the relatives who visit other side of LoC via bus service.

There are several such sites which are revered on both sides of LoC and through cultural heritage and religious tourism the people can get an opportunity to visit these religious

places. It would help bringing peace and understanding across LoC. It would benefit local economy as well.

### **4.7.3. Historical Connectivity**

There exist rich historical linkages between Neelum Valley and Kashmir Valley on the one hand and Central Asia on the other which can attract tourists from both sides. Major routes from Kashmir and Central Asia converged at Neelum Valley. The trade and transit movement created regional linkages through the Valley. Muslims undergo *ziyarat* which is a pilgrimage to sites associated with Sufi saints. Local pilgrimage traditions, under taken as a visit to local graves of *Sufis*, are also found throughout Muslim countries including Kashmir (Cheatham, Elliot: 2013: 60). Nagdar is the largest villages of Neelum Valley. Recently, a number of archaeological sites were documented from this village. One of the several old sites is the shrine of Three Sufi Syeds that occupies the eastern slopes facing the LoC across the river. It is narrated that in 1398 CE, these Sufi Syeds were beheaded by King Timur Lane. People flock here and seek blessings. Couple of kilometers away, there exists grave of another saint Qalandar Baba. This shrine is revered on both sides of LoC by all communities. Prior to division, people from all communities from Kashmir visited this shrine but after divide a similar shrine of *Qalandar Baba* was built on east of LoC which is also visible from *Nagdar* village.

The most significant connection, the Kashmiris have with this side of the world is Tajikistan where the most revered preacher and saint Mir Sayyid Ali Hamdani is buried in Kolab (Bukhari , 2015:4 ). Kashmiris have unflinching loyalty with him and a route like this, if opened, would connect them with a great civilization where their most admired saint is buried. He is also known as Ameer-e-Kabir. He travelled to Kashmir and converted majority of people to Islam. The Muslims across the divide can also visit these graves and holy shrines

such as there are groups in divided Kashmir who are traditionally associated with Sufi shrines in Centre Asia.

#### **4.7.4. Bridging Linguistic Across Divide**

Being an important component of intangible cultural heritage, language strengthens social cohesion and peace through its folklores, poetry and stories. The division of state of Jammu & Kashmir has affected the languages of the region. Professor Khawaja Rehman has elaborately dealt with this topic. Kashmiri is spoken amongst majority of Neelum Valley population and it is the second major language in this area which would connect with Kashmiri speaking tourists from across LoC. It has a potential to revive the linguistic bonds between two sides of Kashmir. Researchers on both sides of LoC are working on dying languages in this area. Access to this area to linguists and researchers would benefit the academia as well as documentation of intangible heritage. Tourism across LoC can revive linguistic connectivity between Neelum Valley and Kashmir Valley.

#### **4.7.5. Celebrating Nowruz Together**

Neelum Valley has a legacy of being a cultural melting pot. An important festival Nowruz is celebrated since centuries. *Baisakhi*, a Hindu festival, has become synonymous with *Nowruz* in this region. It is celebrated to welcome the start of spring and cultivation season when snow melts and the flowers bloom. *Nilamata Puranas* mention customs and rituals of Kashmir along-with other sacrosanct places along the archaeological ruins of Sharda in Neelum Kishenganga Valley.

In March 2015 Pakistan along-with eleven other countries (Afghanistan, India, Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan) has signed the multi-national nomination file of UNESCO's representative list of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) 'Nowruz' (Dawn: 2015). This would bridge cultural diversity beyond borders. India and Pakistan should consider relaxing travel restrictions so that members of

theses divided cultures could organize and join regional festivals and border meals (gatherings) along LoC. Mutual festivals like *Nowruz* can play an important role across divide in J&K and Gilgit Baltistan, northern areas of Pakistan.

#### **4.7.6. Opportunity for Researchers**

Impact of 2012-15, documentation will be significant and would definitely provide a solid base for creating interest in further researches in the area. The value and importance of the sites improve and enhance after its documentation and scientific study. However, the present research can be said to be the initial efforts and it can best be treated at the primary stage but again it would spark great interest for scholars and researchers across LoC and beyond. The salvage excavation, carried out in 2014 near Sharda Temple site, suggests that evidence of layered remains of various periods exist. These initial discoveries need further advanced and carried on till the entire cultural wealth of the valley has been properly and scientifically recorded.

#### **4.8. Community Participation in Protecting of Heritage**

Local community in Neelum Kishenganga Valley is playing a proactive role in protecting its cultural heritage. In order to encourage and promote active participation of the local people in the protection and promotion of their heritage and to create awareness in them about the heritage, we not only kept on maintaining close contacts with the local people, but paid special attention to the members of the civil society organizations and the government institutions. Civil society from the Valley welcomed the initiative and enthusiastically participated in identifying and documenting the cultural heritage. The local community owns and takes pride in its heritage. Sharda Save Committee has been formed to protect and safeguard its heritage. The local community is quite supportive of the idea of cross LoC cultural heritage tourism.



#### **4.9. Way forward to Utilize Opportunity of Heritage Tourism**

The religious places in the Valley such as Sharda archaeological sites & shrines and historical monuments and other sites of cultural significance revered on both sides by all communities have been surveyed and documented. As a first step, these archaeological and cultural places must be preserved and restored so that they can attract tourists.

Initially, persons from pre-divide era who are still alive and desire to visit their birthplaces, ancestral places and ancient temple, shrines and natural sites can be given opportunity to fulfil their lifelong desire on humanitarian grounds. This would pave the way for expanding the religious tourism. A recent research conducted by University of Azad Jammu & Kashmir and University of Srinagar; Indian administered Kashmir shows that the frequent travel across LoC has facilitated communication and helped to maintain the endangered languages spoken in AJK.

Researchers and scholars from both sides can play an important role in conservation and safeguarding of shared history. They can also address the issues of climate change and its effect on cultural heritage, ways of life of people and the region including safeguarding the endangered biodiversity.

To convert the conflict sites into peace tourism, some villages and small towns that have been totally destroyed during conflict in 1990s can be converted into museums or peace parks .In order to initiate the process, some important routes should be opened for local divided families and religious tourists to visit the shrines and places of worship across LoC for short durations. These routes may be opened on special occasions such as Eid, Nowruz, Urs (anniversaries at shrine). This can be facilitated through local arrangements without any help of the state or central governments.

Opening Neelum Kishenganga Valley for cultural heritage tourism in the wake of revival of Silk Route is imperative of time. By opening these areas for tourism, the adjacent belts of the Silk Route will be integrated in the border peace and development initiatives which will strengthen the discourse of regional peace and harmony. In the absence of sustainable economic opportunities, utilization of indigenous cultural heritage resources is important for peace and development in the Kashmir region. The above mentioned steps, if taken seriously, will transform the region into a model peace zone and it may become an excellent model for converting a conflict zone into a peace zone. The area may also attract international peace activists and encourage the international community to replicate the model in conflict ridden areas.

## CONCLUSION

This study was conducted during 2012-16, and involved the survey and documentation of cultural heritage in Neelum Valley. The study provides significant material evidence for establishing the chronological order of the unrevealed history of the region. Over 100 heritage sites belonging to prehistory, history, middle and modern periods have been explored by the author from Neelum Valley. These cultural heritage and archaeological discoveries indicate the earlier settlements in the area, beginning from around the 4<sup>th</sup> Millennium BCE, to the 18<sup>th</sup> CE. The study revealed that human vandalism and natural degradation poses a great threat to these cultural heritage resources. Therefore, serious measures are required by the stakeholders for the safeguarding and protection of these resources. The study concludes that the utilization of these resources as a tool for socio-economic development through cross heritage tourism is the way forward. It offers opportunities for protection of these heritage resources. Moreover, cross LoC heritage tourism will become a major confidence-building measure and help bring peace and development in a conflict torn area of Neelum Valley.

The *Kalhana Rajatarangini*, an ancient written record of the Kashmiri history, reviewed by Aurel Stein (1892), sheds light on the geography, physical features and some of archaeological sites in the valley. The heritage of Neelum Valley comprises of both natural and cultural inheritances which is the physical evidence of evolution of the civilization and cultural history of the area. Geography influenced the evolvement of a unique cultural map in Neelum Valley, as most of the archaeological sites are located at higher mountain slopes or terraces, connecting routes, near ancient lakes and isolated hamlets. Historically, Neelum Valley was laid at the juncture of important routes connecting it to rest of the region. These connecting routes leading into the valley facilitated pilgrims, monks and travelers from as far off as Korea in the east, Bengal in the south east , Tibet and Central Asia in the northwest.

The diverse cultural traits are visible in both the tangible and intangible forms such as archaeological sites, documented artifacts, wooden architectures, shrines, art crafts, dress patterns, cuisines, and languages in the Valley. Only a few dozen sites out of over one hundred sites have been fully documented. Most of the remnants, artefacts and other material have been generally met out from the surface. These findings reveal that in various periods of history Aryans, Shivaism and Naga's preachers lived and left their marks on cultural map of the area. Likewise, Sharda Temple, sacred lakes, Hari Parbat Peak, water springs, Ganesh head, ruins of Har temple which are also mentioned in the ancient Sanskrit texts, authenticate the existence of Hindu religious and cultural practices in the Valley. Ancient shrines, graves and continuity of some unique traditions among various ethnic groups show that the valley hosted Sufi saints and traders from Central Asia through connecting routes of the Silk Road. Documented materials such as rock inscriptions, copper coins, standing burials, rock-cut caves, wine presses, and portable ritual objects, watch towers adjacent to ancient passes, all strengthen the notion that this area was home to diverse cultures. Moreover, it had a significant role in the evolution of the socio-cultural life of the valley. Middle history gives sufficient information on Afghan, Mughal and the later Dogra rule in Neelum Valley.

The Valley has a conspicuous treasure of springs, lakes, streams, *Nullahs* and other tributaries along with the eastern slopes, Gurez Valley in north east, northern lower Himalayan range and *Shamsabari* mountain range watershed. These provide the major water sources in the Valley. Beside these the Neelum River plays an important role in social, economic and spiritual lives of the people of the area since centuries. Inhabitants attributed various names to this river, including, Kishanganga, Mahganga and 'The River of Gold' according to their beliefs. Certain streams and springs which are considered sacred and had spiritual significance join the river at various locations. This water flow was used to carry religious offerings, transport wood and it also acted as barrier against invaders.

The archaeological remains in Neelum Valley are present in the form of Hindu temples, sacred religious mounds, and ruins of fortresses; rock cut caves, watch towers, Dogra fort and shrines. These structures not only reveal a few distinctive features but are important to study the socio-cultural and religious activities of the remote past. The archaeological site Sharda Temple and its associated sites including siege of Gautama *Tehjian*, *Khel Patt* are considered a sacred place. *Ganesh Ghati*, Saraswati lake and Sericella fort were mentioned in the ancient text of Kalhana Rajatarangini (11<sup>th</sup> CE).

