CHAPTER I

Introduction

TEXT AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

In the history of the world in general and India in particular, literary texts occupied a special place in providing useful historical information for reconstructing the bygone events and incidents of the past. In tracing the forgotten past to give a living history to the present, historical information can be collected from two types of sources—archaeological and literary. Archaeology includes the study of relics of ancient monuments, artefacts, architecture etc whereas literary sources comprises of various written records. This written record of the past can be divided and categorised on the basis of language, genre, content, age and the tradition or the class of literature. For instance, literary texts could be written either in Indo-Aryan, Dravidian or any other vernacular script and languages of the Indian subcontinent. The oldest surviving text of India, the Vedas are, in Sanskrit. Literary texts which are written in Sanskrit are classified as pre classical Sanskrit and classical Sanskrit. The pre classical Sanskrit are the Vedas whereas Kālidāsa’s literary works, for example, are considered as part of the classical literature.¹

It is generally believed that the tradition of literary writings in India began when Sanskrit was employed as a language of the court and learned men, unlike the earlier tradition where access to Sanskrit was reserved for a particular section of the society and was used predominantly in connection with the liturgy of Vedic rituals.² Basically, Sanskrit was never actually a language of the masses but extended only to a few circles of the ‘educated’. The language in fact is supposed to have been used in such a way that the kings, the brāhmaṇas and ‘respectable’ persons speak Sanskrit whereas women in plays and common people employ the popular language.³

¹ Upinder Singh, A History of Ancient and Medieval India (From the Stone Age to the 12th century), New Delhi: Dorling Kindersley, 2008, pp 16-17.
A distinctive aspect of literary composition in Sanskrit is the description of the glory of kings. Although Sanskrit literature traverses a wide range of places its location was always the court which functioned as a centre for patronage. This is because the court stood as an institution of complex agencies where the theme and currency of the courtly literature had a more diverse audience of spectators than the individual need of the patrons. It was when this tradition of writing was mirrored by regional languages following the same phenomenon of Sanskrit that literary writings in the regional languages also took place.

Among the various written records of the past such as genealogies, biographies, eulogy or praśastī; chronicles also provide useful information on the rich culture and tradition of the past. The term ‘chronicle’ refers to the forms of historical records or writings that provide a continuous and detailed summary of historical events arranged chronologically. Chronicles often represented the power of the reigning king and were sustained through royal patronage. In most of the chronicles, the chroniclers either praise or eulogize the power and achievement of the kings rather than describing their failings. Although the term ‘chronicle’ is generally understood as a record of historical events in the order of their occurrences, it can be categorized either as a king’s or queen’s chronicle, temple or court chronicle depending on where the chronicle was preserved or written, and to whom the narration in the chronicle is particularly directed.

Kālidāsa’s Rahguvaṃśa, Kalhaṇa’s Rājataraṅginī, and the Cheitharol Kumbaba of Manipur can be categorized as chronicles of kings as the events and occurrences narrated in the three texts recount on the life and activities of kings. Of these three texts the Rahguvaṃśa deals with the central area of the Gangā valley, the Rājataraṅginī deals with the north western part of the sub-continent and the Cheitharol Kumbaba with Manipur which is in the north east.

The Rahguvaṃśa of Kālidāsa is an epic poem about the lineage of the kings of the solar dynasty. Divided into nineteen cantos, the Rahguvaṃśa gives a vivid description

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6 Encyclopedia Britanica vol-II p. 909.
of the lives and achievements of the kings of Ayodhyā where Raghu and his predecessors ruled. The *Raghuvaṃśa* is derived from Vālmīki’s *Rāmāyaṇa* that attempted to give a connected lineage of Lord Rāma as a descendant of the Raghu race. Written in cantos containing several verses, the *Raghuvaṃśa* recounts the life and activities of the kings of the Raghu dynasty. It also discusses about the city, ocean, mountain, seasons, celebration of marriage ceremony and the birth of sons, spring festival, heroic feats of the kings, coronation and sacrificial ceremony etc. While not literally a historical account, it is likely that Kālidāsa’s composition was inspired by and commemorated the achievements and ideals of the Gupta rulers.

The *Rājatarāṅginī* or the history of the kings of Kashmir is the only work on the early history of Kashmir that has often been regarded as a historical text. It was written by Kalhaṇa, son of Canpaka, the minister of King Harṣa of Kashmir in the 12th century. In terms of structure and content, Kalhaṇa’s *Rājatarāṅginī* contains eight sections or taraṅgas which can be further divided into three main parts. The first part comprises of the first three sections dealing with the dynasties which Kalhaṇa projected as having ruled Kashmir from the earliest time to the accession of the Kārkotā dynasty. The second part includes section four to six dealing with the period from the reign of the Karkoṭa dynasty to the exit of the Varman dynasty and the third part comprises of sections seven and eight which gives a detailed connected account of the first two Lohara dynasties of the early 11th century to Kalhaṇa’s own time (12th century).

