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HISTORY OF NAGAS IN INDIA

A ■u must read

The word Nag or Naga simply means a snake or rather a hooded snake. According to the Purana, the Nagas inhabited the length and breadth of the Kashmir Valley. The literal meaning of the word Naga is a snake or a serpent.

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It may not be out of place to mention here that in the ancient world this symbol was used by many cultures around the globe for depicting the serpentine evolution of an individual's consciousness (which is expressed in the tradition of yoga as Kundalini).

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The Nagas of Bharata Varsha's Dragon Culture divided their country into a patchwork of Dragon Empires and city-states. Two of the first and most important of their city-states were the Kingdom of Kashi on the Ganges and Nagpur, the "City of the Nagas."

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Nagpur was built in the center of Bharata Varsha thus making it a strategic location for Nagas monitoring the panoply of Dragon Communities throughout the Indian sub-continent.

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In the city-state of Lothal the Nagas founded a port city on the Arabian Sea which carried on frequent trade with Dragon Empires around the world while using a universal currency of cowries.

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Close to Lothal was the city-state of Takshasila, referred to in Greek records as Taxila. This great city of Nagas, named after the mythological serpent Taksha Naga, became a renowned center of theology and academic learning.

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Greek historians maintain that Alexander the Great visited Taxila on his march across Asia and was both startled and impressed by the size of a huge live snake, a living image of Taksha.

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To the north of the Indus Valley the Nagas established a Dragon Kingdom in what is now Kashmir. According to the two main historical texts of Kashmir, the Nilamata Purana and the Rajatarangini, this northern territory of Bharata Varsha was originally too cold and

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wet to support life, but a group of Nagas, lead by Nila Naga, drained the region's marshes and lakes and thus made it inhabitable. Kashmir was quickly settled thereafter by waves of colonizing Nagas who made Srinagar (Sri-Nagar, Great Serpent) their capital city.

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By the time of the Third Buddhist Council in Srinagar, circa 253 B.C., there was said to be over 84,000 Nagas living in Kashmir. Ruling over this proliferation of Nagas was a series of Naga Kings, the most famous of which were descended from a semi-mythical ruler

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with renowned magical powers, the Naga Karkotaka.

Naga Kingdoms were also established throughout the Ganges River Valley and eastern India. One eastern Dragon Kingdom was founded in Magadha, the modern Bihar, and ruled by a lineage of Naga Kings known as the Shishunagas.

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Their neighbors and allies were the Naga Kings of nearby Manipur (a region situated in modern Bengal and Burma) who claimed descent from a Naga called Pa-kung-ga. To the west of these two kingdoms was another Naga Kingdom which chose as its capital the famous city of Mathura.

The royal family of this empire, the Yadavas, were serpent worshippers and the nobles of the family were associated with serpents. The Yadava prince Balarama was an incarnation of the Primal Serpent, the Shesha Naga.

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One group of Kashmirian Nagas colonized a region just below the Vindhya Mountains and therein established a lineage of Naga Kings called the Shatavahana Nagas.

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While claiming descent from the Primal Serpent, Shesha, the Shatavahana Nagas expanded their dominion until it encompassed the present states of Maharashtra, Andhra, and Karnataka.

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In nearby Orissa a southern Naga kingdom was founded and ruled by Naga kings of the Vairata Dynasty who claimed descent from a serpent goddess.

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South of them, at the southern most tip of Bharata Varsha, the Nagas founded the kingdom of Pratishthana and set over it a series of Naga Kings, the most famous of whom was the legendary king Salivahana, reputed son of the serpent Ananta.

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