



HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND OF KASHI FROM ANCIENT TO MODERN TIMES

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Abstract:

The word Kashi is first mentioned in the Atharvaveda's Paippalada section 4.7.1 and the Shatapatha 13.5.4.21. Several names for Kashi are also found in the Agni Purana 3.5.20. In Udayajatak it is called Surudhana (Surakshit), in Sutasomajatak it is called Sudarshan (Darshaniya), in Soddandajatak it is called Brahmavardhan, in Khandahalajatak it is called Pushpavati, in Yuvajayjatak it is called Rambhanagar (Sundarangadu), in Natak 48119 Sankhajatak it is called Molini (Mukulini), in Jatak 4.15 it was also known as Kashinagar and Kashipur, (Jatak 5.54, 165) Dhammapada Atthakatha 1.67 During the time of Ashoka the name of the capital was Pantali (Jatak 3.39) According to the place name in the Vedic era the kings of Kashi were addressed as Kash. The name of Kashiraj Dhritarashtra has been mentioned in Shatapatha Brahmana. The (Vedic) Buddhist text Kashi Videha is first used in the Kaushitaki Upanishad (4.1). In Brihadaranyaka 3.8.2, Gargi refers to Ajatashatru as the king of Kashi or Videha. In the Shakhayana Shrautasutra (16.1915), Jaljatakarni is described as the priest of the kings of Kashi, Kosala, and Videha.

Key Words: Kashi, Kashiraj, Adi Vishweshwar

Introduction:

Kashi and Videha are mentioned side by side in the Baudhayana Shrautasutra (21.13). The first mention of Kashi Kosala is in the Gopay Brahmana (1.2.9). After the independent kingdom of Kashi was destroyed and it merged with Kosala, Kashi Kosala and Kosala began to be associated together. In the example related to Kashi Kosalia in the Mahabhashya, Kashi and Kosala are paired together as the terms Kashi and Kosala. (Jataka 3.39) mentions different names for Varanasi. The Aryans conquered Kashi long before 1000 BC, according to the Aitareya Brahmana (7.17.7).

The Puranas give two origins for the Kashi dynasty. According to the seven Puranas, Brahmanas 3.63, 119-141, Vayu Purana 19.23-28, etc., this dynasty began with the son of Ayu. According to this, the first four kings of this

dynasty were Kshatravridha, Sunotra, Kash, and Dirghatapas. The Brahmanas and Harivansh Puranas give different origins for this dynasty, in which Sunotra and Suhotra of the Paurava dynasty are said to be the same. According to this, Suhotra was the son of Vitava. Thus, the Kashi dynasty originated from Suhotra-Paurava. According to this second tradition, the first four kings of this dynasty were Vitatha, Suhotra, Kashika, and Dirghatapas, respectively. Divodasa was succeeded by his brother Ashtartha, son of Pratrda Vivodasa. Positor's Indian Historical Tradition 5.10.1, London 1922. Pajitar has given the following table of Kashivansh on the basis of Puranas-

(1) Manu, (2) Ila, (3) Pururava (4) Abu, (5) Nahusha, (6) Kshatravruddha, (7) (8) (9) Sunhotra, (10-11) (12) Kash (13) (14) (15) Dirghatapas, (16) (17) Dhanava, (18) (19) Dhanvantari, (20) (21) Ketumantapratham, (22) (23) Bhimrath, (24) (25) Divodaspratham, (26) Ashtaraya, (27 to 37) (38) Haryashwa, (39) Sudev (40) Divodāsa II, (41) Pratardana, (42) Vatsa, (43) Alarka, (44) Sunith (47) (48) Kṣema, (49) (51) (52) Suketu, (53) Satyaketu, (57) (45) Sannati, (46) (50) Ketumanta, II, (54) Dharmaketu, (55) (58) Vibhu, (59) (60) Suvibhu, (61) (56) (62) Sukumara, (63) (64) Dhrishtaketu, (65) (66) Venuhotra, (67) (68) Bharga, (69) (70) (71) Pauravas, (72) Janhu, Koshitaki Upanishad mentions the philosopher king Ajatashatru of Kashi.

The kings of Kashi have been from Chandravanshi since ancient times, but we have to see the things of Vaivaswat Manvantar of the present Shwetavarah Kalpa. In this regard, it is known from the Puranas that the seventh generation descendant of Ail Pururava, the grandson of Chandravanshi king Manu, started his independent rule here.

In this Manvantara, Chandra's son was Budha, and Budha's son was Pururava. In Pururava's fifth generation, a king named 'Kash' ruled over this land, hence the name Kashi. From then on, this dynasty came to be known as the 'Kashey' dynasty. In Kash's sixth generation, Maharaja Haryasva was born. His son was Sudeva. Sudeva's son was Emperor Divodasa, who, by Indra's order, established Varanasi. According to the newly educated, the ancient Vedic literature is considered the Rigveda. Kashi is mentioned in Chapter 7, Ashtak 5, Mandal 7, Vargha 6, Richa 3 of the Rigveda.

