CULTURE OF ANY REGION OR ANY COUNTRY IS A COMPLEX PHENOMENON AND COMPRISAE MANY NUMBER OF FORCES OPERATING WITHIN ITS FRAMEWORK. THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC FORCES, THE RELIGIO-MORAL FACTORS AND THE POLITICAL AS WELL AS THE ADMINISTRATIVE SITUATIONS PLAY THEIR IMPORTANT PART IN FORMING THE CULTURAL COMPLEXION OF A SOCIAL GROUP. BUT CULTURE IS NOT A STATIC PHENOMENON AND UNDERGOES CONSTANT CHANGES. ANY SOCIETY AND ITS SOCIAL STRUCTURE CONSTANTLY KEEPS CHANGING THOUGH MAINTAINING ITS EQUILIBRIUM. THOUGH THE HISTORICAL FORCES THAT ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR GIVING DIRECTION TO SOCIO-CULTURAL CHANGES ARE DIFFICULT TO DECIPHER, THE CHANGES IN A CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY ARE NOT INACCESSIBLE TO ANALYSE. THE DYNAMICS OF SOCIAL CHANGE PRECEDING THAT PERIOD HAVE TO BE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION ALONG WITH THE VARIOUS CAUSATIVE AGENTS AND THEIR OPERATION. MOREOVER WHAT APPEARS QUITE IMPORTANT FOR SUCH DYNAMICS IS THE ACTION-REACTION PROCESS, CLASHES AND CONTRADICTIONS, CONFRONTATIONS AND CONSOLIDATIONS IN A GIVEN SOCIETY.

While assessing the changes in the structural framework in a region like Karathwada which presents a
remarkable sample of cultural transformation in the country various forces have to be taken into consideration. Primarily, Marathwada, whether in cities or villages, had a culture which was cherished by a feudal structure and manifested the salient features of a feudal culture. The twofold influence of basically not very different systems has to be taken into consideration in the context of socio-cultural changes in Marathwada, namely the orthodox Hindu culture and the Nizami conservative regime, both of them had their different principles in social construction but the relations of the two social attitudes to the modern way of life were the same. After the State’s integration in 1956 when Marathwada was merged into Maharashtra it was initially a juxtaposition of two different social situations or of two different stages in the process of evolution of the same society.

To explore the changes firstly the conceptual framework of the subject was discussed. Since the culture is produced in a social system, while studying cultural changes, the changes in the social structure reflected in the changing institutional patterns are studied. The changes in the middle-class women of
Marathwada are reflected in the changing institutional patterns such as changes in family structure, friendship patterns and marriage system and acceptance of employment of women and the concept of equality.

In societies, the changes occur in people by the contact of groups of different cultures. The acceptance of different institutional patterns from a group was studied in the light of reference group theory. The nature of the present setting of the society in Marathwada is highlighted.

Chapter II is concerned with the methodological procedure and the techniques and tools used for data collection are discussed. The data was obtained mainly by administering the questionnaire to the randomly selected sample of middle-class respondents from middle-class localities. The primary socio-graphic data of the respondents is analysed. In later chapters this primary data is correlated to the behaviour patterns and the formation of changed attitudes of the respondents due to culture contact from outside. The contact of migrants from Western Maharashtra and the respondents view towards them is discussed.
Chapter III presents a profile of middle-class women in Marathwada in the pre-integration times (i.e., the integration of Marathwada with the Maharashtra State). The profile of middle-class women gleaned from literary sources reflects the fetters of middle-class women of those times. She herself was unaware of the progress that women outside Marathwada had made. Only a few women who had political and social awareness helped in the freedom struggle. The interviews of some women of Marathwada who have seen the Nizam rule and changes which occurred later on, picturize the woman in society and family of that time, through their practical experience. Considering this as a point of departure, changes that have occurred onwards, in the attitudinal and behaviour patterns of middle-class woman in Marathwada, are explored. Changes that have occurred in attitudes and behaviour-patterns of women, in context of some major institutional areas have shown the profile of changing middle-class woman in Marathwada.

The fourth chapter discusses the nature of middle-class family in Marathwada under Nizam rule, which was rural-agriculture based joint family. The woman's role in the family, relationships in the role-set, were defined by rigid normative patterns.
The family functioned as a collective entity giving hardly any scope for individuality of a single member and above all women lived an entirely indoor life. The impetus towards urbanization has resulted in the changes in the type of family as it has occurred everywhere else in different proportions. However the nature of change remains a debatable question. The interest of the study lies in exploring whether the weaker sex has gained an equal status in the structural framework of the family.