The Sharda Temple is located on the confluences of an ancient river Madhumati, River Neelum and Surgun. The oral history of Kashmir recognizes this site to be a Buddhist center of learning. However, the construction features of Sharda temple are similar to the Martand Temple (8th CE), which was built in Srinagar during the reign of King Lilitaditya. The architecture of Sharda Temple has pyramidal *Shikara*, trefoil recess arches, raised on high platform is continuity of traditional style of the Kashmiri architecture.

Besides the Sharda Temple, there are ruins of a gateway, which appears relatively older than the Sharda Temple itself. This structure has a Greek influence which is reflected in the outer blustered double grand pillar and a base shaft. No signs of renovation have been observed on this outer most structure.

There is another archaeological site called *Ganesh Ghati*, 5 kilometers away from the temple, where the head of an elephant is naturally carved out on a rock cliff. The elephant god has great reverence in Hindu mythology which has made this natural place prominent since centuries.

Another important historically known place mentioned in ancient text is village *Tehjian*. This village is spread on both the sides of river Neelum. Exploration carried out in the village revealed Pre-historic stone implements, fragments of terracotta pipes and ancient coins, which prove existence of primitive human society subsisting on stone culture in the region.

The most significant Pre-historic tools which helped determine the chronological order of Azad Kashmir were also discovered from Tehjian Village. The presence of beads, stone sickles and other cultural materials, suggest that the site was an agricultural area and craft manufacturing center since ancient times. The documented Pre-historic tools such as sickles, terracotta beads from *Tehjian*, Neelum Valley are similar to those found in Gandhara, Burzahom, Kashmir and Tibet. This evidence strengthens the view that the region had greater linkages in adjacent areas. Moreover Tehjian was at the same agricultural and industrial level as the other important places on the archaeological map of same era.

The *Khel Patt* cave was considered sacred by Jain and Hindu followers. Variety of inscribed signs on rock cut caves, associated sites of Shiva and Hinduism prove that both cults remain pivotal in socio-culture sphere of the valley.

In Sharda village, the researcher documented a variety of cup-mark boulders, which is concluded as the earliest human evidence, belonging to the 4<sup>th</sup> Millennium BCE. These are similar to the rock carvings of the Kandak Valley and its surrounding areas in Swat, Pakistan. The megalith grave documented in Neelum Valley opposite the Sharda Temple is even earlier evidence than the temple itself. Same type of megalith graves are documented by the German Archaeological Mission of Heidelberg, University led by Karl Jettmar, Herald Hauptman and Ahmad Hassan Dani in Chilas and *Yasin* located in the Gilgit Baltistan and *Asota* in District Swabi of Khyber Pukhtoonkhawa belonging to the 4<sup>th</sup> Millennium BCE.

The researcher also recorded the grave culture comprising of copper anklets, axes and other accessories. Similar artifacts i.e copper anklets and iron axes have also been reported from Gandhara grave sites, located in KPK (Timergarha, District Dir, Zarifkaurona, District Peshawar, Chitral, Katalei in Swat Valley) and also in Gilgit-Baltistan.

The discovery of stone presses (Kunda) from *Tehjian* also shows linkages with adjacent regions. These wine presses (*Kundas*) belong to the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> CE. Similar artifacts were

discovered from Kandak Valley, District Swat and Buner Valley respectively by the Italian Archaeological Mission and the Nara Women University, Japan. In Gandhara these *Kunda's* were used to prepare wine for the Buddhist monasteries.

An important ancient rock inscription was documented by the author which belonged to Sharda Brahmi script of the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE, along with symbols of *Trisula* and the lotus flower on rock cliffs at *Nagdar Nullah*, Neelum Valley. Similar types of inscriptions and symbols were also documented by Ahmad Hasan Dani and the German Archeological Mission in Gilgit Baltistan. The rock inscription of Neelum Valley is located on the pilgrimage route which connects Chilas, Babussar pass and Silk Road. The rock inscriptions in Gilgit Baltistan were inscribed by the monks and travelers. The free movement of pilgrims and travelers on ancient routes in the area is proven by these rock inscriptions. These rock inscriptions indicate that Nagdar village could have been the travelling route of the pilgrims for northern areas and finally, to Central Asia. Apparently, rocky slopes under the flowing waters of streams were selected for rock inscriptions and writings because these inscriptions must have been considered sacred. Even today these inscriptions were copied on birch barks from the rocks and are used as a remedy against disease by local people. It shows the continuity of some ancient beliefs still prevailing in the area.

The finding of *Nagdar* village hero stone slab or commemorative stones along engraved figures and documented rock inscription have some connection. The dresses worn by the hero stone figure found in *Nagdar* Neelum Valley prove the existence of cultural links of this area with Central Asia. These stone slabs belong to the 4<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> centuries CE.

Sericella fort which belonged to the 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries CE, is built on the mound near the rock cliff which houses the head of *Ganesh* god. This fort had social, political, religious and military significance in ancient times. According to Kalhan's *Rajatarangini*, many battles were fought at this place between King Jayasimha and Prince Bhoja for the supremacy of

Kashmir. On the façade of a boulder near Sericella fort, Swastika marks and a partially damaged engraved female bust is also found. In the same surroundings, Dogra fort at Sharda belonging to the 18<sup>th</sup> century CE, has also been documented by the researcher.

In the fifteen century, Persian cultural influence brought new traits to Kashmir. It is evident in both the tangible and intangible forms of heritage such as wooden architecture, art craft, languages, celebration, dress patterns and cuisines of the area. The mosque architecture style of valley is the continuation of building construction which was also used in Gilgit Baltistan, Swat, Dir and the adjoining areas. Artisans continued with the decorative elements and techniques which were popular in the region even prior to the arrival of Islamic traditions.

The researcher documented intangible heritage to study cultural links which include dresses, jewelry, textiles, and crafts. The people of Neelum valley live in a traditional and rich cultural environment which can be seen through their ornamentation, foodstuff, textiles and crafts.

The dress and ornamentation is considered as one of the important ethno-archaeological features of a civilization. Inhabitants of Neelum Valley have retained some of the dress codes and ornamentation. During this study it was observed that some features of the above mentioned dresses such as *Kasava* and *pheran* are similar to the costumes of hero stone figures documented from Nagdar village. The jewelry used by the womenfolk of the area is also rich in design and shows a continuity of designs from centuries. This study proves the hypothesis that Neelum Valley has had historical cultural links with Central Asia through connecting routes of the Silk Road.

Central Asian cultural influence is evident on the dresses and accessories used in Neelum Valley. Research documented certain type of dresses, headdresses and accessories used by the inhabitants with little alteration or change in style which is the continuity of central Asian cultural heritage tradition. Spoken languages in Neelum Valley are diverse and include; Hindko, Kashmiri, Shina, Pushto. These languages are used by different tribes such as Dards,



Kakas, settler Gujjars, Bakarwals and Pushtoons. The minor ethnic groups amalgamated with the Kashmiri speakers and led to the evolvement of rich cultural heritage of Neelum Valley. On assessing the languages, the study indicates that Kashmiri is still the second most common speaking language of the area other than Hindko. Kashmiri speakers of the area were considerably influenced by mutual relation with Central Asia and the valley of Kashmir. Due to being disconnected from the east of the LoC from the similar ethnic groups the languages and rich cultural identities are dying. The use of some of the spoken languages which connected this area with rest of Kashmir is very marginal in educational institutions and on media. Urdu is replacing the local languages and these local dialects and languages are under threat unless cross LoC interaction allows the local community to interact in local common languages.

Traditional festivals like Nowruz and Eid are all celebrated with great enthusiasm in Neelum Valley. These traditional festivals have the same resonance among the inhabitants in contemporary times as it was in the past. There are many shrines of saints along the LoC in Neelum Valley. Large numbers of people follow the tradition of visiting of shrines and presenting offerings to the saints or sacred sites in area. Local people also seek blessings on shrines from Sufi saints as they are considered closer to God because of their piety. People send their offerings to certain Sufis and shrines of saints on the other side of LoC to their relatives. The water bodies and natural sites including Saraswati Lake, Surgun *Nullah*, Madhumati River (Bawolie & spring Mukhtaseri) are an essential part of Sharda cultural heritage. These sites still attract people from within the valley and from outside the Valley. These sites have religious significance for Kashmiri Pundits across the divide, who visited these places from all over Kashmir before partition.

The wooden houses of the valley are an important cultural heritage; most of these houses are over one hundred years old. The fact that the wooden houses of Neelum Valley are

environmentally friendly and have survived and are still in practice since ages is amazing. In the wooden houses of Neelum Valley the family occupies the upper story whereas, the ground floor usually is used for cattle or as storage. Similarly all the mosques in the area have carvings on wooden walls and the outer structure. Although, some of these structures are built in recent years, yet they carry the hallmark of old wood carving traditions.

Thorough Study underlines that climate change, human vandalism, encroachment and environmental damages are major external threats which pose greater challenges against the protection and safeguarding of these heritage resources. Another major challenge to the heritage is the lack of realization by the stakeholders about the significance of these natural and cultural resources and its role as a developmental tool. Case studies (1-4) show that the rich cultural heritage is under threat due to inability of stakeholders to act, human vandalism and natural causes. Human vandalism takes place despite presence of forest officials in Neelum Valley. Historical cultural sites are encroached and artifacts dug out and looted. The most important and magnificent archaeological monuments such as Sharda Temple is affected by erosion and threatened by encroachments from private citizens and government departments. Some heritage sites are occupied by security personals, who are also either directly or indirectly responsible for the destruction of cultural and natural sites. Moreover their locations near archaeological sites cause hindrance in protection of these sites due to their illegal occupation.

The research finds that government functionaries are in cahoots with the timber mafia and smugglers of precious herbs, gemstones and artifacts. Vast forests of centuries old cedar, pine and birch bark trees are cut down on the pretext of destruction of these trees by firing even though these forests are in the areas which are not effected by cross border shelling and firing.

Furthermore, relevant departments lack the capacity to manage and maintain these resources and lack of coordination among stakeholders also impedes the implementation of workable solutions.

The overlapping claims and interests by various stakeholders over the natural and cultural sites pose challenges to the implementation of practical solutions to the issues pertaining to the safeguarding of these sites. Cross firing has been the cause of great loss to biodiversity and environment but more recently unregulated tourism and unplanned urbanization pose threat to biodiversity and environment. Onslaught of commercialization has effected the local organic production of crops and vegetables. The only option to preserve the biodiversity and protect the environment is by adapting an ethical tourism approach, as modern day tourism, if unregulated, will destroy the environment and nature.

