

Writers



KASHMIR

Columnists





SELECTED WRITINGS OF PROF. KASHI NATH DHAR

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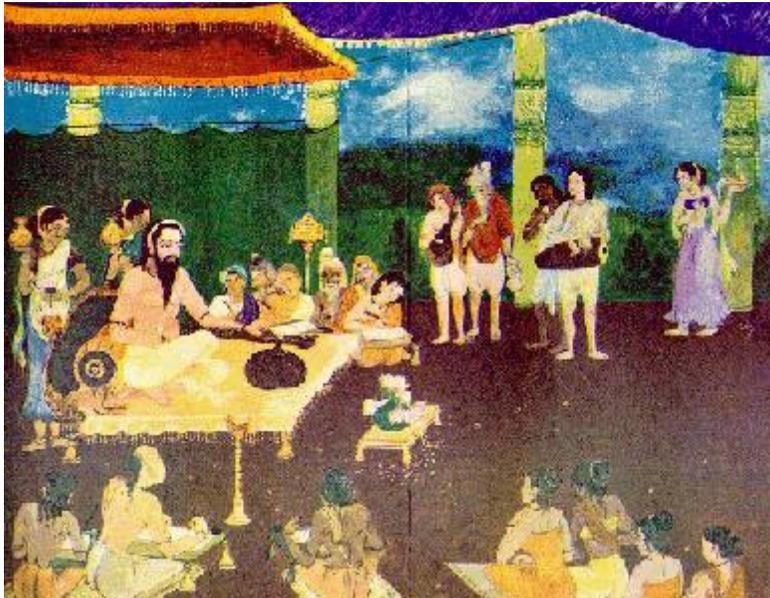
1.0 ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Prof. K. N. Dhar

2.0 ABHINAVAGUPTA - THE PHILOSOPHER

Abhinavagupta has been extolled as "Mahamahesvara" by the subsequent Kashmiri authors, his disciples and admirers, which precisely means the "great devotee of Siva", or the "Supreme - Self" in Shaivistic parlance. Kashmiri tradition also is unequivocal in testifying to his versatility. He wrote on philosophy (Saiva-Darshan, commentary on Bhagvad Gita), commented upon Anandavardhan's "Dhvanayloka", Bharata's "Natya Shastra", thus epitomized in himself the diverse talents of a philosopher, rhetorician, and a critic on dramaturgy. Moreover on Ksemendra's testimony, we know that he himself studied literature (Sahitya) with such a learned Guru. His command over rhetoric was so enthralling that Mammatta- the reputed author of 'Kavya Prakash' out of veneration for his erudition in the subject refers to him as " Abhinavagupta Pada". Pada is added to the names to show great respect.



Acharya Abhinavagupta

Vamana the propounder of Riti school in Indian Rhetoric and commentator of 'Kavya Prakasha' known as "Bala Bodhini" has alluded to Abhinavagupta as 'an intellectual giant and like a serpent (terror) to his young school - fellows.' This all goes to prove that Abhinavagupta deserves these compliments fully as given to him by the Kashmiri tradition and literary authors as will be shown later. However, in Indian literary tradition two such names have come down to us. The first Abhinavagupta belongs to Kamarupa (Assam) and is a Sakhta- a worshipper of Shakti or Devi. The solitary reference made to him is by one Madhva in his "Shankra Digvijaya," who also wrote a Shanker Basha, presumably on Badrayan's Vedanta Sutras. He was a contemporary of Sankaracharya who lived according to accepted opinion from 788 to 820 A. D. Abhinavagupta of Assam was in the first instance antagonistic to the monistic theory as preached by Sankara, but having been defeated in the Shastrartha (interpretation of the sacred lore) became his disciple. The Indologist of Dr. Aufreeht's calibre should not have made such a glaring mistake as to include. "Shaktabhashya" among the works of Abhinavagupta of Kashmir. Perhaps the prefixes "Shakhta" and "Maheshwara" make all the difference between the two and this distinction has been made clear between the two even in very early times.

Abhinavagupta being a conscious artist was not averse to biography. He has given in the colophons of his various works his genealogy and also some dates. It definitely goes to his credit and does not leave us guessing. In his "Paratrimshika Vivarna" he explicitly pens down the name of his earliest ancestor as Atrigupta who was born in Antarvedi - the Doab between the Ganges and the Jamuna. Again in 'Tantraloka' he refers to his sterling qualities of head and heart and being captivated by these was brought to Kashmir - "The crest of Himalayas" - by King Lalitaditya The date of the reign of Lalitaditya is circa 725 - 761. He was also known as Mukhtapida and was eager for conquests.' He defeated the king of Kanauj Yasosvarman and along with the booty brought Atrigupta also to Kashmir. Abhinavagupta goes on to record "In that beautiful city (Srinagar) like that of Kubera's (Alka) in front of the temple of "Sheetanshumauli" (Siva having the moon as his crest) on the Vitasta, the king got built for him a spacious house and also granted a Jagir of land to him. There is a veritable gap of a century and a half between Atrigupta and Abhinavagupta's grand father Varahagupta. In between the two, the author has left the family tree blank for reasons best known to him. Coming direct to the Tantraloka commentary Abhinavagupta explicitly says that his father was Narasinhagupta, popularly known as Chukhulaka and his mother's name was Vimalakala.

Herein we have to refer to the observation made by late Madhusudan Kaul of the Kashmir RP search Department who in his introduction to "Ishvara Pratyabhijna" has erroneously taken Laksmana Gupta as his father. Swami Laksmana Ji also corroborates the other view that Narsimha Gupta was his father. Moreso, the direct confession of Abhinavagupta as regards his parents and their names leaves nothing to argue about. Laksmana Gupta was definitely one of the preceptors of Abhinavagupta who initiated him into the Pratyabhijna Shastra as acknowledged by him in his introduction to Ishvara Pratyabhijna Vivriti Vimarshini in the words:

< verses >

(Sri Laksamna Gupta showed me the path to Pratyabhijna theory (recognition)).

The silence of Kalhana about Abhinavagupta as such is intriguing - he mentions three "Abhinavas" in his Raja-Tarangini and the suffix "Gupta" he has not appended with any of these. The first 'Abhinava' is a "Divira" or a scribe, the second foster - brother of Kayyamantaka in the reign of Samgramaraja and the third a Damaraj a landed - aristocrat. No where the name of Abhinavagupta appears as a scholar of repute or a Saiva; whereas he has at times referred to such names as Muktakana, Shivasvamin, Anandavardhana and Ratnakara etc. It may be argued that our author was more after learning than after the favour of kings, hence was not attached to any court. Consequently Kalhana, whose forte being the description of kings, skips over him. However, the fame which Abhinavagupta acquired during his life time and even after could not have eluded the chronicler Kalhana. He could not ignore the powerful Kashmiri tradition. While mentioning Ananda Vardhana the name of Abhinavagupta would have been a natural corollary being his commentator. Subsequent research in this behalf might throw some light on this omission. About his date or probable years in which he lived, he has bequeathed to us some keys which if properly used, can unlock this bane of Indian date - keeping most easily. In the last verse of "Brhati Vimarsini" he states that he finished this assignment in the 90th year when 4115 years of Kaliyuga had elapsed; by deducting 25 years from the Kali era. the local or Saptarsi era can be found. It works at 4090th year of the Saptarsi Calendar, and the word "Navatitame" used by him in that verse corresponds to 90th year of 4000 Kali era. Even, we at present write down only 74 when actually it is 1974 - seventy fourth year of 1900 Christian era.

Again in one of his Stotras which is called "Bhairavastava" in the last verse he gives the date and his name also:

< verses >

"Abhinavagupta composed this Stava (eulogy) on the 10th of dark fortnight in the month of Pausha in the year Vasu (8) Rasa (6)." (In Sanskrit the digits are read from the left), hence it comes to 68. It is definitely the 68th year of the Saptarsi Samvat 4000 as shown above. Moreover, in his Kramastotra he again refers to date as:

< verses >

"In the 66th year, on the ninth day of dark fortnight, I, Abhinavagupta, in the month of Maghar, praised Lord Siva".

So it can safely be inferred that Abhinavagupta's literary period extended from 4066 to 4090 laukika or Saptarsi era corresponding to 990-1015 A. D. Even though we have tried to locate the period, but at the same time we are not sure that Kramastotra is his first work. It is to be remembered in this context that Abhinavagupta having written a host of books, the chronological order of his works cannot be arranged without any effort, but those which have no date or have not been referred to by the subsequent authors will defeat any such solution. In this way we can safely say that "Kramastotra" might not be his first composition, it might be pushed back to two decades at least, as in the chronological order fixed by Dr. K. C Pandey this Stotra stands at No. 13. Hence we might safely assume that his literary career commenced from 970 A. D. According to his own testimony he adopted many Gurus for pursuing knowledge in different fields and even went outside Kashmir, presumably to Jalandhar to find a Guru "Shambo Nath" there. The years of initiation after which maturity dawned on him might be taken not less than 30 years, after which, confidence was gained by him to write independently. Hence we might place his birth near about 940- A. D. He might have lived even beyond 1015 A. D. and the varacity of the tradition prevalent in Kashmir to this day, that he entered a cave while reciting the Bhairavastava alongwith 1200 disciples, and was never seen again cannot be doubted. This cave, alleged to have received the mortal frame of Abhinavagupta, is situated at "Birwa" village some five miles from Magam on the Gulmarg range.

The thirst for knowledge in our author was insatiable. A bevy of Gurus was adopted by him for this purpose. According to his own statement he read at the feet of :

Subject	
1. Narasimha Gupta (His father).	Grammar.
2. Vainanatha.	Dvaitadvaita Tantras.
3. Bhuti Rajatanaya.	Daulistic Saivism
4. Bhuti Raja.	Brahma- Vidya.
5. Laksmanagupta.	Pratyabhijna.
6. Indu Raja.	Dhvani.
7. Bhatta Tota.	Dramaturgy

He had other Gurus also but the subjects have not been specified in their cases. From all his compositions at least 19 such preceptors can be gleaned.

As will be said later, the 10th and 11th centuries in Kashmiri literary lore have been a landmark. The influence of religion has been pronounced. A climate of religions renaissance was ushered in and many stalwarts like Anandavardhana, Vamana, Ksemendra, Bilhana, Kalhana and last but not the least Abhinavagupta contributed himself in making the sanskrit literary tradition richer and all the more diverse, in as much as, the subjects like rhetories, dramaturgy, poetry, history and philosophy, were treated in an admirable way. So, it can be of value to learn that the whole family of Abhinavagupta was renowned for its unique literary bent of mind. His uncle Vamana Gupta was an expert in poetics and he initiated our author into this field. In the Abhinava Bharati Abhinavagupta quotes him and is also included in the list of his teachers. His younger brother Manoratha was admitted to the discipleship of his brother-Abhinava gupta-perhaps he was first in that order. His five cousins Ksema, Utpala, Abhinava, Chakraka and Padamgupta were also very well-read. If Ksema be identified with Ksema Raja the Author of Spanda-Nirnaya and other treatises on Shaivism, then the scholarship of his cousin is beyond doubt. It need not be reiterated that his father Narasimhagupta possessed intellectual calibre of highest order and was proficient in all the Shastras and a great devotee of Shiva. In this atmosphere of devotion and learning par excellence, Abhinava Gupta was mentally groomed to undertake the stupendous task awaiting him. So, it is not surprising to find that "Jayaratha" alludes to his being 'Yoginibhu', that his parents while uniting for his birth rose above all worldly desires and identified themselves with Shiva and Shakti. The offspring thus born called Yoginibhu, is looked upon as a fit vehicle for propounding and propagating Shaivistic Monism.

Not only this, Abhinavagupta has been called a Bhairava incarnate by the commentator of Parmartha-Sara; "Yoga - Raja," while commenting on the last line of this treatise:

< verses >

has explained this epithet at length. So the traditional belief amongst the Kashmiri Pandits that Abhinavagupta was a living Bhairava in human form is not without basis.

Now we come to the place of his mental activity. From his own authority we learn that Lalitaditya had got built a palatial house for Atrigupta when he carried him along from Antarvedi to Kashmir (quoted earlier). The house was built on the banks of Vitasta. However, in one of the Mss of Tantraloka belonging to Late Pt. Maheshwar Razdan there is a different reading as meaning "at the head of Vitasta" i.e. the source. However, in the quotation is used the pronoun (in) agreeing with (Srinagar) hence this seems to be an interpolation.

In the first verse on the Vartika on "Malini Vijaya" it has been specifically laid down:

< verses >

"The Kashmirian Abhinavagupta is the East of the city known as Pravarapura (Srinagar) composed the Vartika on the very first verse of "Malinivijaya".

From this it is clear that Srinagar was divided into several zones then - East, West etc. and in the East Zone our author lived; but nothing can be said whether this was his ancestral home or an acquired house. However, there is a reference in the Tantraloka of his having shifted to another city at the request of one of his disciples Mandra:

< verses >

"Mandra in order to save him (Abhinavagupta) from distraction requested him to shift to his beautiful city."

It is also clear from this, that this earlier house must have been located in a very busy centre of the city, so was not suitable for his calm composure and undivided attention, so necessary for the delineation of such a terse and delicate subject as philosophy.

On the authority of Kalhana we know that Lalitaditya had built three more cities in the outskirts of Pravarapura Srinagar. The one Parihasapura and the other Lali'pura and the third Lokapunya. However, the former was meant as a respite for the war-worn king and all the amenities of Parihasa (enjoyment) were provided there: Hence it could not be a quiet city. The latter was not taken kindly to by the king as it was built by his architect in his absence, hence it must have been comparatively deserted and all the same calmer. It might be surmised that Mandra lived there and invited his Guru to that very city for being quieter and far from the madding crowds, so that his "distraction could be averted". The third city along with a cluster of villages was given in offering to Vishnu.

Even though Abhinavagupta lived during the span of 940 - 1015 A. D. but no city worth the name was founded by the kings during this period. Although he saw the reigns of Yashaskara, Samgrama Deva, Ksema Gupta, Didda and Samgrama Raja, yet the cities founded by Lalitaditya still found favour with the people. Even though one century and a half had elapsed, the twin cities of Parihasapura and Lalitpura had not fallen into oblivion. In the reign of Samgrama Raja (1003 - 1028 A. D.) the Brahmins of Parihasapura started a fast to bring down the fall of Tunga his Prime Minister. This allusion to the city nearly two hundred years after it was founded, testifies to its being very important at that time and might have been the royal capital even.

Before an attempt is made to pen down the contribution of Abhinavagupta to Shaivism, it will be more appropriate to trace the origin of Siva worship in Kashmir. Perhaps as a corollary to this, we shall have to furnish at least the rough contours on which the earliest religion of Kashmiris was based.

The most ancient book on Kashmir History 'Nilamata Purana' specifically lays down that Shiva and His Shakti were propitiated at that time, but other deities such as Ganesha, Puranic gods, Vedic pantheon and even Buddha (as an Avatara) were not ignored. This fact without any doubt proves that earliest Kashmiri religion was polytheistic in content and character, but the worship of Shiva and His consort Parvati had an edge over all other gods. Not only this, the aboriginal deities like Nikumbha etc. were also owned. On the same subject S. C. Ray observes, "that the earliest inhabitants of Kashmir probably cherished some aboriginal beliefs. In the third century B. C. Buddhism seems to have made some headway in Kashmir. Among Hindu gods Shiva either originated or entered the valley some time before the faith of the Shakya prince.

In this connection the word "Naga used to describe the people of Kashmir, did drop a hint as to its being related to Snake - worship. But word "Naga" in Sanskrit does not mean snake only, it is synonymous with a semi-divine being a cruel person, an elephant or a cloud also. However, Shiva's association with the religion of Kashmir did provide a context for translating "Naga" as a serpent, as it is worn by the Lord around His neck. In this connection H. H. Wilson remarks, "originally, no doubt, it (the religion of Kashmir) was opiate or snake- worship, but this is a part of the Hindu ritual and the Nagas are included in the orthodox pantheon" So it is abundantly clear that the ancient religion of Kashmir was an amalgam of the "new" as preached by Kashyapa and the old - that of the aboriginals whose king was Nikumbha. Even though other gods were also worshiped, the emphasis on Shiva and His Shakti was pronounced. The influence of Buddhism as such in those times was not worth mentioning, since it was only being adopted by the land then, and after some time did give a fillip to the philosophical ramblings which reigned supreme for near about two centuries in Kashmir.

Kalhana has copiously furnished us the proof that Buddhism and orthodox creeds of Shiva and Visnu co-existed in a most tolerant manner here. Whenever any endowment is made for religious purposes, or a Stupa or a Vihara is constructed, the individual or the king, or his members of the family or his Minister with equal zeal and faith constructed shrines of Shiva and Vishnu also.

However, this climate of accommodation between the two faiths - Hinduism and Buddhism was disturbed by the advent of Nagarjuna on the Kashmir scene. He lived at Shadarhatvana (modern Harwan) and took preaching of Buddhism in right earnest. This provoked the "orthodoxy". Insult was added to the injury by King Kanishka (125-60 A.D) who encouraged the propagation of the Buddhistic teachings and gave it royal patronage. Kalhana while recording all this has to say: "After defeating in disputations all learned opponents (Nagarjuna), these enemies of tradition brought to an end etc. the observance of the rites prescribed in the Nilamata." This was a veritable revolt against the established faith of the land and the astute Brahmin lost no opportunity in providing a more palatable alternative to Buddhistic tenets - which may well be called the seeds of Shaivism which sprouted forth in full bloom later.

Perhaps this pre-supposes the give and take which must have preceded before Buddhism went into oblivion in Kashmir. The most potent cause for its decline was that the Shaivism fought on its own ground and assimilated such tenets which were finding favour with the people. Thus the Shaivas on account of their exceptional erudition did provide such a faith to people which though new, was not at all alien. It respected orthodoxy but at the same time did not abhor the "new". A compromise between the two did the trick and Buddhism had to eat the humble pie.

Moreover, the versatile Brahmin of Kashmir did not stop to lick his wounds inflicted by Buddhist propagation, but like a seasoned general attacked its weakest point i. e. the silence about God. Indians at large and a Kashmiri especially, are a God-fearing nation, hence the Shaivite knowing full well this credulity of a Kashmiri, transplanted God again in their faith by naming it Paramshiva or Sadashiva with its antecedent - the Para Shakti. In all the treatises on Shaivism hair-splitting arguments are laid down in proving the existence of the "Supreme Soul". Hence the Buddhists had to take up to their heels in the absence of any powerful counter- argument on this subject. Perhaps the people in general, also became sceptic about their faith, because their belief in God is skin-deep. This has actually permeated their marrow even. They could consequently not reconcile themselves with more or less "Godless" faith. The adage "Had there been no God, Man would have invented one" was proved to the hilt in Kashmir. Herein it will be of interest to mention that Shankaracharya's visit to Kashmir acted as the last nail in the Buddhist coffin.

Shankara after his unparalleled victory over the Buddhists in plains came to Kashmir sometime about the second decade of the 9th century. Even though no other reference regarding his visit to Kashmir has been traced as yet, the popular tradition corroborates its authenticity. This cannot be dismissed cheaply, in as much as, that on the perusal of Shankara's treatises it becomes patently clear that his compositions did influence the Kashmiri Saiva literature; more so his imprint on Pratyabhijna (theory of recognition) is obviously discerned. In his "Dakshina Murti Stotra" commented upon by his pupil Sureshvaracharya the conception of ultimate reality as preached by him and known as Tantric philosophy and that expounded in Pratyabhijna seems to be the same. Not only this, even some technical terms as used in Pratyabhijna have been earlier used by him in the same sense:

(1)

< verses >

(Dakshina Murti Stotra Commentary (2), 13)

(2)

< verses >

(Ishwara Pratyabhijna Vimarshini- 1, 39)

Translation: (i)

" The universe has been created out of knowledge and action and seems also possessed of consciousness."

Translation (ii)

" Knowledge and action are considered the source of all living beings."

(1)

< verses >

(Dakshina Murti Stotra Commentary (2), 13)

(2)

< verses >

(Ishwara Pratyabhijna Vimarshini 1, 207)

Translation (i)

"Therefore, that shining spirit follows everywhere the opposite direction (beyond time and space)."

Translation (ii)

" The shining supreme spirit is not bound by space and time."

Such examples can be multiplied and so the internal evidence culled from the compositions of Shankara regarding his coming to Kashmir and subsequently not only the thought but even the expressions being found common in both (as above), it may be safely inferred that he did come to Kashmir and had presumably discussions with the propounders of Shaiva faith here. On a profound perusal of his "Saundarya Lahari" it becomes lucid that he got influenced also by Kashmirian Shaiva Acharyas and did concede the existence of monistic Tantras and also their number:

< verses >

(Saundaraya Lahari)

Translation:

(O Devi), You having built the whole universe with sixty four Tantras.....

Hence we come to the stage when Buddhism being banished, the vacuum thus created began to be filled by the Acharayas of Saivism who had the blessings of Shankaracharya also.

However, the Buddhists definitely earn credit for initiating the modus operandi of discussions, symposia and religious congregations for propagating their philosophy and projecting this to the masses. We have references of Buddhist councils being held here in Ashoka's and Kanishka's time. In this connection Dr. R. K. Kaw has to say "It will be observed that Buddhists initiated a critical view in matters which were so far believed only as gospel truths." Hence as a reaction to this, the Brahmin votaries of Shiva and Shakti also inducted into their cult the method of philosophical reasoning and persuasive argumentation. "Shaiva Literature" is fully replete with these two ingredients.

The whole of Shaiva literature comes under the name of Trika, Trikashastra or Trikashasana. The derivation of the epithet "Trika" among other things can be ascribed to triple principle with which this system deals e. g. Shiva, Shakti, Anu; Pati, Pasha and Pashu; Nara, Shakti and Shiva; Para and Aparā. and Parapara and finally Bheda, Abheda; Bheda, and Abehda; or it may have been called as such, "For

the reason that its chief authority is the the triad consisting of three chief Agamas - Siddha, Namaka, and Malini. This literature falls into three categories:

- i) The Agama - Shastra.
- ii) The Spanda - Shastra.
- iii) Pratyabhijna - Shastra.

"The Agamas are believed to be revelations, having come down through ages." These emphasize the doctrine of Jnana (knowledge) and Kriya (action) for becoming one with the superself.

The most important composition of this branch are the "Shiva Sutras." Their authorship is attributed to Lord Shiva and were in course of time revealed to Sage Vasugupta. On the authority of Raja Tarangini we know that Bhatta Kallata, the pupil of Vasugupta lived in the reign of Avanti Varman (855- 883 A. D.) Hence it is clear that Vasugupta whose reputation was established as a Shaiva teacher must have preceded him at least by 30 years if not more i.e. 825 A. D. The purpose of writing this thesis (or communicating it as the tradition goes) was to counteract the dualistic teachings in vogue at that time. In Shivasutra Vimarshini by Kshema Raja, it is clearly laid down:

< verses >

" The occult school (of Saiva) may not get into oblivion by the preaching of duality amongst the people - with this purpose."

So the Agamas taught the pure non-dualistic Monism.

The Spandashastra actually amplifies the main principles of shaivism in greater detail than the Shiva-Sutras. The main treatise on this Shastra is Spanda Sutras or Karikas which have been commented upon by Kallata, Ramakantha, Utpalavaishnava (Not of Shaiva School) and Kshema Raja. The content of philosophical reasoning is missing in the main treatise, while the commentators have tried to supply it with meaningful success. Kshema Raja in his commentary ascribes to Vasugupta the authorship of this Shastra also. But Utpala (Vaishnava) uses the unambiguous phrase while commenting on the very first Sutra in his Pradipika. He gives it as "Sangraha- granthakrta" meaning "a work which gathers together the meaning of Shiva Sutras." In one of his verses he attributes its authorship to Bhatta Kallata via Vasu Gupta. But this verse is not found in the recension of Kshema Raja. However, it is to make clear that contents being the same in Shiva-Sutras and Spanda Sutras the authorship could not be different. As the Shiva-Sutras have been revealed to Vasu Gupta, hence Spanda Shastra may also be his acquisition. The word "Spanda" as prefixed with this branch of Trika means "a throb", "quivering" or "movement." The quivering of the mind receives the beautitude of the "Super soul" and hence attains ~he "Nishkampa Pradipa" < unquivering flame of the lamp as given in Bhagvad Gita, or the name to this treatise may be explained as the "throbs of Lord Shiva" clothed in words by later Yogis and Siddhas such as Vasugupta etc.

The third and the most important school of Shaivadarshan is the Pratyabhijna cult with which our author is directly concerned. Somananda is said to be the originator of this branch and has been called as "Tarkasya Karta" meaning the founder of reasoning". He was a pioneer in grafting the element of argument reasoning, support and refutations on rational lines into this system. The first book of this system is "Shiva Drishti" whose authorship is attributed to Soma Nanda. Unfortunately this masterly treatise is now extant upto four Ahnikas (Chapters) only; atleast it had seven as is clearly quoted by Abhinavagupta in Para- Trimsika. Perhaps this is the main reason as to why his erudite commentator

Utpaladeva does not go beyond 74th verse of the IV Ahnika. Subsequently the three chapters were salvaged and the number made seven; but it seems that these form a part of the Vrtti (gloss) compiled by Somananda himself and not the original one. Tho "Forte" of Somananda's teaching is:

< verses >

"Shiva" the auspicious and Supreme soul, is the giver and he is the enjoyer. This whole universe is (permeated by) Shiva."

His disciple and at times taken to be his son also. Utpaladeva commented in a most scholastic manner on the "Shiva Drishti" of Soma Nanda, and for the first time introduced the element of Pratyabhijna in Shaiva literature. He named his treatise, though based on the doctrine taught by Somananda as "Ishwara Prtayabhijna-Karikas" in Sutra form consisting of four Adhikaras (cantos), further sub-divided into a number of Ahnikas or sections. He also propounded "Svatantriya" theory of his own, independent of his Guru Somananda. By Svatantriya he means the "self dependent power of the lord". His exposition of the "Recognition Doctrine" has the sanctity and the authority what it should have deserved, and was even equated with Somananda the originator as:

< verses >

"Reflection of the wisdom of Somananda"

(Ishwara Pratyabhijna Vimarshini - 2, introduction)

Perhaps being very much enamoured by the wisdom of Utpaladeva, Abhinavagupta composed the shorter and longer versions of his commentary on the Ishwara Pratyabhijna of Utpala; who discarding all other names for this system annointed it with Pratyabhijna - recognition. This name alone has stood the test of time and is perhapes synonymous with Trika as a whole; while in, essence this is not the case. The order of Gurus (Guru Parampara) as given in Shaiva Darshani's as follows:

< verses >

"I bow to Lord Shiva, Vasugupta, Somananda, and Utpalacharaya, Lakshmana (Gupta), Abhinavagupta and Kshema Raja."

A faint echo of teacher-taught relation can also be heard into it. Vasugupta pupil of Lord Shiva, Somananda pupil of Vasugupta, Utpala pupil of Soma Nanda, Abhinavagupta pupil of Lakshmanagupta and Kshemaraja the pupil of Abhinavagupta. Had both Vasugupta and Somananda been the pupils of Lord, then the insertion of "Cha" would have made it clear.

From this it is clear that Vasugupta and Somananda represent the originators through the good offices of Lord Shiva while Utpala, Lakshmanagupta, Abhinavagupta and Kshemaraja constitute the heirs to this system, who in their own way interpreted, supplemented and enriched the word sent to the humanity by Lord Shiva through the first two Gurus.

Out of a host of such interpretors Abhinavagupta is not only the best but also possessed of multifaced genius. Not confining himself to the ramifications of "Saiva Darshan" he also strayed into the domain of Rhetorics by subscribing to Rasa theory in his commentary on Bharata Natya Shastra, and also into poetics when elucidating the "Dhvani" as enunciated by Ananda Vardhana. However, we have to delimit his versatility and shall describe him only as a religious philosopher.

However, before embarking upon this, it will not be out of place to give roughly the main characteristics of this "Darshan" so that in light of these, we might determine the place of Abhinavagupta as a philosopher; as to how he explained these and for sooth, even improved upon these.

The " Saiva Shasana" starts with the assumption that Atman is the real and innermost self in everything. It does not undergo any change and is a vehicle to experience the "Parameshwara" or the Chaitanayam. This "Parameshwara" or Param Shiva" is not bound by time, space and form, so is omnipotent and omnipresent. However, He has a dual role - the one which pervades whole of the universe and the other transcendental in which he defeats all mainfestations. His power of pervading the universe is called Shakti, but coming out of His fountain-head is only an aspect of His and not in any way different from Him. Even though these Energies or powers have been called numerous, yet only five are the most notable. The Chita Shakti (the power of resplendence), Ananda Shakti (the power of bliss), Ichha Shakti (the power of desire), Jnana Shakti (the power of knowledge), and the Kriya Shakti (the power of action), with the help of these, the "Paramshiva" manifests itself which in Saiva language is called Udaya, Unmesha, Abhasa or Srishti.

However, to create a universe is the necessity even though He is world-incarnate. Hence the universe has been thought to be composed of "Shiva Tattva (pure, auspicious element), Shakti Tattva (potential element), Sadakhya Tattva (the element of self realisation, or being), Aishwaraya Tattva (element of identification) and last but not the least the Sad-Vidya Tattva (the element of true perception). When in between the self and self-realization, Maya (obduration, delusion) obscures the real form of objects, the Sadhaka (experiencer) has to rise above Kala (time), Niyati (sequence), Raga (attachment), Vidya (limited perception of consciousness), Kala (limited authorship). Such an experiencer who has been doped by Maya and is obsessed with time etc. is called "Purusha". Simultaneously with it is also born Prakritis, that latent power in him which goads him onto act or react. To awake from the slumber under the influence of Maya, the Purusha conjointly with Prakriti has to undergo some mental drill and comprehend the implication of Buddhi (conception), Ahanakara (personal I or ego) and Manas (desire). Taken in reverse order, the desire actuates "I" ness and at the last stage conception of things becomes clear. Hence the Purusha awakens by rejecting Maya and its five concomitants beginning with Time (Kala) etc, comes face to face with chitswaroopam resplendence or Shambhavi state and attains the Paramaishwarya or Self-dependence (Supreme bliss). This is the purport of Shaiva Darshan or Shaiva Monism as given in the "Shiva Sutra" and "Shiva Drishiti" on broad lines.

Dr. K.C. Pandey has given a long list of some 41 compositions attributed to Abhinavagupta. Among these some bear dates, some are referred to by subsequent authors and some have been owned by tradition. However, the most famous works of his on "Shaiva darshan", strictly speaking are:

1. Para - Trimshika Vivarna.
2. Pratyabhijna Vimarshini (expurgated)
3. Pratyabhijna Vivriti Vimarshini (full)
4. Tantrasara
5. Tantraloka
6. Parmarthasara
7. Commentary on Bhagvadgita called Gitartha-Sangraha.

Many other compositions of his such as "Shiva Drishtyalocana" commentary on "Shiva Drishti" as the name clearly signifies, is lost.

Chronologically speaking the "Para Trimshika" seems to be his first work in the "Shaiva Lore". It is in reality composed of the concluding portion of "Rudrayamala Tantra" belonging to Agama school on which Abhinavagupta penned down a commentary calling it Vivarna. However, the title of the book suggests it

containing thirty verses only (Trimshika), but it has even more than these. There seems to be some confusion amongst the later commentators regarding its name, while the author himself has tried to justify it like this:

"Trimshika" is so called because it is the Supreme Lord of three powers desire, knowledge, and action."

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'Para' in Shiava terminology is identical with 'Parasamvid' - the highest power of Self-Dependence. Hence 'Para Trimshika' would connote 'thirty verses of Self-Dependence', or the Super Lord of the triple formula of desire, knowledge, and action.

Pratyabhijnnavimarshini and its larger edition Viviriti belong to the Pratyabhijna (recognition) school of Shaiva Shastra as propounded by Utpala Deva and orginated by Somananda.

Tantrasara and Tantraloka deal with the same contents with the difference that the former is a brief Summary (Sara) of the latter, a voluminous treatise. The Tantrasara is couched in prose while the Tantraloka is in metrical form. These are definitely based on Malini Vijayatantra belonging to Agama school.

Parmarthsara is a philosophical composition of 105 verses and is supposed to be based on the Karikas of Shesha. In his Gitarthasangraha, Abhinavagupta has emphatically declared that freedom from all miseries can be obtained by seeing Him (Paramshiva) in everything and everywhere. This freedom cannot be achieved by renunciation of the world. The battle between Pandvas and Kaurvas is actually the race between Vidya (knowledge, perception) and Avidya (ignorance, blurred perception).

From the above it is clear that Abhinavagupta not only explained Pratyabhijna on which his fame rests, but also other Tantric works belonging to different schools. He did not believe in isolation but in collation which is the keynote of his philosophic bent of mind . Other commentators like Utpala, Kshemaraja etc. confined themselves to a single path but Abhinavagupta not only rode on other paths but also proved the old adage "All roads lead to Rome." He made a compromise between different views and presented such a philosophy of life which never grew stale. His synthesis - oriented approach to life gave a meaningful and healthy direction to his ideas.

Philosophy, strictly speaking, is the science of knowledge or the Tattva Vidya, the lore of the real nature of human soul or material world as being identified with the supreme spirit. Since knowledge emanates from Him, hence it can be usefully used as a medium to interpret Him. If there be no originality and no Shaivacharya has claimed it, since "Shivasutras" are the word of God, the originality definitely lies in interpreting these and unravelling the esoteric content in a most intelligible and homely idiom. In this field also Abhinavagupta has no parallel.

It is also to be remembered that our author does not rest his oars on the philosophic polemics, but also connects these with the ritual. Herein also he shows a master - mind in fitting ritual with philosophy, the mundane with the the spirit, the real with the ideal and to crown all practice with the precept. On account of his versatile genius he is at home in explaining the abstract in the context of the concrete. While reveling in the super world he does not forget the world as such. He is not a dreamer but an awake artist feeling rightly the pulse of super sensuousness but at the same time not forgetting the converse form of it. He tries to explore the obverse and the converse at the same time. Hence his treatment of the subject is more realistic. Perhaps that is the main reason as to why pratyabhijna school though bequeathed to him by earlier Acharyas was actually made popular by him. He not only translated the terse philosophy in the tongue of the people but also gave it the most natural direction. Abhinavagupta does not claim any originality for introducing this "Shaiva Darshan", but most candidly records:

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"Having thought over the views of Shri Somananda, I systematized these."

Moreover, in the realm of philosophy, originality is a misnomer; because the philosophy as such is the cumulative thinking processed through ages and then finding expression through the pen or mouth of an erudite scholar. Even Shankara without mincing words, categorically states that the authenticity of a system is to be tested on the touchstone of Vedas. Somananda, the originator of Pratyabhijna school admits that his "Shaivadrishi" is based on Shastras, though his pupil Utpalacharya testifies to its showing new path for final emancipation. In all humility (because true knowledge bestows humility) Abhinavagupta follows the same tradition of thinking.

It may be contended that he did not compose any treatise independently, but only commented upon the works of his predecessors. Therefore he can be a commentator at best, but not an original thinker.

Commentary from Abhinavagupta's view point is not merely a jugglery of words but actually the personal experience gained through spiritual experiments. He lived the maxims on which he commented. So in the exposition of such matters he sets for himself three norms - first being the personal experience, reason the second, and ancient authority the third. So the contribution of Abhinavagupta to this system of philosophy is not simply of academic interest but is replete with other dimensions of thinking which even the originators failed to comprehend. The commentators preceding him gave mere dogmatic statements of the basic tenets of the Spanda school. They dared not subtract or add to these by way of argument, reasoning and judicious explanation for or against the fundamental principles. Even though some commentators notably Utpalacharya did introduce the element of argument into it, but his domain was only one - sided related to Pratyabhijna only and not the "Trika" as a whole. Abhinavagupta on the contrary did improve on him, though being his disciple, making it broad-based and embracing the whole gamut of Shaiva Shastra. He provided rational base to it and also dwelt on the ritualistic aspect of this system. He has exhaustively explained the Monistic Shaiva rituals also. He made a happy blend of philosophy and psychology, quoted extensively from the Agamas and other established authorities; perhaps he has every right to assert:

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"I (we) will unravel the "unseen" at the bidding of my Guru and Lord."

This verse does allude to the shortcomings of the earlier commentators who could not convert (unseen) into (seen) and so it was left to Abhinavagupta to perceive it in light perspective and accordingly transmit it to others through his writings - commentaries. His scathing criticism of Buddhists and schools of philosophy other than Shaiva with biting wit and pungent sarcasm is perhaps the most original content of what he has written.

His brief yet most pregnant definition of "Trika" definitely portrays his mastery over this system:

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"The unison of Shiva (Paramashiva) and "Shakti" (Para Shakti) is termed as supertrika".

Very succinctly he also lays down the aim of this Shastra - "The removal of veil of ignorance." However, the fundamental difference between the Vedanta and Shaivism though professing the same aim, is real rather than apparent. In Vedanta the negation of the facts of experience are a must presupposition for realization of the self; The illusion regarding the snake and rope is quite known. But in Trika there is no negative approach towards the universe but in fact an affirmation of the facts of experience with new

interpretation. With this positive understanding of the environs, the realizer is simply face to face with self-recognition which in Shaiva-terminology is called self-realization.

While dealing with Pratyabhijna (self-recognition) Guru Somananda defines it as the two fold function of perception and remembrance in its totality at the same time. Utpala Deva thinks that the term Pratyabhijna connotes, the power of self, the power of cognition and power of action - a triple amalgam:

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In this realm also Abhinavagupta shows his originality in defining the term "Pratyabhijna" as:

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"Recognition of that supreme self is to be face to face with what was forgotten through effulgence (of consciousness).

While explaining the word Pratipam he very lucidly says that " (it) means that which was forgotten, or concealed but now coming into view not through remembrance but by clear cognition."

Furthermore to make it more lucid, Abhinavagupta explains that cognition is composed of:

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"When the past perception and the present perception are revived (by the object coming in full view) ".

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Giving an example of past perception and present perception and their getting revived he says:

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"He is that very Chaitra" (name of a person, who was already seen before). His coming face to face now is called present perception and his cognition (that he is really the same person) was done by the previous or past perception, the bridge between the perceptions being remembrance born of mental impression. Our author's independent thinking can very easily be inferred from an ingenious definition of Pratyabhijna.

Herein he does not follow his preceptor but provides a very homely definition, when he says that the Lord is possessed of Infinite Powers. This characteristic of Him is corroborated extensively by Puranas, Siddhantas and Agamas as also by reasoning and inference etc. When by direct experience we ascertain His Nature in our own self, this may be termed as having recognized Him, or in other words, the cognition takes place.

Abhinavagupta does not consider remembrance the only vehicle of identifying the present perception with the past one. Even though Somananda explicitly lays down the role of remembrance in connecting the present and past perception and Utpala also endorses it; Abhinavagupta comments:

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"But being face to face and not by remembering alone, the knowledge (perception) because of being made clear, Recognition takes place."

He very cogently argues that remembrance is related to sight; first having seen a certain object we are reminded of it when some such form crosses our eyes. But there are cases of falling in love without seeing each other, wherein the medium of arousing love and accepting the lover from the depths of heart is confined to "either the words of female messenger or confidante or the perception of such traits in him (as being her ideal) or by any other deeds which made him renowned, she is persuaded to accept him". Here in this case sight has played no part, hence the image which first sight would have caught cannot be repeated at the subsequent sights. The remembrance is altogether absent in it. The master philosopher goes on to argue that in this case the love-lorn lady naturally weaves the pictures of his beauty, gallantry or any other exceptional distinction on the authority of three sources mentioned above. This picture will definitely be at variance with the one if the lover meets her incognito. There is no repetition of image as in the case of "Chaitra" (given earlier), how will the recognition take place? Abhinavagupta raising the controversy himself provides a most plausible answer to this predicament. When incognito hero is introduced as lover whom she has been loving for his qualities all along, the heroine receives a shock instead of joy. As long as the qualities of the hero are not revealed to her and she certifies these by her own experience and also on the authenticity of others. "He is that very person" the recognition is not so simple and easy. Hence the obstruction between what has been heard and what is actually seen is to be removed, so that the identification between the "imaginary" and the "real" is possible. Thus at this juncture the recognition is possible only by the removal of the veil as also the reconciliation between both the mental images one imaginary or unseen and the other seen or face to face. Accordingly Abhinavagupta supplements the remembrance (smaran) with (anubhava) cognition derived from personal observation or experience. On the seeming contradiction between unity and plurality, Utpaladeva contends that:

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"The internal reality of things of diverse nature is unity".

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"that very unity attaining the knowledge or perception of senses."

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"gets multiplied under the influence of time, space and real nature of objects." Like an original thinker Abhinavagupta makes it more clear and simple by saying:

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"The cause or no cause are one and same, so unity and plurality can be the attributes of one and same object."

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"So, in essence the objects internally are one consciousness, but practically speaking as being differentiated by the blue and yellow (colours) unchangeable indeterminate or determinate imply multiplicity externally at the illusionary level."

It will be pertinent here to allude to the aim of the system of philosophy as preached by Abhinavagupta. The unavoidable preamble to every philosophic thought is to describe the why and what of that what teacher or preacher wishes us to know. In the treatment of this subject Abhinavagupta set norms of personal experience, reasoning and thirdly the scripture and in the context of these he tries to explain the domain of his experience. Herein he exhibits a marvelous sense of independent judgment. He does not accept the theories of Logicians as given in Nyaya Shastra, or as expounded in Vaisheshika in details or

fundamentals. From the dualism of Sankhya, idealism of Baudhas and monism of Vedanta he only differs mostly in fundamentals. According to him the world of experience is not God-made nor a portion of Prakriti (Sankhya) nor purely a subjective experience (Baudhas), nor even a mere illusion (Vedanta). It is real as it is a manifestation of superself or universal consciousness. In support of his theory he introduces the Abhasa Vada, which to define most briefly in his own words:

" All that is i.e. all that can be said to exist in any way and with regard to which the use of any kind of language is possible be it the subject, the object or the means of knowledge or the knowledge itself, is Abhasa."

He further contends that subject and object cannot be divorced from each other, so the self also from the not - self. Knowledge of objects is the the inter-mixture of the both, if these are treated as separate and opposite entities, there cannot be any concordance between these just as between light and darkness. Hence Abhinavagupta most cogently supplies the answer:

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"The (ultimate) in form is immanent and without form is transcendental."

In order to discriminate between His two aspects- transcendental and immanent-Vimarsha is the inevitable instrument. It could have been compared to the image- reflecting nature of a mirror, but during darkness images cannot be reflected, hence it needs external agents to illumine it. But the self does not need any such illuminator and can receive images by virtue of his self - independence "Svatantraya."

This Abhasa in its immanent aspect is composed of "Prakasha" and "Vimarsha" .

In Shaiva terminology by "Prakasha" is meant residual traces also which are essentially the same as their substratum. As has been said above, these images being reflected are the same as Prakasha - the cause of reflection-light-in the ordinary sense. This "Prakasha" is definitely synonymous with "Sanskara". "Vimarsha" may be explained as the power of self to know it- in all its purity and not being obsessed by affections whatsoever.

Abhinavagupta has most successfully made his point in this field by saying:

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"This Self- Dependence (Svatantraya) faculty is essentially the power of action, which propels the "bliss of consciousness" and that may be taken as Vimarsha, its preponderance is quite appropriate." This word "Svatantraya" has been given other names also by the Preceptors of Shaivism Vasugupta calls it "Chaitanya" being associated with "Chita" mind. The Spanda school takes it as "Sphurta" or Spanda. It is also called as "Mahasatta" and Paravak. This extraordinary interest in this faculty of "Svatantraya" by Shaiva teachers only proves as to what importance they attach to it. Perhaps it will be pertinent to relate here the conception of "Maya" as propounded by "Shaivas" and what personal contribution has been made by Abhinavagupta to illustrate and explain it.

"Maya" has been treated as a force of obscuration.

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It is more precisely born of the limited experience and so the perception of that universal experience gets blurred hence called "Ashudhavan" the path of impurity, as also the Mayadhavan, the course of Maya.

However, Abhinavagupta, gives a very concise yet pregnant definition of "Maya" by saying that "Maya" is the unmixed part of that transcendental self which engenders the shade of distinction in His "Svatantraya" power bereft of any kind of aids." Moreover this very faculty infatuates hence may be equated with Moha (embarrassment). Hence he says "Maya is the name of seduction". By the introduction of the word "Moha" as an equivalent of Maya it becomes very easy for the layman even to understand it in essence, the Moha of Arjuna being very well known. This Maya not only conceals the true nature of things and also self, but the experience of of identity with the super-self is also obliterated. To bridge the presence of identity of the self with the superself, the Jnana (perception) plays a prominent part. The Jnana (true perception) has been enunciated as having two aspects, Baudha (intellectual) and Paurusha (spiritual), the latter is the panacea for removing the obscuration because "the experimenter having attained the stage of Highest bliss when his animal instincts have vanished altogether," finds that kind of perception which can differentiate between the real and the unreal. Consequently the course of Maya is replaced by "Transparent course."

Now the idea of "Moksha" (emancipation) as conceived by the Shaivas deserves some mention. While defining "Moksha", Abhinavagupta has to say:

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"The purity of consciousness, devoid of significance or otherwise is not only called "Moksha" but can taken any other name also."

Proceeding further, he explains the consciousness as:

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"The state of consciousness is nothing but Supreme perception."

From the above it is clear that "Moksha" is subjective realization of one's self and is both unilluminable by any external agent and unknowable by any means of knowledge.

