Conclusion
The independence of Tajikistan at the end of last millennium fulfilled the long and cherished dream of the people of this region. Tajiks could not have their separate independent state since the decline of Samanids about one thousand years ago. They are the only non-Mongol, non-Turkic people of the region, as racially speaking they are Aryans. Historically Aryans have their home originally in Steppes region of Central Asia. Through various phases of history and geography the present day Tajikistan got formed. It is a nation where many ethnic groups Tajiks, Uzbeks, Kyrgyz and other nationalities reside. Different linguistic groups and cultural regions are together. Tajiks are also conspicuous by present in Afghanistan and Uzbekistan. Today, the most important cultural centres of Tajiks, Samarkand and Bukhahra, are in a different country. Because of this, there seems to be cultural void was created, but political capital Dushanbe, is fast catching up to become the cultural hub as well for the Tajiks.

Soon after its independence from the USSR, civil war broke out this took a heavy toll on Tajikistan. But gradually things improved and by the middle of 2002 Tajikistan appeared to have acquired a degree of stability. The majority of armed opposition groups have been integrated into the regular army. National elections were held which reinstated President Rahman(ov) and formed a new Parliament. UN led peace-keeping forces have left the country, following the expiry of their mandate. Despite these positive indications, however levels of violence remained high and political assassinations, though substantially decreased, are still there. Tensions remained within the government and more active members of Islamic Opposition retained only a fairly loose commitment to supporting the regime.
The defeat of the Taliban in late 2001 and the establishment of Karzai Government in Afghanistan reduced tension in the region to a certain extent. Nevertheless, for various reasons, Afghanistan remained one of the destabilising factors for Tajikistan. The drugs trade, for example, contributed a large portion of Tajikistan’s illegal economy; weapons continued to be illegally imported from Afghanistan: furthermore, the threat of Islamist fundamentalism persisted, despite global efforts against terrorism. International aid agencies agreed that the most effective way to combat drugs-trafficking was to increase humanitarian assistance to border communities. At the same time the Tajik Government needs to confront problems of corruption and regionalism.

In order to improve internal stability, a programme of democratisation and economic reform was essential. The government has thus far strengthened its powers at the expense of the legislature, and the ruling party exercises more influence and power than the opposition party. It was widely agreed that the international community’s renewed interest in the region was not enough incentive for the Tajik government to implement much-needed changes to prevent political and economic collapse and social unrest; rather, international financial and technical aid was required to assist reform the public sector and to support poverty-reduction programmes. In July 2002 Russia donated humanitarian aid to Tajikistan. In the same month the USA pledged to increase economic assistance to the country and confirmed plans to train the Tajik military as part of its campaign against terrorism. The increased US presence in Tajikistan signalled the gradual withdrawal of Russia’s military presence from the former Soviet state. But the situation soon reversed and now the largest Russian military base in Central Asia is in Tajikistan. With increased foreign assistance and help including that from India and committed leadership at the helm of affairs, this small but very important nation in Central Asia is ready to play pivotal role in the regional political, social and cultural developments.

Tajiki, one of the oldest languages of the world, belongs to the Indo-Aryan group of families. It is also called the ‘language of love’ and also the ‘language of cultures’ and it is one of the simplest languages of the world, easy to learn and speak.
Literature produced in this language has affected other literatures of near and far in terms of thought, ideas, culture and religion etc. One of its dialects, Persian, was the official language of India for many centuries during medieval, Mughal periods and as late as till 1832. It also has absorbed influences from other languages, including the Arabic language, which has in a way created this language and gave it the permanent script called ‘Arabic script’. The Arabic script continued for a long time, but during the Soviet period it was changed to Cyrillic alphabets in Tajikistan.

Modern Tajik language has been influenced by French and Russian languages. Before the October Revolution in Russia, many Tajik and Iranian scholars went to Europe and studied their language and literature, upon their return they produced works and used some French words to give correct expression. When Russians and later on Soviets took over Central Asia, Tajik language was once again influenced by the external factor and this interaction brought a positive change in it. There was an intermingling of ideas. When Tajik literature was translated into Russian language and vice versa, there was a greater understanding between the two cultures. Modern Russian literature and many scientific works were made available to the Tajiks.

