

Military castes of ancient Kashmir with special reference to *Rajatarangini* of Kalhana

Dr. Pooja Prashar

Dev Samaj College for Women, Ferozpur City, Punjab, India

Abstract

The *Rajatarangini* of Kalhana is a great source of the socio-cultural history of Kashmir. No history can be completed without knowing its socio-cultural aspects. The *Rajatarangini* of Kalhana is not merely a 'River of Kings', containing dry accounts of various dynasties, rulers and their activities in court or in the field of war, but it is a veritable encyclopaedia of information on the society and culture, the way of life, religious conditions, art and architecture and economic life of the period and so on. As such it becomes a significant source of information to be studied, analysed and interpreted. Through my research, I will specially focus on military castes depicted by Kalhana in his great book *Rajatarangini*. I will also try to find out the social status of this particular caste in the society of Kashmir. The deep study related to traditional Hindu caste system will also undertaken.

Keywords: Varna, Tantrins, Ekangas, Lavanyas, *Kshatriya*, *Damaras*

Introduction

The ancient Indian society has developed twofold coordinated system of social organization. On the one side the whole human life is divided into four stages namely *Ashramas* and on the other side the society is divided into four strata namely *varna*. Both the systems are concerned with the organization and management of the individual as well as society. Together these two systems of *varnas* and *Ashramas* are known as *Varnashrama Dharma*, the ancient social system that was meant to assure spiritual and material prosperity for both society and the individual.

The literal meaning of the term '*varna*' is colour. Originally, it has been used to refer the distinction between Arya and Dasa. Professor Ghurye says that in the *Rigveda* the word *varna* is never applied to any one of these classes. It is only the Aryan *varna* or the Arya people that is contrasted with the *Dasa varna*. The *Satapatha Brahmana* on the other hand described the four classes as the four *varnas*. The colour connotation of the word was strong that later when the classes came to be regular described as four *varnas*. Four different colours were supposed to be distinguished.'

The caste system is deep rooted in the long-drawn socio-economic, cultural and political history. It has brought about a deep and complete division in the Hindu society. Various explanations are given for the origin of the caste system in India^[1]. The origin is a sharp line between various layers of society. So, in place of "origin of caste"^[2] we should use plural form, viz., "origins of caste". It is said that all human beings are divided into four categories per their natural aptitudes and endowments. Some possess high spiritual and intellectual qualities, others fighting qualities, still others producing qualities, and accordingly, they are placed in various categories. The caste system is, therefore, based on natural and inherent attributes found in the mankind. It is therefore called a contribution of the Hindu genius and credited with ensuring continuity and durability to Hindu

society despite foreign onslaughts. But to think of natural qualities of human beings without taking account of the social and material environment in which they are born and nurtured would be going too far. Such a theory of the origin of the caste system obviously serves the interests of those who want to perpetuate this system. It sounds like the statement of Aristotle, per whom certain people are born to command and others born to obey; the first become masters and the second become slaves.

Per a second theory the caste system is based on notions of purity and impurity. The *Brahmanas* possess the purity of the first degree, the *Ksatriyas* of the second degree, and so on. The ritual ranking of the *varna* and *jatis* is based on their relative purity. The *Brahmanas*, partly out of their honest desire to preserve the purity of Vedic ritual, partly being the victims of their own ideas of ceremonial purity, and partly also owing to their consciousness of superiority over the aborigines^[3]. But the exponents of this theory do not realise that notions of purity and impurity found in primitive and ancient societies outside India did not give rise to the caste system. In the case of India also even working in leather was not regarded impure in Vedic times. In the Vedic age artisans including leatherworkers were parts of the tribal community called *visya*, but in post-Vedic times the emergent classes of priests and warriors not only discarded manual and artisanal labour but hated those who practiced it. In fact, the more they moved away from physical labour and primary production the more pure and noble they came to be regarded.

There is a third theory which explains the origin of caste as a legacy from the aboriginal tribal communities of India. Per it every tribe is divided into several clans and members of a clan marry within the tribe but outside the clan. When such a tribe is absorbed as a caste in the Brahmanical system it continues to marry within the tribe or caste and refuses to have social intercourse with other castes. There is no doubt that once the caste system was set up tribes were converted into castes, but

the earliest history of tribal amalgamations would show that tribes entered marriage relations with one another because of war and trade. Marriage served as a form of exchange of women between groups, and this exchange was considered necessary to keep life going. Insistence on marriage within the caste began because of the need of maintaining the privileges of the upper orders, which automatically barred the lower orders from having social intercourse with the upper castes and condemned them to marriage within their circles.