It is super-transcendental state of experience. The three impurities of Maya comprising perception, action and innate ignorance (Anava) are to be surpassed as a whole. The predominance of Jnana (perception) is treated as a means of emancipation by other systems of Indian philosophical thought too, but Shaivas do not subscribe to this view in totality. They contend that even if the Jnana impurity is conquered, still the realizer cannot be treated as having been liberated in real sense of the term, in as much as, the two remaining impurities still persist in him. Hence the perfect freedom according to Trika can be got only through cognition - when all these three impurities get dissolved simultaneously into that supreme soul (Samvit).

Finally, the image of Abhinavagupta as a philosopher can remain incomplete if his arguments to refute various theories of Buddhists, Sankhyas, Naiyayikas and others are not reproduced here. Among the four schools of Buddhist philosophy only two Sautantrikas and Vijanavadins have been singled out for criticism by Abhinavagupta.

The first school argues that perception is momentary, since everything is momentary. The object of perception justt as a jar etc. ceases to exist immediately after casting it reflection on the eye and other sense-organs. By inference it can be established that the object and its reflection cannot co-exist. The one being the cause and the other the effect.

Abhinavagupta proceeds most intelligently to smash this verbose of Buddhist argumentative acumen. "This external object is prone to perception, if this is not the case then no inference can be drawn even. From the rising smoke the inference of fire is quite clear, but the fire as such has already caught our

perception in our kitchen or elsewhere." So it becomes quite clear that object cannot be detached from the subject. If these two are divided, then the question of building a bridge from one to another is very difficult.

The Vijnanavadins (sensationalists) do not at all believe in the existence of the external world. According to them self-consciousness is momentary and proceeds in the form of a chain or a stream. The links in chain are the Vasanas, which generate numerous sensations, called as daily cognitions. Hence a cognition is nothing but a presentiment brought about by Vasana.

Abhinavagupta proceeds to refute this theory by vomiting out the contradiction inherent in this theory in as much as this school of Buddhistic philosophy divides the existentiality in two groups the real (parmartha) and the apparent. The Vijnana only is real and that is reflected in it has only an apparent entity. The learned Shaiva commentator further contends logically that even if the apparent be unreal but its causes or source is to be admitted as real; but how can what is nothing in itself be the cause of something? When the sensationalist brings in the Vasana element he merely repeats what the Bahayarthavadin means by object. How can even Vasana be the cause of presentiments which have no variety in themselves, and if each stream of self-consciousness is different from the rest, if the sensation caused by its own Vasana is exclusive and independent of each other, then each soul will be living in a world of its own and there would be no collaboration of many individuals in respect of the same object for instance carrying a heavy log.

Furthermore, Abhinavagupta proceeds to dismantle the house of sand built by Mimamsakas whose chief exponent is said to be Kumarila Bhatta. His Prakatatavada lays down that the relation between the subject and object is brought about by the "movement of the knowing-self and is an object of internal perception." He takes knowledge to mean simply an act of cognisor which engenders perception and manifested state in the object.

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Abhinavagupta proceeds to remark that Kumarila being a dualist cannot conceive the self-effulgent nature of knowledge. If the subject and object have an exclusive existence at the time of cognition and at the stage of manifestation, this is a part of the object exactly as are the other qualities such as blackness, in the case of a jar; but it should be manifest to all and, not to a few, as can be inferred from what Kumarila says. In this way, if a jar is made by a potter- its creator - then as the mimamsakas contend it should only become manifest to him alone. So this theory of manifestedness is not tenable as it cannot explain the fact of individual experience.

The Naiyayika's theory of knowledge consists in taking it as the illuminator of the object illuminated. The knowledge can be taken as the lamp which makes the object manifest:

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This example of lamp for knowledge is not appropriate. The lamp shines independently without having any kind of relation with any object it illuminates; knowledge is not so. It cannot be divorced from its antecedents. Moreover while imparting its light to the object actually transfers its own luminosity to it, because as we know that the appearance of the object is dependent on the light, but the Naiyayikas do not hold that knowledge can affect the object, so it cannot hold water in view of the refutation given above. Now we turn over to Sankya system of philosophy which lays down that intellect is composed of three qualities - Sattva (transparency), Rajas (mobility) and Tamas (inertia). However, the content of "Sattva" (transparency) is predominant in it, so it is spotless by Nature. So it can receive reflection on all sides. It is like a mirror wherein the light of self-luminous self within and the reflection of an object outside become one. The aid of the intellect has been refuted by Abhinavagupta as follows:

The example of mirror and jar on which this theory is based is not correct, because according to this, then the reflecting agent and reflected object should be similar in their nature. Actually it is not the case; the intellect is sentient and the other insentient. They are definitely opposite to each other. Secondly even Sankhya will never admit that transperance of intellect is more than that of the self, such as the reflection of a flame in a mirror or that of the sun in the water; it cannot even satisfactorily answer that Buddhi with the light of the Luminous - self does itself become light or not. So the separate identity of intellect from the self is never possible, hence this theory does not cut much ice. So his verdict the insentient cannot have the capacity to manifest the objects, cannot stand any review whatsoever. It is definitely logically true and convincing.

Abhinavagupta does not even spare the "Dualist Shaivas" from his trenchant criticism. According to this Dualistic school of Shaivism whose chief advocate is Khetapala, the ignorance is a veil which conceals the perfection of self in respect of powers of knowledge and action. Accordingly each soul by its separate variety of power cannot come face to face with that perfection which has been actually hidden by this (power etc), when this concealing power of ignorance is shattered by Divine grace in the case of a soul, then only the soul retains its former glory.

Abhinavagupta begins the refutation with a pertinent inquiry as to what can be the reason of the destruction or otherwise of this ignorance. It can not be action because it is acknowledged to be the cause of pleasant or unpleasant experience which a person enjoys or suffers. Lord's will cannot be also responsible for this because He is above partiality. He will not free some and imprison others. The second pertinent query made by Abhinavagupta is to the effect that what and how this ignorance conceals? Souls have been called eternal and un- changing, so ignorance cannot conceal these, if we concede this, then the souls will have to become transitory. If it can affect the changeless souls, then the liberated soul of even "Shiva" cannot remain unaffected by the concealing power of knowledge and action. If this will be the case, the cognition of self can never take place. Hence this theory is not only self-contradictory but also deluding.

In this scholarly way Abhinavagupta has very intelligently pointed to "Achilles heel" inherent in each of these systems of philosophy and has unerringly established the superiority of his faith over all others. He has no mercy, no compunction in riding rough - shod over the "premise" of his rivals. Their seemingly convincing arguments cannot bear the inherent superamacy of his thought as also of his diction, and get melted like snow before the scorching rays of the sun.

Abhinavagupta like a true son of the soil, does not advocate a fanatical devotion to his line of thinking. He allows us every right to differ from him, but the irresistible charisma of his thought, couched in dignified language - does definitely enthrall us. To speak squarely, he pleads for facing life and not fleeing from it. Like a practical thinker he exhorts us to eschew the meaning of life and afterwards yoke ourselves to redeem it in its truest possible perspective. His positive attitude to life and universe makes the existence more meaningful and hence rewarding.

He does not preach to discard the world and disown its attendant responsibilities, because it is essentially real. He instead of it, asks us to recognize ourselves in the image of the Lord who is not at all different from us. A person ought to develop true perception - healthy attitude for looking at his environment - then only he can recognise Him in himself and become likewise self-effulgent. The distance between the "ideal" and "real" can be easily fathomed by cognition when the mind is prepared to receive and emit images like an unblurred mirror.

Abhinavagupta performed his mission admirably and saved the humanity from the Jig-saw of intellectual acrobatics of Buddhist theology, culminating in nothingness, and in the same way from the Jargon of other systems of Indian philosophy which neither preach practical approach nor practical thinking, only telling us to reject the "present" just to prepare for "future". But Abhinavagupta affirms the existence of the present and treats it not as a means but as an end itself. Living in the present, taking life as it comes,

taming it by the strength of perception and cognition is a sound prescription for the strife- torn world even at present, when its restiveness can easily be converted into quiet calm of super soul.

His attitude to life and its chief actor man - is summed up in this couplet; which he has understandably quoted from the Shastras:

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"He, whose hands, feet, mind, learning, religious austerity and conduct are well balanced (restrained), enjoys the fruits of piligrimage (even without going there)".

So, this Kashmiri philosopher weaning philosophy away from the mire of impracticability lives up to his name Abhinava. New from all angles, and his thought-provoking treatises breathe an air of ravishing freshness, even after a lapse of more than ten centuries.

3.0 LALLESHWARI

An apostle of Human values

Cultural heritage of a country borrows measured sustenance from the philosophy of life nurtured inch by inch, by its denizens from the time, man awoke to the consciousness of self and spirit. It may well be called the culmination of quest of man from finite mooring, to infinite dimensions. At the same time, this search of man for finding his feet on the spiritual plane, can in no way be the last word on this subject, since such pursuits are cumulative in character and content. This edifice comes into being brick by brick, hammered into proper shape by savants and saints from time to time. However, it calls for reinterpretation every day in and out, so that the erring human being, with all his frailties, in not derailed into the abyss of animality. Perhaps this is the veritable theme of the famous word of Lord Krsna in Gita "when vice prevails and virtue dwindles, I resurrect my own being for proffering refuge to the virtuous and annihilating vice completely; thus re-establishing human values in every age".



In our happy valley Lalleshwari most charitably projected such human values, so dear to Kashmiris from the dawn of history. An irrefutable proof of this attitude of conciliation instead of confrontation can be gleaned from the pages of Nilamata Purana wherein Lord Buddha has been acknowledged as an incarnation of God Avatara. Buddhism, to speak squarely, was essentially a revolt against Brahmanism, yet the catholic Brahmin with his proverbial forbearance did not use the same language or adopt the same attitude as the Buddhists had employed with respect to Brahmanism. The healthy approach of Kashmiri Brahmins was never negative in essence but purely positive. So, we can safely assert that Lalleshwari, a vigilant sentinel of Kashmiri culture displayed highest magnitude of courage and foresight in those not very auspicious times beckoning man not to discriminate on the basis of religious labels:-

<verses>

It was actually the continuation of that Catholic attitude of mind displayed by Kashmiris from times immemorial.

However, time does not maintain a uniform tenor or temper. It is at times moody and capricious; and when the political map of Kashmir was redrawn in the fourteenth century by the induction of sultans over the Kashmir scene, this accomodation of head and heart received a jolt. Kashmiris became oblivious of their pristine past; present consequently got divorced from it, mutilating its brilliant face and its attendant decorum. During those unsavoury and all the more unpalatable times, Lalleshwari fortified to her marrow by the innate strength of her conviction, rose to the occasion and strove hard put to an end to this dismal era of persecution and vandalism. In this crusade her tools were not abjuration but affirmation; bitterness changed hands with sweet and more persuasive compromise. Having elected to tread this path of self-suffering, she became a model for millions of her country-men to abjure the mundance and propitiate the sublime. It was no less than a miracle by which the sufferings of the people lost their sting and they learnt to bear up with these with stoical resistance. They were exhorted to rise above the self and reach up to the super-self at which stage pleasure or pain have no relevance or meaning. Some say it was self-deceit, fleeing from the actual life, rather self-forget-fullness to feel shy of the stark realities of

life. The most apt answer to this faulty assertion is provided by ever-awake Lalleshwari herself in these words:-

< verses >

"Some may heap cavil on me, even some may curse me; They may say whatever they like to say. Some may worship me with the flowers of inherent cognition; yet I do not feel ruffled with this kind of impeachment or praise, since I am concerned with my own self and do not grudge what others have to say about me."

Muslim rule over Kashmir, for reasons obvious, sounded the knell for the use and propagation of sanskrit language. Bilhana, the famous lyricist of Kashmir had once boasted that, "In their household the Kashmiri women even speak sanskrit and prakrit as fluently as their mother-tongue." It was now an old wooden story. However, a bridge was to be built between the present and the past for which sanskrit had been a very potent instrument; but the general public had lost contact with it. Persian was the order of the day in its stead. So, Lalleshwari chose to speak to the people in their own idiom; hence Kashmiri became the vehicle of her message. In this way, she did not only make her message more intelligible and comprehensible to the masses, but also achieved the purpose of bridging the gulf between the past and the present. Present is an improved version of the past providing the base on which future can be built.

In her time the friction between the past and the present was the loudest; hence, she like an expert alchemist, by her healing touch saved Kashmiri culture from being eroded and bruised. Her clarion call to assimilate human values in those dark days won for her the esteem and acclaim of Hindus and Muslims alike and the edge of ruthless proselytisation got blunted. It was no mean achievement on her part in uniting the lost children of one God, when every effort was being made to segregate them from each other. Her message was so universal and appealing that the tallest of Muslim Reshis of Kashmir Sheikh Noor -ud -Din Noorani made her his ideal and expressed what he owed to her in these words:-

< verses >

"That Lalla of Padmpur (Pampur) was fortunate enough in gulping the ambrosial nectarine draughts; thereby she won our adoration as an incarnation of immortal Divinity. Benevolent God, grant me also such a boon."

Lalla's message couched in quartrains called 'Vaks' is very simple and straight bereft of any curves or terseness. It is actually an exhortation to man to indulge in self-cognition. It is a readymade manual on self- education and consequent self-consciousness.

< verses >

"I felt fatigued by imessant self-search, thinking that no body could partake of that hidden perceptive knowledge; I, ultimately got immersed into it and could find admission to the Divine-bar; therein the goblets are full to the brim, but none possesses the nerve to drink these."

Mental drill is preamble to self- consciousness. At that pinnacle of self- discipline mind gets tamed automatically effortlessly:-

< verses >

"The steed of mind gallops through the sky, encompassing this whole universe. During the twinkling of an eye it can traverse millions of miles. He, who is proficient enough to put it on rails by controlling its reins, check its wayward demeanour by clipping its wings in the shape of mastering his own inhalation and exhalation can attain the stage of self- cognition."

Worship, in the words of Lalla connotes self- introspection. It has nothing to do with external paraphernalia:-

< verses >

"Mind is the flower-seller and faith the flowers. Worship should be undertaken with the offerings of mental equipoise. Shiva is to be given a bath of tears. Incantations are to be recited in silence, without making a show of these. In this way only self-consciousness can be awakened from within."

According to Lalleshwari a realizer has to hammer out his mental attitude on these lines:-

< verses >

"He, who considers his own self and others as alike, abjures distinction between 'I' and 'you', He, who treats days and nights alike; is undisturbed by pleasure or pain. He, whose mind is bereft of duality, whose heart beats for all alike; only such a realizer can perceive the highest of preceptors-Shiva." But, that shiva is within the self of the realizer, as inseparable from it as the smell from the flower. Immanence is self and transcendence is super-self-shiva in the language of Kashmiri monistic Shaivacharyas:-

< verses >

"Why do you beat your breast for nothing ? If you possess unwavering intelligence, you shall have to seek Him from within, Shiva is seated there and searching Him from outside will be of no avail. Do believe my word, baked with self- perception."

Without beating about the bush, it can be safely asserted that Lalleshwari's forte was Kashmiri Shaivism. This concept of Kashmirian philosophy actually revolutionized the age-long attitudes of man, more so of the Brahmins. It advocates a caste-less society as also abhors Kitchen-puritanism. Hindu society ailing through its own defective approach, justified such a kind of major operation for instilling evergreen health into its rusty veins. Shaiva scholars of Kashmir diagnosed the disease rightly and prescribed such an elixir for its longevity which defied the time with its nihilistic redclaws. Had not this philosophy of life been at hand to the Kashmiris at that dismal hour of history, no Hindu worth the name, would have survived in the Land of 'Kashyapa', alien culture would have made an easy morsel of him. Lalla's Vaks, are actually a Kashmiri rendering of shiva sutras; When this philosophy was born, no such predicament was there, as was faced by Lalleshwari in her own times later on. At best, shaivas had to contend with the Buddhists, whose attitude was also home-spun and not foreign in any way; Hence, Lalla had to reclaim the lost faith of her brethren, provide a viable alternative to the enticements an alien faith was offering to the people at large; and at the same time, in performing this double duty, she had to be always cross-fingered, not invite the wrath of the rulers. It definitely goes to her credit that while discharging her mission, she did not make a single enemy out of the other camp. To crown all, her message did cut through the man-made barriers of religions, Hindus as well as Muslims became her votaries with equal gusto. Her appeal was humanistic and not sectarian. Her approach was of positive affirmation and not of negative abjuration; consequently it multiplied her friends. Her ingenuity in steering safe between the two antagonistic factions is unsurpassed. She was instrumental in replacing call to steel by call to human conscience, consequently changing sourness to sweetness:-

< verses >

"We, human beings, did live in the past and we alone will be in the future also. From ancient times to the present, we have activated this world. Just like rising and setting of the sun, a usual routine, the immanent Shiva (jiva) will never be relieved of birth and death."

Lalleshwari did not preach any hard and fast religion, she even disdained ritual. She projected a way of life quite in harmony with our cultural traditions, in which a happy amalgam was made of what was good in Buddhism, Hinduism and even Islam:-

< verses >

"That transcendental-self may assume the names of Shiva, Visnu, Buddha or Brahma; I am concerned only With their efficacy in cutting asunder my worldly affections, which might be accomplished by any one of these."

Therefore, it follows from this, that she was not dogmatic or rigid either. She welcomed the healthy wafts of wind coming from any direction whatsoever, anointing her body and soul with chaste Divinity. She always kept the windows of her mind open, rejecting what was mundane and assimilating the sublime:-

< verses >

"The Super- Lord is supervising His shop with personal care. All the aspirants are eager to take away wares of their liking. Whatever, you would elect to buy, does not admit of any intermediary; It is to be earned by your own effort, since the shop is devoid of any hindrance and even a watch is not kept over it."

This is the acme of Lalla's message. Man has been exhorted to seek his own self front within, without any external aids. Self-effort is precursor of self- education finally culminating in self-consciousness - Shiva - as she calls it.

As long as the silvery bellows of the Vitasta maintain their rejuvenating rhythm, as long as the virgin snow on the Himalayan heights retains its unblemished splendour and stature, the exquisite 'Vaks' of Lalleshwari soaked to the full in the inherent values of Kashmiri culture and human understanding will go on, unimpeded of course, in providing dignity to man to recognize his own self and not to run after deluding shadows; since the culture of a land never dies, the message of Lalla portraying meaningfully the humanistic attitudes ingrained in our culture, will never grow stale. Its fragrance and flavour are evergreen.

4.0 BILHANA - THE MINSTREL

Kashmir of yore has been the cradle of Sanskrit lore and learning. From 9th century A. D. to 12th century A. D. brightest luminaries in Sanskrit literature have shone on its firmament. These four hundred years, roughly speaking, form the crux and the culmination of what may be called the creative and original literary activity of Kashmiris in the realm of Sanskrit language and literature. A galaxy of rhetoricians, philosophers, poets, and historians all by their own right brought fame and lustre to the good name of "Sharada Desa", (the land of speech) as Kashmir was popularly known then. They marvellously contributed to the richness of "Deva Vani" (Speech of gods) and immortalized its flavour and fragrance in their thought- provoking treatises.

New theories pertinent to the soul (content) and body (form) of literature were propounded. Tenets of literary Indian criticism were established for the first time in Kashmir. New standards and norms for evaluating a literary composition were enunciated; old ones were refuted by persuasive argumentation. "Aesthetic element" got its cherished place for the first time in the books on Poetics and rhetorics. To quote Dr Raghavan "If there is a prominent Indian Aesthetics which could be applied to all fine arts, it is to Kashmir we owe it ." Among these literary giants Anandvardhana Vamana, Mammatta and others are prominent.

Such diverse subjects like dramaturgy and philosophy could ably be handled by one and the same person like Abhinavagupta. The versatile genius of Kashmiri scholars is irrefutable and their erudition unquestionable. Even the minutest details did not elude their attention. Their command over language is faultless and their thought rejuvenating.

Out of such intellectual climate, enriched all the more by Nature's extravagant disposition, a unique system of philosophy was evolved known as "Saiva-Darshan", which is "the synthesis of the realistic, idealistic, voluntaristic, absolutic and mystic current of thought then prevailing in Kashmir." This system of philosophy, to speak more precisely, is a happy compromise between "the personal and the impersonal and the monistic and the dualistic approaches punctuated with the traditions and terms of thought and practices of the Buddhists and the orthodox. " Dr R. K. Kaw has one more explanation to offer :- "It has laid emphasis on the need of 'recognition' (Pratyabhijna of 'Self' (Atman), viz the supreme inheritance of man. The necessity of supersensuous experience for self- realisation is recognized owing to the limitations of man's sense and reason". Among the host of such philosophers the name of Somananda and Utpala, the propounders, and Abhinavagupta the interpreter deserve special mention. While all these sons of 'Saraswati' or 'Sharada' (Goddess of speech or learning) revelled in their ethereal imagination understandably forgetting the environments in which they were living, one polymath Ksemendra did not lose sight of the society in which he was born to breathe and could feel the ground under his feet, as the idiom goes. A realist by nature and a satirist by disposition he tried his hand on a variety of subjects including poetry, history, rhetorics, prosody, etc, but his realistic approach is pronounced throughout. He might indulge in didactics but the sting of satire is there. He has given a graphic picture of contemporary society rampant with seductive Gourtezans, cheating 'banias' and cunning and corrupt clerks. In the words of Dr. Surya Kanta, "Ksemendra's comprehensive style, his clarity of expression, his power to use satire to the best advantage and his critical insight into literature have earned for him a place among the masters of Indian literary tradition."

"History" says Macdonnel, "is the one weak spot in Indian literature. It is in fact non-existent."

The conspicuous absence of historical spirit among the ancient Indian writers is more due to their outlook on life than to their incompetence to handle this form of expression. In spite of this obvious discomfiture, Kashmir has made a substantial contribution to the art of recording chronicles in the person of Kalhana whose torch was kept alive by Jona Raja, Srivara and Prajya Bhatta in later years. 'Raja

Tarangini', a chronicle of the Kings of Kashmir, is to this day the solitary work on history pure and simple. Even though with intermixture of the supernatural and the marvellous, the historical content of this book is not altogether authentic, yet it cannot be gainsaid that Kalhana is certainly the greatest historian in Sanskrit literature."

Sanskrit as such could not understandably have been the language of the elite only as it is often contended, but could fairly be understood by the people in general. In the absence of such a hypothesis, such a gigantic literary activity could not have fructified. This very fact is further elaborated by Bilhana himself when he says :

< verses >

"Where even the women in their household speak Sanskrit and Prakrit as fluently as their mother-tongue".

This inference is furthermore corroborated by Stein when he says, "The continued popular use of Sanskrit even among Mohammadans is strikingly proved by the Sanskrit inscription on a tomb in the cemetery of Bahau- Din -Sahib at Srinagar (A. D. 1484).' It is, therefore, erroneous to assume that Sanskrit as a spoken word had lost its pristine glory. "Brief Sanskrit inscriptions without dates have been found by me on a number of old Mohammadan tombs in Srinagar, near Martand and elsewhere." During this renaissance when Sanskrit was not only the vehicle of mental gymnastics at the hands of Kashmiri scholars but also the spoken word of the people at large, Bilhana saw the light of the day. He had already a tradition behind him, a background worth its weight in gold, forming an indissoluble part of his soul even if he was physically away from his motherland.

The first extant reference about him is given by Kalhana :

< verses >

"Bilhana who had left Kashmir in the reign of King Kalasa had been made by Parmadi, the Lord of Karnata, his Chief Pandit"; when travelling on elephants through the hill-country of Karnata his parasol was borne aloft before the king. When he heard that the liberal Harsa was like a kinsman to true poets, he thought even so great a splendour a deception.

Some of his verses are also found in 'Kavya Prakasa' of Mammatta and 'Balabodhinivriti' of Katantra; some of his didactic verses not found in the works ascribed to him are also given in the anthologies, This also goes to prove that Bilhana had attained sufficient amount of popularity in his home land even though he had been physically away from it.

However, the credit of unearthing this "Jewel amongst Kashmir Poets" goes to Dr. Buhler and that also, paradoxically enough, outside Kashmir. In 1877 A. D. while in search of Sanskrit manuscripts, he came across an old palm-leaf edition of "Vikramankadeva Caritam" in Jaisalmer, formerly a central Indian State and now a part of Rajasthan.

In the Calcutta edition of Rajatarangini Rilhana is given instead of Bilhana. The astute doctor without any hesitation identified this Rilhana as Bilhana- subsequent research on this subject only confirmed his view. In the Sarda characters "Ra" and "Ba" are apt to be confused owing to their seemingly alike symbols; so the scribe while transcribing the original Sarda characters into Devanagari script must have made this mistake unwittingly. In a later critical edition of Rajatarangini by Dr. Stein, the name Bilhana is correctly given.

The name as such is not of Sanskrit origin. Perhaps it has a Dardic base and might have connoted some meaning in the local dialect. This needs to be looked into. The same can be said about Kalhana whom

some critics have identified with Kalyana, given in Mankha's "Sri Kanth Caritam". But this inference does not hold water. Barring some prominent names which have a Sanskrit base, the majority of names seems to have been derived from the local dialect e.g. Mammatta and other names ending in "tta".

Bilhana does not leave us guessing as regards his birth place "He does not wish to remain under a bushel." He gives a candid description of the village in which he was born :

< verses >

"There is at a distance of two and a half kosas from Pravara Pura (Srinagar) a rising plateau named Jayawan in which there is a spring of Takshaka (serpent king) of crystal clear water, veritably a disc to chop away the head of Kaliyuga ready to annihilate the "Dharma". Quite close to it is a village endowed with the virtues, opulence and all fame named Khonmukh."

This Khunmukh Village is even to-day as exactly situated as it was given by Bilhana some eight hundred years ago. In some editions the name Khonmusa is given which according to Buhler is the correct word. He had advanced a theory that the copyist must have been a Jaina who pronounce "Sa" and "Kha" alike, such as Katimoshā: Qaimoh, Ratimoshā: Romoh. This theory cannot be termed as correct as it is a conjecture only. I have tried to provide an answer to this controversy like this. The final "ausa" sound is generally changed to "oh" in Kashmiri as in 'Pausa' to 'Poh', and the medial sound "O" and "U" are not clearly distinguished by Kashmiris. So the "Khonmukh" as given by Bilhana has come to be pronounced as "Khunmuh". In modern vernaculars also "Mukha" (Sanskrit) has changed to "Munha". There may be one more cause for this confusion of "Kha" and "Sa". Again the "Sarada" characters might be responsible for this. Even today the Pandits of Kashmir knowing Sarada script sometimes refer sarcastically to a new entrant to their ranks in the words: "can he differentiate between 'sa' and 'ma' ? This clearly goes to prove that the various symbols in Sarada are apt to be confused; only a profound scholar with an immaculate knowledge of the intricacies of this script can be relied upon for genuine text.

This "Khunmuh" village is situated on a 'rising mound' (a table-land, exactly speaking) near the Srinagar Jammu National Highway, when it branches off to the left near Pandrethan at a distance of five miles from Srinagar. In this volcanoic range are situated Zevan, Wuyan and Khrewa also. It is at a distance of seven miles from Srinagar as pointed out by the poet one and a half "gavyuti". 'Gavyuti' is roughly taken to be equal to four miles.

The 'Takshaka Naga' as alluded to above in the Sloka under reference has undergone cultural conquest. There is a grave-yard adjacent to it. The water is not as crystal clear as was known to the poet. It is not also altogether circular in shape now. The saffron fields and the vine-yards are even to-day as luxuriant in their brilliance as in the days of the poet. Only the Vitasta (Jhelum) seems to have gone farther way from it perhaps by a distance of two to three miles. Rivers do change their course and it is a geographical phenomenon which will take its toll on any part of the globe.

In these surroundings our poet was born of 'Jyeshtha Kalasha' and 'Naga Devi. His father Jyeshtha Kalasha was a commentator of Mahabhashya of Patanjali. In a way his illustrious father bequeathed to him as an heirloom the love for Sanskrit Muse.

No exact date of his birth or death can be given for obvious reasons. Even though he has written profusely about himself, yet he has not given us the dates with mathematical precision. In order to arrive at some conclusions regarding the years in which he flourished we have to rely on stray references about him in the works of his successors or contemporaries, or on the indirect evidence to be culled out from his writings. Happily for us Kalhana has made a reference to the years in which he left Kashmir. He went for a sojourn to Central India in the reign of King Kalasa. King Kalasa was the son of King Ananta whose rule commenced from Saptarsi Samvat 4 i.e. 1029 A.D. to Saptarsi Samvat 39 i. e. 1064 A.D. Towards the end of his rule he performed the Abhisheka (Anointing ceremony) of his son and made over his

kingdom to him in his life-time in Saptrsi Samvat 41, i.e 1066 A.D. This can safely be fixed as the date for the departure of Bilhana to Central India. The immediate predecessor of Bilhana, the Polymath Kshemendra gives this detail about the kings and indirectly helps us to form a rough view of the range of years in which Bilhana lived.

Kalhana makes another reference to him when he enjoyed the partonge of Parmadi of Karnata. The Vikram as given by Bilhana has been identified as King Chalukya Vikramaditya VI of Kalyan who reigned from 1076 A.D. to 1127 A.D. Thus it is clear that this illustrious poet reached "Kalyan" ten years in advance of Vikramaditya's enthronement. During this decade Bilhana must have made a name by his talent and erudition which consequently arrested the attention of the king who rewarded him munificently and bestowed on him the title of "Vidyapati" (the Master of learning).

So it seems probable that Bilhana lived between the last two quarters of the eleventh century. Probably the poet was cut short in his life by 1088 A.D. as he has ignored his patron's biggest military campaign to the south in his Vikramankadevacaritam. This great expedition, had Bilhana been living at that time, could not have been ignored by him while smaller campaigns have been elaborately narrated by him in his Vikramankadevacaritam. Thus we can rightly assume that the span of life of our poet outside Kashmir ranges from 1066 A.D, when Kalasha ascended the throne of Kashmir, to 1088 A.D. when his patron started his military campaign towards the south. However, this assertion cannot be termed as final because :

- (i) It can also be possible that he must have left Kashmir not in the first year of Kalasa's reign. Kalhana explicitly says that he left during the reign of King Kalasa. It might be any year.
- (ii) Moreover, he might have fallen into dis-favour of his patron, as the kings have generally been whimsical by nature. Because of this dis-favour Bilhana no longer eulogized him in his memoirs.

One more point also deserves attention in this respect. What could have been the possible age of Bilhana when he chose to try his fortune outside Kashmir. Taking the state of communications and the time it took to travel from North to Central India he could not have been a minor. He would not have been allowed to risk his life on such a hazardous journey had he not been quite mature and seasoned. Let us assume the lowest limit of his age and fix it at 25, if not more. So broadly speaking, our poet lived from 1041 A.D. to 1088 A.D. i.e. forty eight years, not a span worth its name in view of the standards obtaining at that time. Hence it seems plausible that he lived even after 1088 A.D., might be a retired life; and when he actually breathed his last, remains hidden in the womb of time.

Bilhana, as the tradition goes, has three compositions to his credit: "Vikramankadeva Caritam"- a historical Kavya, 'Caur Panchasika- a lyric of fifty stanzas and a small drama of four acts "Karna Sundari". One more book "Bilhana Caritam", ostensibly an autobiography, has also been ascribed to him. But in it the name of the writer does not appear any where. It may have been written by one of his admirers who preferred to remain unknown. Moreover the details and dates given in it do not agree with those given in Vikramanka Deva Caritam.

Out of these three compositions only the Vikramankadeva Caritam reaches the highest water-mark. It is definitely a work of mature judgment and composed demeanour. It must have been written before 1088 A. D., for the great expedition of that king to the south, which occurred in that year is not mentioned by the poet. This kavya consists of 18 cantos while the last canto is devoted to the personal account of the poet. In these 18 chapters the number of verses roughly comes to 2500. In this composition history has been wedded to romance and war. King Vikramaditya, his patron, is portrayed in brightest possible colours. His valour, his charitable disposition, his love for fine-arts have been lavishly praised. The description of seasons, the landscape and other relevant topics occupy the largest space in the book. The historical content is definitely subservient to the poetic fancy :

< verses >

"Like the buzzing of bees engaged in collecting honey, like the new sprout of the vernal damsel, like the blowing of auspicious conches on a birth-day, the spring set in. "

About the erotic sense of love, he has to say :

< verses >

"O Lord of Night (the moon), I have a spotless beloved in my bosom. What will you do with your spotted one (beloved) ? Pour out to me wine in your goblet studded with gems. Are you not conversant with the 'spot' in your lap."

The two introductory verses of the Kashmirian manuscript of 'Caur Panchashika', the genuineness of which is corroborated by Bilhana himself, show that it was written in Kalyana before the poet had obtained the favour of the king Vikrama. The mention of Lord of Kuntala and indignant address to his envious rivals and enemies prove this. It is often ascribed to "Caur Kavi" which is not a name but a pseudonym for Bilhana. It is definitely the offspring of a corrupt reading in the colophon :-

< verses >

(Thus end the fifty verses of amor by Caura)

"Caurpancasika" (the fifty stanzas of a thief) or the "love-lament" aptly called by Sir Edwin Arnold is a lyric of a poet ready to mount the scaffold for enticing a princess. During this fateful suspense when the life of the poet hangs by a slender thread, the reminiscences of the days spent in the sweet company of the princess oppress the heart of the lover and he ventilates these in a powerful and pathetic versified form. The refrain of each stanza begins with even today. At places the imagination of the poet borders on sensuality :

< verses >

"Oh me ! I was the bee who sucked his fill Prom fragrant chalice of that gold-leaved flower, Breast deep. Know I not well how it did thrill Beneath mine eager clasping in that hour, When love waxed well-nigh cruel in quick kisses, And passion welcomed hurts that mixed with blisses."

The theme of this lyric according to tradition is a leaf from the personal experience of the poet. This can be also an imagined situation which the poets can visualize easily by virtue of their innate productive faculties. The freshness of the poem is eternal.

"Karna-Sundari" is the name of the heroine of the drama bearing the same name. Usually the dramatists in Sanskrit have named their compositions after their heroines. Kalidasa also did the same. In this small drama of four Acts is a love episode between Karna Sundari, a princess and Karna Raj, son of Bhimadeva, a scion of Chalukya dynasty. Like other Sanskrit dramas it is more of a dramatic poem than a drama. The story is common-place with a happy blending of history and imagination. Prose pieces are simple and short. Prakrits have also been laudably employed. Bilhana puts the following compliment in the mouth of the King for the beauty of his beloved: "On account of being put in fire the lustre of gold is darkened as if with the smoke; the moon is robbed of its resplendence like a leaf bereft of red hue; the creeper-like bow of cupid is ineffective, the beauty of the world having gone to sleep. Why only the pliantain groves shine before her in their pride? "

It can now safely be asserted that Vikramankadeva Caritam is the poet's last work, and these other two works precede it. Both these works, the lyric and the drama, do not portray perfect craftsmanship in respect of the technique of the language.

Bilhana essentially is a romantic poet. Romantic poetry baldly speaking is the acme of poet's individuality. At the roots of this poetry we perceive the all-pervading sentiment of this romantic instinct inherent in man. Our poet does not dabble in high sounding philosophical dicta like Somananda and others which are definitely beyond the comprehension of an ordinary man. He does not either indulge in hair-splitting argumentation on the ingredients of literature as Mammatta and others did. He does not also tag history with legend like Kalhana and his retinue. He also fights shy of indicting the society like Ksemendra. Like a truly romantic poet he translates his emotions as they ooze forth in his heart. He weaves a world of his own in which the inebriating influence of vines and the golden hue of saffron form the woof and the warp. To speak precisely he lives in his imagination.

Bilhana's 'forte' is love-milk of human kindness. "The love portrayed by Indian poets is not of the ideal type, of the sensuous type; but yet they reveal great delicacy of feelings and refinement of thought. "He holds a mirror to human feelings in a masterly way and at the same time keeps the nature an eyewitness to this all. He delineates human feelings in the background of Natural surroundings, so that the throbs of man and Nature beat in unison. "By the artistic use of pathetic fallacy the lyric-poets blend Nature and Man into one inseparable whole."

The natural beauty of Kashmir can definitely give fillip to the creative imagination of a poet. While in Central India he enshrined the sweet memory of this land of "learning, saffron, ice-water and grapes, making it a superparadise," in the innermost sanctuary of his heart. This very faculty impelled him to write exuberant poetry pulsating with his emotions inherent while in Kashmir and acquired while in Kalyan. His language is flowery and his diction flawless.

Unlike his predecessor Ksemendra, he does not seem to believe that the figures of speech (Alankaras) are external embellishments only. He makes use of these profusely and in a dexterous way. His similes are apt and impressive. Even though he uses a variety of metres in his compositions, yet his favourite is andakranta" in which metre Kalidasa has couched his immortal lyric "Cloud Messenger".

Consequently when he takes pride in narrating the two peerless products of his Motherland, it seems no exaggeration:

< verses >

"Verily saffron and the poetic prowess are born of the same womb, outside Sarda Desa (Kashmir) I have not seen these two sprout forth."

To crown all, in the portrayal of human feelings punctuated with the sobering influence of love and all the more accentuated with the extravagantly kind- hearted disposition of Nature none can excel him in his home-land. He drinks at the fountain of love - a synonym of life - to his fill; older critics perhaps were right when they classed him with Kalidasa and compared the talent of the former and the latter to the "lustrous hair" and the "coquetry" of the "charming Lady of poetry" respectively.

Bilhana has been fortunate enough to receive recognition in his life time, a phenomenon very rare with sanskrit writers. Usually their talents have been sung in panegyrics when they leave their mortal frame. This all goes to substantiate that Bilhana epitomizes in himself a dexterous mastery over sound and sense. His facile pen could clothe any imagination that would strike his fancy in proper words and in proper order. He might have at times spent much ink while eulogizing the virtues of his patron, even then he believed in the golden mean - a synthesis between fact and fiction. He paid back his gratitude to the

King in words pulsating with sincerity, pregnant with scholarship and endowed with vibrant emotions. No other better repayment could be imagined. So when he says :

< verses >

"There is no hamlet or village or even Metropolis; That is no forest or garden or land devoted to learning where the wise, the dull, the old, the young, the women and men, one and all, do not recite his poems with utmost exhilaration."

It does not jar on our ears as hyperbole or pedantry. It is a statement of facts which may not be palatable to a few, only because it comes from the mouth of the poet himself.

5.0 LATER HINDU PERIOD OF KASHMIR HISTORY (1148 A.D. TO 1339 A.D.)

The Doyen of Sanskrit chroniclers, Kashmirian Kalhana was destined to write about the Hindu period of Kashmir History only upto A.D. 1148. Thereafter, being inspired by overwhelming talent of his illustrious predecessor, Jona Raja pieced together the reign of subsequent Hindu Kings up to 1339 A. C. when the Sultans appeared on the Kashmir-scene. It was at the instance of celebrated Shirya Bhatta that Jona Raja took up the thread of chronicle writing with Jaya Singh's last seven years to the end of Kota Rani, the Hindu monarch of Kashmir and wove a panoramic picture of fourteen Hindu kings in 307 verses. Thus the chronicle of later Hindu Kings of Kashmir did not suffer by default in any way, more or less was made complete and self-contained by this versatile scholar.

Even though Jona Raja has confessed that Kalhana was his ideal, yet he has not been able to pin-point the sources on which he rebuilt the History of these Hindu kings. Kalhana, on the other hand, has most lucidly given as a lengthy inventory of sources which came in handy to him while delineating the History of ancient Hindu period of Kashmir. Unfortunately for Jona Raja, no such reference material could be available to him, more so in the context of social and political turmoil which found a fertile soil during the reign of those later Hindu Kings. Perforce, he had to draw upon public-memory, tradition, and other allied direct or indirect evidence and piece these together for giving it the shape of readable chronicle. Moreover, the selection of medium-Sanskrit also posed a veritable predicament to him. In his own words he has lamented the apathy of general public for Sanskrit and so has elected to caption his chronicle as "Raja Tarangini in the footsteps of Kalhana." He could correctly divine that this title borrowed for Kalhana would draw the elite towards it since the reputation of Kalhana as a master-mind in wedding History to poetry was irrefutable, an alibi for Kalhana through his own treatise.

Despite all these shortcomings, it goes without saying that Jona Raja has taken up his assignment in all seriousness and has not indulged in futile kite flying. He along with his successors in this field -Shrivara, Prajya Bhatta and Shuka- have kept their heads cool and have in no way got involved emotionally with the turn of events. The inauspicious atmosphere staring them in their face did not at all ruffle them and they have admirably enough maintained the highest traditions of chronicle writing; their counterparts in Persian have more than often lost their balance and in their misplaced zeal for Islam have mutilated the actual content and ethos of Sultan period of Kashmir History. They have presented most of these Sultans as rabid crusaders against the Hindu way of life, which does not stand the veracity of facts penned down by the contemporary Sanskrit chroniclers. These chroniclers having been reduced to a minority overnight as also treated like the under god (as narrated by Persian Historians), had every reason to deride this proselytising attitude of the Sultans, but instead have placed honour where it was due and have not also refrained from calling spade a spade. The very fact of engaging Sanskrit Scholars for writing the History of Sultan period gives a lie to what Persian Historians have termed as mass conversion under duris or general genocide of the Hindus at that time. Jona Raja takes Sultan Sikandar, in collusion with Suha Bhatta, to task for his inhuman treatment towards Hindus, though he was in the pay of his son Sultan Zainul-abdin Budshah. This kind of plain - speaking on the part of Jona Raja deserves kudos but at the same time acts as a telling reminder of the freedom of expression allowed so benignly by this benevolent Sultan. To crown all, Jona Raja has praised Sultan Shahab-ud-Din for his catholicity, yet Persian chroniclers have dubbed him as the worst kind of Hindu-baiter. Shrivara has recorded in his "Zaina Raja Tarangini" that a Buddhist monastery at Bijebhara and a rock Shrine of "Ganesha" at the foot of Hari Parbat in Srinagar were built at public level during the reign of Sultan Hassan, the grandson of Budshah, but at the same time he has said that the Shrine of 'Bahu Khitkeshwara' at the confluence of the Jhelum and Dhud-Ganga was razed to ground by hot headed Muslims,' actually neo-converts. The very fact of converting Hindu Shrines into mosques preserving their sanctity in every respect speaks volumes for the forbearance exhibited consciously or otherwise by the Muslim Population of Kashmir. In recent years we have seen the sordid fate which such places of worship met during Russian Revolution or even after it,

when we are told that the man of today is more rational than he was ever before.

At the same time, these chroniclers have suggested loudly -rather reading between their lines- that the Sultans of Kashmir always treated themselves as the big brother and never mixed with local Muslim population. They were so conscious of their blue-blood that they preferred to marry daughters or sisters of Rajas of Jammu, Rajouri etc. rather than have any such matrimonial relations with Kashmiri Muslims. At best they brought sayed girls to their harem who were obviously foreigners here and belonged to the highest echelon of Muslim hierarchy. But, when during the decline of Sultan rule, local factions began to assert themselves, the force of circumstance made them initiate such relations with the most powerful factions not for the love of it but to make themselves secure on the rickety throne.

In the background of such detached attitude to chronicle writing we can safely assert that Jona Raja has steered meticulously safe between enthralling emotion and nauseating exaggeration. Later Hindu period of Kashmir History is an eloquent testimony to this kind of highest norm observed by him most tenaciously. He has elected to sit on the fence and narrate the events as they take shape of their own accord. He never sits on judgment on these and leaves it to the reader to draw his own inferences. He had enough excuse to lament when the rule of Hindu Kashmir was slowly and steadily raking way for an alien sovereignty, but instead has felt relieved to see the end of such incompetence and depravation which these Hindu kings represented in letter and spirit. This is a glowing tribute to his undaunted spirit unruffled by sentiment or religious loyalties.

Jona Raja has altogether given us a list of twelve Hindu Kings punctuating it with a brief interlude of "Renchan" and then proceeded with Udyan Deva and Kota Rani. The last seven years of JaYa Singh's rule (1148 A. D. to 1155 A. D.) were exhausted in obstructing muslim incursions into the state for which he also sought the help from neighbouring Hindu chieftains. He seems to be the last Hindu monarch worth his salt and laid down his life while defending his home land. After him the reins of the Government passed on to his son 'Parmanuk' 1155 A. D. to 1164 A. D. through whose incompetence the vassals of Kishtwar, Rajouri and others on the outer fringe of Kashmir declared independence. He has been portrayed as an idiot with least credentials for becoming a king. Thereafter, 'Vanti Deva' (1164 to 1171 A. D.) and 'Bopa Deva' (1171 A. D. to 1181 A. D.) ascended the throne one after another and the social and political conditions deteriorated in the country due to their being nincompoops. They were followed by 'Jassaka' (1181 A. D. to 1199 A. D.) given to levity and lust. However, his talented son Jagdeva (1159 A. D. to 1213 A. D.) tried his best to stem the rot and halted the disintegration of the state. He erected a towering shrine of 'Harsheshwara' Lord Shiva at Razpur near Khonmuh. Unfortunately he was poisoned to death by the commander of the gate guards (passes leading into Kashmir) "Padma" by name.

His son Raja Deva (1213 A. D. to 1236) had fled to Kishtwar but was brought back by the enemies of the commander of gateguards, the nobles of Khovurpora in the Liddar Valley. Later on 'Padma' was also done to death by some hunters. Raja Deva was acknowledged as the ruler by the entire Kashmiri population. He rehabilitated 'Lavanyas' ('lones' in Kashmiri) and made them his strong allies. But he could not arrest the erosion that had seeped down into the very fibre of Kashmiri society and was venquishad by the chieftain of 'Lar' - 'Baladhyachandra' who grabbed half of the metropolis- Srinagar from him and built a hospice 'Baladhymatha' (Kashmiri Baldimar) in his own name. The Brahmin-section of the population did not take kindly to his weak-kneed policy, consequently revolted but were brought to bay with an iron hand. They were persecuted so vehemently that they opted for changing their caste even. Jona Raja associates the abominable term 'Na Bhatto ham -' 'I am not a Bhatta' (Kashmiri Nabtu) with this Hindu King for the first time. He founded the two localities of Rajori (Kadal) within the city and Village (Razul) consecrating these with his own name.