Cross border firing severely hampers long term planning for utilization of indigenous cultural and natural resources. In November, 2016 firing and shelling from across the LoC, caused extensive loss to nature and wildlife, vast areas of forests were deliberately hit to cause fear. At some places vernacular wooden structures were partially damaged by heavy shelling and bombing from across the LoC. Therefore, there is a need to devise a mechanism to stop such incidents across the LoC to save the architectures and traditions of the area.

Study reveals that there is a steady change in traditional motifs and design patterns of wooden houses from the past few decades. Mud plaster and extensive use of wood is now being replaced by stone or cement blocks and tin roof, because modern construction materials are easier to manage. Construction of cemented and tin roof houses and motels is taking place to accommodate the tourists. There is need to preserve theses traditional wooden houses. If careful measures are taken and the local population is provided with the capacity and the building resources, the wooden houses can be maintained properly.

The study also revealed that the traditional art of wood carving, Kashmiri straw making, basketry, embroideries on textiles and metal work are declining. This decline in traditional art and craft is attributed to lack of planning by government and its failure to provide incentives to the artisans. Moreover cross firing along LoC also affected the indigenous ways of livelihood forcing artisans to abandon their professions and creative skills.

Lack of planning initiatives are contributes in destruction of environment and cultural heritage in valley. The case study reveals that the community in Neelum Valley has the propensity to own their cultural heritage and it is willing to cooperate in protection of these heritage sites. Jalal-ul-din Mughal, a local journalist told the researcher: “We care for the historical sites; these are our heritage, our identity. Heritage sites are just as important as other assets, and once these are gone, then our history and identity has gone too”.

Landscape, natural environment and cultural wealth are the building bricks for achieving sustainable socio-economic development in conflict ridden areas. Furnished with diverse cultural and natural heritage, ancient monuments, sacred sites, Neelum Valley offers great potential for a wide range of tourism opportunities. Harnessing this potential for sustainable development can only be achieved through an adequate idea of an alternate form of cultural heritage tourism across divide in Kashmir.

Throughout, world it is accepted by developed and underdeveloped countries alike that tourism is a source of social and economic benefit for the people. The Neelum Valley cultural resources possess not only the potential to create wealth for the local community, but at the same time this heritage can be used as a tool of peace and harmony in the conflict areas of Kashmir.

The study underlines that the scope of heritage tourism in Neelum Valley is multi-dimensional and it offers rich and diverse cultural heritage resources in both tangible and intangible forms. Traces of this broad cultural material from pre-history to present day have

been catalogued. The potential heritage resources which can be exploited to promote cultural heritage tourism across the divide are classified to various categories: archaeological sites, natural-based route, cultural places, mutual celebrations and festivals.

The number of cultural places which are associated with diverse communities and groups living on both sides of the divide in Kashmir, provides an opportunity to utilize it as a tool through heritage tourism for social and economic development in the region. Sharda heritage and its affiliated natural and cultural sites are revered by all communities. The Sharda Temple can play an important role in extending the cross cultural harmony through religious tourism.

Likewise ancient mosques and commonly revered saint's shrines can become part of the heritage and religious tourism. A revival of traditional routes and cross LoC cultural tourism will help to create environment for preservation and integration of these cultural assets. This initiative will further help the socio-economic development and bring peace in the region.

The heritage tourism across the divide will strengthen the existing peace process between India & Pakistan. This initiative will further create an environment for sustainable peace and help to reduce hostilities along the LoC in Kashmir, especially Neelum Valley which has been effected by cross firing in the past. People who visit after cumbersome process of acquiring travel permits which takes over a year and still very few fortunate people get the permission. This process of heritage tourism will help to ease the suffering of divided families in Kashmir.

The study explores the benefits of cross LoC heritage tourism as this initiative will help to achieve capacity building. Moreover it will bring structural improvements in tourism-related private and government institutions and departments. The initiative will provide opportunity to review the present status of the heritage sites and pave the way for the implementation of rules regulations to protect and renovate the damaged sites. Study also underlines that this

initiative will help instill awareness and underscore the importance among the local population about their heritage, preservation of environment and ecology.

The revival of the traditional routes and cross LoC cultural tourism provide excellent opportunity for creating environment for preservation and integration of these cultural assets for socio-economic development and bringing peace in the region. Domestic cultural heritage tourism might help stimulate national pride and help local economies. Intra-Kashmir cultural heritage tourism stimulates an understanding of the divided cultures which may help to create a basis for better environment in the area and the region.

Neelum Valley with immensely rich heritage resources and its location along the ancient Silk Route (land connections with Central Asia) offers a unique opportunity for reviving cultural connectivity, bridging the trust deficits and gaps across divide. Opening Neelum Valley for heritage tourism would open trans-regional tourism opportunities in the wake of the revival of Silk Route in the shape of Pak-China Economic Corridor.

Unemployment and economic deprivation gives space to extremism and violence, causes breakup of the social fabric and threatens peace. Conflict zones are vulnerable to extremist ideas because of lack of opportunities. Cross LoC heritage tourism will create opportunities in all ranges of social and economic life for the communities which will fill the socio-economic voids and bring about a progressive change in the society.

Beside the benefits of heritage tourism, the study provides ways forward to utilize the opportunity of heritage tourism across divide. Therefore, it is suggested that some important routes should be opened for local divided communities and religious tourists to visit across LoC, to shrines and places of worship for short durations. Moreover, researchers and scholars from both sides should be allowed to work on common cultural heritage of the region.

## RECOMENDATIONS

- To protect archaeological and natural heritage sites from encroachment, these must be brought under Antiquity Act. Local community, departments and individuals directly concerned with management of these sites should be trained and their capacity building should be developed. A comprehensive cultural heritage development plan is needed to integrate all resources and create sustainable economic opportunities at various levels. The management should also follow the guidelines of the sustainable tourism model. The revered archaeological and historical sites including Sharda Temple and associated places, Sericella complex and unexcavated sites need to be brought under antiquity act forthwith.
- Sharda Temple, Dogra fort, vernacular buildings have survived earthquakes and appear undamaged, but it may also have been severely weakened and might be unable to withstand further shocks. Thus, the restoration of these sites is necessary.
- Neelum Valley Azad Jammu & Kashmir lacks an effective cultural heritage management policy for protection and promotion of rich cultural heritage. There is an urgent need for intervention from governments to regulate tourism and provide capacity building and consultancy to the local population. Training is needed to integrate and utilize the existing infrastructure to facilitate the tourists' lodging and entertainment instead of importing the alien commercial trends.
- Existing indigenous wooden and other houses can accommodate any number of tourists, if the local community is provided with capacity building opportunities. Government must intervene and plan to identify such traditional houses and help to develop a system within the community to adapt the approach of utilizing these assets.
- Cultural sanctuaries and nature protection areas must be earmarked, cultural resource centers for preservation of natural and cultural resources can be an important step

towards safeguarding these assets. Awareness campaigns among local communities, in the educational institutions and capacity building of stakeholders in tourism and hospitality will help overcome deficiencies in the management of heritage resources.

- The conflicts among the stakeholders regarding safeguarding of heritage could be addressed if all the stakeholders are brought on board and are given uniform policy guidelines for the execution of their responsibilities.
- Armed conflicts such as firing and shelling create insecurity which hampers the safeguarding of these heritage resources. Out of the box solutions are needed to overcome these challenges.
- A uniform regulatory mechanism, capacity building of local communities, sense of ownership by locals for their cultures and natural assets can help preserve the heritage.
- Traditional and indigenous crops and herbs are essential for a vast variety of cuisines and medicines. These should be saved from extinction. The indigenous agricultural products should be promoted and incentives given to producers.
- A regulatory framework and incentives for local artisans such as pottery makers, horse keepers, water mill owners, and indigenous crop growers could help maintain the sustainability and preservation of cultural heritage. Human traffic and vehicles poses a serious danger to the integrity of natural and archaeological structure. It is recommended that pedestrian routes from bridge to the Sharda archeological sites should be built and vehicle traffic should be restricted to areas away from endangered sites.
- Information technology can be used to develop visual programs and on site theaters to narrate ancient history through animation. A virtual site can protect historically important archaeological remains from destruction, due to excessive visitation. In



future virtual models may be the means by which the public can experience contained historical sites, where human traffic poses a serious danger to the integrity of the structure. The computer model of the temple could be used to produce virtual tones of the sites. An opportunity for Cross LoC collaboration for religious tourism can bridge the gaps in management and safeguarding of such sites. Free movement of scholars and researchers across the divide in Kashmir is essential for sharing the experiences within the region with, similar issues relating to preservation and safeguarding of the cultural heritage.

- Foreign expertise in conservation and heritage management must be sought in Neelum Valley.
- The regulatory bodies and economic planners must formulate strategies which should prepare the communities to maintain equilibrium between exploiting economic opportunities and sustainability without compromising the essence of cultural wealth and ecology. Subjects relevant to socio-geographical contexts of the valley (especially in Neelum campus of AJK University) may be introduced. Local campuses can also introduce subjects in tourism management and hospitality, similar to the courses offered by Srinagar and Jammu universities.