A fourth theory accounts for the origin of the caste system in terms of the division of labour. It is said that the need for occupational division leading to more production and economic efficiency gave rise to castes. There is some validity in this theory. But what is ignored is the hereditary aspect of the caste system. In Vedic times castes were occupational in nature, and change from one occupation to the other was possible. But over the centuries this change became impossible. What is further important, division of labour was effected in such a manner that *Brahmanas* or priests and *Ksatriyas* or warriors were withdrawn from direct production, which was placed in the hands of the *Vaisyas* and *Sudras*.

The origin and growth of the caste system can be better appreciated if we bear in mind that caste is a form of social differentiation. Since social differentiation arises out of social conflicts and unequal distribution of resources and produce, the origin and growth of the caste cannot be understood without a study of social processes which again are intimately connected with changes in material life^[4]. Of the many cultures flourished in India the literary records of the Indo-Aryan culture are not only the earliest but contain the first mention and a continuous history of the factors that make up caste^[5].

Of the many cultures that flourished in India the literary records of the Indo-Aryan culture are not only the earliest but contain the first mention and a continuous history of the factors that make up caste. In the *Rig Vedic* time, there was no place for individual enterprise. Whether for hunting or for animal keeping, for safety or for settlement the tribe had to work collectively. Hence distribution also was collective and equal. Since struggle for existence was hard and the food scarce, the goal was expansion of the tribe (*praja*) and of animals (*pashu*) for food^[6].

The one-caste society of the *Krta* age is the mythicised version of the tribal herd bound by ties of kingship and tribal discipline. Men were governed by tribal rules of hunting and war. Tribal wars were fought to extermination. In course of time human labour was replaced by animal labour. Cattle-produce and animal labour yielded a surplus of wealth. It was possible to feed and use men and women captured in tribal feuds. The animal was yoked to the plough and the captive alien harnessed behind. Like animal man became booty of plunder and an article of use. This is how slavery came, the two-caste society, social laws and fusion of tribal blood. When Aryan and non-Aryan tribes settled down and commingled, the tradition of uni-caste society gave way to the bi-caste society of *Deva* (gods) and *Asura* (demons) or the *Arya* and *Dasa* (master and slave). It was not the result of disintegration of the original *vis* but was produced by the impact of the hostile aboriginals who were admitted as slaves and wage-earners (*bhataka*) within the Aryan society. The masters and

the slaves became two castes or *varna* (colour). The white-skinned and the dark-skinned as they are labelled in the *Rigveda*.

Now the duties of society were divided and the *vis* itself was split into three parts. The main body, i.e., the *Vaisya* followed productive pursuits like agriculture, cattle rearing and trade. The surplus wealth went towards the maintenance of two new castes (*varnas*), the *Brahmana* and the *Kshatriya*, marked not by the colour of their skin but by their profession. The *Brahmana* performed sacrifices for general welfare, studied the Vedas and formulated social laws (*dharma*) based on custom and equity. The *Kshatriya* was charged with the defence of the realm and the running of the administration. The three *varna* specialized in their avocations and each was accorded a place in the social hierarchy suitable to the dignity of its service. Below the three was the fourth caste of *Sudra* or *Dasa* serving the former and no longer an alien race but a subordinate partner within the Aryan system. The *Purusasukta* of the *Rigveda* gives a mythical story of the origin of the four castes from the mouth, arms, thighs and feet of the Lord Brahma^[7].

In the beginning the vocations of the *varna* were not strictly hereditary. A *Kshatriya* could excel in philosophical pursuits and become a *Brahmana*. A well-known story in Vedic literature is that of *Visvamitra* who was born a *Kshatriya* but became a *Brahmana* by acquiring Brahmanical knowledge and virtues. The *Satapatha Brahmana* gives a similar story about Janaka, king of Videha^[8]. A *Brahmana* might acquire a kingdom by dint of his valour and become a *Kshatriya*. He became known as *Brahma Kshatriya*. In the *Matsya Purāna* the *Brahmanas* descended from the sage *Bhrigu* are described as founders of royal houses^[9]. The *Vaisya* and the *Sudra* could improve their status provided they possessed the necessary talents and virtues. Conversely, by choice or by accident, one might be demoted from a higher to a lower caste. The *Aitareya Brahmana* and the *Puranas* give instances of these two categories. Later, caste and vocation were strictly fixed by heredity per the laws of the *Smritis*. Social and economic divisions were identified and graded. The *Brahmana*, *Kshatriya*, *Vaisya* and *Sudra* were separated from and related to one another by a set of laws framed per a scheme of division and synthesis.

