

Flora and Fauna of Ancient Kashmir: A Historical Perspective

Wasim Akram

Ph.D Research Scholar

Department of History

University of Jammu, Jammu, India

Abstract

This study explores the rich biodiversity of ancient Kashmir, as documented in historical texts like the *Nilamata Purana*, *Rajatarangini*, *Kuttanimata Kavya*, and *Kathāsaritsāgara*, along with travel accounts such as Hiuen Tsang's *Si-Yu-Ki*. These sources highlight the deep cultural, religious, and economic significance of the region's flora and fauna. Sacred groves, medicinal plants, and revered animals played a vital role in Kashmiri society, reflecting a strong ecological consciousness. The study also reveals sustainable practices rooted in religious beliefs and agricultural advancements, demonstrating a harmonious relationship between nature and civilization. By reconstructing this historical perspective, the research underscores the importance of Kashmir's environmental heritage and its relevance to modern conservation efforts.

Key Terms:- Biodiversity, Ancient Kashmir, Literary Texts, Natural Wealth, *Nilamata Purana*, *Kuttanimata*, *Kathāsaritsāgara*, *Kumarasambhavam*, *Rajatarangini*, Kshemendra's Works, Hiuen Tsang's Travel Account, Relationship, Flora and Fauna, Sacred Groves, Medicinal Plants, Revered Animals, Cultural Significance, Religious Importance, Economic Value, Agriculture, Medicine, Trade, Ecological Practices, Human Intervention, Conservation, Ecological Balance, Sustainability,

Introduction

The present paper shows that the flora and fauna of ancient Kashmir played a crucial role in shaping its ecological, cultural, and socio-political landscape. The region, renowned for its breathtaking natural beauty, has been a cradle of biodiversity since antiquity. Historical records, religious scriptures, and travelogues provide invaluable insights into the environmental wealth of Kashmir. Ancient Sanskrit texts such as the *Nilamata Purana*, *Rajatarangini* by Kalhana, and Persian chronicles from the medieval period document the abundance of plant and animal life in the region. These sources not only describe the natural bounty but also highlight the cultural and religious significance of forests, rivers, and wildlife in ancient Kashmir.

The *Nilamata Purana*, one of the earliest textual references on Kashmir, offers detailed descriptions of sacred groves, medicinal plants, and revered animals that played a role in religious rituals. Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* (12th century CE), a historical chronicle of Kashmiri kings, references forests, wild animals, and the role of nature in shaping the socio-political landscape. Additionally, works such as *Si-Yu-Ki* by Hiuen Tsang and the *Kathāsaritsāgara* provide further evidence of Kashmir's rich biodiversity.

The ecological history of Kashmir is deeply intertwined with its cultural and political evolution. The reverence for sacred trees, conservation practices rooted in religious beliefs, and the economic utility of forest produce shaped ancient Kashmiri society's interaction with nature. Furthermore, historical texts suggest that periods of ecological transformation were influenced by climatic shifts, deforestation, and human intervention.

This study aims to reconstruct a historical perspective on the flora and fauna of ancient Kashmir by analyzing primary sources, shedding light on environmental consciousness, sustainable practices, and the region's changing ecological landscape over time. By examining texts such as the *Nilamata Purana*, *Rajatarangini*, *Kuttanimata Kavya*, *Kathāsaritsāgara*, *Kumarasambhavam*, Kshemendra's work and travel accounts of Hiuen Tsang, this paper seeks to illustrate the symbiotic relationship between Kashmiri society and its natural environment. Such an exploration will enhance our understanding of the environmental heritage of Kashmir and its impact on the region's history and culture.

Flora from the Literary Texts

The earliest source available to us, belonging to the 4th-8th centuries A.D. is the *Nilamata Purana*. It was composed by Sage Nila. The *Nilamata Purana*, an ancient text from Kashmir, provides detailed descriptions of the region's flora and fauna, reflecting their cultural and religious significance. Below are specific references from Dr. Ved Kumari Ghai's translation, including verse numbers for precise context.