The Puranas mention King Ailpururava's capital as Pratishtan (Jhusi near Prayagraj). According to the Ain Akbari, the fort of Allahabad was built in 1584 AD, and the capital was moved from Jaunpur to Allahabad. By combining the Vedas and Puranas, the assumption that Kashi, adjacent to Prayag, was under their control does not seem unreasonable. The Shatapatha Brahmana and the Upanishads clearly mention Kashi and the names of its kings. There is not a single Smriti or Purana that does not mention Kashi's name or significance. This kingdom was under the control of the

Chandravanshi Kshatriyas until the time of Maharaja Jayachandra. After twenty-eight generations, Kashi was controlled by the Kaushals.

Then it came under the control of the Magadhas, followed by the Nandas, Mauryas, Shungas, Kanvas, Kanishkas, Bharshivas, and Guptas, respectively, until the end of the sixth century AD. In the seventh century, it came under the rule of Harshavardhana. At the end of the eighth century, the Gauda king Dharmapala took over. In 916 AD, the Rashtrakuta king Indrayudha took control of it. Gangeydev and his son King Karandev ruled from 1015 AD to 1041 AD. At the end of the eleventh century, Kashi became the capital of Chandradev of the Gahadavala dynasty. Shahabuddin Ghorī defeated Chandradev in 1194 AD and established his control over the city of Kashi. Nialtagin looted Kashi extensively in 1034 AD and before that Mahmud Ghazni had attacked India several times. In 1026 AD, the Somnath temple was looted. Hasan Nizami in his book *Tajlim Asir*, it is written that after destroying the Vishwanath Temple, Ghorī departed for Ghazni, leaving the responsibility in the hands of his commander Qutbuddin. Qutbuddin Aibak had to go to Aligarh to suppress a Rajput rebellion there and entrusted the administration of Banaras to a senior officer, who made every effort to eradicate idol worship from Banaras. This governor was named Syed Jamaluddin. He established Jamaluddinpurā in Banaras. Banaras later regained its independence from Muslim rule, and the Vishwanath Temple was rebuilt at the same site during the Muslim period. A short time later, Qutbuddin Aibak had to conquer Banaras again in 1197 AD. During Qutbuddin's reign, the governor of Banaras was Muhammad Baqar.

Qutbuddin's forces wreaked havoc in Banaras, and the temple officials were forced to build several mosques in Banaras. The two-and-a-half-kangura mosque at Hanuman Phatak boasts a spectacular dome. The lower portion of the mosque is made from temple debris.

On its second floor, there's a Sanskrit inscription from 1190 AD, which mentions the construction of several temples and buildings. This mosque dates back to the thirteenth century. The 24-pillared mosque in the Chaukhamba neighborhood appears to be from this era. The north and west porches of Makdoom Sahib's graveyard in Gulzar neighborhood are also made from temple pillars. The mosque in the Bhadal neighborhood is also built using temple materials. The mosque at Rajghat has a 150-foot-long and 25-foot-wide hallway, with pillars dating back to the Gahadavala period or earlier. Near Palang Shaheed, there's a four-pillared building on the Duha, with statues on its roof. This also dates back to the thirteenth century.

The ancient Avimukteshwar temple of Kashi, located near the northern gate of Gyanvapi, was demolished by Niyattin in 1033 AD. Three tombs currently stand at the same site. After Qutubuddin, Shamsuddin Iltutmish ascended the

throne of Delhi in 1211-1226 AD. Upon ascending, he faced rebellions in Banaras and Awadh, but Iltutmish was unable to withstand them. After this rebellion was crushed, Razia Sultan became the ruler. During her reign, from 1236 to 1240 AD, she again began demolishing temples and building mosques. It is known that during Iltutmish's reign, the Vishweshwar temple was rebuilt. Appendix 132 of the treatise Prabandhakosh mentions that the famous Gujarati merchant Vastupal of that era sent one lakh rupees for the worship of Vishwnath in Banaras. Ghiyasuddin Balvan ruled the throne of Delhi from 1266 to 1287 AD. The most powerful king of this dynasty was Ala-uddin Khilji. His reign is famous from 1296 to 1316 AD. He tried his best to destroy the Hindus. He was a staunch enemy of idol worship. In the very first year of his reign, a temple named Padyeshwar was built in Banaras. This is known from an inscription found in the Lal Darwaza Mosque in Jaunpur. The Lal Darwaza Mosque was built in 1447 AD. The inscription is as follows: The temple of Padmeshwar remained in Varanasi from 1296 AD to 1447 AD.

Tasyaatmaja: Shuchih Dheera: Padmasadhurayam Bhuvi.