Rise of individual enterprise necessarily led to the institution of private property. Anyone could recover some wasteland, turn the virgin soil by means of slaves and bullocks and become owner of agricultural land. In industrial arts, the old collective enterprise still prevailed but the income was shared and not jointly owned. The trader made his fortune by exchanging the products of agriculture and industry. In the wake of caste and property came the state. The place of the *vis* was taken by the *rastra* (country); the *Vispati* (patriarch) became *Bhupati* (lord of the land). The *Kulapatis* (paterfamilias) who were sharers in the tribal common-wealth were replaced by *amatyas* (officers and councilors), paid men of the king. The state protected private property and took a part of private income as revenue (*bhaga*). It had no hand in social regulation and was only the guardian of the rules of duty (*Dharmasya gopta*).

The caste system was conceived with recognition of variations in human nature and as a plan to fit these variations in a

graded structure per the needs of society. This was a scheme of cooperation and synthesis to ensure progress. Given sufficient flexibility this was an excellent solution of the dichotomy of the individual and the community.

The law gives sought to give caste system an inflexible rigidity. The codes of Gautama, Baudhayana and Apastamba followed by later canon fixed the *Varna* irrevocably to birth and imposed restrictions on marriage and social relations. That these laws were meant to be obeyed is shown in descriptive literature. The narratives of the *Ramaya* and the *Mahabharata* and the *Jataka* stories of the Pali canon further show that at first *Varna* not only remained in enjoyment of dignity and position but also to rise to wealth and power.

As in the closing period of the Vedic Age, the *Varna* (the classes or the castes) and *Ashrama* (the four orders or stages of life) are the dominant features of society^[10]. They gradually become rigid and fixed, but the Hindu society was far from attaining its normal and standardized form in this age. The caste system developed rigidity so far as the Sudras were concerned but there was no rigidity among the upper three classes^[11]. The duties of the different castes, as enumerated in the Dharma *sutras*, have been very pithily put in his inimitable analytical manner by *Kautilya* in his *Arthashastra*^[12]. He enumerates the duties of the *Brahmana* as (1) *Adhyayana* (study), (2) *Adhyapana* (teaching), (3) *Yajna* (worship), (4) *Yajana* (officiating at worship), (5) *Dana* (making gifts) and (6) *Pratigraha* (accepting gifts). The *svadharma* or duties of the Kshatriya comprised (1) *Adhyayana*, (2) *Yajna* (3) *Dana*, (4) *Sastrajiva* (profession of arms as source of livelihood) and (5) *Bhutarakshana* (protection of living beings). The duties of the Vaisya are (1) *Adhyayana*, (2) *Yajna*, (3) *Dana*, (4) *Krishi* (agriculture), (5) *Pasupalya* (cattle-rearing) and (6) *Vanijya* (trade). The functions assigned to the Sudra are (1) *Dvijatisusruka* (menial service of the three twice-born castes), (2) *Varta* (production of wealth), (3) *Karukarma* (arts) and (4) *Kusilavakarma* (crafts). It will be seen from the above that *Kautilya* points out the common duties of the three higher castes as Study (*Adhyayana*), Worship (*Yajna*), and Making Gifts (*Dana*).

The picture of the caste system as given in Hindu text, however, is very different from what we find in the Buddhist and Jain texts, and even in some parts of the epics^[13]. Thus the *Mahabharata*^[14], lays down that one does not become a *Brahmana* by birth but by his conduct, a theory frequently met with in an elaborate form in the Buddhist texts. The *Mahabharata* also declares^[15] that the son of a *Brahmana* is a *Brahmana*, even though his mother is a *Kshatriya* or *Vaisya*. This view is also repeated in Buddhist texts. We are told that when *Prasenajit* came to learn that his queen was really a slave woman, he reported the matter to the Buddha who said:

"Wise men of old have said, what matters the mother's birth? The birth of the father is the measure." He also cited a famous instance in support of this view. When the king of *Kosala* heard this, he was pleased and treated the queen and her son as suited their rank.

The Buddhist and Jain texts also always openly declare the *Ksatriyas* to be less superior to the *Brahmanas*, and name the *Ksatriyas* first in enumerating the four castes. Thus, although the general framework of the caste system is admitted, the

supremacy of the *Brahmana* is challenged in these texts^[16]. This view is also indirectly supported by the *Mahabharata*. Although in theory priestly power is higher than the royal power, and the king is a creation of the priest, in practice the king often gets the upper hand. This is quite natural, as the whole political organisation was behind the king, whereas the priesthood had not been organised into a worldly power independent of the state. In any case the Epic, rarely, indicates that the king dictated and the priest obeyed.

