

Historical Importance of Rajatarangni

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Abstract:- We have study in detail the importance of Kashmir in the field of historical compositions in ancient times. The Nilamatpurna is a story of pre-historic Kashmir. Kalhan's Rajatarangni occupies a unique position as the only work on history in Sanskrit with a scientific approach of modern historians. Yet Kalhana was not the first in this line. He mentions the works of 11 preceding historians whose compositions he consulted in producing his famous work. Among the early historians, whose work unfortunately cannot be traced, were Helaraja, Padmamihara, Chavillakara, Suvrata and Kshemendra. Kalhana's tradition was continued by others in this line Junaraja, Srivara, Prajyabhata and Suka. The Kashmiri writer's possessed a historical sense is proved by Bilhana's Vikraman Kadevacharita which though composed in the 'Kavya' style was yet superior in historical approach to the work of Bana and Hemachandra. The technique of chronology helps us in applying the tests that Kalhana follows. It is evident that the result of a scrutiny of this chronological system must have an important bearing on our views regarding the historical value of the narrative itself for which that system forms as it were the frame work. It hence seems justified that

an examination of the characteristic features of Kalhana's chronology should precede our critical inquiry into the traditions and records contained in his chronicle.

Key Words: - Scruting, Sanskrit Literature, Anecdots Aggregate Period, Intellectual Horizon, Champaka etc.

Introduction:

Kalhana is known to the world by the name Kalhana pandit. He was born in North Kashmir in first quarter of 12th century in a Brahmin family. He was son of Champaka, the minister of King Harsha of Kashmir. Kalhana is known for his well known history namely "Rajatarangni" (The river of kings). He started his well known work in 1148 CE and completed it with two years. According to tradition Kalhana wrote another poem Jaya-Simhabhyudaya, probably a eulogy of his patron. King Jayasinha of Kashmir. Kalhana does not say anything about his own caste, he seems to be Brahman. His vast learning as expressed in the Rajatarangni accords well with the reputation of generally enjoyed by the Brahmin Pandit of Kashmir. Kalhana's qualities as a historian are unsurpassed for the collection as material for his

history he not only consulted older works on the subject but also used original sources like inscriptions of various kinds. He also studied coins and inspected old buildings. He is a master of accurate topography of ancient Kashmir. History according to him was not something to learn but something to make people live and understand life.-

Rajatarangni is a famous Sanskrit verse written by Kalhana in 1148-49 CE. This is the only work in ancient India literature that may be regarded as a historical text in the true sense of the world. The Rajatarangni comprises in eight context of Sanskrit verse the history of various dynasties which ruled Kashmir from earliest period known to the time of author. It can be accepted as liable record from the seventh century onwards.

Rajatarangni is a store house of information and gives us ample information from the holy Brahmin and noble Rajaputra to the humble domba and the untouchable, Chandala and depicts all at their tasks. He shows us how contemporary people looked like, what they wore, believe and thought of the eternal problems of the relation between the senses. He tells us about the foundation of towns, cities, temples, shrines and monasteries. He gives us information about political and administrative aspects of different ruling dynasties like of Karkotas, Loharas and

Utpalas. It also throws light on economic and social information about different philosophers and religions adopted by the people.

The Rajatarangni has hither to been regarded as on entire composition, it is however in fact a series of compositions, written by different authors, and at different periods, a circumstance that gives greater value to its contents as with exception of the early periods of the history, the several author's may be regarded almost as chronicles of their own times. The first of the series is the Rajatarangni of Kalhana Pandita the son of champaka, who states his having made use of earlier authorities and gives an interesting enumeration of several which he had employed. The list includes the general works of Surata and Nrendra. The history of Gondarda and his three successors Hala Raja an ascetic of lava and his successors os Ashoka by Padmamishra and of Ashoka and four next princes by Sri Chavillachara. He also cites the authority of Nilamuni, meaning probably the Nilapurana, a purana known only in Kashmir, the whole forming a remarkable proof of the attention bestowed by Kashmirian writers up to the history of their native country, an attention the more extraordinary from the contrast, it affords to the total want of historical enquiry in any other part of the extensive countries peopled by the Hindus. The

history of Kalhana commences with the fabulous ages and comes down to the reign of Sangrama Deva the nephew of Didda Rani in Saka 949 or 1027 CE, approaching to what appears to have been his own date, Saka 1070 or CE 1148.