Kashyam Vishveshvaradvarihimadrishikharopamam.

Jyeshthemasi sitepakse dwadshyambudhavasare.

Padmeshwarasya devasya prasadamkarot sudhi. Likhiteyam sadabathi prashasti: strishtvatsare. S. 1353

That is, Padmasadhu built the temple of Padyeshwar in front of Kashi Vishwanath in 1296 AD. Two things come to light from this article, one is that new temples could have been built even at that time. The temple of Padyeshwar was situated at the present day Katwarkhana, north of Adi Vishveshwar, at Kundighartola. Another evidence found from Banaras shows that the temple of Manikanikeshvara was established on Samvat 1359 Ashadha Badi 11, Monday, 24 April 1302, by a person named Veereshwar. In the book called 'Kuttanimatam', the Shiva temple which was described by Damodar Gupta, the minister of King Jayapida of Kashmir between 779 and 813 AD, the temple which Prince Samarhatt of Ujjaini visited on his visit to Varanasi was the place of Adi Visheshwar. That temple was built by King Jaryasa of Amber. Vividhirthakalp written by Shvetambara Jain Acharya Jinprabhasuri says that great and wonderful people lived in that city surrounded by the north flowing Ganga, rich in gold and gems, and it was named by the Nairuktas because of the entry of two rivers named Varuna and Assi into this city. The Tughlaq dynasty was established on the throne of Delhi in 1320 AD. The most powerful king of this dynasty was Muhammad Tughlaq (1325 to 1351 AD). The Jain acharya Jinprabhasuri had a significant influence on the Tughlaqs. Firoz Tughlaq (1351 to 1388 AD) was a staunch Muslim, and numerous accounts of his destruction of temples and persecution of Brahmins are found. In Varanasi, Firoz Tughlaq's fanaticism is evident in a mosque at Bakariya Kund, built with the staff of Hindu temples. It features three rows of five pillars each. An inscription on the mosque reveals that

during Firoz's reign in 1374 AD, the steps to the pond and the wall of the shrine of Fakhruddin Alabi were constructed.

The clouds of disaster once again loomed over the temples of Banaras. Jaunpur was established by Firoz Shah Tughlaq in 1359-60. In 1393, Khwaja Jahan Malik Surwar severed his ties with Firoz Shah Tughlaq and established Jaunpur as an independent kingdom. Shah Sharqi became the fourth Sultan of this dynasty in 1436. Kashi came under the rule of the Sharqi Sultans of Jaunpur in 1447. Shah Sharqi destroyed several temples, including the Padyeshwar and the nearby Vishweshwar temples, and executed the Padyeshwar temple staff. The Lal Darwaza Mosque in Jaunpur was built in 1447. This is recorded in the mosque's inscription. Shah Sharqi married Razia, a poor widow from Katuapura, Banaras, and bestowed upon her the title of Queen Shakiya. Razia was a very clever woman.

Sultan Mahmud Shah Sharqi used the material from the Vishweshwar Temple to build another mosque on the same site. Shah Sharqi named this mosque Bibi Razia Mosque after his queen. This name remains popular even today. Sharqi ruled from 1436 to 1458. The Pathans of the Lodi dynasty rose in Delhi. Bahlol Lodi defeated the last Sultan of the Sharqi dynasty, Hussain Shah Sharqi, and annexed the Jaunpur kingdom to Delhi. Upon the death of Bahlol Lodi, his successor was Sikandar Lodi. Upon ascending the throne of Delhi, Sikandar Lodi destroyed thousands of temples in Kashi. Along with thousands of other temples, he demolished this third temple of Vishweshwar around 1494 AD. For nearly a hundred years, there was no Vishwanath temple in Kashi. In 1526-60, Babur defeated the Lodi dynasty at Panipat and ascended the throne of Delhi.

In 1527 AD, Humayun captured Ghazipur. In between, Banaras was held as a farm by the last king, Vannar (Yavanari) Ghazimiyan (Salar Masud Ghazi). From that time on, Hindus lost control of Banaras. On 5 March 1529 AD, Banaras again fell into the hands of Babur. Babur died in 1530 AD. Humayun ascended the throne in 1530 AD and went to see the Chaukhandi Stupa in Sarnath from Banaras. In 996 Hijri, Raja Todarmal's son Gobardhan built an octagonal dome on the Chaukhandi Stupa to commemorate it. Sher Shah defeated Humayun near Kannauj and ruled from 1538 AD to 1545 AD. After Humayun, his son sat on the throne of Delhi from 1545 AD to 1554 AD. Along with Banaras, other districts were also under his control. Humayun reclaimed the throne of Delhi from his son in 1555. Humayun was killed in 1556. Peace was restored in Uttar Pradesh when Akbar returned to Banaras in 1556. Akbar entrusted the Khankhanas with Banaras, Jaunpur, and Ghazipur. After a few days, Akbar took over the administration himself, appointing Mirza Mirk Rizvi and Sher Shah Sakriwal as his regents.