Flora in Nilamata Purana

The *Nilamata Purana* describes a serene lake adorned with blooming lotuses, its waters cool and crystal clear. The lotus, deeply revered in Kashmiri tradition, symbolizes purity, beauty, and spiritual enlightenment. Its presence in the sacred text underscores its cultural and religious significance, often associated with deities and divine manifestations in Hindu mythology. The depiction also suggests the abundance of wetlands and pristine water bodies in ancient Kashmir, which provided an ideal habitat for aquatic flora.¹

The text portrays Kashmir as a land thriving with extensive rice fields, indicating the region's strong agricultural foundation. The phrase "filled with rows of rice-fields, fully thriving" reflects the prosperity and fertility of the valley, suggesting that rice cultivation played a crucial role in sustaining the population. The mention of well-maintained paddy fields highlights not only the agrarian economy of ancient Kashmir but also the presence of advanced irrigation and farming techniques that contributed to bountiful harvests.²

The *Nilamata Purana* further emphasizes the region's rich biodiversity, describing it as a land teeming with a diverse range of flora, including flowering plants, fruit-bearing trees, creeping vines, and medicinal herbs. The abundance of such vegetation indicates a favorable climate and fertile soil that supported a thriving ecosystem. The reference to medicinal plants suggests a deep-rooted tradition of Ayurveda and herbal healing practices in ancient Kashmir, where natural remedies derived from local flora were likely used for therapeutic purposes. Additionally, the mention of a lush and vibrant landscape reflects the reverence for nature in Kashmiri cultural and spiritual beliefs.³

Flora in Kuttanimata of Damodaragupta

The Kuttanimata of Damodaragupta provides a wealth of information about the diverse flora of ancient Kashmir, with saffron (*kasmira-janman*) being the most notable among them. Renowned for its exceptional quality, saffron was extensively cultivated in the region. Bilhana emphasizes its rarity by stating that it grew exclusively in Śārada (Kashmir), highlighting its distinctiveness. The text also mentions a variety of fruit-bearing trees and other significant plant species. The bilva tree (*Aegle marmelos*) is recognized for its nutritious fruit, while the palmyra palm (*Tāla-taru*, *Borassus flabelliformis*) flourished abundantly across the landscape. The bay leaf tree (*Tamāla*, *Cinnamomum tamala*) was commonly cultivated in gardens, adding to the region's rich vegetation. The banyan tree (*Vaṭa*, *Ficus bengalensis*), known for its expansive canopy, was widely found throughout Kashmir. Additionally, the mango tree (*Āmra*, *Mangifera indica*) is mentioned, particularly for its delicate sprouts (*majari*), and the pomegranate tree (*Dādima*, *Punica granatum*) was valued for its vibrant red fruit. This extensive reference to various trees and plants underscores the fertile environment and botanical diversity of Kashmir in ancient times.

Among the flowering plants referenced, the land-growing lotus (*Śthala-kamala*, *Hibiscus mutabilis*) is noted, suggesting its deliberate cultivation in the region. The sandalwood tree (*Candana*, *Santalum album*) was highly valued for its soothing and cooling properties, often used in perfumery and medicinal applications. Vetiver grass (*Uśīra*, *Andropogon laniger*) was another significant plant, commonly utilized for hair treatments due to its aromatic and therapeutic qualities. The Mālātī creeper, known for its fragrant blossoms and climbing nature, is also mentioned, reflecting the presence of ornamental and scented plants in ancient Kashmir. A particularly noteworthy reference is made to the Kalpa-Taru, the legendary wish-fulfilling tree, which held deep mythological significance. Additionally, the text makes an indirect mention of Indigo, acknowledging its value as an important dye-producing plant. These references highlight the botanical richness of the region and the diverse uses of its flora in daily life, medicine, and cultural traditions.

The text also highlights various medicinal and sacred plants, emphasizing their cultural and religious significance. Darbhā grass (*Poa cynosuroides*) was revered for its sanctity and was commonly used in religious rituals and ceremonies. Additionally, the text classifies trees based on their distinct characteristics, such as thorny trees (*Kaṇṭakin*), known for their protective nature, and milky sap-bearing trees (*Kṣīravṛkṣa*), which were likely valued for their medicinal or practical uses. The references found in the *Kuttanimata* not only showcase the natural richness of Kashmir but also highlight its economic dependence on plant-based resources, including saffron, wool, and timber, which played a crucial role in the region's livelihood and trade.

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¹ Nila, *The Nilamatapurana*, Eng. Tr. By Dr. Ved Kumari, Vol,II, V V. 46-47, J&k Academy of Art, Culture & Languages, Srinagar,1973.

² *Ibid*, V. 14.

³ *Ibid*, V. 23.