Sangrama Deva (1236 A. D. to 1252 A. D.) his successor put in herd labour to reclaim the lost territories from neighbouring chieftains but his younger brother 'Surya' fell foul with him and indulged in conspiring against him though he had been given the respectable authority as the chairman of the Council of ministers. Consequently a fight broke out between the brothers in which 'Surya' was taken prisoner and

killed subsequently at the 'Hamal', the Governor of which locality 'Tunga' had sworn allegiance to him. During the absence of 'Sangrama Deva' the descendants of Kalhana had unleashed a reign of terror throughout the state and the king had to seek asylum with the ruler of Rajori. Thereafter "Damaras" also joined hands with the "Kalhanas" and sucked the blood of Kashmiris. Sangrama Deva returned to his state incognito, collected his forces and overwhelmed his enemies. He also gave reprieve to 'Kalhanas' for being Brahmins. He built a row of twenty-one barracks for the Brahmins and cows at Bijebhara. But the 'Kalhanas' nursed a grudge against the King and secretly conspired to get rid of him. Pandit 'Yashska' the poet, immortalized the King in his composition replete with poetic excellence. However, this treatise along with its title is not available to us today. We also are not informed about the medium used by this poet - Sanskrit or Kashmiri.

His son Rama Deva (1252 A. D. to 1273 A. D.) avenged the murder of his father by putting to sword all those who had colluded with each other to kill him. On the left bank of 'Ladar' stream he built a very imposing fort in his name. The Vishnu temple at Kakapora was renovated by him which had earlier been desecrated mistakenly. He had no son of his own, hence adopted a Brahmin-boy 'Lakshma' by name. The queen 'Samudra' erected a hospice within the city naming it as 'Samudra Matha' ? (Kashmiri 'Sodramar').

We are given to understand that a Brahmin boy, the adopted son of Rama Deva, Lakshma Deva occupied the throne (1273 A.D. to 1286 A.D.) but it proved to be a veritable crown of thorns for him. Though being made 'Kshhtrya' by his profession, he could not shake off his marrow-deep Brahmanical outlook. The Turk 'Kajjala' invaded Kashmir during his reign and Lakshma Deva was uprooted. His queen 'Ahalya' built a serai calling it as 'Ahalya Matha' (Kashmiri 'Ahalmar') within Srinagar.

'Sangram Chandra of 'Lar' in collusion with the Turk invader 'Kajjala' made Lakshma Deva's successor 'Sinha Deva' (1236 A. D. to 1301 A. D.) flee to the 'Ledar' Valley which comprised his nominal state now. When 'Sangrama Chandra' died, Sinha Deva entered the city and indulged in setting the house in order. The King was a devout Hindu, so constructed many shrines, the prominent amongst these was the temple of 'half lion, half man' (Nara Simha) at Dhyanodar?the Karewa of Dhyneshwara near Bandipore. He also honoured his guru Shankar Swami by allotting him the income accruing from ten shrines. The King was poet also, but none of his compositions has come down to us so far. However, he fell in bad company later on and had illegal relations with one courtesan 'Idagali' by name. The chief teller of Royal treasury Darya (Khan) by name got the King assassinated by 'Kama Samuha.'

This very 'Kama Samuha' was instrumental in installing Simha Deva's brother 'Suha Deva' (1301 A.D. to 1320 A.D.) on the throne.

During his reign a sizable number of fugitives came to Kashmir for seeking employment here. The king obliged them readily, least knowing that he was digging his own grave and working unconsciously for the dissolution of Hindu Kashmir. Along with these fugitives Shahmeer arrived in Kashmir in A. D. 1313 and the king Suha Deva allotted a Jagir to him making him comfortable in every way.

At that very time 'Dulcha' invaded Kashmir with his hordes spelling disaster. King Suha Deva, not having the nerve to confront him, tried to buy peace from him with a huge sum of money. For meeting that end he imposed exorbitant taxes on his subjects already groaning under the terror of Dulcha not sparing the Brahmanas even who were immune from such levies. The ego of the Brahmanas was hurt to such an extent that many of these preferred self immolation to paying of taxes. Even after getting a huge amount as gratification, Dulcha did not vacate Kashmir for long eight months. During this period Kashmiris suffered untold miseries, to borrow Jona Raja's words could not afford to come out of their hide-outs for being killed, like rats out of fear for the cat. At last he went out of Kashmir through Pirpanchal negotiating 'Tarbal' pass towards the South of Divsar. Again Jona Raja would make us believe that a very small portion of the population had survived this holocaust and that also could not find any food to eat. Kashmir had become desolated completely.

During this nemesis which visited Kashmir, 'Renchan' a runaway prince from Ladakh was in the Valley but was lying low for fear of Dulcha. He was perhaps biding his time to strike at the right moment. Propitiously for him Kashmir was in shambles, the people and their ruler demoralised, so he did not encounter any resistance in grabbing the throne. He had earlier subjugated 'Rama Chandra' the last chieftain of 'Lar' through perfidy. He managed infiltration into this stronghold of Chandra Dynasty in the disguise of cloth-sellers and was successful in murdering Rama Chandra and marrying 'Kota Devi' a scion of his family. King Suhadeva went into hiding and Renchan (1320 A. D. to 1327 A. D.) had his bread buttered on both sides. Jona Raja uses the adjectival epithet 'Sultan' with his name hinting towards his conversion to Muslim faith, though he had beseeched one Deva Sawmi, a Shaivite, earlier to admit him into the Hindu fold. But on his being a 'Bhautta' the Swami did not oblige him. Renchan tried to consolidate his position with an iron hand and suppressed the 'Lones' who had become very powerful.

He founded 'Rinchenpur' (near Kashmiri Bulbul Lanker) within the capital surrounded by a moat (Kashmiri Mar) on all sides. At last he became a victim of a conspiracy hatched jointly by Tukka a compatriot of Rinchen and Udhyan Deva who had taken refuge in Gandhara. A fight ensued between these two factions. Rinchan received a fatal head injury and died. Earlier Rinchan had been very much pleased with the non-partisan attitude of Shahmeer who had not aligned himself with all such intrigues against the monarch; so had made over his son 'Harder' to him for upbringing.

Rinchan could have been safely termed as the first Sultan of Kashmir but after him Hindu rule again continued for sixteen years. He might at best be called the first Muslim ruler of Kashmir. It might well be termed as a rehearsal for induction of Sultan rule later.

After him Udyan Deva (1323 to 1339 A. D.) settled himself on the throne marrying 'Kota' the widow of Rinchan. Jona Raja has not cared to give exact credentials of Udyan Deva or his relations with King Suha Deva. The chronicler laments his rise to power as he lacked statesmanship and also nerve. He bestowed governorship of 'Kamraz' and other places on the sons of Shahmir - Jamshed and Ali respectively. Actually the power was concentrated in the hands of Kota Rani the queen while the king would spend all his time in religious observances. Jona Raja has indulged in laughing in his sleeves when he mentions that Udyan Deva had fastened bells around the neck of horses so that insects were not trampled over, as if these poor creatures would hear and comprehend such an advance warning.

The last nail in the coffin of later Hindu rule was the invasion of Achala who was tactfully prevailed upon to return after getting a good sum from Kota Rani. During this invasion instead of confronting Achala or negotiating peace with him on diplomatic level, king Udyan Deva like an irresponsible coward had fled to Ladakh throwing his wife to wolves. But Kota stood this test well and called her husband back. She had a son from him named 'Jatta' who was made over to 'Bhaikshana' one of his ministers for being properly nursed.

During this confusion and anarchy with which the firmament of Kashmir was overcast, Shahmeer after making his position secure tried to fish in these troubled waters. He could very well divine that the Hindu empire was tottering under its own weight of incompetence; so to fill in this vacuum his credentials were now the best. However, like an astute diplomat he stood his ground well and did not take a rash step. He had been made the chief of guards on duty at the mountain passes. This position he exploited to his heart's content and manipulated infiltration into the valley on a large scale. Secondly, he unified the scattered muslim population within Kashmir and became their leader. Moreover, he coaxed the commissars of Bhangil, Beerwa, Hamal etc. into matrimonial alliances thus enlisted their support. He also would demoralize Kota Rani the virtual ruler at that time by reminding her that her son 'Haider' who was in this tutelage would inevitably suffer if she tried to thwart his plans. Kota Rani out of motherly affection for Harder could not take any action against Shahmeer. This resulted in making him stronger every day; sensing that the time was ripe for striking, Shahmeer raised the banner of revolt and looted Shankarpur (Pattan) and set Bijbehara on fire and encamped on the 'Udars' (Karewas) of Chakdar. The Lones, Damaras and Bhauttas defected to his side through his superb statesmanship and his garrison

outnumbered the Royal army in men as well as material king. King Udyan Deva died and now the decks were cleared for Shahmeer by Nature even.

Kota Rani after suppressing the news of the death of her husband for a couple of days went to Anderkot. While engaged in_ planning counter strategy she was beseiged by Shahmeer. Earlier, Shahmeer had 'Bikshana' murdered on whose help Kota could very safely depend.

In this atmosphere of gloom and despair Shahmeer sent feelers to her to get married with him. Kota Rani in order to save the throne for her as also for guaranteeing safety to 'Haider' acceded to the proposal of Shahmeer. She could not see through the game Shahmeer was initiating under the cover of this marriage-proposal. The siege was lifted, and Kota having become the spouse of Shahmeer only for one night, was in the morning handed over to assassins. Thus the later Hindu period of Kashmir History came to an ignominious close and Shahmeer waiting in the wings had a cake-walk to the throne of Kashmir for ushering in Sultan rule.

After going through this brief detail, we cannot resist inferring that this epoch of Hindu kings of Kashmir had outlived itself for obvious reasons. Out of 16 Kings in this period, five were killed through court intrigues. Four amongst them fled the country for not sizing up to the impending danger. Some amongst these Kings were so spineless as to share the capital Srinagar with rulers of Lar – comparatively a very small principality. A fugitive from Ladakh Renchan could very safely entrench himself on the throne without a leaf in the valley. Only Kota Rani tried her best to resist the onslaught made on this Hindu Kingdom but she was alone in undoing toe wrong that had permeated the entire of Kashmiri society then. She valiantly tried to fight against time and tide and in doing so had to pay the price of getting killed.

So, it may be said without any fear of contradiction that in the context of such an undignified rule of later Hindu kings, the induction of Sultans can unmistakably be construed as the Divine retribution in every sense of the word when man fails, Nature intervenes. Fortune had smiled over Yashovati when she inaugurated the Hindu rule in Kashmir, but Kota Rani being more dashing and resourceful than her had to succumb to the conspiracy of circumstances making her write an epitaph over this period with her own blood.

6.0 KALHANA - THE CHRONICLER

Chronicle-writing is not foreign to the imagination of the Kashmiri Brahmins. A host of histories Charitas and Mahatmyas amply testify to this assertion. However, the history as it is taken in the modern parlance, is absent in Sanskrit literature. History is not an account of rise and fall of kings but should embrace in its ambit the political, social and religious attainments and aspirations of the people at large. To glean such fool-proof material from Kalhana's Raja Tarangini (River of Kings) will only mean love's labour lost. In the first instance in his time such a conception of history-writing was not at all known; Even the earlier Greek memoirs cannot be deemed free from this defect. I before accusing Kalhana of inefficient handling of the subject-matter, it is to be borne in mind that he holds brief only for the "Rajas" i. e. Kings, and does not dabble in any other literary or historical pastime concerning people. He has very faithfully and aptly captioned his chronicle as "The River of Kings". Hence he limits his poetic description to the kings for and about whom he has written this Kavya. Thus it can safely be stated that Dr. Mcdonnell's remarks about the non-existence of truly historical material in Raja-Tarangini is only partly true.

Among the galaxy of such writers of Historical Kavyas Kalhana shines the brightest. He is the only Kashmiri author who has taken his assignment seriously. He is the first and the best in the line. Obviously enough the name Kalhana is non Sanskritic but may have had some meaning in the local dialect at that time; this is not even now intelligible to Kashmiri people.

Kashmiri writers have shown a preference for coining their names in local dialect instead of Sanskrit over which their command was praise-worthy. So names as, Bilhana, Mammatta, Kayatta etc are striking examples of this trend.

However, Dr. Stein in his masterly introduction to Raja Tarangini has taken pains in establishing the affinity of "Kalyan", as given in the Srikanthacaritam of Mankha, with "Kalhana" of Raja Tarangini: Moreover, the commentator of Sri Kantlia Caritam, jonaraja has said that "Alakadatta was actually the "Sandhi-Vigrahaka" or the minister of war and peace." He further says that the stories (Kathas) in which "Kalyan" is said to be proficient are the stories from Mahabharata and other epics. But being himself a man of letters and having taken up the thread of chronicle-writing from Kalhana has also given his local name and has not cared to identify it with "Kalyan." Even though phonetically "Kalyan" can be rendered into "Kalhana" Apabhramsa, yet we have to rely on the verdict of Dr. Keith who seems to take this conclusion with a grain of salt.

Kalhana is silent about his pedigree or the sort of life he lived. His name only appears on the colophons of his work including the direct reference to him by jona-Raja who wrote some three centuries after him. This establishes beyond doubt that inspite of his being shy about self-introduction unlike "Bilhana" the tradition had not forgotten him and his merit.

Some scholars have tried to identify certain names in the text of the Raja Tarangini as the relations of the Chronicler e.g. "Canpaka" as his father and "Kamaka" probably his uncle. It is true that this name occurs frequently and with evident respect also:

< verses >

"When Canpaka who was stationed as incharge of the 'gate' was ready to go in for that assignment under the orders of the king, Vataganda (Ananda) endeavoured to stop him.'

Unless this surmise is corroborated by any other, evidence contemporary or later, we are constrained to dismiss it as extraneous.

Fortunately for us Kalhana has not left us into guessing the date of his composition. He explicitly says that he began the writing of his chronicle in year 4224 of the Laukika era i.e. 1148-49 AD. and finished it in the year following.

Kalhana does not brag about the originality of his Kavya but instead very humbly says:

< verses >

"If I again narrate the subject matter of tales which have been related by others earlier, still the virtuous ought not turn their faces from me without hearing my purpose".

He very frankly admits that the tradition of chronicle-writing was very popular even before his advent, but to his dismay these chronicles no longer existed in a complete state in his time. He further says that the loss of such chronicles was due to the fact that one "Suvarata" condensed all these chronicles into one book, hence nobody bothered for the originals; having fallen into disuse, these in course of time, were consigned to the forgotten niches of the houses.

Before embarking on his task of writing the chronicle, Kalhana very rightly wants to be dispassionate in narrating the events. He would like to sit on the fence recording the events in a most judicious and unprejudiced manner; He believes that:

< verses >

"That talented one is alone praiseworthy whose intellect devoid of love or hatred relates the past anecdotes like an umpire."

The chronicler acknowledges the debt of Eleven works of former scholars containing "the chronicles of Kings" including the Nilamata Purana. Out of these eleven chronicle only three are named by him and about other eight he is silent. The first title he refers to as his source, is Ksemendra's Nrpavali or List of Kings. However, this useful book is now lost along with the works of "Padam Mihira" and "Helaraja" who had also composed a List of Kings (Parthivavali)." In view of his giving a direct quotation from "Chavillakara's" uncaptioned work which furnished him with the name of Ashoka and five other ancient kings it can be safely inferred that this work was extant at that time but subsequently could not stand the ravages of time, hence was lost.

Besides this, he made ample use of inscriptions and edicts for building the chronicle upto date. He could not also ignore the popular tradition which has occupied a sizable portion of his chronicle.

However, on even a cursory perusal of the chronicle we can very safely infer that he had studied the "Vikramanka Deva Caritam" of Bilhana, a fellow-poet of his. He has not at times refrained from quoting his phraseology and style even. Another earlier work which he must have consulted is Bana's "Harsacarita". It is a well-known fact that this historical record of King Harsa Vardhana of Kanauj enjoyed popularity in Kashmir as Mammatta in his Kavya Prakasa has quoted a passage from it. It cannot also be gainsaid that Kalhana was very well conversant with the epics-Ramayana and Mahabharata. In this connection copious examples can be culled from the Raja Tarangini. Having armed himself with all this material, he took up his assignment in all seriousness and tried to overcome "the difficulties arising from any errors".

The oldest manuscript (in Sarada characters) of 'Raja' is in the possession of Govt. Research Library, Srinagar. There is another manuscript of this chronicle prepared by one Pt. Gana Kak, with explanatory notes by Pt. Saheb Ram.

Kalhana originally wrote in Sarada and subsequently it was transcribed into Devanagari. However, it is to be borne in mind that the scribes (lipikaras) engaged for this purpose seem not to have mastery either over the language or the script. Hence many errors crept into it. Moreover, Sarada is a very intricate script and the resemblance of several words with each other could only be detected by scholars of profound learning. Unfortunately the lack of command of the transcribers over the language has corrupted and even ruined the text at places. This is mainly responsible for the defects inherent in the Calcutta edition of the "Raja". Confusing 'Rilhana' with 'Bilhana' is a glaring example of such neglect. This edition was so corrupt that the translation of this gave rise to many controversies.

Taking cue from Dr. Buhler, who first of all pointed out the defects of the Calcutta edition, the search for a more authentic manuscript was continued by the subsequent indologists. The efforts of Dr. Stein were crowned with success, when he could find access to the "zealously guarded Codex Archetypus (date of composition from 1648 A. D. to 1685 A. D.) of Rajanaka Ratnakantha by his successors," through the good offices of Pandit Suraj Kaul, member of the Kashmir State Council and his son Pandit Hari Krishen Koul. This genuine Kashmiri recension of Raja Tarangini solved many mysteries and a trustworthy text of this great chronicle, in the hands of Rajanaka Ratanakantha, was unearthed in 1890 A. D. Moreover, Dr. Stein could also lay his hands on the Lahore edition of Raja Tarangini in 1895; it was in the possession of a Kashmiri Brahmin named Pandit Jagmohan Lal Hundu, who had migrated to Lahore from Srinagar. These two valuable finds were instrumental in dispelling doubts regarding the authenticity or genuine-character of Raja Tarangini. Earlier, Dr. Buhler had also been able to procure a manuscript of Raja Tarangini, in Sarada, from one Pt. Keshava Raina in Srinagar. This MS according to the learned scholar, was only hundred or hundred and fifty years old.

However, the credit of introducing this Kashmiri chronicle to the world goes to Professor Wilson. In 1825 A.D he compiled an essay on the first six cantos (tarangas) of Rajatarangini and published it in Asiatic Researches. Thereafter the text was published also from Calcutta in 1835 by the Asiatic Society and later on Mr. Troyer undertook the stupendous task of translating all the eight cantos in 1840 and completed these in 1852.

His knowledge of Sanskrit being faulty, he made the confusion arising out of the Calcutta edition, worse confounded. Then onwards, in addition to this, many other European scholars have made references to this chronicle and have gleaned much useful data from it. Prof. Lassen, in his Encyclopedia of Indian Antiquities, has given a complete analysis of this work. General Cunningham treated its chronology in an admirable article in the 'Numismatic chronicle of 1918. In spite of all this, Prof. Wilson had to concede that a close translation of these cantos in such a pretty mess with regard to linguistic inaccuracies, would have been impracticable. It is noteworthy to mention here that no of these scholars had seen the MS in Sarada characters. They based all their conjectures on Devanagari manuscripts. Professor Wilson, in particular had seen the sent by Mr. Moorcraft from Kashmir and two copies in Devanagari gifted to the India House Library Lond by Mr. Colebrook. Dr. E. Hultzsch also utilized the material brought to light by the above mention scholars for many of his thought-provoking articles. Among the Indian scholars Shri Yogeshchander Dutt's English version and R.S. Pandit's translation also deserve mention. Both these works are based on Calcutta edition.

Before we proceed, it is desirable to allude to a controversy raised by Mr. Troyer. He contends in his introduction to the translation of Raja Tarangini that the last two cantos of this chronicle have not been written by Kalhana but are the composition of some other poet. To substantiate his theory he argues

- i) He (Kalhana) allots to the last two hundred and fifty years double the number of verses of what he devotes to the preceding three thousand and odd years.
- ii) The references and resumes given in the VII and VIII do not tally with those of the first six.
- iii) Canto VIII relates events which occurred after 1148 A. D.

Prof. Lassen also notes the difference in style between the first six and last two cantos. In meeting his arguments it useful to bear in mind that:

- i) Last two cantos can roughly be called the contemporary history delineated by the chronicler. It definitely deserved more space, because Kalhana was sure about the ground under his feet. The first six cantos are based on different sources coupled with tradition; so Kalhana wanted to skip through these. The matter he was treating was more or less not so authentic from his view-point and so was given lesser space.
- ii) The so-called varying references are mainly, due to the bad and faulty MS; and to crown all, his incorrect translation. No such contradictions have been detected by, subsequent scholars, more recently by Dr. Stein because of the correct text. Mr. Troyer's hold on Sanskrit was not so good. He has translated Mukhtapida and Lalitaditya as two different personalities while actually they are one and the same person. With regard to this Dr. Buhler has to say "He (Troyer) undertook a task very much beyond his strength for which he was qualified neither by learning nor by natural talent;
- iii) With regard to the third argument it may safely be said that he began to write his chronicle in Saptrsi Samvat 24 which works out at 4224 (Saptrsi Samvat) i.e. 1148-49 A.D. It contained thousands of slokas, hence could not be completed in the same year by any stretch of imagination. If he mentioned events happening nine years later (VIII book) in Saptrsi Samvat 33, it only proves that the poem was not completed until after that year.
- iv) The so called difference in style referred to by Prof Lassen is not at all detectable.

The most unassailable evidence regarding the authenticity of the last two cantos of 'Raja' is furnished by Jona Raja when he took up the thread from Kalhana (nearly three centuries after him) and completed his Raja Tarangini. He explicitly mentions that Kalhana finished the "Account of Kings" with the reign of Jaya Simha. One fact should not be lost sight of that canto VI, ends abruptly which can never be termed as the conclusion. Hence it has been made sufficiently clear that, all the eight cantos are from the fertile pen of one and the same author and that is Kalhana. However, it is to be conceded (with all that is said and done) that Kalhana's text of 'Raja', as it is available to us at present, does suffer from some shortcomings. After making due allowance for the corruptions which might have crept into the text by careless transcription and, at times, deliberate interpolation's, yet some unpardonable oversights have been made by the 'renowned' chronicler. Kalhana's mastery over the language is also at times doubtful when he repeats the Alankaras word by word particularly in the Canto VIII. At times consistency with the anecdotes related earlier is not maintained and it seems that he was either in hurry in completing the assignment or treated the subject - matter towards the conclusion in a slipshod manner. In view of his accurate detailing and exactness, it can only be surmised that he did not care to revise his manuscript for one reason or another, or he could not find time to do so.

As regards the over-sights, he has made a glaring error : while describing King " Sacinara" in Book I he extolls him like " Sacipati"; Indra, or the husband of saci (queen), but in Book VIII while giving the resume of the reigns of different kings he mentions "Sacinara" as the "son of Saci" (queen Mother):

< verses >

"Thereafter his son (Janakas's) the illustrious Sacinara like an Indra on the globe protected the earth. He was forbearing and his commands could not be disobeyed."

< verses >

"The latter's son (Suvarna's) was Janaka, whose son was Sacinara born of Saci (queen mother). Even if we may contend that Kalhana has play on the word Saci, yet it is not in good taste to describe "Saci" as the wife and the mother at the same time in respect to one and the same person. Moreover in Book VIII he has altogether forgotten to mention King Nara I whom he has treated at length in the Book I. Also while giving the names of the lovers of Srilekha queen of Samgrama Raja in Book VII he has not mentioned Vyaddasuha who plundered the treasures of the King and courted his consort as given in the Book VIII. To crown all, at some places we are confronted with bad Sanskrit and even wrong metres employed.

Besides this, he has been so much influenced by Bilhana's Vikramankdeva-caritam and Bana's Harsacaritam that he has not refrained from borrowing their words and even phraseology. From epics also he has enriched his vocabulary and has not resisted the temptation of quoting Verbatum from these. Kalidasa's Raghuvamsa has been also used by him for his treatise and even the thought and diction have been borrowed from it :

< verses >

"(He King Kalasa) had approached the woman (daughter in-law of Jindu Raja of licentious Character), having sent in advance the noseless man (His vita). That very inauspicious man because of his disfigurement was responsible for the frustration of his amors".

Evidently the books which have attracted Kalhana to borrow do come also under the purview of chronicles, e.g. Ramayana, Mahabharata, Raghuvamsa etc., hence he could not but get acquainted with these so as to make his own composition more authentic and traditionally accurate. The point to be emphasized here is his freedom with which he has drawn upon these and has even quoted the words, vocabulary and to crown all imitated the style.

But such lapses are few and far between, and do not, in any way, tarnish his image as a chronicle-writer. Out of a compendium of some 8000 Slokas such defects are quite natural when, the canvas is very wide before the chronicler.

In his introduction to his 'Raja' Kalhana very clearly indicates that he would prefer to be a poet because:-

< verses >

"Who else but the poets resembling Prajapati in (creative power) and able to bring forth lovely productions, can place the past times before the eyes of men ."

He thinks that transformation of the past into the present can be attained by the deft pen of a poet only. A Kavya has been defined as a composition in prescribed metres, being devoid or blemishes (Dosa) having meaningful words containing Rasa (sentiment), Guna (quality) and embellishments. Such and other ingredients of Kavya presuppose a thorough study of Rhetorics, poetics and embellishments. Kalhana has not cared to give any account of his literary attainments. To whatever poetic horizon he reaches is to be gleaned from this chronicle. Therefore, we may assert that he is a poet by intuition and a historian by profession. Primarily his concern was to put into words the hierarchy of Kings which ruled Kashmir; poetry was used by him only as a convenient vehicle.

Having read other Kavyas, Raghuvamsa and Vikramankadevacaritam and the epics about which we are sure very thoroughly, he must have gained proficiency in the art of Kavya-writing and there can be no surprise, in noticing that at times he rises to the heights of poetic prowess also:

< verses >

"Having come out of the grove off lowery creepers, (a young Brahmin visakha) saw before him two virgins donning blue robes and having very sweet eyes. The corners of their eyes were very attractive and were smeared with a very thin line of collyrium, as if this was the stalk of the red ruby-like lotuses used by these as ear-ornaments. To their two shoulders were pinned their faces, as it were like flags, the ends of which in the shape of their captivating eyes were fluttering in the gentle wind."

The similies used in these stanzas are not only very beautiful but also homely.

In his benedictory tribute to Siva and his consort Parvati in book III, the dialogue between the two, reminds us of the same situation in Kalidasa's Kumar Sambhavam. Herein Kalhana has most poetically justified the otherwise ugly demeanour of Lord Siva:

< verses >

"May Siva protect you who in his form composed of two halves (male and female, Ardhanarisvara) gives these replies (to Parvati's queries):

"Leave away this elephant-skin". "In the inner recesses of the frontal globe on his fore-head are pearls which can effortlessly adorn the tips of your breasts." "Why this fire on your fore-head." "From these you may take the collyrium for your eyes" and who even, if objection were raised by his beloved to the Snake, would suffer such an answer."

In the Stanzas below the use of Alankaras (poetic, embellishments) has been made dexterously

< verses >

While describing the burning of the Cakradhara temple in the reign of Sussala 1121 A. D. to 1128 A. D. the poet in Kalhana weaves a graphic panorama of words and images:

1. "The sky was densely screened by huge columns of smoke from which shone moving flames resembling the bushy and tawny red-hair and beards of goblins.
2. The tongues of the flames emanating from the fire the smoke of which was spent-up, gave the impression of waves of gold coming out of a golden cloud which had been, as it were, melted by the excessive heat.
3. The columns of fire strewn on the sky looked like the red headgear fallen from the crests of gods fleeing in scare before the conflagration."

Even if Kalhana tries to live up to the norms of a Kavya as enjoined by the Alankarashastra, yet his 'forte' being chronicle-writing, he has therefore conveniently ignored many of the tenets laid therein. Even though he employs a variety of metres yet his mastery over these is deficient. Some scholars are forced to label it as "versified prose." In view of what has been shown to illustrate his poetic prowess earlier, this verdict seems unjust. Many such examples can be copiously quoted from the 'Raja' to show that Kalhana is no poet of mean order, even if he cannot catchup with his fellow country-man Bilhana. The didactic import of his work is also distinctly pronounced. In this branch of his poetic fancy he has amply drawn from the epics, Dharmasastras and Nitishastras

< verses >

"The diamond can be held as proof against all metals and stone-dykes against the waters, but nothing (is proof against) the false." His mastery over the pun can be sufficiently illustrated by the following stanza:

< verses >

"There Gauri though she has assumed the form of Vitasta still keeps her wonted inclination. (For in her river-shape) she turns her face towards the ravine (Guha), just as (in her godlike form) she turns it towards (her son) Kumara, (Guha) (in her river shape) the mouths of the Nagas (Naga Mukha) drink her abundant water (Apita bhuri Paya) just as (in her god like form) elephant faced (son Ganesha Naga Mukha) drank her abundant milk (Apita bhuri Paya).

Alankara Shastras also lay it down that every poetic composition should have a Rasa (sentiment) permeating throughout. the length and breadth of the Kavya. To live up to this tenet Kalhana says:

< verses >

"Suddenly coming to life of living beings and their transitory nature is to be seriously thought over ; sothe Santa (indifference to worldly objects and pleasures) sentiment will reign supreme here-in in this book)." This Santa Rasa is very much pronounced in Mahabharata. While defining Santa Rasa Vishva Nath Kaviraja has to say:

< verses >

"Wherein there is no Sorrow or joy, nor fear, as neither apathy nor attachment and no desire. The great munies have called such a state of mind as shanta, where in all sentiments and their consequent expression are equal in measure.

One point needs clarification here. Raja Tarangini is composed of thousands of anecdotes in which individual "Rasa" in view of its subject matter, should naturally run. So in the description of war vira is there; in the details giving amors of various queens "Srinagar" is present. The intrigue and court conspiracies arouse "Jugupsa" and the sad end of some kings excites "Shoka". These sentiments are all subservient to the motif of the chronicle i. e. "Santa". Perhaps this is the reason that Kalhana ends four out of eight Tarangas of his chronicle with the description of such kings who gave up their thrones by acts of pious resignation and renunciation. He has emphasized off and on that despite regal glory and affluence, every king, one after another, had to renounce this by the everlasting natural law that nothing is permanent in this world.

"What is born is to die definitely." Hence every one should take a lesson from this and try to remain resigned and cultivate in himself an attitude which remains unruffled in pleasure or pain, plenty or penury; herein the patent influence of Mahabharata is clearly seen on the chronicler.

Without mincing words we are alive to the fact that Kalhana's poetical prowess was limited by his assignment of chronicle-writing. He wants to be a poet and a chronicler at the same time. Kalidasa did combine poetic acumen with history in his "Raghuvamsa" but therein also his talents and unparalleled skill have suffered a jolt-especially towards the closing chapters of his Kavya. Kalhana has also tried to emulate his example. Let us now discuss how far he has been successful in making a happy compromise between the two.

Perhaps sensing some such insinuations Kalhana has very succinctly made a confession:

"Though in view of the length of the narrative, diversity could not be secured by means of amplification, still there may be found something in it that will please the rightminded."

Hence the chronicler is aware of the fact that his treatise cannot boast of diversity by elaborate events, because that would lengthen his narrative and as such he has to be brief and factual. This axe of brevity is to be employed even though the chronicler may not have liked it. Important events need to be emphasized and minor ones skipped over. This very fact goes a long way in proving that Kalhana even though wanting to retain the poet in himself does actually make it subordinate to his skill of chronicle-writing. Not only this he has also set a norm for his chronicle-recording:

"Only that person of merit is worthy of praise who while relating the past does keep himself away from partiality or otherwise like an Umpire."

So, it is abundantly clear that Kalhana would not like to indulge in fanciful hyperbole or otherwise like a poet, but would like to record the facts as these took place, in an unattached bent of feeling. The vehicle for this he has chosen is the poetry, otherwise his motive is to write a chronicle upto date which had become fragmentary.

The inference that Kalhana is a chronicler first and a poet afterwards, can very safely be made from the preceding stanzas. Poetry to him was only a means to an end, the end being pure and simple- chronicle-writing. The soul of a chronicle is art of narration. Hence Kalhana's merit as a chronicler can be measured by his deftness in narrating events. Narration 'does not mean only flow of events but events should also admit of impartiality of the narrator. Secondly, the individuality of characters and their personal traits have also to be taken into consideration. Thirdly, historicity of the narrative is the touchstone on which the merit or otherwise of the chronicler is to be tested.

About the impartiality and independence of judgment as depicted by Kalhana we have earlier shown his attitude to his assignment. However, as practice is better than precept we have to see the veracity of his professing an "Umpire-like attitude."

Happily for us, Kalhana has lived upto this maxim. He has been a close witness of the rise and fall of kings from Sussala to Jayasimha of whom he was a contemporary. In narrating the events of the reign of Jaya-Simha he has not hesitated to bring into relief his defects also. He has not been a panegyrist. He has very emphatically criticized the conduct of high-ups in his own times, the omissions and faulty judgment of the king under whom he wrote. At times we feel that such trenchant criticism could not have been publicised at that time for fear of punishment.

About the exploitation of their subjects, Kalhana records:

< verses >

"The riches which the kings amass by tormenting people go to the rivals or enemies or are consumed by fire." Ill gotten wealth does not last long. In order to illustrate his point he says:

< verses >

"The treasures of King Kalasa which he had contrived to get through malpractices were very soon squandered by his son on unworthy persons and by his wife on lovers."

Ordinarily like all other Kavya-writers even in his own land Kalhana should have followed a policy of safety first and painted the kings only in white splendour; but like a true chronicler he does not hesitate from using black paint whenever occasion arises. In this connection he has placed a host of rulers in the dock.

In this respect we should remember this fact that Kalhana was alive and a close witness of events of Sussala's and his son's Jayasimha's reign. About Sussala, the father of the reigning king, he has not a single 'kind word and even for Jayasimha he does not ignore to pen down his bad points.

This needs high order of courage and that also at that time when political murders and diplomatic reprisals were a common feature. He also gives a graphic account of Sycophants, parasites and flatterers of the king, Jaysimha who definitely held high office in his government. He is not at all afraid of their revenge and very faithfully paints their detestable figures.

The ruling king also does not escape his chastisement:

< verses >

"Uneven, indeed are the features also in his (Jayasimha's) character. Not perceiving the excellence of their (aggregate) result, the people have concluded that-these were faults."

Now we come to the moot point of historicity in Kalhana's chronicle. He has given us the eyewitness account of at least three kings- Harsa, Sussala and Jayasimha. Herein his historical acumen is at its highest. However in the first six books he has relied on the sources which he has described at length in the beginning of his chronicle. He has also taken help from tradition which he could not ignore at any price. In this way if the events are treated in a very loose and general way in the first six books, it is the fault not of the chronicler but of the sources at his disposal. He has tried his best to weave into one the scattered threads of history.

The first king of Kashmir has been named as Gonanda I by him and he has been shown a contemporary of Yudishthira of Mahabharata. The date of accession to throne by Yudishthira is given as 653rd year of Kali era. Kalhana has given this very date as the start of Gonanda's rule or Kashmir-history on the authority of Nilamata Purana. However, from Gonanda III he gives the length of reigns regularly. For this he supplies a cogent reason in as much as " fifty two lost kings" he has not been able to identify or locate. Among the fifty two lost kings he has given us names of seventeen perhaps on the basis of the tradition. Still there is a veritable gap of thirty five kings between Gonanda I and Gonanda III which he has not succeeded in filling. Out of these seventeen kings whom he has retrieved, he has given us the name of Ashoka (B.C. 300) - the great Buddhist monarch of Pataliputra who had also annexed Kashmir. Kalhana's record about Ashoka is corroborated by his inscriptions and by the Chinese travellers. One of the famous deeds of this monarch was to found the city of Srinagar which was called "Srinagari" at that time:

< verses >

"That illustrious king (Ashoka) founded the important city of Srinagari with ninety six lakhs of houses full of wealth".

"The Turkish incursions into Kashmir have been amply dealt with by Kalhana while mentioning the names of great Kushan ruler Kanishka and other two Huska and Juska, while describing these foreign kings Kalhana has shown extreme sense of catholicity. They had embraced Buddhism and as such this religion - a virtual reaction against Brahmanism- also was popular in Kashmir, for which Kalhana a staunch Saiva has no regrets; instead he praises this religion and its founder.

These kings founded the towns Huskapura, Juskapura, and Kaniskapura now known as "Vushkur, Zokur, and Kanisapur respectively, the first and last are in the vicinity of Baramulla (Varahmulla) and "Zokur" near the famous Naseem Bagh. The chronicler also refers to famous Buddhist philosopher "Nagarjuna" having lived here at Sadarhadvana (the first of six Arhats-Buddhist mendicants). This place has been identified as the present "Harwan" where on the hillocks remains of the Buddhist monasteries are still visible.

Another alien king who retired to Kashmir as narrated by Kalhana, is the white Hun Mihir Kula whom he refers as "Trikotihan" - killer of three crores. After perpetrating countless atrocities, he embraced Saivism here and later out of penitence consigned himself to flames.

Out of the indigenous kings Kalhana has given us illuminating accounts of the following. These illustrious kings are very renowned in Kashmir:

Pravarsena II (A.D. 580 roughly): This king has been portrayed as a valiant warrior; when he was invited to occupy the throne, he was leading an expedition in Trigarta (modern Kangra) to recover the kingdom of his fore-fathers. He is said to have built his capital named Pravarapura, (Pravarasenapura) perhaps on the same site on which modern Srinagar stands. However, on further scrutiny and reading through the lines, it can be safely established that the new city was founded on the outskirts of Sharika parvat or Hari parvat in Kashmir. In Kalhana's own words this hill was situated in the centre of the new city.

Lalituditya Mukhtapida (A.D. 750) has been painted in very profuse colours and also at length by Kalhana. Here-in the evidence of foreign notices and monuments is so striking that Kalhana's account does not seem only credible but also accurate, Lalituditya was a great conqueror and inflicted crushing defeats on Yasovarman, the king of central India, Tokharians (Dwellers of upper oxus or more precisely Badakhshan of the Muslim Historians) from where he brought a very astute person Cankuna by name and made him his minister, and also some Turks who lived in the upper Indus. Not only this, he invaded Baltistan and Tibet with Chinese connivance and subjugated Dard tribes. He has also been portrayed as having crossed the sand-ocean perhaps in central Asia. In this way we are told thrt the whole of his life was spent in wars and he perished while with an expedition to distant North in the excessive snow. Not only this he made the king of Bengal his vassal.

Even though his hands were full with waging wars, he did find some time to build some famous buildings in Kashmir. One of these is the sun-temple at Martanda which the king constructed at the site of the Tirtha of the same name. Its massive walls of stones with a lofty enclosure have been clearly mentioned. He also founded the city of Parihasapura which served as the royal residence also. He also built a cluster of temples around it. This city had been built by the king for merrymaking (parihasa) as a respite after strenuous wars. "The karewas of Paraspor and Diwar are situated at a distance of fourteen miles from Srinagar on the Baramulla road." Another two towns namely "Lalitpura" and "Lokapunya", "Lalitpur" an abbreviation of Lalitudityapura can be identified easily. It is called "Letapor" now, but no remains are seen there above ground. May be these lie buried under the saffron-growing udars.

The "Loka Punya" is the "Lookabhavan" of to-day; the former town did not find favour with the king as it had been designed and built by his architect in his absences. This great king also made elaborate arrangements for the irrigation of villages by water- wheels drawing water from the Vitasta.

The reign of Avantivarman (A. D. 855-883) has been rightly called the period of consolidation for the country. Even though the suzerainty of Kashmir was not extended beyond its frontiers as in the time of Lalituditya, but the king gave ample attention to the internal problems of the country, which had become more pronounced during the reign of weak successors of Lalituditya.

The king founded the town of "Avantipur" situated at a distance of some seventeen miles from Srinagar on Srinagar Jammu Highway. The fame of Avantipur is still preserved by the huge temples he built there, which are still erect though in dilapidated condition. Among these ruins the most valuable are a series of sculptures which have been placed in the Srinagar Museum. His very astute and wise Minister Sura was also as pious as the king. He also founded a town after his name Surapura called Hurpora at present. The landmark of his reign is the dredging of the Vitasta undertaken by Engineer Suyya. By his ingenious methods he regulated the course of Vitasta and the scare of famine looming large every year by excessive floods was warded off for ever. New land was also reclaimed and on one of these tracts Sayya built a township named "Suyyapur," Sopore of today.

King Avanti Varman died of an affliction at Jyeshtheshvara shrine overlooking the "Dal" lake where he had retired earlier. This shrine is called "Zeethayar" at present near the Chismashi spring. In his court there were such luminaries as Muktakana, Sivaswami, Ananda Vardhana and Ratnakara. Among the most powerful women who changed the course of the history of Kashmir by their irresistible personality "Dida" deserves full mention. Actually being the consort of "Khemagupta" (A. D. 950-958) she wielded the real regal power, as her consort was a weakling given to licentious habits. She was the daughter of "Simha Raja" the king of Lohara. She tried to give clean administration to the people by getting rid of corrupt ministers and even the prime-minister Phalguna. Many rebellions raised their head but were quelled by Dida as she did not show any mercy. After the death of her husband she ruled the country as a regent for minor Abhimanyu. However, Abhimanyu died prematurely and his son Nandi Gupta was installed on the throne by Dida his grandmother. He ruled for one year only and died of "witchcraft" employed by her grandmother. Her other grand sons Tribhuvaha and Bhima Gupta were also despatched to other world in the same way and path became clear for the queen to ascend the throne herself. She had a love affair with Tunga a cowered boy from Poonch and made him the prime-minister. After anointing her brother's son "Samgrama Raja" as the Yuva Raja she died in A.D. 1003 121 after having ruled for 53 long years both as a regent and a monarch in a most ruthless way. After the assassination of Sussala (A.D. 1123), Jayasimha ascended the throne in the face of conspiracies, intrigues and famine. This is the last king of Kashmir as narrated by Kalhana. His reign was marked by the revolt of Damaras an in the end the king had to make a compromise with them so that the troubles in the land would end. In this way the chronocler had described the reins of 109 kings from Gonanda I to Jayasimha spreading over a period of 1182 B. C. to 1149 A.D. As has been said earlier, Kalhana has given the tenure of reigns of each king from Gonanda III and prior to him the dates have been given in a hyperbolic manner; these have not been consequently added to the span of years given above. The exact number of verses he has employed to condense this account is 7126.

Kalliana is at his best when he gives an exact topographical account of ancient Kashmir. The veracity of his interest in this field can be very conveniently established even now after such a lapse of time. It seems probable that he had visited each and every place before describing it in words. The exactness of their position and accurate description are a feather to his cap. By even a cursory perusal of the chronicle the geography of Kashmir can be built with precise dexterity. Copious examples can easily be gleaned from the chronicle to illustrate this point. About the sanctity of the soil of his land he does not exaggerate when he says:

< verses >

"(Where in my county) Keshava (Visnu) and Isana (Siva) shine like Chakrabrt and Vijayesa and also in other forms, there is not space even as a fraction of sesamum seed without having a Tirtha."

To this day, the whole valley is strewn with holy places, springs and temples and even every pebble of this land has been deified.

The names of towns and villages have Nagara, Pura, Bhoga, Dhama, and Grama, as endings respectively, but in Kashmiri pronounced as Nagra, Pora, Bug, Homa, Gama, respectively; Srinagar e. g. Lyatapora, Shalabug, Danyahoma, and Chandigama. Perhaps the best tribute we can pay to the the precision with which Kalhana has penned down topography is the route of vitasta with its serpentine flow. The names of places through which it flows have been faithfully recorded. The Kashmiri Buga is evidently derived from Bhoga meaning property.

Even though Kashmir valley is hemmed in between continuous chains of mountains, yet. Kalhana has given us a lucid description of the 'Dvaras' or gateways to Kashmir. Through these 'dvaras' invasions took place as also the traffic on both sides was maintained to and fro.

At the eastern corner of the Pir Panjal range Banasala has been mentioned. A castle had been built there perhaps as a watch-tower also. This pass be easily identified as Banihal nowadays. Anantvarman's Minister Sura built a town Surapura, modern Hurpor which has been also mentioned as an entrance to the valley. Herein also a watch-tower was built. This route connected RajaPuri, (Rajouri) with the valley. This road was also known as "Salt road," as alluded to by Ksemendra, as the salt has been all along an imported commodity into Kashmir.

The other route, which connected Kashmir with Lohara (modern Lohrin) and Parantosa (Poonch) passing through the Tosamaidan was very well known at that time. The ancient name of this route was Karkota Dranga.

Even though the village Dranga situated at the foot of the hill still bears that name, yet Dranga in Kalhana's time was an equivalent of watch station. The mountain-ridge known nowadays as Kakudar (Kashmiri) is a corrupt form of KaraKota dhara. Tosa maidan of present day is made up of "Tausi" the plain of "Tohi" as known in Poonch and the persian 'maidan' (a plain).