In 1567, Akbar was also displeased with Banaras. Later, thanks to Akbar's religious tolerance and the efforts of Todar Mal and Mansingh, Banaras once again shone. Legend has it that Raja Mansingh vowed to build a thousand temples every day during Akbar's reign. Maps were engraved on numerous carved stones, thus fulfilling Mansingh's vow. Mansingh built the Kai Ghat. Raja Mansingh's fort stands above the Manmandir Ghat, which was later converted into an observatory by Maharaja Jaisingh.

After Sikandar Lodi's destruction of the temple, and after the conquest of Munger in 1580, Narayan Bhatt advised Todarmal to rebuild the Vishwanath Temple, which had been lying in ruins since 1585. Akbar also contributed 45,000 dinars for the temple's construction. The builders presented a map of the 15th-century Vishwanath Temple. The ancient temple had five pavilions, of which the Gyan Mandap was on the east side. The fifth pavilion measured 125 x 35 feet. It was the Rang Mandap, where religious sermons were held. There was the Aishwarya Mandap to the north, and the Shringar Mandap to the west. Todarmal repaired only this pavilion. The temple's plinth was raised 7 feet, bringing it to the level of the road. Fearing the Mughals, no sculptures were carved into the temple. The 16th-century Vishwanath Temple was square, with each side measuring 124 feet. The main temple was located within a 32-foot enclosure in the center, surrounded by a water tank. Four 16 x 10 feet inner chambers connected the sanctum sanctorum. These were followed by smaller 12 x 48 feet inner chambers, leading to four mandapas. The eastern and western mandapas housed shrines dedicated to the Dandapanis and the Dvarapalas (doorkeepers). Their idols were placed on niches. There were 12-foot sub-temples at the four corners of the temple. The Nandi mandapa was located outside the temple, reaching a height of 128 feet. The mandapas and temples were topped by shikharas (spires), estimated to be 64 feet and 48 feet, respectively. A circumambulatory path surrounded the temple, containing shrines dedicated to numerous deities. Diwakar Bhatt states in his Danahavali:

Shri Rameshwar Suri Sunur Bhavan Narayanakhyo Mahan. This work was done with the help of the liberated Vishweshwar. Pt. Narayan Bhatt, the renowned son of Pt. Shri Rameshwar Bhatt, established Vishweshwar in the Avimukt Kshetra, Kashi, as per the prescribed rituals. With the assistance of Raja Todarmal, Narayan Bhatt accomplished this task around 1585 AD. Dr. Altekar estimates that the period of the southern scholar Narayan Bhatt was from 1514 to 1595 AD.

During Akbar's reign, Raja Todarmal had considerable connections with Banaras. Todarmal constructed the famous Draupadi Kund, including its staircase, in Shivpur in 1589 AD. One of his writings reveals that his son Govardhan is credited with some religious works. Jangir Singh has collected material on the history of Govardhan, on the basis of which a connection with

Banaras can be established. Akbarnama reveals that in 1577 AD, Govardhan fought bravely with his father against Mirza Muzaffar Hussain and Marimali. His name appears again in 1584 AD. On the orders of the emperor, Todarmal sent him to punish Arab Bahadur. Akbarnama reveals that in the twenty-fourth year of Akbar's reign, Todarmal's son Govardhan was appointed to a government post in Jaunpur. After Todarmal's death in 1589, Govardhan went straight from Jaunpur to Agra. Govardhan ruled Jaunpur from 28 to 33 years. He was a Jagirdar in the 1st century AD. All the temples and stepwells built in Varanasi in the name of Todar Mal were commissioned by Govardhan. Between 1585 and 1589, the play "Kansavadha" (the killing of Kansavadha), written by Shesh-Krishna, was composed for the worship of Vishweshwara. Govardhan himself was present in this play. The play opens with a verse:

Tasyasti Tandan Kulamal Mandanasya, Shri Tod Rakshit Patestanayo
Nayajnah. Nanakala Kulgriham Savidagdhagoshthi, Eko'dhitishthati
Gurugirdharinama.

This verse reveals that Guru Girdhari was the son of Todar Mal, born in the Tandon clan. He loved the arts and was a great admirer of scholarly gatherings. In 1590, Abdul Rahim went to Multan with Khankhana. He was killed in Sindh in 1592 AD in a battle with Mirzajanineg and Tarkhan. I am describing it very briefly.