⁴ Shastri, Ajay Mitra, *India as seen in The Kuttani-Mata of Damodaragupta*, Motilal, Banarsidass, Delhi, 1975, pp.196-200

Flora in Si-Yu-Ki: Buddhist Records of the Western World

One of the traveller work also mentioned about flora in ancient Kashmir like Si-Yu-Ki: Buddhist Records of the Western World. Here the Chinese monk Hiuen Tsang provides detailed observations of the natural environment of ancient Kashmir. His accounts offer valuable insights into the region's rich biodiversity during his travels in the 7th century.

Hiuen Tsang describes Kashmir as a region rich in diverse plant life, with an abundance of trees and flowers enhancing its natural beauty. He attributes this botanical variety to the region's fertile soil and favorable climatic conditions. Among the various flora, he specifically mentions the 'san-hoh' flower, which was particularly widespread, though its exact modern identification remains uncertain. This flourishing vegetation played a significant role in shaping Kashmir's reputation as a land of exceptional natural splendor.

Additionally, references to ancient Indian flora provide insights into historical botanical practices. While no specific regional association is explicitly stated, except for a passage that seemingly describes the flora of the Abu region, it is possible that these references pertain to Kashmir's rich plant life. The text also acknowledges the moon as the lord of vegetation, reflecting ancient beliefs about celestial influences on plant growth. Furthermore, trees were not only cultivated in forests and gardens but were also commonly planted along roadsides, demonstrating a conscious effort to integrate greenery into public and travel spaces.⁵

Flora in the Kathasaritsagara

C.H. Tawney's English translation of Somadeva's *Kathāsaritsāgara* (*Ocean of the Streams of Stories*) offers a vibrant portrayal of ancient Indian storytelling, intricately woven with detailed references to the rich biodiversity of regions such as Kashmir. Throughout the text, various descriptions of plant and animal life are seamlessly integrated into the narratives, showcasing the natural splendor of the land. These vivid depictions not only enhance the storytelling but also provide valuable insights into the diverse flora and fauna that characterized the landscapes of ancient India.

The text portrays a lush, dense forest bustling with diverse wildlife, vividly capturing the raw and unspoiled beauty of the natural world.⁶ The text depicts a charming garden, rich with a variety of flowers and enlivened by the melodies of birds, showcasing the perfect balance between the plant life and wildlife.⁷ The story features a serpent within a vibrant woodland, emphasizing the role of reptiles in the forest ecosystem.⁸ The account describes a serene lake bordered by blooming lotuses, with swans gracefully gliding across its surface, highlighting the rich aquatic flora and the diverse birdlife that thrives in such a habitat. The presence of these lotuses and swans reflects the interconnectedness of water plants and the avian species they support, contributing to the overall ecological beauty of the region.⁹ The story centers around a lion in its natural environment, highlighting its majestic presence and commanding role within the animal kingdom. Such narratives remind us of the awe-inspiring creatures that inhabit our world, reinforcing the delicate balance of life in the wilderness and the respect that all creatures, great and small, deserve.¹⁰

The text references various medicinal herbs growing in the forests, highlighting the deep-rooted understanding of botany in ancient times and the vital role plant life played in traditional medicine. This knowledge reflects the wisdom of utilizing nature's resources for healing, showcasing the integral connection between humans and the natural world.¹¹

The text describes peacocks dancing in the monsoon rains, capturing the lively interaction between the fauna and the seasonal shifts. It highlights the vibrant response of the animals to the changing weather, showcasing the harmony between nature's cycles and wildlife behavior.¹² The text also depicts a grove abundant with

⁵ Tsiang, Hiuen, *Si-yu-ki, Buddhist Records of the Western world*, Eng. Tr. By Samuel Beal, Vol.I, Trubner & Co. , London, 1906. Pp.146-151

⁶ Somadeva, *Kathāsaritsāgara or Ocean of the Streams of Story*, Eng. Tr, by C.H. Tawney, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, Delhi, 1880, p.5.

⁷ *Ibid*, Vol.I, p.22.

⁸ *Ibid*, Vol.II, p.78.

⁹ *Ibid*, Vol.II, p.145.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, Vol.III. p.210.

¹¹ *Ibid*, Vol.III. p.275

¹² *Ibid*, Vol.IV p.320

sandalwood trees and fragrant flowers, emphasizing the aromatic plants that were highly prized in ancient times for their pleasing scents and valuable uses.¹³ An interaction with elephants by the riverbank showcases the harmonious bond between large mammals and their surroundings, emphasizing how these creatures rely on and coexist with their natural environments.¹⁴ A portrayal of parrots perched in mango trees, symbolizing the vibrant and bountiful landscapes full of life and abundance.¹⁵

These descriptions not only enhance the storytelling but also offer a deeper understanding of the ecological variety and the cultural importance of various plant and animal species in ancient Indian literature.

