Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

The objective analysis of any historical phenomenon not only depends on the approach and the method that historian evolves but is dictated more by the scope and nature of source material available for that period. In the case of Kashmir, too, various researches have been carried out in the recent past, mostly based on plethora of books and chronicles from Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* down to the literary outputs of our own day. However, the opinions of travellers who passed through Kashmir from time to time have been referred to by scholars without any critical analysis.¹ A careful study of these travellers accounts reveals

1. In the beginning of nineteenth century when Durani Empire was on its last legs, Kashmir fell in the hands of Sikh rulers. It was during this time that the British power was speedily expanding on Indian soil and getting involved into conflict with Russia in Central Asian possessions. In these circumstances the occupation of Kashmir to British meant a grip over some of the important borders which played an important role in commercial intercourses between British India and Central Asia. To explore the opportunities for advancing the

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that they are an important source material for re-
discovering the history of the nineteenth century
Kashmir. Among these European travellers William
Moorcroft was the first traveller who visited
Kashmir in the first half of the nineteenth
century. During his visit William Moorcroft was
accompanied by George Trebeck and Mr. Guthrie. ²

Basically, William Moorcroft was a veterinary
surgeon who visited Bengal in 1808 as a superinten-
dent of the military stud of the East India Company.³

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colonial interests of their Empires, a good
number of Europeans travelled extensively in
these areas. Foreign Department, Political A.
October 1868, No. 140-41. Enclosures to secret
letters from India 1841-1849, Vol. 87-137,
National Archives of India. The original
manuscript is in Indian Office Library, London.
For details see also D. C. Boulger; England and
Russia in Central Asia, London, 1879, pp. 339-
345.

2. William Moorcroft and George Trebeck; Travels
in Himalayan Provinces of Hindustan and the
Punjab, in Ladakh and Kashmir, in Peshawar,
Kabul, Kunduz and Bokhara. Prepared from
original correspondence by H. H. Wilson, 2 volu-
James P. Ferguson; Kashmir, A Historical Introduc-
tion, pp. 168-171.

p. 168, p. XXT.
For improving the breed of horses he undertook various journeys, the first of which led him to Mansarowar, the second to Ladakh and Kashmir. He lodged at Bagh-i-Dilawar Khan and stayed in Kashmir up to 1823.

Though Moorcroft is said to have spent most of his time in carrying out medical relief work in Kashmir, from his account, however, it becomes clear that he also peeped deep into the life and conditions of the people of various places which he visited extensively. It was after the death of William Moorcroft at Andokh and his associate Trebeck at Mazar, that his papers were collected and organized into a continuous narrative.

5. Ibid.
6. Ibid. Did Moorcroft die of natural causes or was he poisoned is not yet clearly established. Ferguson says that Moorcroft died but does not give further details. However, this view is doubted by Jeannette Mirsky, Sir Anrel Stein, Archaeological Explorer, London, 1977, p. 19.
William Moorcroft visited Punjab, Kashmir, Ladakh, Peshawar, Kabul, Kunduz, Bokhara, Chinese Tartary and many other Himalayan regions. The information that he has recorded is generally accurate and minute. From his account it seems that he was an intelligent and keen observer. Apart from giving a geographical description of Kashmir, its agricultural, horticultural, forest and other industrial products, William Moorcroft bewails the lot of poor Kashmiris during his sojourn there. He says that people were reduced to misery. He attributes the poverty of the people of Kashmir to the rapacity of the Sikh rulers who extorted money from them without any scruples. He also talked a great deal about the corrupt practices of the Sikh bureaucracy.