The frontiers of ancient Kashmir as narrated by Kalhana should also deserve mention here. The actual territory on which the monarch at Srinagar ruled can be ascertained by the reference to chiefs and independent Rajas bordering on the outskirts of the valley beyond mountains. On the southeast Kashtavata (modern Kishtwar) and Bhadravakasa (modern Badarwah) were ruled by the local Hindu rajas. The Rajas of Chamba (ancient Champa) often had matrimonial alliances with the Lohara Kings which reigned over Kashmir. To the west of Champa and south of Bhadravakasa was situated Vallapura the Billavar of to-day in Jammu district. The chieftains of this territory were independent and have been described by Kalhana often.

To the south west and west of Kashmir lay the hill-states of Darvabhisara. Actually it is combination of Darvas and Abhisaras finding mention in Mahabharata also. The prominent principality of this region was Rajapuri known as Rajouri today. Owing to its strategic position of being on the route to plains, the rulers of Kashmir always tried to subjugate it . To the North-west of Rajapuri was the territory of Lohara-the moden Lorin (now in Poonch district). The chiefs of this family ruled Kashmir also for some time. In those times Parantosa, (Poonch) was included in Lohara.

On the North west of Parantosa the valley of Kashmir was situated. Vitasta flowed in between the valley and further to the west lay the Kingdom of Urasa, district Hazara of today to which many expeditions by kings of Kashmir were led.

The tract of land now known as Keran or Karnaha bore the old name of Karnaha, though under local rule, paid tribute to Kashmir kings. The valley of Kishenganga was known as Drava derived from Duranda as given by Kalhana. This was a feudatory state of Kashmir and one of the most sacred Tirthas of Kashmir 'Sarada' is situated therein. This is now under the unauthorised rule of Pakistan.

At the other end of this valley the territory of Dards (Dard-Desa) is located. It was a separate kingdom though small in extent. This is, therefore, in nutshell the political topography as given by Kalhana about the Kashmir of his times.

As has been said earlier, Kalhna is concerned only with the rise and fall of kings and people at large have been left untouched by him directly. However, the mercurial fate of kings which at times smiled at them and at times frowned also, has afforded sufficient opportunites to him to study the behaviour and character of his people.

The most noteworthy trait of Kashmiri character is its tolerance and catholicity. There are numerous examples in his chronicle to show that Buddhist viharas and stupas were built side by side with Visnu and Siva temples. The great conqueror Lalita Ditya though himself a Vaisnava erected a massive Buddhist

vihara at his newly built capital Parihasapura. Even though the king professed a certain faith, his ministers or people could subscribe freely to any other faith. King Avanti Varman was a Vaishnava but his minister Sura was a Saiva and there was no tension between the two on this score. Even the Kashmir rulers did not hesitate to appoint ministers of foreign descent and foreign faith. Cankuna the Turk was the minister of Lalitaditya 'Sarada' Mukhtapida. The secular outlook towards life was ever present in Kashmir even in those hoary days.

The foreigners like Khasas, Bombas, Turuskas, Dards and Bhatitias etc were free to practise their own faith and if they felt impressed by Hindu or Buddhist outlook on life and embraced one of these, there was no compulsion in this behalf. Not a single communal trouble is mentioned by Kalhana in his chronicle. The holicity of a Kashmiri can very faithfully be proved the existence of Turuska-Raja Bhairava, a Siva shrine at the new colony Narsinghgarh, Srinagar. As the name conclusively suggests that a foreign Turk has been made into a Bhairava and is being propitiated even now regularly. The foreign kings like Huska, Juska, and Kanishka ruled over the country and have left the annals of Kashmir history by founding cities after their names.

Kashmiris according to him are also fatalists of the highest order. They ascribe all their woes and otherwise to the unseen and unknown fate, perhaps this trait in their character has to a large extent deprived them of their initiative but at the same time has also afforded them calm composure at the changes which so frequently took place at that time:

< verses >

"He (Guru Isana) was amazed and thought how this would come about. Pondering for long he said (to himself) that the power of fate is unpredictable." The people of Kashmir were so much enthralled by this unseen power of fate that Kalhana says that "fate is the mine of all miracles."

< verses >

The firm belief in what is ordained already can be illustrated eloquently by this:

< verses >

"The lightening of good fortune, the crane of fame, the thunder of bravery, and the rainbow of glory come in the wake of the cloud of fate."

As a natural corollary to the above trait, Kashmiri character has firm belief in Divine retribution. Evil doer can in no way reap a harvest of virtue. Only good actions can be rewarded and bad deeds will receive punishment sooner or later. There is no escape from this:

< verses >

"Cursed by the oppressed subjects, the king's (Shankar Varman's) who was taking to evil path, some twenty or thirty sons died without being ill (suddenly)."

The Kashmiri subjects being powerless before tyrants invoked the Divine wrath over them and felt gratified to see that such despots fleecing their subjects did lose family, life, name, and even glory. Since good deeds are rewarded, hence the Kashmiris have all along been charitable-this being a good deed, helping the needy. The importance of charity has been extolled and consequently practised. Alms giving has been stressed in Niti Shastras as well as in the Mahabharata also, and is an inalienable ingredient of Hindu culture. Kalhana says that even if wealth may be got through fraud but becomes righteous if given in charity.

As a matter of fact, a peoples' revolt has never taken place in Kashmir as narrated by Kalhana. The kings often squeezed blood from their subjects who were already groaning under the weight of their abject poverty. Moreover the favourites of kings exploited them to their fill. Perhaps they drew satisfaction from the Fatalism and the Divine retribution present in their character. Indigenous rule at times changed hands with foreign domination. Intrigue, treason and lust reigned supreme in royal courts. To all this, Kashmiris reacted in a most stoical way. Whenever counter-conspiracies are hatched, it is not the Kashmiri but a foreigner finding favour with the king. Sometimes revolutions of far-reaching consequences rocked their native land but they sat with fingers crossed. This clearly shows that they did not feel any sense of participation or belonging with high-ups above them. Hence Kalhana very faithfully draws the picture of idle and indifferent crowds in the bazars:

< verses >

"The indifferent crowds without any feelings whatsoever, looked at their king fighting with his contenders at the bridge, as if it was a horse-show on the first day of Asvin Month."

In view of such a pacifist and indifferent attitude to life, Kashmiri character has obviously been nonmilitant. Inflicting injury on others could not be their blood as they believed in Divine retribution, Violence in any form cannot be termed as a noble act, being essentially an evil action, the Kashmiris refrain from indulging in such actions. Absence of militant traits in their character has given ample opportunities to Kalhana to jeer at his own countrymen:

< verses >

"Canga etc who were the confidants and advisers of Tonga became dumb-founded with terror like women, though being armed."

Consequently Kashmiri soldier was undependable and the kings had to employ mercenaries from fighting clans in the adjoining areas. The people detested war and when a foreign army came to invade them, they felt despondent. They could never think of giving it a fight:

< verses >

"At the sight of a hostile army the people felt their bodies aching as if paralysed by the sudden appearance of untimely clouds, and their energy began to give way."

A Kashmiri could never be a spendthrift in as much as he had to provide for the rainy day. Such "rainy days" were legion in his time in the shape of famines sieges, and invasions. So, he is calculating in expenditure and does not waste his hard-earned money. Even the kings learnt the utility of such wise-spending:

< verses >

"(The king Uccala) a Kashmiri as he was, did not invest his riches in building and dismantling palaces time and again; or purchasing horses only to make these apart of the dust or the robbers (respectively)." These pages have most succinctly brought into bold relief the claims of Kalhana as a chronicler. Since he is the first to initiate this form of literary-writing yet, as has been shown, he is humble and does not brag about his prowess in this field. He may not touch the high water-mark of historical attitude of mind, but is very careful about his shortcomings also. All the criticism that is levelled against him does not ruffle him. No better tribute could be paid to the denizens of this land of "learning, palatial houses, saffron, icy water and grapes difficult to find in heaven even," for their piety and spiritual attainments:

< verses >

"The inhabitants of this land can be conquered only by spiritual force and never by brute-force of arms, hence they have the fear of the other world only."

7.0 KSEMENDRA - THE PEOPLES' POET

Sanskrit poets and literary luminaries have been often accused of oriental hyperbole. It may be conceded that by and large such devotees of Muse did indulge in some kind of exaggeration which became nauseating at times; such kind of poetic fancy becomes pronounced when they had to extol their patrons, heroes or even their beloveds. Kings whose munificence made such kind of poets as mercenaries, so to say, have been equated with the lord of the gods - Indra, while they had no intrinsic merit of their own. People at large have been by-passed and no direct reference has been made to them. Even the prince among poets Kalidasa has revelled in the description of Raghu or Dilipa but has forgotten altogether his subjects over whom they ruled. Aja sheds torrents of tears for his beloved wife Indumati, but not a single drop has been reserved for the underdog whom he exploited to live in luxury.

Happily for us, a Kashmiri Brahmin "Ksemendra" by name has striven to wash off this stigma attached in general to Sanskrit poets and has tried his versatile pen on the people in general. This is not a mean achievement in the context of the standards and norms of poetry-writing prevalent at that time. Even the Rhetoricians had laid it down that the hero of a Mahakavya should be a god, saint or a man of exceptional attainments. To rise in revolt against such time-honoured conventions needs self-confidence of highest order. Ksemendra did not err in his duty towards his brethren and though being a rebel did initiate a very healthy trend in the Sanskrit literary tradition. He made heroes and heroines of ordinary mortals in flesh and blood - the courtesan, the clerk, the miser and many others culled from ordinary life. He did not believe in portraying the ideal, at the same time not being averse to it. He in a most realistic manner could feel the ground underneath his feet. The throbs, sighs, sobs, joys and sorrow of the man in the street have been woven in dexterous verse pulsating with innate sincerity by him only to point out that the distance between the "ideal" and the "actual" needs to be bridged, and perfection being an adage only found in text books on morality, approximation to that ideal should guide us as to the inherent merit or otherwise of the people of whom he was one.

In an extant reference to Ksemendra found in Kalhana's Raja Tarangini, his talent as a poet has been praised but his acumen for historicity played down:

< verses >

"Because of somewhat carelessness, not a single fraction of the Ksemendra's Nrpavali is free from blemishes, even though it is the work of a poet."

Kalhana having seen the "list of kings" could glean mistakes in it from the point of view of a chronicler, but unfortunately this book was lost to the posterity, hence no judgement whatsoever can be passed on it except relying on Kalhana who acknowledges Ksemendra's right to be a poet. However, in the Colophon to the 'Samaya Matrika', Ksemendra has written that he finished that work during the reign of Ananta in the 25th year of the Laukika era. Again in "Suvratta - Tilakam" he reiterates that he wrote in the reign of king Ananta and finally in 'Dasavataracaritam' he says that he finished this assignment in the reign of Kalasha, son of Ananta, the year being 41 Saptarsi era. So it is abundantly clear that he did at least see the rule of two kings- Ananta and his son Kalasha. Again in his 'Bharatamanjari' he has alluded to his being the pupil of Abhinavagupta from whom he learnt Alamkara Shastras. The date of this Shaiva philosopher and commentator - Abhinavagupta cannot be later than 1014 A.D. because he wrote his bigger commentary on the Pratyabhijna Darshana in 1014 A. D. At that time Ksemendra studied at his feet. So we can safely assume that Ksemendra must have been born at least 20 or 25 years before this date so as to develop his comprehension in receiving the tuition from Abhinavagupta. Hence his date of birth can roughly be placed in the last quarter (towards its end) of the 10th century. His explicit mention of Ananta and his son Kalasha only might give some clue as to his death or retirement from creative

literature. He does not mention any other king after Kalasha which proves that he was not destined to see the reign of the successor to Kalasha. The year in which he finished the "Dasavatarcaritam" has been given as 41 Saptarsi era which corresponds to 1066 A. D. After this date he either sought respite from literary pursuits or was cut short in life by death. He went to Tripuresha mountain for spending his old age there and probably breathed his last at the Ashrama he had built over there. King Kalasha reigned from A.D. 1073 - 1089 and it can fairly be assumed that Ksemendra cast off his corporal frame after A. D. 1066 and not in any case later than A.D. 1089. Between these two limits his date of death can be cogently placed. This Tripuresha or Tripureshvara was held in great reverence in olden days as Kalhana alludes repeatedly to it for its sanctity. King Avantivarman also passed his last days on this Tirtha. Nilamata purana also mentions it as a place of pilgrimage. This has been identified as 'Triphar' on route to Mahadeva shrine, some 4 miles from the headworks of the present 'Harvan' to the North-East A stream known as Tripuraganga is still visited by the pilgrims going to Mahadeva which flows close to modern Triphar. Even though it has lost its fame now, yet Shrivara has mentioned about a 'Annasattra' started by king Zain-ul-Ab-Din (Bud Shah) at this Tirtha. This may be the permanent 'Langar' of those days started for feeding the needy and might prove that during the Muslim rule also it had retained its renown as a holy place.

Ksemendra unlike other Sanskrit poets does not feel shy of publicity. In the colophons of his various works he acquaints us fully with his lineage; piecing together all these facts given by the author himself, we can conveniently build his family tree. His grandfather's name was 'Sindhu' being the son of 'Narendra' a minister of Jayapida, grandson of Lalitaditya.

He was a very strong and benevolent king of Kashmir and was named Vinayaditya also especially on his coins. His father's name was Prakashendra. He seems to have been born in affluence as the family surname of 'Indra' most eloquently testifies to. His father was of very liberal disposition and made handsome gifts to Brahmins. He subscribed to Shaiva cult hence installed many Shiva lingas at Svayam near Nichihama in present Handwara Tehsil, and spent some 25 lakh rupees for endowment purposes. Like his father Ksemendra also built an Ashram at Triphar and retired there in his old age. His son was 'Somendra' and being talented like his versatile parent wrote an introduction to the "Avadana-Kalpalata". Fortunately for us, the family tree of Ksmendra unmistakably illustrates that this family had preference for Sanskrit names and not local names, whose meaning at present cannot be made out like those of Kalhana, Bilhana and Mamatta, etc. "Khema" in Sanskrit means "eternal happiness" and Indra means a "lord". So the name taken together means "Lord of eternal happiness, which he really was, as his compositions fully portray. He did not confine this happiness only to himself but dispensed it profusely among his fellow-countrymen by composing humorous skits and witty character sketches in "Deshopadesa" and "Narmamala". He lived perfectly up to his name.

His versatile genius has flowered in many directions. Dr. Keith called him a polymath while Dr. Stein' has appended the epithet polymister with his name. This tribute goes a long way in establishing that he did not confine himself to a single form of literary expression but tried his pen over many other forms with equal force and effect. However, in all humility he calls himself 'Vyasadasa' the servant of Vyasa of Mahabharata fame. Knowledge has given him humility in every sense of the word. Even though like Vyasa he was a prolific writer, yet he refrains from equating himself with him; he does scale the virgin heights of literary expression, yet does not boast about this but ascribes it to the blessings of Vyasa whose slave he becomes willingly. The ego in him remains subdued as should be the case with every literary giant.

However, it is to be conceived rightly that though Ksemendra's father was a devout Shaiva and he himself received tuition from Abhinavagupta - a Shavitie stalwart - yet he got converted to Vaishnavism by the efforts of Somapada. It also seems that he had more respect for this Somabhagvata than even for Abhinavagupta. Moreover, he kept his mind open and studied Bhuddism also. Perhaps his awake intuition first of all thought of including Buddha among the ten incarnations of Vishnu. Some faint echoes of ridiculing Shaivism can also be gleaned from his compositions especially in 'Deshopadesha' and

'Naramamla'. But despite all his flirtations with Shaivism, Vaishnavism and Bhuddism, he was a firm believer in the religion of Shrutis (Vedas) and Smritis.

Before we proceed to discuss his literary acumen as a polymath, it seems pertinent to refer to a controversy raised by Prof Peterson regarding the identity of Kesemendra and by mistake confusing him with Kshemraja - the renowned commentator of Shaiva lore. However, on second thoughts he revised his earlier opinion, and in this way the dust raised by this confusion got settled. Perhaps this wrong inference is due to the fact that both these Kshemaraja and Ksemendra acclaim Abhinavagupta as their teacher. Ksemendra has provided a veritable hint as to his real identity as much as he prefixes the epithet "Vyasadasa" invariably with his name while Kshemaraja does not have any such appellation. The latter is silent about his pedigree but the former has written profusely about his lineage. Hence it can be easily understood that the two have had separate identity.

Broadly speaking Ksemendra's immense literary activities can be divided into four distinct traits:

- a) As a condenser of very lengthy epic -literature and other religious Kavyas.
- b) As a Historian.
- c) As a satirist.
- d) As a writer on Rhetoric, poetics and metres.

Under the first head, his summaries of Ramayana, Mahabharata, Brhatkatha of Gunadya, 'Deshavatacharita' and 'Baudha-vadanakalpalata' are note worthy.

By epitomizing the Brhatkatha written originally in paishachi, he did a great service to the literary tradition of Sanskrit literature. The original having been lost, but Ksemendra's translation into Sanskrit has served admirably to retrieve that irreparable damage, and so he is looked upon as the originator rather than the translator of this famous story-literature. Soma Deva Bhatta also prepared a second version of Brhat Katha in Sanskrit after him which proves that this kind of literature on the pattern of Arabian Nights had become very popular with the people.

Brhat Katha Manjari deals with amors and heroism of various kings especially the king Udyana. It has nineteen Lamabakas (cantos). The poetry employed is not of high order and in the words of Dr. Buhler may be called "verified prose". Ramayana Manjari and Mahabharata Manjari are obviously the shorter versions of Ramayana and Mahabharata - the epic literature of India respectively. In the latter a glaring omission is perceptible. He has altogether omitted the chapters 342-353 of the Shanti Parva. On a perusal of the Ramayana Manjari it is quite clear that he follows Valimiki in a most faithful way and has even alluded to minor incidents be it by a single phrase or a single sentence. So, how this striking omission can be explained? Perhaps in the eleventh century the Shantiparva did not form the part of Mahabharata and might have been interpolated subsequently.

One fact comes to surface while discussing the Manjari literature of Ksemendra. He retains the original name of the text he has chosen for being summarized and appends the word 'Manjari' to it. "Manjari" might mean a sprout, cluster of blossoms, a flower-bud or a creeper. In this way he has very intelligently suggested that his smaller edition is like a creeper to the original and imposing tree of Ramayana, Mahabharata etc. He has like a deft gardener pruned the extraneous and redundant foliage around these trees and carved out of these a cluster of blossoms, even though smaller in volume, but all the more prettier in appearance. As a translator of Brhat Katha, his translation from Paisachi into Sanskrit was definitely subservient to the contents of the original. He could not take any liberty with it; with such shortcomings even, Ksemendra's mastery over Sanskrit is unblemished. So it is wrong to judge his poetic prowess from his "Manjari" literature. His independent works only can be the touch-stone to test his talents as a poet. We will come to this point later.

'Baudhavadana-kalpa-lata', is a collection of Jataka tales. On the authority of the poet's son "Somendra" Ksemendra composed only 107 Pallavas (chapters), to which his worthy son added one more, making it the auspicious number of 108. Unfortunately the first 40 Chapters of this compendium were lost but luckily were retrieved from its Tibetan translation, when Shakya - Shri a Kashmiri Pandit presented a copy of it to the Lama of Tibet in 1202 A.D. He got it translated into Tibetan some seventy years after i.e. 1272 A.D. Ksemendra also acknowledges the debt of one 'Virya Bhadra' an authority on Buddhistic texts who assisted him in composing this treatise.

"Dashavatarcharita" as the name suggests contains anecdotes regarding various incarnations of Vishnu; though Ksemendra does display a rare kind of ingenuity in dealing with this religious topic, yet it cannot be termed to be his original work; first 9 cantos are definitely derived from Puranas. Novelty of conception is discerned in the 7th canto wherein "whole of the Ramayana is narrated with Ravana as the central figure". The result is quite happy and vividness of description adds to its charm. This novelty of conception is further more witnessed in his extolling Buddha as an incarnation of Vishnu. The inherent attitude of an Indian thinker believing in synthesis is seen at the work here. Herein the Hindu view of life assimilating all that is good from any source whatever, has come in handy to the poet. So, the rebel against Hinduism as such - the Buddha has been admitted to the fold of Hindu pantheon which proves not only the catholicity of Hindus but also their wakefulness.

When the symbol of revolt-Buddha was equated with Rama, Krishna etc. the edge of proselytisation started by his followers got blunted. The wind was taken out to their sails, not by force, not by persecution either, but by owning him. In this way Hindus got one more incarnation and propitiated him in the form he detested the most. His followers definitely stood to lose in the bargain while Hindus gained everything - their culture, their way of thinking remaining in tact. Imperceptible erosion took place in the other camp and consequently this very religion had to either get amalgamated in the Hindu fraternity, or live in self-exile.

As a historian no estimate of his can be built as his "Nrpavali" (the list of Kings) has been lost even though Kalhana did consult it for writing, his Tarangini. However, Kalhana has not been fair to him. He admires his acumen as a poet, but derides it as a historian. However, it is to be conceded that Kalhana while enumerating the sources of the historical data on which he built his chronicle, does mention his "list of kings" which must have commanded some respect in his time, and to justify the writing of his "Tarangini" pointed to the defects in the former "Nrpavali". In this connection it is to be remembered that even though Ksemendra undertook to write the "list of kings" but his heart definitely lay with the underdog. So he treated it in a slip- shod manner. In course of time, Nature respecting his conviction, consigned the book to some forgotten corner, hence was lost. His innate progressive outlook would have compiled a "Janavali". The "List of people" instead of "The list of kings". Perhaps to atone for this omission he wrote a number of books which do definitely come under the caption "Janavali". Royal patronage he did not want as he was sufficiently affluent himself, so could not bring himself to cater to the moonish caprices of kings.

Kalavilasa may be considered the best work from the fertile pen of Ksemendra. This book consists of ten cantos and in the very first canto "Muladeva" the arch cheat is introduced and the rest of the book is devoted to the tips given by him to his pupil Chandragupta the caravan leader's son. Each canto deals with vanity, greed description of courtesans, the character of the clerk, arrogance the description of Music, description of various cheats, and lastly exposition of all the arts. As is clear from the titles of cantos, the poet does not refrain from exposing the weakness inherent in the society at that time. The cheats, courtesans, Kayasthas and goldsmiths epitomizing the deceit in themselves corrupt the society with the aid of vanity, greed and arrogance. His play on the word ('mud') arrogance which was spelt as ('dum') restraint in the Krta - age deserves mention. In Kali - age the sequence of syllables has changed places 'dum' becoming 'mud'.

Moreover, useful information about the currency in vogue at that time is also given in this book. While describing the character of miserly trader he calls him a thief in broad day light. Having plundered the customers by guile or flattery during the day, he very reluctantly parts with three cowries for house-hold expenses. It seems clear that the cowries were in use as a medium of currency in his time - and that also of the lowest denomination. He calls cowries as a (Shvetika) being of white colour also. Narrating the novel deceptive ways of gold smiths who have faulty balances for weighing gold and possess sixty four arts of cheating the people, he alludes to their birth, and says that they were previously nibbling at the Meru mountain as mice and cursed by gods for this insolence were born as goldsmiths on this globe. The title of this composition means the charm or pastime of arts- the art of deception, cheating, enticing, seduction, and robbery etc.

About the depraved woman, he has this castigation:

< verses >

"Eluding her own husband like a fawn, tasting the hospitality of another tree (not her own husband's), by nature a low-born vamp, displays false coquetry, crooked she-serpent, can be faithful to none".
In the same vein the prostitute is condemned as

< verses >

"In this way, having many hearts, many tongues, many hands, and many tricks of seduction, in reality without truthfulness; no body can know the prostitute in essence."

About the innocence of men he has this satirical compliment:

< verses >

"The astrologer calculating in the sky as to when the moon will enter its sixteenth mansion, does not know anything about his wife who is attached to the amors of various serpents (bad charactered men)."
The Kayastha (the scribes clerk) who held very important post in old Kashmir and like a leech drank the blood of people has not escaped his chastisement.

< verses >

"The handwriting (of Kayastha) is crooked, (fraudulent, so that the actual entries made into his books are not deciphered) looking like the snares of the death-god. The Kayasthas sit on the file of the birch bark (files) like serpents in a charmed circle (drawn by a conjurer)."

Samayamatrika may be also called the finest composition from the versatile pen of Ksemendra. Herein the poet lays bare the seductive amors of prostitutes and their enticing acumen. In the colophon to this book the poet calls it ('subhashitam') by which its didactic import is suggested. The caption of the book a compound consisting of ('Samaya') time and ('Matrika') mother, when taken together, may mean the "mother of the time" in that age. It was not the chaste or the virtuous lady but the ensnaring vamp - the prostitute who ruled over the hearts of men. The times were not in any way flatteringly punctuated with piety but besmeared with sinful conqueries of the prostitutes; by bringing them to the fore and also alluding to their ghastly end, the poet does reform the society. Some critics have found Ksemendra guilty of low-taste, vulgarity and only narrating the bad points in the society. However it is to be remembered in this context that Ksemendra in the first instance does not claim to be a religious preacher. He writes what he actually sees and feels. If the society was rampant with vulgarity, low taste and other evils, how could the poet be blind to these? The degradation in the society could not have remained hidden even if Ksemendra had tried to make the use of "idealistic" rather than the "realistic" approach to life. The filth and the mud in the society would after all raise its head had Ksemendra covered it with the sweet

smelling roses of his imagination even. By screening these from public view would have all the more multiplied their intensity, hence by portraying these, the society at large hanging its head in shame, could have thought of reform in right earnest. Hence the poet's intention is to reform and in no way to present the deformation of society. Hence the use of the ('subhashitam') at the end of book is quite justified. Negatively if the darkness is explained in full detail, the positive reaction to it would be light, more light. As the little of the book suggests, it is a compound of 'Times' and 'Matrika' (mother) object of respect. In a sarcastic manner the author wants to convey that the harlot is the "mother of the times" or more respected and sought after individuals in the society, while actually the Matrikas should have been propitiated. The moral and mental fibre of the people at that time was so base that instead of engaging themselves in "Matrika Pujananam" they wasted time and money in enjoying prostitutes. Hence in the very beginning of this treatise, Ksemendra very rightly says:

< verses >

Moreover, towards the end of this composition Ksemendra himself justifies the title by saying:

< verses >

"In course of time (by the curse of the time) that (Kankali) - the mother was transformed into an artificial beauty by Kalavati, associating this treatise with her name, I, Ksemendra has arranged it (into cantos)". This book also furnishes geographical data about the old salt route (salt has been always imported into the Valley) and a hospice named 'Panchala-Dhara-Matha' on it. Later on this very route and hospice were renovated by the Mughals connecting the Valley with the plains via Pira-Panchal range. This book of verses is divided into eight cantos (Samayas). Herein the initiation of one 'Kankali' into the hierarchy of prostitutes and her various sojourns have been described. The agent for introducing her to a senior-in-trade grown up lady- hence unmarkatable is naturally the hair-dresser- among men the barber (hair-dresser) is the most wicked.

Charucharya is actually a century of verses in Aaushtubha metre. According to the author the main purpose of writing it is to teach law and polity by way of a moral couched in the first line of the verse and followed by an illustration in the second. The illustrations are mainly drawn from epics and Puranas. 'Deshopdesha' contains updeshas (advice) in eight cantos regarding his innate feelings about the customs and notorious characters in the society. In the opening verses of this book the author craves for the indulgence of the readers in not construing any other meaning into his use of biting sarcasm, but only to bear with him, because he would like to reform the society through this medium:

< verses >

"Being ashamed very much and not goaded by the defects (in the society), it is my attempt to reform the people through mirthful laughter."

The characters he has chosen for his chastisement are the villain, the miser, harlot, the bawd, the sexy rogue; the Gouda students having come to Kashmir for receiving tuition and the old man's marriage etc. The harlot epitomizes in his words: -

< verses >

"In her speech honeyed-sweetness, in her heart the blade of a razor, the prostitute is like a sharp edge of an axe ready to cut at the roots of her paramours."

Even though being at the right side of sixties, she polishes her face with beauty - aids like a girl in teens, verily at the commencement of the iron age, she must have taken nectar along with crows.

About the foreign students especially from Gauda Pradesha (Bengal), he has this left-handed compliment:

< verses >

"He demands more vendibles, but gives very little as the price, so the vendor in the morning stands before him like a local Kali (to recover the balance). "

Presumably the student given to vile practices could not be coaxed into paying the actual price being under the influence of liquor on the preceding night. He would have cooked up a brawl and even wounded the vendor with his knife.

Moreover, the psychology of a miser has been graphically woven by him in these words:

< verses >

"The miser seeing a relation of his having come to his house of his own will, under the excuse of an altercation with his wife vows not to take anything."

When the host is observing a fast, more so under protest, how could the guest expect hospitality there. So, he takes up to his heels and in this way, the miser gets rid of him. Furthermore, Ksemendra tries to philosophise on his over-all behaviour :

< verses >

"The dry-as-dust miser's words can never be sweet. How can be loveliness on his face when there is no salt even in his house-hold." Herein, the poet has played on the word 'salt' which in its abstract form may mean beauty also.

In this way, he has not spared any such despised character in society.

The Kashmiri Bhatta (Pandit as known now) having fallen from his high pedestal and addicted to vice has been painted by him as

< verses >

"The initiated Bhatta (Kashmiri Brahmin) bent upon taking liquor, being addicted to Vamachara by which the pride of his own clan has been set at naught, with a plate of fish in his hand, approaches the house of his teacher (for reading scriptures)."

This description of a Bhatta very lucidly brings home to our mind the levity obtaining in the highest caste at that time. Having forsaken the right path of worship and taking to Vamachara, he has to observe the 'panchamkaar' (five MS) rule, and is so bashless that he does not care two hoots for the prestige of the community to which he belongs.

The old man's infatuation for a young girl has been very aptly summed up by the author as follows :
"The old man begs for a virgin (in marriage) like a miser for wealth." The undertone in this simile is purposely condensed by the author by comparing the lust for a virgin of a dotard with the lust for money by the miser - who will never use it but simply keep it imprisoned in his coffers, only to feed his eyes upon.

'Narma-Mala' or a garland of humour and wit is actually a complement to the 'Deshopdesha.' It is divided into three Parihasas (Jokes). The main target in these is the Kayastha- clerk- who is painted most black.

He revelles in dismantling temples, teasing Brahmins, and encouraging bribery. His life full of vice lands him into the prison ultimately, and all his ill-gotten riches and property are confiscated. His end is most tragic.

The "Then" and "Now" of the Kasyastha has been very wittily condensed in the following verse:

< verses >

"(In former days) his wife used to drink the begged scum in a broken and second-hand stone bowl. She now takes the musk-scented wine in silver goblets.

Under the fourth head, Ksemendra as a rhetorician and writer on poetics and metrics composed Kavi Kanthabharana (The necklace of a poet) and Auchitya Vicharaeharcha (an account of propriety) and Suvratta tilakam (the crest of good metres) deserves special mention. As the titles of these compositions reveal, the first is a short treatise on the making of a poet for which divine as well as human effort is necessary. The second declares the 'propriety' as the soul of poetry. The age-long predominance of Rasa (sentiments) has been subordinated by him to Auchitya (propriety). The third obviously is a work on metres. Twenty four metres are described, discussed and illustrated by him in all. Besides these, a host of books on other subjects has been ascribed to Ksemendra. Late Pt. Madhusudan Kaul Shastri enumerates as many as thirty one compositions from his versatile pen.

However, to build his towering image as a peoples' poet, only such uncontroversial treatises as have been classified under different heads earlier, are sufficient.

Without mincing words, it would be expedient to judge him as a poet first and afterwards the subject he chose as a vehicle for his poetic talent will merit discussion. The most accepted definition of poetry from Eastern point of view is by Kavi Raja Vishwanatha when he says that even a single sentence containing Rasa (flavour or sentiment of relish) may be called poetry. Further to pin-point the importance of Rasa he defines it as < sanskrit text > which tinkles or which is relished is called Rasa. With other constituents such as 'embellishments', 'qualities', etc, Rasa is acknowledged by one and all as the soul of poetry. Herein obviously the emphasis is on the content of poetry.

Ksemendra himself defines poetry as containing "Auchitya" propriety. According to him propriety has been defined as :

"An embellishment is a real embellishment when applied at the proper place, and Gunas (merits) are actually merits when they up-bold the norms of propriety. So it is clear that Ksemendra does not subscribe to Rasa theory of poetry and makes bold to give his own definition. He actually makes the poetry purposeful. Furthermore in a poetic composition when different Rasas (sentiments) are intermixed propriety alone can preserve their flavour, if this kind of discretion is not employed, then the composition would only be a counterfeit mixture of sentiments. The author lays emphasis on the existence of propriety in each word, sentence, figures of speech, verbs, syntax, gender, number, adjective, tense and even on other outer limbs of poetry (Kavyangas) i.e. environment, time, intuition, thought and nomenclature.

Therefore the difference between the Rasa school and the definition of poetry given by Ksemendra is that the former is subjective in essence and the latter is objective in comprehension. The Advocates of Rasa did definitely include propriety in merits and impropriety with blemishes.

But Ksemendra like a realist does mark the frontiers between the two, because his judgment is objective. Before testing his merit as a poet by his own standards or by Eastern norms of criticism, it will be feasible to define poetry and also the making of a poet from western point of view also.

Wordsworth defines poetry "nothing less than the most perfect speech of man, that in which he comes nearest to being able to utter the truth." Herein this celebrated poet under-lines the truth which should deserve to be the subject of poetry. Another famous poet Shelley while defining poetry in a general way takes it to be the expression of imagination. Coleridge makes it as anti-thesis of science having for its immediate object pleasure not truth. Herein the emphasis is laid on the pleasure which should flow from a poetic composition. Thomas Carlyle declares poetry to be "musical thought". This definition is perhaps in consonance with that given by Dr. Johnson when he says that "poetry is metrical composition." Both these definitions pertain to the form of poetry-other than prose. Edgar Allan Poe also echoes the same feeling when according to him poetry is "the rhythmic creation of beauty."

W. H. Hudson sees poetry "as an interpretation of life through imagination and feeling."

However, from the perusal of all these definitions it is clear that poetry as such is a metrical composition pulsating with imagination and feeling its goal being to interpret the truth or to provide pleasure. In this way the form of poetry being musical and metrical and its content either the truth or the pleasure, have been properly and proportionately located. By comparing this definition with that of the Indian critics it is patent that these are in line with the protagonists of 'Rasa' theory which definitely tinkles the emotions. With regard to Ksemendra we have to note the didactic import in his poetry which he proclaims from the house-top. Therefore, the question arises whether a poet can be a moral teacher. He has to translate his feelings and emotions faithfully as they ooze forth in his heart and to preach morality through this medium is justified or not. To this knotty problem Sir Philip Sidney provides a cogent answer. In his "Defence of poetry" he says that a poet is a 'maker'; the Indian counter-part being 'Srishta' having the same meaning. So, it can be safely inferred that the poet does not express what already exists, but he invents - precisely the 'ideal' for the imitation of the reader in general. He (Sidney) further contends that the world created by the poet is surely better than what exists reality. In the same way fiction sounds truer than the fact. The contention of Sir Sydney to put squarely is, that poet is actually a moral teacher, but Ksemendra while admitting this in toto, does not believe in his painting the ideal and thereby reform the 'actual'. He would like to proceed from the 'actual' like a revolutionary and would like the reader to assess for himself 'what should have been' from 'what it is.' What he preaches on Morality is simply suggestive and not direct. Perhaps his approach is more realistic than Sir Sidney who would like us to go to the 'Real' via 'ideal'. Ksemendra believes in treating the 'Real' with its imperfections, and all the time beckoning us in undertones, and not directly, to have an eye on the 'perfect ideal'. "What should not be" can be very efficiently emphasized by "what actually is."

His conviction about the function of propriety in poetry comes to his succor in this dilemma. Propriety according to him is nothing but a real representation of life as it obtains. Had he painted it otherwise, it would have amounted to impropriety. Hence his candid portrayal of society is an illustration of propriety in its all shades of meaning. He would not like to pass on a counterfeit society for a genuine one. He believes in calling spade a spade and not confusing dross with gold. While discussing the attributes of a poet, Ksemendra in his 'Kavi Kanthabharna' has unambiguously laid down that a poet-in-the making should not seek the guidance of a logician or a grammarian because they hinder the flowering of good poetry. He is alive to the fact that good poetry should in no case get fettered in grammatical technicalities or the mental drill of logicians. It should flow like an uninterrupted stream. Moreover, he even goes to the extent of saying that a poet - in-the making "should neither go a - begging nor stoop to vulgarity in his narratives". His imaginative faculty should not be wanting in anything and should not fall below the established norms of good-taste. So, it is clear that Ksemendra as a teacher on poetry and also as a poet does strike a happy mean between the precept and the practice; for this he has chosen the vehicle of satire.

A satire has been defined as a piece of writing which ridicules the follies and wickedness of mankind, of a class of people or of an individual. As has been made clear in the preceding pages his emphasis is on the individual - different units of society who are a veritable cancer for its healthy growth. Hence his chastiment pulsating with sarcasm and irony does not border on vulgarity. It is a faithful representation

of life. It can safely be asserted that his poetry is not a revolt against life in any sense of the word. The moral standards as should have been existent in the society - which actually are not there - form the dirge of his poetical compositions. Like Mathew Arnold he believes that 'poetry is at bottom a criticism of life.' Morality and ethical values do form an inextricable woof and warp of the texture of society, hence the poetry of revolt would be revolt against life itself. So, he does not revolt against it, but lays it bare with pungent sarcasm and seemingly 'Mirthful laughter', only to relieve its grim effect on his readers. In the same way Ksemendra's poetry cannot be accused of being- the poetry of paradox. In a paradox the self-contradictory or absurd element is somewhat more pronounced than the truth it contains; our poet does not believe in the 'paradoxical' approach to poetry, but in its stead, prefers the direct approach which is easier to comprehend. He does not want us to solve riddles or puzzles.

Hence it is clear that his 'satire' does not subscribe either to 'revolt' or to 'paradox', in their stead, he transfers his innate feelings to the reader without any pretensions whatsoever.

It has been contended that satire is best suited to prose. In it the appeal is made to reason, judgment, "it cannot be heightened by being garnished with an appeal to emotion". However, our poet has employed the more difficult medium of poetry, hence his task to produce the desired effect is more arduous than those of the prose-writers in this field. Perhaps for this very reason some critics have called his poetry as versified prose. As has been shown earlier, this is sheer injustice to our poet. Like a true satirist he has to subjugate his emotions to the compelling reality around him. The wings of his imagination do get clipped consequently, so his poetry may not touch the high water-mark of Kalidasa - who has no such shortcomings and his emotions are free to take any direction whatsoever. Even then Ksemendra has yoked his poetic prowess admirably well to the exposition of the real by contrasting it with the ideal. For a satirist the method of contrast is indispensable. He may feel piqued at times with the gulf between the real and his dreams, yet his anger has to be screened under a mask of 'Mirthful-laughter' as Ksemendra would say himself. The satirist has to don the mantle of a moralist though he may not like it. His insistent beckoning to ideal - appealing to the sense of right and wrong - unconsciously bestows on him the status of a moral teacher. He cannot escape from it. Hence, in his poetry the aesthetic content is naturally subservient to the moral one. Even having such discomfitures for the full flight of his imagination, Ksemendra has tried his hardest to introduce aesthetic pleasure into it according to his own norms of propriety, as discussed earlier. His satire does show the poet in him. His compositions are even now relished with the gusto of a lyric vibrating with emotions and have never been treated as codes on Morality. Perhaps this popular reaction to his satire is a sufficient compliment to his genius as a poet of no mean order.

The very first verse of samaya Matrika introduces him as a poet by his own right :

< verses >

"He who has conquered three worlds by his exciting, stormy, yet formless weapons; I salute him the flower-bowed cupid, for his surpassingly wonderful prowess'.

Whenever his imaginative faculty is not under the curbing thumb of content, or is free to take strides at his own will, he definitely touches the high water mark of poetic fancy. The poet in him remains subdued not that he lacks proper imagination, by the compelling nature of the subject he has chosen, and the vehicle of shloka metre which cannot admit of any elaborate treatment because of its comparative shorter span. His vocabulary is so rich that he looks like a living Dictionary; hence he could readily and easily weave a particular situation or feeling out of the inexhaustible fund of words at his command. Words flow from his pen spontaneously and at times he does not feel diffident to use the local Kashmiri words also, perhaps to give his compositions a native colouring and flavour: "The flute-player has the Veena and the "tumbak" on his shoulders".

To make its Kashmiri usage more emphatic, he also uses the word 'Nara' with it. In this context many such Kashmiri words even the idioms can be gleaned from his works e.g. 'Tala' in the sense of Sanskrit 'palater', Gharaghara, representing the roaring sound of clouds in Kashmiri. Not only this but even the Kashmiri colloquial taunts and abuses have also been reproduced by him faithfully in Sanskrit.

To crown all his similes and other, figures of speech are not only apt but also homely. He does not believe in ethereal poetic fancy but has amply drawn from daily life. His personal experience and observation make his diction all the more realistic. His delineation of nature:

< verses >

"The starry night keeping vigil having become disgusted with the fatigue caused by its sporting with the white rays (off the moon), gradually gets emaciated, being anointed with the morning dew, as if with perspiration."

Describing Moonlight the poet portrays a bewitching scene with its enthralling effect with the help of very simple words:

< verses >

"The lord of the night (the moon) a white parasol of cupid, the unblurred mirror made of crystal for the lady of "space", the white Tilaka of the damsel of Night, shone resplendently.

While describing the beauty of the city (presumably Srinagar) he has to say :

(In that city) where the musical notes of the pretty swans is all the more made sweeter by their devouring flesh lotus-stalks, which (musical notes) getting diffused in the lotus-groves sound like the jingling of anklets of goddess Lakshmi.

About the content of Ksemendra's writings, we have made it amply clear that he chose the ordinary man or woman with his or her all weaknesses as his subject. The choice of such a subject was in itself revolutionary at that time when fixed norms were laid in this behalf by the Rhetoricians. Ksemendra not only rebelled against such hackneyed, standards but provided his own thesis for rhetorics and criticism in 'Auchityavicharacharcha' and ' Kavikanthabharna'. He showed the path to progressive trends in literature in those hoary times when dogmatic approach was the order of the day. Some ten centuries after him the humanly woke to the necessity of ushering in progressive outlook in literature, more especially after the Russian revolution of 1919. In a way Ksemendra combined in himself the characteristics of a prophet and a poet. He brought down the poetry from the ethereal heights to the matter of fact and real dimensions.

The style which he employs deserves some mention before we close this paper. Style is defined as a mode of expression and we shall have to examine as to how Ksemendra acquits himself in this field. We know already that he uses very simple words, avoids lengthy compounds and ambiguous epithets. His appeal is direct. He does not believe in traversing zigzag when shorter routes are available; with the use of simple straight and chiselled words he produces the maximum effect. This is his immortal contribution to Sanskrit literature. He lives to the maxim propounded by Coleridge "best words in best order" by any standards whatsoever. Moreover, the mode of expression he employs has his own indelible imprint on it. Regarding this trait in style J. Middleton Murray has observed "A style must be individual because it is the expression of an individual mode of feeling." Some sixty years after him another Kashmiri Soma Deva Bhatta also tried his pen on epitomizing Brhatkatha; it can easily be understood from the comparison of the two that Ksemendra has his own style which could not be imitated by Soma Deva. His own Kashmiri Retotician Vamana, a protagonist of Riti School has said:

< verses >

"Riti is a special arrangement of words; Riti is the soul of literature."

Ksemendra's writings do possess the "special arrangements of words", he does not waste a single word, but knows fully well "that these are two edged tools, if not used well, these can bite" as very aptly said by Anthony Trollope. Ksemendra's mastery over the language is perfect. He very prudentially uses a particular word to project a certain context and meaning. His selection of words is superb. T.S. Elliot has said "The poet has not a "personality" to express but a particular medium", which obviously connotes style. Ksemendra's style is neither artificial nor wanting in anything. It is to quote Wordsworth - "Man speaking to man?" and to make this definition more representative, Ksemendra added the words "about the man" to it.

These words represent Ksemendra in all his shades. In his prolific writings he performs the mental surgery of the Man, locates the disease and points towards its eradication. He with child-like innocence and simplicity employs the most direct language only to talk to man like a man, because his aim is to beckon to him :

< verses >

"Alas, seeing always the deer in the trap in the jungle, even then the deerlings get into the crooked snares."

8.0 HABBA KHATOON

Philomela of Medieval Kashmir

The cultural heritage of Kashmir is as rich as it is varied. This mental child of 'Kashyapa' has been the recipient of fondest love and bountiful benevolence from Nature and has consequently enthralled the whole world by its superb physical charm from times immemorial. To crown all, this physical grandeur has been very usefully groomed by Kashmiris in weaving the rainbow. Coloured texture of mental and spiritual attainments. In many respects they have been pioneers in evolving a cult of philosophy in tune with their environment and called it as 'Shaivism'. A galaxy of rhetoricians have taken pains in prescribing norms and standards for making the literature in general and poetry in particular more acceptable and representative. To say squarely, not a single branch of literature has been left out by these savants without their impress and alchemic touch.



Not only this, Kashmir has been the testing-ground of three universal religions of the world-Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam. The traits of all these religions have fused into the attitude of a Kashmiri like milk and candy; and it is no surprise that though bearing Hindu or Muslim or even Buddhist names, a Kashmiri even to-day in actual practice is a living embodiment of Buddhist compassion, Hindu tolerance and Muslim zest for life. Therefore with such a Catholic background, secularism to a Kashmiri is not a political expedient but an article of faith ingrained in his blood from the hoary times to the present day. 'Kalhana' in his monumental History of Kashmir 'River of Kings' has not mentioned even one Communal trouble between the Buddhists and the Hindus when a voracious race was in progress between their respective adherents to make their own tenets popular and thus steal march over other faiths. In contrast to this, Buddhist Kings have donated large sums for the erection of Hindu temples and shrines and vice versa. Religious battles have always been fought here on paper, in a more rational way, or through dialogues which never left bad taste in the mouths. During the Islamic period Sultan Zain-ul-ab-Din Badshah in an admirable way and forsooth like a Kashmiri to his marrow renovated demolished Hindu places of worship and even started 'Langars' at Places of pilgrimages for feeding the hungry and the devout. 'ShriVara' in his 'ZainaTarangini' has mentioned such 'Satr' or Langars, one of which was located at the foot of Mahadeva mountain.

