CONCLUSION

Social life of Simla Hills has dealt with the history of the paramount power and its effects on the social and cultural life of its inhabitants. During this period, as a result of civilisational contact, not interaction, because the latter connotes a significant relationship, certain vital changes, however, did take place in the society of Simla Hills. These vital changes have been dealt with in some depth and at some length in several chapters.

The introduction gives an extensive and deep description of geography, etc., and the life and ethnicity of the inhabitants to give the setting in which important part of Simla Hill history was played out followed by chapter II Historical background which shows the arrival of the British and consolidation of the paramount power. Because the British do not subscribe to sudden cataclysmic changes, they did not go in for any radical surgery in the existing Thakuraie system, though they streamlined it somewhat, intervening from time to time. Their essential role though, in addition to governance while respecting the autonomy of the Rajas, was that of supervision. This fact has been highlighted in Chapter II Historical Background.

Chapter III, General Social Life, deals with the unique religious life of the Simla Hills, which revolves around the village deities. The difference of this cult tradition from the
mainstream religion has especially been brought out in sharp relief. This cult tradition has its infrastructure of small and large temples, with gurs, oracles sooth-sayers Kardars who maintain the temples. The cult is communitarian and participatory. In the course of analysis, the erosion of the cult because of the shrinkage of the gur base and the turis taking to other professions and their offspring looking for "pastures new" has been pointed out as well. The chapter catalogues briefly the dress and ornaments of the people. The apparel is part of the social personality of the people. The apparel of the hill people shows their fondness for colour with a touch of flamboyance. They can be recognised differently from the rest of the Indians, especially women.

In Chapter IV, "Social Reforms and Welfare Work", the thesis settles into the history of begar and beth system, their moribund medieval nature and shameless exploitation of the poor and the marginal, the depressed and the sunken swarms. The chapter shows how a movement against those affected them and how decadent practices built over centuries were dented, though not pulverised. It highlights the role of the Britishers and their finally abolishing those which permeated hill society with noxious stench. Begar though has disappeared, but viewed psychologically and sociologically, it still prevails in India that is Bharat at bureaucratic and political levels when the officials and the politicians travel with their staff, family members and lumper chipkus and followers for visiting guest
houses and rest houses of PWD and forest departments, etc. *Begar* came to be abolished and practically disappeared in such blatant, gross form and the *beth* structure collapsed. The land of bonded tenants was returned since they were the sweat and blood tillers and thus deserved it. In addition to this revolutionary surge forward, viewing such with hindsight, certain major developments took place in the fields of education and in the area of social and health welfare. The details of the second contribution have been spelled out in the chapter IV. From 1870 to 1945, it is important to highlight the fact that the British Government established eight nearly full fledged hospitals and a solitary, modest one was established by the Raja of Baghat. The British also established eleven dispensaries whereas the Raja of Baghat set up just one Ayurvedic dispensary. Why the other Rajas of Bashahr, Jubbal, Keonthal failed to show like concern for their own people is somewhat baffling disappointing, to say the least because they were definitely more affluent than the Raja of Baghat.

The Status of Women has significantly progressed, registering a fair degree of amelioration. *Reet* was abolished. The chapter V shows how the Britishers succeeded in banning it after great preparatory debate and discussion and social mobilisation at the instance of social reformers and a handful of enlightened hill rajas. The British way has invariably been the way of debate and discussion, and social mobilisation to bring about any change in the polity before enshrining it in an
act and making it obligatory on people to follow it. The British do not go for a violent cut or rupture in history, unlike other colonial powers like the French, the German, the Dutch, the Spaniards did in the course of their colonisation. This has been especially underlined in chapter V "Status of Women".

The VI chapter Amusement and Recreation presenting the material on the fairs, by no mean inclusive, has been categorised in three slots, first, second and third. This should not be taken to mean the fair in slot one is more important psychologically, socially and culturally, because for the participant the importance of the fair is in the spirit, in the mystique, in the level of participation, in the gaiety and abandon that he brings to bear upon his participation. The weak and small or short can prove as powerful as the big tall and strong.

At this point, the fair vibrancy is being described in one dimensional prose—in 'cold print'. But for the people of Simla Hills, their participation in the fairs, some secular, some predominantly spiritual, like the mela fair around Shiv, Devi, etc., celebrating sheer animal strength and aggression — the buffalo emblematizing that — have made a rupture, a slash in their day-to-day existence. To adopt a concept of Mircea Eliade, they enter sacred space and experience supra expansion of energy and consciousness. Their social life, the intensity of interaction organized around the fairs is something unique in
the annals of history. Once in a while you want to be a part of a festival where you shed all civilized constraints and burst into laughter and zest.

It is a tribute to the British that they did not tamper with the socio-culturalism of Simla Hill people, thereby not deterring them from connectivity with the archaic to recharge their batteries instinctually, emotionally and spiritually.

The paramount power did not interfere in the immemorial socio-cultural fabric of historicity of the inhabitants in terms of their local religion, their festivals and fairs, songs and dances which continued as they had for millennia. This has been discussed in Chapter III "General Social Life" and in chapter VI "(Amusement and Recreation)." Historically, the contact of the Simla Hills with a different civilization and its effects has been examined in Chapters II, III, IV, V and VI.

It is hoped that future historians will further explore the interface between the British and the hill people, supplementing, complementing, qualifying, shading and nuancing my modest venture.

Rightly, Arnold Toynbee enunciates that history is primarily the relationship of challenge and response between civilizations and cultures. This challenge-and-response dialectics, insofar as Simla Hill is concerned, retained its unique religiosity and cultural historicity, but nevertheless
underwent significant historical changes economically, thereby losing its traditional roots, somewhat yet stepping into modernity.

In the course of the thesis Social History of a Simla Hills stance emerged crystallized itself that thought the British gave governance spear headed education, diffused social welfare, abolished begar and bethu, they did not interfere in social life in terms of its expression through age old fairs and festivals and amusement; they did not touch their religion.

Simla Hills acquired a modern visage, countenance without loosing its traditional moorings and roots.

But the story is not the same since the British left, the healthy balance between tradition and modernity has been affected adversely. Tradition has become recessive, modernity is furiously apace. The folkways are in danger of becoming a copy for Bollywood.

The present researcher would like to recommend that this balance of tradition and modernity be maintained and the course of pauperisation must be stopped through grass-roots movements while this is going on, documentation of religious and folk material must be done. Certain gods have fallen into disuse. The example of Magneshwar of Jubbal comes to mind. The five villages where he had a sway do not extend hospitality to the entourage of the godlings. In the Junga belt the believer do not know the story of Kathesar, for less its symbolism. The
present researcher would like to suggest that the Himachalies should enter into an analytic relationship now with their numinous heritage. In the neighbouring Punjab at Punjabi University, Patiala hundreds of studies at M.Phil and Ph.D. level have been carried out on folk material under the guideline of Prof. H.S. Gill. It is hoped that some such things would be done in the newly opened center of Himalayan Studies at Himachal Pradesh University.

The point which is conveyed is that tradition and modernity must go hand in hand in the social life of Simla Hills even as it was earlier in its history.