The earlier three sections can be identified as an account that contains more myths than historical data. The second part connects us with the recent past. The third part discusses contemporary events and incidents. Therefore, the accounts of the ancient kings of Kashmir provided in the *Rājatarāṅginī* covers the history of Kashmir from the mythical past to the twelfth century AD. The division of the accounts of the *Rājatarāṅginī* into three main parts was based on the materials used by Kalhaṇa in describing the kings in the texts. Thus, we see that apart from the earlier traditions, Kalhaṇa uses local religious, secular literature as well as other historical remains as evidences in reconstructing the accounts of the ancient kings of Kashmir.⁷ It is within this broad framework of three structures that Kalhaṇa carefully weaves in the socio

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economic and political life of the people of Kashmir in the Rājatarāṅgini or the ‘River of Kings’. The major portion of the Rājatarāṅgini is about the conflict and strife for throne among the royal families. It also described the building of towns and temples by the kings, queens and ministers of Kashmir either to mark the religious significance or show the power of the ruling dynasty. The Rājatarāṅgini also mentioned about the relationship the kings of Kashmir had with the adjoining hill areas as well as with the outside world. It also gives accounts about the grant of land to the brāhmaṇas as endowments by the kings.

Like Kashmir, Manipur, which lies in the north eastern corner of India, also possessed a strong sense of history which can be traced back to 33 A.D. The traditional concept of history in Manipur is known among the Manipuris (Meiteis) as ‘Puwari’ (story of the forefather). According to Gangumei Kabui, “the Meitei word ‘Puwari’ is nearer the Sanskrit Itihasa-Puran, rather than English ‘history’ or Greek ‘Historia’. He says that the Meitei Puwari consists of myths, legends, genealogy and the historical account of the country and chronicles with or without chronology form the core of historical literature. The celebrated the Cheitharol Kumbaba and Ningthourol Lambuba are the best examples of such texts. Among the various literary sources of the history of Manipur, Cheitharol Kumbaba, the royal chronicle of Manipur provides useful historical information. The chronicles are the backbone of traditional Metei historiography.

The Cheitharol Kumbaba is believed to have been written around the 15th century but its origin can be traced back as early as 33 A.D. It is a collection of works written by various learned royal scribes who lived in the king’s court at different periods of time.

It was translated from the archaic Meitei script (Meitei Mayek) into Manipuri language using the Bengali script by various Manipuri scholars like Late Pandit Laienmayum Iboungohal Singh and Ningthoukhongjam Khelchandra. Recently, the trend of translating the Cheitharol Kumbaba in English was done by Saroj Nalini Arambam Parratt and Bihari Nepram. The calendars adopted in writing the chronicle are the Kalyabda or the Kali age, Sakabda or the Saka era and Chandrabada or the

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Kangleipak era. However, months, dates, and days were recorded according to the Manipuri calendar.

In terms of structure and content, the *Cheitharol Kumbaba* can also be studied in three broad phases: 1) the early phase from king Meidingu Nongda Laien Pakhangba 33 A.D to king Meidingu Ningthoukhomba (15th century AD). 2) the middle phase from king Meidingu Kiyamba (15th century AD) to king Meidingu Charairongba 18th century. 3) the later phase from king Meidingu Pangheiba (Garibaniwaz) (18th century AD) till Maharaja Bodhachandra (20th century AD). Alternatively, it can be classified in two sections; 1) records dealing with the pre-Vaishnavite Manipur which can cover the period from 33 AD to the 18th century and 2) the Vaishnavite Period covering the period from the 18th century to the 20th century. The recorded events and incidents in *Cheitharol Kumbaba* are mostly about warfare; internal conflicts, and the heroic feats of the Meitei kings of Manipur. It also gives the origin of various cultural practices that are still common even to this date. The text also lists social functions like the ear piercing ceremony of the Meitei kings. Through the *Cheitharol Kumbaba*, one also gets information about the use and significance of boats both for war and pleasurable trips and social functions; rivers and lakes serving both as scene of wars and places of recreation, about the migration of many people from the neighbouring states and kingdom.

In the case of both Kalhaṇa’s *Rājataraṅginī* and the *Cheitharol Kumbaba* of Manipur we find a similar pattern that is describe by Hermann Kulke as follows: that India’s medieval chronicles usually comprises three distinct though strongly interrelated sections which may be termed mythological, legendary and historical. The mythological part mainly consists of well known accounts from the Purāṇas and Epics particularly the *Mahābhārata* and thus represents a localized blueprint of the assumed pan-Indian tradition. The second contains nearly exclusively the legendary tradition of regional heroes and gods and their constructed relation with the respective localities of the chronicle. The third or historical section of the chronicle narrates local events, quite often with a great deal of historicity.¹⁰

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All three texts are connected more or less closely with courtly traditions. The possibility that Kālidāsa enjoyed royal patronage is strongly suggested by the central role that the figure of the king plays in his dramas and in his epic *Raghuvaṃśa*. Similarly the colophons which are attached to the end of each Book of the *Rājatarāṅginī*, ascribe to its composition to “Kalhaṇa, the son of the great Kasmirian minister, the illustrious Canpaka”. The *Cheitharol Kumbaba* was written in the court of the kings of Manipur. This is pointed out by the late renowned scholar of Manipur, Saroj Nalini Arambam Parratt who states that the recording of the *Cheitharol Kumbaba* was done by the palace maichous, who were official scribes in the Loisang or institute of scribes.

