INTRODUCTION

Human history includes political, economic, social and cultural aspects and all these aspects are so interconnected that while studying one the other cannot be left out. Whereas social history dwells upon human institutions and grouping, cultural history centers its focus upon the customs, institutions and achievements of a particular nation, people, group and cultivation of these things. It also includes intellectual activity of a particular period, which examines the course and influence of significant ideas. Therefore, history must seek a broad definition of society and culture. While studying history of a particular society one must study all aspects of society from past events to relationships among different groups which provides insight that help to understand various ways in which individual and groups make decision, exercise power and response to change. Through their studies and analysis one can understand history in a better way. Society affects not only politics but also the customs and traditions that played a significant role in shaping Indian political structure and cultural paradigm.

On the other hand cultural history includes not just arts or legends but all aspects of a society and especially those beliefs that tie together political, economic, familial, social, artistic and religious behavior and expression. Cultural history is an attempt to find those shared beliefs, assumptions and concerns that hold together the various groups and individuals and activities of a particular society. So one must attempt to understand the mind and emotions of an age, paying attention to what people wore or ate their work and recreations, their aspirations and fears, their beliefs and philosophy etc. Because all these forces affect history, so while studying history one must seek to discover those notions which make a unit of the diverse individuals and groups.
While studying and understanding a valuation ancient Indian society and its culture, Kashmir region plays very important role. Kashmir is that ancient historical region of the Indian sub-continent which has great contribution in India’s historical unity and continuity. Kashmir is known to be a land of learners. References to these regions go back to the Vedic period in the development of Indian culture. Kashmir has a strong tradition of the art, literature, philosophy and learning. People of Kashmir have inherited a culture which is older and richer than the culture of the West. The first historical book of this land known at present is the *Rājatarāṅginī* of Kalhana, written in Sanskrit in nearly 8000 verses. Through this book Kalhaṇa made us view the contemporary socio-cultural history of Kashmir.

**KASHMIR-LOCATION AND IMPORTANT GEO-POLITY**

Modern Jammu and Kashmir is the name given to the northernmost state of the Indian Union which, generally speaking, stretches from the east of the river Indus to the west of the river Ravi. The kingdom of ancient Kashmir, however, was a territory much smaller than the modern state of Kashmir-Jammu. It denoted an irregularly oval valley, 84 miles long from north-east to south-west and 20 to 25 miles broad, between 33° to 34° 35’ N. and 74° 8’ to 75° 25’ E. It was surrounded by snow-capped mountains varying at different points from 12,000 to 26,000 feet in height from mean sea level.

Politically, ancient Kashmir was generally confined to its geographical limits. But at times it extended its influence beyond those boundaries. According to Ptolemy (2nd century CE), Kaspeiria lay between the land of the Darads and the land of the kulindas on the Hyphasis and extended eastwards¹. When Hsuen Tsang visited the valley in the middle of the 7th century CE, he found all adjacent territories on the west and south, down to the plains, under the sway of the king of Kashmir. He clearly records that Takṣasila to the east of the Indus, Urasā or Hazara, Sirthapura or the Salt Range, with the smaller hill states of Rājāpurī and Parnotsa, were not independent, but subject to Kashmir.
In the middle of the 8th century CE, Lalitaditya conquered territories as far as Kanauj in the east and his grandson Jayapīḍa is said to have had trials of strength with rulers of Kanauj, Gauda and Nepal. Śaṅkaravarman (CE 883-902) annexed Darvābhisāra and some parts of the northern Punjab to the kingdom of Kashmir proper. Kalaśa (CE 1063-1089) conquered the hilly state of Rājāpurī and among the neighbouring kingdoms which acknowledged his supremacy were Campā, Vallāpura, Lohara, Urasā, Kānda and Kāśṭhavāṭa.

The characteristic physical features of Kashmir are its strong mountain ranges, its lovely lakes and rivers, and its pale red Karewas. The valley of Kashmir is surrounded on all sides by a chain of mountain ranges. To the north lies a series of mountains which hasten away in wild confusion to the great promontory of Nanga Parbat (26,182 feet). To the east rises Harmukh (16,903) which guards the valley of Sindh. On the south is Mahadeo looking down upon Srinagara, the high range of Gwash Brari (17,800 feet) and the lofty peak of Amarnath (17321 feet). The Pir-Pantsal range with peaks of 15000 feet or more stands on the south-west, over which the ancient trade routes with Punjab lay. Further north is the Tosmaidan (14000 feet) and in the north-west raises the majestic Kajinag (12125 feet).

