



# Thirsty For History

For centuries, Kashmir faced a **strange paradox** — too much water, yet not enough to grow crops.

Swipe to know all about  
**The Water Slides of Kashmir**

---





## Kashmir's story begins with its **landscape**.

Imagine a giant shallow bowl. At the top are the hills, the bumpy bottom forms the valley, and rising to the rim are the fertile plateaus.

Ancient texts, such as the *Nilamata Purana*, describe how these waters were the lifeblood of the land.

The valley was fed by a network of rivers, lakes, and springs.

At the centre of this network was the **Vitasta River, now called the Jhelum**.





**With so much water everywhere, agriculture should have been easy.**

**But water in Kashmir was both a blessing and a threat.**

Every summer, melting snow from the mountains sent huge amounts of water into the valley.

Three wavy lines in red, green, and blue are positioned to the left of the text.

**Rivers overflowed, fields flooded, and crops were destroyed, which often led to food shortages and famine.**

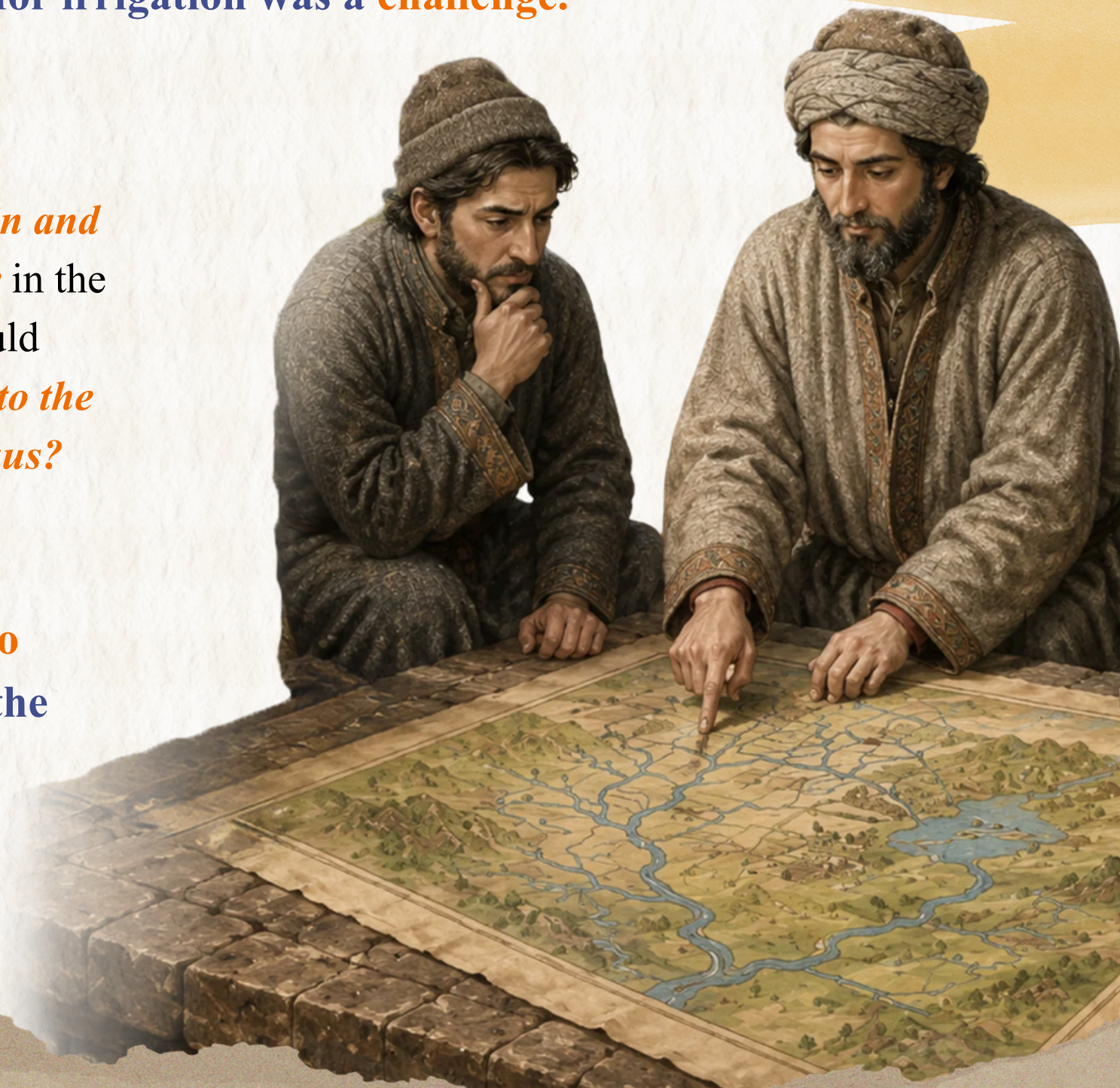




On the other hand, the fertile plateaus were higher than the Jhelum River, so carrying water up to there for irrigation was a **challenge**.

How could they *drain and control excess water* in the valley? And how could they *carry water up to the dry but fertile plateaus*?

These were the **two challenges** facing the ancient engineers.