Despite the similarities that appear amongst the three texts, there are certain differences. For instance, both the *Raghuvaṃśa* and the *Rājatarāṅginī* are in Sanskrit but the *Rājatarāṅginī* is a Sanskritized text of a regional tradition whereas the *Raghuvaṃśa* is not. Also, despite the fact that the *Raghuvaṃśa* and the *Rājatarāṅginī* are texts which represents the Brahmanic culture of early India, there are differences in the style of narration. The *Raghuvaṃśa* represents almost the entire descriptions in allegorical terms. But recognizing the period in which the *Raghuvaṃśa* belonged, the narration of the text reflects the prevailing trend. That the tradition of representing the abstract idea of royal glory in the form of beautiful phrases became prevalent from the 4th century AD. And this found widely in the descriptions of the *Raghuvaṃśa*. The *Cheitharol Kumbaba* stands quite apart from both as it is a pre-Vaishnavite chronicle translated from the archaic script into the colloquial local language. While the *Raghuvaṃśa* provides information only about the Solar dynasty, the *Cheitharol Kumbaba* also gives the account of a particular dynasty of Manipur, i.e the Ningthouja or the Royal dynasty.

The *Rajatarāṅginī* however gives a connected account of different dynasties of early medieval Kashmir. A unique character of the *Rājatarāṅginī* is, unlike the *Raghuvaṃśa* and the *Cheitharol Kumbaba*, it is free from bias found in other chronicles which praise the reign of each king for their benefit as most of the time the

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chronicler used to be a scribe whose patron was the king. This we can know from the introduction of the Rājataranginī where Kalhaṇa wrote “that noble minded poet is alone worthy of praise whose word, like that of a judge, keeps free from love or hatred in relating the facts of the past”.14

C.R Devadhar in his Works of Kālidāsa Vol-II attempts to discuss the works of Kālidāsa in a chronological manner. He states that the Raghuvamśa and the Kumārasaṁbhava are works written in the mature age of Kālidāsa while the Ṛtusainhāra is written in his youth and the Meghadūta in his advanced years. In this book, he discusses Kālidāsa’s Raghuvamśa by following a verse to verse translation in English. However, in spite of the detailed study, the book focuses simply on the translation and lacks explanations on the social, cultural, and political implications of the work. But the book is valuable in terms of understanding Kālidāsa’s thought. Regarding the Raghuvamśa, Devadhar15 writes that it manifestly sets out to chronicle a number of illustrious heroes of the past to which the kṣatriya kings of his days belonged. But he says that the narrative is too compressed and briefly allusive because of Kālidāsa’s indifference to the treatment of the verses devoting a larger number of verses to a few selected kings and giving little importance to others.

According to T.G Mainkar in Kālidāsa: Art and Thought, the Raghuvamśa remains to us not merely as a historical narrative or an ornate poem but a literary workmanship of the highest kind focussing on human element narrating the story of a great dynasty which reflects the continuity of a race in an ideal manner. He writes that in the Raghuvamśa, Kālidāsa deliberately chose the ‘Vaṃsa’16 to present the kings of the solar dynasty of the Raghu race. But he says that chronicle would be the nearest approach to the real meaning. As a matter of fact it is the only composition among the works of Kālidāsa dealing with the great solar dynasty. In this book Mainkar also tried to present Kālidāsa’s Raghuvamśa as an indirect attempt to glorify the military achievement of the kings of the Gupta dynasty. This he does by suggesting that the digvijaya of Raghu in the Raghuvamśa is but an artistic representation of the world conquest of Samudragupta.

According to him it is this striking similarity between the Raghus and the Guptas\textsuperscript{17} which made Kālidāsa choose this particular theme in writing his \textit{Raghuvaṃśa} and therefore requires no second thought to think of different Digvijayas of some one else as some scholars do.

V.V Mirashi and N.R Navlekar in their \textit{Kālidāsa Date, Life and Work} say that the \textit{Raghuvaṃśa} is by far the best of Kālidāsa’s political work and as it is written in a comparatively simple language, its appeal to the lovers of Sanskrit is irresistible. Its great popularity has led scholars to designate Kālidāsa as Raghukara, the author of the \textit{Raghuvaṃśa}. The authors are also of the view that the \textit{Raghuvaṃśa} is more excellent in subject matter than the \textit{Kumārasonaṁbhava} which dealt with the episode of the life of the gods whereas the \textit{Raghuvaṃśa} deals with human beings with a description of twenty eight kings, tracing their lineage. But the fact remains that the \textit{Raghuvaṃśa} like the \textit{Kumārasonaṁbhava} was also left incomplete by Kālidāsa.\textsuperscript{18}

However, some scholars are of the view that Kālidāsa’s \textit{Raghuvaṃśa} also contain verses which cannot be regarded as taken from genuine sources. According to C Kunhan Raja some of the verses of the \textit{Raghuvaṃśa} are interpolations on. He states that the first eight cantos of the \textit{Raghuvaṃśa} alone are by Kālidāsa and the remaining cantos are only later additions.\textsuperscript{19} But his view may not be accepted because in treatises on poetics, dramaturgy, and anthologies the passages cited from the later cantos of the \textit{Raghuvaṃśa} are used profusely.