The Buddhist texts also show that caste was not rigidly tied to craft in those days. They tell of a *Kshatriya* working successively as a potter, basket maker, reed-worker, garland-maker, and cook^[17], also of a *Setthi* (*Vaisya*) 'working as a tailor and a potter'^[18]. Without loss of prestige in both cases. We find *Ksatriyas* of the *Sakya* and *Koliya* clans cultivating their fields. The *Dasa Brahmana-Jataka* states how *Brahmanas* in those days pursued ten occupations against rules: as (1) physicians, carrying sacks filled with medicinal roots and herbs; (2) servants and wagon-drivers; (3) tax-collectors who would not leave a household without collecting alms; (4) diggers of the soil in ascetic garb with their long hairs and nails and covered with dust and dirt; (5) traders selling fruits, sweets and the like; (6) farmers; (7) priests interpreting omens; (8) policemen with arms to guard caravans and shops, like *Gopas* and *Nisadas*; (9) hunters in the garb of hermits killing hares, cats, fish, tortoises and the like; and (10) menials of kings who helped them in their baths in the garb of *Yajnikas*. Similarly, the *Vasettha Sutta* refers to *Brahmanas* working as cultivators, craftsmen, messengers, sacrifices and landlords. The fragment on *Silas* mentions *Brahmanas* following many diverse occupations as physicians, sorcerers, architects, story-tellers, cattle breeders, farmers and the like. The *Jatakas* refer to *Brahmanas* pursuing the following callings: tillage, tending cattle, trade, hunting, carpentry, weaving, policing of caravans, archery, driving of carriages, and even snake-charming; and hold up a *Brahmanas* peasant as a supremely pious man and even a *Bodhisattva*.

Both Jain and Buddhist works describe the normal *Brahmana* either as a citizen serving society or as a hermit who has renounced society. The second type is called a *tapasa* or a *rishi* living in his *Ashrama* in the forest. The first class of *Brahmanas* served as the king's priests and sacrificers, as well as ministers, ambassadors and military officers. Besides the four established castes or Hindu society the Buddhist *Pali* text-books speak of the peoples ranking socially below them as *hina-jati*, "low tribes", marked out by their pursuits of 'low crafts', *hina-sippa*, and instance the workers in rushes, fowlers and cart makers, who were aboriginal peoples; as also mat-makers, barbers, potters, weavers and leather workers. Some texts apply the general term *Milakkha* to peoples lying outside the pale of Aryan society^[19]. These include the *hina-jatis*, mentioned as five in the *Vinaya-Sutta-Vibhaga*,^[20] viz. *Candala*, *Vena*, *Nesada*, *Rathakara* and *Pukkusa*. Some of these counted as Sudras belonging to Aryan society, while others lay outside its pale. The former is called by *Panini*^[21] *aniravasita* (*abahiCkAta*) *Sudra* and the latter, *niravasita*. As examples of the latter, the *Sasayama Sutta* mentions the *Jonas* and *Cambodia's* whose society knew of only two classes, employers and employed, or rather master (*aye*) and slave

(data).

A graphic account of the caste system is given by Megasthenes, the Greek ambassador at the court of Chandragupta Maurya. He enumerates seven classes or castes into which the whole population of India is divided, viz. (1) Philosophers, (2) Husbandmen, (3) Herdsmen, (4) Artisans, (5) Military, (6) Overseers or Spies, and (7) Councilors and Assessors. He adds that "no one can marry out of his own caste, or to exchange one profession or trade for another or to follow more than one business."

This is undoubtedly a characteristic of the rigid caste system as enunciated in the brahmanical texts, but it is difficult to believe that the seven categories mentioned by Megasthenes really conformed to this. Neither of the last two classes of officials could really form such a close social corporation, and the fourth class, the artisans, must have included several such social units. There is no doubt that Megasthenes confused the castes with the professions or occupations with which he was more familiar than others. It is significant that he makes no mention of the fourfold divisions of caste, and his obvious confusion between castes and occupations probably indicates that the broad division of society was based on this latter factor rather than on the theoretical classification in the brahmanical texts of the period. Whatever 'we might think of the accuracy or otherwise of Megasthenes's observations about the caste-divisions in general, we get interesting glimpses of the social conditions of his time from the particulars he records of them. Special interest attaches to his description of the 'Philosophers' whom he divides into two classes- *Brachmanes* and *Sarmanes*. There is no doubt that the first of these refers to the *Brahmanas*. The second is generally taken as the Buddhist *Sramaṇas*, but most likely refers to ascetics as a class irrespective of the religious sect to which they belonged.