In this way, when in the 14th-15th century an alien culture knocked at the mountain-doors of Kashmir for being shown in, the values cherished by Kashmiris all along had already prepared a hospitable ground for its happy welcome. The puritanic proselytizing tenacity of Islam in the absence of any mentionable reaction on the part of Kashmiris compellingly changed to more logical and rational methods. In this political and religious upheaval, long-cherished secular outlook of the faith of the people would have received a jolt, but at this juncture literature came to our succour.

At the confluence of Hindu and Muslim cultures 'Lailshwari' or 'Lalla- Deda' stands like a colossus beckoning people to eschew differences of colour, creed or faith and yoke themselves to attain Identity with Him-- the All-pervasive Transcendental Force called God as such, Therein all are equal, the worldly appellations drop down like slough from a snake. The pursuit of mundane is an exercise in futility; Therefore the goal should be beyond mundane-materiality; It is no use counting mile-posts of material gains or losses and getting lost in its maze; the eye should be on the destination-- the real and permanent.

For reasons obvious, the social fibre of the Kashmiris was also undergoing transformation at that time and the present could not have been in any way palatable to the denizens of Kashmir at large; so like an awake artist 'Lalla' dismissed the present as trash and ushered in spirituality in its all shades 'Being' was replaced by 'to be'. By borrowing sweetness from the 'unknown' 'Lalla' virtually transformed the frustration of people into the hope to live with ever -appetising gusto. 'Lalla' could not help striking a happy compromise between Kashmiri shaivism and Islamic sufism. It was in tune with the times. To quote Dr. Sufi 'Even long before the formal conversion to Islam, Islamic sufism had already entered the valley.' Cultural conquest is always a pre-requisite to any other kind of conquest. A Kashmiri by nature tolerant and catholic kept his windows open for inhaling the fresh air of sufism. He even assimilated and owned much of it what was good and rejuvenating.

But, by the time Habba Khatoon's inebriating imagination began to find words, this climate of spirituality and mental drill had become suffocating and even stale in the context of fast changing economic conditions and human values; emphasis on individual instead of on the society had become the accepted norm of public relations and thinking. The extrovert attitude yielded place to introspection. So, the poet in these changed environs harnessed his imaginative faculty to interpret his or her own feelings; Hence, Habba at the very outset of her poetic career rebelled against the prevalent standards of poetry-writing. Textbook idealism is not found in the dictionary of her pulsating emotions. She did not also try to bridge the distance between the ideal and the real. Her substantial contribution in this domain is to interpret her life as it was and not what it should be. Total absence of didactic content in her poetry (what ever is available to us) lends support to our belief, that she always believed in translating her feelings without any redundant appendages of ideal, faithfully and with sincerity of purpose. Her poetry consequently is a happy blend of sweetness and pathos. She has preferred to live in the present, past was beyond her reach and future out of her comprehension.

Kashmiri nation at that time was groaning under internal exploitation and external aggression. The last indigenous ruler of Kashmir Yusuf Shah Chak personified in himself levity and depravation in every sense of the word. "His own Subjects being fed up with his way-ward conduct had to invite the mughals to get rid of such an incapable and debauche ruler," Writes Dr. Sufi in his 'Kasheer'. His regal writ could not run outside his palace where passion and carnality were reigning supreme. This trait of inviting aliens to redress their troubles is not new to Kashmiri character at all. Kalhana has alluded to this many times when the natives falling foul with their rulers invited the neighboring Kings of Lohara (Lorin) and Parantosa (Poonch) to sit on the throne of Kashmir. The great queen 'Dida' herself belonged to Lorin and installed her brother Jayasimha as the king of Kashmir just before her death. So, the Mughals who had vulturous eyes on Kashmir already, but their incursions had been thwarted by Kashmiri twice before, exploited such a situation to their fill. This was a welcome addition to their diplomatic bag of conquests. Yusuf Shah at last awoke to find his own people arrayed against him. The Mughals arrested him and forced him to live a life of solitary confinement at a remote village in Bihar outside Kashmir, where he ate his heart away in sole distress and breathed his last. It has been contended by some overzealous Kashmiris lately that uprising of Yusuf Shah against the Mughals symbolized the urge of Kashmiris to fight external domination. Unfortunately, the contemporary historical evidence of this period does not, in any way, confirm this view, however laudable it may seem to be.

Moreover, the famine of 1576 A.D. due to the untimely snowfall multiplied the miseries of the people. The devastating effects of this unprecedented famine persisted for full three years and Kashmiris passed their days on starvation level more or less. To this injury insult in the shape of 'Shia-Sunni' troubles was added. Sectarianism became pronounced and it let loose all the evils which nurture and sustain it. In such a disappointing state of affairs, the poet naturally has to close his eyes against all that is happening around and in self-deceit revels in the fanciful panorama of his heart. Habba could not afford to be an exception to this Universal truth. Hence her love-poems do breathe an atmosphere of total self-absorption being blind and deaf to the environmental vicissitudes. These may well be labelled as throbbing vibrations of self-immersion but not self forgetfulness. Her ego is always pronounced in each line of her verse.

Unfortunately for us we are actually at sea about the life of this Nightingale of Kashmir. No authoritative contemporary record has been unearthed so far to test the veracity of the popular tradition which associates Habba with Yusuf Shah Chak. Moreover, we have no hesitation in doubting the credence of the contemporary records as the History writing even to-day is not free from strings of pressures and pulls. During the rule of the English the events of 1857 have been mentioned as Mutiny, and those very events under the Indian rule have been treated as war of Independence; A dispassionate account of historical events devoid of personal projections is rare even to-day when every man proclaims that he is free and has been given every opportunity for independent thinking and expression of opinion thereof. In those hoary days, when history was compiled at the behest of the king, perhaps in proportion to the munificence the ruler lavished on such mercenaries, distortion of historical facts has always come in handy for the rating clique and its sycophants. In the same way, there is a thin line between aggression and liberation; In such a dilemma the verdict of people should have been the guiding principle for us all, but wherefrom it is to be made available?

Moreover, the evidence of the historical data which is still in manuscript form and has not undergone the acid test of public opinion cannot be relied upon. In Kashmir even to-day people who enjoy leisure and have aptitude are given to record their own experiences in which casual references to rulers have also been made in Sanskrit, Persian or Urdu; but for reasons obvious these cannot be termed as histories as such. Perhaps every Kashmiri house-hold having mentionable literary background of any order can boast of such personal record. By no stretch of imagination these can be treated as historical evidence worth quoting. Therefore, the chronicles written to order or as a product of personal caprice have no place in literary or purely historical criticism, Kalhana has not mentioned the great Shaiva philosopher Abhinavagupta even once. Does it follow from it that Abhinavagupta was not a historical personality at all?

In the face of such scanty historical material at our disposal, we have perforce to fall back upon the popular tradition which in unequivocal and unambiguous terms has all long associated Habba with Yusuf Shah. In the reconstruction of histories of literature the tradition has played no mean part. This kind of unbroken evidence cannot be dismissed as cheap and unreliable altogether. The tradition passes from generation to generation by word of mouth. If in literary criticism this had not been taken cognizance of, then the religious lore of entire humanity would pass on as forged; Actually the case is reverse of it. Tradition has all along held the vedas, the Bible and the Koran as the most respected and the most genuine of all the available literature that has come down to us by the word of mouth. Tradition embraces in its ambit the force of public opinion which cannot be disregarded at any cost. Public opinion in its turn breeds sentimental attachment, and this sort of living testimony is far superior to other media of evidence. Perhaps this irresistible public opinion forced the later Persian chroniclers to make a mention of Habba though two centuries or more after her death. The reasons for maintaining Sphinx-like silence regarding 'Habba' by the contemporary chroniclers may be attributed to the aversion Sunni scholars had for the wayward behaviour of a sunni girl in consenting to become a 'Keep' to Shia Yusuf Shah. The Shias on the contrary did not like to tarnish the image of the shia king Yusuf by making a mention of his licentious disposition towards Habba. The Hindu Historian could not afford to offend these both sects hence sat on the fence. Therefore, instead of adopting an iconoclastic attitude a critic should own a positive outlook and respect the tradition and the sentiments of people from which he cannot alienate himself. Later skt chroniclers i.e JonaRaja or Shrivara have not mentioned 'Lalla' at all though being her contemporaries, yet the popular tradition has had her day in as much as 'Lalla' lives before our mental eyes even to-day. Historicity in ordinary and unsophisticated parlance connotes systematisation of facts, values, tradition and outlook. Therefore, the role of tradition can in no way be under estimated. When the dust of such controversy had settled down, Birbal Kachru and Hassan Khoiyami, the first chroniclers in this field, thought it fit to mention her by name. Both these historians have given an account of 'Habba' though in a slipshod manner; but piecing the incidents together we can build her personality without any fear of contradiction or historical irrelevance. According to them "Habba" was the scion of a well-to-do peasant family living at Chandrahara, a village near the famous Saffron fields of

Pampur. She had been married to Aziz Lone one of her collaterals. The proverbial animosity between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law dampened the marital relations between Habba and her spouse. She was forced to live with her parents. 'Habba' at such a tender and impressionably age could not recover from the rebuff she received at the very threshold of her conjugal life. Her despondency flowed out in the form of poetry pulsating with unartificial fusion of sound and sense. Her fame reached the amorous ears of Yusuf Shah, who admitted her to his harem as a 'Keep', and did not allow her the status of a queen. Both the chroniclers are punctillious about using the phrase "sharing the same bed," about her.

Further, Mohammed Din 'Fauq' and Abdul Ahad Azad have provided us with her actual name 'Zoon', as faultless as the moon. Mahjoor has also accepted this name without a murmur. 'Habba Khatoon' presumably a more respectable mode of address than 'Zoon' must have been bestowed upon her when she joined the harem of Yusuf Sbab in keeping with the royal etiquette. There should be no surprise, or eyebrows need not be raised when a Kashmiri lady is supposed to have two names. In olden days, Kashmiri girls after their wedlock earned a new name in their inlaw's house. This custom has persisted with Kashmiri Pandits even now.

A section of popular belief ascribes her home to Gurez where a contiguous mountain and a spring are named after her.

Internal evidence as culled from her verses confirms the first view:-

< verses >

"My parental home is situated at the tableland of Chandra Hara."

Her another name can be inferred from this:-

< verses >

"I am bemoaning my lot in Plaintive cries, the Moon (Kashmiri Zoon) has been devoured by an eclipse." Shri Amin Kamil's well-edited booklet containing only twenty songs is the only authentic source material available to us for commenting upon Habba- Khatoon's poetry; however, in addition to these, Kashmiris ascribe many more poems to her and these have been printed. As long as an anthology of all her available songs is not compiled and given the seal of an authoritative edition, we have to confine our comments to these twenty songs only. Interpolations will be there, more essentially so, her extraordinary popularity has been a bane for the original texts composed by her. The more popular a poet, the more danger is there of interpolations creeping into his compositions and after the mischief has been done it seems very difficult to distinguish gold from dross, and often dross passes on for gold.

'Habba' is very proud of her lineage:-

< verses >

"My parents brought me up with fondest possible care; A host of maid- servants was at my beck and call. I could not fore-see that the dreams nourished by me would be shattered to the ground. No body's youth with childlike innocence should go unrewarded like that of mine."

'Habba' testifies to her being very well-read:-

< verses >

"My parents sent me to a distant school for receiving tuition. The teacher there beat me with a tender stick mercilessly and ignited a fire within me; No body's youth with child- like innocence should go unrewarded like that of mine."

She did not ignore the religious education also:-

< verses >

"I committed thirty 'Siparas' of the Holy Quran to memory in a single sitting, faithfully adhering to the diacritical intonations; yet the valentine punctuated with love could not be read with such facile speed. What will you gain by my passing away."

She has woven the scene of her marriage in these words:

< verses >

"My parents blessed me as a fortunate daughter, and beckoned to me that the in law's were waiting in the compound for taking me away. My silver- studded palanquin had golden ear-rings hanging down on all sides. Alas ! innocent youth of any body, with child-like innocence should not go unrewarded as that of mine."

But all this pomp and splendour could not pacify the wrath of her mother-in-law :-

< verses >

"The mother-in law grabbed me by my hair, which stung me more than the pangs of death. I fell asleep on the supporting plank of the spinning wheel, and in this way, the circular wheel got damaged. I cannot reconcile myself with the atrocities of the inlaws, O! my parents, please come to my rescue."
Habba unfolds her love for her husband like this:-

< verses >

"I have been waiting for long with extreme patience for you - O! my love (or Aziz) do not be cross with your moon (zoon)! I have adorned myself lusciously from top to toe; so enjoy my youth as lively and inviting as a pomegranate flower."

But Aziz did not relent and Habba had to experience the pangs of forced widowhood:-

< verses >

"I am on pin-pricks for want of an avid response to my love; my bubbling youth is on its ebb. My awake parents, do read in to the hint I have dropped."

The stings of separation from her husband in her prime-youth can better be imagined than described. Perhaps her being on the brink of human patience can justify her consenting to give company to Yusuf Shah Chak. She could not wait for legal or other formalities involved in sharing his bed. This might seem not very laudable, yet it is true of every maiden who is a slave to her senses and whose warmth of love has all along remained unrequited, moreso, it is all the more pronounced in the case of a lady who would like to wreak vengeance on the callous society not reciprocating her sentiments, no matter if she loses her identity in this bargain.

For the span of years in which Habba lived, no cogent authority is available. Mohd Din 'Fauq' and in his footsteps Abdul Ahad Azad have given her life span from 1641 to 1552 A.D. on the authority of 'Tarikh

Baharistan Shahi.' But on close examination Shri Amin Kamil refutes this and says that these dates are nowhere found in this chronicle. However, her association with Yusuf Shah can give us a clue as to the years in which she was still alive. The reign of Yusuf Shah has been determined as 1579-1585 A.D.; so we can safely assume that during these years at least Habba was living. Akbar annexed Kashmir in 1585 A.D. imprisoned Yusuf Shah and exiled him to Bihar; so, when her paramour Yusuf fell on bad stars, Habba must have eaten her heart away in disgust and dismay. This was the second rebuff she received at the hands of the Destiny, and this impulsive Lady unresponsive in love, unaccepted by the society still did not own defeat. She created an exuberant world of her own, punctuated it with her emotions resonant with the dirge of what she had got and what she lost. She lived in her thoughts, so to say. Such a state of mind is a fertile ground for the induction of Romanticism. Habba deliberately ignoring the less pleasant side of her life indulged in dreamy habit of mind. Romanticism is the acme of poet's independence of feelings; under its spell he refuses to be bound by conventional restraints. A romantic poet has either the nerve to rebel nor the will to compromise with his environment. Unmindful of what is happening around him, he delves deep into the inner most recesses of his heart and without fear or malice pours out his feelings as they ooze forth. Such a poet is incapable of clothing his emotions with artificial adornings. Romanticism may thus be called the highest water-mark of poet's individual thinking. Habba may be called the harbinger of such kind of poetry in Kashmiri. She is the originator of popular love-lyrics in Kashmiri literature. However, her love is earthly; she could not rise above it; Her passionate love has its source in the enjoyment of senses and not their denial in any case. She does not feel fed-up with sensual pleasures, but at times would like to revert to these with ever-increasing appetite. She cannot reconcile herself with the sour-truth of being a widow who has perforce to abjure sensuality. She would not like to show herself off as a pious lady either, under the cover of so-called piety myriad sins do thrive when a woman is not mentally ready to own a salutary course of life for herself. Her poetry, therefore, is a candid expression of her feelings which has immensely contributed to her popularity. She does not like to play hide and seek. Her appeal is straight and unsophisticated.

Habba's forte is love-in-separation. She has not sung even a single verse eulogizing the munificence of Yusuf Shah when she was in her company. In the words of Kalidasa 'Separation chastenes love,' Hence, Habba like a born-poet selected 'separation' for her treatment of love. Her verses throughout waft an air of restlessness and not contentment; Calm Composure and resignation to be in turmoil to fate are absent in her poetry. She seems sit cross-legged, She believes in winning love by bodily excellence alone:-

< verses >

"I will apply on my body of spotless silvery sheen, the greasy whiteness of milky creams; I am immensely enamoured of thee; I will anoint myself with scented sandal-water. MY love! I will relish to be your slave."

Even though Habba has repeatedly and even lustily made a call to flesh only, yet her songs reverberate an aroma of lasting flavour; though these songs may sound as sensual to a moralist, yet 'Habba' has made no secret of her sensuous attitude to life. She has all along wanted to drink deep at the fountain of life without any saintly pretensions. Therein her moral-courage shines the best. Her voracious hunger in this respect seems unsatiated. To her present holds the mirror to what she lost and what she had gained. Her songs are a lament in every sense of the term. She is firm-footed in her convictions and does not vacillate. This is perhaps the most glaring trait of her poetry. She has no concern for morality or ethics in the sense that she would not elect to be a preacher: She revels in being always loud. She revels in being immersed in her imagination only, yet her ego is always loud. She is not shy of parading her beauty and is rather conscious of it also. Even though she has paid a heavy price for it, still she has no regrets in this behalf.

Habba's refrain is love wedded to pathos; consequently she has kept the windows of her mind shut and her heart is only wide-awake in emitting and receiving images from her fancied dreams. The pathetic content of her poetry is all the more aggravated by the elusive nature of her ideal which has

consequently earned for her the epithet 'Nightingale' of Kashmir most squarely. She does not subscribe to the view that "It is better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all." In the absence of any appropriate and meaningful response to her simmering emotions, she has opted for self-suffering, telling beads of her tear-drops. Be it Heemal, Arnimaal or Habba Khatoon, it is the Kashmiri woman bemoaning her lot in pathetic plaintives, the common subject with all these, the victims of the conspiracy of circumstances. Habba Khatoon essentially is a typical example of such a woman who cannot make any kind of compromise with life. In this predicament she could have turned a rebel, but, she instead of it, becomes a martyr by consent. This is exactly the most salient feature of Kashmiri womanhood. Towards the closing years of her life, Habba does express her remorse for not compromising with the life as it is, but fashioning it according to her imagination; none the less in the same breath she admits that missed opportunities need not be recalled. She does indicate the 'Achilles Heel' of her personality-to rule only and not to get ruled:-

< verses >

"I, Habba Khatoon, is definitely sorry for not adapting myself submissively to the moonish caprices or my lover. I do recapitulate those missed opportunities, but it is now too late to atone for these; therefore, You, my lover! should not be cross with me."

A sense of guilt seems to haunt this love-lorn lady, but at the same time her self-willed nature dismisses this weight on her heart by taking refuge under the excuse that race is already run. This subdued expression of penitence does portray her loud thinking in unguarded moments, but like a wakeful artist, she cancels it in the second breath. She does not flop, as the idiom goes.

Habba's songs are musical in essence and pathetic in spirit. She has also been acclaimed as a melody-queen of Kashmiri poetry. Her popularity is also due to the fact that her songs are not only a replica of Kashmiri sentiments but also a potent vehicle of Kashmiri music. Her originality in this sphere is undisputed. Even though she has appropriated a sizable chunk of Persian words and Persian similes, yet she has refrained from owning Persian code on metres. She has in their place introduced home-spun Kashmiri melodies pertaining to rhyme and rhythm in her quatrains.

Therefore, her songs self-contained in each quatrain can be more profitably compared with the 'Vaks' of Lalleshwari or 'Shruks' of Nund- Reshi from the style-point of view only. These cannot be classed under 'Gazal' or 'Nazam' of Persian metrics, despite the fact that Habba has a tendency to repeat refrains. Therefore, it is not without reason that 'Mahjoor'- the doyen of Kashmiri romantic poets, has dealt a dig at one of his celebrated predecessors- Rasul Mir in this pregnant verse, for not paying well-deserved compliment to Habba Khatoon:-

< verses >

"Rasul Mir of Shahabad has profusely alluded to the moon of Qandhar; Why has he been averse to the moon (Zoon, Kashmiri) of Chandrahah?"

9.0 ABDUL AHAD "AZAD"

The poet of tomorrow

Physical exuberance of Kashmir is as inebriating as its mental excellence. Herein, we find a happy compromise between the prowess of body and ingenuity of mind; To speak squarely in Kashmir, we witness a living example of superb soul enshrined in a superb body. Nature has been luxuriant here in weaving a dexterous tapestry of rainbow-colored flowers stretching over miles after miles. The jingle of babbling brooks endows it with undying seraphic music. Taking a cue from this physical eminence, Man here has not lagged behind in providing a meaning to his land of buxom youth.

Man, here has always tried to replenish this physical eminence with his inquisitive mind ever-ready to bridge the gap between his own self and the opulence around. Hence, here in Kashmir, we perceive a veritable equation between Man and his environ.

Therefore, to derive inspiration from amiable surroundings as also to groom it purposefully with the richness of mind over here, Man has provided a silvery tongue to this arresting panorama of enticing youthfulness; The result has been exhilarating poetry vibrating with the heartbeats of Nature and Man alike. So, it does not sound as an exaggeration when Bilhana-the celebrated lyricist of Kashmir Christenes his homeland, Kasbmir, as the 'land of Divine Speech,' from whose womb saffron and poetic prowess have sprung up as real-brothers." Right from the day, when Man planted his feet on this land, his mental exercise has never cooled its heels. It has been a continuous drill; Man, as such, could not afford to be anything but a poet in such an inspiring and soothing climate. Tools for scaling such virgin heights were already there; it was now left to Man to use these for his edification. The denizen of this fairyland took this challenge in fight earnest and a galaxy of philosophers, chroniclers and poets have shone an its firmament. In modern times 'Azad' has very laudably and all the more, very loudly beckoned to man to derive inspiration from the evergreen nature around him, and consequently tame his animality to reach upto such heavenly heights. He, essentially, is a poet of human values bemoaning the shortcomings and inhibitions under which Man is constrained to count his days; but at the same time, inspring him to know his own self as well its his compatriot, which only can usher in an era of mental peace and worldly affluence for him. He has not woven songs of sorrow, but has always wafted an aroma of optimistic rosy future through his pulsating imagination. He has consequently opted for finding an asylum in the future, disdaining the unpalatable present. He may, therefore be called a poet of morrow.

It might well be contended that this kind of ostrich-like behaviour on the part of the poet may sound as self-defeat and hence is a left-handed compliment. Herein, it can be said very conveniently that 'Azad' did not at all shut his eyes towards the present red in tooth and claw; he did not also own self-deceit--a salient trait of Romantic poets. He was very sure of the ground under his feet, but at the same time, he presaged a meaningful future for the Man, though himself living in the present. He was essentially a poet of Man unscreening his wants and aspirations, unveiling the satan underneath his fair complexion, portraying most pathetically the man's dilemma being ground under the weight of exploitation and oppression and to crown all his faulty attitude of dividing man and man on the basis of religious beliefs. These all stigmatic characteristis of a mentally sick man were obviously unbecoming of him- the crown of creation. Therefore 'Azad' an everawake artist could not all the time afford to deride him, cultivating in him a sense of irreparable frustration, and bluntling his initiative. As his ardent votary, he tried to instill fresh hope in him for bettering his present and on its contours build a happy future. He, therefore, strove hard to keep the spirit of Man alive and kicking. The distance between the actual and ideal was to be smoothened by the Man himself. In utter frustration and inner turmoil, be would never rise to the occasion, bence the need to sustain his hopes holding out economically secure, fraternally amiable, socially agreeable and politically undominating future to him, This, in short, is what 'Azad' strove all his

life to accomplish. In all fairness to him, it cannot be dubbed as self-defeat or self-deceit, it is self-education and self-discipline. 'Azad' would never like Man to bite the dust, but rise above it, so that a future comfortable in every respect would be guaranteed for him, This kind of attitude is the forte of all poet-philosophers for them shadow has never been a substitute for substance.

'Azad' is inherently possessed of uncommon consciousness of head and heart. He has never elected to go into the shell like other Kashmiri Romanticists. Instead, he has tried to analyse Man in every sense of the word, bereft of any curves or blind alleys. His approach is direct, therefore sparing us the fatigue of fruitless kite-flying in respect of the essence contained in his poetry. We are saved the embarrassment of solving puzzles and conundrums, rack our brains in interpreting his message and derive inferences interwoven in his poetry throbbing with life. He most candidly asserts that his propitiation of the Muse is only a medium to focus attention on Man. In this field, he wears his profession on his sleeves:-

< verses >

"O! Adorer of religious values, you have opted for puritanic religiosity; And I have elected for my own faith. You resign yourself completely to the steadfast faith in God, and my aim is to propitiate Man." In other words, the poet begins with the real and does not get lost in the maze of ideal. Man was made after the image of God; he is a macrocosmic representation of his microcosmic spirit. Therefore, to propitiate Man is actually to adore God. Azad believes in the affirmation of life and not in its negation. For him Man is not a solid bundle of flesh and blood only, but a manifestation of undaunted vigour and unvanquished spirit. He may have forgotten, or even obliged to forget such sterling qualities for the time-being, for which he is not only to blame; Azad's poetic fervour has tried to re-ignite that dead spirit in him. It is awakening Man to his stature:-

< verses >

"This world is a thorn of unfulfilled ambitions in my garden; And the world- beyond is a blot of scare and fear on my skirt. Therefore, I owe it to Man to usher in a new- spring and bring back blossoming health to this garden of his; So that Man like the flowers will attain full bloom therein."

It can be conceded forthwith that 'Azad' has no pretensions for being a spiritual preacher. He is mainly concerned with the material well being of Man. He does not make tall claims for reforming the spiritual attitude of Man. He does not go beyond the material contentment of Man, He makes him conscious of his rights and obligations, but does not dabble in awakening him to spiritual consciousness alone. He has concern for him on the material plane only. A hungry man is always an angry individual.

When this anger against the society has made him unbalanced, he can in no way harness his faculties to reach up to the subliminal heights. On the other hand, if he gets two square meals without any fuss or friction, he can usefully yoke his mind to achieve self, consciousness and consequent self-realization; Stuck up in the mire of material insecurity, his yearning for spiritual edification will be an exercise in futility. Self-consciousness presupposes mental peace and equilibrium. If it is denied to Man, how can we expect him to engage himself in self- search. He has his frailities, he is not a super-soul adept in self-denial. He would like to have his minimum wants satisfied, hence abjuring world is foreign to his genius in these circumstances. He is weighed down so much by the oddities of life, that he is always nursing a cramp in his back. With this physical and mental ailment, his soul does receive bruises, hence is incapable of unfolding its wings, without mincing words, 'Azad' has elaborated his point of view in this behalf, in these words:-

< verses >

"O God, I do not yearn after riches and gold, but would implore you to show me such a world in which Divine obedience is to remember God within always, but not to pray to Him everytime for the fulfilment of each and every want."

He would like Man to be self- reliant, architect of his own fate. He has to put in efforts incessantly for making his life self-dependent and not to look to God for making him materially secure always. Relying on the Grace of God will naturally breed indolence in him and mar his initiative, which 'Azad' would never allow. God's blessings are reserved for those who help themselves. For him the religion of Man is straight- forwardness wedded to truthfulness. Hypocrisy degrades Man:-

< verses >

"Even though holding rosary in his fingers (A Mussalmaan), or donning the sacred- thread around his neck (A Hindu), such a human- being is diffident to speak the truth, can well be called a 'Peer' among his flock, or a Brahmin among his tribe." According to 'Azad' he does not deserve the title of Man. He deludes people by his outer appearance and exploits their credulity. He is an imposter and a pretender. He lacks courage to call the spade a spade. It would be better to quote the exact phrase used by 'Azad' in this respect:-

< verses >

"Nature had brought you to life simply for disseminating love; instead of it, O! Man, you converted your religion and faith into a lucrative trade, a veritable device for minting money."

The poet in 'Azad' is an indefatigable crusader against inequality between man and man in terms of his religious beliefs, creed, social injustice and political exploitation; but at the same time, he does not subscribe to the theory of total annihilation as propounded by Marxists. He advocates the view of total upliftment called 'Sarvodaya' in Gandhian parlance. He does not borrow foreign tools to make social order viable, but prefers to remedy the ills rampant in Man and his society by home-spun prescriptions. He is enamoured more of Gandhi than of Lenin or Marx:-

< verses >

"Even the ferocious torrents can be arrested and tamed, if the man plunges himself, with out any fear, into the turmoils and tribulations of life and does not sit on the fence. This very trait of self- suffering is discernible in Gandhi--the Head of our Family, and is completely absent in alien people and their ideology."

'Azad' is alive to the fact that independence of India and that of Kashmir is in the offing. It is a writing on the wall. At that hour of political emancipation, our leaders shall have to undergo an acid test. If they choose the line adopted by our erstwhile rulers, the English, then this freedom will have no meaning. It will mean only change of masters. Indigenous political power cannot be a synonym for corruption, but should in its stead goad man on to sublimity. Political leaders should personify detachment, never feel intoxicated by the power they are supposed to wield- a mandate and a trust from the people. It has often been seen that the man loses his head at this time of his political elevation and paradoxically enough uses the same power given to him by the people, ruthlessly against them. Therefore, he cautions the future rulers of our land in these words:-

< verses >

"The foreigners have now bolted away after doing a brisk business here. It is the turn of our own kin now, but they also appear to me as the shrewd tradesmen presiding over their business-houses. O!

Sylvan pine tree, who does nurse you?" Their tricks of trade to exploit innocent people are enumerated as under:-

< verses >

"These enemies of healthy social order screen away the truth the people by invoking religion, authority, God and His Godliness and even destiny.

Even though 'Azad' was not destined to witness the era of independence in its fullness, but how prophetically he has pin-pointed the behaviour of our rulers to be. He could smell future in advance. In this predicament, the people have no choice but to opt for slavery once again. The self-centred leadership has monopolized all the fruits of freedom, these have not been allowed to trickle down to the masses at large. Being disillusioned, the man would like to revert once more to foreign domination. The so-called love and concern by which these leaders swear is nothing short of opium mesmerizing the thinking and vision of the people, so that the unbridled rule of these Political jugglers is perpetuated undisturbed:-

< verses >

"That poor soul can never think of detached behaviour of fearless self-denial; He, who is devoid of his mental as well as physical balance, and to crown all, has planted his feet on the pedestal of authority endangering his equilibrium all the more, that so called concern for the weal of man as professed by such leaders actually dopes the dauntless spirit of man, denying him to keep his head high, and forces him to bite the dust."

'Azad's' conviction in Hindu-Muslim amity and consequent Solidarity is marrow-deep. He abhors division of man into parochial nomenclature. Human beings have one and only one religion that is living up to human values. The fruits of hardwon freedom should not be frittered away on Hindu-Muslim squabbles. Humanity need not be sacrificed at the altar of communal frenzy:-

< verses >

"Those who call Hindus and Muslims as brothers, hand and glove with each other, are strictly guided by the tenets of the vedas and the Quran; they have no other Holy Book for preaching this enlightenment. If God had to segregate nations and creeds from each other, then He would have provided them with separate earth and Sky."

The children of God share the bounties of the earth together; They are uniform in body and soul. Why should their thinking get muddled?

< verses >

"I, as a frailman, took into account only the negative aspect of life- the turmoil of the waves, friction and even man- handling, The positive phase of life is contained in the maximum unity amongst Diversity; But, I only paid heed to the brewing of quarrels and the subsequent bad-taste these leave in the mouth. Had there not been oneness of Man how could such ignorant people pull on with those gifted with reason? For me, life is a continuous journey to reach up to that ideal."

After going through the entire poetic prowess of 'Azad' this inference is irresistible that his attainments as a celebrated Kashmiri poet were not a matter of days; It took him years after years to find his feet and thus project his message through rhyme and rhythm. Thus, we can glean three patent stages in his poetry from start to the end, in which his heart- beats have built inch by inch the premise on which his innate imagination indulged in playful sport. The first stage may well be termed as the period of

initiation; Herein the poet has tried to harness his talents in translating his emotions, feelings and experience. This is the first attempt, hence cannot be free from shortcomings. His poetic fervour at this time was greatly influenced by the current Persian trends in vogue in Kashmir. It is more or less a Kashmiri rendering of Persian songs replete with the symbolism of 'Gul' and 'Bulbul'! Not only the content of his poetry is inspired by Persian 'Gazal' but even the form, the phrase, idiom and even vocabulary has been borrowed from it. In this behalf, it may be said that 'Azad' could not gather moral strength to rise above the traditional trends current in Kashmiri poetry till then. He could not also afford to plough a lone furrow and extricate his poetry from the traditional stamp of Persian Muse. Therefore, his poetry at this stage could not be expected to touch the highest water-mark of independent thinking:-

< verses >

"I became fully intoxicated after gulping down the wine of love, even bordering on lunacy; This, I drank at the tavern of Love, one goblet after another. He filled my heart with inebriating warmth of love to the brim, so that not a niche was available there to lend ear to worldly advice. I experienced a very thin line between my life and death, presumably having lost my head by excessive indulgence."

This kind of sensual and sensuous poetry is not actually in the grain of 'Azad', but he feels compelled to toe the line his seniors had earmarked for themselves. Even the Persian vocabulary has been freely used by him, which to speak the least, has shorn the wings of his inherent imagination. At times, such Poetry sound as versified prose wafting the flavour of Persian propensities:-

< verses >

"The heart, the life, the love and the reason-The four bloodsuckers, in their own way, torment the helpless and abject feverish sentiment of irresistible call of flesh."

In this stanza only 'chhi' and 'Nali' are pure Kashmiri words, the rest being Persian; such artificial poetic constructions, initial attempts of a novice, can be profusely multiplied.

'Azad' has very sincerely confessed that at the initial stage of poetry-writing, 'Mahjoor'; the Doyen of Kashmir's lyricists, was his mentor. He used to get his poetic compositions revised and corrected by him. We can very safely assert also that at this time 'Mahjoor' was also his model. 'Azad' has at times composed his own verses on the pattern used by 'Mahjoor'; such Poems even though not imitations strictly speaking, are actually the models before him for undergoing, constant drill to catch up with this 'Master of Kashmiri Muse'. For example, 'Mahjoor' wrote the famous poem is "karo bulbul deedaari gul" "O Bulbul steal a glance at the flowers," and 'Azad' like a faithful apprentice composed a poem with the caption "vuchh bulbul darbaari gul" "O, Bulbul witness the Durbar of flowers." The construction of verses, their meter, and the content are exactly similar. In the same way, 'Mahjoor's' famous romantic poem "baagi nishat ke gulo" "O Flower of Nishat Garden, come unto me with exquisite fund of coquetry," has been rendered by him into his own picture-poetry like this "baagi naseem ke gulo" "O flower of Naseem Garden, come unto me with captivating babblings of a child."

However, after such a brief honey-moon with this kind of poetry, on which Mahjoor's influence was the loudest, 'Azad' was successful in carving out an exclusive experimental ground for his independent thinking, totally divorced from the tradition and any extraneous influence. It may well be called the stage of experimentation,

'Azad' was rebel and a reformer at the same time. His imagination pregnant with new values revolutionary as well as altruistic could not remain tethered to the hackneyed norms of poetry for long. The force of circumstances, brought out the real poet in him which was in content and form home-spun and hand-woven, so to speak. After undergoing excruciating travails of labour-pain, when there was a twilight engulfing him disturbing the exact equation between his head and heart, in the second stage of

his poetic fervour, his imagination got chastened, and his vision was divested of faulty aberrations. He located his goal with meticulous ingenuity. He was no longer a dreamer weaving reveries of sound and sense, but a vigilant sentinel of human values. He chose to discover Man, and his environment contaminated with contradictions. To him love, was not a sentimental frenzy now but milk of human kindness saturating meaningfully every phase of life with its attendant vicissitudes:-

< verses >

"Love robs even high-statured seers given to penance, and also the well-read matters of knowledge; It tarnishes the innocent and flower-bedecked bodies of fair-maidens. At the threshold of Your Youth, you erred in selecting opulent people as your companions, perhaps not knowing that even the kings have been reduced to abject penury and those who used to give change hands with receiving alms."

This is actually the hard core of life and 'Azad' is now fully groomed to analyse it. For him poetry is a potent vehicle to unravel this bitter truth of life. It is neither jugglery of words, nor an expedient to indoctrinate people:-

< verses >

"Taking bold of a pen and to write from beginning to the end cannot be called a pleasing composition. It is nothing but gold-coating on brass, simply to cheat the innocent people."

'Azad' is now alive to the fact that beauty has its limitations; ugliness cannot be termed squarely as its antonym. These are actually states of mind, a very thin line dividing these. In the context of changing values, beauty and ugliness can become complementary to each other, as the sun and shadow in actual life. So, the poet has to proclaim:-

< verses >

"To the wise love is self-suffering, wrapping their bony skeleton underneath their garments. People with diverse intellectual dimensions call these either devices for minting money, or highway robbery; only a few can read true 'leadership' into it." True leadership worships service before self. It has to set an example for others to follow. 'Azad' displaying courage of highest order took up the challenge of the time, its stresses and strains, its demands and obligations most seriously:-

< verses >

"Having fully felt the pulse of this age, 'Azad' is now composing these songs in which the 'Flower', the Bulbul, the wine, and their unquenching thirst are totally absent. Can this kind of poetry commend itself to poets?"

'Azad' changed the entire fabric of Kashmiri poetry, its woof and warp. He deviated from the age-long tradition. With eyes wide awake, he metamorphized the content as well as form of Kashmiri poetry. He is alive to the fact that this sweeping change will not earn him laurels for the present, because it will be lacking in the traditional attributes. He bemoans the content of Kashmiri poetry in these words.-

< verses >

"Was it befitting on your part to have bargained your faith and world for fleeting sentimentality. You were actually nursing with love those flowers which had lost their fragrance. It was not becoming of you." This attitude of the poet heralds the third epoch of his poetry. Herein his imagination has become fully baked, his outlook completely changed and his nerve surprisingly enough quite strong to defy the tradition and usher in a new way of life. He has evolved a method of sweet persuasion punctuated with direct approach. He beckons to Man:-

< verses >

"O Dullard! you bemoan your lot, and blame your destiny least knowing that this heaven or hell is the outcome of your own actions."

Then what should be the attitude of a perfect Man according to 'Azad':-

< verses >

"If you are very soft, lying flat like the earth, the world will trample you and also heap indignities on you. If you act like steel, then remember, one day will come, when you might have tamed lions by chains even, yet this very trait of yours might also turn the steel in you into a dagger or a sword."

The attitude of Man should be middle of the road, neither too soft nor too hard. In being too soft, there is every apprehension of losing the image, and in being too hard there is every chance of using that very steel against the people which had earlier shielded them from tyranny and oppression. Therefore, Man has to tread his ground very carefully, paving a rewarding path between these two extremes. He has to apply reason, the guarded treasure of his, and not get blinded by animality:

< verses >

"O Man, you were supposed to be the lighthouse of innate reason, but you acted like a contagious fire. You have brought discredit to humanity in the most callous way."

Man was modelled by Nature to share the common weal and woe of his co-brethren; but he reappropriated to himself all the good things of life and thus starved his fellow-beings:-

< verses >

"Nature had uncovered all her treasures for your free use. You had to share these equally with others; but you elected to become their sole guardian-cobra."

His clarion call to awaken Man to his duties is quite understandable in the background of communal disharmony, exploitation, tyranny of foreign rule, appalling inequality and monstrous behaviour of Man having lost his moorings. His nature-poetry should also be construed in that very perspective. He most consciously injects love of motherland and humanity into the dead veins of Man, bringing him back to robust health; Love for land and love for man are the two most predominant ingredients of Azad's poetry:-

< verses >

"The sweet warbling Bulbuls and cuckoos girdle round my motherland disseminating love and harmony. The flowers of this fairyland hold cups in their hands; How auspicious and thought provoking is my land of birth!

In the very second-breath, he weaves this arresting panorama of bountiful Nature:-

< verses >

"The 'Dal lake' with its full-grown crop of lotuses is steady and silent, as if to preserve its ego of immensity, Nevertheless, the violent water-falls rush down from the hill-tops in frenzied ecstasy; How auspicious and thought-provoking my land of birth is?

His love for Man with unparalleled catholicity can be conveniently inferred from this verse:-

< verses >

"You proclaimed yourself to be the pillar of religious obligations in terms of Hindus and Muslims; Actually you were least concerned with it. Seeing your actions, the entire humanity is in consternation."

The religious labels dividing Man from Man have no relevance to the demands the universal values of brotherhood are making at present. This kind of inconvenient luxury is out of date now. We had to pay through our nose by this artificial division between the sons of the same soil in the days of yore. This lapse needs to be rectified now:-

< verses >

"It is verily the man who constructed the temples and who also laid the foundation of 'Kaba'. Therefore, O you believer in the Quran, what fault do you find with the Gita."

Change is the sauce of life, monotony its poison. 'Azad' has explained this universal truth like this:-

< verses >

"What is life? It is a folk depicting change. Oneness of God was the harbinger of oneness of His creation; The unity of Man is the consummation of that oneness. The real purport of life is continuous turmoil, and the essence of turmoil is change."

This is the message of 'Azad'; continuous struggle against odds. Actually life had never been a bed of roses for him. He could only get a petty pittance of Rs. thirteen per month as a teacher. Despite this economic discomfiture, he never grumbled. He could hardly keep the wolf out of the door, yet he was more keen to drive away the wolves of exploitation, social inequality and political aggrandisement. His poetry is not individualistic. It is the dirge of the underdog scattered over length and breadth of this globe. He does not weave his own sighs into heart-rending poetry, but laments the woes of Man-a fallen angel. He would like to rehabilitate him, restore his pristine glory. Self is absent throughout his poetry. He sings for whole humanity. His entire poetry is a saga of human consciousness; He does not pretend to be a preacher, a mystic, or a romanticist. He is the conscience-keeper of man.

Even though, the present, he was destined to face, was thoroughly unpalatable, yet he disdained it only to build a rosy future out of it debris. Ignoring his own to-day-inhospitable and discomforting, he, like a valiant crusader only looked towards the bright to-morrow, when Man would recognize his own self and get rid of all the ills which irk him at present:-

< verses >

"The revolution in the thinking of Man will bring back to life the doped Bulbuls, the flowers- gardens will be in full bloom. Those who are bereft of head and heart will be looked after by this sweeping change." But 'Azad' died a martyr to his own ideology; burning love for humanity consumed his blood every day in and out, and at a comparatively younger age of forty five he had to drop down his mantle. His 'to-day' was physically over; he had discarded it mentally since long, so it made no worthwhile difference to him; Yet his 'morrow' dawned with all the brilliance he had endeavoured all his life to bestow on it. The poet in 'Azad' can never die because his imagination is wedded to the immortal human values; The soothing touch of his poetic-alchemy will resurrect him in the morrow-the vocal champion of which he was throughout.

He is, to speak precisely, a poet of to- morrow. He only feigned to count his breath in to-day, actually his heart lay in the day following. Therefore, it was not without meaning that 'Mahjoor' his tallest senior, mentor and model paid him this glowing tribute:-

< verses >

"Oh! 'Azad' has concealed himself from this world; or the cup of life has eluded him. 'Mahjoor' would like to unfold his heart over his death by saying that the sweet-throated Bulbul has opted for silence."

10.0 CONCEPT OF "MAYA"

Vedantic and Shaivistic points of view

At the very outset, it may be said without any fear of contradiction, that in philosophy unalloyed originality is a misnomer. It is actually the sum total of the thinking on a particular subject, collated, coordinated and brought uptodate by the stalwarts in this field. It would, therefore, be in the fitness of things to give a bird's eye-view of the philosophic content supposed to emanate from the word 'Maya', as discussed in the various schools of philosophy in India, which has rightly been taken as the raw material on which the Vedantins and Kashmiri shaivites built their lofty edifices later on.

In the earlier Vedas-the first book of Humanity-'Maya' has been used in the sense of supernatural or extraordinary prowess attributed to the pantheon of gods. In more ancient Vedic hymns it is praised as 'world sustaining power'. But the later Vedic literature comprising the upanishadic lore, it began to convey the sense of illusion, though in subdued tones. So, this philosophic content relating to this word, had already been spelt out in the time of upanishadas. The later philosophic treatises in the classical age of Sanskrit must have taken a cue from the meaning attached to this word in the upanishadas and have remarkably kept its intonation in tact. The succeeding philosophies tried to provide the why and what of this kind of import projecting from this word.

The logical Realism (Nyaya) of Gautama a virtual reaction against Buddhist scepticism has no concern for this word 'Maya', but substitutes it with the appellations Doubt (Sanshaya), fallacy (Hetuvabhasa) and Error (Mithya Jnana). To speak precisely, doubt is wavering knowledge, Fallacy is inconclusive knowledge and Error is defective knowledge. All these three attributed of knowledge definitely provide the base on which the superstructure of 'Maya' was installed later on.

Atomistic pluralism (Vaisheshika) of Kanada propounds the theory of (Abhava) with respect to Maya. It is that very attitude of Neti Neti (negation), on the contours of which vedantins later on elaborated their theory of Maya. This negation (Abbava) is an antithesis of affirmation (Bhava), absence of distinction between the two - The Existent and the non-existent and the result is Error (Moha), blurred perception. The originator of Sankhya system of philosophy Kapila substitutes Maya with the avidya (ignorance) aspect of intellect (Buddhi). It has been explained as non-distinction of 'Purusha' from Buddhi called 'Akhyati' (non-apprehension). To quote:-

"Just as a danceess retires after displaying her dance to the audience; in the same way, Prakriti (gross matter) manifests herself to the purusha (passive spirit) retiring subsequently." This non- apprehension of 'Sankhya' is actually the precursor of Maya.