Kālidāsa’s \textit{Raghuvaṃśa} apart from being an epic poem is also important for the historical geography of the Gupta period. According to Sudhakar Chattopadhyaya in his book \textit{Early History of the North India}, the conquest of Vaṅga country by Chandragupta II has been mentioned by Kālidāsa in his \textit{Raghuvaṃśa}. It was described as the region lying between the two streams of the Gangā i.e the Bhāgīrathī and the Padma. Also, the mention of Hūṇas as living in the Oxus valley in the \textit{Raghuvaṃśa}

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., p. 104.
\textsuperscript{18} V.V Mirashi and N.R Navlekar, \textit{Kalidasa, Date, Life and Works}, Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1969, pp. 185-86.
provided us with the idea that they penetrated into the interior of India during the time of Skanda Gupta.\textsuperscript{20}

R.G Basak in his \textit{History of North Eastern India} writes that Kālidāsa’s poetical description also undoubtedly tells us about the connection the Gupta kings had with the other states. He says apart from the description in the Nidhanpur plates of Samudravarman, the relationship between the imperial Guptas and Kamarupa can also be inferred from the work of Kālidāsa. The relation of Raghu with the Lord of Prāgjyotisha described in the \textit{Raghuvaṃśa} during his military expedition is exactly similar to that of Samudragupta with the king of Kāmarūpa. Basak supported his view by stating that in the \textit{Raghuvaṃśa} it is mentioned that when Raghu crossed the Brahmaputra, the Lord of Prāgjyotisha out of fear pleased Raghu with excellent war elephants and worshipped him.\textsuperscript{21}

Moreover, that Kālidāsa’s \textit{Raghuvaṃśa} is a representation of Gupta history can also be inferred from descriptions of military achievements in the \textit{Raghuvaṃśa}. S.R Goyal in \textit{The History of the Imperial Guptas}, suggests that Kālidāsa wrote the description of the digvijaya of Raghu on the basis of the actual facts provided by the conquest of Samudragupta.\textsuperscript{22} He says Kālidāsa gives a detailed account while describing the conquest of Raghu in the south but does not pay much attention to the western Deccan. Samudragupta, like Raghu, conquered only the eastern part of the Deccan. The relatively less attention Kālidāsa paid in describing the conquest of the western Deccan conclusively proves that he had completed the composition of the \textit{Raghuvaṃśa} before the conquest of western India by Candragupta.\textsuperscript{23} So it is possible that Kālidāsa wrote the account of the digvijaya of Raghu on the basis of the military conquest of Samudragupta and not Candragupta II.

Despite the fact that Kālidāsa’s work is closely related with the Gupta period, nothing definite is known about him. It is generally held that Kālidāsa lived during the Gupta age. This is however challenged by others who argue that Kālidāsa lived around the second century B.C. In the opinion of S.A Sabnis, certain scholars are inclined to

\textsuperscript{20} Sudhakar Chattopadhyaya, \textit{Early History of North India (From the fall of the Mauryas to the death of Harsa)}, New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1976, pp. 206-207.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., p. 218.
assign Kālidāsa to the middle period of the Gupta dynasty because of the Vikramāditya tradition. But he refutes this by saying that the title of Vikramāditya was assumed by Candragupta II and others is a strong evidence that there must have been a great king before their time who first bore the name. Also, Ujjayinī, the favourite city of Kālidāsa was at no time the capital of the Guptas but it was Pātaliputra. So Sabnis says that Kālidāsa belonged to the period prior to the Gupta dynasty i.e between the 1st and 2nd century B.C.  

Similarly, K. Chattopadhyaya also opines that there is no sufficient reason for placing Kālidāsa during the Gupta period. Careful scrutiny of the works of Kālidāsa reveals that there is no parallelism between Raghu’s Digvijaya and the Gupta conquest. In his opinion, Kālidāsa has followed no actual historical model but his own imagination. According to him it was Hariṣena, the chronicler of Samudragupta’s conquest who took the hints from Kālidāsa’s poem and described the achievement of his patron’s conquest. Contrary to the above views S.K Maity in The Imperial Guptas and their Times writes:

it is traditionally believed that the reign of Candragupta II is very famous for Sanskrit literature and was adorned by the celebrated Nava Ratna (nine Jewels). It is not certain whether all of them were contemporaries. But it is believed that Kālidāsa flourished about Candragupta’s time and graced the court of Candragupta II Vikramāditya who ruled from about 375 AD.