The surrounding mountain ranges have largely determined the political destiny of the valley, making it impregnable and inaccessible. While powerful neighbouring kingdoms succumbed to the onslaught of the invaders, Kashmir’s natural defenses saved her from impending foreign domination. In fact, it was not the valour of the army of Kashmir but the defense furnished by the mountain ramparts, which many a time turned the tide of invasion from the valley. Guarded from the outer world by chains of mountains, she was able to preserve her ancient culture for a considerable time and to develop her social and economic system in her own way.

The Udars or Karewas are names given to the alluvial plateaus of Kashmir, which, according to most geologists, were formed by lacustrine
deposits. They range in height from 100 to 300 feet above the level of the ravines and valleys that intersect them and that are cut into twins by the swiftflowing mountain streams rushing to the river Vitastā. The area covered by each Udar varies from 5 to 50 square miles. The Udars with inferior quality of soil are less productive than the even fertile land of the valley. In ancient times, when the population of the valley was probably much larger than at present, the whole land was intensively cultivated. The Karewas and even the mountain slopes were not spared. Consequently, a very detailed arrangement had to be made for their irrigation. Many of the irrigation channels which are visible now, are of ancient date. The chronicles also refers to some of the water-courses which were conducted over the Udars from the higher ground behind. A large number of Udars being isolated, water cannot be brought over them.

LITERATURE

The literature related to ancient Kashmir, can be divided in to foreign notices and indigenous records. As the information provided by these sources on the whole, is earlier in date and very precise and important. By that time Kashmir was the centre of learning and other social and political activities that we have a long list of literature to mention. To learn what the outer world knew or recorded of the secluded land, we will give a brief picture of the foreign accounts.

The earliest note on Kashmir by foreigners occurs in the writings of Hecataeus who refer to Kaspapyros, the city of the Gandarians. Next comes, Ptolemy, in his geographical account of India, refers to a region held by the Kaspeiraeans extended eastwards from the land of the Pandoooi on the Bidaspes as far as mount Ouindion or the Vindhyas is undoubtedly exaggerated.

The first Chinese traveler to enter the valley of Kashmir was probably Che-mong. He visited Kashmir shortly after CE 404-15. In CE 420 another
Chinese, Fa-yong, started for India, along with twenty-five Buddhist monks. Fa-yong is said to have passed more than a year in Kashmir where he studied the Buddhist texts and the Sanskrit language. Hsuen Tsang visited Kashmir in the year CE 631. He observes that the valley is surrounded on all sides by mountains which have saved it from the onslaughs of the neighboring states. The next Chinese notice is found in the annals of Tang dynasty which mentions the arrival of an embassy in the Chinese court from Kashmirian king Tchen-to-lo-pi-li shortly after CE 713 and another from his brother my-to-pi. Tchen-to-lo-pi-li seem to be Candrāpiḍa, and his brother mu-to-pi is undoubtedly Muktāpiḍa. The annals of the Tang dynasty further refer to the city of Po-lo-pi-lo-po-lo, i.e Pravarapura and to the river Mi-na-si-to, i.e., the Vitastā. In the middle of the 8th century CE Kashmir was visited by the Chinese pilgrim Ou-Kong. Ou-Kong saw more than three hundred vihāras in the valley besides numerous stūpas and images of the Buddha.

The next work, which furnishes us with a very detailed and accurate account of the valley of Kashmir, is Alberuni’s Kitab-ul-Hind. Alberuni, the Arab scholar, seems to have gathered most of his information about Kashmir during his long stay at Ghazna and in the Punjab between CE1017 and 1030.

The last foreign writer of our period, who has left an account of Kashmir, is Marco Polo (middle of the 13th century CE). He mentioned Kashimur as province inhabited by a people who were idolaters and had a language of their own. They were acquainted with the devilries of enchantment and could perform many supernatural acts.

The old Indian literature, which supplies abundance of data for our knowledge of old Kashmir, is a great source of information. The earliest Sanskrit literature of the valley, so far known, is the Nilamatapurāṇa. To quote the words of Buhler, it is a real mine of information regarding the sacred places of Kashmir and their legends. Besides the references to the legendary origin of the country and the rites and worships prescribed by Nīla and observed by the
people, the work dilates upon such various topics as the principal Nāgas or sacred springs of Kashmir, the origin of the Volur Lake, the places consecrated to Śiva and Viṣṇu, the sacred river confluences and lakes, the chief tīrthas of the land and in the end upon the sanctity of the river vitastā.