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## Plates

**Plate No: 1**



Fig. 1: Burzahom Prehistoric artifacts, Srinagar (Stacul:1989-91,88-90)



Fig. 2: Prehistoric artifact from Tibet (Stacul:1989-91,88-90)



Fig. 3: Terracotta bead from Tehjian Neelum Valley,



Fig 4: Neolithic Stone Sickle from Tehjian Neelum Valley

**Plate No: 2**



Fig. 5: Megalith graves and cup marks, Sharda ,Neelum Valley



Fig. 6: Rock inscriptions and cup mark  
*Chaterpari, Mirpur, AJK*



Fig. 7: Dancing demon on rock,  
*Chaterpari, Mirpur ,Azad Jammu & Kashmir*

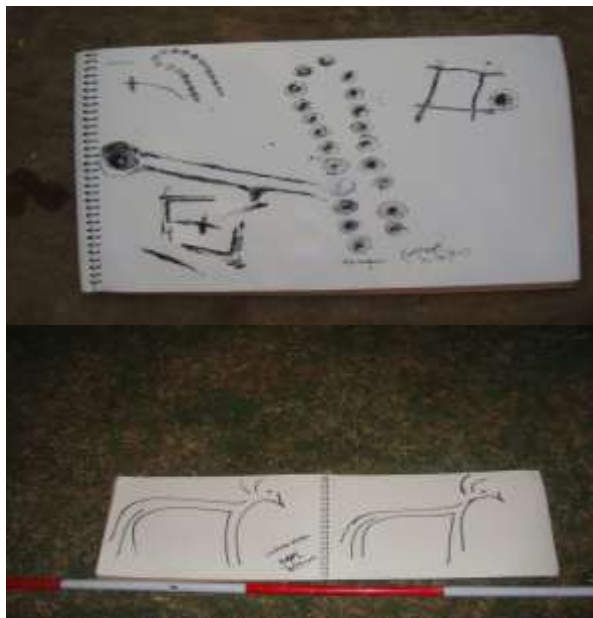


Fig 8: Cup marks and animal figures on stone  
*Chaterpari, Mirpur , ,Azad Jammu & Kashmir*

**Plate No: 3**



Fig.9: River Neelum at Sharda, Neelum Valley



Fig.10: View of Saraswati lake at *Narda* Neelum Valley



Fig.11: *Surgan* Nullah, Neelum Valley



Fig.12: Sharda town along river Neelum , Neelum Valley

**Plate No: 4**



Fig.13: Sharda ;A general view of eastern mountain ,Neelum Valley



Fig.14 :Athmaqam ;A general view of mountains, Neelum Valley



Fig.15: A general view of Nangi Mali , Neelum Valley



Fig. 16 :A general view of Shamsaberi Range , Neelum Valley



**Plate No: 5**



Fig.17: Approach towards Sericella site, Neelum Valley



Fig.18: A birch bark, Neelum Valley



Fig.19: A general view of Mukhtaseri village, Neelum Valley



Fig.20: Fruit trees at Rawota village, Neelum Valley

**Plate No: 6**



Fig. 21: Wild Herbal tea at Narda Peak, Neelum Valley



Fig.22: *Benifsha* a wild herb Sharda, Neelum Valley



Fig.23: Figs trees at Sharda, Neelum Valley



Fig. 24: A woman collecting fruits at Surgun Valley

**Plate No: 7**



Fig. 25: Sacred mound at Tehjian site, Neelum Valley



Fig. 26: *Minch* tree along colorful flags at Tehjian site, Neelum Valley



Fig. 27: A general view of *Tehjivan* site Neelum Valley



Fig. 28: Stone tools from *Tehjian*, Neelum Valley

**Plate No: 8**



Fig.29: Stone wine presses (*Kundas* ) from Danna,*Tehjian* ,Neelum Valley

**Plate No: 9**



Fig.30: Wooden *Kundas* from Nagdar , Neelum Valley



Fig.31: Carved *Kundas* for bathing ,Sharda Neelum Valley



Fig.32: A wooden water storage tank Nagdar, Neelum Valley



Fig.33: Series of stone cut Kundas Nagdar, Neelum Valley

**Plate No: 10**



Fig. 34: Sketch of sacred rock cave by the researcher, Neelum Valley

Plate No 11



Fig. 35: Sketch of *Shashpari* rock, Sharda, Neelum Valley (by the researcher)

**Plate No 12**



Fig. 36: Rock inscription at Nagdar, Neelum Valley



Fig. 37: Rock inscription at *Nagdar*, Neelum Valley



**Plate No: 13**



Fig.38: Lotus flower symbol at *Nagdar*, Neelum Valley



Fig.39: *Trisula* symbol at *Nagdar*, Neelum Valley



Fig.40: Researcher during Documentation of the inscription ,*Nagdar*, Neelum Valley



Fig.41: Documentation of symbols on rock boulder, *Nagdar* ,Neelum Valley

**Plate No: 14**



Fig. 42(a) Commemorative stone pillar, Badan Pura Nagdar, Neelum Valley



Fig. 42 (b) Drawing of Commemorative stone pillar, Badan Pura Nagdar, Neelum Valley (by the researcher )



Fig. 43(a): Commemorative stone with figure holding shield Badan Pura Nagdar, Neelum Valley



Fig. 43(b): Drawing of Commemorative stone with figure holding shield Badan Pura Nagdar, Neelum Valley (by the researcher)

**Plate No: 15**



Fig. 44: Front view of Sharda temple, Neelum Valley



Fig. 45: Side view of Sharda temple, Neelum Valley

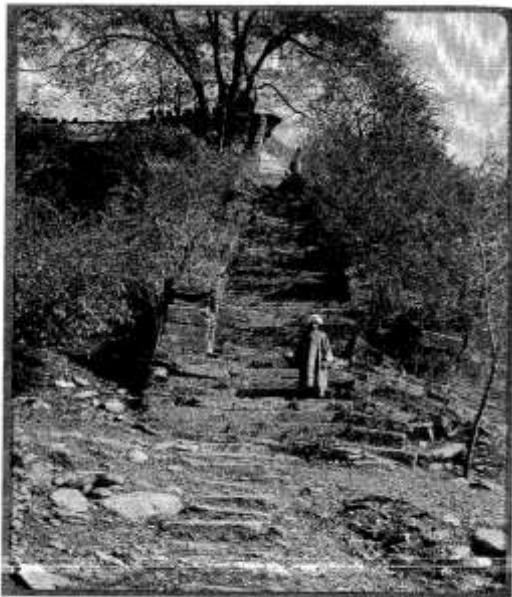


Fig. 8. Sharda, stairs, Stairs to Sharda temple (i. 37).

Fig. 46: Oldest photo of Sharda Temple steps (Neelum Valley)

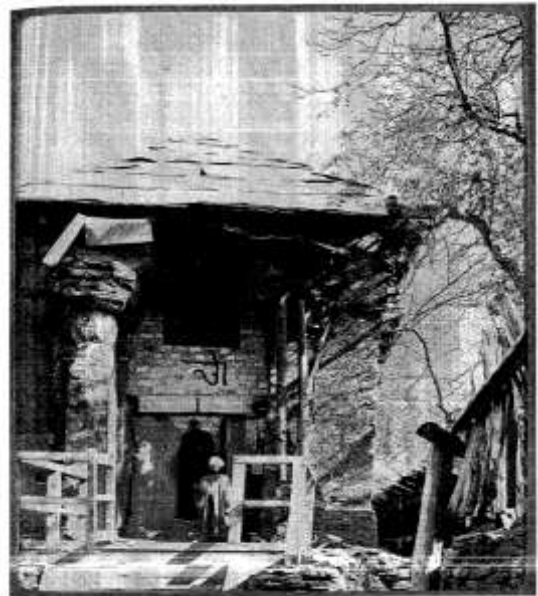


Fig. 9. Sharda, Sharda temple from gate (i. 37).

Fig. 47: Oldest photo of Sharda Temple with roof top (Neelum Valley)

**Plate No: 16**

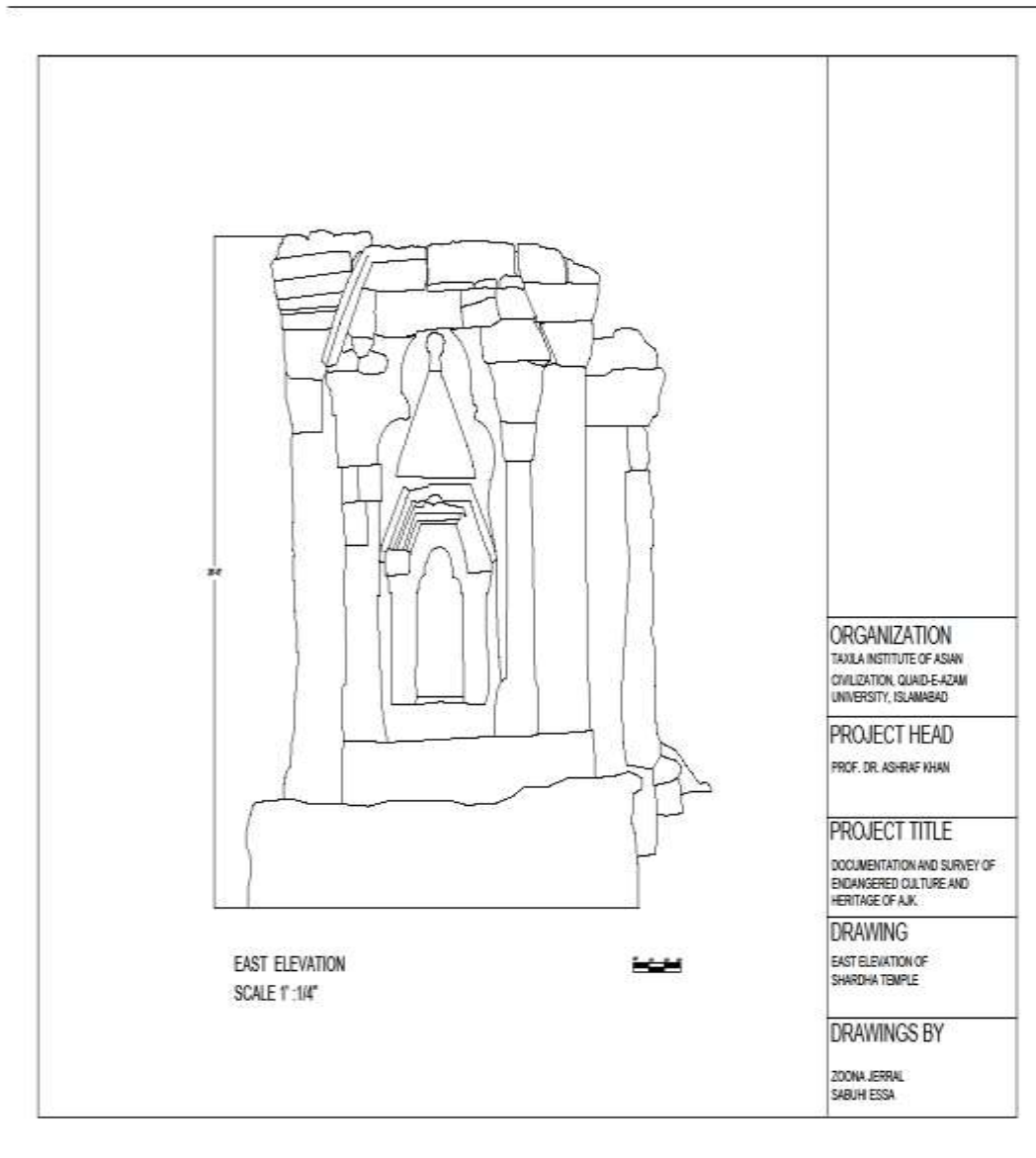


Fig. 48: East elevation drawing of Sharda Temple, Sharda, Neelum Valley

(Drawing by Zoon Jerral and Sabuhi Essa)