**Over time, rulers and communities began to reshape the valley's waterways.**

They built canals to feed the fields, and dykes and embankments to protect the villages. One canal, called *Suvarnamanikulya*, helped carry water to farmland in southern Kashmir. Water was finally regulated to support farming rather than destroy it in the valley.

But the problem of the plateaus remained. How to carry water against gravity, from the lower valley to the higher plateaus?

In the 8th century CE (about 1200 years ago!) King Lalitaditya Muktapida hit upon a genius idea - simple but effective!

**He placed giant water wheels in the Jhelum River!**





Imagine a **big Ferris wheel**, but instead of carrying people, it carried **buckets of water**.

The *river's flow pushed the buckets from the bottom to the top of the wheel*. The water was then poured into a trough connected to a giant slide.

This **slide** carried water to the **plateaus**, making farming easier!



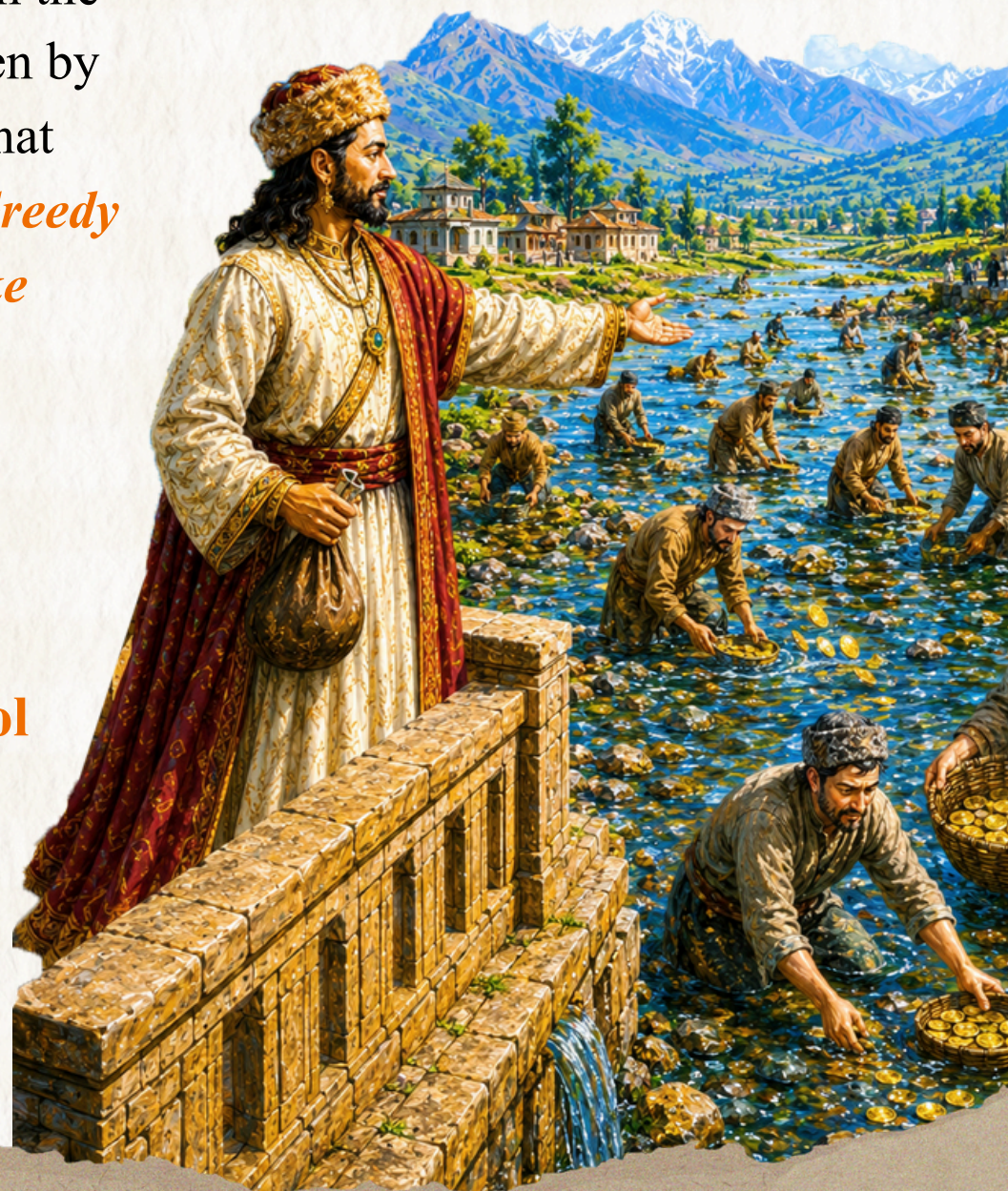


Then came the ‘**hydrologist**’ of Kashmir, the irrigation minister Suyya.

He realised that building dykes managed the floods, but it didn’t solve the cause. Silt and stones had accumulated in the river, causing it to choke and inundate. How did he clean the river without using any modern machinery or equipment?