Suvrata wrote the oldest extension works containing the royal chronicles of Kashmir. It is believed that Suvrata’s compilation the study of the oldest chronicle was discontinued and that complete copy of his works was no longer to be found in Kalhaṇa’s time.

Kṣemendra in his Samayamārkā furnishes us with some useful information about the topographical details of his country. His heroine Kanakalī travels through the length and breadth of Kashmir. Many of the places visited by her can be traced out on the map. To him we owe the first reference to the Pir Pantsal route (Pančāladhara).

After Kṣemendra came Somadeva, the author of the Kathāsaratīgāra. He describes Kashmir as a region in the south of the Himalayas washed by the waters of the Vitastā. He mentions some of the holy sites of the valley such as the Vijayakṣetra, Nandikṣetra, and Varāhakṣetra, Maṇḍapakṣetra and Uttararamamansa and the town of Hiranyaapura.

Bilhana, who lived during the reigns of Kalaśa and Harṣa, has also left an account of his native valley. In the last chapter of his poem, the Vikramānkadevacarita, he gives us a vivid picture of the Kashmirian capital and the village of Khonamusa where he was born. His account, apart from its poetical beauties, is full of local details.

Dāmodaragupta is one of the renowned scholar of Kashmir is known mostly for his work Kuttanimata. Another scholar, Helarāja, who was a Pāṣupata ascetic and lived probably in the 9th or 10th century, composed a commentary on the Vākyapādiya, known as Pārthivāvalī. Kalhaṇa says the composition was of considerable extent of twelve thousand slokas. Vasunanda
was the ruler of Gonandiya dynasty of the valley and a son of Kṣitindra, whom the goddess has spared as the root-bulb of the family tree. Kalhana gives this information that Vasunanda had composed a well-known work on erotic known as Smṛsastra. However, no work of Vasunanda is extant.

Kalhana in his Rājatarangini named another poet Candaka, who is said to have been a great poet. His identification is unknown to us. Kalhana has not even attributed any specific work to him. Some scholars identify him with the same Candaka to whom some verses are ascribed in Ballabhadeva’s Subhasitavali. He is also identified with the writer Candra, who is mentioned by the Chinese traveller I-tsing.

Mātrgupta was a poet and a contemporary of Pravarasena II (c. CE 580) of Kashmir and Vikrama of Ujjayini (c. 6th century CE). He has given his commentary on Bharata’s Nāṭyaśāstra which is referred to in Sundararāśī’s Nāṭyapradīpa. Kṣemendra quotes Mātrgupta in one of his works and some of his verses have found a place in Vallabhadeva’s anthology.

Next name comes of Mentha, for composing the poem Hayagrīvavadhā. The poem Hayagrīvavadhā is lost but Bhartṛmentha is mentioned by Kṣemendra in the Suvṛttatilaka and by Maṅkha in Śrīkanṭhacarita. The date of Mentha is also not known for certain. But Mentha or Bhartṛmentha seems to have been a person of fame.

Kalhana gives this information in his chronicle that learned Bhaṭṭa Udbhata was the sahapati or court pandit of king Jayāpiḍā, known chiefly for his writings on aesthetics, who received a daily allowance of one lakh Dināras. He wrote profusely on the Alankāra School. He also wrote the poem Kumārasambhava, which is not available now. In the reign of the Kārkota king Ajitāpiḍā, there lived a poet named, Śaṅkuka who is described by Kalhana “like a moon over the ocean of learned minds, composed a poem called Bhuvnabhyudaya. The theme of the book was centered round the conflict between the regents Mamma and Utpalaka. The work has not come

