CHAPTER-III

EDUCATION

Kashmir occupies an enviable place in the world of Sanskrit literature as is evident from the works of a large number of celebrated scholars like Kṣemendra, Abhinavagupta, Ānandavardhana, Dāmodaragupta, Vāmama, Maṅkha, Bhallata, Jonarāja, Śrivara and Śuka to name just a few. Kalhana, the author of the Rājatarāṅgini, himself was a scholar of high merit. It cannot be called a presumption that the land of such high degree of literary activity was a prime land in the field of education and learning. Though we have a very few direct references to education, educational institutions and the process of learning in the Rājatarāṅgini and also in the other contemporary literary works, yet there is no doubt of the excellent machinery of education that must have existed in the land.

It is well known that from ancient times Kashmir and Kāśi were famous centres of learning throughout India. But Kashmir was way ahead of Kāśi. Scholars of Kāśi had to come to Kashmir for completing their studies. Even today the traditional people of Kāśi, at the time of initiation of their children to learning, tell them to wear the sacred thread and walk seven steps in the direction of Kashmir. The sacred thread is considered a symbol of visiting and returning from Kashmir and is changed after the completion of education. Kashmir was from the earliest period, a seat of learning. No scholar could be considered well accomplished unless and until he had associated himself with the illustrious learned men in Kashmir for several years and taken lessons from them. This is reflected in an observation of the renowned scholar Kṣemendra that the students of Bengal went over to Kashmir to receive education in a matha. It shows that the mathas in Kashmir were the sacred homes of high education. We are told that even in the medieval times the son of Guru Nanak Dev and founder of the sect of renunciation, Baba Shri Chand, had received his
training in Sanskrit in a *matha* in Kashmir. The Mughal prince, Dara Shikoh, too had come to Kashmir for learning Sanskrit.

From an early date renowned Buddhist scholars and preachers like Kumārājīva and Kumāralāta were products of Kashmir and composed famous works like the *Kalpaṇāṇḍitikā* which they carried to far off land of Central Asia and China. The latter work unfortunately has been lost in original but has survived in its Chinese translation only. Even scholars like Aśvaghoṣa and Vasumitra have been associated with Kashmir. It was probably because of its fame as a centre of Buddhist learning that the famous Kuṣāṇa ruler Kanisha convened the fourth Buddhist Council at Kuṇḍalavana-vihāra in Kashmir. The Mūla Sarvāstivāda Vinay contains many legend of the conversion of Kashmir to Buddhism and to the spread of scholarship over there.

Kashmir has remained very important centre of education is attested by several Chinese travelers of note. Many foreign historians and scholars would consider it essential to receive education in Kashmir as is recorded in the diaries of foreign writers like Fa-Hsien, Hsuen Tsang and I-Tsing. Hsuen Tsang, who spent some time in the valley saw a number of monasteries over there and stayed at Jayendravihāra and Huṣkapura-vihāra which are mentioned by Klahana also. The pilgrim spent two years in Kashmir studying Sūtras and Śāstras and saw as many as one hundred vihāras with five thousand monks living in them. He also refers to a Mahāyāna monastery that was famous as the dwelling place of the Śāstra-master Saṅghabhadra. He also tells that the Sthavira school of Buddhism as distinguished from the Mahāsaṅghika School was also founded by the *arhats* in Kashmir. There are several other references to the prevalence of Buddhism and the Buddhist education in Kashmir in the account of the Chinese pilgrim. Some of them find an echo in the *Rājatarangini* of Kalhaṇa. For instance, he talks of the establishment of a vihāra at Juṣkapura by the king Juṣka (Vasiṣṭka) and that of the *mathas* and *caityas* at Suskaletra by the same king. Kalhaṇa also refers to the famous Buddhist philosopher Nāgārjuna living at Śaḍaradvana. The Kuṣāṇas who are
described as Turuškas by Kalhaṇa are said to have founded several Buddhist
establishment that speaks by itself the flourishing condition of Buddhist
learning in the land. Again when talking of the king Meghaṭhana, Kalhaṇa
tells us that the former’s queen named Amṛṭaprabhā constructed a lofty vihāra
called Amṛṭabhavana for the benefit of the Buddhist monks of foreign lands.10 She probably was a Buddhist like her father who had a spiritual guru from Loh. The later place has rightly been identified with modern Leh on the basis of the word Lo-stompā, which is a strong centre of Buddhist learning to this day.11 Another queen of the same king, named Yūkadevi, built a wonderful vihāra at Nādavana12. In a unique reference, half of this vihāra is said to have been for the monks and the other half for the families that had been renounced by these monks. The third queen named Indradevī constructed another vihāra named Indradevībhavana.13 Other queens such as Sammā, Khādanā, etc. are also said to have built several other monasteries.14

The construction of Buddhist monasteries, which were centres of
learning besides being the residences of the monks, continued in Kashmir. In
the fourth book of his work Kalhaṇa again makes flying references to the
construction of vihāras and maṭhas.15 In an interesting reference the author of the Rājatarangini tells us of the construction of a vihāra for the Kashmiris as well as foreigners by the queen Diddā, which is said to be quadrangular in shape. No imagination is required to surmise that such a great number of vihāras in Kashmir, constructed from time to time, served as seats of great Buddhist learning for a long time. The result of this is evident in the number of Buddhist scholars of fame being produced by the land and the works produced by them. It is a pity that such centres of learning fell prey to the wicked kings like Kalaṣā who mercilessly plundered them and destroyed valuable heritage.