**Plate No: 17**

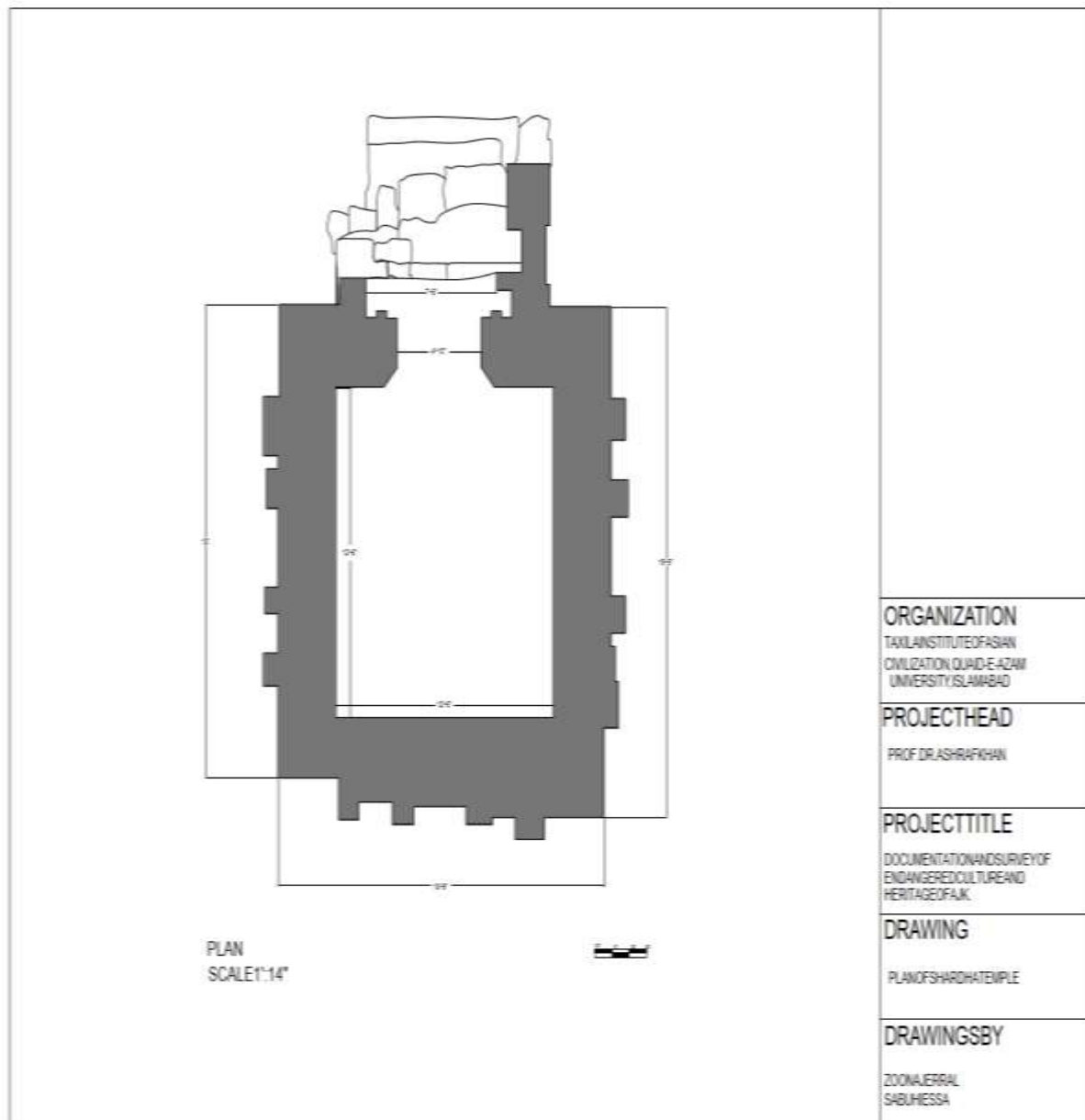


Fig. 49: Plan of Sharda Temple, Sharda, Neelum Valley  
(Drawing by Zoon Jerral and Sabuhi Essa)

**Plate No: 18**

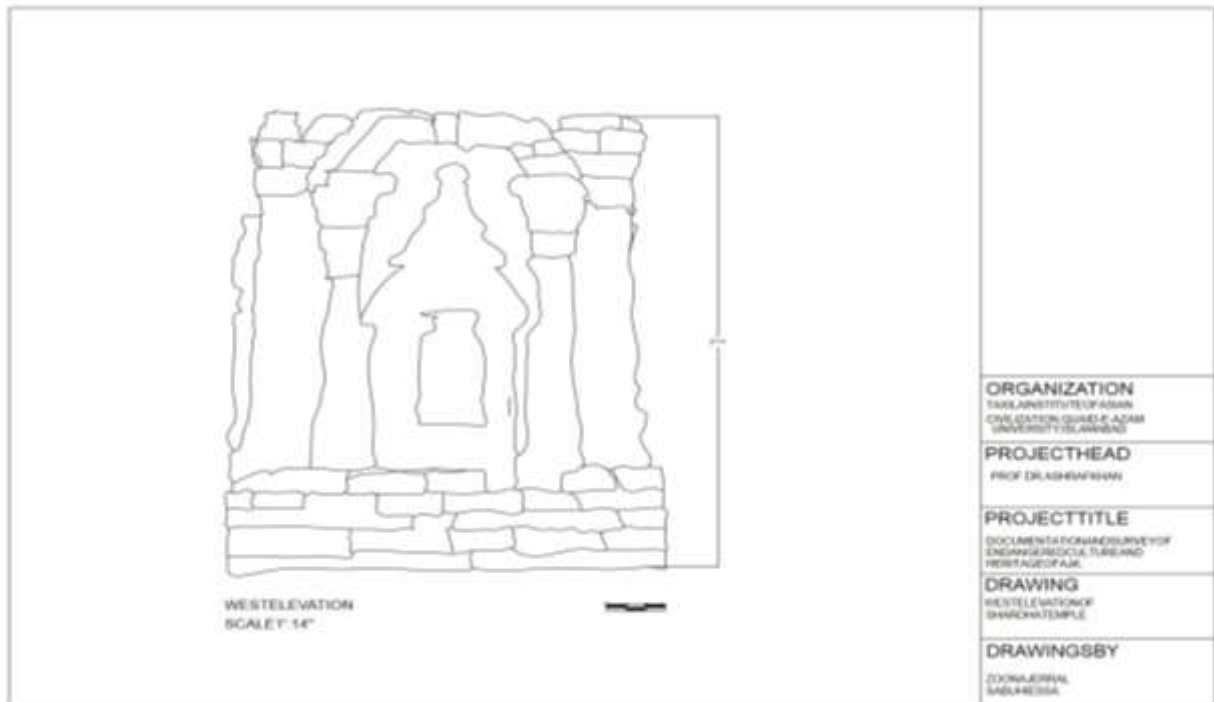


Fig. 50: Western elevation of Sharda Temple, Neelum Valley

(Drawing by Zoona Jerral and Sabuhi Essa)

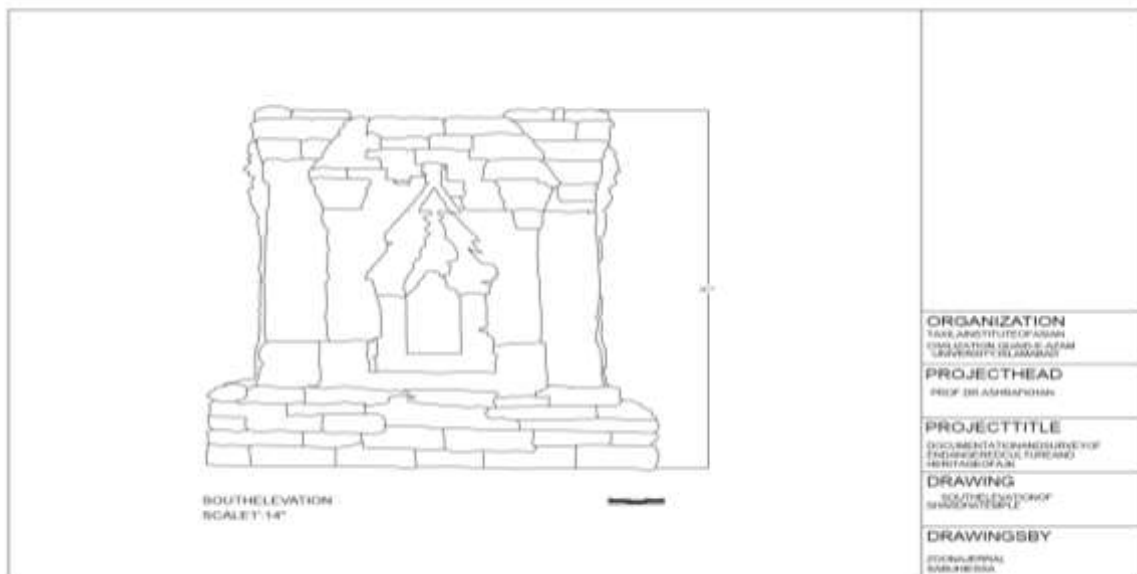


Fig 51: Southern elevation of Sharda Temple, Neelum Valley

(Drawing by Zoona Jerral and Sabuhi Essa)

Plate No: 19



Fig. 52: Reconstruction of temple, Neelum Valley (sketch by the researcher)





**Plate No: 21**



Fig. 54: Main stairs of Sharda Temple, Neelum Valley



Fig. 55 Northern outer wall of temple, Neelum Valley



Fig. 56 Outer entrance structure of temple, Neelum Valley

Plate No: 22

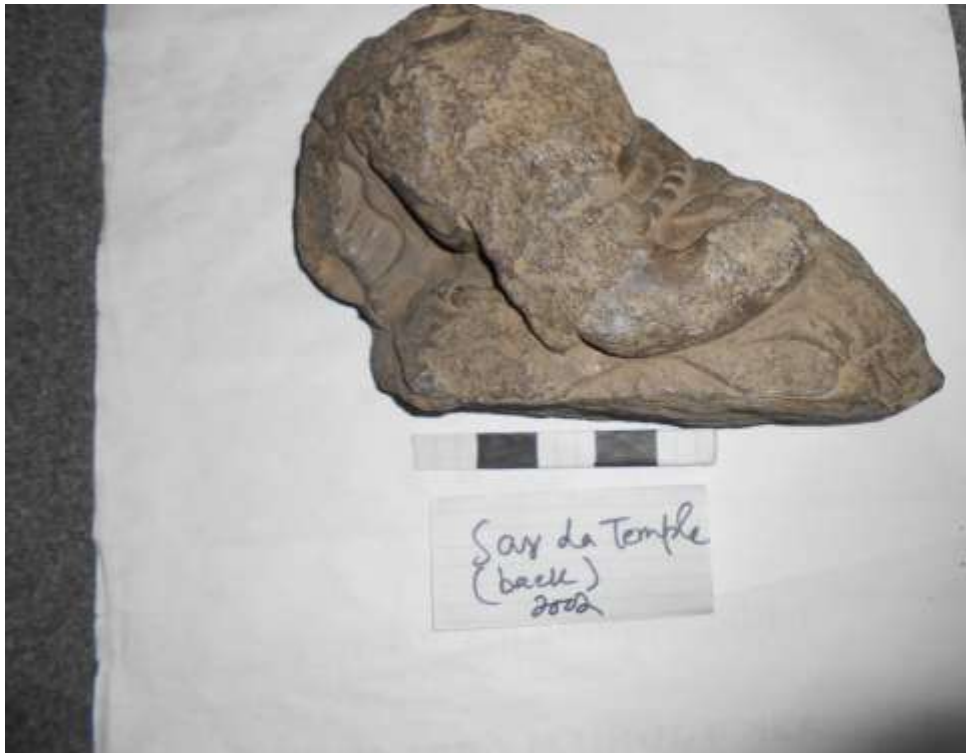


Fig. 57(a). A head of *Ganeh* from Neelum Valley



Fig .57 (b). Sketch of Ganeh head from Neelum Valley (Drawing by researcher)