Indian Antiquary pp. 12-7-13 Mahamahopadhyay Shastri states that Narayanbhatt's father, Rameshwarbhatt, was a resident of Paithan. It is a remarkable fact that members of Narayanbhatt's family had been respected scholars of Varanasi for three hundred years. Narayanbhatt was born in Dwarka in 1514 AD. After a few days, his father Rameshwarbhatt moved to Kashi and had three sons. Narayanbhatt wrote the book Tristhalisetu in 1580 AD, describing the rituals of worship in Gaya, Kashi, and Prayag. During the Shradha ceremony at Raja Todarmal's house, he defeated a group of scholars from Navadvipa, including renowned scholars of his time like Madhu-Sudan Saraswati and Upendra Sharma. Aufrecht mentions 28 of his works. Narayan Bhatt died of enlightenment. His brothers were renowned scholars of the seventeenth century. A little information is available from the Ain-i-Akbari. In 1599 AD, the governor of Banaras was Mirzachin Kilichkhan. Some details of Kashi during Jahangir's reign (1602-27) are known from Banarasidas's Ardha Kathanak. In Jahangir's reign, Banaras is mentioned only once in the history of Jahangir's reign, during Khurram's rebellion in 1614-60. In 1623, Narayandas constructed Manikarnikaad, whose length and breadth were 60 feet and depth was 28 feet. In 1738, Narayan's son Narenu renovated the pond.

Banaras and Jaunpur had to face another calamity in 1615 AD. Jahangir sent Aganur to Jaunpur with his head and feet. Aganur committed a lot of atrocities between Banaras and Jaunpur. Shahjahan, who ascended the throne of Delhi in

1632 AD, was a staunch Muslim. Shortly after his reign, he ordered the demolition of the newly built temples of Kashi. Based on the Badshahnama, this order was issued in 1632 AD. The emperor was informed that during Jahangir's reign, in Banaras, which had become a major hub of idol worshippers, construction of temples had begun but was never completed. The idol worshippers were eager to continue. However, Shah Jahan ordered the demolition of the unfinished temples in and around Banaras. Following this order, 76 unfinished temples were demolished in Banaras alone. The governor of Allahabad, Barvegh, also sent his uncle and brother to demolish the temples in Banaras.

Peter Mandi has described the incident with his own eyes. On September 3, 1632, a Rajput, hiding on the way, killed the governor's cousin and three or four companions who had come to Banaras to demolish the temples. This Rajput also died fighting. After his death, his body was hung from a tree above the main road. A few days later, Shah Jahan II, son of Shah Jahan, fell ill and declared himself the Emperor of India. Hearing this, Shuja attacked Banaras on January 14, 1658. However, Dara Shikoh's forces captured him on January 25 at Bahadurpur, near Banaras, and after an eight-day battle, drove Shuja out of there on February 4, 1658. Dara Shikoh established a town in the middle of Banaras and named the area Daranagar. Dara lived there with 825 Pandits and got Hindu scriptures translated into Urdu by these same Pandits. In October 1658, Shuja again attacked Delhi. Upon receiving this news, Aurangzeb completely surrounded Shuja near Khajwan, three miles from Allahabad, on December 23, 1658, and defeated him in battle. He ascended the throne of Delhi on February 28, 1659. Subsequently, Aurangzeb issued a decree on February 28, 1659, prohibiting the construction of new temples in Banaras and ordering the elimination of Dara Shikoh along with all the Pandits.

Aurangzeb's army and his supporters attacked Dara Nagar in Banaras and killed Dara Shikoh and all 125 Pandits. And in 1659, the Alamgiri Mosque was built after demolishing the Krittivasheshwar Temple in Vishweshwaranjan. Seeing the calamity that had befallen the Krittivasheshwar Temple, the old priest, a monk, was unable to see anything else and immediately jumped into the temple's well, taking the metal-studded emerald-studded idol. The Mughals then filled the well with the temple's own debris and transformed it into a fountain. Even today, religious people continue to worship at that fountain on Shivratri. Hindus have been granted the right to worship on Shivratri by the court. Saki Mustaid Khan describes this in Maasir-e Alamgiri. In his own words, on 17th Zilqado Hijri 1078 (April 18), he reported to Aurangzeb that foolish Brahmins in Banaras were teaching and explaining their own books in schools. Hindu and Muslim students from far and wide go to the school to learn the mischievous knowledge.