Patanjali in his yoga-sutras asserts "when the persons possessing a body mistake by their erring intellect, this very body for the soul (Atman), this kind of bondage is wrought by ignorance (Avidya); its annihilation is emancipation (Moksa)." While Sankhya calls it non-apprehension, yoga terms it as mis-apprehension (Anyatha- khyati), which can be substantiated by misapprehending one-the rope from the other-the snake, due to the machinations of ignorance (Avidya).

The ardent advocate of Mimamsa Philosophy Jaimini contends that it is not non-distinction alone which engenders misapprehension, it is also attended with false identification (Akhyati), thereby erroneously inferring non-distinction between the broken piece of a conch-shell and silver. In this context, this school of philosophy holds that it is mal-observation coupled with faulty remembrance giving birth to this invalid cognition. It further argues that misapprehension is not a product of wrong knowledge, but a mere negative factor of non-perception due to weakness of mind. When the valid cognition dawns, it

restores the strength of mind and misapprehensions do not recur. This is the exact purport of Akhyati theory of these investigating rationalists (Mimamsakas). Interestingly enough, Badarayana composed his Brahma-sutras getting inspiration from one of the branches of this system of philosophy called posterior mimamsa (uttara Mimamsa), commonly known as vedanta-sutras also.

It will be intriguing to note that none of the philosophic systems enumerated above have used the word 'Maya' as such, even though they have lucidly narrated its essence and antecedents. They have refrained from using the exact appellation 'Maya', but have substituted it by 'sanshaya' (Doubt), 'Mithya Jnana' (Error), 'Abbava' (Negation), 'Avidya' (Ignorance) and 'Akhyati' (Non-discrimination), representing all those constituents of 'Maya' discussed thread-bare by the vedantins and shaivas alike subsequently. Gauda Pada while commenting on the Vedanta or Brahma-sutras of Badarayana, has used this word 'Maya' for the first time in the classical period of Sanskrit literature.

He has vehemently laid down that Maya is unreal because it advocates duality as between the Jiva (soul) and the Brahma (Absolute Truth). This is like a dream seemingly looking real but inherently unreal. Just as in darkness the rope is imagined to be a snake, in the same way, the self is also imagined by its own illusion as having many forms. Actually in that state of existence there is no production (utpati) or no annihilation (Nirodha). To sum up, the imagination being unreal, finds itself realized in the non-existent existents. The objects are neither different nor non-different (Na Naredam... na prathak, naprathak); the sages have perceived it as devoid of imagination and cessation of all false appearance (Nirvikapla prapanchopashamah). The absolute truth (sat) is immortal, beyond the pale of birth and death, therefore it can not admit of any change by its own nature (svabhava), it is therefore, indivisible. All objects as they appear to us are likened to a magical or illusory elephant (Maya hasti), as it exists only or appears to us existing only with relation to experience. Hence, it is the experience which bestows on it the characteristics of birth, death etc. To quote: "By the nature of a thing is understood that which is its very condition, that which is inborn, that which is not accidental or that which does not cease to be itself." Gaudapada treats life as a waking dream, and contends that world exists only in the mind of Man. "The world of duality is mere Maya, the Real being the non dual" (Mayamatramidam Dvaitam, Adavaitam Paramarathatah). Just as sunlight falling on the finger appears straight when finger is straight and crooked when it is crooked, but in reality it is neither the one nor the other. It is as space in vessels seems to move when these are moved but in reality remain motionless; just as the sun does not quiver when its reflection quivers in the water, so the non-dual Atman is one and changeless (Avikari) in essence, but seems diverse through the association with objects (Visaya)- a trick manipulated by Maya; therefore, Maya according to Gaudapada is the faulty representation of transcendental consciousness into cosmic experience. When the unifying balance between the consciousness Absolute in personified Atman and the experience condensed as in Jiva is disturbed, it is said to be the sorcery of Maya. The Brahma and Jiva are not parallel entities, forms and names, or transforms itself into the world; this kind of they are congruent. The jagat or samsara - world of objects is transitory, it comes and goes, so the pleasure and pain. It is actually non-existent (Mithya), the ever-existent (Satyam) is only Brahma. When mental experiences appear as real, Maya is thought to have unleashed its jugglery.

However, it was left to Adi Shankaracharya to condense and re-interpret the content given in Brahma Sutras and Gauda Pada Karika and furnish a firm footing on which the Vedantic philosophy could survive triumphantly unaffected by other schools of Indian thought. Even though a host of commentaries is available on the Vedanta-Sutra, yet the 'Shankara Bhashya' is the tallest of them all. Hence, it should not seem surprising that vedanta and Shankaracharya have become synonymous. His is the last word on this branch of Indian philosophy.

As regards Maya Shankar's premise is that it is an antithesis of Brahma because of being inextricably connected with the world (Jagat). Brahma is real (Satyam) while world is transitory or unreal (Mithya). It is definitely part and parcel of Brahma-the very basis of creation. As nothing can be created out of a vacuum, in the same way Brahma being the only eternal entity, the world does emerge out of it only. At this stage Ignorance (Avidya) intervenes to confuse the human mind and intellect by mistaking the Finite

form of Brahma with its Infinite form. Therefore, ignorance is the progenitor of Maya (Illusion), unreal seeming as real. "Since Maya is deceptive in character, it is called 'Avidya' or false knowledge, it is not mere absence of apprehension but positive error." Toys and pots made of clay, though bearing different names and shapes from each other, are nothing but clay; similarly this 'Maya' through 'Avidya' gives rise to plurality without scanning the inherent unity. When Brahma projects itself into myriad forms and names, or transforms itself into the world; this kind of activity inherently of Brahma is called Ishwara with relation to the world and the power to procreate is alluded to as Prakriti. (Ishwarsya MayaShaktih Prakriti). Therefore Maya is the energy of Ishwara, His inherent force by which He transforms the potential into the actual world." It has no separate identity, it is in Ishwara as heat in fire. Maya through the machinations of false knowledge (Avidya) or erroneous perception (Mithya Jnana) exhibits its modus operandi (Vyapara) in two ways of concealment (Avarna) and misrepresentation (Viksepa). It hides the truth and at the same time mis-represents it. To conclude, it would be pertinent to quote from Shankara direct :-

"As the magician is not affected by the illusion (Maya) he has himself created, because it is without reality (Avastu), so also Paramatman is not affected by the illusion of a dream because the soul is not touched by sleep or waking." The ever-erring factor which disturbs the mental and psychic equilibrium between the creator and his creation is Maya. Such mental aberrations have relation to time and space and in their context unity is regarded as plurality, heterogeneity as homogeneity. This is in brief the content of Maya as enunciated by Shankara.

Monistic Shaivism of Kashmir has the 'Shiva-Sutra' of Acharya Vasugupta as its sheet-anchor. This shaivite scholar has defined Maya as:

'Kaladinama Tattvanam aviveko Maya.'

Non-discrimination of the limited elements of authorship (kala) etc is Maya.

Non-discrimination (Aviveka) has been explained by its commentator KshemaRaja as follows:

"Paramartha Svarupasya Aprathana Svabhavah." The nature of non-projection of the highest form of Truth.

This would clearly denote that the stage of non-projecting or non-extending of the supreme spirit is 'Maya'. In other words, it would connote the inability of the supreme consciousness (Samvit) to transfer its consciousness to the objects around. This kind of non-perception and subsequent non-identification between the self (Atman) and the objects (Padartha) will precisely convey the purport of Maya in shaivistic thought: shaivism has treated maya as shakti (Energy), even the primeval Energy or Nature (Mula Prakriti). It is identical with the immanent form of Shiva; His transcendental form is unaffected by it.

Actually Maya is revealed in the Pashu (animal) stage of the Atman fettered by the impurities of action and perception, called the impurities of Maya (Mayiya Mallah). On the path of self-realization (Chaitanyam), it is to be contended with at the initial stage when the Jiva is bound by impurities (Pasha Badha) and when he is dispossessed of these fetters (Pashamukto), he becomes Shiva. So, the Maya is an ephemeral mental aberration between Jiva and Shiva, a stage between the Pasha-baddho (Animal) and Pasha-Mukto (Subliminal) mental states, fleeting of course. It is in flux and flow as long as Jiva is possessed by non-discrimination (Aviveka); once this veil is shattered, it takes to heels. It can no longer seduce Jiva into wrong thinking even though being a seductress (Vimohini). Hence, it is devoid of permanency. It is actually a passing phase at which uniform essence of creation is presented in multiform, one seeming many. To speak briefly, when one primordial force is seen in multiplicity through faulty mental projection, it is said to be the working of Maya according to Shaivas; but at the same time its influence is far from being permanent, it is transitory and persists only till the time the 'Sadhaka' or the realizer is at a distance, or even at a discount from self-realization. It is more or less the immanent (Vishvarnaya) form of Transcendental Shiva (Vishvateerna), and inalienable ingredient of His self-conscious spirit. This very approach of shaivas marks their fundamental difference with the vedantists. The shaivas take Maya as an inevitable aspect of Shiva when releasing His shakti (Energy) from His

fountain-head. Even though He is universe incarnate (Vishvarupa), yet He feels the urgency of creating a universe, so that His shakti (Energy) can have full play. This Maya is called a veritable screen which conceals the real form of things (Tirodhanankari) deluding us into believing the multiform of universe, which in essence is uniform. The moment, the realizer through his perceptive cognition (jnana), takes the blue (neela) and the yellow (peela) as one, and only one entity, the Maya stops her machinations. Therefore shaivas treat Maya as not as unreal but momentary. As against it, the vedantists proclaim that Maya is unreal (Ayathartha), coinciding squarely with their thesis that universe is unreal (Jagat Mithya). Shaiva scholars are at pains to argue that this whole creation is a reflection (Abhasa) of the Super-self which is real, omnipotent and self-dependent (Svatantra): therefore, the relation between the world of appearance (Vishvamaya) and that of Transcendence (Vishvoterna) is that of the reflected object and the reflector. If the reflector is real, how can an object, its reflection, be unreal; since the reflected object has no separate entity from its reflector. Hence Maya has to fulfill her role in transmuting transcendence into immanence. It is thus a veritable hide and seek between the primordial and subliminal aspects of the same force which is Shiva. Vedantins taking Maya as a perennial deluding force, treat this world as unreal, illusory, but shaivas do not subscribe to this view. As argued earlier, they take this world as real-an image of superconsciousness (Chaitaynam) which to all intents and purposes is self-dependence (Svatantrva) incarnate. Hence shaivas invoke Maya as the progenitor of the world of objects as a whole (Sakala Janani), or as Casual Matrix (Amba). The attitude of shaivas towards the concept of Maya is positive, affirmative in the sense that as long as the equation between shiva and shakti is disturbed, it has to be there. As against this, the vedantins treat Maya as negation of vidya (Avidya). The inherent ignorance of jiva makes it also a permanent affair with him; As long as 'Jiva' is a part of deluding universe, he cannot get rid of it, he can not be emancipated. Shaivas contend that a realizer can attain emancipation while living (Jivanmuktavastha) in this world, that is when his coalition (Jnana) is complete and does not waver in seeming diversity around him, he can attain bliss of unity, being in perfect health, mentally as well as physically. The line of thinking adopted by vedantins is that life being false needs to be abjured, while shaivas treat enjoying life (Bhoga) as a preamble to meaningful renunciation (Yoga). In this context Abhinavagupta has asserted emphatically that this world is essentially Truth. Therefore, in vedantic school of philosophy we come across with a galaxy of ascetics having renounced all earthly concerns (Sanyasins), but in shaivism we are confronted with spiritual guides (Acharyas) who have owned life and also have risen above it; with them matter is as important as the spirit. These are rather complementary to each other; hence they are averse to caste taboos and kitchen puritanism. Their approach is, to speak in nutshell, psychic and not intellectual like those of the vedantins. They had their eyes wide-awake and could even anticipate the demands, the vagaries of mind would make on human intellect later. They provided the panacea in advance in terms of their emancipated and more healthy outlook, so that human mind does not get derailed into nihilism in future. In the context of changing time and consequent outlook, shaivas do possess an edge over all other Indian schools of philosophy; Maya, with them is therefore a fleeting psychic experience, as long as 'Self-Dependence' (svatantrya) is at an arm's length. As soon as this kind of diversity (Bheda) is dismantled by the awakening of spirit (Chaitanya), such enveloping clouds, prone to error, meet away through the effulgence of spirit; The realizer does attain shivahood being dispossessed of such obdurate shackles as the Maya is called. At this pinnacle of spiritual bliss (Paramananda), the confusion between duality (Bheda) and Non-Duality (Abheda), manifested (Kula) or unmanifested (Akula), ceases permanently.

Vedanta preaches equipoise and tranquility of mind labelling it as Bliss (Ananda). This is mental bliss related to thinking (Bhanda) which is limited in essence. Hence, they have indulged in hair splitting argumentation. Their approach is, therefore, intellectual.

Distance between the intellect and the spirit does also mark the frontiers between the vedanta and shaivism. Vedantists lay emphasis on mental Ascendancy, while shaivas advocate vehemently spiritual Transcendence. The conception of Maya as illustrated by these two schools of Indian philosophy hinges obviously on their respective approaches.

Shaivism is a philosophy more realistic and universal than the Vedanta, inasmuch as, it has made a happy amalgam of the prevailing Shakta and Tantric beliefs in vogue in Kashmir then; whereas vedanta is idealistic in approach and self-contained in content, thereby meant for only those who are intellectually more advanced-the elite-so to say. Common folk with common-place intellect have been by-passed, since they can not comprehend the exact essence of the brain-racking intellectual gymnastics indulged in by the towering giants of vedanta philosophy. Hence the conception of Maya as outlined by the vedantists is above the average quotient of intelligence possessed by an ordinary man. Shaivism, on the other hand, has given a straight and simple definition of Maya, in consonance with the average intelligence obtaining in an ordinary mortal. It has abstained scrupulously from jig-saw approach of the vedantists. To conclude, with Shaivas, Maya is a psychic disorder, a passing phase, while with the vedantins it is a mental aberration entwining the human mind and intellect permanently; they treat this world being entrenched in the mire of Maya as a waking dream.

The shaivas look at it as a seductress, a momentary disequilibrium between self and self-consciousness." Therefore, Abhinavagupta has most graphically unfolded the import contained in Maya in this homely idiom:

"Maya is the unmixed part of that transcendental self which engenders the shade of distinction (Bhedavabhasa) in His Self-Dependent power (Svatantrya Shakhti), which does not stand in need of any aids."

In conclusion, it may most fairly be emphasized that Indian outlook believes in assimilation rather than in segregation. It has made a heart-pleasing compromise with all that is good and edifying so the poet is not far from wrong when he asserts:

"Thou art Brahma-The Creator, Vishnu-The Preserver and Thou art Matter-the embodied soul, Ego-consciousness, the Moon, the Sun, Nature of things, the Lord of Jainas-Mahavira, the Illumined Sage-Buddha, Sky, Air also Shiva and Shakti. By these different names, O Goddess ! Thou art heard of and called by the righteous."

Even though vedantins and shaivas are at variance with regard to the conception of Maya, yet their destination is same-ennobling human intellect and awakening human spirit. This is exactly the rhythmic jingle of the heart-beats of Indian mind from times immemorial.

11.0 PANCHASTAVI - A BRIEF STUDY

I. Prologue:

The compound word 'Panchastavi' in ordinary parlance connotes a collection of devotional hymns divided into five cantos. The very first verse of the first canto remakes it abundantly clear that these panegyrics are essentially meant for the 'Rainbow-hued' Divine Energy comprising the 'speech' and 'resplendence of symbols'. Moreover the whole gamut of Alphabet from AA to Ksa is presided over by this Transcendental Energy; and to speak squarely, it is the progenitor of the sound and sense. At times it has been equated with super-knowledge, bliss and even this whole cosmic world. Moreover, this 'super-marvel' Maha-maya creates and annihilates this world of sound and sense by the triple formula of desire, perception and action. However it is also to be conceded that this poetic work is essentially an allegory in which the mental experience of supreme consciousness has been clothed in the flesh and blood of words to make it appear as physical or concrete. The poet has very candidly referred to this approach in the fifth canto (6th verse). So the 'Benign Motherhood' of that 'Primeval Energy' has become the focal point throughout the pages of this devotional composition.

II. Title of the Composition:

But this word five pancha or, the original panchan has many other shades of meaning, moreso with the Saiva philosophers, which naturally must have weighed with the poet while giving a name to his composition. So, it will not be out of place here to , allude to those shades contained in the number five, so as to comprehend exactly as to what the poet wants to express by its use. Perhaps this contention presupposes that the devotee-poet has deliberately confined his imagination to five cantos (stavas) only, so as to make it synchronize with other shades of meaning contained in this number.

In 'TantraSadbhava' - a Shaivistic treatise, the Divine Energy has been described as five-fold, panch-mantra gata and also Panch-vidha having five forms. Herein clear reference has been made to the five modes of reciting a Mantra or an incantation with syllabic instants (Kala). These are Ishana with five instants, Tatpurusha with four. Aghora with eight; vamadeva with thirteen and Sadyojata also with eight respectively, making a total of thirty eight, which works out to be the exact number of consonants in the Alphabet.

The school of cognition in the Shaiva-lore takes five as the synonym of five duties which are Abhasan appearance, rakti attachment, Vimarshan scrutiny, Bija source, and avasthapanam establishing. These five duties or the stages of perception are also extricable part of the muttering of an incantation Japa-vidhi; hence the reference to mantroddharah delivering an incantation is not without purpose in Panchastavi.

Moreover, this pentad of devotional poems is essentially a treatise on Para-vidya super knowledge, as conceived by the Shaivas. Naturally to spell out its contrast with the negation of knowledge avidya - Ignorance, the poet must have made its five-fold division in his mind. This ignorance comprises tamah - error- Moha - illusion-, Maha-mohah - obduration-, tamisrah -fallacy, and andha mental blindness; copious references throughout the text of Panchastavi for dispelling tamah - error moha - illusion etc. have been made in this context. " Consequently these concomitants of ignorance are to be crossed, so that Super knowledge may dawn which is also called Shuddha Vidya or sad- vidya) by the Shaivas, which can be attained by adopting the course prescribed in Shuddhadhvan - the pure path. The Shaivas also believe that the purusha - the limited individual self has five envelopments of niyati - confinement, Kalah - experience of changes in time, Ragah - attachment, Vidva -limited knowledge and Kala -limited authorship. The cumulative effect of these aberrations produces Maya (obduration) and this can be

removed completely by Shuddha vidya, the pure knowledge as alluded to above. Actually Maya obduration, is the name given to non-identity between Shiva and Shakti. So the poet invokes the 'Immanent Mother' Sakala Janani - to emancipate all the living beings from this 'knot of Maya'.

As a corollary to this, having overcome Maya (obduration) the experienter has to traverse five stages of sad-vidya, assimilative consciousness (Aishvarya). All pervasive conscious-self, Sadakhya, objective conscious self, Shakti tattva predicative manifestation, and Shiva-tattva subjective conscious-self, so as to identify himself with the Parama Shiva (Supreme conscious-self), the acme of Shaiva realization. The Panchastavi-kara (the composer of Panchastavi) has referred to these in very unambiguous terms also." In addition to these shades of meaning projecting from five, it cannot be gainsaid that it does not connote the body made up of five elements namely Prithvi, solidity. Apas liquidity, Agni (formativity). Vayu (aeriality) and akasha (etheriality). The recitation of an incantation is definitely a mental drill with physiological basis; so the body - the very first expedient for accomplishing Dharma- is an inevitable part of this mental discipline. Hence the poet is at pains to refer to this Vehicle in his eulogies to the Supreme Energy.

Not only this, in several Tantric works, human body is looked upon as Shri Chakra (disc of bountiful Superhuman power) in which the microcosmic angles of the Energy (Shakti) have been detailed as tvak (Skin), asrah (blood), mamsam (flesh), Meda (lymph) and asthi (bones). The macrocosmic angles have also been defined as the five elements, five tanmatras (subtle elements) belonging to Shabda (sound), sparsha (touch), rupa (colour), rasa (flavour), and gandha (smell), five senses, of perception, five senses of action and five pranas. This aspect of SHakti (Energy) has been fully brought out not only by Panchastavi but also by another compilation of panegyrics named Saundarya Lahri (the wave of Beautitude) even. Again the five karnas @ur (generative causes) in Shaiva philosophy are Brahma (the progenitor), Vishnu (the nourisher), Rudra (the annihilator), Sada-Shiva, (perennial & immanent conscious spirit) and Ishvara (the supreme Lord). To this belief the poet has succinctly referred in these eulogisms."

Last but not the least, the Shiva from which the Shaivism derives its name, is supposed to have five faces, Panch-mukha, but it is just a corpse (Shavah), without the union, with Energy (Shakti). This very thought has been expressed by the author in dexterously fine poetry. The Saundarya Lahri begins the devotional praise of the Super-Energy with this belief.

So it has been made abundantly clear that the poet, who composed Panchastavi was an ardent Shaiva and had all these shades of five in his mind, when he deliberately selected this very number, so pregnant with esoteric content, for choosing an apt and befitting title for his imagination concentrated in Panchastavi. It could not have been a mere accident or even a happy coincidence; it was wilfully done by him as a conscious artist and a versatile Shaiva.

In tune with the arguments advanced above, it also seems plausible to assert that Shaivism in essence advocates a happy compromise between materiality (bhoga) and spirituality (Yoga), a rewarding attitude to life, and if that balance is tilted in favour of any of the two, that attitude will get disturbed and may not contribute to the well-being of the humanity at large; so when vamacharah (the left hand ritual of the Tantras) pleaded for the introduction of pancha makara (five Ms); naturally as a healthy reaction to this degenerate Tantric ritual which ran counter to the Shaiva teachings, the poet thought it fit to substitute the five eulogiums for five Ms. This conjecture is substantiated by the dig in undertones he has dealt at such believers in his own composition. The use of the words aparey and budhah are significant here. Budhah (the wise, enlightened) call this super-Energy as transcendental (akulam); in contrast with this aparey (others), not enlightened or wise call Her Kaulam personifying Kaulacharah.

III. Nomenclature of Cantos:

Furthermore, the poet has captioned each canto with a sub-title. Herein also these subtitles have been used not haphazardly but with a purpose.

First Canto: The first canto bears the sub-title Laghu (insignificant or light). In the penultimate verse of this chapter, the poet has justified the use of this word and hinted at his insignificance laghustvatmani for undertaking such a lofty yet burdensome task for analysing the Super-Energy. However, also, it seems that he has tried to play on the word 'Laghu' and in keeping with the Shaivistic tradition tried to keep it occult rahasya sampradayah. As the word discussion has many other meanings also we have to glean any such out of these, which is in consonance with what has been described in this canto.

Without mincing words, it may be said that this canto tries to define, explain and emphasize the purport contained in the aphorism ' Vidya shariratta mantra rahsyam. "The occult power of an incantation is its efficacy to strike identity between the sound and its symbol. " Vidya has been described as nothing other than the symbols (matrika) of the alphabet. Hence the 'origin of letters' and their method of grouping into an incantation and the consequent mode of recitation has been fully dealt with in this canto. This very knowledge of letters has been treated as a fond Mother granting each and every boon to her children. These sounds and symbols (nada, Bindu) emanate from the Muladhara where these are coiled together like a Kundalini - the coiled serpent and traversing twelve stations (dwadash-dalam) approaches the Brahma-randra and then its return or descent into the Kanda or Muladhara begins and it again lies dormant there. The poet, while describing this terse and yet intricate discipline of the breath is alive to the fact that it may not be taken kindly to by the prospective realizers; they might feel diffident to practise this course which seemingly appears guru (weighty, difficult); hence to make it popular and banish all the scare from the minds of the devotees, he has captioned this chapter as Laghu (very light, easy to comprehend). Some say that it is the composition of a devotee named Laghu Bhattaraka, hence the sub-title Laghustava will mean a panegyric composed by Laghu, a diminutive from Laghu Bhattaraka.

Second Canto: The second canto, is known as charchastava (the panegyric containing careful study or reflection). Herein the attributes of the Divine Mother (Energy) in cosmic form have been fully described. She is also invoked to cut the shackles of birth and rebirth, and to release the devotee from the prison (bondage) of his body. This canto gives in detail the immanent form of the Super-Energy, whereas the first brought into bold relief Her Vishvotteerna transcendental form.

Third Canto: The third canto bears the title gatastavah. Gatah is patently derived from Ghat verb meaning to unite, to join or, bring together. Herein the ghatnam or sanghatnam (union) of Shiva and Shakti is complete. The impersonal as described in the first and the personal in the second cantos respectively get fully immersed in each other in this canto just like the water and its container (Ghatah). This coincides with the paraparadasha or bhedabheda vimarshanatmakta (complete identity) for which sadyidya (the perennial and pure knowledge) is also a synonym. Hence the third canto deals with this aspect of knowledge. The Ghatah (pitcher) is looked upon as the body metaphysically by the Yogis and the water inside it is taken to be the soul (Atman). The body of the alphabet (Vidyasharira) has been profusely mentioned in the first Canto, the second locates its soul and the third marks their auspicious blending, hence the use of the word ghatah or the verb ghat. So the poet jeers at those fools who torment their body with various kinds of penance or make themselves paupers by spending lavishly on Yajnas (sacrificial fires) and liberal remunerations. The realizer attaining this stage has not to bother himself with these fruitless rituals. This very union between the sound and the symbol, para (higher) and apara (lower), the immanent and the transcendental. Shiva and the Shakti, Bheda (duality) and abheda (identity) has been very beautifully alluded to by the poet while addressing the Supreme Energy as 'Shabda Brahmamayi'.

Fourth Canto: The fourth canto is called Amba Stavah, a panegyric eulogizing the Mother. The word Amba is to be read in the context of Jyeshtha and Raudri. While discussing the origin of letters, the 'Tantra Sadbhava' has to say that Raudri the terrible, on account of the agitation it produces, is the first stage of a letter being conceived. Jyeshtha-'the elderly or prominent' indicates its form being taken, and Amba is the final sound which comes at the tip of the tongue. Hence it is established beyond doubt that embryonic and formative stages of a letter having been described at length in the previous chapters, the fullfledged word having taken shape and being pronounced singly or is a part of an incantation is actually

the Amba. This word also means a mother like matrika, hence may also mean vidya Super-knowledge as corroborated by the poet himself in the very first verse of this chapter. Herein, consequently the praises of Vidya have been sung which has been naturally equated with Shakti (energy) without which Shiva is a non-entity (asamartha). So, this Amba (Mother) is the real generative power in nature or man ; bereft of Her, this world would look desolate. Moreover, only when Her two lotus - feet are enshrined in the of hearts people, the puzzling din and strife of obstinacy, argument and counter-argument will cease. In the last verse the poet prepares the ground for captioning the penultimate chapter as 'sakala janani stava' by invoking Her as as sakala bhuvana mata (Mother of all the worlds - inanimate or animate) with Her protruding breasts ebbing with the milk of human kindness.

Fifth Canto: Sakala (entire or whole) can be expounded in more than one way. It may mean, along with other parts, digits or full, such as sakalaindu (the full moon). It might also connote in the language of Shaivas as savyenjan (with consonants) as against nishkala (avyenjan without consonants one of the methods of japa muttering an incantation. It might also indicate the medial sounds or letters of the incantation with sakala japa vidhih the method of muttering with consonants. The latter part of the compound Janani (Compassionate Mother) makes it more clear and all the same unambiguous. Actually this chapter is devoted to the propitiation of the 'Universal Mother' Jagatmata; and this Universal Mother is maha vidya Super knowledge being beyond speech and argument. This all-pervading Mother represents in Her ownself attributes of creation, sustenance and annihilation, as also the over-lordship and the super-knowledge, thereby exhibiting diversity, out of unity. She showers supreme bliss on those, who take pains to know Her in essence.

IV. Precise import of Tripurasundari

Before proceeding further it seems pertinent to explain the content of Tripura or Tripura Sundari personifying the 'Divine Energy' and repeatedly used by the poet in all the cantos.



Tripurasundari

tri denotes number three and *pura* means among other things, the body also. The word thus literally will indicate any such woman who has three bodies (tripura) or who represents in herself the beauty of three worlds (whole cosmos). Perhaps to facilitate the exact comprehension of this word, the poet, on his own,

has advanced reasons for calling this 'Divine Energy' as Tripura. After enumerating the triple form of gods (Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra), fire (household, sacrificial and of pyre), energies (desire, perception and action), basic vowels, worlds (Bhur, Bhuvah and Svah), Vedas (Rig, Yajus and sama) and other cosmic manifestations, he very convincingly tries to establish that this threefold division is actually an extension of the essence of the Divine Energy, consequently called Tripura. Shaivistic lore confirms this view of the poet, 'Prapanchasara' asserts that 'Ambika' is named as Tripura because of its accent on the three basic vowels. 'Tripurarnava' lays down that the Energy residing in 'Sushumna, pingala and Ida'-Blood Vessels- as also in the mind, intellect and soul is called Tripura. 'Kalika Purana' says since everything is threefold, so she (Divine, Energy) is called Tripura. 'Vamakeshvara -Tantra' believes that Tripura is threefold in the form of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, and also personifies in Herself the three powers of desire, perception and action. 'Varaha Purana' also explains the name on those very lines. Hence the word Tripura is actually the manifestation of triple power of the super-Energy-Raudri, Jyeshtha and Amba-the birth of a letter from the embryo to the actual pronunciation. Letter is an indissoluble part of an incantation, hence the poet feels that Tripura Sundari on being discerned by physical eyes or through mastering a Mantra (mentally) dispells sins and mitigates the fear of death.

Hindu genius has all along provided form (Vyakt BERTE) to the formless (Avyakta), not because it believes that 'Divine Energy' can have any form, but with the sole motive of making that abstract Entity look like a concrete object, especially in human form, so as to make it more acceptable and intelligible to the general masses. To make this approach more impressive and effective the image of the Mother came in handy for them. "An unworthy son may be born, but there can never be a bad- Mother." This attitude is at the root of the Mother- worship so popular with the Hindus. In this way also the so called polytheism grew out of the monotheist. Even in the hoary times of Vedas the seer was constrained to remark "Ekam hi sadvipra bahuda vadanti "The Reality being one is interpreted in many ways." On the same analogy the poet-devotee of panchastavi has provided all the human attributes to Her, and yet made her look superhuman. Hence Tripura in essence being an abstract feeling of mind, has been painted in words pulsating with undivided devotion as a 'Loving Mother'; such discipline of mind is a mental experience beyond the domain of physical words. This discipline will remain incomplete, if the mention of the common belief is not made that Tripura is the consort of Tripurari (shiva). Propitiation of Tripura is still performed in Kashmir especially by a sect of Kashmiri Pandits, known as Tikus, presumably a Kashmiri rendering of trik.

V. The name of the Composer

Unfortunately for us, the poet has maintained sphinx-like silence about his name, time or lineage throughout the length and breadth of his versified composition. However strange it might seem, but it is all the same true about many Sanskrit authors of repute. Even Kalidasa, the prince among poets has been also reticent about himself. Barring a few authors like Bilhana and Ksemendra, the date and name of whole galaxy of Sanskrit luminaries of Kashmir is still a matter of research. In the Shaivistic literature only Abhinavagupta has given his brief biographical sketch and some dates in one of his stotaras devotional panegyrics. Herein his versatility has to be thanked, otherwise the Hindu attitude of mind by and large feels shy of publicity more so, of self-advertisement.

In 1917 A. D. T. Ganapati Shastri brought out an edition of the first chapter of Panchastavi naming it as Laghustuti with the Sanskrit commentary of one Raghvananda. On the authority of the commentator he put down the name of the poet as Laghu Bhattaraka:

<verses>

However, he has also referred to another commentary on the same treatise which to quote him is very voluminous and consists of nearly two thousand verses by some Parameshwaracharya. This commentary is not still out, hence nothing can be said about it. Had this commentary been made available after getting it printed, who knows many knotty problems would have been solved. In his introduction the learned Shastri has not referred to Panchastavi at all, and has, for all practical purposes, thought these

21 verses to be an independent work, and not the first canto of Panchastavi. Curiously enough the commentator Raghavananda also has not made the mention of Panchastavi or its other cantos even once directly or indirectly. This intriguing silence poses many questions which deserve plausible answers. Firstly, it seems that Panchastavi as a whole is unknown in the south and only its first chapter has gained currency there. Therein also the original Stava has been substituted by Stuti even though both mean the same thing. Moreover, it is thought to be a Composition of some Laghu Bhattaraka.

It is very well known that Shaivism of the south is predominantly dualistic in content. Madhvacharya (A.D. 1199-1276) has described: 'Shaiva Darshan' as, a, dualistic system, which is fundamentally at variance with the Monistic system which thrived only in Kashmir. Nimbarka (A. D. 1162) emphasizes that it is from duality bheda that non-duality abheda can be realized. In the Tantric literature a clear division has been made on the basis of duality and non- duality; hence the Tantras like Kamaja, Yogaja, etc. numbering ten have been ascribed to the dualistic school of Shaivism. Therefore it seems surprising that a composition like this advocating non-duality should come from the south. As will be made clear later Panchastavi as a whole, beyond any doubt, breathes an air of being composed in Kashmir, and to crown all, by a Kashmiri author. Hence it seems plausible to surmise that the text of only one canto was commented upon by Raghvananda for propounding a faith which would have raised many eyebrows there. If we contend that the other four cantos were lost, it will not be tenable in the face of his not referring to any one of these in his commentary. For fear of being misinterpreted and also misunderstood, he stopped at the conclusion of the first chapter. Perhaps this will also solve the puzzle of substituting Stutih for Stava by him. Even though both these words mean the same thing, yet in usual practice Stava is a collection of stutih; Had he used the original Stavah he would have then betrayed the knowledge of other Stavas also. Hence he changed the word to Stutih without impairing its connotation as in the original, and also thereby implied that he knew nothing about other cantos. Our poet has used the Stutih (praise) in the same context, which confirms our belief in the rightness of this conjecture. Raghvananda wanted it to look like an independent and single Stutih (praise) of the 'Supreme Energy' like 'Saundarya Lahri' or Bhairavastuti of Abhinava Gupta.

Bhattaraka or Bhattara is an appellation of respect or esteem joined with the names of either very learned Brahmins or Kings, its diminutive Bhattah still survives as a generic name for Kashmiri Pandits. In south no such practice is in vogue perhaps with the exception of Kumarilla Bhatta; so Laghu Bhattaraka seems also to be a Kashmiri Brahmin; 'Laghu' taken as an adjective would mean 'quick witted' or one who was so proficient as to give the minutest details Laghava (noun) about the Supreme Energy. Hence it can not be the actual name of the author but a commendatory epithet used by the commentator for his erudition and devotion. On the analogy of *ralayauhbedah* (Panini's diction in his sutras) it strikes as the name of the commentator himself laghava becoming Raghava. Hence we come to the conclusion that the commentator did not know the real name of the poet and to be on the safe side ascribed it to a quick-witted Kashmiri Brahmin Laghu - Bhattarka and thereby inserted his name also with it. Lakshmi Dhara in his commentary on - Saundarya Lahri while quoting from Panchastavi has referred to its author as an 'Acharya' generally, but in one case has referred to Kalidasa particularly also in this context. However, we can authoritatively say that he is not the famous Kalidasa of Raghuvamsha or Shakuntala repute. It might mean "A votary of Kali," some Acharya who was a devotee of Kali is perhaps meant by him.

In some manuscripts in the possession of the Kashmir Government Research Library the name of the author has been given as Laghavacharya, and in some as Acharya Prithvi Dhara, disciple of Shambhunatha. In one Ms the name of the poet has been written as Shri Ramchandracharya. Kashmiri tradition ascribes it to Abhinava Gupta. In the quoted verses from Panchastavi used by commentators of 'Vidyarnava' and 'Saubhagya Ratnakara' the author has been mentioned as Dharmacharyah. Nityananda, the commentator of Tripura Mahimastotra also corroborates the same view. Harabhatta Shastri, the reputed local scholar also has taken Dharmacharyah to be its author.

The very fact that there is no unanimity of views about the authorship of Panchastavi leads us easily to think that actually the author has wanted to remain anonymous to which view the last verse of the first canto also subscribes. The use of Laghustvatmani (insignificance of his own self) debars him to proclaim his name. This is the zenith of humility and knowledge has been acclaimed as the giver of the same. As to the names Acharya, Kalidasa and Dharmacharyah, we may say that actually these are not the proper names but assumed ones. Acharya may mean a preceptor and Dharmacharyah accordingly indicates a preceptor of Dharma, here Shaiva Dharmah ostensibly. At times even scribes when not finding the name of the author therein, may have put in their name in his stead. In the absence of any indisputable and authentic evidence, we are forced to conclude that the authorship of Panchastavi is an unresolved mystery.

VI. Date of Composition

Panchastavi is the quintessence of Tantric scriptures of non-dualistic school. The earliest extant reference to its verses used as quotations are found in the Saraswati Kanthabharana of King Bhoja. The probable date of the composition of Saraswati Kanthabharana is between 1030-1040 A. D. Hence Panchastavi must have been composed much earlier to it; by the time of Bhoja its poetic merit (leaving devotional apart) must have been established on firm footing, only then it could deserve a place in this work on poetics. Moreover Saundarya Lahri whose authorship is ascribed to Shankaracharya, does in a way, treat the same thought as couched in the Panchastavi.

For this very reason Lakshmi Dhara has quoted profusely from it. It is very difficult to say as to which composition of these two is earlier; in other words, what debt they owe to each other is a subject of profound research. However it can be said without any fear of contradiction that the subject matter of these two compositions being similar, as also the phrase and idiom at many places, both these might have been composed at the same time when the devotional climate in Kashmir was vibrating with 'Shaivistic Monism'. It is also believed that Shankaracharya was converted to this line of thinking during his sojourn in Kashmir. Local tradition of Kashmir also confirms it. Shankara's date has been fixed between 788-820 A.D. So it seems probable that Panchastavi was also composed during this period, Even if it may be argued that Panchastavi is posterior to Saundarya Lahari, still it could not have been composed by after 1030-1050 A.D. in any case. The upper limit may be fixed at 788-820 A.D. Shankara's visit to Kashmir and consequently composing Saundarya Lahari by him, and the lowest limit is furnished by the date of Bhoja's treatise on poetics (Saraswati Kanthabharana) i.e. 1030-1050 A.D. During this span of period our poet's composition must have seen the light of the day. So in all fairness to the author, it may be concluded that Panchastavi must have been composed in the latter half of ninth century and by the time of Bhoja its verses had attained sufficient fame and credence for being included in his work.

VII. Common authorship of five Cantos

One more point deserves consideration before we conclude this brief study, whether this is the work of one and the same author, who-so-ever, he might have been. On the strength of the internal evidence as well as the external, we have to answer this query in affirmative. The data available to us from the internal evidence conclusively points towards this hypothesis. Besides the astounding similarities of phrase and idiom and even repetition of words, the reference made to Vatsa Raja Udyana who was blessed with plenty and opulence by the Divine Mother, in more than one cantos, corroborates this view. Not only this, in the second factual reference there is mention of a famous Kashmiri king Pravarsena also, who, has been equated with king Udyana. The use of api (also) in the verse itself makes this inference obvious. The king Udyana as also the "Pravara" (Pravarsena) is the correct translation and not 'Udyana pravara' or very esteemed Udyana. Pravara herein is not a qualifying adjective of Udyana, but a noun, name of another king Pravarsena, the use of api (also) can be justified only then, otherwise it seems redundant. The translation thus would be 'king Udyana' (as referred to already in I-12 but also Pravarsena (api) which agrees with the singular sah in the third line, otherwise should have been tau (these two). In this verse, therefore explicit reference to Udyana has been made. Pravarsena has been obviously mentioned explicitly. If the poet had meant to refer to Udyana again, he could not have

escaped the blemish of repetition and as such his verses could not have been cited as examples by rhetoricians like Bhoja and Mammata.

Taking this suggestive import into account, we can easily identify as to which Praversena is meant by the poet, as Kalhana has given two kings of this name in his Rajatarangini. It seems Praversena II (590 A.D. roughly), who was a great warrior and an ardent believer like vatsa Raja Udyana. In Kalhana's own words: "He founded the city of Pravarpura on the outskirts of Sharika Parbat, which formed the centre of the new city". This Sharika Parbat, now known as Hari Parbat is regarded as the abode of the Goddess. So the cause of establishing the capital around Sharika Parbat is not far to seek. Being the recipient of favours from the Goddess he wanted to remain permanently under the canopy of Her feet literally. Moreover, verses not only from the I and V cantos, but from II, III and IV have also been quoted by later writers, this fact beyond any doubt establishes that these were the product of a single poet's imagination.

VIII. His Kashmiri Origin

He was a Kashmiri by birth needs no further elucidation. The monistic Shaivism was founded and propagated only here. It could not catch up with other schools of this philosophy, more especially in the south. This poetic composition is found as a whole in Kashmir alone, and from very remote times its verses are on the tongue of the Kashmiri Brahmins. In this connection reference to purely Kashmiri herbs like trupsi also points eloquently towards this conclusion. Moreso, reference to Praversena discussed earlier, also substantiates this view. Reference to Udyana in this respect is not so important, as he has been an ideal with most of the Sanskrit poets and Dramatists for his amors, exploits and bravery. Praversena is known only to Kashmiris; Kashmiri scholars have often referred to him, but no mention of him has been made anywhere in Sanskrit literature outside Kashmir. Tripura Pooja is exclusively carried on here without any break from times immemorial. Tripura worship outside Kashmir does not seem to be popular, even Tantriks over there have chosen kali as their Tutelar Deity (Isht Devi). Only the Brahmins of this place persist with this name of the Goddess.

IX. Epilogue

In the end, it looks quite appropriate to invoke the 'Supreme Energy' in the words of the poet himself who is bold enough like other true Shaivas of Kashmir to announce that caste restriction is no bar to Her propitiation; but only the steadfast intellect and unflinching faith overcomes any impediments whatsoever, ushering in a span of material opulence and spiritual ascendancy for the devotee. In this context it will be of interest to note here that the charisma of 'Shakti' worship here in Kashmir, prompted 'Adi- Shankaracharya' to pay this tribute to Her imminence and transcendence: "Oh Youthful Spouse of Shiva, Thou art Mind, Ether, Air, Fire, Water, Earth and dost thereby transform Thyself into the universe. Nevertheless there is nothing beyond Thee. By Thy play Thou dost manifest Thy consciousness and Bliss in the body of the universe."

12.0 SANSKRIT CHRONICLES AND SULTANS OF KASHMIR

A Resume

The history of Muslim period in Kashmir is as intriguing as it is revealing. Though a sizeable number of chronicles, both indigenous and foreign, contemporary as well as remote, is available for this phase of Kashmir history, yet the conclusions arrived at and the facts enumerated are in no way immaculately objective. These historians, barring a few, have granted their personal dimensions into these. Unfortunately for this epoch, the chroniclers have not been able to extricate themselves from co-coony meshes of personal likes and dislikes. Their subjective involvement has gone a long way in tarnishing the inherent image of this period in Kashmir history.

Moreover, modern scholars have not also been able to provide a dispassionate account of this period in as much as their knowledge of Persian or Sanskrit, in which the chronicles of this period are couched is either scanty or next to nothing. They have usually depended upon the defective translations, more so in the case of Sanskrit chronicles, thereby mutilating the exact import of the events and also drawing wrong and misleading inferences. Even Dr. G. M. D. Sufi, author of the monumental work entitled "KASHEER" has suffered from this lapse. Therefore, the edge this particular period has over earlier periods of history, in terms of contemporary evidence, seems to have been blunted.

This period in Kashmir history only confirms the age-long truth that the transitional ferment rides rough shod over the society when it is turning a new leaf. Old norms and attitudes melt away before the effulgent enthusiasm of the new order. It can never be smooth-sailing on either side. In the Hindu period, as depicted by Kalhana, whenever a change in rule was necessitated by the force of circumstances, it was definitely attended with scourge and death for the values the earlier kings had nursed. Even the vestiges smacking of the old were done away with. The 'new' was enthroned only on the ashes of the 'old' ! Therefore, it should not seem surprising or denigrating that the Muslim rulers got engaged in the crusade of annihilating the old and installing their way of life with unrelenting gusts and fervour. The Muslim monarchs were only repeating the course of history of their earlier periods in Kashmir. There were such emancipated kings like Pravarsena, Lalitaditya, Avantiverman etc, but the majority of the rulers could not rise above their narrow parochial loyalties. The same trend is discernible in the Muslim period of Kashmir history and is therefore neither horrifying nor unnecessarily disheartening. When the dust of this tumult settled the Muslim period also brought out of its womb benevolent kings like "Budshah" and Shahabuddin. Therefore, it does not seem justifiable or fair to dub this period as nihilistic or iconoclastic. More recently when, in the wake of Indian Independence, the political map of our country was redrawn the Rajas and Nawabs being dubbed as the representatives of a dying order were compelled to join the national stream by persuasion, guile or force. Their states underwent a transformation beyond recognition. This kind of friction between the old and the new is a natural phenomenon and the sparks coming out of this should not scare us into building a fallacious or deluding premise. History as such is a faithful representation coupled with detached interpretation of events. It is neither propaganda nor useless kite-flying for imposing own thinking on others. It is also not a veritable substitute for re-orientation or indoctrination. After going through the chronicles of this period, it can be easily conceded that the Muslim kings did not find any time to cool their heels and consequently engage themselves in ushering in a happy compromise between the dying old and the present coming to birth. The vulturous scramble for regal prowess was so intense that brother was after the blood of brother and son wove plots to overthrow his parent. In this pernicious climate of internecine feuds, the king was always expected to look around with fingers crossed, his maximum concern being his personal safety. Therefore, to expect a fair deal for his subjects and society at large, is a misnomer here. They at best could only invoke Islamic Brotherhood to keep their authority in tact. As a corollary to this, they were also obliged to excite the religious propensities of their subjects - neo converts, of course - to make

themselves secure on the throne. It was essentially a political strategy and had nothing to do with their actual approach to life. Whenever such mist of distrust and infidelity cleared for a brief spell, the Muslim kings have rendered yeoman's service to their subject.