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down but quotations from it are presented in Vallabhadeva’s *Subhāṣītāvalī*. Śivasvāmin also known as Bhaṭṭa Śivasvāmin was an ardent follower of the Buddha is also mentioned by Kalhaṇa in his Chronicle. He wrote a poem named *Kapphinābhhyudaya*, describing the expedition of Kapphina, king of Daksināpatha against Prasenajit of Śrāvastī. Ratnākara, the next writer from Kashmir, has been identified with the author of the great kāvyā named *Haravijaya*, an enormous epic in fifty cantos which describes the defeat of demon Andhaka at the hands of Śiva. Āṇandavardhana’s work is mainly on the science of poetics, which included *Dhvanyāloka*, *Kāvyāloka* and *Sahṛdayāloka*. Bhaṭṭa Kallāṣṭha descended to the earth for the benefit of the people at the time of Avantivarman. He was a pupil of Vasugupta, the founder of the *Spandāśāstra* branch of Kashmirian Śaiva philosophy. Bhaṭṭa Kallāṣṭha wrote a commentary called the *Spandasarvasva* (on his teacher’s *Spandamṛta*). Next poet named Bhallaṭa lived in the reign of Śaṅkaravarman. He is known for his excellent work *Bhallaṭāśataka*, a poem of 108 stanzas dealing with morality and conduct. Verses from this work have been quoted by Abhinavagupta, Kṣemendra and Mammaṭa.

Along with these names Kalhaṇa has given long list of those literary personalities whose identity is unknown to us like Manoratha, Śaṅkhadanta, Cāṭaka and Sarīndhimata. They are mentioned as great poets during the reign of Jayāpiḍa. Then Mammaṭa, Vāmana, Udhaṭa were the famous poets under king Jayāpiḍa. Muktakaṇa, Śivasvāmin, Āṇandavardhana, and Ratnākara were court poets of Avantivarman, etc.

**KALHAṆA**

The *Rājatarahginī* or the ‘River of the kings’ is written by poet Kalhaṇa. He was the son of great Brahmān minister of Kashmir known to be as Chaṇḍapa. He was brahmin by caste. Kalhaṇa writes that he started writing this book in 1148 CE and he took one year for completing it.
The consciousness of the high office of the poet sharpened his sense of responsibility and impartial adherence to truth brings him close to the modern view of history. He was gifted with scientific approach and a critical temperament. Kalhaṇa along with intensive training in the Indian rhetoric had great knowledge of Sanskrit grammatical lore. He was also inspired by regional patriotism. Before writing the Rājatarāṅgini, he had scrupulously studied various previous writings e.g. the Nilimatapurāṇa, ancient accounts of 51 Tīrthas, foreign travellers’ accounts, legends, etc. He did not confine himself only to the literary sources but in a detached scientific spirit examined inscriptions of various kinds. He has honestly and impartially related the events, while recording the contemporary happening; Kalhaṇa has presented the principle figures in their individual character and not as types. Aware of his surroundings he portrays a very realistic picture of various aspects of society and culture of his time.

THE LATER CHRONICLES

The later chronicles which were composed, after that of Kalhaṇa, with the distinct object of continuing his work furnished valuable supplements to the historical information. These chronicles include: the Rājatarāṅgini of Jonarāja who continued the narrative down to the reign of Sultan Zain-ul-abidin, in other words up to CE 1459. Jonarāja was a scholar of considerable attainments, but apparently without any originality. But outside it he commits himself to the forms like Puruṣavīra, the present Peshawar. Next name comes of Śrivara. He was the pupil of Jonarāja. His work is known as the Jaina-Rājatarāṅgini. It deals in four books with the period CE 1459-86. Stein calls him a slavish imitator of Kalhaṇa. His text looks in a great portion more like a canto from the Rājatarāṅgini, than an original composition. Notwithstanding the thorough study of Kalhaṇa’s work which this kind of exploitation presupposes, we find Śrivara more than once betraying ignorance of the old names for well-known Kashmir localities. Thus we have the name of the Mahasarit stream transformed into Mari, an evident adaptation of the modern Mar, Siddhapatha,
the present Sedau, represented as Siddhadeśa, the tīrtha of Mārtanda regularly referred to by its modern name Bhavana. The fourth chronicle finally comes from Prajñābhaṭṭa, named Rājāvalīpatākā. This composition was completed by his student Śuka, some years after the annexation of Kashmir by Akbar in CE 1586. Their works are said to be inferior even to Śrivara’s chronicle is proved by the increased number of modern local names and its author’s scant familiarity with the old geography of Kashmir.