Later, this order was issued to the governors: all the schools and temples were demolished. Aurangzeb, upon hearing this news, vehemently ordered the infidels to cease all forms of idol worship and the study of scriptures. On 15th Rawul Akhir, September 2, 1669, Emperor Aurangzeb received news that the Vishwanath Temple in Varanasi had been demolished on his orders. Not only was the temple demolished, but the Gyanvapi Mosque was also built on its site. The builders demolished the western wall of the old temple and razed the smaller temples. The western, northern, and southern gates were also closed. The sanctums that had stood above the gates were demolished and replaced with domes. The sanctum sanctorum was transformed into the main hall of the mosque. The four inner chambers were preserved and combined with pavilions, creating a 24-foot corridor. The temple's eastern pavilion, measuring 125 x 35 feet, was transformed into a long square by erecting a black stone platform. Before the temple was demolished, the linga was separated from its halves and taken to their residence in Lolark Bhadaini by members of the priest Lakshmiapati Dubey family, spreading the illusion that the Vishwanath linga had been thrown into a well. They secretly worshipped the linga. After some time, when the linga's name spread, they secretly took it to their relatives' home in Mirzapur. Years later, they quietly brought it back to Lolark, hiding it on the third floor, and continued to worship it privately. After his death, his family members brought the linga down to the ground floor and installed it there. It still stands at House No. B2/32. Why is this linga neglected? Narayanbhatt, in his *Tristhal Setu* (1580) on page 208, states that if a Linga is removed, it should not be worshipped. If a temple is destroyed by Mlechhas, the newly installed Linga should be worshipped; otherwise, the place itself can also be worshipped. The place was worshipped for years based on the principle "Kalau Sthanani Pujyante".

It was spread over several Vindumadhav temples. From Panchgangaghat to Rambat, there were houses for the priests of the temples of Shri Ram and Mangala Gauri. After demolishing the Vindumadhav temple, a mosque was built on the same site. The mosque's structure is not particularly beautiful, but its pillars have now fallen. Its width at the ground level and 71 feet at the top, its height was 1407 feet 2 inches. The mosque's pedestal is approximately 80 feet above the Ganges. An inscription on the stairs at Panchgangaghat indicates that Maharaja Jai Jai Shah ended his journey here in 1642. Hans, Kashi issue, page 125. Aurangzeb died in 1707. Aurangzeb's son, Bahadur Shah, ascended the throne of Delhi. He was a man of a very generous nature.

Jarasandharaj established a Shivalinga named Jarasandheshwar at Mirghat in Kashi. A Nawab named Mir Rustam demolished the temple in 1735 and built his fort on the same site. After ascending the throne of Banaras, Raja Balwant Singh had this fort demolished during his reign in 1748. The stones from the fort were taken and reinstalled in the fort built in Ramnagar.

Balwant Singh became the king of Kashi in 1748 AD. Maharaj Balwant Singh built his fort in Ramnagar town situated on Bhagwar east of Bhagirathi. Over time, the control of Kashi again came into the hands of Hindu king Maharaj Balwant Singh, but his son Maharaj Chet Singh could not rule for long. Rambagh Sumeru temple and pond are situated outside Ramnagar on the east side at a distance of about one mile from the fort. It was built by Chet Singh. According to E.V. Havell, Maharaj Chet Singh started its construction in the latter half of the 18th century and it was completed after his reign around 1850 AD. From the point of view of excellent craftsmanship, a grand and huge Vishnu temple was built at a huge cost; it is considered to be the best example of minting art. M.A. According to Shering's book "The Secret City of Hinduism," this temple is 100 feet high. From the base to approximately 39 or 40 feet, the sculptures are carved in several rows, totaling 120. In the lowest rows, statues of the Dashavatara deities, the rivers Ganga, and other gods like Vayu, Surya, and Indra are carved in separate niches. Famous sages like Narada are also exquisite. Images of Gajendramoksha and Sahasrarjuna are also artistically crafted. In the top row, Durga is depicted in the middle on the south side, Mahakali in the middle on the east side, and Lord Krishna holding Govardhan on the north side. (Durga Panchayatan) Unfortunately, Maharaja Chet Singh was unable to complete this Vishnu temple due to his abandonment of Kashi in 1781. It remained incomplete for a long time, becoming a symbol of hindrance. Maharaja Ishwarinarayan Singh completed this temple by doing Vighnashanti as per the instructions of his Guru Shri Kashtjihva Swami, and established Bhagwati Durga Panchayatan, the destroyer of all obstacles and the giver of all. The external Vishnu related symbols were left as they were, the winged lion symbolizing the Goddess was placed on the main gate, and Nandi and Garuda, the symbols of the gods of Panchayatan, were placed in front of the adjacent gates. Maharaja Chetsingh got the pond garden and the temple constructed at this very place. It is worth noting that this place is far from the city of Ramnagar built by him. It seems that where Rambagh is situated, there was a fort where the Kshirsagar Leela used to take place before Maharaja Chetsingh.

Gr After removing the fort on October 5, 1787, Duncan Mahadji Scindia attempted in 1789 to have the Gyanvapi Mosque re-established as a temple.