Around the third century CE the Vaisya -Sudra social formation was afflicted with a deep social crisis. The crisis is clearly reflected in the descriptions of the Kali age in those portions of the Puranas which belong to the third and fourth century CE. Emphasis on the importance of coercive mechanism (*Dana*) in the *Santi Parva* and the description of anarchy (*arajakta*) in the epics possibly belongs to the same age and point to the same crisis. The Kali age is characterized by *Varna-sanskara*, i.e., peasants, artisans and laborers, either refused to stick to the producing functions assigned to them or else the Vaisya peasants declined to pay taxes and the Sudra s refused to make their labour available. This made the functioning of the state and society difficult [22].

Early in the 5th century CE, Fa-Hien testified. to the prosperous condition of Northern India under the rule of the Imperial Guptas. He clearly depicted the picture of rigid caste system of that time. He says that the low caste *Candala* dwells on the outskirts of the city [23].

Hsuen Tsang, who came to India in the 7th century CE and travelled more widely over the country than his predecessors wrote a detailed account of the life of the people. He mentioned that the division of society was based on caste. Concept of untouchables was in existence. *Candala* or the Sudras had to reside outside the city or village. The *Brahmanas* were held in the highest esteem. The Chinese pilgrim noticed the king was generally Ksatriyas. There were

no inter-caste marriages [24].

So, we can say that from this time society in India became more and more mechanical under the regulations of the *Sastras*. The castes and sub castes were rigidly separated. Inter-caste contact was prohibited with strict rules of dining, marriage, touch and ceremonials.

A close study of the *Rajatarangini* shows that the population of Kashmir in early times comprised of several castes. There is, however, no well-defined caste system mentioned either by *Kalhana* or by his predecessors. Though the concept of the population as consisting of the four traditional castes was not unknown to him [25], as he has used many terms like *Brahmana*, *Rajaputra*, *Kiratas*, *Candala*, *Nona* etc., but there was no such caste as *Ksatriyas*, *Vaisya* and *Sudra* in early Kashmiri society. Many scholars like S.

C. Ray believe that there was no intermediate caste in Kashmir, not even *Sudra* [26]. The society of Kashmir was divided along the occupational or socio-economic lines. The one reason believed to be is the Buddhism which was introduced into Kashmir by Asoka and subsequently, flourished under the *Kushanas*, had been accepted by the masses and was for several centuries the dominant faith in the Valley. Caste system, hence, had lost all rigidity and except for the *Brahmanas* who maintained their traditions tenaciously and who were responsible later in re-establishing the Hindu faith among the people of Kashmir, and low-caste tribes who followed the calling of scavengers, night watchmen and boatmen.

The fighting castes of old Kashmir are represented by the *Kshatriya*, *Tantrins*, *Ekangas* and *Lavanyas*. The *Rajatarangini* does not make specific references to *Ksatriyas* as in the context of Kashmir's ancient history but it is believed that from the ancient period *Ksatriyas* have remained influential in Kashmir. *Ksatriyas* in Kashmir would attach "*aditya*" word with their name. *Pratapaditya*, *Lalitaditya*, *Vajraditya*, *Baladitya*, *Ranaditya*, *Vedaditya* and *Vikramaditya* are some of the instances. Rajputs or *Rajputra* were associated with the fighting and the ruling caste [27].

There are occasional references to the *Ksatriyas* in the *Nilmata Purana* indicating their martial character. They are described as skilled in the use of all sorts of weapons [28]. The *Nirajana* ceremony, in which Durga-the goddess of war-is worshipped and the weapons of war are also worshipped in the temple of *Durga* [29], seems to have been a kind of military ceremony associated with the *Ksatriyas*.