The scrutiny shows a remarkable change towards individualistic tendencies and urge for independence. The significant change is women have become more assertive about their rights and they participate in the decision-making about the major institutional spheres in the family. The instrumental authority of the eldest male head of the family is seen decentralized as it is exhibited in the participation of woman in the important spheres of decision-making. The right of decision making about important personal matters, regardless of sex show the trend of change in the system of hierarchy of power and control.

The fifth chapter, regarding the friendship patterns and marriage it was seen that the friendship
with the other sex which was a taboo in this region previously, is now gradually being accepted. The traditional bonds are loosing due to several factors. Education, Students' participation in socio-cultural activities, urbanization and the effect of liberal behaviour pattern of migrants from Western Maharashtra who are seen as a reference group, have forced the women to come in contact with the society. However, the meaning of friendship patterns in Marathwada have not reached to the extent of liberal patterns which one finds in cosmopolitan cities like Bombay or Poona.

It was observed that there is a slow but sure change regarding attitudes towards marriage. The adoption of liberal attitude has given the right of decision-making to the girl regarding her marriage. Moreover, conjugal relationship which was considered subordinate and almost discouraged in the pre-integration times is now of paramount importance and also considered pivotal. The acceptance of attitude that marriage is a matter of individual choice has led towards perceiving the marriage as a companionship of spouses by a considerable number of women. There is an awareness about the evils of dowry. The status of widows has changed and widow remarriage is now accepted.
It was found out that though the changing society has loosened the caste-barriers, intercaste marriage is still not accepted by the majority of the respondents. This shows that the caste-consciousness is still deeply rooted in the society. It is seen that the change is accepted in selective areas and stubbornly rejected, in certain other areas. In this fluid situation some old ideas have changed and new ideas have taken their place, while some have remained unchanged.

Movement for women's education started by the political leaders had a poor response in the beginning for many years. The articles reviewed in the Third Chapter show that few families which have migrated from West-Maharashtra, insist and consider it essential to send their daughters for college education. In the Sixth Chapter it was found that there is a transformation in the situation and number of women students is not only increasing but it was found out that the level of education has also gone up. Now women think that graduation or post-graduation should be the necessary level of education for women. This rise in education, in turn, helps for acceptance of employment.

The exploration of changing attitudes of women towards employment shows that the women of this region
are coming out of the tradition-bound, fixed images which are ingrained in them. The traditionally reinforced image of woman as a dependent person has now vanished and woman considers employment as essential. However, in the Indian setting, it becomes essential to explore whether the woman's work has really given her economic independence or not. It was found out that majority of the respondents have the authority over saving or spending her own salary, according to her wish. Employment, thus, has improved her status in the family. Thus bringing out changes in another institutional areas. Employment has also compelled the woman to mix with the male colleagues at place of work which in turn helps to change the orthodox normative patterns. On the whole, it is observed that the acceptance of employed woman as an independent personality has replaced the traditional ideas about woman, by an emerging rational consideration for assessing the contribution which woman can make for the development and modernization.

It was observed that the change that took place so speedily after the integration of Marathwada with Maharashtra State, was a cumulative effect of many factors. The review of literature, interviews of some
eminent ladies who participated and helped for 'Hyderabad Liberation Movement', the analysis of the effects of different independent variables on the changing attitudes of women have shown that the change can be explained partly in context of education, urbanization and partly due to the effect of reference group of the migrated people from Western Maharashtra which took place mainly after the integration of Marathwada with West Maharashtra. The change can be seen partly as cultural contagion which took place from a developed to an underdeveloped culture. After the integration of Marathwada with West-Maharashtra, not only government aids but also communication with Western Maharashtra gave incentives for accepting the change which took place in that area much earlier in social life. At the same time the process of urbanization was also started which created forces for change. The introduction of comparatively progressive and liberal behaviour pattern which was set by the migrated women from West Maharashtra were brought up in liberal traditions, had their education in co-educational institutions, were willing to take up jobs and work with men or to participate in various socio-cultural activities. Their behaviour was first met with disapproval but was further slowly accepted and adopted. They became a desired pattern
for change in cultural aspirations, particularly in the life of women of this region. The comments of eminent women of Marathwada (as given in Third Chapter) are significant in this context. The analysis of data shows that considerable number of respondents, specially those of the elder generation, noted that the comparatively modernized behaviour-pattern of the migrant women from Western Maharashtra was a leading force towards acceptance of change. The initial start by migrant women to come out of the house and to mix in the society was a threat to the existing normative pattern. Further started the process of selective borrowing of the behaviour patterns of these reference models and the changes in attitudes accordingly. The acceptance of the life-styles of migrants is in a way, a process of acculturation in the sense of emulation of an effective if not dominant, culture. This adaptation started at the superficial, overt behavioural level first, later on bringing out the changes in attitudinal and behavioural patterns in institutional spheres. Here it is seen that the weaker or underdeveloped region is adopting the culture of a stronger region, a backward area accepting the culture of an advanced area - but within the broad framework of a similar culture and without willing to lose some of the basic characteristics which are the
strong points of the indigenous culture.