**Plate No 23**









S.No	Coin	Obverse	Reverse
1	<p><b>Coin no. 1: Ardoxsho</b>  <b>Material:</b> Copper  <b>Weight:</b> 10.1 gm            Dia:2 cm  <b>Period:</b> 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> century CE  <b>Description.</b>  <b>Obverse:</b> Enthroned Ardoxsho of Kushana style, Sharda legend <i>Sri Ja....</i>  <b>Reverse:</b> Standing figure of Kushana style</p>		
2	<p><b>Coin 2: Muhammad</b>  <b>Material:</b> Copper  <b>Weight:</b> 6.4220 gm  <b>Period:</b> 8th Century CE  <b>Description</b>  <b>Obverse.</b> Arabic legend .....  <i>Muhammad.....</i>  <b>Reverse.</b> <i>Fisanah</i>,            date probably 8<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> CE</p>		
3	<p><b>Coin 3: Defaced Coin</b>  <b>Material:</b> Copper  <b>Weight:</b> 5.3703 gm  <b>Period:</b> 14<sup>th</sup> Century CE (Islamic Period)  <b>Description</b>            Both sides of the coin are defaced and unclear</p>		
4	<p><b>Coin 4: Islamic Period (Shah)</b>  <b>Material:</b> Copper  <b>Weight:</b> 0.6281 gm  <b>Period:</b> 14<sup>th</sup> Century CE (Islamic Period)  <b>Description</b>  <b>Obverse.</b> Arabic legend <i>Shah.....</i>  <b>Reverse.</b> Defaced</p>		

Figure No 58.Copper coins (surface collection from Sharda temple),  
 Neelum Valley

Plate No 24



Fig. 59 : Stairs of *Sericella* fort, Neelum Valley( sketch by the researcher)

Plate No 25



Fig. 60: Around *Sericella* fort (sketch by the researcher)

**Plate No 26**



Fig: 61

A view of carved head of *Ganesh*,  
Neelum valley



Figs: 62

*Ganesh* head (Sketch by the researcher)

**Plate No: 27**



Fig. 63: Inscribed symbols on boulder, Ghuffa Neelum Valley



Fig. 64: Rock cut cave of Ghuffa, Neelum Valley



Fig. 65: A woman wearing serpent style cap, Neelum Valley



Fig. 66: Cup marks boulder in Ransawali

**Plate No: 28**



Fig. 67: A general view of Dogra fort Sharda, Neelum Valley



Fig. 68: Western Bastion of Dogra fort, Sharda, Neelum Valley



**Plate No. 29**



Fig. 69: Graves of Three Sufi Saint, Nagdar, Neelum Valley



Fig. 70: Head stone of an ancient grave Nagdar, Neelum Valley



Fig. 71: An ancient wood engraved grave Nagdar, Neelum Valley

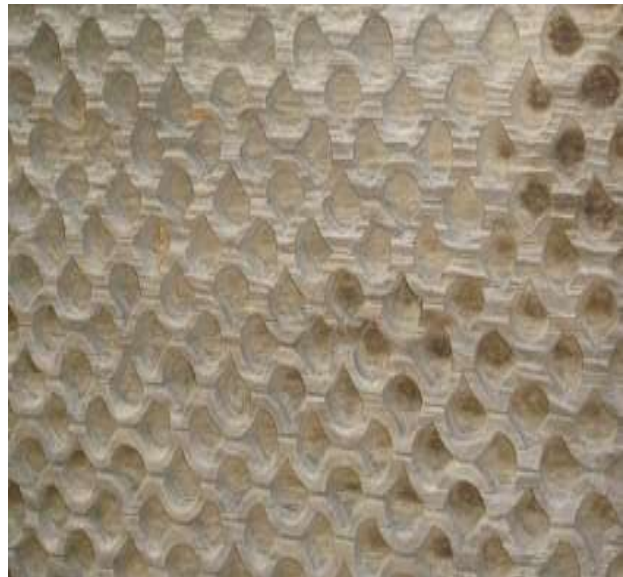


Fig. 72: Wood work on grave Nagdar, Neelum Valley

**Plate No.30**



Fig. 73: Mahrab of ancient wooden Mosque at Kosab pura, Nagdar Neelum Valley



Fig. 74: Another view of Mosque at Kosab pura, Nagdar Neelum Valley



Fig. 75: Front view of wooden Mosque at Kosab pura, Nagdar Neelum Valley



Fig. 76: Variety of engraved motifs on wooden Mosque at Kosab pura, Nagdar Neelum Valley

**Plate No.31**



Fig. 77: An old house in Sharda, Neelum Valley



Fig. 78: Traditional wooden house in Kel, Neelum Valley



Fig. 79: A wooden house at Nagdar, Neelum Valley



Fig 80: A ancient house at Kern, Neelum Valley

**Plate No.32**



Fig. 81: Wooden logs of a old house in Sharda, Neelum Valley



Fig. 82: Wood engraved style Sharda, Neelum Valley



Fig. 83: Upper most portion of wooden house, Sharda, Neelum Valley



Fig. 84: A traditional fir area of wooden house, Sharda, Neelum Valley

**Plate No: 33**

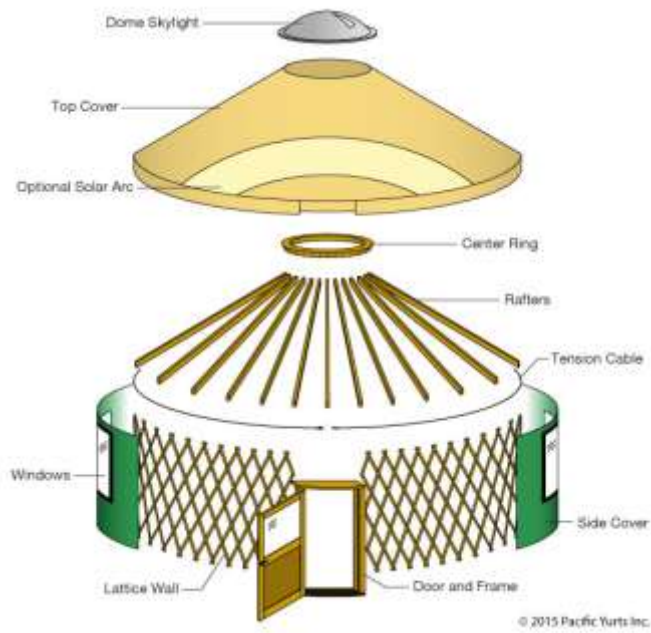


Fig. 85 Yurt, Mongolian tent, similar in construction to wooden houses of Neelum Valley,  
(Drawing by Zawhar Babri)

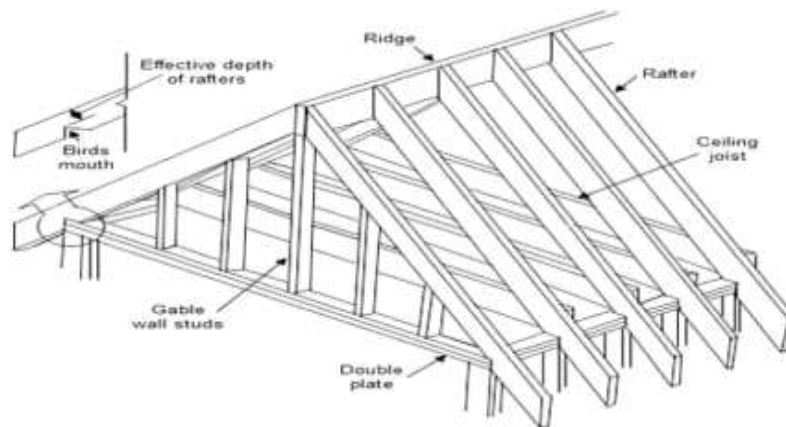


Fig. 86: Construction of Gables of roofs of wooden houses, Neelum Valley, (Drawing by Z.Babri)

