CHAPTER 3

PHYSICAL FEATURES AND GENERAL ASPECTS

TOPOGRAPHY:

Geographical speaking, the area under study has been classified as 'middle mountains'. The average height of peaks ranges from 4,000' to 12,000'; some valleys occur below and some peaks rise above these limits.

The steep mountain ranges and narrow rivers gorges are a very striking feature of this area. The mountains are characterised by the presence of thick vegetation on the northern slopes and the complete barrenness of the southern sides of the hills. The elevation of these mountains is sufficient to allow a temperate vegetation to flourish because of abundant rainfall.

RIVERS:

There are large number of small streams and nallahas scattered throughout the area. The streams and nallahs in the Lider valley area meet Lider river. This major stream rises from the Kolahoi glacier, which is called Lamboderi. The Lider irrigates a large tract of alluvial soil and for miles from either of its banks one can see a green sea of rich-fields during the summer. The aqueducts full of glacial water infuse life everywhere and we hear the rush and flow of water all along. A canal has been opened from the Lider river at Ganeshpur to water the Mattan plateau. This canal is called the Shahkol.
From Margan pass rises a stream named Naubug river, and it meets down in the valley with Jhelum.

**CLIMATE:**

The climate of the area under study varies with altitude. In the valley proper, the summer months, May to August, are pleasantly warm and dry. In July and August, Srinagar becomes a little warmer. The mean temperature at Srinagar in the month of August is 26.7°C (80°F), the highest in the year. In January and February, it goes down to 1.7°C (35°F). April-May and September-October are the best months for field work in the Kashmir valley.

**RAINFALL:**

The annual rainfall seldom exceeds 686 mm (27”). Therefore nowhere in the Kashmir valley is the visitor hampered and inconvenienced by a long and continuous monsoon season.

**VEGETATION:**

In spring the snow starts melting and the willows turn green. In May and June strawberries and cherries are available in abundance. Plums, pears and apples follow, and in early autumn, walnuts and almonds. In September and October, the cherry trees turn gold and copper, and in November the saffron fields are covered with mauve flowers. Perhaps autumn is in many ways the best season for a visit to Kashmir. But whatever be the time of the year, one can find a place where the climate and temperature are to one's liking.
In common with other parts of the Himalayas, the terrain under consideration, is noteworthy for the almost total absence of lakes of any size, while such small ones as do occur, are mainly confined to comparatively higher levels, not far removed from the region of existing glaciers, or where glaciers existed in comparatively recent times.

The northern edge of the Lider valley is flanked by steep and smooth mountain slopes, the slopes being interrupted in places by cliffs of trias limestone. The fine wash stuff from these slopes occurs in a beautiful curve of projection southwards and covers the root of the inter-fluvial tongue between the east and west Lider rivers. The colour of this wash stuff is slightly darker than that of the very similar fine brown alluvium which lies in a thick layer over the main till bed which composes the tongue.

The main mass of the tongue is a true glacial formation; it is a till of quite normal facies, the upper beds of which grade away into the superincumbent fine alluvium by a successive unbroken passage. There is, apparently, no definite break between them. Here and there in this till, scratched boulders occur and at one place on the banks of the east Lider, a buried cliff is exposed in natural section.
In the case of West Lider the right bank is composed of strike ridges of lie rock, smoothened in many places by very complex boulder beds and humus showing many signs of water action. The bedding of the rock runs with the stream. Though in places it is chamfered on top to a glacial contour, no striæ could be seen. That a glacier once flowed down the West lider valley to confluence of the present east and west Lider rivers is suggested rather than indicated.

CAVERNS:

The only caverns of any size occur in the limestone of the lower Lider valley of Kashmir, about a mile above the village of Bawan. One of these has its opening about 40' above the ground and may be traversed for a length of about 210' but seems to extend much farther. The entrance to the second is nearly 100' above the road and the cavern itself is about 48' in length. A thick coating of stalagmite forms the floor of these caverns and it is to be hoped that this may someday be penetrated; since however, the caverns are in the possession of Fakirs it will be difficult to obtain necessary permission.

APPROACH TO THE AREA:

There are two ways to travel to Kashmir - by land and air. Pathankot is the terminal railway station on Northern Railway where a person bound for Kashmir ends his train journey, to proceed further by
road. Beyond Jammu a beautiful road leads to Srinagar via Banihal tunnel. An alternative route is by air from Delhi, Amritsar, Pathankot, etc. to Srinagar. (Kashmir).

Besides these, there are other routes from Jammu, Chamba etc. suitable for pedestrians and ponies.