The Principal concern of methodology is wider. Philosophy of Science, issues in Social Science, and the study of how, in practice, sociologists and others go about their work, how they conduct investigations and assess evidence, how they decide what is true and false.

(Gordon Marshall : The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Sociology)
METHODOLOGY

2.1 Nature of the Study

The political scenario at the global level is fast changing, taking new turns and going through new phases. At the same time, the social and cultural set up of different societies is also going through changes. Thus there emerges a need to study these changes and developments as they affect the religious, linguistic and cultural life of communities and ethnic groups. Asserting their identity is a common phenomenon across the globe in the present times. Kashmir is no exception to this phenomenon. In fact, during last few years violence in Kashmir has become the primary reason for this. The violence and gun culture that has been dominating the Kashmiri social set up for years now, is aimed at asserting the unique identity of Kashmiris, although there is no doubt that violence has spread to other regions of the State. From the stand point of international politics, Kashmir continues to be the cause for concern. What is the Kashmiri Identity? What are its main features and dimensions? How it has emerged, faced different challenges and survived in different times is the concern of the present study. This study intends to provide a base for sociological research in this field.

2.2 Focal point of study

In the extreme north of India-Pakistan and at the southern point of Central Asia is situated a place called Jammu and Kashmir, formerly only Kashmir. The territories of this state before 1947 stretched from the Punjab plain to the Karakoram mountains. However, the state is presently divided between three different nations - India, Pakistan and China. China occupies two areas, one is Aksai Chin (formerly a district of the state) and a small strip of land to the north of the Karakoram watershed. Pakistan has conceded these areas to China. Of the remaining part, India is in occupation of an area of 138,942 square kilometres, while Pakistan controls an area of 78,114 square kilometres. As regards the areas under Pakistan, these are again divided into two parts. While the south-western corner of Jammu and Kashmir covering an area of 13,582 Sq. kilometres is the
Pakistani Kashmir or 'Azad Kashmir,' the other part covering 72,495 Sq. kilometres is the Northern Areas ruled by Pakistan directly.

The part of the state which is being controlled by India has three different regions - Jammu, Ladakh and Kashmir. Jammu is separated from Kashmir by Pir Panchal mountains. With an area of 26,293 Sq. kilometres, this region is divided into six districts. While the districts of Jammu, Kathua and some parts of Udhampur are dominated by Dogri-speaking Hindus and other districts of Poonch, Rajouri, Doda and some parts of Udhampur districts are dominated by Pahari-speaking Muslims.

Ladakh Region lies to the east of the Kashmir and is thinly populated (134,372 population according to 1981 census). This region is divided into two districts of Leh and Kargil. The people of Leh are mainly Ladakhi-speaking Buddhists and are ethnically Tibetan, while as the people of Kargil are mostly Balti-speaking Shia Muslims.

Kashmir region (area 15,948 Sq. kilometres) constitutes the valley of Kashmir. The valley is famous for its beauty all over the world. The region has a reputation for something distinctive in its nature and character. It is a thickly populated and having fertile area of orchards and paddy fields. Ninety-eight percent of its people are Muslims and the rest are Hindus (Kashmiri Pandits), Sikhs etc. The valley of Kashmir is divided into six districts for administrative purposes. Hindu minority of Kashmir, totalling about 3.00 lacs left the valley because of the disturbances after 1989. These Hindus are ethnically and linguistically the same as Muslims of this valley.

2.3 Collection of data / information

In order to collect the information about the concerned topic, both primary and secondary sources were used. The secondary sources included books, journals, reports, newspapers etc. In most of the cases detailed interview sessions were done with the respondents, where the researcher used tape recorder to record
the responses of the respondents. However, in some cases the responses were jotted down on paper and then arranged and re-arranged to give it a proper shape. While talking to the respondents the political affiliations of these people were taken into consideration in order to be more accurate in analysis. The questions broadly focused on:

i) Kashmiri's history, culture, economy, and religion;
ii) Kashmir vis-a-vis other cultures; and
iii) Political, social, cultural and ethnic developments of Kashmir.

2.4 Selection of Respondents

The topic of the study demanded that the respondents must know about the subject (of study) properly. For this purpose, intellectuals, academicians, journalists, political thinkers and politicians were selected by random sample. However, even common people were interviewed for the purpose to give a representative character to the sample. Representation was given to all the sections of the society.

2.5 Field Work

This study was conducted after doing extensive field work in different stages. The interview guide prepared for the purpose was processed through sociological pre-testing before the actual field work was taken up. The interview guide contained a list of questions on the topic and its related sub-topics. In most of the cases tape recorder was used to record the response of the respondents in question. The class of people who were interviewed included:

a) Intellectuals;
b) Academicians;
c) Experts on Kashmir;
d) Journalists;
e) Political leaders;
f) Religious leaders; and
g) Common people.
The responses thus collected were arranged theme wise and then incorporated in the text.

2.6 Methods / Tools and Sources

Both primary and secondary sources were used for the purpose of the study. The primary sources include the responses collected through interviews and observation. The secondary sources thus used consisted of books, journals, magazines, reports, government records, newspapers etc.

2.7 Data processing and Analysis

The responses given by respondents were in raw form. The responses were given code numbers and were kept in different files on the basis of themes and perspectives. The classification was done according to the variables and parameters in an arranged form. The same format was evolved throughout the study. In case of secondary data the same procedure was used. The analysis of the responses collected from respondents and the comprehensive review of literature was done which lead to the finalization of the present thesis. The review of literature was done keeping in view the publication date of the books and different themes and subjects discussed by the concerned authors. The representation in this case was given to different periods of history as per following break-up:

i) Books published up to 1947;
ii) Books published from 1948 to 1988; and

In this case a bibliography of books about Kashmir was prepared and after consultations with experts and the guide, the books which were found sociologically viable were reviewed. However, an attempt was made to focus on books giving representation to various religions, rulers, cultures, which have remained part of Kashmir.
2.8 Difficulties faced

The concept of Kashmiri Identity is being attributed with different meanings and concepts by people belonging to different political, religious and cultural backgrounds. Even intellectuals are not having any consensus on this issue. Different people and different schools of thought are giving their own definition and meaning of this concept. To accommodate the views of different people and different schools of thought was thus an uphill task. The lack of literature on the topic also created a number of problems for the researcher. At the same time the political ups and downs also created problems. The topic itself is a sensitive one both politically and socially. In most of the cases the responses recorded were highly irrelevant because, while discussing the topic the respondents distracted from the main topic. At the same time the required data like census etc. was not available as the census of 1991 was not carried out in Jammu and Kashmir. At the same time no academic work had been done in this field, thus hampering the researcher in this regard. On the other hand, because of the turmoil in the valley there was every possibility of not getting proper responses to some questions while some others were considered controversial or irrelevant, therefore misleading responses to some questions.