**Plate No: 34**



Fig.87: An Axe from Khawaja-seri east Neelum Valley



Fig. 88 a.b: Copper anklet & bowl from Khawaja Seri

Plate No: 35



Fig.89. Red ware Pitcher from Mundkaro, Yamheri ,Neelum Valley

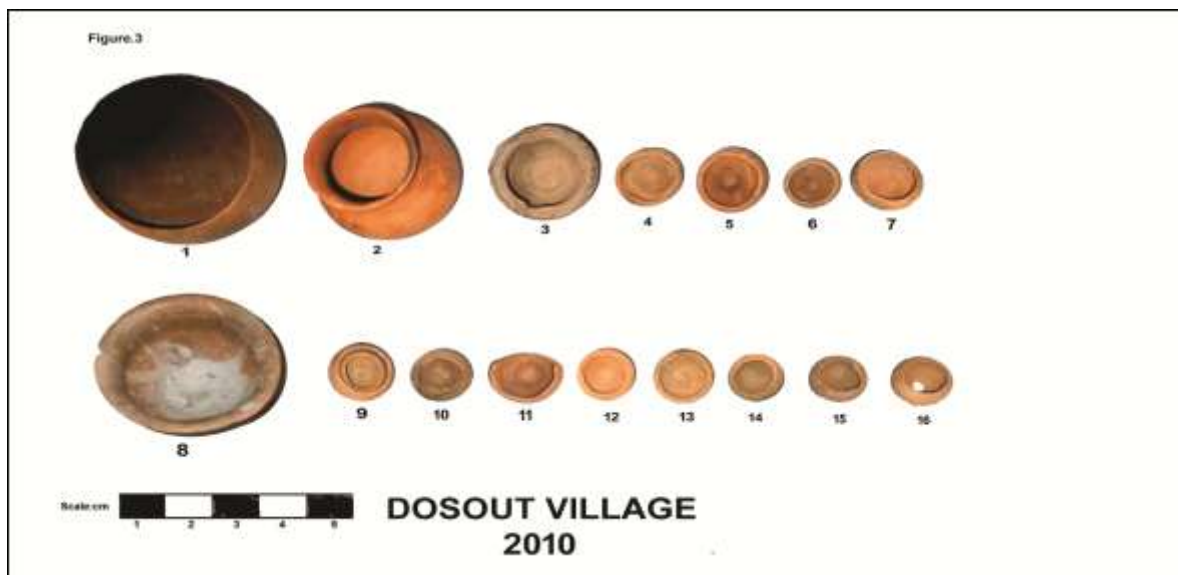


Fig. 90: Miniature vessels from Dosout village

Plate No 36



Fig. 91: Fragments of pottery from Sharda Neelum Valley



Plate No 37

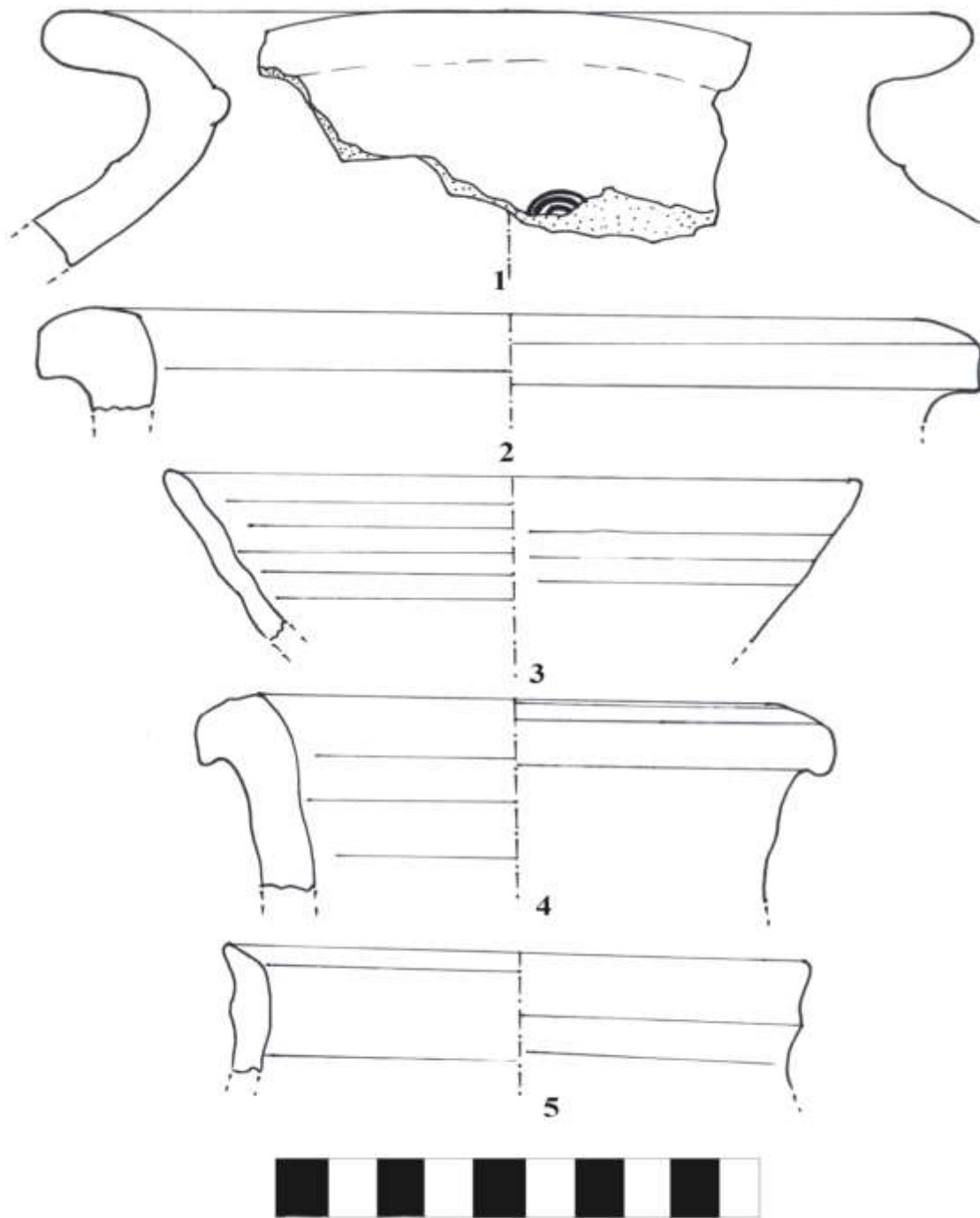


Fig. 92: Pottery rims drawing from Sharda, Neelum Valley

Plate No 38

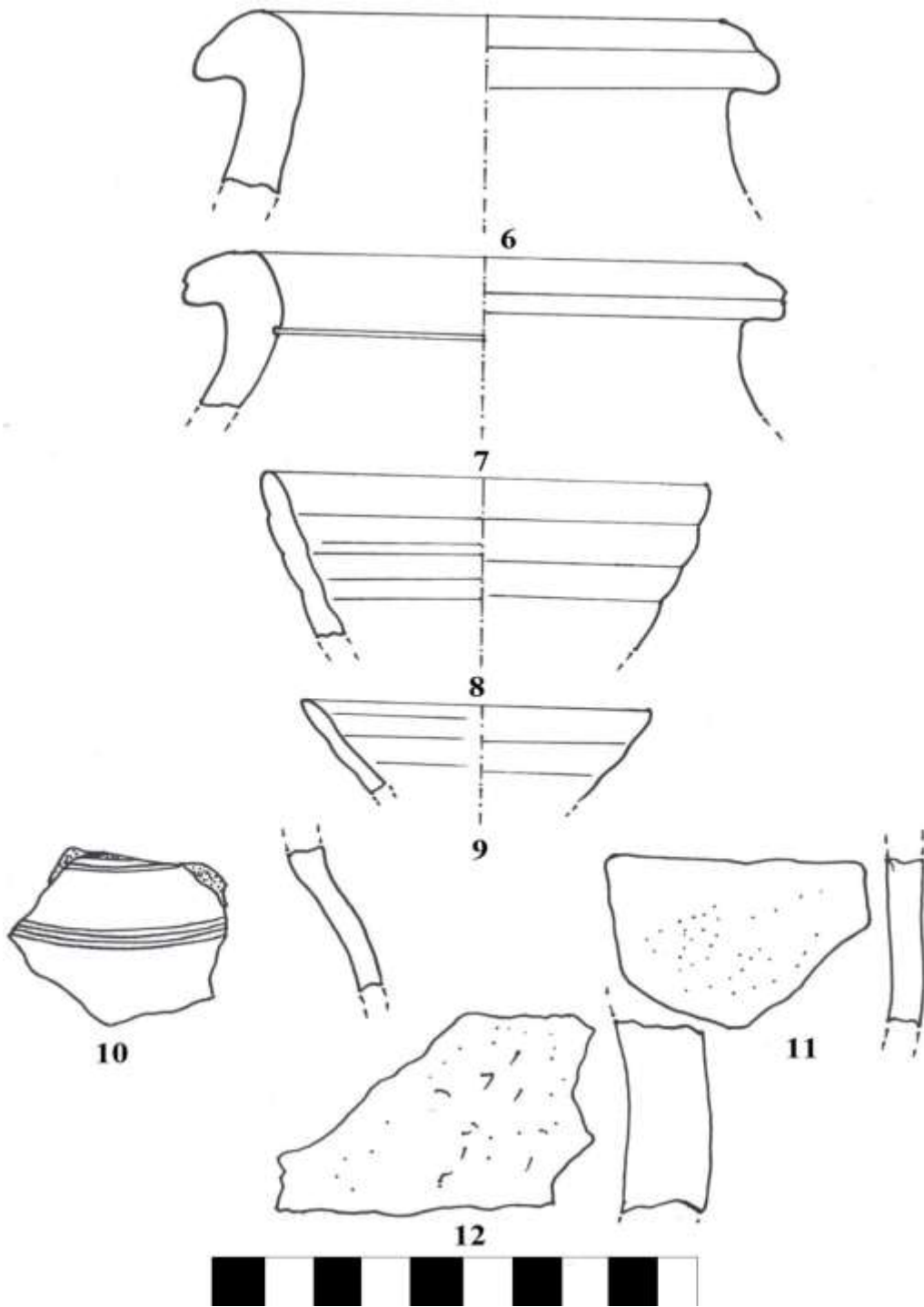


Fig. 93: Pottery base drawing from Sharda, Neelum Valley

Plate No: 39

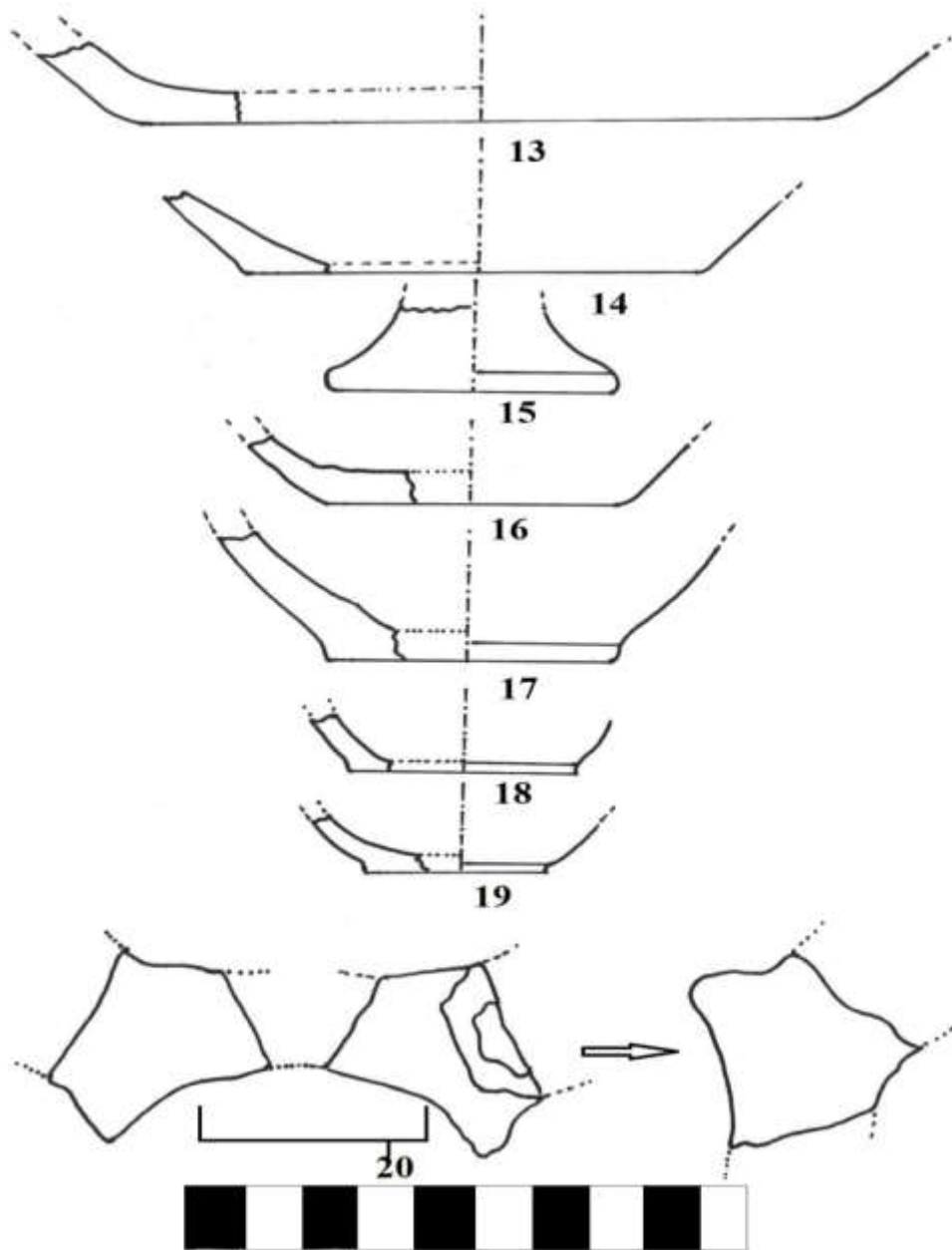


Fig. : 94 Pottery base drawing

**Plate No: 40**

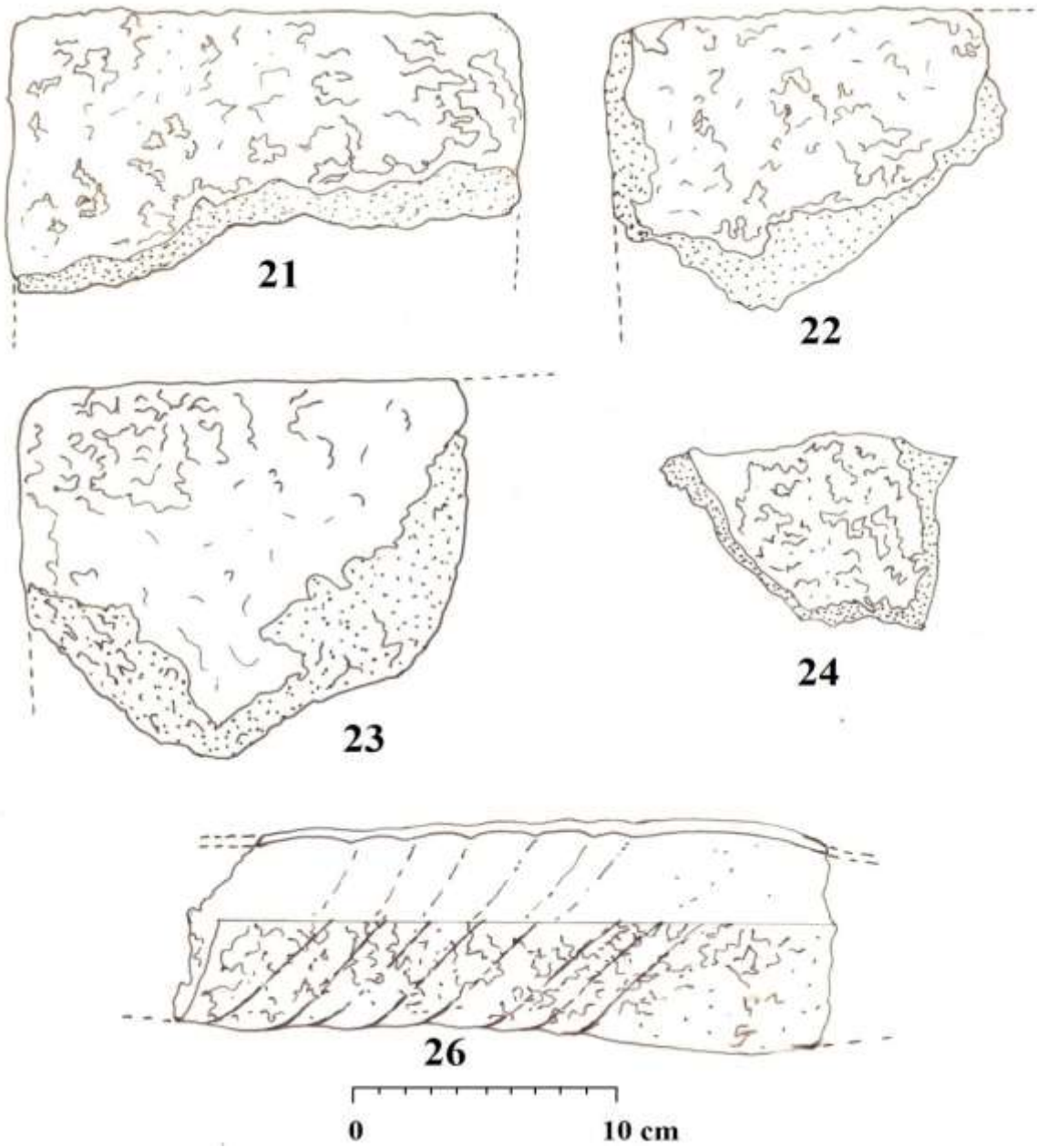


Fig. 95: Terracotta tiles & Pipes drawing from Neelum Valley

**Plate: No. 41**



Fig. 96: Traditional dry fruits, herbs, Neelum Valley



Fig. 97: Vegetable preservation, Neelum Valley



Fig. 98. Dried herbs used in cooking, Neelum Valley



Fig.99. Dried Grapes and Vegetables, Neelum Valley

Plate No: 42



Fig. 100: A lady in traditional embroidered dress, Neelum Valley



Fig. 101: Women folk in *Phern* (loose shirt), Neelum Valley



Fig. 102: Typical geometrical designs



Fig. 103: *Phulkari* motives common in use

**Plate No: 43**



Fig 104: Chain stitch on dress, Neelum Valley



Fig. 105: Ethnic designs of nomads on Textiles, Neelum Valley



Fig. 106: Different types of clothes caps, Neelum Valley



Fig. 107: *Kasava* (A type of cap) Neelum Valley

**Plate No: 44**



Fig. 108: woman wearing traditional cap, Neelum Valley



Fig. 109: Researcher in typical cap, Neelum Valley



Fig. 110: Silver jewelry with engraved designs, Neelum Valley



Fig. 111: A silver coin locket , Neelum Valley



**Plate No: 45**



Fig. 112: Silver pattern ear rings,  
Neelum Valley



Fig. 113: A silver engraved amulet, Neelum Valley



Fig. 114: Researcher in typical Kashmiri  
dress, Neelum Valley



Fig. 115: A woman wearing traditional jewelry,  
Neelum Valley

**Plate No: 46**



Fig. 116: A woolen blanket, Neelum Valley Neelum Valley



Fig. 117: Design of woolen blanket (*Looi*) Neelum Valley



Fig. 118: A man preparing wool for blankets



Fig. 119: Spin wool in every house of Sharda Neelum Valley

**Plate No: 47**



Fig. 120: Hide used for making different articles,  
Neelum Valley



Fig.121: Indigenous rope from Sharda



Fig. 122: Handmade items for daily use,  
Neelum Valley



Fig.123: Animal skin made article,  
Neelum Valley

**Plate No:48**



Fig. 124 : Kangri (Fire pot) Neelum Valley



Fig. 125: : A wild plant basket Neelum Valley



Fig. 126: Engraved design on wood, Neelum Valley

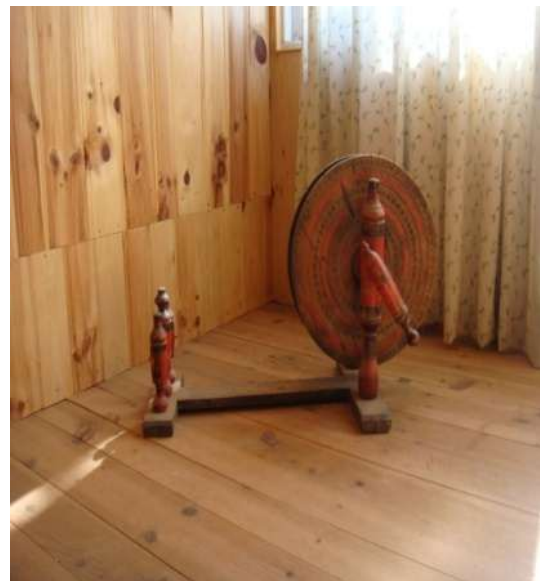


Fig.127. Wooden in interior of house, Neelum Valley

**Plate No: 49**



Fig. 128: Wooden high bowl Neelum Valley



Fig. 129: A wooden shoe from Neelum Valley



Figure no 130: Brass utensils, Neelum Valley



Figure no 131: Engraved brass utensil, Neelum Valley

**Plate: No. 50**



Fig.132: An aged *Gujjar* Neelum Valley



Fig.133: A girl carrying basket on Khawaja Seri , Neelum Valley



Fig.134: A hindko woman with infant from Neelum Valley



Fig.135: Children from different ethnic groups, Neelum Valley

**Plate No: 51**



Fig.136: A nomad girl on horse in Valley



Fig.137: A hindko girl, Neelum Valley



Fig.138: A Kashmiri speaker lady, Neelum Valley



Fig.139: Lady from Dard tribe, Neelum Valley

**Plate No. 52**



**Fig.140: A general view of Narda mountain Neelum Valley**



**Fig.141: Researcher near Saraswati Neelum Valley**



**Fig.142: Hari-Parbat Peak, Kel Neelum Valley**



**Fig.143: Hari-Parbat Lake in Kel, Neelum Valley**



**Plate No. 53**



Fig. 144: Common use of horses in Neelum Valley



Fig. 145: Tourist influx near natural sites Neelum Valley



Fig. 146 : Water mills along river in valley



Fig. 147: Water preservation Rawota village

**Plate No. 54**



Fig. 148: Researcher examined Illegal digging site at Rawota



Fig. 149: Fragments of artifacts unearthed from Rawota, Neelum Valley



Fig. 150: A stucco sculpture looted from Neelum Valley



Fig 151: Unearthed antique container Neelum Valley