B.G Gokhale supports the view of Maity and states that the weight of internal evidence suggests that the period around 360-420 AD is more probable for the date of Kālidāsa. The tradition that Kālidāsa revised the poem of Setubandha composed by Pravarasena II of the Vākāṭaka dynasty also lends support to the view that the poet, in all probability lived during the time of Candragupta II.

Hence, the commonly accepted view of Kālidāsa as belonging to the Gupta period can be accepted by his association with the tradition of the Vikramaditya. The later Indian legend which tells of a great and good king Vikramaditya who drove the Sakas out of Ujjayanī could be no other than the Gupta king Candragupta II. And so Vikramaditya

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26 S.K Maity, The Imperial Guptas and their Times (AD 300-550), New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1975, p. 211.
could be one of the titles adopted by Candragupta II. That Kālidāsa lived during the Gupta period can also be argued from the internal evidence of his work.\(^\text{28}\)

Given the possibility that Kālidāsa lived during the Gupta period, in all probability the Raghuvamśa must have been written around the 4\(^{th}\) century. The Rājatarāṅginī although written in Sanskrit belonged to the period which is generally regarded by historians as the early medieval period. It was the period which was marked by the formation of local and regional state formations after the decline of Gupta dynasty.

**HISTORIOGRAPHICAL ISSUES (SECTION)**

For the early medieval period, certain features have been pointed out by scholars like D.D Kosambi and R.S Sharma such as political decentralization, emergence of landed intermediaries etc. These scholars have posited feudalism for this phase of Indian history. R.S Sharma put his emphasis on the model of Indian feudalism. His theory offered a picture of a highly decentralized and fragmented political structure for the early medieval period. The decentralized political structure was supposed to be the result of the widespread practice of religious and secular land grants made by imperial powers in the far flung areas of their mighty empires.\(^\text{29}\)

However, Hermann Kulke questioned the very basis of the political decentralization of the post-Gupta period which fails to explain the growth of the great regional kingdoms and the long duration of their rule in certain cases. He rightly observes that:

> there was balance of power during this period in some parts of north, south and central India. This was determined by both the internal strength of the respective regions and the ability of the rulers to extend their control beyond their respective regions. Their military equipment, their administrative machinery and their strategic concepts were all more or less the same. Due to this balance of power there was a great deal of political stability within the regions which fostered the evolution of a distinct regional culture.\(^\text{30}\)

The rise of the regional kingdom however involved much more than a mere military conquest, which was usually only temporal. But it required the establishment of

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permanent and legitimate relations with the conquered areas and their rulers to
maintain the kingdom.\footnote{Hermann Kulke, The Early and the Imperial Kingdom in Southeast Asian History in \textit{Kings and Cults}, New Delhi: Manohar, 1993, p. 271.}

Moreover, in the evolution of the regional kingdom, the nuclear areas form an integral
part. According to Kulke, this is because the centre of the nuclear areas was encircled
by a number of tax free agrahāra villages donated to Brahmins by the kings. These
Brahmins of the court circle, together with those Brahmins who had settled in the
peripheral areas, had a tremendous influence upon the inner colonization of the
nuclear areas. It was mainly due to their influence through ritualistic means that the
nuclear areas were gradually integrated to the areas of sub regional power.\footnote{Hermann Kulke, Royal Temple Policy and the Structure of Medieval Hindu Kingdom in A. Eschmann, H. Kulke and G.C Tripathy (edited) \textit{The Cult of the Jagannath and the Regional Tradition of Orissa}, New Delhi: Manohar , 1978, p. 127.}

This was pointed out by Kulke as having achieved been mainly through three features,
i) royal patronage of places of pilgrimage of regional and all Indian importance within
their respective kingdoms. ii) a systematic and large-scale settlement of Brahmins,
and iii) construction of new temples.\footnote{Ibid., p.132.}

B.D Chattopadhyaya tries to see the early medieval period as a stage of transition. He
sees this period both as a chronological phase and as a signifier of the process of
change corresponding to the phase. He criticised the stand of Sharma and Kosambi as
having certain internal inconsistencies and having a Eurocentric orientation as the
shifts in European historiography seem to lead to shifts in Indian contexts as well.
Instead, he emphasises on the need to look into various kinds of sources to avoid an
epicentric view and to keep in mind the fact that historical cultural stages have always
been uneven over the subcontinent. As such, one needs to identify the major
historical processes in their specific temporal and spatial contexts. He gives three
major processes operating through all the phases of history: i) expansion of the state
society through all the phases of local state formation. ii) peasantisation of tribes and
caste formation. iii) cult appropriation and integration.\footnote{B.D Chattopadhyaya, \textit{The making of Early Medieval India}, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 16.} He also points out that the
early medieval period has to be seen in terms of the scale of certain fundamental
movements within the regional and local level and not in terms of the crisis of a pre-existent pan-Indian social order.