Flora in Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*

The *Rajatarangini*, written by Kalhana in the 12th century, provides a rich historical and environmental account of Kashmir, including descriptions of its flora and fauna. Below is an explanation of some of the plants and animals mentioned in the chronicle, along with how they are depicted in Kalhana's verses.

Flora (Plants) Mentioned in *Rajatarangini*

1. Lotus (*Nelumbo nucifera*)

Kalhana depicts Kashmir's lakes, especially the Dal and Wular lakes, as being surrounded by blooming lotuses. The lotus is portrayed as a symbol of purity and divine beauty, frequently featured in poetic representations of Kashmir's tranquil waters.¹⁶

2. Chinar (*Platanus orientalis*) – The Chinar tree, an iconic symbol of Kashmir, is depicted as offering shade and majestic beauty to the valleys. Kalhana describes these trees as integral to the region's royal and sacred landscapes, often found near palaces and temples, where their large, broad leaves create a serene and majestic atmosphere. The chinar's presence not only enhances the natural beauty of Kashmir but also reflects its cultural and historical significance, often associated with nobility and spirituality in the region.¹⁷

3. Saffron (*Crocus sativus*) –

Saffron, one of Kashmir's most valued crops, is highlighted by Kalhana for its agricultural significance. He describes the saffron fields as casting a golden glow over the land, underscoring Kashmir's uniqueness in producing saffron of exceptional quality.¹⁸

4. Chir Pine (*Pinus roxburghii*) – Chir pine forests are referenced in descriptions of Kashmir's mountainous regions. During Kalhana's time, the wood from these trees was likely used for building, as well as for fuel and medicinal applications.¹⁹

Flora in Kshemendra's work

Kshemendra, an 11th-century Kashmiri poet and scholar, often incorporated references to flora in his works to enrich his narratives and convey deeper meanings. Here are some notable instances:

1. "Brihatkathāmanjari" (The Ocean of Stories):

The depiction highlights the dense and flourishing forests of the Vindhya Mountains, showcasing a diverse and thriving plant ecosystem.²⁰

Additionally, a tranquil lotus pond is described, adorned with blooming lotuses that symbolize purity and natural beauty, enhancing the serene ambiance of the landscape.²¹

2. In *Deshopadesha* (Counsels of a Countryman), Kshemendra mentions the neem tree, emphasizing its medicinal value. Despite its bitter taste, the tree is recognized for its numerous health benefits, reflecting its significance in traditional healing practices.²²

¹³ *Ibid*, Vol.IV p.389

¹⁴ *Ibid*, Vol.v, p.450

¹⁵ *Ibid*, Vol.v, p. 512

¹⁶ Kalhana, *Rajatarangini: A Chronicle of Kings of Kashmir*, Gulshan Books, Srinagar, 1900, Book I, V. 52

¹⁷ *Ibid*, Book III, V. 15

¹⁸ *Ibid*, Book IV, V.42

¹⁹ *Ibid*, Book VIII, Verse 112

²⁰ Kshemendra, *Brihatkathāmanjari*, Ed. by MahaMahopadyaya Pandit Sivadatta and Kashinath Padurang Parab, Bombay, 1901, V. 10.1

²¹ *Ibid*, V. 12.15

²² Kshemendra, *Deshopadesha*, Ed. by Pandit Madhusudan Kaul Shashtri, Arya Bhushan press, Pune, 1923, V. 4.9.

3. In *Narmamālā* (A Garland of Mirth), a vibrant garden is described, filled with blooming flowers such as jasmine and roses. The enchanting blossoms attract fluttering butterflies, adding to the lively and picturesque charm of the setting.²³

Flora in *Kumarasambhavam*

Kalidasa's *Kumarasambhavam* vividly portrays the rich biodiversity of the Himalayas, often linked to ancient Kashmir. He describes the majestic mountain range as the 'king of mountains,' extending from the eastern to the western oceans, adorned with diverse plant and animal life. Among the notable flora, he highlights the towering deodar trees, which are native to Kashmir, emphasizing their prominence in the region's landscape. Additionally, he references saffron (Kumkuma), a highly valued crop extensively cultivated in Kashmir. These descriptions capture the breathtaking natural beauty of the region in ancient times, reflecting its ecological richness and cultural significance.²⁴

Fauna

Fauna in *Nilamata Purana*

1. Nagas (Serpent Deities)

The Nagas are described as the sons of Kadru, with significant narratives involving their interactions and conflicts, reflecting their mythological importance.²⁵

2. Garuda (Divine Bird)

Garuda, the mount of Lord Vishnu, is portrayed as rescuing his mother Vinata and consuming the Nagas, highlighting themes of valor and filial duty.²⁶

3. Wild Beasts

The region is described as "full of hosts of wild beasts," indicating the presence of diverse wildlife in ancient Kashmir.