**POLITICAL HISTORY OF KASHMIR AS DEPICTED IN THE RĀJATARAṄGĪṆĪ**

Kalhana has started the history of Kashmir just before the great Mahābhārata war, and the first king mentioned by him is Gonanda I, whose initial year of reign he places in 653 Kali-era, the traditional date of the coronation of king Yudhiṣṭhira, the eldest brother of the Pāṇḍavas. Gonanda was killed in a battle along with his son in India, and at the time of the commencement of the Mahābhārata war, Gonanda II was ruling Kashmir. After his death, the great historian informs that the record of 35 kings who ruled the valley could not be traced by him, because of the destruction of the record. However, a modern scholar Peer Zada Hassan has given a brief record of these kings from a Persian work composed during the time of Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin (CE 1420-70). The author of this work Mulla Ahmad had been able to obtain the names of these kings from an earlier Sanskrit work Ratnākara. The great Mauryan emperor Aśoka is recorded to have ruled Kashmir, and Kalhana rightly mentions that the king was a follower of Buddhism. Aśoka founded the old city of Srinagar called now as Pandrethan, (Puraṇādhiṣṭhāna) and also built many vihāras and temples and repaired the old shrine. At Vījeśvarī (modern Bijbehra), he built a Śiva temple, thus winning the heart of the local population, who were mostly worshippers of Lord Śiva. It was Majjhantika, a celebrated Buddhist missionary who was deputed to Kashmir and Urvasa to preach the faith of Buddha in those territories. Hsuen-Tsang mentions the arrival of 500
monks in Kashmir, and Aśoka making a gift of the valley to Saṅgha. Many Buddhist scholars, missionaries, and intellectuals permanently settled in the valley. Naturally, in the course of time, many people embraced Buddhism here. According to local tradition, like Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Lord Buddha is also supposed to have visited Kashmir. Writes Sir Charles Elliot in a book called *Hinduism and Buddhism*, "For some two centuries after Gautama’s death, we have little information as to the geographical extension of his doctrine, but some of the Sanskrit versions of the " Vinaya ", represent him visiting Mathura, north-west India and Kashmir. After the death of Aśoka, his son Jalauka ascended the throne of Kashmir, and the latter was succeeded by his son king Dāmodara II. Jalauka was a great king who cleared the valley of oppressing 'Malecchas', (foreign unclean tribes). King Dāmodara lives in our memory even at present, for the Srinagar Air-port is located at Dāmodara I Karewa’, where the king is supposed to have lived in a big palace and, where again, he was transformed into a snake by the curse of a Brahmin. The scholars also, accept the theory that the valley for over two hundred years was ruled by Indo-Greek Kings before the start of Turuṣka ( Kuṇāṇa ) rule in the state. Cunningham records a large find of silver coins of Azes and Azilies (Indo-Scythians) on the banks of the Vitastā (River Jhelum) in the hills between Varahmūla and Jhelum. The contact with the Greeks is responsible for the beautiful architectural and sculptural style of old Kashmir temples, and the coinage of later Kashmir kings has also been influenced by this contact. Kalhana’s account of Turuṣka kings, indicates without any doubt the Kuṇāṇa occupation of the valley. The three kings mentioned by him are Huṣka, Juṣka, and Kaniṣka, each of them is credited with the foundation of a town, christened after their respective names: Huṣkapura, Juṣkapura and Kaniṣkapura. The Kuṇāṇa kings also built many temples and vihāras. According to many scholars, Kaniṣka held the third great council of the Buddhist church at "Kundalvana ", (Harwan, near Shalimar garden) Hsuen Tsang has given the proceedings of this council. Nearly 500 Buddhist and Hindu scholars attended this conference, and a learned Kashmiri Brahmin Vasumitra presided over its session. Some of the great Buddhist scholars, who
took active part in this Council, were Aśvagōsa, Nāgārjuna, Vasubandhu Sugamitra and Jinamitra. Hsuen-Tsang praises the intellectual calibre of the Kashmiri scholars, and considered them as incomparable. The entire proceedings of the conference were inscribed on copper plates in Sanskrit, enclosed in stone boxes, deposited in a vihāra. Like the famous Gilgit manuscripts, it is possible that these copper plates may be unearthed in near future, and we would learn much about the rich cultural history of the valley.