About their status in society, their mention after the *Brahmanas* indicates their social status in accordance with the *varṭika* on Panini's *Ashtadhyayi* [30], which lays down the rule that the castes should be mentioned in the order of status, the highest one to come first and the lowest one last. At one place this order seems to have been upturned but the sense of gradation is not lost sight of there too. While bathing the king, the higher castes come later to assure the highest purity at the time of coronation. We have noted the position of the *Brahmana* Purohita and the *Brahmana Samvatsara* in the court of the king. The kings paid respect to the *Brahmanas* as is shown by the treatment *Candradeva* and *Mahapadma* received from *Nila* and *Visvasvasva* respectively [31]. There is reference, no doubt, to Paraśurāma killing the *Ksatriyas* twenty-one times [32] put as Pargiter has pointed out; this

account is purely a tale of brahmanical tradition with little historical background. Anyway, from the version of the story, as preserved in the *Nilmata*, making the significant assertion that some *Ksatriyas* afraid of *Rama* had sought refuge in Kashmir^[33], we may infer the lack of *Brahmana-Kshatriya* conflict in Kashmir of the age of the *Nilmata*.

1) Tantrins

Tantrins, the second military class, mentioned by *Kalhana* appear to have formed in a caste of strong organization. The name *Tantrin* survives in the tribal name of *Tantri* which is borne by a considerable section of the Muhammadan agriculturist population of Kashmir. Families claiming the *Tantri Kram* or surname may be found in most of the towns and villages throughout the Valley^[34]. At this period of chronicle *Tantrin* foot-soldiers had formed a confederacy and were strong^[35] enough to punish or to favour the rulers of the land^[36]. During the period of internal troubles between the succession of *Partha* and the defeat of *Sankaravarman* (906-936 CE), they organized themselves into a powerful condottiere and were at the height of their power^[37]. In 933-34 CE the *Tantrins* overthrew *Cakravarman* and made *Suravarman*, the son of *Pangu* from *Mrgavati*, king^[38]. But his uncles and ministers had no affection for him. They were solely looking to their own advantage, caused the overthrow of the king by not paying what was due to the *Tantrins*^[39]. *Kalhana* further tells that though the prince was of great character but he could not keep his ruling powers without the favour of *Tantrins* and for that purpose he had to give them rich gifts^[40]. After one year the *Tantrins* dethroned *Pangu* and seeing the chance of profit, made the liberal *Partha* once more king^[41]. When king *Cakravarman* could not pay money to *Tantrins*, in terror he fled in the month *Pausha* of the same year^[42]. Later on he sent *Sambhuvardhana* to negotiate with the *Tantrins*^[43]. But he deceived his elder brother and got them to install himself on the throne. *Kalhana* says that the kings were in the service of the *Tantrins*, and ousted each other, like village officials, by offering greater and greater bribes^[44].

In another reference, he tells that in this land, the rulers of which had conquered *Kanyakubja* and other countries, the king now maintained themselves by giving bills of exchange (*hundika*) to the *Tantrins*^[45]. They raised different claimants to the throne of Kashmir, one after the other, demanding larger and larger bribes from each puppet king and oppressed the land by their heavy exactions. Queen *Sugandha*, after *Sankaravarman*'s death, ruled for two years through the good will of *Tantrins*^[46]. At one occasion she assembled the ministers, feudal lords, *Tantrin* and *Ekangas* in council, in order to invest some fit person with the regal power^[111]. Subsequently they formed an important and often troublesome element in the army, in which they seem to have served as foot soldiers^[47]. They are in the several references made in the *Rajatarangini* as clearly distinguished from the mounted forces and figure as royal guards. On the eighth day of the bright half of *Caitya*, the foot-soldiers marched out for battle with *Sankarvardhana*. King *Parvagupta* also took the favour of *Tantrins* to secure throne^[48]. Later this same king tried to control the increasing power of *Tantrins* and grew his terror in their hearts. The *Tantrins* also joined the conspiracy against

Uccala. They also they also participated in action against king *Rada-Sankharaja* and helped the consecrated *Garga* as king. He worried king *Sussala*'s force by surprise attacks and in a fight killed *Trailokyaraja* and other prominent *Tantrins*^[49]. When *Sussala* marched back to Kashmir with other councilors, *Tantrins* in league with *Janakasimha*, came to meet him^[50]. Thus *Tantrins* acted as true praetorians and king-makers. If any person found close union with them, only then he could succeed^[51]. In the *Rajatarangini* *Tantrins* are compared with cruel snake-charmers^[52].

2) Ekangas

The exact meaning of the term *Ekangas* cannot be established with certainty. It is frequently used in Books Five to seven of the *Rajatarangini* for the designation of an armed force. *Troyer* assumed them to have been the royal bodyguards and various references in the chronicle, show that he is not wrong. They are mentioned along with *samantas* (feudal lords), ministers, *Tantrins* and *Kayasthas*, (officials) as influencing the affairs of the court and the state^[53].