A letter dated August 10, 1792, suggests that Nana Phadnavis promised to assist the British during the battle between Tipu and the British, on the condition that Hindus be allowed to rebuild the Vishwanath Temple at its original site. However, this failed. This is evident from a letter from Cornwallis to Jonathan Duncan. Shri Govindlal Vyas, in the History Collection of Banaras, May 1908, page 72, footnote: Malhar Rao considered demolishing the Gyanvapi Mosque and rebuilding the Vishwanath Temple. However, the Pancha Dravid Brahmins were concerned that if the mosque was demolished without the emperor's permission, the emperor would become

enraged and have the Brahmins killed. Therefore, it was better to build the Vishwanath temple elsewhere. The Brahmins of Kashi were in a dilemma about demolishing the Gyanvapi Mosque and rebuilding the temple. Seeing the Brahmins frightened by their religion and beliefs, Balaji Bajirao kept this thought in his heart and went back.

One hundred and eight years later, Maharani Ahalyabai of Indore State, wife of Khanderao Holkar, daughter-in-law of Maharaja Malhar Rao Holkar, again obtained approval for the Vishwanath temple from the Nawab of Lucknow in 1777. The foundation stone was laid under the guidance of Shri Narayan Dixit of Kashi. The Linga installation was inaugurated by her ascetic priest, Jayaram Sharma, on Monday, Magh Krishnashtami, 1834 Vikram Samvat. In 1838, Maharaja Ranjit Singh of Lahore State had a copper plate plated with gold on the top of the present Vishwanath Temple.

Sequentially, Kashi was annexed to the British Empire in 1794 during the reign of Lord Hastings. In 1809, during the reign of Magistrate Mr. Ward, an unfinished Hanuman temple in the courtyard of Gyanvapi was demolished by weavers, resulting in a massive Hindu-Muslim riot. Indian History Journal, Proc. 12 (1929), p. 67.

Kashi's famous Ram Halla - On April 8, 1892, municipal employees measured the land of the ancient Ram Temple along with other land next to the Lolark Kund in Bhadaini to establish a water reservoir. When the priest's request was not met, the priest, a Vairagi Sadhu, informed everyone that the Ram Temple was being demolished. Upon hearing this, a large crowd of residents gathered and pleaded with the authorities not to demolish the Ram Temple. However, when the authorities ignored it, a rebellion broke out. On the night of April 15th, the people rebuilt the demolished portion of the temple and demolished the waterworks building that night. The army had to be called in to quell the rebellion. Baba Govardhan Das, Baba Gopal Das, and several others, along with the Ram Temple's builders, were imprisoned, and some were fined. The current Ram Temple's worship services are being conducted under the supervision of the Dashamod Gaubhuja Vanik Samaj.

The idols in the Vishwanath Temple at Gyanvapi, demolished during Aurangzeb's reign in the 16th century, were destroyed, along with the idols in other pavilions and the circumambulatory path, and Hindus were barred from entering the Gyanvapi complex. Some broken idols from the Mughal period are still kept in the Gyanvapi compound. After entry into the Gyanvapi courtyard was prohibited, the officials of the Vyaspeeth approached the Mughal courts to obtain the right to conduct the Panchakroshi and other pilgrimages starting from Vyasasan. Mosque employees used to confiscate the offerings made by Hindus to the idols in the Gyanvapi courtyard. Rukmini Devi, the official of the Vyaspeeth, obtained various rulings from the Mughal

court seeking justice. The officials of the Vyaspeeth periodically replaced the broken idols with new ones after consecrating them. Pt. Raghunandan Vyas was a staunch Hindu and served as the 9th official of the Vyaspeeth. During his tenure, he secured court decisions in favor of many important Hindus, which is highly commendable. His only son, Pandit Baijnath Vyas, the successor of the Vyaspeeth, determined to complete the unfinished work of his father, tried continuously since his short life to end the occupation of the Mughals from the Gyanvapi site after many controversies and succeeded in stopping the funeral prayer from the western courtyard of Gyanvapi in 1930. Despite tireless efforts for 30 years during the British rule, he achieved unprecedented success by stopping the Alvida prayer from the Gyanvapi courtyard on 15th August 1947. The ruins of the ancient Vishwanath temple, ancient idols, place of worship, ancient basement of the temple, Gyanvapi courtyard are still under the control of the officials of Vyaspeeth. The files of many disputes are kept safe in the Vyas family. Taking undue advantage of the situation, the selfish pundits of Kashi began telling pilgrims that Vishwanath, fearing Aurangzeb, jumped into the nearby Gyanvapi well and reappeared in a well called Kashikarvat. This has never happened in the past, nor will it ever happen in the future. At the request of the gods, you manifested your power and became Mahakaal, the destroyer of all beings, the Sadashiv, eternally sleeping like a corpse at Shakti's feet. You devour the entire universe, animate and inanimate. On whose forehead resides a flame, the Jyotirlinga, illuminating the entire universe. How could such a ray of light jump into a well? This place, Kashikarvat, was once the home of an Ahir chieftain, which later came under the control of the pundits. Uneducated pundits and underlings lured pilgrims to this temple. They are deceived and taken away. Pilgrims began to be duped based on misleading legends. When this fraud reached its peak and news reached the British rulers of Banaras, a government lock was placed on the lower portion of the Kashikarvat temple with strict enforcement. The temple was cleaned weekly under police protection, and the keys were deposited at Thana Chowk. Following this practice, Varanasi remained a hub for thugs from the 12th to the 16th centuries. Hemchandra, commenting on thugs in his Kumarapalacharita (3.59), mentions the proverb of that era, "Varanasi thugaanaam sthanam," meaning Varanasi is the home of thugs. According to mythological beliefs, it is now the fourteenth Chaturyuga since Vishwanath visited Kashi. In this sequence, the Jyotirlinga of Vishwanath disappeared and reappeared fourteen times. This time, Aurangzeb was the culprit. Upon India's independence from the British, Indians gained independence on August 15, 1947. Since then, Kashi has been under the control of Indian rulers. On September 15, 1957, the Indian government allowed untouchables to enter the Shri Kashi Vishwanath Temple. Swami Karpatriji, along with religious leaders, strongly opposed this move, resulting in Karpatriji and several others being jailed. Seeing no solution from the government, Swami Karpatriji decided to build a separate Vishwanath Temple for religious leaders. After laying the foundation stone on February 9, 1958,