After the independence of Tajikistan, there is an ongoing debate on the selection of script for Tajiki language. Many people in Tajikistan and also Iran want that ‘Arabic Script’ should once again be adopted, which will connect the present generation to vast Tajik world classics. But some people say that it will take back the language standards of Tajikistan to the medieval period and may take the Tajiks backwards from the scientific and modern literature which is available in Russian and in Cyrillic scripts. It may be noted that most of the Tajiks are bilingual, they speak, read and write Tajik and Russian languages. Though Tajik is the national language, Russian is still used as the medium to transact businesses. The debate is going on but the government of Tajikistan has introduced the teaching in Tajiki from the elementary level at the schools which will, in course of 10 to 15 years, cover the higher educational and technical institutions as well.
There is a vast repository of literature in Tajikistan in Persian/Tajiki language. The classic like *Shahmane* has no match in the world literature. Golden period of the Tajik literature was during the Samanid rule. These rulers gave special attention to the development of Tajik literature and culture. Thousands of poets and writers were supported by the state, princes and *amirs*. But everything after reaching a peak has to decline, Tajik literature was no exception to it. Poets and writers lost touch with the ground realities and had their focus only on the courts and of their patrons. Subjects related to the general masses were not dealt at all. This situation continued in one form or the other till the coming of Russians and later on Soviets. A whole new world of literature was brought before them. Old style of writing changed dramatically. Before the revolution there had been only *tazkirat* (description), which were generally uncritical anthologies in nature. With the considerable help from the Russians, the study of Tajik literature has developed well with contributions from highly qualified individuals in fields like literary history, criticism and theory. After the coming of Russians, it became very common to subject every new literary work to criticism. Thus far, however, no detailed and systematic history of Tajik literature has been produced. Some works have been produced by the Tajik and Russian scholars; Braginski, Husainzoda, Tabarov, Shukurov, Babajan Ghafurov, Levkovskaya, *Acherk istara i tajikkoi sovetskoy literaturi*, published in Moscow. It may be mentioned here that study of the history of the Tajik literature from the 16th century onward was practically initiated by the Soviet scholars.

During the soviet period the Union of Tajik writers played an important role in raising the standard of modern Tajik literature and there is undoubtedly the study of Soviet Tajik literature was founded by Sadruddin Aini. His first history of Tajik literature *Namuna i Adabyat i Tajik* was published in 1926, within ten years of the October Revolution of 1917.

The study of Tajik literature is mainly done in institutions of the Tajik Academy of Sciences – the *shoba i sharq senasi wa asri adab* (Department of Oriental studies and Literary Heritage, Dushanbe) for classical literature, and the *instituti zabon va adabyat* (Institute of Linguistics and Literature which has been renamed as the Rudaki Institute of Language and Literature) for modern and contemporary literature. The latter also possesses a special folklore department. Besides, the study of literature is pursued at the Dushanbe University, Pedagogical Institute in Dushanbe and Qurghanteppa, the universities in
Samarkand and Tashkent and elsewhere. One of the oldest literary scholars is Bahram Sirus (born 1885), who is also the author of several collection of poems, had studied classical literature, the aruz, and published a selection of verses from the Shahnama. He also did research in Tajik folklore. Other founders of modern Tajik literary studies, include Tarakul Zehni (born in 1894) and Rahim Hashim (born 1908), and Abid Ismati.