Kashmir was a grand arena of science and arts. Innumerable names of illustrious persons, who have attained the loftiest pitch of glory in the literary world, can be cited. Kashmir was a centre for the study of poetics, the home of Bhāmaha (seventh century CE), Vāmana (eighth century CE), Rudraṭa (eighth
to ninth century CE), Mammatā (eleventh century CE) and others. The majority of leading authors in this field belonged to Kashmir. It also produced famous doctors like Caraka, whose books on medicine are a marvel to the modern medical and surgical world. The high mark of development in the field of medicine is attested by some manuscripts from the region. Men of culture and letters from distant countries came here and sat reverentially at the feet of the great masters of learning and drank deep at the fountains of abstruse knowledge and arts. From here, went forth teachers to distant countries with the torch of learning and dispelled the darkness of ignorance from there.

Śāradā was a famous seat of ancient learning and pilgrimage. This was considered a university where scholars would come from far and near. The famous Kashmiri script Śāradā was developed here. It is presently in Pakistan occupied part of Kashmir. It enjoyed to being the famous educational centre, not only of Kashmir but far beyond it. Kalhana, himself, in his account of Lalitāditya’s reign refers to certain followers of a king of Gauḍa or Bengal, who had come to Kashmir under the pretence of visiting the shrine of Śāradā, but in reality to avenge the murder of their king by Lalitāditya. Whatever the historical value of the story related may be, it is clear that the particular reference to the shrine could not have been introduced if it had not been known that the fame of Śāradā had spread even to far-off regions. Alberuni has also written about this shrine. Bilhana, the Kashmiri poet, in his panegyric description of Pravarapura or Srinagar, written when he was in the deccan, far away from his home, ascribes the patronage of learning, claimed for that city, to the favour of Śāradā. In one legend related to the great Jain scholar Hemacandra, the literary importance of Śāradā temple figures out. It says that when Hemacandra was commissioned by the king Jayasirihha, of Gujarat to compose a new grammar, he requested to be supplied with the necessary materials in the shape of the eight older grammars, which could be found complete only in the literary works of the goddess Śāradā (Sarasvati) in Kashmir. Goddess herself commanded her own attendants to transmit the
desired works to her favorite Hemacandra and after the blessings of the
goddess, Hemacandra composed his greatest grammatical work, the
Siddhahemacandra). George Buhler rightly believed that all manuscripts had
not come from the temple of Śāradā but Stein has correctly observed that there
can be no doubt that by “the temple of Sarasvati” is meant the shrine of Śāradā,
the two names being ordinarily considered designation of the identical deity.

Right from the beginning, Kashmir has been a centre of teaching and
learning. No scholar would be considered experienced and perfect without
learning from known scholars in Kashmir. Hsuen Tsang has written that people
of Kashmir are lovers of education and culture. For centuries there has been
honour and respect for education in Kashmir. Alberuni, who in 1002 CE
toured Punjab with Mahmud Gaznavi, has written that Kashmir is the biggest
school of Hindu scholars. People from far and near places used to come to
Kashmir for learning Sanskrit and many among them would stay back after
getting attracted by the valley’s pleasant climate and natural beauty. It attested
by the reference given by Kalhana. He notes that the king Yaśaskara (CE 939-
948), who was fond of making endowments, built a Maṭha for the students of
Āryadeśa (North India) who were devoting themselves to the acquisition of
knowledge. This is a very explicit reference to Kashmir as a great seat of
learning which attracted students from far and wide.

Rulers of Kashmir were also great patrons of learning. Avantivarman
appointed a teacher named Ramatā in a Vaiṣṇava temple which he had himself
built. Ramatā was famous for his work on grammatical science. The king
Yaśaskara of Kashmir who built a maṭha for the students of Āryadeśa, as noted
above, is also credited for making a gift of fifty-four agrahāras with all sorts of
material resources. The king further invested the superintendent of this maṭha
with imperial insignia and the royal umbrellas. So great was the honour that
except for the royal seal all honours were bestowed upon the learned teacher.
Few decades later a Queen Diddā built, a maṭha for the residence of students
from Madhya deśa, Lāṭa (Gujarat) and Sandotra. In the third book of the work
there is a reference to a Brahmāṇḍha which may have been either Brahmanas or students (brahmacārins)\textsuperscript{28}.

Kashmir produced an endless community of learned and elevated men and women. These great men, by getting encouraged from the strong religion and ancient doctrines, adopted a life of penance and resolved the mystery of existence. They explored the ultimate truth and carried that truth to mankind. Throughout history Kashmir from ancient times is famous as the seat of learning. The land of Kashmir has remained an important training centre of Indian culture. Kashmir has a special role in propagating Indian culture in the entire world. This fact cannot be ignored. John Mecenze has written in his book \textit{Hindu Ethics} that Kashmir has enriched the world ethics by its religious doctrines and the principles of sober qualities and deeds. With this the recognition of the doctrine of deeds and the immortality of soul have received important place in the code of ethics.
REFERENCES

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2 Desopadeśa, Chap. VI.
4 Beal, S., Si-yu-ki, p. 148.
5 Ibid. also see Mookerji, R. K., Ancient Indian Education, pp. 510-511.
6 Ibid.
7 RT. I, 169.
8 RT. I.170.
9 RT. I. 173.
10 RT. III.9.
11 Ibid. 10.
12 Ibid. 11-12.
13 Ibid. 13.
14 Ibid. 14.
15 Ibid. IV. 512, 696.
16 RT. VI.303.
17 RT. VII.696, 1336.
18 RT. IV.325.
19 Vikramāṅka devacariṇī, XVIII.5.


21 Ibid., 386-87.

22 E.C. Sachau, Alberuni’s India, XIV.

23 Ibid. p. 173.

24 RT. VI. 87.

25 Ibid. V.29.

26 Ibid. VI.87.

27 Ibid. VI.300.

28 RT. III.476.