After Kaniṣka, local weak rulers continued to govern the state, till we hear from Kalhaṇa, the arrival of Mihirakula, the notorious Hūṇa invader of our country. Kalhaṇa correctly represents him as a savage cruel king, whose approach became known by the sight of thousands of vultures, crows and the like in the sky, eager to feed on those being massacred by his encircling army. While crossing Pir Panchal pass, the tyrant rolled down one hundred elephants from a mountain pass. The shrieks and the yells of the dying elephants greatly delighted this fiend. Till the advent of Kārkoṭa dynasty (beginning of the 8th Century CE), the Gonanda dynasty gave Kashmir only two notable rulers viz. Meghavāhana and Pravarasena. The former was a pious and a strong ruler with Buddhist leanings. He stopped killing of animals and birds throughout his kingdom. In fact, he undertook conquest of many countries solely for the purpose of stopping animal slaughter. His chief queen Amṛtaprabhā built Amṛtabhavana Vihāra for foreign pilgrims and students who came to Kashmir in large numbers for learning. The next great king was Pravarasena II, in whose time people enjoyed perfect peace and prosperity, was a great conqueror who extended the boundaries of the state in all directions. He has made his name immortal by founding the city of Pravarasenapura (modern city of Srinagar), the summer capital of the state at present. Pravarasena ruled ably for sixty years and is supposed to have directly ascended to heaven while worshipping Lord Śiva in his temple named Pravareśa, now standing in ruins near Hari-Parbat fort.
It was during the time of first king of the Kārkota dynasty, Durlabhavardhana that the Chinese pilgrim, Hsuen-Tsang visited Kashmir. It is the Kārkota dynasty that has given Kashmir its greatest ruler Lalitāditya Muktāpīda (724-761 CE). He is undoubtedly the Samudragupta of Kashmir. He was filled with an unquenchable thirst of world conquest. He invaded and conquered many countries. The Punjab, Kanauj, Tibet, Ladakh, Badakshan, Iran, Bihar, Gauḍa (Bengal) Kaliṅga (Orissa), South India, Gujarat, Malwa, Marwar and Sindh. It was he, who finally broke the power of the Arabs in Sind. All these unbroken victories created a feeling of pride among the people here and his victories came to be celebrated in a big way. Kalhana who wrote his famous chronicle (the Rājatarangini) nearly four hundred years after the death of Lalitāditya, records that even in his time the victories of the great victor were being celebrated throughout the valley. Alberuni, who accompanied Mahmud Gaznavi in his Indian campaigns, specifically mentions in his book (Kitab-ul-Hind) that in Kashmir is observed second of Caitra, as the day of victory. Lalitāditya was equally a great builder and he built his capital near the sacred shrine of Khīra-Bhavānī (modern Khir-Bhawani), and gave it the name of Parihāspura (city of pleasure). Throughout the valley, he built very fine and massive temples, out of which the world famous sun temple (Mārṭanda) built on Mattan Karewa, reminds us about the grandeur and splendor of the times when their builder ruled the state. The extensive ruins of his capital city Parihāspura, speak of his activities in the field of art and architecture. After his death, it was mostly the weak rulers except his grandson Jayāpīda, who ruled the valley. Both Lalitāditya, and Jayāpīda were great patrons of learning and extended their patronage to Bhavabhuti, Vākpatirāja, Udbhata Bhaṭṭa, Dāmodhargupta, Manoratha, Śaṅkhḍanta and Sarindhimata, etc. The history of Kārkota dynasty after Jayāpīda is a sad story of decline. All the conquered territories regained their independence, and the sovereignty of the ruler of Kashmir came to be confined to Vitastā basin. The economic ruin was hastened by the extravagant habits of both the rulers and the ministers. In the words of Kalhana, “the ministers and the grandees carried off the revenues of the
country, feasted in mutual jealousy on the masterless kingdom, like wolves on a dead buffalo in a desert.” In spite of this entire Kārkoṭa rule on the whole has been considered as the glorious and remarkable periods of ancient Kashmir. Laments P. C. Ray that “never before the Kārkoṭa period, had Kashmir performed such a feat, nor was she able to repeat it in future.”

It was round about in 855-56 CE that Kārkoṭa rule ended, and a new Utpala Dynasty assumed power in Kashmir. The most important ruler of this dynasty was Mahārāja Avantiverman. It was he, who recovered Kashmir from utter political and economic disorder. His reign witnessed a period of peace and consolidation and prosperity. It was during this time, that the valley rose to great heights in the realm of philosophy, art and letters. There was an outburst of literary activity on a grand scale, and eminent men Kallata Bhāṭa, Ratnākara, Ānandavardhana, Muktakaṇa, Śivasvāmin, Rudrṭa and Mukula flourished during this period. Kalhaṇa’s mention of numerous temples built and towns founded by this king and his ministers throws plenty of light on the prosperous condition of the period. The most important foundation of the king was his capital city of Avantipura, which he embellished with two temples: one dedicated to Śiva, and other to Viṣṇu. Both of them are in ruins now, but even then, they stand as the most imposing monuments of ancient Kashmir.