In this context, and fortunately for the posterity, the Sanskrit chroniclers have tried to keep themselves at arm's length from the emotional involvement - the bane of this period. They have striven hard to sit on the fence and relate the events in more or less a dispassionate manner. It goes definitely to their credit that they could maintain the balance between head and heart in those hectic days when the links with the past were being broken with venomous acclarity. These historians had every reason to get derailed into the jigsaw of fallacies, in as much as they definitely were the chips of the old block which was being derided under their very nose. To speak squarely, these master-minds wore their profession on their sleeves.

Four Sanskrit luminaries have given an account of the Muslim rule in Kashmir, in succession. The first Jona Raja was followed by Shrivara, who took the thread from him when he (Jana Raja) was cut short by death and could not complete his assignment. The third was Prajya Bhatta whose original chronicle is lost but has been condensed by Shuka in the introductory portion of his Rajatarangini to make it a continuous whole. So this gap has been ably retrieved by the fourth chronicler Shuka, and the loss has been thus repaired.

Jona Raja

Jona Raja at the very commencement of his Raja Tarangini acknowledges the debt he owes to Kalhana - the doyen of chroniclers of Kashmir. He treats him as his ideal and his reputed dictum in respect of history writing as his guide-line for supplementing suitably the course of events, where Kalhana had left it. Kalhana has very aptly remarked:

"That noble-minded (poet) is alone worthy of praise whose word like that of a judge, keeps free from love or hatred in relating the facts of the past."

Jona Raja has faithfully striven to live upto this maxim. There are some omissions and commissions here and there, still this most illustrious, Sanskrit historian of the Muslim period, being the first in the line, is also the best, by any standard whatsoever.

In those insecure times the safety of the chronicles was the prime concern. The fear of interpolations can also not be ruled out. Before we proceed to examine critically the narrative of Jona Raja, it will again be useful to allude to erroneous inferences of modern scholars on this subject. Dr. Parmu has remarked that "His (Jona Raja's) besetting defect is that he generally puts the poet above the chronicler". Herein the learned scholar has innocently betrayed his ignorance regarding Sanskrit language and literature. Actually the reverse of it is true which is a compliment to Jona Raja. Kalhana's Raja Tarangini is classed under historical poetry in Sanskrit literature. No such honour has been bestowed upon Jona Rnja's Raja Tarangini. It is at places versified prose, to borrow the epithet from Dr. Buhler. In this respect Dr. R. N. Singh has to say "Jona Raja after I recording an event proceeds further; he even skips over the chain of events at the slightest possible hint. He does not stay behind to explain it, but transfers this burden to the reader." Further on, the learned scholar has remarked, "The Raja Tarangini of Jona Raja is history. It is neither a biography nor an eulogy."

Without mincing words, Jona Raja admits that his chronicle is merely an "Outline history of King". He does not make tall claims for elaborating the events or sitting on judgement on these. Moreover, he very candidly owns that he was commissioned to write his chronicle by King Zain-ul-abdin, through the good offices of Shirya Bhatta, the Head of Judiciary. Therefore, it may be contended that he being a

professional chronicler and also in the pay of the sultan, his account might have tilted in favour of his benefactor. Dr. Mohibul Hassan does refer to this seemingly believable handicap by saying, "Being a courtier of Zain-ul-abdin, Jona Raja is inclined to exaggerate the virtues of his master and gloss over his failings." On careful scrutiny of the account given by Jona Raja about Budshah (Zain-ul-abdin) and his father (Sikandar) it seems that he has safely steered clear of personal inclinations.

While describing the vandalism of Sikandar in razing temples and places of pilgrimage of Hindus to the ground, which would have alienated Jona Raja's sympathy for reasons obvious, he like a faithful reporter does pay tribute to the king's administrative acumen. He does not spare his Sultan from chastisement when it is due. He vehemently chides his co-religionists, the earlier Hindu Kings, for their lack of political foresight and also for being the slaves of lust.

All told, Jona Raja has given an account of twenty three rulers of Kashmir, out of which thirteen are Hindus, one a Bhautia and nine Muslims. This account covers a span of 459 years, He has been the contemporary of Sikandar and Zain-ul-abdin, by virtue of which his description about these two kings is not only lucid but also authentic. The general impression gleaned from the account of Hindu kings is that their hold on the reins of their kingdom was tottering under the irresistible weight of court intrigues, corruption, avarice, lust and sex. These failings were all the more be meared with physical and moral cowardice. Therefore, the occupation of Kashmir by Muslims was a natural culmination of this chaos and confusion. Degeneration of the highest order had already permeated the soul of Hindu society and the astute Muslim struck when the iron was hot. Hindu rulers had to blame only themselves for this catastrophe. Their levity did not even allow them to lick their wounds. Cultural conquest of Hindus had already commenced when Islam entered the valley a century or more before Muslim rule was installed here. Jona Raja treats the reign of these last Hindu kinds in a very cursory and brief manner. He has disposed of some Hindu kings in four or five verses. The brevity he has employed can be assessed by the fact that the description of thirteen Hindu Kings is dispensed within 174 verses out of a total of 976 verses comprising his chronicle. Jona Raja has himself adduced the reason for his lack of sympathy for these kings, as alluded to earlier. The chief cause for this unconcern was that Jona Raja wanted to pick up the thread from where Kalhana had left it, only to induct continuity into his chronicle. His main forte was Muslim Rule, for which alone he was responsible to King Zain-ul-abdin.

Jona Raja has described the Muslim Rule at length and a span of 140 years is covered by him. He could not complete the assignment of the King as he was probably cut short in life before he could do the last eleven years of Budshah's reign have however been commented upon by Shrivara - a professional heir to Jona Raja.

Jona Raja treats Shahmeer as the first Sultan of Kashmir. He ascended the throne of Kashmir under the name of Shamsud-Din and ruled for 3 years from 1339 to 1342 A.D. Prior to his snatching the throne by deceit and guile from Kota Rani, he was her chief adviser and also a paramour. After sharing the same bed for one night with Kota Rani, he got her murdered alongwith her sons. Thus the last symbol of Hindu Raj in Kashmir ended. Shahmeer was not an indigenous sultan, but came perhaps from Persia as a refugee. Dr. Mohibul Hassan takes him to be a Turkish adventurer. Even though Jona Raja prefixes the epithet Sultan with Renchan, the Buddhist also and the implication from it may be that he has taken Renchan as the first non-Hindu ruler, yet it was a very brief interlude which was followed by the restoration of Hindu monarchy. The Muslim rule entrenched itself in Kashmir, without any break whatsoever, with the reign of Shahmeer. Hence he earns the right to be called the first Muslim ruler of Kashmir.

Jona Raja has not referred to the episode of "BULBUL SHAH", who according to Persian chroniclers converted Renchan to Islam. He only alludes to one Deva Swami who refused to admit Renchan into Hindu fold. Furthermore, Jona Raja asserts that it was the manoeuvring of Shahmeer which got Renchan initiated into Islam.

Jona Raja has given us a graphic description of three invasions on Kashmir prior to the establishment of Islamic rule here : one by Dulcha, the other by Renchan and the third by Achala. Dulcha, a Turk with a retinue of sixty thousand strong cavalry swooped on Kashmir "like a lion forcing its way into a deer den."

King Kurushah, whom Jona Raja has taken as the grandfather of Shahmeer, tried to buy Dulcha off with a very good amount of money. Dulcha, whose sole intent was loot and carnage, did accept the money, but stayed back to unleash his cruelty over Kashmiris. Jona Raja has given a heart -rending description of the invasion of Dulcha :-

"Those Kashmiri people who had eluded destruction, after the Dulcha-cat took to heels, came out of their holes like the mice. When the scourge let loose by Dulcha did abate (when he was sent away) no son could find his father, nor father his son, and brother his brother."

The second invasion was that of Renchan Buddhist, who came down from northern mountains to loot and plunder Kashmir. Jona Raja has said in this connection:

"As a kite swoops on the birdling having dropped from its perch, in the same manner the invincible army of Renchan dispossessed of all belongings Kashmiris."

Afterwards Renchan also occupied the throne of Kashmir in collaboration with Kota Rani.

The third invader, Achala was prevailed upon by Kota Rani not to unleash his sword on the innocent people. He was invited to adorn the throne which was lying vacant, as the king had fled to Ladakh. Achala was taken in and he disbanded his army. Once he did this, it was very easy to see him off. Consequently, when Shahmeer came to the throne, he had a stupendous task of rehabilitation awaiting him. He acquitted himself very well in this field and proved to be a very competent administrator. In the words of Jona Raja "He changed the face of Kashmir." The salient facts come to surface while describing the ascendancy to power by Shahmeer. Jona Raja alludes to the oracle of the great Goddess wherein She predicted to him (Shahmeer), in a dream, that his progeny would rule Kashmir henceforth. By putting this anecdote to pen Jona Raja seems to have reconciled mentally to the change of power in Kashmir and also adduced Divine sanction for it. He has also called Shahmeer as "Kula Natha", the chief of the Muslim population in Kashmir, which could put its counter-weight against the machinations of landed aristocrats, such as Damaras (Dhars), professional fighters like Lavyanyas (Lones) and also Bhatta (the entire Brahmin faction). Perhaps that was the reason why Kota Rani took him into her service and confidence. This very influence with his co-religionists facilitated him to grab power without a single leaf fluttering in the valley. His seige of Anderkot (near Sumbal) proved as the last nail in the coffin of Hindu authority over Kashmir.

Shahmeer did not live long to consolidate the ravaged Kashmir. He breathed his last on the full-moon day in Ashadha in 1342 A. D., after a brief reign of three years and five days.

Jona Raja, for reasons obvious, has cursorily treated the reign of Sultan Jamsheed (1342-44) and that of Sultan Alla-ud-din (1344-56) sons and successors of Shahmeer. As he (Shahmeer) was an astute politician, he transferred the burden of the kingdom on those two sons jointly, so that they did not feel foul of each other afterwards. But the two brothers could not carry on with each other and the reign of Jamsheed, for two years, was only a tragic interlude of conspiracies and brotherly feuds. He was such a weakling that Jona Raja has aptly used the words "Being a king in name only, he actually suffered incessantly till he was relieved by death." Herein we shall have to refer to the observation made by Dr. Sufi; he has come to the conclusion that, as soon as Jamsheed was crowned king, he was deposed by his brother Ali Sher (Alla-ud-din) and spent the two years before his death rather in exile and penury. Dr.

Parmu has written that Jamsheed was killed in 1344 and Dr. Mohibul Hassan has suggested that "Jamsheed finding himself not strong enough to fight (against his brother) fled and after aimlessly wandering about in the valley for a year and two months died in 1345."

In this context the account given by Jona Raja does not confirm the views given by these learned authors. He unambiguously records that Jamsheed put to sword so many followers of his conspiring brother Ali Sher at Avantipur, that "the current of the Jhelum began to flow upwards due to the heaps of corpses thrown into the river." He records further that Sultan Jamsheed made "Sathya Raja" (Shiraz) responsible for the safety of the city of Srinagar and himself went for a trip to Handwara. It has nowhere been suggested by him (Jona Raja) that the Sultan was forcibly deposed and also killed. In the words of Jona Raja he died a natural death after being a Sultan for two years less by two months.

Jona Raja does allude to Jamsheed's holding the charge of 'Commissioner of Guards' stationed at one of the mountain passes, leading to Kashmir Valley. Perhaps this very reference of his becoming the 'Commissioner of Guards' has led these learned authors to do a bit of unfounded kite-flying. Jona Raja explicitly lays down that Sultan Jamsheed got fed up with wars, when Ali Sher inflicted a decisive defeat on his son. Moreover, Ali Sher broke the truce of two months cease-fire, offered initially by him. All these factors prompted him to relinquish the royal authority voluntarily, and during the closing months of his life he did accept an assignment much below his status. Therefore, it is sufficiently clear that he was neither deposed nor killed.

Ali Sher, assuming the name of Alla-ud-din (1344-1356 A.D.) ascended the throne of Kashmir by guile, deceit and statecraft. Despite these defects he was a master-mind in politics and a dauntless warrior. Two great events of his reign have been narrated by Jona Raja. The first being a direct reference to a bevy of Yoginis (females possessing magical powers), whose leader has been identified as 'Lalleshwari'. In Kashmiri tradition, Lalla is not credited with having found any order of 'Yoginis' at all. She lived by herself and also in her own thoughts. Therefore the use of the word 'Chakra' does not confirm the views by Persian scholars. It might also connote the host of eight Yoginis - attendants of Durga, Shiva's consort. Again, Kashmiri tradition makes Lalla-Arifa contemporary with Syed Ali Hamdani (Shah Hamdan), about whom Jona Raja is surprisingly reticent. It may be inferred here that Jona Raja did not mention the name of Shah Hamdan, as he was the sole instrument for transplanting Muslim faith in place of Hinduism in Kashmir. The crusade for mass conversion in Kashmir was initiated by him. Even if he (Jona Raja) would have liked to refer to Lalla, Shah Hamdan's mention would have been a natural corollary to it, as far as Kashmiri tradition goes. Therefore, he chose to skip over both these personalities in Kashmir history. The chief of 'Yoginis' (Nayika), narrated earlier, may be construed to be a female Tantric worshipper, otherwise she would not have offered a 'goblet of wine' to Alla-ud-din. Subsequent Persian scholars have tried to replace 'wine' by 'milk' - as former is forbidden by Islam. But Jona Raja has no such aberrations. Here again, 'Lalla' is never associated with wine etc in Kashmiri tradition like the left-band ritualists. Therefore, to infer from 'Yogini' the existence of 'Lalla', in that period at least, according to testimony of Jona Raja, is not only far-fetched but also preposterous.

However, the silence of Jona Raja about Lalleshwari and Shah Hamdan should not erroneously lead us to believe that these two personages never existed in Kashmir and are only the figment of imagination. Kalhana has not at all referred to Abhinavagupta, the reputed Shaiva Scholar, though other such erudite scholars like Udbhata, Rudrata, Vaman and Anandavardhan have been mentioned profusely by him. Yet Abhinavagupta did live in Kashmir on the basis of the testimony of the colophons of his works, in which he has indicated the year of composition of a particular treatise. He has bequeathed to us his own genealogy also. The force of tradition is always irresistible and cannot be dispensed with cheaply. What is actually meant to be conveyed here is that although Jona Raja's chronicle, as it is available to us, does not contain the names of Shah Hamdan and Lalleshwari, yet their having breathed the air of Kashmir cannot be doubted.

The second event of Alla-ud-din's reign is the terrible famine which shattered the economy of the country; but Jona Raja does not write that remedial measures were taken by the Sultan to offset its unsalutary effect on the people. Some scholars have wrongly quoted Jona Raja and ascribed this compliment to Sultan by him - "But he did all he could to alleviate the sufferings of his subjects". Actually, Jona Raja dismisses this calamity in one verse. He says, "In the nineteenth year of the local calendar (i.e. 1343 A.D.) a ghastly famine, tormented the people as a reproof for their bad deeds". Just after it he gives the date on which the Sultan breathed his last.

Again, another scholar has indicated that Sultan Alla-ud-Din transferred his capital from Anderkot to Alla-ud-din Pora, a new city founded by the Sultan. The description given in this behalf by Jona Raja reveals that the Sultan re-established his capital at Jayapida Pur - another name of Andrakot. Alla-ud-din shifted his capital back to Andrakot from Srinagar. Shahmeer, his father had made Andrakot as the first capital of Muslim kingdom in Kashmir. He had sentimental attachment with it for being associated with Kota Rani. His elder son Jamshed transferred the capital to Srinagar, but Alla-ud-din, from the view point of safety, shifted it back to Andrakot.

One redeeming feature during the reign of the first four Sultans comes to full view. Even though the pace of proselytisation was gathering momentum every day, during this period of only three decades or more, yet the influence of Hindus at the royal court did not wane. The Hindus occupied the position of counsellors, advisers or ministers. Sultan Jamsheed confided in his counsellor Lakshman Bhatt. Udayashri was probably the prime minister of Sultan Alla-ud-din and Chandra Damar his commander-in-chief. In the company of both these, the Sultan had caught the glimpse of the Yogini, as referred to earlier. Similarly Sultan Shahab-ud-din, when away on military campaigns, depended upon Kota Bhatt for internal administration of his kingdom.

Jona Raja is all praise for Sultan Shahabud-Din and compares him with Lalita Ditya - the famous warrior-king of ancient Kashmir.

In the wake of his illustrious predecessor, Shahab-ud-din also undertook many military expeditions and even went as far as Peshawar and Ghazni. His appetite for extending the borders of his country was unquenchable. It was also necessitated by the fact that the kingdom of his predecessors was shrinking by their incompetence. Several scholars have doubted the veracity of these campaigns and termed these as highly exaggerated. Their scepticism is perhaps based on the misnomer that Kashmiris only knew how to defend and could never venture to indulge in offensive. On the testimony of Jona Raja this assumption is not only unjust but also unfounded. He (Jona Raja) has narrated that the Kashmiri Sultan Sikandar was offered a gift of two elephants by Timur the Lame. Timur, who looted Delhi without compunction and called himself invincible, could not have parted with his two elephants for the King of Kashmir, for nothing in return. It was definitely the scare of Kashmiri army, which the Mongol scourge tried to pamper, so that it did not attack his forces while returning.

Where diplomacy could not work, Kashmiris were behind none to defend their Motherland by a call to steel. Law and order in the country was firmly established; no conspiracies or schism polluted the placid atmosphere; hence the need for moving out for annexations was keenly felt by the Sultan. The political geography of Kashmir was now turning a new leaf. Therefore, the testimony of Jona Raja regarding the military conquests of Shahab-ud-din need not be taken with a grain of salt. Kashmiri armies have penetrated deep into Kishtwar, Bhotia Pradesh, Lorin and Poonch. The military prowess of Kashmiris also did show itself off admirably well later, when Mughals were repulsed not only once but twice. Jona Raja like an awake artist does presage that "posterity might take this account of the superhuman exploits of the Sultan as mere flattery". This leaves nothing for us to guess otherwise.

Shahab-ud-din was not a religious zealot. He was catholic to the marrow of his bones, not by expediency but by conviction. When it was suggested to him that the huge idols of copper and bronze be smolten and converted into coins, as the imperial mint was running short of these, he promptly declined to order

this vandalism and said: "How paradoxical it will seem that I would like to amass fame by breaking these immortal idols which have been installed and worshipped by certain people who have earned approbation (by doing this)".

An unprecedented flood engulfed Srinagar in his reign, when the surging waters even mounted the surrounding hills. The Sultan, therefore, founded an alternate city at the foot of "SHARIKA SHAIL" (HARI PARVAT) and named it after his consort Lakshmi, as Lakshampur and not Sharikapur. This city extended from modern 'Hawal' to Lal Bazar. He also founded one more city, at the confluence of the Vitasta and the Sindh after his own name, as Shahab-ud-din pur (modern (Shadipur).

Unfortunately some Persian historians have painted Shahab-ud-din as an iconoclast in their misguided enthusiasm for the propagation of Islam. Jona Raja has prophetically smelt this and has consequently warned the future generations: " The king Shahab-ud-din had broken, the idols of gods; this preposterous and unfounded assertion should not in any way unnerve the posterity." Jona Raja was born in 1389 and died in 1459 A. D. Shahab-ud-din's span of reign ranges from 1354 to 1373 A. D.; so it is abundantly clear that Jona Raja's account of Shahab-ud-din's rule is only 16 years anterior to him. In the face of such a brief interval between the death of Shahab-ud-din and the birth of Jona Raja his testimony can never be dismissed cheaply, while the Persian chronicles. e. g. Baharistan Shahi (1586-1614 A. D.) Haidar Malik's Tariki Kashmir (1618 A. D.) and, to crown all, Peer Hassan's Tarikhi Kashmir (1885 A. D.) depended upon for what they have recorded about Sultan Shahab-ud din. Theirs is only a hearsay or wishful thinking while Jona Raja, from the point of historicity, is more reliable.

To sum up, Jona Raja has every sort of admiration for this benevolent Sultan of Kashmir; only Zainulab-din (Badshah) possesses a slight edge over him according to this Hindu historian. Kutub-ud-din (Kudadin) succeeded his father Shahab-ud-din as the Sultan of Kashmir from 1373 A. D. The Sultan had to undertake military campaigns against Raja of Lohara (Lorin) and the Khashas (Khokhi), inhabiting the south western belt of Pir Panchal range (Rajori) and also in Kishtwar. He brought these erring vassals to book under the generalship of Lolak the Damar. The Sultan also started a free 'langer' for the people in view of recurring famines in the valley, every, year at very huge cost. Through the blessing of one Yogi Brahma Natha he got the desired progeny; he had been without any son or daughter earlier. He also founded a township within the city, after his name, as Qutab-ud-din-pora. Modern scholars have identified it as the tract of land now known as Mohalla Haji Peer Mohmad Sahib, (also called as 'Langar Hatta' bazar near Islamia College to-day). There is a mohalla in Srinagar bearing this name even now. It is situated on the left bank of the Jhelum between Zainakadal and Ali Kadal, some distance below Gurgari Mohalla. I am led to believe that the Sultan was in some way the founder of this locality/habitation. Future research may unfold some relevant information regarding this.

Sultan Outub-ud-din breathed his last in 1381 A.D. At time his son Sikandar was only eight years old. Being minor, mother Subhatta acted as his regent and appointed two advisers, Uddak and Sabak, for efficient governance of the land. Shri P. N. Bazaz gives her name as Bibi Hora but does not indicate any source. The mother had such an immense love for her elder son Sikandar, that she did not hesitate to put to sword her own daughter and son-in-law Mohammed, when it was suspected that they were conspiring against the reigning sovereign. The younger son Haibat was also similarly done away with by poisoning. In such a callous yet judicious manner the fondling mother paved the way for her gon to ascend the throne without any impediments, whatsoever. On assumption of regal power Sikandar started a campaign of exterminating his foes; his own brother-in-law (brother of his first wife Shri Shobha) was not even spared. The two advisers during the regency of his mother were done away with. Here-in we shall have to refer to a controversy regarding the status of Shri Shobha in the harem of Sultan Sikandar. Persian chroniclers have termed her as the second wife of the King ; but according to Jona Raja this seems to be a wild guess. He clearly indicates her position as "Mahadevi", the senior - most queen. When Sikandar married Mera, the daughter of King of Ohind, Udbhandpur near 'Attak' in west Panjab, Shri Shobha suffered in her rank. Mera, being a Muslim by birth, got precedence over her. Till then the Sultan was not much biased against Hindus. Again, Jona Raja pays a compliment to him in as much as the

queen Shri Shobha got the Shiva-temples rennovated, presumably with the consent of the Sultan. The valour and terror of the Sultan made him quite safe and secure on the throne. Perhaps the most noteworthy event of his reign is his diplomacy with which he bought peace from Timur the Lame, who had earlier sacked Delhi. The scanning eye of the Sultan could not under-rate the invincibility of this barbarous Turk; hence smelling his invasion on his land, he sent an emissary to him when he was camping at the Indus and conveyed his unflinching loyalty to him. The whimsical Turk felt flattered by this gesture of servility and sent a word back to the Sultan to meet him along with his army at Dipalpur. The Sultan had hardly reached Baramulla with his retinue when he was given to understand that Timur had already left for his homeland Samarkand. This good tidings gave great relief to the Sultan. The Turk-invader had been touched by the loyalty of the Kashmiri Sultan and sent him two royal elephants as a present.

Jona Raja does not give all these details. He only refers to the gift of two elephants sent by the "Malchha" King (Timur), while returning from Delhi, to the Sultan. But in this very verse he has also unfolded in one word the cause for this unbelievable kind gesture from this cruel and callous invader. He uses the word "the suspicious Malechha King". Herein this Sanskrit historian would make us believe that Timur feared an attack from the Sultan when his army was returning to Samarkand with invaluable booty. In order to keep him in good humour the Turk sent two royal elephants to him. Jona Raja further extols the towering stature of these beasts which were definitely a rarity in Kashmir. Jona Raja acknowledges the superiority of his Sultan over Timur and in a subdued tone does hint that the latter wanted to buy neutrality of Sikandar, for which end in view he sent the gift of two elephants to him. Like an astute general, Timur could anticipate Sikandar's sending reinforcements to Sultan Mohd Tughlak of Delhi. In order to forestall these designs he overwhelmed Sikandar with this unique but, all the same, very respectful gift. During the sack of Delhi it was free for all, but Sikandar's intervention would have made a veritable difference. Persian chroniclers, Hindus as well as Muslims, are unequivocal in asserting that it was Sikandar who was actually scared of vandalism of Timur, which seems more probable. Jona Raja has tried to be over-patriotic in delineating this incident. At the same time, he deserves credit also for not skipping over this great event in Indian History, when he refers to the sack of Delhi by Timur. During the initial years of his rule the Sultan was very forbearing and charitable. Jona Raja has most graphically described this trait of the King. He has recorded "Nobody can describe his charitable disposition; the lotus-hands (of the Hindu subjects) would always feel drenched with water." It is a convention with the Hindus to receive alms or 'dakshina' (fee etc) with hands wet with water so that in return they spray the benefactor with this very water, showering blessings on him. It is therefore clear that Sikandar treated the Hindu subjects also kindly along with the Muslims. Unfortunately the Sultan could not maintain this policy for long. The visit of Syed Mohammad Hamdani, the illustrious son of Amir Kabir, changed his Catholic out-look on life to a large extent. Jona Raja very diplomatically ascribes the reason of this great change in the Sultan to the vices rampant in his (Hindu) subjects. But at the same time he acknowledges the over-all superiority of this missionary from Hamdan. He tells us that "He was a shining moon among the stars; though very junior in age, he was adored as the senior-most in scholarship." The Sultan was in his grip and under his spell and through his exhortations an era of unprecedented proselytisation was inaugurated in Kashmir. Shariat was for the first time proclaimed as the state religion. He appointed the ministers, all of them neo-converts: Ladda Raja, Vaidya Shankar and Suha Bhatta, perhaps with this unflinching belief that the converts are more rabid than the originals, hence will not hesitate to perpetrate every kind of tyranny on their erstwhile co-religionists.

At the instance of Syed Mohammed Hamdani the Sultan married Mera, the daughter of the King of Ohind, who was a born Muslim. Naturally Shri Sbobha, his first queen, had to get degraded in status. Her sons were killed. Mera, gave three sons to the Sultan: Mer Khan, Shahi Khan and Mohammed Khan. Dr. Mohibul Hassan has somehow or other inferred that Shri Shobha had adopted sons. While, quoting Jona Raja on this subject, incorrectly, he has mentioned no other source for this inference. Jona Raja has actually used the epithet "artificial" with the sons of Shri Shobha. According to Hindu Dharmashastras adoption is of two kinds - one "Dattak", the offered and taken, the other "Kratrim", only for completion of certain rites of a sonless father, after his death. In the first the consent of the adopted is not necessary,

while it is imperative in the case of second, who acts as a water-son. Even though adoption is banned in Islam, yet this custom of adoption is not wholly extinct among the Muslims of Kashmir, even today. Therefore, we can safely assert that the sons of Shri Shobha were actually the water-sons. The word used "artificial" can have other intonation also. It may mean "unreal". Since the sons were the progeny of a Hindu queen, hence they were not real Muslims though given Muslim names. So they were banished from the state. The sole motive for their being shunted out of Kashmir seems to be to keep the throne safe for the (real) Muslim sons of Mera.

The Sultan founded a new city at the foot of the Sharika Parbat. Muslim historians have called it as "Nowhatta" - the name which has survived to date. They refer also to his building of the imposing Jama Masjid, adjacent to the new city.

Actually the arch-intriguer against the Hindus was Suha Bhatta. He came under the influence of Syed Mohammad Hamdani, and was converted to Islam with the name of Saifud-Din - "the sword of faith." He may not have proved as much a defender of his adopted faith, but he did definitely unleash his sword on Hindus. Herein his name proved prophetic. Jona Raja equates Suha Bhatta with the ancient King Harsha - the Turk, the epithet given to him contemptuously by Kalhana, for the wholesale destruction of temples and idols. The massive temples at Martand, Bijbehara, Ishabar (near Nishat Garden), Triphar (at the foot of Mahadeva mountain) and in Baramulla district were razed to the ground.

After demolishing the temples, the relentless crusader against Hindu faith, Suha Bhatta turned his attention towards the persecution of Hindus. He enforced Jazia and compelled thousands of Hindus to embrace Islam. Those who resisted were put to sword; some fled the country for fear of reprisal. But there were also dauntless believers in Hindu faith who did raise a banner of revolt against this mass conversion. Jona Raja gives their names as Sinah Bhatta and Kastuta - the grocers and Nirmalacharya. The last mentioned spurned the royal patronage and preferred penury to change of faith. The excesses committed by the subordinate officers cannot absolve the reigning king from the infamy thus earned and sins committed; hence the tyranny let loose by Suha Bhatta paid its toll back in the shape of the Sultan's incurable malady. Seeing his end near, he annointed his eldest son Mir Khan (Ali Shah) as his successor and breathed his last on the eighth day of the dark fortnight or Jeth in 4489, the year of the local calendar. It comes to 1413 A.D. according to the English calendar.

Before the account of Sikandar, as given by Jona Raja, is concluded it will be pertinent to refer to the meticulous caution with which the historian has tried to cover up the mis-deeds of the Sultan by keeping Suha Bhatta only in the dock. Perhaps Jona Raja did not like to malign the parent of his benefactor (Budshah) for reasons obvious and consequently shifted all the odium to Suha Bhatta and to Hindus. But at the same time he does say that the Sultan could not wash his hands off these atrocities. His tacit consent must have been obtained by Suha Bhatta through the good-offices of Syed Mohammad Hamdani, who was actually the big boss in those dark days. The Sultan was always at his beck and call and could not go against his wishes. Persian historians have advanced many reasons for Suha Bhatta to wreck vengeance on his erstwhile co-religionists, but Jona Raja has simply written that he came under the magnetic spell of Syed Muhammad Hamdani and at his bidding took to heaping inhumanities on Hindus and their religion.

In discharging his mission of persecuting Hindus he had to prove that he was more loyal than the king. His over-enthusiasm in this respect can be squarely explained by the fact that being a convert his go-slow policy could have been misunderstood, and also misinterpreted; hence he had to look like the most devout Muslim and the most zealous partner in this "Jihad" against the Hindus. The fanciful inferences of Persian historians in this regard have no credence as the contemporary record of Jona Raja is silent on these.

Mir Khan assumed the name Ali Shah on ascending the throne. He, after fruitless flirtation with regal splendour, decided to undertake pilgrimage to Mecca and nominated his brother Shahi Khan

(Zainulabdin) as his successor. But being prevailed upon by his father-in-law, the Hindu Raja of Jammu, he changed his mind and returned to Kashmir. Shahi Khan did not resist his taking up the mantle of Sultan once again. Later he was killed in a battle with Khokhars, thus paving the unobstructed way for Shahi Khan to ascend the throne. These two incidents are perhaps sufficient to prove that the inherent tenets of Muslim faith had not made any substantial headway in the Valley, though the population was being admitted into its fold by hook or by crook. This was only a political expediency. The King Ali Shah had married two daughters of Hindu Raja of Jammu, which is un-Islamic, since a Muslim has been ordained to marry a non-Muslim only when he or she is converted to Islam. It is also enjoined in Islam that two real sisters cannot be wives to the same spouse concurrently. Moreover, once a 'Kasad' (resolution) is made to undertake Haj, it should not be revoked in any case. This very background facilitated Budshah to rehabilitate Hindus, as the loyalty of the people to their new faith was not even skin-deep as yet. It may well be called just a change of label from Hindu to Muslim, the neo-converts were still finding their feet, their only hobby was to pay off old scores under the garb of religious crusades. Shahi Khan (Budshah) as a prince already had a foretaste of this, when the adjoining Hindu tribes and neo-convert tribes of Thakurs and Khokhars had helped him to regain the throne from his brother. Therefore on assumption of power he elected to own benevolence instead of violence. Sultan Sikandar and his evil-genius Suha Bhatta failed to cash on this policy of conciliation instead of confrontation, thereby mutilating their image in Kashmir history.

Jona Raja has very rightly referred to this change of heart in Budshah. The Sultan effected far-reaching and sweeping adjustments to make the Hindus comfortable and thereby he made amends for the sins of his predecessors.

So much ink has been spent in delineating the golden reign of Budshah, that it would seem redundant to repeat all this. However, some light needs to be thrown on two or three points which have been more or less glossed over by the authors.

The first point which deserves emphasis is that Zain-ul-abdin was never under the influence of Hindus. He was a devout Muslim and would consult the Shaikul-Islam on every measure he would like to introduce. Perhaps this is also the reason that "Shariat" as the state-religion could not be replaced. In accordance with its dictates, Jazia also was not revoked entirely, but fixed at a lower rate. Zain-ul-abdin could not dare to go totally against the current of public opinion, built brick by brick by his forefathers, so far as treatment towards Hindus was concerned. Fanatics did raise their eye-brows on his attitude towards the Hindus and for this very purpose Syed Sad Ullah came from Mecca with a huge load of books. He tried to cajole the Sultan into reversing this tolerant policy, but the latter did not oblige. Budshah seems to have been more awake than those zealots who would try to foist their faith on others not by persuasion but through coercion. He therefore first of all called upon his own kinsmen to set their house in order. Muslims had multiplied themselves into different sects; Shias, Sunnis, Sayeds, Sufis and were vying with each other to show the other sects down. The Sultan could very well anticipate that once the object of their combined hatred - the Hindu was gone, they would fall out among themselves. Once such a nihilistic propensity is nurtured, it can express itself in any shape whatsoever. Therefore like a true follower of the Prophet he tried to consolidate the Muslim Brotherhood and exhorted them to sink their differences and close their ranks. It would have done more harm than good to the spread of Islam. How prophetically Budshah hinted towards this, can be easily corroborated by the subsequent Chak rule over Kashmir. Therefore, reinstatement of the irritant - the Hindu- did not only do good to him but also made the Muslim society cohesive and viable.

The second point which needs explanation here is the appointment of the Hindus to very responsible posts. The neo-converts, thinking themselves dandies, could not be expected to handle the intricate problems of statecraft. Moreover, they were actually the scum of the Hindu population; hence their credentials for running the government could not be depended upon, and the proverbial Eleven had survived the tyranny of the earlier Sultans. The state was in the doldrums owing to lack of foresight on the art of the predecessors of Budshah. Draught and flood in his reign trade the state poorer all the

more. In this predicament a hunt for Brahmin talent was made, so that the state be entrusted to it to set things in order. Moreover, the Hindu, unbelievably elevated to such position after an interval of condemnation, had perforce to appear more loyal than the king and would apply his heart and soul together to prove his capability. Thus the state was again put on the rails and attained the speed which it had squandered earlier. Tilakacharya, Shriya Bhatta, Sinhabhatta, Ruyya Bhatta, Karpura Bhatta, Ramananda, Gaurak Bhatta, Jaya Bhatta and a host of such luminaries administered the land of their birth with unparalleled devotion and to the best of their capacity. In the bargain Budshah made double gain. He became the champion of the underdog - the Hindu - and also gave his state a very good government.

The third point regarding the renovation of the temples and grant of lands to the Hindus can also be explained in this manner. During the reign of earlier Sultans, more-so when Sikandar through Suha Bhatta unleashed an era of unprecedented tyranny over the Hindus, the temples were annihilated and the Hindus were fleeing the country, leaving behind the jagirs attached to these temples fallow and desolate. The neo-converts only relished in bringing death, destruction and loot, but never cared to attend to these jagirs for getting produce out of them. At best they could think only of converting temples into mosques but that sentiment alone could in no way act as the substitute for sustenance.

Budshah's scanning eye could very well locate the disease; so he not only pledged safety to the bidding Hindus, but also coaxed those, who had left, to return to their homeland. Renovation of temples was executed under the supervision of Shriya Bhatta, which restored confidence into Hindu folk. Once again the lands attached to these temples were brought under plough and the food prospects of the country improved substantially.

Moreover in the wake of building a network of canals and water feeders, he rehabilitated the Hindus also on the land thus reclaimed. It served the purpose of replenishing the government treasury with the revenue these lands yielded. Whatever the inherent motive of Budshah regarding these steps, it is laudable on his part to usher in liberalism, despite the resentment of his Muslim subjects. He stood his ground firmly well and that is perhaps the indisputable reason which makes him the tallest of all the sultans in Kashmir. He possessed an unbending sinew and could never be swayed by passion. His reason thoroughly groomed was not only precise but also perfect. When the neo-converts under instructions from Syed Sad Ullah, who harboured a grudge against the king, as alluded to earlier, got arrowed to death a Yogi who had blessed the Sultan with male issues, he at first sought the counsel of the Shaikhul Islam, who decreed that "eye for eye" treatment be meted out to him. But the king did not like to act in haste and also alienate the sympathies of the Muslims. He introduced a novel method of punishing Sad Ullah by making him ride a donkey with his face towards its tail and his beard singed off. The people were asked to spit at him wherever he was conducted in this plight, but the King spared him his life. In other words he extended immunity from death to Syeds also, as was the practice regarding the Brahmins in earlier Hindu period. Undoubtedly the Sultan resurrected the dying human values, nursed these with his sharp intellectual prowess and tried to sell these out to his co-religionists. Nature willed otherwise. When his reign, like the flicker of a glow-worm in engulfing darkness, came to an end, his successors could not appreciate the exact import of his emancipated outlook, but reverted to wholesale repression on Hindus, that also with vengeance.

Jona Raja has given us an eye-witness account of the first thirty-nine years of the reign of this gracious Sultan. He concludes the account abruptly at verse 976, without adducing any reason for it. The account of penultimate eleven years of his rule has been narrated by Shrivara in his Zaina Tarangini, as already indicated.

This benevolent Sultan, by commissioning Jona Raja to pen down his history, has been instrumental in doing permanent good to the annals of Kashmir. No contemporary Persian chronicle has come down to us in this respect. The earliest Persian reference to Kashmir is contained in 'Tarikhi-Feroz Shahi' (1285-1286 A. D.) by Zia-ud-Din Barni. Obviously this is a historical record about Feroz Shah Tughlak of Delhi.

Montion of Kashmir hao come there-in in a casual manner. Mulla Ahmad's 'Tarikhi Kashmir', was composed after the reign of Budshah. It can conveniently be treated as the first Persian chronicle of the Sultans af Kashmir. In view of this, by getting the events recorded by contemporary Hindus, the king not only provided an authentic base to these, but also bequeathed to the future scholars enough material to build up his personality, after exchanging the notes of Sanskrit and Persian histories. It will not be an exaggeration to say here that his period alone can take rightful pride in being authentic in Kashmir History. Jona Raja has performed his mission with honesty of purpose and dedication to his profession. His account of Budshah, though incomplete, is not wanting in any thing. It is neither magnified nor played down. The subsequent Persian chroniclers, without any exception, have profusely drawn from him and then only built, their respective theses. Kashmiris owe a debt to Jona Raja for erecting the contours of a light-house of accurate historicity which reduces to nullity thankless pastime of groping in the dark.

Shrivara

Without beating about the bush, Shrivara straightway adduces two reasons for taking up the thread of chronicle-writing from Jona Raja. Firstly, he writes "I have taken this assignment simply to complete the unfinished History of Kings written by Jona Raja, whose disciple I am". At the same time he, in all humility, confesses his diffidence, to reach up to his guru's heights. Secondly, he acknowledges the fillial affection which Sultan Zain-ul-abdin nourished for him and to repay his debt towards him elected to write history, so that posterity does not forget him altogether. He pays back what he owed to the Sultan, not in terms of gold which is perishable, but in words throbbing with his gratitude for him, imperishable of cours. No better deal than this could be imagined. He made his name immortal while his treasures and regal splendour lie buried in the womb of past. Shrivara makes the Sultan live in the present even though belonging to the days of yore.

As has been indicated earlier Jona Raja could not write the account of penultimate eleven years of Budshah's reign. He was snatched away by the icy hands of death. So in all sincerity Shrivara records that Jona Raja mounted the funeral pyre in the 35th year of the local calendar which works at 1457 A.D. So, the commencement of his treatise can be taken safely from this year, and he also could complete the account of Kashmir Sultans upto the year 1486 A.D. only, much against his wishes. Therefore, Shrivara records the events of more or less 29 years as an eye witness. Even though he has veneration for his Guru Jona Raja, yet he has arranged his chronicle on the pattern used by Kalhana; he alone seems to be his ideal in this field. Jona Raja has given verses serially without breaking these into sections or subsections. Shrivara has revived the "Taranga" form of dividing history into cantos. He has also indicated the subjects he has treated in a particular canto at the end of each. With this astute wakefulness on his part, he got rid of the interpolations whatsoever. Beginning the History of Kashmiri Sultans with the last eleven years of Budshah he has ended it with the Sultan Fatehshah's accession to the throne. In between these he has treated profusely Haider Shah, Hassan Shah and Mohammad Shah - a span of Kashmir History covering nearly 29 years. In the colophon of his last canto he only says that "This canto has ended", but does not indicate that Zaina Tarangini, as a whole, has come to an end. This clearly establishes that he was also not destined to complete whole of the project. His untimely death must have intervened to leave it incomplete like his guru Jona Raja. He has captioned his "River of Kings" as Zaina Tarangini directly as well as at end of each canto, which proves beyond any doubt that his forte was to describe the reign of Budshah only in the first instance. Budshah's successors have been described only to preserve the continuity of the Sultan. At that time many compositions were named after the Sultan -N oth Soma composed "Zainacharita", Yodha Bhatta : "Zaina Prakash" and Bhatta Avtar : "Zaina Vilasa". Shrivara also took after the fashion of the time; hence instead of christening his chronicle as Raja Tarangini, he gave it the title "Zaina Tarangini". Shrivara while unfolding the events of reign of the Sultan clearly mentioned that he would describe the rule of the king along with his son - presumably Haji. Perhaps this insertion proves that towards the closing year of his reign Zainul-ab-Din had become

ineffective and the power was actually concentrated in the hands of his sons; so this historian could not afford to ignore the authority of the son while describing the reign of his father. Furthermore, Shrivara spares us the trouble of making unnecessary conjectures in this behalf by recording that the Sultan was so much scared of his other sons that he kept Haji always with himself, perhaps as a veritable shield for any surprise attack on him. His tactics were to play one brother against the other, so that he would himself remain unscathed and steer safe between the two. Shrivara has described the reign of Badshah in a more detailed manner than his predecessor Jona Raja. While Jona Raja has dispensed with the first 39 years of the rule of the Sultan in 267 verses, Shrivara has treated a far less span of years in 786 verses.

Two unforeseen natural calamities befell Kashmiris in those years. The first was the unprecedented rains in Chet i. e. March and April. Shrivara even says that dust did pour down from the sky which obstructed the prospects of rice-sowing with the result that food shortage loomed large before the denizens of this land of plenty. Perhaps to accentuate the conditions of famine snow fall was unexpectedly witnessed in the month of Maghar i.e. October. The crops already hit by unprecedented rains earlier, were engulfed by early snow. Whatever food could be salvaged from the fields was turned to dust before ripening. The cycle of famine was thus complete. Shrivara gives a vivid, yet pathetic, description of people tormented by hunger. The thieves breaking into houses at night left gold, silver and money untouched, but ransacked every utensil for laying hands on food. The people were forced to eat vegetables, roots and fruits. When these got exhausted the people did not spare the leaves of the trees, more especially the "Bandhujiva" (sustainer of the kind literally, actually the name of the sun-flower plant). One 'khari' of paddy which used to sell at three hundred dinars was now available at fifteen hundred dinars and that also with much difficulty.

The Sultan rose upto this misfortune without losing his nerve. He devised many means to ameliorate the sufferings of his people. He purchased paddy at a very high cost, even imported it and gave it to people at subsidised rates. The black marketeer were brought to book and artificial scarcity created by these was reduced to a large extent. He also opened free 'langars' for the most poor section of his people. To crown all, he opened avenues of work for people, so that they could earn wages and thus keep wolf out of the door. Earth-work camps were installed; edible oil was got extracted from the walnuts and other kinds of greases from the pines and other forest trees. Above all he enforced moratorium on debts - the agencies of lending and borrowing were abolished.

Zainul-ab-Din had also to contend with the runaway habits of his son Adam Khan who even tried to snatch the throne from the Sultan. Consequently the King had to bring him to bay at Pallashila, near Shopian where a fierce fight took place between the father and the son. Adam Khan was repentant, hence his life was spared by the orders of the Sultan. Conspiracies and counter-conspiracies in his court were as much responsible for this rebellious character of Adam Khan. The Sultan returned to his capital and erected a pyramid of the skulls of Adam Khan's soldiers, put to sword in his war. This was the reason why the Sultan annointed Haji Khan as the heir-apparent. Adam Khan went into self-exile. On the heels of the earlier flood and consequent famine in the thirty sixth year of the reign of the Sultan, i.e. in 1460 A.D., orily after two years, this scourage repeated itself. Another bolt from the blue made the conditions in Kashmir far more worse. All the rivers, namely Vitasta, Ladri, Veshav, Sindh and Kuta Kol were in spate due to torrential rains and vied witheach other in recording the highest water-level. The king, in order to see for himself the ravage wrought by this flood, toured the districts submerged under water in a boat. He felt grieved to see the paddy under water, foreboding shortage of cereals. At last the swaying waves found respite at Sonawari. Persian historians have not described this second flood at all. Since Shrivara's evidence is of contemporary importance, hence his testimony to this effect cannot be discredited. Fireworks were also introduced in Kashmir in the reign of Budshah. Shrivara has profusely described the different varieties of these made by Kashmiri artisans, e. g. the arrows, the discs, the sheets, the tubes tied with string and waved in the air, the petal-shedding flowers, the wavy-serpents etc. The mastermind behind all these inventions was one "Habib". Salt-petre and sulphur were also harnessed into making guns and cannons. For the first time in the history of Kashmir such missiles were invented and used.