7. William Moorcroft, op. cit., Vol. I and II.
After Moorcroft left Kashmir on 31st July 1823, the next traveller to visit Kashmir was Alexander Cosma de Koros. Moorcroft and Alexander Cosma de Koros met each other in Dras and spent some time together. In 1819, when Alexander Cosma started his travel, he was thirty-six years old. He travelled with long detours through Turkey, Egypt, Persia, Bokhara, Kabul, Lahore to Kashmir. It will be at singular interest to note that Alexander Cosma de Koros had previously the opportunity at travelling through a very fascinating region i.e. Central Asia, but he did not oblige his reader by making available to him details about the people, their life, geography and archaeology of the region. But the same traveller, later on, settled down to very serious studies in Tibetan history and culture and made valuable contribution towards researches in that field. These occupied him for next twenty years.


12. Ibid., pp. 18-20.
Though Cosma's references to Kashmir are available and original in nature, he however, occupies an important position in Tibetan scholarship.¹³

Ten years after Moorcroft's visit, Victor Jacquemont, a French scientist, visited the Valley. He was born in France in 1801.¹⁴ He undertook a mission to make a botanical survey in India. In this connection he landed at Calcutta on 25th May 1829.¹⁵ From Calcutta Victor Jacquemont travelled to Delhi and from there he visited Mussoorie, Jamnotri, Simla, Kanawar and later obtained permission from

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¹³. Stein wrote in a letter to Earnest on 27th of September 1896: "He became the discoverer of Tibetan literature through his chance of meeting with Moorcroft who knows where his urge to travel might have taken him." Jeannette Mirsky, op. cit., p. 20.


¹⁵. Ibid., After coming to Calcutta he became a very close friend of Lord William Bentnek.
Maharaja Ranjit Singh to visit Kashmir. The letters he wrote to various persons during his sojourn in Kashmir form an important source material. These letters are distinguished by his vivid description of various personalities, their actual weak and strong points. Like Moorcroft's account, his letters reveal the prevailing political climate, and economic and cultural problems. His simple but penetrating

16. After receiving permission to enter Ranjit Singh's territory, Jacquemont crossed the Sutlej on March Second, 1831, where he met a party of Sikhs sent to welcome him and gave him cash presents of Rs. one hundred one. These presents were repeated each day till he reached Lahore. Ibid., p. 180

17. These letters are mainly addressed to his father, brother and his friends in France. These letters were illustrated with drawings which show Jacquemont as an artist of great skill and delicacy. Ibid., pp. 179-80. See also Victor Jacquemont, Letters from India, 1829-1832. Being a selection from the correspondence of Victor Jacquemont, translated with an introduction by Cat Resina Alis Philips, London, Macmillan, 1936.
style of writing influences the reader very much. Unfortunately, Victor Jacquemont was kept on a small allowance by his employers which was quite inadequate for anyone travelling in style that he thought right to assume. The result is that his letters show a pre-occupation with many that is far from agreeable. Hugel, who came immediately after him makes several comments on Victor Jacquemont. He mentions that Jacquemont’s letters, especially after publication, injured his reputation in India because many people who had been hostile to him now saw themselves critically depicted and unfavourably in evident breach of obligations of austerity. However, the actual


reading of these letters does not give this impression today. As a matter of fact, Jacquemont gives a lively description of the habits and way of life of the people with whom he stayed: there is nothing censorious in his letters.

After Jacquemont a number of European visitors came to Kashmir. In 1832, Joseph Wolf made his appearance in Kashmir. He was a Christian missionary and had already travelled extensively in Asia, Africa and America. Wolf, unlike Moorcroft, travelled with a definite purpose of spreading Evangelism. Consequently, we do not find in his travel account many a description of the country or its people except mainly a record of religious controversies in which Wolf indulged. He entered Kashmir by Pir Panjal route.

21. Joseph Wolf, op. cit., p. 184. Joseph Wolf was the son of a Jewish Rabbi and was born in 1795 at Weiberrabad in Bohemia.
22. Ibid.
Hugel mentions the work of Wolf as a confused mass of materials, in which the ever present 'I' abounds. Hugel charges him with adopting a method of Evangelism. However, Wolf's book of travels is an extraordinary collection of adventures and incidents such as could never befall the normal travellers. His work makes an entertaining and absorbing reading. Considering the difficulties he had to face, his travel account is a remarkable piece of work in many ways. Despite the fact that Wolf's account of Kashmir is somewhat fragmentary and lacks strict coherence, yet considering the difficulties he had to face, his travel account is a remarkable piece of work in more than one way. His close observation of life and his dispassionate rendering of his experiences, objectively stated throughout the work, make it a work more dependable than some of histories written by only on the basis of preserved material.