The description of the reign of Avantivarman would not be complete without the mention of Suya one of the greatest engineers Kashmir produced in ancient times. For centuries the people of the valley had been suffering from the recurring curse of famines and floods. Suya correctly assessed that these frequent calamities occurred due to heavy rains and excessive water of the Vitastā River which could not easily get out with swiftness, through a gorge near Varahmula, as the compressed passage there had got blocked with silt and huge boulders. The people removed both the silt and stones when the great engineer threw plenty of gold and silver coins into the river at many places. Thousands of starving people immediately jumped into the flooded Vitastā and in order to find the coins cleared the bed of the rocks and boulders which had
choked up the passage. Suya, then raised stone embankments, and adopted other protective measures. Many canals were dug-out to increase the irrigational facilities. The result of all these measures was that a great increase of land became available for cultivation. The production of paddy increased and the price of one Khirwar (nearly two mounds) came down to 36 Dinaras from 200 Dinaras. Suya’s memory is still preserved to this day, by the town Suyapura (Sopore) founded by him at the point where river Vitastā, since his regulation, leaves the basin of Mahapadomsar (Wular lake). Avantivarman died in a temple on the Dal Lake, when a fatal disease caught him, and in the words of Kalhana, "listening to the end to the song of the Lord (Bhagavadgītā) and thinking of the residence of Viṣṇu (Vaikuṇṭha) he cast off his earthly life with a cheerful mind" (CE 883). Avantivarman was succeeded by his son Śaṅkaravarman, but then the decline of Utpala dynasty set in. In the time of the king Yaśaskara (939-48 CE) a matha (hospice) was built for the students of India, who came to Kashmir for study and meditation. It clearly reveals intimate cultural contact between the valley, and plains of India in the 10th century. In CE 950, Kṣemagupta ascended the throne of Kashmir, a man of mediocre ability who married princess Diddā, daughter of the ruler of Lohara (Poonch) and granddaughter of the Śāhi king Bhīma of Udbhāṇapura. After the eclipse of Utpala dynasty, Lohara dynasty ruled Kashmir till the end of the Hindu rule in Kashmir (CE 1339). Queen Diddā was the de facto ruler of the state, as she was very dominating and exercised immense influence over her husband. She built many temples and monasteries and one of these was reserved for people of Madhyadesa and Lāṭā. In 980 CE Diddā ascended the throne after the death of her husband and sons. Before her, two other queens had ruled Kashmir namely Yaśomati and Sugandhā. Diddā was a very unscrupulous and willful lady and led a very immoral life. But in spite of these drawbacks, she was an able ruler, who firmly ruled the valley. She died in 1003 CE and left the throne of Kashmir to her paternal family in undisputed succession. As her children had died young, she transmitted the crown to Saṅgrāmrāja, son of her brother Udayarāja, the ruler of Lohara.
It was during her time that Mahmud Gaznavi twice tried to capture the valley but the fort at Lohara, remarkable for its height and strength proved impregnable. The Sultan was obliged to abandon the conquest. At that time king Ananta was ruling Kashmir. He was related to the Hinduśāhis and sent help against Mahmud through his general Tuṅga.

From 1089 to 1101CE, king Harṣa ruled Kashmir. Versed in many languages, a good poet, lover of music and art, he started his rule in a remarkable way, and became famous in northern India. His court was a centre of luxury and splendor. He introduced new fashions in dress and ornaments. His ministers were gorgeously dressed, wore earrings and head dresses, previously reserved for the members of ruling families only. But strangely enough, Harṣa’s career became a record of follies and misdeeds. The people also suffered from famine, and plague as well and a considerable section of people became victims of these calamities. Confusion followed these misfortunes, leading to a general uprising of the people under two royal princes Uccala and Sussala. Harṣa along with his son Bhoja was murdered and the throne of Kashmir passed into the hands of two princes respectively. Both the princes met the fate of Harṣa and when our great historian Kalhana completed his Rājatarangini in CE 1149-50 king Jayasimha, the last great ruler of the Hindu times was ruling the state.