The outstanding literary historian Abdul Ghani Mirzaev (born in 1907), who was a member of the Tajik Academy of Sciences, studied primarily classical literature of 16th to 19th centuries (Saido, Danish). He has also published many treatises and articles on classical literature, specially Rudaki. Other scholars who specialize mainly in pre-revolutionary literature include Rasul Hadizadeh (19th century, Danish), Kamal Aini (Hiali and other writers), and M. Baqoev (Khusro Dehlavi and others). Classical and contemporary literature are the subjects studied by Sharif Husianzadeh (born 1907), one of the authors of the aforementioned Outline of the History of Tajik Literature published in 1956. The leading younger literary historians and critics concentrating on modern literature include Shoib Tabarrov born 1924, who was a Professor in a University in Dushanbe, and Assistant Professor Y. Babaev. Of the youngest generation, mention should be made, among others, of Atakan Saifullah, Masoo Mullajan, S. Salo, and Kh. Otakhanova. Most prominent among the scholars specializing in the theory and history of drama and Tajik dramaturgy are N. Nurjanov and L. Demidchik. Folklore – a field to which is being increasingly paid in Tajikistan – is the domain of Rajab Amanov, V. Asrori and B. Tilavov. Many Tajik authors write critical literary essays and articles, principally Tursunzadeh, Olughzadeh, Rahimi and some members of the younger literary generation. Ikromi and Tabarov also appeared in the press as drama critics, while Dehoti, Ulughzade and many others collect and study folk literature.

At present considerable attention is being paid to bring out monographs on Tajik writers, literary classics, and collection of Tajik folklores and publications of works by the folk poets so that masses are made aware of their literary treasure. Iran is also helping in study of Tajik literature. Many books have been published by Tehran in Persian script which were written by the Tajik writers, it has also donated computers with Persian softwares to Tajikistan.
Tajiks of the present day Tajikistan are having a complex mixture of national traditions and modern values, often influenced by the urban culture. There are several factors that determine the way of life of the ordinary people in this country. The most important is whether one lives in the city or countryside. City dwellers have much higher incomes, more modern values, greater access to modern means of entertainment such as television, radio and the internet and means of communications. Another factor is what generation a person belongs to?. Younger people often have greater access to international mass culture and tend to be more cosmopolitan in taste and nature. Meanwhile it is expected that mature people act their age and be more devoted to their families, social duties, and traditions and are less interested in leisure activities. The third factor that determines lifestyle is social status. One person is culturally inclined according to what place they have in that society.

It is difficult to generalize ‘culture’ about any nation, but even more difficult for a society as culturally diverse and complex as in Tajikistan. Yet there are several features that are common to most people in the country. Tajiks have unique cultural tradition. It is a mixture of many traditions and cultures. Nauroz, which is of Zoroaster origin, is still celebrated and it is the largest festival of Tajikistan. Tajiks highly value their close knit communities and the sense of belonging that they provide. Tajiks often share their achievements and difficulties with the members of their communities. They also highly value hospitality and they usually celebrate important events with their extended families, friends and neighbours. More often even a total is invited to join a celebration of such important events as a wedding or the birth of a child. There is also a very strong sense of mutual assistance, since it is expected that the people will help and support one another in times of difficulty with any reasonable means. In etiquette, there would be perhaps no match of Tajiks. Though during the Soviet period Tajiks got influenced by many things, but they even influenced the Soviets. Tajiks would come at the gate, even though they may be holding very high position, to meet their guest and come out to see him off at the time of departure. In the offices, officials have different table and chairs of equal height where they talk to the people who have come for work. This is amazing that they leave their seats and sit at equal chair.

Before the Soviets, traditional Tajik social relations had been built around the concept of social and political rank and the separation of sexes. The economic and political
developments of the 20th century, however, significantly changed these notions. This led to a complex mixture of past and present, a vibrant interchange between traditional Islamic and Central Asian culture and modern western models. Until the 20th century tradition strongly endorsed separating the sexes in public and family life. It was widely accepted that girls should be taught to be housewives only and to be prepared exclusively to perform her domestic duties. Many women remained uneducated, because there was a strong traditional perception that they did not need extensive schooling. Women could not take positions in government or public life and could not vote or participate in any discussion of development at the community level. Moreover, they were not allowed to go out of their homes alone, even for shopping, specially without being properly veiled and dressed. Most houses were divided into separate sections for males and females and the sexes could mix in public even during weddings and other major family events.