However it was found that different independent variables, i.e., socio-geographic data of the respondents, also have an effect on the acceptance and adoption of change. The younger generation is found more progressive and susceptible to change. Higher education, more urbanized background in the period of socialization, employment, higher educational background of parents, were found having positive correlation with the acceptance of change in most of the explored areas, acting as supportive factors for preparing the background for change.

In some spheres unmarried respondents were comparatively more progressive than married respondents. But in some areas like authority and participation in the process of decision-making about financial matters, married respondents did have more authority. This can be attributed to the acceptance of the equal status of wife in the family. It was observed that in certain areas higher castes held more progressive attitudes. Marathas and specially non-Maharashtrian communities, are comparatively less willing to change. The traditional politico-economical domination of these two groups would
prevent them from accepting change so as to maintain the status-quo, since the change is always considered a threat by the dominant group. The joint property and business of the Gujaratees and Marwaris, also prevent them to adopt individualistic tendencies and modernized outlook. Thus it was observed that the new values are now being internalized at the level of the personality system, for which micro-structural forces and features have their influence, to some extent, on shaping up the attitudes and behaviour patterns.

The analysis of the data showed that the gap between the socio-cultural set up of West-Maharashtra and Marathwada, since Marathwada is lagging behind, is now nearly filled up. The functions, roles, relationships of women in various basic institutions like family, marriage and employment and her own perception about herself are changing.

Similarly, the change can be seen resulting in a legitimization of the changing attitude towards herself and towards her relationships in the role-sets. This legitimization has created a new conception of the adequate socially desirable middle-class woman, balancing in different spheres of performance and responsibility,
such as in her occupational role on one hand and in her family on the other. The ideological legitimation of new differentiated femininity than before is seen exhibited basically in family life, in having an equal status as a family member, regardless of sex, an individualistic orientation resulting in more emphasis on preference for devotion towards basically nuclear family set up. A later phase involves various forms of community participation and occupational involvement, or accepting a woman's right to do so.

The change that has occurred is not a structural change at large but there are some definite positional changes in the different institutional spheres. As a result of the influence different factors together, the change that occurred has enabled the middle-class woman of Marathwada for her self-actualization as an independent entity. Though accepting the role of working woman and creating an image of independent and self-reliant woman which is totally different from the traditional image was a slow process, it helped to change the overall position of women in the society. The traditionally reinforced and glorified image of shy-coy woman or the 'gruhini-mata' image (house wife and mother) has now definitely changed and the woman
is considered as an able, dynamic and independent personality. The perception of the woman about her equal status has not only changed her own view towards herself but also other's attitudes towards her.

The middle-class woman in Marathwada in general and in Aurangabad in particular has gone through a great socio-cultural change after the merger of Marathwada in West-Maharashtra. The factors initiating change, such as women's education, employment, participation in socio-cultural activities were initially inducted by the migrated middle-class women from West Maharashtra, who become a reference group for the middle-class women of Marathwada. The cultural gap of more than half a century is almost bridged up within two decades and the middle-class, woman of Aurangabad is no longer lagging behind the middle-class woman of Western Maharashtra. She is seen in the field of education, employment, socio-political activities as she is seen in the belt of West-Maharashtra. In the sphere of family as well as in the society she is a dynamic force and the changes in her opinions and attitudes are significant. This change has erased the shadowy role-image of woman and she has emerged as a
human being, performing her rights and duties on equal footing.

The study of the process of change, and the different factors which influence it is considered significant, in so far as it enables us to identify the effective measures for self-actualization for the middle-class woman as an independent entity.

Suggestions:

Further studies can be conducted on the impact of reference-group on rural women and whether the process of acculturation has started taking place among them. A study of the lower-class women and the culture contact with the migrants from other parts will highlight the total change in the women. Study of higher-class women who are exposed to the factors of modernization and westernization due to their travel outside Marathwada is also necessary.

However, to get a complete picture of the culture contact from developed regions, a study of social system including the men should be undertaken to highlight the changes in this society due to (1) integration into Maharashtra State (2) development of the region and influence of migrants from developed regions.