Shrivara even gives the date of this marvellous invention, which is 1465 A. D. He further says that it was called "Top" in Muslim language and "Kanda" in popular dialect. The Sultan had also maintained a river-army, more or less a navy in miniature. This wing of the arm was provided boats for the mobility of soldiers, on water ways where the floats would take place, Shrivara has penned down that one "Deva" by name was the chief of this force.

The Sultan was also very receptive to fine arts. He was not only a gifted singer (vocalist as well as instrumentalist) himself, but also showered limitless bounties on talented singers. The musical instrument "Rabab" is actually indigenous. Out of ignorance some Persian historians have asserted that it was imported here from Iran. Shrivara's contemporary evidence in this behalf cannot be contradicted. He says "The invention of this musical instrument Rabab Behlol and other Vocalists were munificently rewarded by the King."

The Sultan was torn with grief towards the closing years of his life. The sole cause for his dismay, which eventually broke his health was the feud between his sons. His eldest son Adam Khan did not refrain from waging war against his father. The King died with a broken heart on Friday, the twelfth of Jeth, in the year 1527 Bikrimi (1470 A. D.), having ruled for fifty-two years. In the words of Shrivara - "On that day the houses were devoid of smoke, as no cooking was done in the city. The people became life-less and speechless with grief on being bereaved of their master."

He was laid to rest in his ancestral graveyard (Mazari-Salatin) near the grave of his father Sikandar. A gravestone glittering like transparent crystal was erected there with an epitaph inscribed on it. However this stone is missing at present in the Mazari-Salatin. If it were discovered, the exact date of the Sultan's demise could be found out without any brain-racking whatsoever.

In view of the strife amongst his sons, his advisers had suggested to the Sultan that he should name his heir - apparent in his life time. Adam Khan had already revolted against his father and was living at Jammu with his maternal uncle. The youngest Behram was not also looked upon kindly by his father, the Sultan. Even though he (the Sultan) had a soft corner for Haji Khan, the second son, yet he refrained from nominating him as his successor. He simply said, "I will not confer my kingdom on any one of my sons during my life-time. He, who is strongest amongst them all, will definitely get the throne after I am no more."

So, when Budshah breathed his last, Haji Khan his second son ascended the throne on the first day of dark fortnight of Jetha in 1470 A.D., but was destined to reign only for one year and ten months. Adam Khan the eldest was in self-exile and the youngest Behram Khan was paid the price of 'Nagam-jager' for renouncing his claim to the throne. Moreover, the Kuchhais, a local clan were in favour of Haji Khan. All these causes contributed to his coming to power. He assumed the name of Haider Shah as sultan and issued his royal-seal under this very name. He was anointed as the king, by the Royal Treasurer, Hassan Kuchbai with due religious formalities. Herein it may be said without any fear of contradiction that Sultan Haider Shah ordered the performance of age-old Hindu rites of "Raja-Tilak" along with the Muslim ceremonies pertinent to the assumption of kingship. On that auspicious day whole of "Sikandar - puri" (present Newshehra), near Srinagar was profusely illuminated.

His first act as the Sultan was to confer the Jagir of Nagam "of fertile soil" upon his younger brother Behram Khan. He also gave away Ikshika (Pachhagom near Damodar udar) and Kamraz to his son Hassan and proclaimed him as his heir-apparent. The rulers of Rajori and Indus (Sindhu) who had come to take part in his coronation were honoured by the Sultan.

An extraordinary event during his reign has besmeared the reputation of tolerance built brick by brick by his father Budshah. The Sultan was actually a nincompoop and given to licentious addiction to wine and women. One barber, a neo-convert "Purna" by name earned his confidence and also acted as his pimp and tout. This barber lost his head by the unbelievable protection he received from the Sultan, for

reasons obvious, and began to unleash a reign of terror on the people, especially the Hindus. The limbs of offenders were got amputated on a light excuse. Being suffocated by such tyranny the Hindus gave expression to their pent-up feelings by damaging the "Khanqah" of the Sayid. The Muslim subjects of the Sultan being exasperated by this sacrilege prompted him to teach a lesson to the Hindu subjects by inflicting most inhuman atrocities on them. In this context Shrivara has recorded: "The Sultan, torn to the quicks by this, got the hands and noses of many Hindus amputated. He even ordered the demolition of the idol at the Bahu-Khatkeshwara, the presiding Bhairva of the City."

Intensity of such atrocities compelled many Hindus to forsake their own faith and dress, and declare that they were not Bhattas. In this connection it may be safely asserted that 'Nabatu', the colloquial phrase in Kashmiri even current today, denoting total annihilation of Bhattas has its origin in 'Na Bhatta Aham' (I am not a Bhatta). This is the second 'Nabatu' in the series on records, the first being in the reign of Sikandar. Adam Khan, the eldest son of Budshah and virtually having an undisputed title to the throne, thought this time most propitious to invade Kashmir and snatch away kingship from his brother Haider Khan. He was not far from wrong in choosing this time for his attack. The king was oblivious to his duties and a sizable portion of his subjects was disgruntled. About the law and order situation prevailing at that time in Kashmir, Shrivara has remarked- "The thieves, the jackals, the cruel, the adulterers, the criminals and the deceitful roamed about during the day even." Adam Khan wanted to invade Kashmir through Poonch. In the meanwhile the Sultan smelling the perfidy and collaboration of Hassan Kuchhi (who had anointed him as the Sultan) with Adam Khan, got him assassinated. On hearing this Adam Khan retreated to Jammu. But he was not destined to live long. While fighting on the side of Manikya Deva of Jammu, his maternal uncle, against the Moguls, Adam Khan was killed. Haider Khan got his dead body to Srinagar and he was buried beside his mother at Suhyar, on the bank of Jhelum between Ali Kadal and Nawa Kadal.

The Sultan had become so weak-minded and suspicious that he did not accord befitting reception even to his son Hassan returning from his victorious military expedition outside Kashmir. His Nero-like disposition has been graphically delineated by Shrivara when the Lakshimpur, a town founded by Shahabud Din (at the foot of Hari Parbat), was in flames and the five annexes of his own residence (as the prince) were burning the Sultan ascended the roof of his palace and felt so much jubilant (on seeing the ravages of fire) that he began to indulge in drinking there and then." While attending a drinking party in his lotus-palace, his foot slipped on the marble floor. He fell down and his nose began to bleed profusely. He swooned into a coma from which he never recovered afterwards. He breathed his last in the month of Baisakh on Basant Panchmi in 1472 A.D. At that time the Royal power was swinging between his uncle Behram Khan and the prince Hassan, like a person of suspicious disposition not knowing on whom to depend."

Shrivara has clearly indicated that a knotty problem of succession to Haidar Shah confronted the courtiers when the Sultan died. One Ahmed Yatu (whom Shrivara calls as "Ayukta" or the Commissar), after having consultations with the nobles offered the crown to Behram Khan, the youngest son of Budshah on one condition that he would declare Prince Hassan as his heir-apparent. He did not agree to this. Ahmed Yatu, with the consent of the ministers, thought it more expedient to confer sultanate on inexperienced Hassan than on turbulent and haughty Behram. The learned historians of this period, Dr. Parmu, Dr. Mohibul Hassan, Dr. Kapur have applied the axe there and have erroneously inferred that Prince Hassan got the throne without any murmur from Behram Khan. The actual facts are that Behram Khan did collect the forces loyal to him when the negotiations with Ahmed Yatu broke down. Skirmishes did take place, but the royal guards under the command of Abhimanyu thwarted the plans of Behram Khan. Moreover, Shrivara has recorded unambiguously that when Prince Hassan was informed that the city was cleared off of the enemies and he himself was safe and secure, he ordered the coffin of his father to be taken to the ancestral grave-yard. About Hassan's contender for power (Behram Khan) Shrivara goes on to say, "On hearing about the exploits of his nephew (Prince Hassan) and the very low morale of his own forces, Behram Khan left Kashmir along with his son." The chronicler has implicitly narrated that Behram Khan wanted to usurp the throne through force, but Prince Hassan with his bravery over-whelmed his

(Behram's) army which ultimately got depressed. No other course was left to Behram but to flee the country of his birth like his eldest brother Adam. He took his son with, so that he would escape the usual reprisal. If we care to read between the lines about the mention of burial of Haider Khan by Shrivara, the natural inference would be that the burial was delayed because of the uncertain conditions in the city. There must have been street fights between the adherents of Behram and admirers of Hassan. That is also the reason that the Prince had to postpone his coronation by sixteen days. The culmination of this internecine feud we find later, at the very outset of Hassan Shah's rule. Only when calm was restored in the city and it was declared safe for the royal cortege to move to the ancestral burial-ground, Prince Hassan accompanied the coffin of his father to the grave-yard and laid to rest his father Haider Shah towards the feet of his parent Budshah at Mazari Salatin. Everybody present at the funeral threw a handful of earth over his grave. When it got filled up with earth a grave stone higher in the middle was raised on it with the epitaph that "the Sultan was relentless in war." With all his defects, as enumerated earlier, Haider Shah was a great lover of music and fine arts. He composed poetry in Persian and also in the "Language of Hindustan" i.e. (doubtlessly) Hindi. He was also very adept in flute - playing and was considered a past-master in this art. The rabab - players like Bahlol and others were generously rewarded by him. The disciple of Khwaja Abdul Qadir Mulla Daud taught him to play on Veena.

Before concluding we may refer to some points on general information as narrated by Shrivara. Due to excessive use of liquor here in Kashmir, or the decline in the growth of grapes, wine was extracted from suger-beet for the first time here. This "Fairy land of Grapes", so dear to Kalhana and Bilhana, had now declared its bankruptcy in producing this sweet luscious fruit any more.

Shrivara also for the first time gives the synonym of Vitasta as Jhelum. Till his time we nowhere find this notice of Jhelum in Sanskrit chronicles.

The Sultan though a chronic addict would sometimes pass off nights in vigil listening to the Puranas and other scriptures (of Hindus) laying down the guidelines for salvation. He felt very much impressed by these. Perhaps this was the sole reason which prompted the Sultan to entrust his son, Prince Hassan to Shrivara for his all round upbringing. Shrivara would narrate the tales from Brhat Katha to him. Shrivara has for the first time made mention of the Dal Lake, which name persists even today. Prior to him this lake was known by the name of "Sureshwari Sara." He also refers to the floating gardens on its surface and the twin 'lankas' (islands) of 'Ropa' and 'Sona' there. He writes "spread over twelve miles this Dal Lake has for its constant companion the Hari Parvat which in the hope of reaping virtuous reward always drenches itself with its holy water - (is reflected in its water always). According to Shrivara the bank of Dal Lake was a hub of cultural and social life of Kashmiris at that time. There, on its bank, were the places of pilgrimage, monasteries, palaces, hostels for students and the penance-groves so more sanctified than Varanasi." Likewise he has used the epithet "Ullol" for "Mahapadmasar" - the name of the Wular Lake then. One glaring fact comes to surface while going through the reigns of Budshah and his son Haider Shah: that is the ascendancy of Sayeds. In a sense this clan, which got power firstly through the magnetic personalities of Syed Ali Hamdani and his son Syed Mohammed and also through matrimonial alliances with the reigning kings, can be safely called non-Kashmiri. They are supposed to be the direct descendants of Prophet Mohammed. Budshah offered his daughter to Syed Nissar and made him the governor of one of the provinces, probably Beerwah, as it is known now. Budshah had even himself married Bodha Khatoon, a Sayed. He also got a Sayed spouse for his son Prince Haibat. Sultan Haider Shah married his son Hassan to a Sayed girl, daughter of Miyan Hassan. In this way, the three Sultans - Budshah, Haidershah and Hassan Shah, the grandfather the father and the son, had Sayed queens. Therefore, the Sayeds had ample opportunities to come to power over and above the heads of the local factions of Maliks, Magreys, Kuchhais and Yatus. The 'History of Sultans' heretofore is actually a continuous strife between these clans to capture power. At times the helpless Sultan had to surrender to the chief of the victorious faction and appoint him as his Prime Minister.

The Sayeds, commanding respect in the 'harem' got intoxicated by the power they enjoyed with the Sultans and did not behave well and had to be exiled from Kashmir many a time.

13.0 THE SERPENTINE VITASTA

From times immemorial rivers in India have been treated as sacred.

After the Aryan occupation of the North when towns and cities began to be built on the banks of rivers, their utility could not be over looked. Hence by way of gratitude the rivers were deified and varied mythological background was woven around these to justify their deification. It was believed that the violent form of rivers in the shape of floods etc could be averted by propitiation; Hence their being elevated to godly position can be easily understood. Whatever the religious importance of these rivers, it cannot be gainsaid that the economic gains the people derive from these rivers are immense. The Nature worship as extolled in the Vedas is the patent manifestation of the gratitude the Aryans owe to her salutary aspect which provided them peace and comfort in every sense of the world. Hence in the Rgveda the Rsis have all praise for the rivers.

In this Sukta direct reference to Vitasta has been made along with her prominent rivers of North India. Even in the Mahabharata this river has received mention and its sanctity even in those times attested. These references go a long way in proving that this river of Kashmir was very well known in India and it was held in great respect being a Tirtha of repute.

Nilamatapurana deals profusely with the ancient geographical History of Kashmir. This river has also been called the "Nilja" the daughter of NilaNaga which establishes its link directly with Nilanaga the son of Kashyapa who drained out the water from the "Satisar" and the land thus reclaimed was named "Kashmir," and then handing over the authority to his son, the Rsi set out for pennance.

Kalhana also corroborates this account. However, when the valley had become waterless the need for water for maintaining life was felt all the more, and in an allegorical manner the birth of Vitasta has been described in the Nilamata. The contact with pisacas had made the inhabitants of the valley unclean, hence to purify them Kashyapa requested Lord Siva to prevail upon his consort "parvati" to manifest herself in the form of a river. The Goddess asked her lord to make an opening through which she could come to surface after assuming the form of a river. Thereupon Lord Siva struck the ground near the abode of Nilanaga with his trident which measured one "Vitasti" and through this fissure the goddess parvati gushed forth in the form of Vitasta. The name Vitasta was given to her (this river) by Lord Siva himself. Lord Siva made a fissure measuring a Vitasti and brought forth this holy river out of the underworld. However, Kalhana describes clearly that this "Nila Kunda" was circular in shape which acted as a "Royal Parasol" for the King Nila. Different names given to this river are Nilija, Nilakunda, and Vitasta, whereas last is more famous and current from the earliest times as shown earlier:

< verses >

The shape of this "Kunda" is now octagonal perhaps due to the renovations made in it by later Kings especially the Moghuls. No less than sixty rivers of Kashmir and Madra have been referred to in the Nilamata. But amongst them Vitasta wields the highest importance and respect which can be testified by an account in the Nitamata that this river twice disappeared and only consented, to flow permanently when given the company of other goddesses i.e. Ganga in the form of Sindhu in Kashmir, Godavari in the form of "Gudar" and Vishoka in the form of Lakshmi. This very river Veshav has been described as having come from the mousehole which at present forms the waterfall of "Aharbal" famous throughout the world.

This legend of manifesting and then disappearing perhaps alludes to more than one source of Vitasta. On second appearance it began to flow from the Naga of "Panchahasta" modern Panzeth in the Divsar Tehsil of Anantnag district. The third appearance took place from "Narasinhashrama". Even in the

"Vitastamahatmya" does also mention its second source at "Vitastatra" the present "Vethavotur" situated some two miles below from Verinag to the north-west.

Next to Nilamata in antiquity and credence is the Kavya of thirty two cantos "Haracaritacintamani" by poet Jayadratha Rajanaka brother of Saivacaraya Jayaratha, who composed the saiva-treatise named a "Tantra Lokaviveka". This Kavya of Jayadratha gives a vivid description of pilgrimages of Kashmir and also reproduces faithfully from "Nilamata" of course, the origin of Vitasta-how it earned such a name. It has been owned by Kalhana himself that he had Nilamata before him when he undertook to pen down his chronicle of Kashmir kings. Therefore he follows faithfully the account regarding the origin and the name of Vitasta as given in Nilamata:

< verses >

"This Kashmir is protected by the king of all Nagas Nila, whose Royal Umbrella represents the circular spring (Nila Kunda) with Vitasta oozing forth from it as its handle." However, he is silent about other sources of this river after its disappearance twice. This fact conclusively establishes that in his time only Nilanaga was taken as the source of Vitasta.

The texts eulogising the places of pilgrimages in Kashmir or even outside are called Mahatmyas. Naturally such a sacred river as Vitasta should have a Mahatmya. In this respect, only two Mahatmyas in extant form are available in the Kashmir Govt Research Library.

There might be other Mahatmyas on this subject; if so, they are confined to the personal libraries of the pandits. Unfortunately these two Mahatmyas are not historically dependable in as much as their antiquity and contents are disputable. The text in both with minor difference claims to narrate the Tirthas along the course of the Vitasta. At the very outset the Mahatmyas locate the source of the river as Verinaga instead of Nila Naga the established source by tradition and fully described in Nilamata and Raja Tarangini. The author has given the name of the village Veri Naga in which this spring is situated. In course of time this spring did come to be known as Verinaga but it is of comparatively recent origin. It is totally unknown in Nilamata and RajaTarangini and Haracaritacintamani, the oldest texts. First reference to this epithet "Vera" is found in Moghul times.

So these Mahatmya's can roughly belong to the sixteenth or seventeenth century A.D. This is corroborated by the fact that the name Saradapur or Shadipur occurs in it at the confluence of Vitasta and Sindhu.

On the authority of Jona Raja we know that this name was given to it by Sultan Shahabudin patently a corruption from "Shahabudin pura". The aim of the author seems to bring it in line with its present name "Shadipur". This pertains to the fourteenth century A.D. it is probable that the author being of recent origin had lost contact with the old tradition and pretended to write "Saradapur" etc only to announce his antiquity while he actually knew that it was called "Shadipur" in his time. Not only this, the name of the famous Moghul garden, "Shalimar" occurs in it, which was built by Empress Nur Jehan wife of Jahangir, Emperor of India (1605-1627). This conclusively proves that the author belongs to seventeenth century A.D. However, in spite of their comparatively recent origin, the Mahatmyas do display a thorough familiarity with the older texts and the current tradition prevailing in their time.

Both these Mahatmyas narrate at length the origin and source of this river on the lines given in the Nilamata. It has also furnished us with a lengthy list of Tirthas located on its right and left banks. So it becomes lucidly clear that "Nilanaga" is acknowledged to be the source of Vitasta by Nilamata, Haracarita Cintamani, RajaTarangini and the Mahatmyas. We have no justification in rejecting this most ancient evidence.

However, there is one more marshy lake some three miles south of Yusmarg a tourist spot, known as Nilanaga nowadays. This is probably the source of Duda Ganga ancient Dugdha Ganga or 'Ksirasindhu.' Nilamata refers to it as 'Ksiranadi' and the Mahatmyas as Sveta Ganga. This lake seems to be fed by snow and small rivulets coming down from Pir Panchal range. It is not definitely a Naga or a spring - a perennial waterbasin, but an inundatory receptacle. It has not enjoyed any significant sanctity, so the Mahatmyas are silent about it. Abul-Fazal being taken in by the similarity of the names has ascribed all the legends to this lake instead of Verinag. This confusion on his part has to a large extent influenced the ancient tradition. Even though in Nilamata itself two Nilanagas are mentioned, but by no stretch of imagination, the Vitasta can be taken as flowing from it. The route of the Vitasta is quite different and the waters from this lake meet it just below Srinagar. Till then there is no contact between the two. The present Shahabad in Anantnag district was known as 'Vera' in the ancient times. Abu-1-Fazal also records this very name for this Pargana. " Hence it is no surprise that the spring Nilanaga came to be known as the 'spring' of vera or Verinaga also. The name of the village came to be associated with this spring and it could be located easily thus. Such Nagas-springs which have the name of the village or the locality in which they are situated prefixed or suffixed with them are legion in Kashmir. Abu-1-Fazal testifying to its sanctity has recorded that many temples of stone were erected near it. However, these massive temples of stone are not there now, but a small Shivalaya exists still there. These stones must have been used for renovation and enclosing the spring by later kings. This fact can be easily discerned even now. Moreover, a hamlet in the close vicinity of this spring is still known as Verinag even now. It has been explicitly mentioned in Nilamata (762-66) that Vitastotsava or the birthday of Vitasta falls on the 13th of bright half of Bhadrpada or Bhadoon, known in Kashmir as 'Vyetha truvah." On this auspicious day offerings of scents, garlands, and eatables are to be made into the river itself. In Kashmir the Vitasta is called " Vyetha" today.

It can easily be surmised that the small stream coming out of Nila Naga or Nila Kunda could assume the form of a big river only when being fed by other streams coming in its way. So a number of streams or rivulets join it close to Anantnag and the actual Vitsasta begins to take shape. The present " Bringi " stream called "Bhrngi" in ancient times is the first to join its waters. From the northeast " Arpath " stream mentioned in Nilamata as Harsapatha, and from the west waters issuing from springs of Achabal (ancient Aksavala) meet the waters of Vitasta at Khanbal. From the north ancient Ledari (modern Lida) also rushes down with its voluminous waters to join this confluence and the Vitasta flows down majestically to Srinagar in all her glory.

From Khanbal the river becomes navigable and in ancient times this was the only dependable and profitable means of transport to and from Srinagar, and so, many important towns Tirthas and capitals came to be built on its bank. Down below Khanbal on the right bank of the Vitasta is situated the ancient Tirtha of " Vijyeshvara " modern " Vejbror. " Kalhana says that this Tirtha was built by king Ashoka (Raja I, 105). About 3 miles down below Khanbal the Vitasta is joined by 'Veshiva' (Visoka) and Rembyar rivers and this junction known as " Sangam " at present was in olden times called " Gambhira Sangani." "Gambhira " can literally mean " deep, " since three big rivers meet at this Sangam, hence it was called "Deep" (Gambhira). Dr. Stein contends that the " Gambhira " river as mentioned at different places in Raja Tarangini is the short united course of " Vesav " and Rembyar before it meets the Vitasta but no such name occurs in Nilamata in the description of rivers. In course of time the prefix " Gambhira " has dropped and only " Sangam" has remained upto date. No ruins whatsoever of the old Tirtha are seen above ground these days. If excavations are taken up we might unearth the temples built at this site by the Guru " Mihirdatta " of king Candrapida (A.D. 686-695).

Some miles below " Sangam " the Vitasta with its replenished waters flows close to the old city of Avantipur founded by king Avantivarman (A.D. 855-883). Ruins of two temples built of stone are seen there now. The Srinagar - Jammu National Highway passes very close to these. This town was very famous even after the death of its founder and finds mention in many chronicles including Raja Tarangini. In the time of Avanti Varman the Vitasta was dredged by one Suyya and its course regulated. The scare of floods and famines looming large in the horizon every year was averted. The price of one

Khari of paddy would shoot upto ten hundred and fifty Dinaras. After these dredging operations were completed, that very Khari would sell at 36 Dinaras only.

At a distance of five to six miles below on the " Udar " itself was located the city founded after the name of Lalitaditya. Muktapida known as "Lyetpor " today. Since this, town was built in the absence of the King by his architect, so he did not take kindly to it. At present no ruins of the old city are seen above ground ; only lovely saffron-fields standing on these Udars greet our eyes. While coming down from these " Udars " we see the Vitasta touch the fringe of " Padampur " called " Pampur " now-a-days. This township was built by Padma brother of Jaya Devi a concubine of Lalita Pida (A. D. 900) and a temple of Visnu was also erected there. At this place the Vitasta takes a slight curve towards the right just to be quite close to Puranadhisthana (Kashmiri Pandrethan) the old capital of Kashmir built by Praversena. At this place the Buddhists and in turn Vaishnavas and Saivas constructed their places of worship, the remains of which lie scattered all over.

Down below by three miles or less, Vitasta is joined by Mahasarit (Kashmiri Mar, Tsunt Kol). In reality it is a canal diverted from " Dal " lake, Skt (Dala), so that its superfluous water joins the Vitasta. The level of the lake is higher than the Vitasta and a water- gate has been built at the head of the canal to regulate the level of its water. It seems that in those times also, some such system of regulating its flow did exist Kalhana explicitly mentions that Praversena II built the dyke (Setu) around the Mahasarit and in an allegorical way adds that the "Rakhsa's-knee" was used to part the waters. The part of city which falls in this locality is called Suthu even to-day. Moreover, it can be inferred easily that the back waters (Mar in Kashmiri) extended upto " Khodabal " (Ksurikabala) as used by "Kalhana". In this virtual island was the temple of Maksika Swamin known as " Mysum " nowadays. The confluence of Mahasrit (Tsunta-Kol) with the Vitasta was known as a Tirtha since very old times. Bilhana in his Vikramankadeva Caritam (xviii, 28) says that the temple of Siva called Ksemagaurivara was built at this confluence by king Ksemagupta, (A. D. 950-958). Mankha refers to it in his 'Srikanthacaritam' as "maha sarid vitstyo sangam." While Srivara in his Zaina Tarangini gives it more recent name "maari sangam". Evidently this maari is the modern maar which was a useful means of internal transport and extended up to " Narvor " (Skt Nadavana) before passing into the marshes of the " Anchar Lake. "

One fact comes out prominently while following the course of the Vitasta from Khanbal to the city proper, that all the important towns and Tirthas have been built on the right bank of the river and, the left bank has been ignored completely. There is a cogent reason for this, in as much as, on the right bank elevated 'udars' made these townships and Tirths flood-proof, while on the left bank the river has eaten into not very high and solid embankments and thus marshes have been formed. Such land could never be depended upon for construction purposes. This fact can be witnessed even to-day. Just before meeting Mahasarit, Vitasta enters into the precincts of the city; perhaps the temple of Shurahyar at the foot of Gopadari (Takhti Suliaman, Shankara carya hill) joined the gateway to Pravarapur (Srinagar). The dykes on both sides of the river are built on solid foundations and also at a considerable height, so that a flight of steps commonly made of stone have been carved out of these for reaching the river itself. The approaches to the river are called " Ghats " and have served from a long time as the temporary bazars or "Mandis" for vegetables, fuel and other necessities of life when the river transport was in vogue. Even to-day the food rationing Depots run by the Government are installed at these ghats and the barges carrying heavy loads of rice, flour, and even sugar are anchored there. The city of Srinagar is also located on the two banks of this river at present linked by many permanent bridges. However, in olded times particularly during the Hindu Rule permanent bridges were not built for fear of invasion or of fire. Kalhana refers to at least two bridges which were built by joining big barges. He also asserts that it was Praversena II who introduced this art of boat bridges and got massive bridges of boats built at his new capital Pravara pura." The making of bridges with boats was as much important from defence point of, view as from that of fighting outbreak of fire. These boats could be disengaged at a very short notice and the advancing army of the enemy could not cross over to the capital, or the blazing fire could not spread so easily.

Just a hundred yards or so below the Marivitas-tasangama to the left, the Vitasta is diverted into a smaller river called occasionally Ksipt Kulya modern (Kuttokol). This means the rivulet (Kulya) having been taken out of Vitasta (Ksipta). 'Kut' In Kashmiri, means inferior or artificial; since this stream was not natural hence earned the name Kuta. This branch again meets its source the Vitasta beyond the seventh bridge. Just on this diversion stood the old Palaces of Dogra rulers which have since been takenover by the state Government and are used as offices known is old Secretariat. On the left bank of the river in front of these old Palaces over-looking the Mahasarita-Vitasta Sangama is a Vaishbna temple called Gadadhara temple now-adays, supposedly built by Dogra rulers. No reference to this is found in any of the chronicles on Kashmir. On this tract of land girdled by Vitasta on one side and Ksiptika on the other, a virtual island, presumably stood the Royal palaces in olden times. This island was called by the name Kasthila; (Modern Kathul). This inference is strengthened by a passage in Raja Tarangini which shows that king Ananta (A. D. 1028-63) transferred his Royal residence to the vicinity of the temple of Sada Siva to left bank of the river. Since imposing and massive structures of wood were used for making a palace, so this locality came to be known as Kasthila (derived from kashth wood). "The evidence of buildings made of wood in Srinagar is corroborated by the huge conflagrations which overtook Srinagar frequently and at times the intensity of the fire was so great that it crossed to the other side of river also, and set it to flames". Easily combustible materials as wood and birch bark used for roofing could only workout such havoc. There is a Siva temple in this locality also presently known as Kathalisvara; Sada Siva temple as alluded to above may be this. Dr. Stein has tried to identify this with modern " Purushyar " just below Kutkol. However the shrine of Siva built there on the Ghat is of recent origin and built by public munificence, whereas the temple at Kathul does bear patent marks of antiquity. Moreover, Kalhana writes that this shrine of Sada Siva was in front of Soma Tirtha on the right bank of Vitasta. This Soma Tirtha is definitely the present Kashmiri " Somyar " shrine just close to the second bridge. Both the shrines on the left bank viz Kathlesvara and Purusyar can claim this privilege though not exactly in front but a bit removed from right downstream and upstream respectively. The elevation of Kathul or the Zaindar Mohalla as it is called now, is also comparatively higher than the rest of the city; perhaps it shows that this island between Ksiptika (Kutkol) and Vitasta was intentionally raised to protect the Royal palaces from the ravaging waters of these rivers when in fury, as also furnishing it with a vantage position when attacked.

After this, the Vitasta flows at a much slower pace upto the weir where a lock has been built to control the level of water in the city. Many more Tirthas been located on its banks, but no reference can be found for these, nor any ruins sighted. However, between the 6th and 7th bridge just near the weir to the right Queen Didda (A.D. 980-1003) built the " Didda Matha" called presently "Dedmar" now-a-days. Srivara also refers to this part of the city frequently in his chronicle. "Just in front of the "Didda Math" on the left bank Ksiptika joins Vitasta again having parted with it earlier near the "Gadadhar temple ". However, before we follow the course of Vitasta beyond the weir, it will be pertinent to remove the misnomer that "baths" and hot-water baths were unknown in Kashmir before the Muslim rule. Kalhana has preserved for us copious references regarding "Snariagrhas", "Majjaanavasa" "Snanakosthas" etc in his chronicle. These may be translated as "river baths" and "bathing cells". Presumably the first two were used by male Population and the "Kosthas" individual cells were reserved for ladies. These were built of wood and could be shifted from one Ghat to another. At the time of the "great fire" even these were devoured by the raging flames. The corruption from "Snankoshta" as "Stankuth" is even used to-day in the same context. Ksemendra mentions such baths in his Samaya Matrika much before Kalhana. Just below the weir one glaring difference becomes patently visible. The right bank of Vitasta changes into marshes being very low and the left bank is considerably higher; within the city both these banks command the same height for understandable reasons as the city is situated on both of these. Some furlongs below from the left bank "Dudganga" joins the Vistata. At this confluence as at every Sangama a Tirtha is essentially located. Bilhana clearly alludes to it." The most renowned Sangama is however located some distance below towards the right when the Sindhu the greatest tributary of the Vitasta meets it at Prayaga.

The "Sinhdu" comes down from Gangabal lake and enters the Plain at Dugdhasrama - Kashmiri "Dodarhom." The name Uttara Manasa is the name given to this lake by the ancient chroniclers, Kalhana (Rajal-57), HaracaritaCintanmai (Iv-87) and Nilamata (610,970); Haramukuta Ganga Mahatyma also testifies to it. The valley of Sindhu is the modern district of Lar the old "Lahara". At Dodurhom all the various branches of this river meet and also form a veritable river which wending its way towards the west, it reaches the Vitasta quite opposite to the village Shadipur. The "Sindhu" can also mean an ordinary river in Skt, yet "Sindhu" in Kashmir has been equated with "Ganga" in its sanctity and importance. Nilamata, Haracarita Cintamani and Mahatmyas have repeatedly referred to it. Nilamata identifies the Vitasta with the Yamuna and the Sindhu with Ganga the two most famous and holiest rivers of India. Hence their confluence has also been called Prayaga (Nila-vv 297). It is held in great esteem and respect by the devouts since very ancient times. However, on the evidence of Kalhana we have to believe that the present position of Sangama is not so very ancient. This confluence was artificially engineered by "Suyya" while busy in dredging operations for desilting the Vitasta. This was done under the orders of king Avanti Varman (A.D. 855-883). He further says that at the former confluence the two temples of VishnuSvamin and VainyaSvamin were situated close to Phalapora and Parihasapura, Kashmiri (Paraspura), and the confluence which Suyya contrived near Sundaribhavana the temple of HrsihesaYogasvamin was erected as it was the deity of worship ishtdeva of Suyya.

On the authority of Kalhana himself we know that Parihasapur and Phalapura were the two cities founded by Lalitiditya Muktapida (A.D. 750); we have to assume for relying upon this evidence that the Vitasta at that time flowed near these two cities just below the Uddars on which these are situated and the Sindhu met it there, "The plateau situated with heaps of ruins of which few have been excavated. Barring Buddhist monuments there are purely Hindu structures also visible there." Pt. R.C. Kak has to say further, "crossing the ravine in which nestles the little village of Diwar Yakmanpura and ascending the plateau opposite are seen the immense ruins of two extraordinary large temples; one of them has a peristyle larger than that of the Martanda." This ravine may be the dry bed of the Vitasta now as it flowed then before its course was changed and harnessed by Suyya and the two temples alluded to above may be temples of VisnuSvamin and Vainaysvamin built on these heights. At present at this confluence a small Shivalaya is situated and in mid-stream some distance from the bank, a pedestal of stones is constructed on which a cinar trees has grown. Kalhana specifically mentions that the tree was Vata (fig) and not cinar. It may be concluded that the fig tree could not catch up with the climate of Kashmir and in course of time it withered and in its place the local tree of benign majesty cinar was transplanted in its place as figs are not grown at all in Kashmir. There is also a belief amongst the Hindus here that this cinar has remained stationary in size since it was planted. Some miles below the confluence, the village of Sumbal comes next. This village is now situated on both banks of the river joined by a bridge. However, in those times when the Vitasta was flowing towards the left, the ancient capital of Kashmir Jayapura is situated. The town was founded by king Jayapida in the second half of the eight century.

Somewhat below the present bridge to the left stands the shrine of Nandikesvara alluded to as Nandi Kesava. Close to it a channel from the river goes towards Manas (Saras) lake, now known as Manasbal. This lake is mentioned in Nilamata and Raja Tarangini by Jonaraja A short distance lower the vitasta glides its way through the Wular. This very big lake is named as Mahapadmasaras founded by Maha Padama Naga who is believed to dwell in it as its presiding deity. Nilamata and other older texts relate this fact at length. The name Wular given to this lake nowadays is obviously derived from "Ullola" occurring in Jonaraja's Rajatarangini. In Srikanthacaritam Mahapadama has been equated with "Ullola" by its commentator Jona Raja. Many myths and legends seem to have been woven around this lake in which it has been mentioned that this lake was a very thickly populated town named Candrapura, and through the curse of sage Durvasa was submerged under water.

Many other legends bring in the name of king Visvagvasva and a Dravidian magician. From the north via the town of Bandipura, Madhumati stream joins the lake. This stream is mentioned in Nilamata also for its sanctity. However, one thing remains patently clear that the Vitasta while passing through the lake

does not altogether lose its identity. Very cautiously it follows the rule of keeping to the left of the lake and a string of water is easily discernible in that vast expanse as that of the Vitasta.

After wading through the waters of the lake, the Vitasta regains her own original stature nearabout Suyyapur modern Sopore. This town now a very flourishing centre of fruit-growing is a standing monument to the engineering acumen, of Suyya who regulated the course of Vitasta in the time of Avanti Varman . This town was founded by the Annapati himself on the reclaimed land after desilting Vitasta. Three miles below Sopore the Vitasta is joined by "Pohur" stream from the right at Doabgah. This name does not appear either in Nilamata or Raja Tarangini when its two tributaries "Mavar" and "Hamli" are distinctly mentioned in Nilamata and Raja Taraiigini as Mahuri and Samala respectively; However jona Raja has referred to it as " Pahra".

Some miles downstream the Vitasta enters the Varahaksetra, and the principal town of this Ksetra is known as Varahamula, Baraniulla of to-day. The name is evidently derived from the ancient, Tirtha of VishnuAdiVaratia near the site of the present Kotitirtha very close to the river bank. This shrine was destroyed by Sikandar Butshikan to which Jona Raja refers explicitly. The town ably was located on the right bank of the river in those times. It has now spread over extensively to the left also eating into the Karewas adjacent to it. In those times a bridge also existed over the Vitasta for come and go from right to left and vice versa. This town also was important from strategic point of view; hence a "Drang" watch-tower was also constructed over there.

Even to-day where the Vitasta narrows down and flows over large boulders which is referred to as "Dvara" by Kalhana the name of the locality is persistently known as "Drang". However, to the left of the bank Turuska king "Huska" built his capital Huskapura, which has survived as "Ushkor" nowadays. It seems that "Huskpura" was more important than the "Varahamulla" in olden times. Kalhana refers to it frequently and kings other than the Indo-Scythian "Haska" also embellished it from time to time. Lalitaditya built a great temple of Vishnu and a Buddhist Vihara there. Ksemagupta spent his last days at the two maths he had founded at Huskapura.

Kaniska the famous Kushan ruler also founded a city "Kaniskapura" (Now Kanispura) to the left of Vitasta some furlongs above "Ushkhr". Understandably there was much space available for the extension of the city on the left bank rather than on right where it is closely girdled by hills; since the route to "Sarada" also lay through Varahamulla, this town was more of a stopover station than the actual city and consequently was founded on the right bank. Some distance above the gorge in which the Vitasta goes down and rises up again as a river by its own right in the west Pakistan under the name of Jhelum, "Indradvasi" festival used to be celebrated in ancient times. On this day presents and clothes were given away to the poor. This day is still observed in Kashmir under the same name "Inderbah" on the 12th of the bright half of Bhadrapada but with a difference. It used to be a day of festivities and gaiety, but now this day has been reserved for manes. Shrada is being performed there on the spot which is known as "Kanimaja" Kashmiri Kaniyasi- Mata in Sanskrit. The name as such does not occur in any ancient text even though Indradvasi is mentioned in the Nilamata. The place has been called as Varahaksetra in general.

The boons accruing from this river are so many that it can be called a veritable Mother; but at this place it becomes smaller in expanse and volume, so it may have been called a smaller Mother. It might be even derived from kan verb meaning to lessen or to reduce in size.

After emerging from the emerald hued spring of Nila at Verinaga, we have followed the course of the Vitasta from Khanbal to Khadanyar. This Khadanyar can be traced from Khadana Vihar built by one of the queens 'Khadana' of king Meghavahana. The Vitasta Mahatmya (xix, 60) refers to this locality as Khadanahara. This journey of eighty miles and odd of this zig-zag river conceals in its bosom the variegated cultural and religious values of the valley. These miles definitely represent the milestones stretching over thousands of years for recording its inflow and outflow; virtue and evil, rise and fall, joys

and sorrows of the Kashmiris at large. So it does not seem any exaggeration when Vaisampayana says to Janmejaya:

< verses >

"O king, whatever Tirthas exist on this globe are found there (in Kashmir)."

And to elucidate his point he adds:

< verses >

"There (in Kashmir) the springs, ponds and Mountains bestow virtue. There the rivers and streams are very sacred; their shrines are immensely sanctified and likewise the hermitages also. In the midst of which the great spring goddess Vitasta born actually of the Himalayas has sprung up dividing it (Kashmir) like the parting-line of a lady's hair."

14.0 INTUITIVE MYSTICISM OF MASTERJI

"He rejected the dross and assimilated the pure"

Mysticism is a continuous exercise in self-realization. It is an incessant mental drill in which the self and the super-self are fully identified. In Kashmir from the hoary times to the present day, this urge of the soul for becoming one with the super-soul has been always emphasized. Monistic Shaivism, as propounded in the 'Shiva Sutras' of Acharya Vasu Gupta, and later interpreted profusely by Abhinava Gupta, is the first milestone of the human spirit on its pilgrimage to self-consciousness in Kashmir. The Kashmiri version of Persian Sufism has also influenced the Kashmiri thought to a large extent. This veritable quest for self-education and self-discipline is therefore not at all foreign to the mental fiber of a Kashmiri. It is in his blood. Lalleshwari and Nund Rishi (14th Century AD) epitomized this mental trait in their Vakhs and also gave it the most homely and appropriate expression in Kashmiri, pure and simple. Till then either Sanskrit or Persian ruled the day in this field.



This torch of interrogation and consequent self-satisfaction, the hallmark of mysticism, was kept alive by- a host of Kashmiri thinkers like Parmananda, Rupa Bhavani, Gobind Kak, (Vanaph), Shamas Fakir, Ahmed Rah, Samadmir, Shah Ghafoor and others and its virgin heights were admirably scaled by these stalwarts.

In mysticism two distinct trends are discernible. The first, born of experience, is termed as 'revealed' and the second, attained by intellect, is named 'intuitive'. The goal of both these media is the same; firstly, locating clearly the frontiers between the immanence and transcendence, and finally, fusing these into each other. The acme of such intellectual pursuit is rising above the Finite and getting closer to the Infinite as speedily as possible, thereby minimizing the distance between the two. In Islamic Sufism also, similarly, two forms of mystic exaltation are noticed, abnormal and supernormal. Ibni Farid calls these respectively as intoxication and sobriety of union. It can therefore, be said safely that intuitive mysticism is a non-stop intellectual process and is more arduous than the revealed for reasons obvious.

In this context of mystic discipline, Masterji has earned by his own right a prominent place in the galaxy of such thinkers who churn their intellect incessantly and groom it to explain the ideal spurning the actual. This should not be treated as self-deceit—fleeing from the life in all its naked realities instead of facing it with courage and patience. Masterji did not forget life around him, he did not abjure life even though it was always bitter to him. He was a civil servant by profession but a Savant by nature. As long as he remained in -government service, he acquitted himself very well with undivided dedication to his profession. He drank at the fountain of life most voraciously. He wore his profession on his sleeves, so to say.

Perhaps, this acute sense of responsibility to his profession ignited the first spark of the mission he had to undertake in future. This formative period in his life ushered in the mental ferment which is so necessary for reaching the mystic plane. It is the moment of self-forgetfulness when the 'actual' with all the teeth is incapable to bite; the soul commences its flight to touch unknown horizons and the body has no meaning at this stage.

Masterji's life was no bed of roses. It had nothing palatable to offer to him, it only enabled him to keep the wolf from his door. He never lived in affluence. The cruel hand of death snatched away his dearest son; he had to fend for his widowed daughter-in-law and her children. He did not succumb under the weight of such calamities. He fought his life's problems in the most detached manner conquering these bit by bit, never losing hope. These came as a blessing in disguise and made a mystic of him, not out of spite for life, but for making it more meaningful.

Masterji was a profound scholar of Persian. He could not escape the influence and impact of great Persian mystics like Shams Tabrez, Maulana Rumi, Hafiz Shirazi and others. He had fully assimilated all that they had to say. The echo of Shams Tabrez's 'Man tu Shudam, tu Man Shudi' can be unmistakably understood from his verses also.

Masterji built his personality brick by brick. The foundation for this was provided by the Hindu mystic lore especially by the Kashmir Shaivism. Vedanta and the Upanishads also acted as the cementing link to make it more broad-based. Both are portrayed most eloquently in his 'Sumaran'. Masterji's intuitive mysticism is a happy blend of Hindu mystic thought and Islamic Sufism. He toiled hard to attain to that plane of self-consciousness where the material contours melt away before the effulgence of the 'spirit'. A hand-to-mouth living gave him the required tools for rising above it. Erudite scholarship in Persian and Sanskrit opened for him the vistas of mystic exuberance achieved by a host of his predecessors. Self-discipline in the case of the first and self-education in the case of the second, are in themselves a worthy preamble to self-dependence, and this in its turn paves the way to self-consciousness. Masterji's unambiguous attitude to mysticism is of synthesis in which intuition and intellect form the woof and the warp. The didactic content is, therefore, somewhat subdued in his poetry. He does not claim to be a preacher. He only unravels the conclusions that he has arrived at in life. He does not even analyze these but only clothes these in most pulsating words as they ooze forth. The intensity of feelings does not afford him even a breathing time to ruminate on what he has written or expressed. He goes on serializing his heart-beats most candidly. His approach is suggestive and not direct. His innate introspection rejects the dross and only assimilates the pure - the yard-stick for it being his unerring intellect. So 'Sumaran' is a codified version of his feelings and not a treatise on morality or ethics. His poetry is clear and more intelligible than that of Lalla or Nund Rishi, because his discriminating intellect has an edge over their on-rushing experiences by which they feel overwhelmed. Masterji is always sure of the ground under his feet.

Masterji was a conscious artist like Goswami Tulsidas who without mincing words beckons to us in undertones, by implication, to make this life a veritable bridge to the life-beyond. He makes a happy compromise between the self and the super-self, matter and spirit, enjoyment and renunciation, intellect and intuition. He does not leave us guessing. That is, perhaps his most substantial contribution to our unbroken heritage of mysticism.