

KALHANA  
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# KALHANA'S RAJATARANGINI

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Rajatarangini is a chronicle or history of kings of Kashmir written by Kalhana, a distinguished Kashmiri historian of the twelfth century AD. He was the son of Campaka, a minister of king Harsha (AD 1089-1101). He adorned the court of king Jayasimha (AD 1127-59), the son of Sussala II. It was during his reign that he composed his great work. According to all available evidences, he began his work in AD 1148 and completed it in 1150.

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His Rajatarangini became the most famous of all the ancient royal chronicles of Kashmir. Kalhana was gifted with all qualities of a true historian. He occupies the highest place among the ancient historians of India. With his appearance on the scene ancient Indian historiography took a new turn.

## SOURCES OF KALHANA

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Kalhana utilized the works of eleven chroniclers of Kashmir who preceded him as sources of his information for composing his work. The eleven chronicles (rajakathas) used by him include the oldest extensive original works containing the royal chronicles (of Kashmir) condensed or abridged by Suvrata in the form of a handbook of the history of Kashmir the Nrpavali or Rajavali (List of Kings) of Ksemendra (AD 1028-63), who graced the court of

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king Ananta Deva , the work (name not known) of Padmamihira containing the list of eight kings who preceded Ashoka , and the work (name unknown) of Srichavillakara (also called Sricchavillaka) containing the list of five princes from Ashoka to Abhimanyu out of fifty-two. In addition to the chronicles, he consulted also a Puranic record which is the Nila Purana of Nilamuni. From this source he obtained the list of four kings, viz.,

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Gonanda and his three successors. While acknowledging the aforesaid works Kalhana observes “I have examined eleven works of former scholars which contain the chronicles of the kings, as well as the Purana containing the views of the sage Nila”.

He critically examined the existing historical records on Kashmir before wielding his pen. In fact, he adopted a critical method of

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historical research. Of all the works utilized by him for his purpose only the said Purana is now available and the rest have passed into oblivion. We do not possess any information about the use of the earliest historical kavya, the Bhuvanabhyudaya of Sankula of Kashmir (C.AD 850), which describes the local battles, by him.

Kalhana made a through use of royal charters, edicts, records of

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land-grants, the contemporary documents, coins, inscriptions and other archaeological evidence, and with the help of these he corrected errors occurring in the earlier works. He has himself stated that by looking at the ordinances (sasana) of former kings, at the inscriptions recording the grants and erection and consecration of temples and other monuments, at the laudatory inscriptions (prasasti-patta), and the written records (sastras), all



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worries arising from errors have been overcome and doubts have been set at rest. Like a serious historian or researchers of today he used all the relevant sources available to him for composing a chronicle of Kashmir.

## PRINCIPLES OF HISTORICAL INVESTIGATION BY KALHANA

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The principles Kalhana followed for carrying out his historical investigation also merit our attention. His strict adherence to the exposition of facts can best be qualified in his own words: “That virtuous (writer) alone is worthy of praise who, free from love or hatred, restricts his language to the exposition of facts.” He tells us that the discovery of truth was his sole object. He discarded all bias and prejudice which is duty of a true historian. He laid stress

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on the fact that while writing a history of the past one has to pronounce his judgments like a judge. The mission of a historian, he says, is to “make vivid before one’s eyes pictures of a bygone age.” He further says about the methodological technique he adopted for writing the history of the past: “How great a cleverness is required in order that men of modern times may complete the account given in the books of those who died after

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composing each the history of those kings whose contemporary he was! Hence in this narrative of past events, which is difficult in many respects, my endeavour will be to connect”. He had, no doubt, clear understanding of fundamental principles of historiography. His impartiality, honesty and objectivity find reflection in the statement of facts recorded in his work.

( To be continued)