The next work is the Rajavati of Jona Raja of which I regret to state I have not yet been able to meet with a copy. It probably begins where Kalhana stops and it closes about the time of Zain-ul-abidin or the year of Hijra 815 as we know from the next of the series.

The Srijaina Rajatarangni is the work of Srivara Pandita, the pupil of Jona Raja whose work it professes to continue, so as to form with it and the history of Kalhana, a complete record of kingdom of Kashmir. It begins with Zain-ul-abidin whose name the unprepared would scarcely recognize in its Nagari transfiguration of Srijaina Ollabha Dina and closes with the accession of Fateh Shah in the year of the Hijra 882 or AD 1477. The name of the author has chosen give his work of jaintaragini has led to a very mistaken notion of its character. It has been included amongst the production of Jain literature whilst in truth the author as an orthodox worshipper of Siva and evidently intends the epithet he has adopted as complimentary to the memory of Zain-ul-abidin a prince who was a great friend to his subjects and a liberal patron of Hindu letters and literary men.

The fourth work which completes the aggregate current under the name of Rajatarangni was written in the time Akbar expressly to continue to the latest date the productions of the author's predecessors and to bring the history down to the time at which Kashmir become a pro-vice of Akbar's empire. It bring accordingly where Sri Vara ended or with Fateh Shah and closes with Nazek Shah the historian apparently and judiciously avoiding to notice the fate of the kingdom during Humayun's retreat into Persia. The work is called the Raja Vali Pataka and the production of punya of Prajnya Bhatia.

Kalhana Rajatarangni comprises eight books the 1st with 373 verses and second book with only 171 verses. The 3rd book consists of 530 verses and the fourth of 720 verses in all fifth, sixth and seventh book have 483, 368, 1732 verses respectively. The last book i.e., 8th book is largest with 3449 verses in all the interests and important which Kalhana's work possesses for the present generations lies in its character as a historical record and in the mass of detailed information it furnishes regarding the conditions of ancient Kashmir. Whether the author was motivated to compose Kavya for the sake of being Kavya or as a historical record or with the subject of training Kashmiris for national political behavior. One can assess but its importance lies in the fact that it is

he only extant codex to relate the present Kashmir with its past. In the absence of this valuable work Kashmir would have dropped in darkness for want to insight into its past.

Chronology used by Kalhana in his literary work

The contents of Kalhan's work from the point of view of the critical tests which are able to apply to them, divide themselves into two great portions marked also by a corresponding difference in their intrinsic historical value. The narrative of books IV and VIII which extends from the beginning of Karkotta dynasty to Kalhan's own time, we are able to check in many important points in independent evidence from other sources such as coins, inscriptions and notices of Indian and foreign writers. Our position is very different in regard to the first three books containing the narrative of the earlier epoch. The record to here found of the successive Gonandiya dynasties whose rule is supposed by Kalhana to have filled an aggregate period of nearly 3050 years consisting mainly of bare dynastic lists interspersed with more or less legendary traditions and anecdotes. The persons and events which figure in them can but rarely be traced in our other sources and then too only with considerable variations as to date and character. It is clear here where independent information fails us in the

control of Kalhana's statements. We must depend all the more on the only remaining critical test that of internal evidence.

It helps us greatly in applying this test that Kalhan's follows from the first a clearly defined system of chronology which by its outward precision lends itself conveniently to critical analysis. It is evident that the result of a scrutiny of this chronological system must have an important bearing on our views regarding the historical value of the narrative itself for which that system forms as it were the frame work. It hence seems justified that an examination of the characteristic features of Kalhana's chronology should precede our critical inquiry into the traditions and records contained in his chronicle.