Thus, B.D Chattopadhyaya sees the change in the early medieval period but he points out that this change is not necessarily in terms of the break-down of the early historical order. The shaping of the regional societies was the most dominant pattern with state formation at diverse territorial levels as the crucial agency of change from local through supra local to regional and sometimes to supra-regional level. According to Chattopadhyaya, it brought a measure of cohesion among local elements of culture by providing them a focus. At the same time it mediated in the assimilation of ideas, symbols and rituals which had a much wider territorial spread and acceptability. Common modes of royal legitimation and interrelated phenomenon such as the practice of land grants, the creation of agrahāras, the emergence of major cult centres and temple complexes, social stratification subscribing to the varṇa order were significant.\(^{35}\) However, it has been pointed out that this transformation and gradual shaping of regional societies was derived from the major ingredients of early historical society.

While writing about the importance of the Ṛājatarāṅginī, Sures Chandra Banerji in his book *Cultural Heritage of Kashmir* discusses about the contribution of Kashmir to Sanskrit literature and deals with the poets and authors of Kashmir in particular. He explains that Kashmir was not only the cradle of the schools of poetics but it was also a home that nurtured poets and writers from generation to generation.\(^ {36}\) As such, the literary works of Kashmir may be in prose or verse, may be written in Sanskrit, Prakrit or Apabhraṃśa, the focus will be on a particular theme of pomp and grandeur of the royal court, man and manners of different regions, devoted to gods, eulogy of heroes and patrons in two different compositions, historical and didactic. According to him of the historical literature of Kashmir,\(^ {37}\) Kalhaṇa’s Ṛājatarāṅginī has to an extent removed the view of the western scholars about the Indians as lacking in historical sense. Because, despite legendary account and exaggeration, Kalhaṇa’s

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\(^ {35}\) Ibid., p. 35.


\(^ {37}\) Ibid., p. 48.
Rājatarāṅginī contains materials that are indispensable for the political and social history of Kashmir which no other historical work can match.

Sunil Chandra Ray in his *Early History and Culture of Kashmir* did a systematic study to understand the early history of Kashmir down to the mid 13th century A.D. Apart from political history, his book presents an in depth knowledge on society, economic conditions, administration, religion, literature, archaeology and everyday life of the people. Thus, the book discusses not only the chronological list of the kings and change of dynasties but also incorporates the socio-cultural aspects. Beside the chapter that deals with the proto history of Kashmir the whole discussion in the book was based almost entirely on the Rājatarāṅginī. As far as the Sanskrit literature of Kashmir is concerned Ray says that Kashmir produced a remarkably rich culture in Sanskrit learning till the pre Muslim period. The names like Kṣemendra, Dāmodaragupta, Bilhaṇa and Kalhaṇa stand as outstanding figures which give light to the history of Sanskrit literature. Among these he however states that it is not necessary to say anything about the Rājatarāṅginī of Kalhaṇa as the chronicle itself bears ample evidence to his usefulness.

M.L Kapur in his *Kingdom of Kashmir (Political and Cultural history of Kashmir from the earliest time to the 16th century)* says that though archaeological evidence is scanty for studying the early history and culture of Kashmir there is a rich store of literary sources. The *Nilamatapurāṇa* which primarily deals with various rites and ceremonies also contains the legend of the creation of Kashmir out of water. The legendary account about the early inhabitants of Kashmir in the *Nilamata Purāṇa* is one of the earliest sources for understanding the ancient history of Kashmir. Besides, the work of Kṣemendra like *Narmamālā*, Somadeva’s *Kathā Saritsāgara* and Bilhana’s *Vikramāṅkadevacarita* are also important. However, he is of the opinion that Kalhaṇa’s *Rājatarāṅginī* is the most important of all the sources and states that it is the only work in ancient Indian literature which may be regarded as a historical text in the true sense of the word. Written after consulting not only all the previous early chronicles but also inscriptions and coins; Kalhaṇa’s work describes the history

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of the kings of different dynasties which ruled Kashmir from the earliest time till the 12th century A.D. This has become a priceless legacy for the researchers on the history of Kashmir.

A passing reference on the importance of the Rājatarāṅgini is to be found in Mohammad Ishaq Khan’s Perspectives on Kashmir (Historical Dimension). Although the main emphasis of the book lies on the issue of defining the political identity of Kashmir which arises out of the protest against the domination of the Brāhmaṇas by the oppressed class to convert to Islam, it also made a passing reference to the culture of writing histories and treatises in Sanskrit that continued to flourish in Kashmir and was cherished both by the Hindus and Muslims alike. He says the tradition of writing history existed in Kashmir even before the advent of Islam and there are various sources that can be dealt with for the history and culture of Kashmir depending on the time period as for instance, the Sanskrit sources, the Persian chronicles written in Kashmir, chronicles of non-Kashmir and biographies of saints etc. He however states that Kalhana’s Rājatarāṅgini or the Rivers of Kings of Kashmir is based on several sources including traditions legends and inscriptions, but still occupies an important place as it narrates not only the events of the past but also analyses the past meaningful historical evidence. Unfortunately, the work of the later Sanskrit writers such as Jonarāja and Śrīvara failed to adopt the technique of Kalhana.