the idol was brought to Kashi from Vanling Narvada at 9 pm on February 10, under the supervision of the royal priest of Maharaja Maihar, and a procession was taken out through the main roads. After special worship on 16 February 1958 in the presence of Shankaracharya of Kashi along with Swamiji, Vishwanathji was established on 21 February on the banks of Ganga at Mirghat.

The third Vishwanath temple of Kashi is situated in the campus of Hindu University established by revered Madan Mohan Malviya ji on the banks of Jamhavi in the southern part of Kashi. The idea came in the heart of Malviya ji that there should be a huge temple of Shri Vishwanath in the middle of the school which people of all sects could visit in close proximity. This pious work was entrusted to some wealthy brothers here. These people collected some money but when the money was not sufficient, the Birla brothers were requested. Birlaji took the entire responsibility and after the construction work continued for 20 years, in Vikrami Samvat. The temple was built on 2023 AD in 1966, with a 250-foot-high spire adorning the university campus. The magnificent Durga Temple of Kashi is located on the banks of the vast Durgakund lake along this route.

The king had a vision of Goddess Bhagwati at this very spot in Kashi, as per the story of Devi Bhagwat, the queen of Bengal. The temple was built by Nataur Avani. The western corridor of the temple's circumambulatory path was built by Bajirao Peshwa in 1828 AD.

This huge pond was built by Maharani Ahilyabai of Badhey Indore State. Based on the historical story, upon receiving news of the demolition of the temple during the Mughal invasion, fearing the loss of the Durga idol, the temple officials removed the movable idol and placed it near their residence, Lolark Kund, where it remains preserved in the same condition to this day. The Hindu people of Kashi have been worshipping the land in the vast courtyard of the Durga Kund located at the Durga Temple, based on the principle of "Kalousthananipujyante."

A grand, massive marble building was constructed near the Durga Temple on Monday, Falgun Krishna Tritiya, Samvat 2016, with funds from the Thakurdas Sureka Charity Fund. The idols of Lord Vishnu and Lakshmi were installed, along with the statue of Goswami Tulsidas on Friday, Magh Shukla Tritiya, 2020. The inner walls of the building were decorated with couplets and quatrains from the entire Ramayana, transforming the building into a "Manasamandir." Visitors are enthralled by the automated tableaux based on the stories of Rama and Krishna, using modern equipment. During the Jhoolnotsav in the month of Sawan, crowds of visitors from Kashi and outside gather to see these special tableaux.

About a furlong from here, the temple of Shri Sankatmochan Hanumanji is situated amidst a small forest. The atmosphere here is a secluded, peaceful, and divine place of worship for devotees. In the temple courtyard, Shri Hanumanji sits facing the idols of Shri Raghavendra Sarkar, Shri Kishoriji, and Lakhanlalji. Near Hanumanji, Lord Shiva is present in the form of a linga, and a statue of Lord Narasimha is also installed in this courtyard. After appearing in the guise of a leper to Tulsidas, the supreme devotee of the Lord, the two Ram devotees arrived at this very place from Karnaghanta. Tulsidasji lay down at their feet. Upon praying with utmost humility, he appeared and asked, "What do you want?" Goswamiji said, "Remain here in this form for the devotees." Shri Hanumanji said, "So be it." He sat down. Shri Hanumanji offers protection to the devotees with his right arm, while his left arm rests on his heart. The Hanuman Jayanti festival is held every Chaitra Shukla Purnima. On this occasion, a tableau depicting the presence of Lord Hanuman is presented. Legends about its significance claim that this self-manifested idol was manifested through the austerity and virtue of Shri Tulsidasji.

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