Jayasimha’s (CE 1128-55) early days were critical, because of the proceeding civil wars and political unrest. Still the new ruler was able to maintain his firm rule for twenty seven years in comparative safety. The king repaired and restored many temples and shrines, and numerous other pious foundations were also made during his reign. The people after a long time heaved a sigh of relief. From CE 1155-1339, Kashmir rulers remained busy only in intrigues, debauchery, and mutual quarrels. These incessant feuds, civil wars, risings and upheavals greatly weakened the Hindu domination of Kashmir. The valley soon fell prey to Mongol and Turkish raiders, free boaters and foreign adventurers. Quite naturally, the boundaries of the kingdom got
shrunk and were reduced to the valley only. The Kabul valley Proutonsa (Poonch), Rājāpurī (Rajauri) Kangra, Jammu, Kishthwar and Ladakh, one after the other threw-off their allegiance to the rulers of Kashmir.

In the beginning of 14th century a ferocious Mongol, Dulucha invaded the valley through its northern side Zojila Pass, with an army of 60,000 men. Like Taimur in the Punjab and Delhi, Dulucha carried sword and fire, destroyed towns and villages and slaughtered thousands of people. His savage attack practically ended the Hindu rule in Kashmir. A weak and worthless man Rājā Sahadeva was the ruler then. It was during his reign that three adventurers, Shah Mir from Swat (Tribal) territory on the borders of Afghanistan, Rinchin from Ladakh, and Lankar Chak from Darad territory near Gilgit came to Kashmir, and played a notable role in political history of the valley. All the three men were granted Jagirs by the king. Rinchin for three years became the ruler of Kashmir, Shah Mir was the first ruler of Shah Mir dynasty and the descendants of Lankar Chak established Chak rule in the Kashmir.

The last Hindu ruler of Kashmir was Udyana Deva. It was his chief Queen Kotā Rānī, who practically governed the state. She was a very brave lady, shrewd and an able ruler. Though she tried her best to save her kingdom, odds were too heavy for her. The valley was again invaded by a Mongal and Turk invader Achalla, but the queen defeated him, and drove away all the foreign troops. In the confusion Rinchin, the Ladakhi prince, whom the Hindu religious leaders of the time refused to admit into their fold, organized an internal rising and seized the throne. Before his death, he embraced Islam. Finally another rising was led by Shah Mir, who defeated the queen at Jayapura (modern Sumbal). The defeat upset her and seeing the indifference of the Hindu grandees and general public, she stabbed herself to death, because Shah Mir wanted to marry her. Her death in CE 1339 paved the way for the establishment of Muslim rule in Kashmir.
SIGNIFICANCE OF SOCIO-CULTURAL HISTORY ON THE BASIS OF KALHAṆA

The Rājatarāṅginī provides a realistic depiction of the grim socio-cultural life of the land. In a perpetual flux of causes and effects Kalhaṇa’s account has been a unique experiment. He resolves to ensure authenticity of his statements by dint of personal observations references and plausible conjectures. He had keen historical sense and sharp critical talent which was matched by his flexible imagination and fine sensibility. His chronicle is rich in glimpses of the socio-political setup of the time.

Kalhaṇa gives authentic picture of contemporary society and culture which includes domestic life, economy and trade, political thoughts and organization, caste system, position of women, eating habits, dress, ornaments, religious cults, festivals, religious practices, philosophy, language, art and architecture. The Rājatarāṅginī perhaps possesses an authentic account of Kashmir history from very earliest period. Past account of the valley, its culture and tradition, rise and fall of various kingdoms, victory and defeats of the people etc. have been depicted in the varied and colourfu pattern. In this way Kalhaṇa has evolved to form the rich mosaic of Kashmir’s social and cultural history. He tells that all the traditional features of Hindu caste system were to be found in the Kashmir’s society. He tells that like other parts of India, Brahmans were uppermost caste. He has also given indirect reference of Kṣatriya and Vaiśyas. Position of women was not different from rest of India. There are references of Sati custom. He has also given plenty of references about religion, beliefs, customs of contemporary people of Kashmir. It can be said that Kalhaṇa chronicle is a complete historical book in itself.

1 Ptolemy, VII, I, 42