In the late 1920s, the Soviet authorities introduced and fiercely enforced a policy of liberalization of women. They allowed women to abandon veiling in public. Women were encouraged to enrol in schools and universities and to serve in public positions. The government even established informal job quotas for women in universities, local and national governments, ministries and the agencies that made up the Communist Party.

By the late 20th century this policy had resulted in the creation of a large class of professional women who had their independent incomes and a strong presence in public institutions and at many levels of government. There was no longer the segregation of men and women in public. Young people could meet at restaurant, night clubs, sports centre, and other public places without any social stigma.

The situation began to change after 1991, as the steep economic recession, the civil war, rise of Islamic extremism, an increasing isolation from the outside world resulted in a high level of unemployment. Women were among the first to lose their jobs and their voices in public life. Some older, pre-modern traditions also made a comeback in many parts of the country. Segregation of men and women in public, for example, has begun to slowly re-emerge during the last few decades.
At present, urban women still enjoy large degree of freedom; they can decide on their own education, jobs, and lifestyles. Many young women often prefer to wear western style dress and enjoy western style entertainment. Meanwhile, many rural women are often strongly encouraged not to attend school beyond the primary or secondary level and to prepare themselves only to be housewives. In some families, girls’s opinions are not counted when the families chose their future husbands, and young women are not allowed to go out alone without guardians.

The urbanization and modernization that characterize much of the 20th century left their imprint on national traditions, making them less restrictive and more flexible. More recently, the opening up of the country after independence to the outside world and the rapid growth of an international mass media culture have contributed to major cultural shift in Tajikistan. Young people now have more liberty. Although tradition remains an important means which is still binding the Tajik society.

The Tajiks highly respect the older members of their communities, the aksakals, and often turn to them for advice, for social and political support, or for resolving existing disputes. Elderly people are considered to be the source of wisdom. They exert strong influence both in their families and their local communities. It is considered polite to listen to elders, to invite them for discussions of various social, political, and community matters, and to ask for their opinions about wide variety of issues. Young people still go to the elderly members of their extended families and of their communities to ask for approval of major undertakings, such as decision to move to other places or accept work in other countries. This approval and advice, however, is not binding and does not carry the same weight as it did about half century ago. Still elders often play a central role at the local level, and sometimes they are even entrusted to carry out justice in cases involving minor offences.

After independence, there has been great emphasis on reviving the Tajik culture from all quarters. Government of Tajikistan has been organizing seminars and fairs to emphasise and redefine ‘Tajik culture’ connecting itself with Zoroastrians and Samanid traditions of Tajikistan. To some extent it has been successful in infusing the sense of nationalism as
against regionalism. People now talk about the 'country' and not about the regions from where they belonged to.

For centuries the area that makes up the present day Tajikistan was populated by various ethnic and religious groups. The groups that played major role in forming modern Tajik culture and identity, spoke Persian and Turkic based languages. The Persian speaking peoples established their presence and developed their cities first. The Turkic speaking people began arriving in large numbers from the fourth to sixth centuries A.D., probably even earlier.

In spite of religious, linguistic, and cultural differences, various people who settled in the region co-operated with one another in times of foreign invasion or in the face of natural calamities. There were significant cultural exchanges between Tajik-Persian and Turkic speaking communities. Inter-marriages between the two groups became common. At the same time some groups and communities competed fiercely with one another for political and economic influence or dominance. The area experienced its share of turbulent times, as a series of devastating wars slowed the consolidation of the Tajik nation and further weakened the people's abilities to resist foreign invaders.

By the late 19th century, the Russian empire controlled most of the central Asian region, but in many places its presence was minimal. In the 20th century, however, the Soviet authorities established tighter control over the social and cultural aspects of the people living in Central Asia. Although the Tajik state was formed, many Tajik communities remained outside of the country's official boundaries, mainly in the provinces of Bukhara and Samakand in Uzbekistan. At that time, in the late 1920s, when the modern borders of Tajikistan were established, the population of the country was about 1.2 million. In 2004 the total population of the country was estimated to be about 7 million. Tajikistan is one of the least urbanized countries in the Asian continent, with around 72% of its population living in rural areas. