INTRODUCTION
INTRODUCTION

English has been taught in our educational institutions for quite sometime now, yet our students feel handicapped in using it effectively in and outside their classrooms. The reasons are many and manifold but the most obvious and glaring is the use of faulty methods of teaching and learning the language at various levels of our education. The methods so far used have been the Grammar-Translation and the Direct Method or at best an 'Eclectic Method' which combines some characteristics of both. These methods consider language learning/teaching a mechanical process without considering its cognitive aspects. The learner is considered a mere appendage in the learning/teaching process with no say, whatsoever, in any aspect of the curriculum. The teacher is a mere agent who transfers the set material from the higher authorities (the govt. or board of studies) to the students with no consideration of the peculiar situation that he finds himself in. The context in which he teaches and the students, that he teaches, their affective states and their needs are altogether ignored by our present system. The teacher who should have been at the top of curriculum framework is at the bottom most position with no say in its constitution. The examination system is faulty, testing the learner's memory and luck rather than his competence in the various language skills. All these factors have led to a deterioration of the educational system and a serious setback to quality education.

A shift, therefore, needs to be made if our language learning/teaching has to yield positive results. The Communicative Method with its learner-centred focus can help in equipping our students with adequate skills to use language
communicatively in different situations. It views language as a creative process with the learner playing a pivotal role. Native language though not completely abandoned becomes a boon rather than a bane in communicating through the target language. All the skills of language are equally acquired to enable the learner to use language effectively. This method takes not only the cognitive and creative aspects of the learner into consideration but also considers his psychological and behavioural aspects. It aims at developing the intrinsic motivation of the students and makes a teacher motivating, stimulating and supervising rather than imposing and thrusting. The shift of emphasis is from teaching to learning with the learner as the focal point. The learner's affective states and his learning needs are adequately catered to. There is an emphasis on acquisition as well practice in language teaching. The emphasis shifts from focusing on the language (i.e., correct grammar and structure) to an emphasis on the functions of language (i.e., what it is used for).

The teacher is the main agent of change and of prime importance in the learner-centred approach. Her roles are varied and manifold and her position in the whole educational system becomes indispensable.

Both the teacher and the learner are considered in every decision-making process of the curriculum. Their views carry weight and their recommendations are incorporated at various levels in the curriculum.

Because of its all-encompassing and multidimensional nature, the Communicative Method is envisaged not only to develop the communicative capacity in our students but also to empower them with the capability 'to learn how to learn' and become self-directive in the long run.

It is with these things in view that I have attempted to make an indepth assessment of our teaching/learning of English at the college level; to mark the limitations and restrictions under which we are presently working and to
suggest the remedial measures that need to be taken to come out of our fossilised system in which we have cocooned ourselves and subject ourselves to the changes occurring in the ELT world outside. The study has taken all the aspect of our teaching/learning situation in view. Chapter 1 deals with the history and evaluation of this rather novel method (at least in J&K). It shows how this Method evolved, over-shadowing all the other methods with its merits. It has come a long way from the 'functional-notional' to the 'interactional task-based' and 'learner-generated' type of teaching. It has changed the focus from the product learning-oriented to the process-oriented method of teaching/learning.

Chapter 2 deals with the implications that this method has for the teachers and learners in our non-native environment. The heavy demands it makes on the educational system as a whole, and in particular on the teachers and learners, has been discussed in detail.

Chapter 3 deals with the present scenario in the Kashmir valley regarding the system. The present curriculum is discussed at length and the drawbacks and shortcomings highlighted. The responses of the teachers and the students regarding various aspects of the curriculum are recorded. It is seen that both the teachers and the students are ready to take up the challenge offered by the Communicative Method. It has been generally accepted that heterogeneity in the proficiency levels of the students, unmanageable classroll, lengthy uninterested literature-oriented courses and faulty teaching methods are the main reasons behind the poor performance of students as far as the use of the language is concerned.

Chapter 4 deals with the actual implementation of the method in our situation. Many suggestions have been put forward that need to be considered. Learner awareness courses, teacher in service and pre-service training and
continuous ongoing evaluation of all the aspects of curriculum (including the teacher, the materials used, the syllabus, the techniques, the method used) are advocated. A teaching model has been proposed for use by teachers.

The study ends on an optimistic note wherein it is believed that the implementation of the Communicative Method is practical. A sincere effort from our experts and the government can set the rails on the tracks and get it going. We all need to pool in our efforts to make the Communicative Method work in our situation and make our education more fruitful and rewarding.