Preface

With the dramatic changes that have occurred in the human civilization, dismissing the old concepts of life as obsolete and outdated, the historiographical concepts have automatically undergone a change of paramount importance. Quite contrary to the ageold notion about history which was merely taken to reel round the pomp and panoply of the royal court, the object of the discipline, as it is taken today, is to study man and his environment, irrespective of any social distinction; and to increase man's understanding of, and mastery over, his environment by illuminating his vision through an insight into the society of the past. So to "enable man to understand the society of the past and to increase his mastery over the society of the present is the dual function of history."¹ As such it is a necessary corollary of the present trends of historiography to have a micro-study of even the minute aspects of society to understand the role they played in shaping the history of mankind. Leneath politics flow currents which considerably determine and influence the course of history. So it goes to the credit of modern trends of

historiography that it has taken out the historical writings from the age old, narrow and unimaginative groove of politics and given them new and vast dimensions.

Judging from this rational approach to history, most of the historical works of Kashmir, like those of many other parts of our country, suffer from a lamentable lack of these new dimensions. The scholars have primarily dealt with political events and made no serious attempt to unravel the socio-economic life of the people of the valley of Kashmir during the Sikh rule, which lasted from 1819 to 1846. Apart from many historical works which give some sketchy information about the political conditions of Kashmir under the Sikhs, two scholarly works, viz, *A History of Sikh Rule in Kashmir 1819-1646* by R.K. Parmu, and *Kashmir Under the Sikhs* by D.C. Sharma, exclusively deal with the period under study. But Parmu's work is a general history containing sultry references on the life and conditions of the masses and that does not enlighten us much, and therefore does not fulfil the purpose for the accomplishment of which the present project has been undertaken. No doubt Sharma has studied certain aspects of society but his account is neither comprehensive nor interpretative. Likewise, some vital socio-economic and cultural aspects viz, architecture, literature, *Jagir* and *Dharmarth* grants, revenue units and functionaries and ownership of land have been left untouched. Also, he has not tapped and utilized the available sources relevant to the
subject of study, and those consulted have not been critically analysed.

An attempt has, therefore, been made in the present work to give a detailed account of some aspects of the administrative, socio-economic and cultural life of the period. The opening chapter of the thesis gives an objective analysis of the previous scholarship and of the relevant sources of the period of study. In the second chapter, the treatment of the factors that made it possible for Maharaja Ranjit Singh to conquer Kashmir, along with the military and economic inducements that the conquest offered to him is analytical and merits consideration. The third chapter provides all possible details on the socio-cultural life. Among other things it deals with the status of women, institution of khanadamadi, robbery, housing conditions, food and drinks, festivals and religious practices, dresses and ornaments, dancing, pastimes, architecture and literature.

The fourth chapter is devoted to the religious policy pursued by the Sikh governors in Kashmir. The fifth chapter presents all details available in the sources pertaining to the agrarian system. The sixth chapter deals with the development of industries and their bearing on the economy of Kashmir. The seventh and last chapter gives an account of the trade and commerce.
Both published and unpublished contemporary and near-contemporary chronicles, news-letters, official orders, travel accounts, gazetteers and the like have been used in the present work. Dasturul Amal-i-Kashmir, the voluminous statistical contemporary documents in Persian, may be mentioned as of particular importance.2

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2. For details, please, see infra. pp. 20-23.
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