After the death of her husband king *Sankaravarman*, Queen *Sugandha* assumed the royal power in her hand. *Kalhana* tells that she ruled for two years relying on the *Ekangas* and through the good-will of the *Tantrins*^[54]. On one occasion, *Kalhana* tells that she assembled the ministers, feudal chiefs, *Tantrins* and *Ekangas* in council, in order to invest some fit person with the regal power^[55]. In another story, *Tantrin* made *Partha* king, who was the son of king *Nirjitvarman*, and queen *Sugandha* was forced to leave the royal palace^[56]. At this point of time *Ekangas* troops went forth united, and brought back *Sugandha* from *Huskapura*, where she had stayed^[57]. But when *Tantrins* heard of her approach, they marched forth in fury^[58]. In this battle *Ekangas* were defeated and Queen *Sugandha* was captured^[59].

At another place *Kalhana* mentions, when *Partha* was overthrown by his father, *Pangu*, with the help of *Tantrins* but soon *Pangu* died and another son *Cakravarman*, was placed on thrown^[60]. Thereupon the *Tantrin* footsoldiers, taking the side of *Partha*, who was anxious to seize his father's thrown, fought a battle with the *Ekangas*, who were protecting *Cakravarman*. Before his death, king *Yasaskara*, who was suffering from an abdominal disease, in the presence of his ministers, *Ekangas* and feudal lords, appointed *Varnata* as a king. *Varnata* was the son of his paternal grand-uncle *Ramadeva*^[61]. After the death of king *Hariraja*, his mother *Srilekha* wished the thrown for herself. When she was coming after taking the bath where the arrangements for the installation had been made, the assembled *Ekangas* and the king's milk-brother, *Sagara*, made his child-son *Ananta* king^[62].

Ekangas fought with the *Tantrins*, who supported another claimant to the crown^[63], and saved Queen *Didida* from a rebel force, whose onslaught they opposed in orderly array at the palace gate^[64]. They protected king *Ananta* with equal devotion against a pretender. When *Tribhuvana*, the powerful commander-in-chief of *Ananta*, collected the favour of *Damaras* and become to deprive the king of the throne, it was the honesty of *Ekangas* that they did not leave the king's side^[65]. In another incident, when king *Ananta* was in war field with *Tribhuvana* and his army, he saw at every step of war

field *Ekangas*'s bodies were slashed with cuts. *Ekangas* were under the office of *Aksapatala*. Who were probably character of be the chief office of account. The king, to show his gratitude, freed the *Ekangas* from the harassing service at the *Aksapatala*, i.e. a sort of pension ^[66]. It is near the *Akshapatala* that Harsha endeavoured to collect a force of *Ekangas* for a final struggle ^[67].

The later references show that *Ekangas* were a force organized in a military fashion but employed chiefly for police duties. King *Tunga* had employed thirty brave *Ekangas* in his service and who died in a battle field ^[68]. *Ekangas* are also referred as feudal lords as well. *Kalhana* tells that Parvagupta wanted to dethrone *Samgramadeva*, but could not do this from the fear of a rising of the *Ekangas*. So, he arranged witchcraft for this purpose ^[69]. But he could not achieve his aim. Fearing the hostile *Ekangas* ^[70], and losing command over himself owing to his rising agitation and apprehensions, he became so miserable day and night that he suddenly collected his troops on a day when people did not even move outside because a heavy snow-fall, and surrounded the palace. Ultimately, he assured the throne. When Parvagupta become king, *Ekangas* were afraid of him. An *Ekangas* called *Madanaditya*, who was descended from the race of *Suyya*, burst his large drum through carelessness in the king's assembly-hall. The angry king had his garments taken off and ill-treated him. Having his hair and beard shaved off, he became an ascetic. But from the text it is not clear whether *Kalhana* means the *Madanaditya*'s family following him in to his new status, or that the *Ekangas*, who had after his humiliating punishment turned in to a mendicant, married again subsequently ^[71]. In another place *Kalhana* tells that an equerry, *Trailokya* by name tells Harsha that his grandfather (*Ananta*) once won a victory with the *Ekangas* and the mounted man. Therefore, he should go to the *Akshapatala* [office] to collect them because if they will join him, he can win over his enemy ^[72].

Ekangas's modern counterpart would be customs and forest guards, and other revenue collecting agents. Till the beginning of the present century the 'Patan Nizamat' was a regiment, specially maintained in Kashmir for the support of the civil authorities for the collection of revenue etc.