It can safely be asserted that what induced European scholars from the first to turn with special interest towards Kalhana's account of Kashmir history was not the intrinsic importance of the records contained in it, but the fact of their being presented with all appearance of strict chronology. The Kashmir chronicle stands quite alone among extant works of Sanskrit literature in respect of the exact date it furnishes. They seemed to offer the means for determining the dates of events and persons in other parts of India. The history of which in the absence of similar chronicles presented itself to the inquiries of the

early part of this century as surrounded in hopeless obscurity. It is therefore only natural that all those scholars who had occasion to occupy themselves with the Rajatarangni have devoted a good deal of attention to the determination of those dates.

We may hence proceed directly to the exposition of Kalhana's chronology as it is presented in the text itself. Our first task must be to ascertain what the chronological data which Kalhana wishes to put before us. Subsequently we may concern ourselves with the question what critical value can be allowed to this chronological system as a whole and to the particular dates it furnishes.

In regard to the chronological information contained in the Rajatarangni. It is essential to note at the outset the marked difference between the two forms in which the information is conveyed to us. In the earlier portion of Kalhana's narrative as comprised in the first three books as well as in the bulk of the book IV we receive no chronological data whatever except such as may be deduced from the stated length of individual reigns and a few general figures of a manifestly theoretical character. On the other hand we find that from the concluding part of the book fourth onwards the dates of the accession of individual rulers and of other events of political or economic importance of the country are indicated by the

question of the exact years of the Laukika era, coupled in most cases with equally precise statements of the month and day. The dates thus ascertained range from Laukika year 3889 which began on March 7th A.D 813 to the Laukika year 4225 corresponding to A.D 1149-50. The first named date is that of the death of king Cippata Jayapida the date is given by Kalhana as the time of the completion of his work.

Rajatarangni as a source of historical writing

It would be a task far beyond the scope of the present introduction were we to attempt a detailed critical account of the history of Kashmir such as it present itself from all extant sources during the long period comprised in Kalhana's chronicle.

On the one hand, our available historical information is for great part of this period for too scanty to permit of anything resembling connected treatment of the political and cultural development of the country. On the other hand again it must be remembered that the history of Kashmir notwithstanding the geographical isolation of the valley has been greatly influenced by the relations which community of race, religion and culture and at times also political dependence have established from an early date between this country and the neighboring

territories during the Pre-Muhammadan epoch our information is even more fragmentary and in need of critical sifting than in the case of Kashmir. It is thus evident that a great deal of preliminary work still requires to be done before the task above indicated can be attempted on a satisfactory critical basis.

Among these preliminary labours precedence may justly be claimed for a critical analysis of Kalhana's chronicle as a source of historical information. For the Rajatarangni is at present our earliest accessible record of the historical tradition of the country and is likely also to remain so thereafter. Before we can safely utilize its contents for the reconstruction of Kashmir history, we must endeavour, firstly to arrive at a clear perception of its authors' personal character, surroundings and intellectual horizon, his materials and methods of work. In the second place it is necessary to review from a critical point of view the facts and traditions which he has recorded and his opinions regarding them. In the initial chapters of present introduction we have had occasion to consider the questions arising under the first head. In the present place we attempt to furnish a critical summary of Kalhana's narrative and the historical data reflected in it.

Following the course of Kalhana's relation we shall endeavour as far as possible to indicate the

sources which we had utilized for its several portions and to trace their character and relative trustworthiness on the basis of this analysis and our previous observations regarding Kalhana's own labours as a chronicles we shall examine what historical value can be attached to the traditions and records presented to us. For the purpose of this scrutiny we shall take special note of the results furnished by the comparison of Kalhana's date with the evidence of independent records such as coins, foreign notices etc. Finally our review will enable us call attention also to those features in Kalhana's narrative which though incidental and perhaps not strictly historical in themselves, yet throw a true light on the cultural development and social conditions of the country. The fact that all points of detail bearing on the historical contents of the chronicle have been fully discussed in the commentary will permit us to make the review more concise than would be otherwise possible.

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