Another important book about the early history of Kashmir is K.S Saxena’s Political history of Kashmir (BC 300-AD 1200). In writing this book, Saxena has fully utilized Kalhana’s Rājatarāṅgini as the main source of information. He has tried in this book to trace the development of the institution of kingship along with the changes brought by the growth of bureaucracy from the earliest time till the advent of Muslim rule. He also tried to prove in this book that Kashmir can proudly claim a well maintained political history because of the rich historical work of Kalhana called the Rājatarāṅgini which is in the nearest approach to a regular work of history narrating about the kings of Kashmir. He however says that as the Rājatarāṅgini is essentially a narrative of political history, it does not throw much light on the administrative

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40 Mohammad Ishaq Khan, Perspectives on Kashmir (Historical Dimension), Srinagar: Gulshan, 1983, p. 97.
41 Ibid., p. 98.
system. But despite the fact that the book is on political history it did a selective study of only some notable kings and is therefore incomplete in its information about the history of Kashmir. Nevertheless, it is regarded as an important book for studying the early political history of Kashmir.

Another notable book is *A History of Kashmir (Political, Social, Cultural from Earliest time to the Present day)* by P.N.K Bamzai. The author has tried in this book to present a connected account of the kings and rulers of Kashmir from the pre-Muslim period to modern times. The book discusses the different periods in three sections. The first part deals with the early history of Kashmir down to the end of the Hindu monarchy, the second part is concerned with the period of Muslim rule and the third part with that of Sikh and British colonization till independence. Apart from political history, information about the social, economic and cultural elements is also given.

In this book Bamzai presents Kashmir as a land where different traditions and culture dwelt together in harmony. This was indicated by the fact that in the earlier period a blend of religious belief and practices was prevalent in Kashmir. This includes Buddhism, Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism but with the coming of the Muslims Islam occupied a dominant place. Bamzai highlight the influence of Hinduism on Islam and Islam on Hinduism in Kashmir. He also writes that the people of Kashmir were distinguished by their uninterrupted production of a series of written records for its history and Kalhaṇa’s *Rājatarāṅginī* proves an outstanding authority to testify this. In his opinion the *Rājatarāṅginī* still retains a connected account of the history of Kashmir which stood the test of historical criticism well and can be accepted as a reliable record from the seventh century onwards even while allowing for the legendary events and character of some of the events of earlier period.

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44 Ibid., p. 33.
As far as the reliability of the Rājatarāṅginī is concerned, Ranjit Sitaram Pandit in his Rājatarāṅginī, the Saga of the Kings of Kashmir writes that written eight hundred years ago, the story is supposed to cover thousands of years, but the early part is brief and vague and sometimes fanciful, and it is only in the later periods approaching Kalhaṇa’s own times, that we see a close up and have a detailed account. It is the story of medieval times and often enough it is not a pleasant story narrating much about treason and murder, civil strife and tyranny. In a nutshell, it is the story of the kings and royal families of Kashmir and not of common folk. Likewise Kumkum Roy is also of the opinion that Kalhaṇa’s Rājatarāṅginī assumes the character of a historical account from the time of Durlabhavardhana of the Karkoṭa dynasty i.e from the seventh century A.D.

In discussing about the Cheitharol Kumbaba, N. Khelchandra Singh, in Ariba Manipuri Shahityagi Itihaas (History of Old Manipuri Literature) opines that the Cheitharol Kumbaba is a very rare and important historical and cultural source for Manipur. This book was chronicled by various learned scribes of various ages, recording important events that occurred in the reign of various kings and princes. Important information of certain historical events and happenings are recorded chronologically. Different periods of different kings, the number of years they reigned, different incidents and events, important warfare and annexation, relinquishment of the throne, bilateral relations with others states, migration of people from other lands and their contribution comprise the bulk of the royal chronicle.

In this book, N. Khelchandra Singh tried to bring back the lost glory of the beauties and secret of ancient Manipur through a series of ancient literature and texts. He deals with the history of ancient Manipuri literature by periods, stages and eras. It was one of the standard books which cover a large volume of prose and poetical works, treating of literature, fiction, novel, allegory, history, astrology, philosophy, geography, songs, and moral maxims etc. Although good in description the main defect of the book lies in the fact it was not translated in English so its scope is limited.

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only to those who are familiar with the Manipuri language and script. According to W.Ibohal Singh:

the Cheitharol Kumbaba is a chronicle recording day to day events of the Mangang kings who were later known as the kings of Manipur. There are different copies of the Cheitharol Kumbaba in manuscripts in the hands of local pandits. All such Kumbabas start the chronology from Kiyamba. But the printed one was the copy of the book found in the royal custody. Up till this date, the printed Cheitharol Kumbaba is regarded authentic. However, the accounts of the earlier period projected of the Kumbaba are all forged in order to give the Aryan descendant of the Manipuri kings. This is evidenced by the accounts of the first seven kings mentioned in the Kumbaba. We are not told that it was not known where they went or died.\(^\text{48}\)