These references illustrate the deep connection between Kashmir's natural environment and its cultural narratives as depicted in the *Nilamata Purana*.²⁷

Fauna in *Kuttanimata* of Damodaragupta

The *Kuttanimata* provides a rich depiction of the diverse fauna of ancient Kashmir, highlighting their economic, religious, and symbolic significance. Among wild animals, the lion (Simha) represents bravery, while the elephant (Gaja, Karīna, Vārana) is admired for its regal presence, often featured in royal processions and warfare. The deer (Harina, Mriga, Ena) appears frequently, both as a hunted species and as a symbol of grace and beauty, whereas the black antelope (Ena) held sacred status in religious rituals. Hunting is a prominent theme in the text, with boars (Sūkāra) and hares (Śaśa) regarded as challenging prey for skilled hunters. Other notable mentions include monkeys (Plavaga), commonly associated with dense forests, and bears (Rkṣa), which were frequently found in the mountainous regions of Kashmir.

Domesticated animals played a crucial role in both the economy and daily life of Kashmir. Horses (Aśva, Turaga) are frequently mentioned, emphasizing their significance in warfare and transportation, with particular references to Turkish breeds being used in military campaigns. The she-buffalo (Mahisi) is described as being fond of muddy environments, while the she-camel (Karabhī) is noted for its ability to survive on thorny vegetation such as Kairā and Badara. The region's renowned wool industry is highlighted through references to rams and goats (Ajā, Urana, Mesa), which provided the high-quality wool that Kashmir was famous for. Additionally, hunting dogs (Visakadrū, Vṛṣa, Aśva) are mentioned for their role in assisting hunters during expeditions.

Birds are frequently mentioned in metaphorical and symbolic contexts. The pigeon (Parāvata, Grha-kapota) is depicted as a messenger bird, while the peacock (Kalpa-bhrt) is admired for its beauty and grace. The cuckoo (Kokila, Pika, Kala-hansa) is associated with melodious songs, and the swan (Hansa, Kala-hansa) is

²³ Ibid, V.6.8

²⁴ Kalidasa's *Kumarasambhavam*, trans. and ed. Mahendra Pratap Shastri, Ram Narayan Lal Publishers, Allahabad, 1941 V V. 1.1, 1.14, 3.59.

²⁵ Nila, *The Nilamatapurana*, V V. 53-57

²⁶ Ibid, V V.59-60

²⁷ Ibid, V. 23

linked to lotus stalks, signifying purity. The parrot (Śuka) is noted for its ability to mimic human speech, and the mynah (Sārika, *Gracula religiosa*) is famous for its talking skills. The crow (Kaka) is portrayed as a messenger and scavenger. Additionally, the goose (Cakravāka) symbolizes love and companionship. Reptiles and insects are also present in the text. The serpent (Bhujaṅga, Vilāsin, Pāvana-bhojana, Gandhava-bhojana) is mentioned in poetic and symbolic expressions. The mongoose (Nakula) is noted as the natural enemy of snakes. Additionally, honey bees (Kṣudra) are referenced in the context of honey extraction, further highlighting the detailed depiction of Kashmir's fauna.²⁸

Fauna in *Rajatarangini*

1. Kashmiri Stag (Hangul) –

Kalhana describes the Hangul, a red deer native to Kashmir, as part of the region's dense forests. These deer were often hunted by kings and nobles as part of royal game hunting traditions.²⁹

2. Wild Elephants –

Though Kashmir itself did not have large elephant populations, Kalhana mentions wild elephants in the southern parts of the kingdom, possibly referring to regions closer to the Indian plains. Elephants were used in battles and royal processions, emphasizing their importance in warfare and prestige. These descriptions from *Rajatarangini* reflect Kalhana's deep appreciation for Kashmir's natural beauty. His detailed observations provide insights into how flora and fauna were woven into the cultural and historical narrative of the region.³⁰