In the fourth decade of nineteenth century Charles Baron Hugel, G. T. Vigne and Dr. Henderson visited Kashmir. Hugel paid a visit for few months but Vigne stayed in the Valley for a longer period. Both Vigne and Hugel met in Srinagar and were later joined by Dr. Henderson. After staying in Srinagar for a short time, Hugel left for Anantnag.

Unfortunately, Hugel made his journey to Kashmir in winter from October till December 1835 when it was extremely cold. The sufferings which Charles Baron Hugel had to undergo in Kashmir during winter

24. Ibid., p. 186.

25. Hugel entered Kashmir by the old Mughal route of Pir Panjal. In Srinagar he found that he was given rooms in a house in the city, over looking the Jhelum, which he considered, had a striking resemblance to river Arno at Florence, but disliking the accommodation, he transferred to Bagh-i-Dilawar Khan, where Moorcroft and Jacquemont had lodged. Ibid., p. 187.
form the most vivid impression of his journey that he conveys to the readers. As a result, he could not make much use of his stay in Kashmir. Generally, Hugel's account regarding Lahore is more original and valuable. He gives a graphic and living picture of Ranjit Singh, his courtiers and the Europeans working in his service. 26

Vigne travelled extensively in Kashmir. He explored thoroughly the different routes in the Valley. His travel account is full of details regarding the ecology, geology, botany, geography, society and political climate of the places he visited. He also visited Skardu and Leh. From his account it is obvious that he wanted to go to Gilgit but was prevented from going there by the Sikh government. 27 His narrative is comprehensive and objective. Vigne mentions that the herons

26. For details see C. B. Hugel, Kashmir and Punjab, (1844), Delhi, 1972.

27. G.T. Vigne, Travels in Kashmir, Ladakh, Iskardo, the countries adjoining the mountain course of the Indus and the Himalaya, 2 volumes, London, 1842.

which nested in the Valley were highly priced. No one was permitted to trouble the birds which nested in Chinar trees. When in spring their long neck feathers dropped off, they were carefully collected and sorted out. The best ones were exported to Lahore where they were in great demand because Sikhs made plumes out of these for their turbans. Likewise his references to many more aspects of Kashmir, its people and their life are complete and exact. He tries to give a very faithful description of the events to which he himself was an eye witness. Sometimes his account gives the impression that he is a very hostile to the Sikhs. But with all this his records form a very important source material from which modern students can derive both fact and opinion.

29. Ibid.

Vigne also met Henderson, the superintendent of the East India Company's garden at Saharanpore, when he left Kashmir in 1838.\(^\text{31}\)

The travel accounts mentioned above form an essential historical record for the study of Kashmir history during the period of our study. Though some of their themes spill over into the realms of sociology, politics and criticism of arts and manifestations but these various ingredients are blended into a uniform composition in which they lose all their separateness and form the seemingly indispensable parts of a well rounded whole. Hence it is with this idea that we are subjecting the socio-economic life of people of first half of the nineteenth century Kashmir to a variety of opinions produced by these travellers.

\[^{31}\text{James Ferguson, op. cit., p. 197.}\]
G. T. Vigne also met Dr. Falconer in Kashmir in 1838. Dr. Falconer came on botanical expedition to Kashmir.
The different aspects which we shall examine on the basis of our data include Agrarian economy, Industrial activity, Social life and position of women. In this study our attempt shall be to identify these aspects as they appeared to European travellers. Hence the names of William Moorcroft, George Trebeck, G. T. Vigne, C. B. Hugel, Joseph Wolf, Honiberger and others deserve special mention in this study.