He found a simple solution. A story from the Rajatarangini, a book on Kashmir written by Kalhana a thousand years ago, tells us that Suyya threw gold coins into the river. ***Greedy people jumped in and cleaned the choke points as they searched for the coins!***

Suyya cleared parts of the Jhelum riverbed, built embankments, and redirected water channels to **control flooding.**



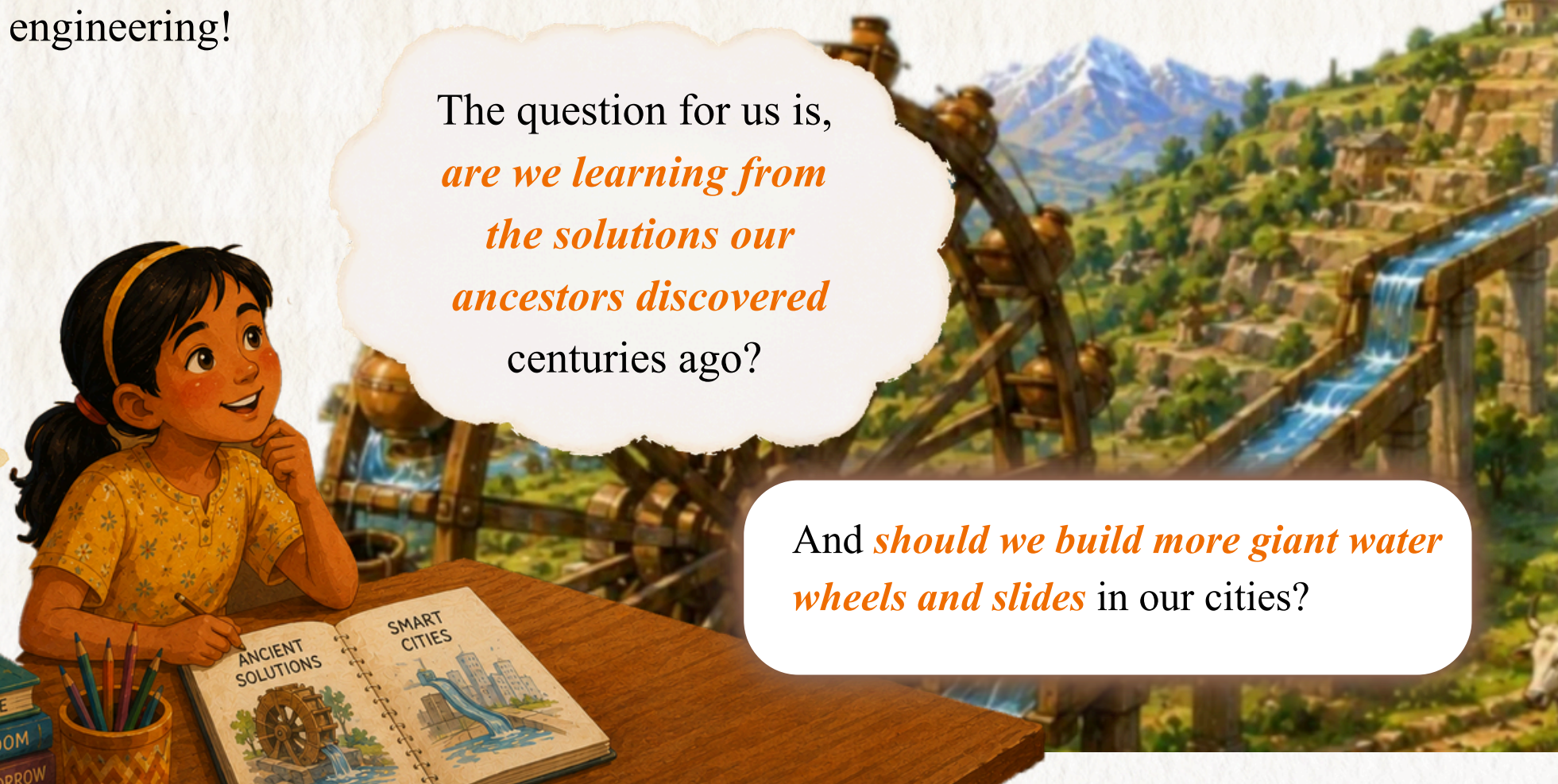


**Among the later rulers, Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin built canals in every district of Kashmir and promoted agriculture.**

The *simple but innovative irrigation systems* implemented by the people of Kashmir transformed the economy.

Farmers could now grow crops such as rice, wheat, and pulses more reliably. This led to more food, more trade, and the growth of towns in the valley.

History reminds us that managing water has always been a challenge, but one that our ancestors solved with unique engineering!

A colorful illustration of a young girl with dark hair and a yellow headband, sitting at a wooden desk. She is looking thoughtful, with her hand on her chin. On the desk are several books, including one titled 'OUR NATURE' and another 'WATER WISDOM'. A pencil holder with colored pencils is also present. In the background, there is a detailed illustration of an ancient irrigation system with a large wooden water wheel and a series of canals flowing through a valley with mountains in the distance. A thought bubble above the girl contains text.

The question for us is,  
*are we learning from  
the solutions our  
ancestors discovered*  
centuries ago?

And *should we build more giant water wheels and slides* in our cities?