Ch. Manihar Singh in his book *History of Manipuri Literature* has done a proper survey of all the available literature and other literary works of Manipur classified into four parts from the ancient time till the contemporary period. So his book includes all the variant literature of Manipur from the pre-Vaisnavite to the Vaisnavite period. His book is a major contribution to the literary and historical studies of Manipur as it serves as the first English translated work of all Manipuri literature which was totally absent in Manipur before him. He says that the Cheitharol Kumbaba has a pride of place for its broad sweep of time from the first century down to the present day, as its chronological recording is still being maintained and for the coverage of manifold events-social, political, economic and religious. It deals with the uninterrupted record of the Meitei kings or the Ningthouja clan.\(^\text{49}\)

Another scholar who talks of the Cheitharol Kumbaba as the most important reliable source of history is W.Yumjao Singh in his book *An Early History of Manipur*. He wrote, the Cheitharol Kumbaba is referred to as the most authoritative source of historical documents because, it is the best available authority though recording events of an important nature in the way it is done in the book began in the fifteenth century of the Christian era.\(^\text{50}\)

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However, he expressed doubt regarding the authenticity of the work. He writes, there are some defects in this so called Royal chronicle *Cheitharol Kumbaba*, since the chronicle was handled by too many peoples. There might be inaccuracy of dates and events due to chronicling by various people at different times which resulted in the over ruling and ignoring of certain important events. Also, the partial revelation of information by responsible people who wrote the *Cheitharol Kumbaba* may be mainly to hide the bare face of the reigning kings. For instance if a new king came to the throne by murdering his predecessor who was his near relative the fact will never be mentioned but the text will end the whole affair by saying that his predecessor died on a particular day.\(^{51}\)

With regard to the authenticity of the *Cheitharol Kumbaba*, Gangumei Kabui in his book *History of Manipur vol-l (Pre Colonial period)* says that the information of events and occurrences prior to the 15th century are very brief and the chronology of the kings is highly confusing. So the events described in the chronicle are all antedated because many modifications and alterations must have been made during the rewriting of the chronicle. So it may not be the most authentic document but is very useful and important as it provides information for reconstructing the early history of Manipur.\(^{52}\)

Even the British acknowledged the importance of the *Cheitharol Kumbaba* as the most trusted source of information for Meitei society. They endeavoured to study and understand the content of the *Cheitharol Kumbaba*. After the annexation of Manipur, they took the *Cheitharol Kumbaba* and preserved it in their custody. And so in 1891 from 15 June to 15 July the *Cheitharol Kumbaba* was transcribed from the Meitei script to the Bengali script and the same was translated into English by Bama Charan Mukherjee. This statement was found in the *Cheitharol Kumbaba*:

\[\text{In 1813A.D (early 19th century) in Ahongshangbam’s Duhon’s year….in May-June, 17 Monday….the Pandits of Priest department were asked to bring the Cheitharol Kumbaba. It was kept in Kangla. In May-June (Inga)……8th, day-Monday, the Cheitharol Kumbaba was began to be written in Kangla. Two Maiba (priest/pandit) and twelve men begun translating the Cheitharol Kumbaba from Meitei script to Bengali script. In June-July (Igen)…..10th, day-Wednesday, the}\]

\(^{51}\) Ibid., pp. 145-46.

Maiba Pandits (priest) finished the translation. On that day……Bama Charan Babu translated the Cheitharol Kumbaba into English. Taoriya Hidang and Sharang Panji were asked to help in translation.53

The main objective of this thesis is to compare three distinct texts - Kālidāsa’s Rahguvaṃśa, Kalhana’s Rājatarāṅgini, and the Cheitharol Kumbaba of Manipur, of which the first is composed in the Gupta period, the second in Kashmir in the 12th century and the third in Manipur in the 15th century. My interest for choosing the three texts is to examine the similarities and differences that emerged. By focussing on these three texts I will examine how society, religion and political structures are represented in the texts as also the language used and the spatial relations. For the purpose, a section or sarga wise tabulation on the geography, administration and social relation represented in the three texts has been done. The first chapter is an introduction of the three Texts i.e the Raghuvaṃśa, Rājatarāṅgini and the Cheitharol Kumbaba. The second chapter will deal with Kālidāsa’s Rahguvaṃśa. The third chapter will deal with Kalhana’s Rājatarāṅgini. The fourth chapter will deal with the Cheitharol Kumbaba of Manipur. In each of the chapters, three themes will be in focus: a) Description of geography and landscape. Here, the focus will be on how the land is defined, the significance assigned to geographical features such as the rivers, lakes, mountains, plains, and the way in which the realm of the ruler is differentiated from the neighbouring kingdom. b) The second theme will be the nature of kingship and administration. Here, the focus will be on modes of succession, the features associated with kings and their administrative role. We will see how the army, judiciary and revenue collection is represented. I will also look at royal ideology and see whether the king is treated as god or not. I will also explore the role assigned to or assumed by women. c) The third theme will be the broad representation of social relations in the texts, where my concern will be to explore the extent to which these correspond with or deviate from the varna-jāti system. I will also examine the ways in which religious beliefs and practices are depicted, and the place they occupy in the chronicles. This will be followed by a brief conclusion.