3) Lavanyas

The *Lavanyas*, who played a great part in the internal troubles which occurred in Kashmir during the closing years of the eleventh and the beginning of twelfth centuries, seem to have formed an important tribal section of the rural population who took to arms. Their name, too, survives in the modern *Kram* of *Lon* ^[73]. The numerous passages in which the *Lavanyas* as a body of individuals is referred to, tell us nothing about their origin, but show that many of them must have held a position of influence as land-owners or tribal headmen. Up to *Jonaraja*'s time, the *Lavanyas* seem to have retained a certain importance as their name is of frequent occurrence in his *Chronicle*, but by *Srivar*, the later historian, they are mentioned only once. In the *Rajatarangini*, *Kalhana* shows that the *Lavanyas* of this period were so powerful that who so ever powerful ruler came, they first tried to crush them. When *Harsa* attacked the *Lavanyas* of *Holada* in *Madavar*, he killed the *Lavanyas* so ruthlessly that he left not even *Brahmanas* alive if they were dressed liked *Lavanyas* e.g. who wore high

hair dress and who had prominent appearance ^[74]. He even killed travellers, taking them as *Lavanyas* ^[75]. Those who brought heads of *Lavanyas* were paid heavily. *Kalhana* tells that wherever king *Harsha* took his abode, there the people formed wide-spreading triumphal garlands with the horrible heads of *Lavanyas* ^[76]. With this ferocious action of *Harsa*, *Lavanyas* became so frightened that they fled in all directions ^[77]. and the king was praised for the destruction of the *Lavanyas* ^[78]. When *Brahmanas* rebelled against the king, *Kalhana* said that this was worse than the rebellion of *Lavanyas* ^[79].

Kalhana tells that the *Lavanyas* caused so much trouble throughout the reign of king *Sussala* and subsequently killed him. Later, *Sussala*'s son *Jayasimha* took the revenge and killed all *Lavanyas* ^[80]. All ruling kings or those who wanted to be ruling power tried to do so with the favour of *Lavanyas*. *Kalhana* in eighth book of the *Rajatarangini* tells that once king *Bhikshacara* came to *Vijayesvara* to make the *Brahmanas* of the *agrahara* s to give up their fast. *Tilaka* who was the commander-in-chief of king *Bhikshacara*, advised him to kill all *Lavanyas*. But he did not accept this advice. Later *Bhikshacara* along with *Lavanyas* got defeated by *Sussala* and thought of going abroad from fear of *Sussala* ^[81]. Even the *Shrivaka*, the brave Brother-in-law of *Yashoraja*, never took hostile action against the *Lavanyas*. On the contrary, they passed the time secretly in doing each other favour ^[82]. *Bhikshacara* took the favour of *Lavanyas* to gain the throne ^[83]. When king *Sussala* returned to *Srinagar* in 1121 CE, he entered the palace in search of *Bhikshu*, who was the son of *Bhoja* and *Vibhavamati*. But he took the favour of *Lavanyas*, who helped him in saving his life ^[84]. *Bhoja* also wanted to take the favour of *Lavanyas* to strengthen his position ^[85]. *Lavanyas* are also depicted as robbers. In *Jayasimha* time, villages were plundered by the *Lavanyas* ^[86].

Conclusion

Thus, we can say that like traditional caste system, in Kashmir as well, Brahmins were at top and next to them were worrier class. It is true that there was no such caste as *Kshatriya*, *Vaisya* and *Sudra* in the early Kashmir but we cannot deny this fact that *Kalhana* in his chronicle has used many terms related to the traditional caste system of India e.g. *Brahmana*, *Rajaputra*, *Dombas*, *Candala* etc. It appears from what has been said above that the Kashmir society became something like a federation of castes and sub-castes, whose members did sometimes intermarry, more frequently in earlier than in later ages, but which nevertheless retained their separate identity. Society consisted of many groups which had been brought into the same spiritual and cultural framework, but which had been only partially fused together. Caste was not altogether static, for new sub castes frequently arose from migration, fusion or sub-division. Old sub-castes sometimes lost their identity and rose or fell in status. In *Rajatarangini*, *Kalhana* gives ample examples that how this class overpowered not only Brahmins but ruling class as well. They had very strong position in the society of Kashmir specially when ruling class was surrounded by tremolos. Kings tried many times to get the favour of worrier class to strengthen their position. They were shown as employees as well as independent to ruling powers. Like other parts of India, in

Kashmir we also find different sub castes of this caste as well. We cannot Deny that throughout the period of Rajatarangini worrier classes of Kashmir strongly influenced the history not only of Kashmir but the whole of India too.

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