PREFACE

The Rājatarāṅgini of Kalhaṇa is a veritable mine of information enlightens us about the history of Kashmir, rightly called the paradise on this earth. Though known for a long time, the complete work was not available to the modern scholars almost till the last decade of the nineteenth century CE. The credit of undertaking the arduous task of collecting all the available manuscripts of the Rājatarāṅgini and preparing a critical edition of the same goes to Sir M. Aurel Stein, the then Professor of Sanskrit and Principal, Oriental College, Panjab University, Lahore. He published the edited text in 1892 and its annotated translation was brought out by the erudite scholar in 1900. Stein not only edited, translated and annotated the work but also prepared copious notes on several important aspects, especially on the geographical identifications, which form a compendium to his edition of the Rājatarāṅgini. However, the learned scholar did not dwell upon the socio-cultural history of Kashmir as pictured in this work and the task was left to the future scholars. Later on other scholars like Durga Prasad and R. S. Pandit also published their versions of the Rājatarāṅgini but this aspect was left out. Professor Jagannath Agrawal of the Panjab University intended to finish the work started by Stein and contributed detailed chapters on the political history of Kashmir in the Comprehensive History of India Volumes III and IV. He had undertaken the work on socio-cultural study of the Rājatarāṅgini but could not complete it in his life time. Some piecemeal work in the form of research papers or flying references in works on the history of Kashmir are available but no comprehensive study of the socio-cultural life of Kashmir as depicted by Kalhaṇa. A humble attempt has been made in this study to follow in the footsteps of these great savants of my alma mater.
The Rājatarāṅgini of Kalhaṇa is a great source of the socio-cultural history of Kashmir. No history can be completed without knowing its socio-cultural aspects. The Rājatarāṅgini of Kalhaṇa is not merely a ‘River of Kings’, containing dry accounts of various dynasties, rulers and their activities in court or in the field of war, but it is a veritable encyclopedia of information on the society and culture, the way of life, religious conditions, art and architecture and economic life of the period and so on. As such it becomes a significant source of information to be studies, analyzed and interpreted. Through our research, various social and cultural references given by Kalhaṇa, have been explored, and its political references are discussed only when required.

Our research was aimed for two major objectives. The first objective of the proposed research work was to explore the socio-culture aspect of Kashmiri history and second objective to portray picture of contemporary society and its culture by comparing it with the other parts of the country. The detail analysis of the socio-cultural aspect of the Rājatarāṅgini explained the reason which makes it so important for the study of ancient Kashmir and Indian historical research in general.

After a brief introduction to the land and history of Kashmir we have taken up in the first chapter, the names of various castes as mentioned by Kalhaṇa in his chronicle and their bearing on the fourfold caste system of ancient India. We have also tried to find out the social status of these various castes. The deep study related to traditional Hindu caste system was also undertaken.

Kalhaṇa has depicted family life of Kashmir in very detail. He has given plenty of references related to different colours of human life. On the basis of
these references we have tried to portray the family set-up of the people of Kashmir in the second chapter.

Kalhana has called Kashmir the ‘Land of Learners’. According to his work, not only from the different parts of India but also from the rest of world, people used to come to Kashmir or higher education. In the chapter III we have found out the different contemporary educational institutions, royal patronage for education and basic educational set-up of Kashmir. The rich contribution to the literary activities of various intellectuals of Kashmir has been taken up in the ninth chapter.

The position of the women is a mirror of the society to which they belong. This important aspect of Kashmir has been undertaken by us in the fourth chapter. In this chapter we have discussed their position in society, their educational rights, various customs and traditions related to women such as prevalence of the system of Satī, etc.

In order to have a full insight into the culture of the Kashmir, a survey of the objectives of daily life, such as food and drink, medicines, dress and ornaments, amusements and pastime is very essential. So through deep and comparative study of various references was undertaken and this aspect of Kashmiri people is also explored.

The society of that period was not free from social evil called slavery. Kashmir was also not out of it as we hear of a good many of references about references about slavery in our source-book. An attempt is made to throw some light on slavery during the period of our research.

In seventh chapter religious aspect of the Rājatarangini is undertaken. Through the Rājatarangini we come to know that mainly two religions were dominating i.e. Hinduism and Buddhism. During the concerned period Kashmir
was the hub of Śaivism. There were many other minor cults which are studied in depth as well.

In chapter eight another important aspect of Kashmir i.e. its art and architecture is discussed. Through the various names of buildings, as given by Kalhana, the characteristics and specialties of the architecture of that period are discussed as also the sculpture, terracotta and painting mentioned in the work and corroborated by archaeological and other literary evidence.

Chapter ten of our research includes the various economic activities i.e. agriculture, trade, articles, local industries, market setup, transportation etc. are undertaken. It has also included the different groups of people engaged in economic activities.

We can say that Kalhana has very beautifully depicted the life of Kashmiri people and has given the accurate picture of society and its culture. There is comprehensive and authentic details about family setup, caste-system, position of women, the economic life and various other aspects that have been undertaken.

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