Fauna in Kshemendra's work

Kshemendra, an 11th-century Kashmiri poet and scholar, often incorporated references to fauna in his works to enrich his narratives and convey deeper meanings. Here are some notable instances:

In the *Brihatkathāmanjari* (The Ocean of Stories), diverse wildlife is vividly described, including graceful deer, vibrant peacocks, and majestic elephants, all contributing to the richness of the natural world.³¹ Additionally, the text depicts humming bees gently hovering around blooming lotuses, symbolizing tranquility and the serene beauty of nature. These elements highlight the harmonious connection between fauna and flora, creating a peaceful and picturesque landscape.³²

In *Kalāvilāsa* (The Grace of Art), a melodious cuckoo is described singing on mango trees during spring, marking the arrival of the season with its joyful song.³³ Additionally, a serene scene is painted where swans glide gracefully across clear lakes, surrounded by blooming lotuses, symbolizing the beauty and tranquility of nature during this time.³⁴

In *Deshopadesha* (Counsels of a Countryman), Kshemendra uses the imagery of a lion in the forest to symbolize strength and majesty, portraying the animal's powerful and regal presence in its natural environment. This representation highlights the lion's dominance and authority, serving as a metaphor for power and courage.³⁵

In *Narmamālā* (A Garland of Mirth), playful monkeys are described leaping from tree to tree in a thick forest, capturing the lively and mischievous energy of the animals within their natural habitat.³⁶

These examples demonstrate Kshemendra's acute awareness of nature and his talent for integrating its elements into his literary creations. His ability to craft vivid imagery enriches his storytelling, offering readers a vivid and engaging portrayal of the natural world.

²⁸ Shastri, Ajay Mitra, *India as seen in The Kuttani-Mata of Damodaragupta*, Motilal, Banarsidass, Delhi, 1975, pp.200-204

²⁹ Kalhana, *Rajatarangini*, *op.cit.*, Book VI, V. 267

³⁰ *Ibid*, Book VII, Verse 389.

³¹ Kshemendra, *Brihatkathāmanjari*, *op.cit.*, V.10.1

³² *Ibid*, V.12.15

³³ Kshemendra, *Kalāvilāsa*, Ed. By Janaki Nath Kaul Kamil, Kashmir Research Department, 1954, V.3.7

³⁴ *Ibid*, V. 5.12

³⁵ Kshemendra, *Deshopadesha*, *op.cit.*, V.2.4

³⁶ Kshemendra, *Narmamālā*, Ed. by Pandit Madhusudan Kaul Shashtri, Aryabhushan press, Pune, 1923,V.

Fauna in Si-Yu-Ki: Buddhist Records of the Western World

Hiuen Tsiang's accounts offer valuable insights into the rich biodiversity of ancient Kashmir during the 7th century. He describes the presence of diverse fauna, including the 'Hsien' bird, which was known for its distinctive call and vibrant plumage, commonly found in the forests of Kashmir. Additionally, he mentions the 'Ming' deer, characterized by its graceful appearance and agility, roaming freely across the grasslands and forests of the region. These observations highlight the abundant wildlife that thrived in the region, reflecting the ecological diversity of Kashmir during that period.³⁷

Conclusion: - In conclusion, the rich biodiversity of ancient Kashmir, as reflected in various literary texts, not only highlights the region's natural wealth but also its deep cultural and spiritual connection to the environment. From the detailed descriptions in the *Nilamata Purana*, *Kuttanimata*, *Kathāsaritsāgara*, *Kumarasambhavam*, *Rajatarangini* and Kshemendra's work to the travel accounts of Hiuen Tsang and the, these texts reveal a harmonious relationship between the people of Kashmir and their flora and fauna. Sacred groves, medicinal plants, and revered animals held significant cultural, religious, and economic value, demonstrating a society that recognized the importance of nature in shaping both its material and spiritual life. Furthermore, these historical records suggest that ancient Kashmir's ecological practices were not only rooted in religious beliefs but also in practical applications such as agriculture, medicine, and trade. The interplay of climate, human intervention, and conservation reflects a sophisticated understanding of ecological balance, which can offer valuable insights into sustainable practices today. Ultimately, this study of Kashmir's ancient flora and fauna underscores the importance of preserving the region's rich environmental heritage while recognizing the enduring legacy of its cultural and ecological wisdom.

³⁷ Tsiang, Hiuen, *op.cit.*, pp.146-151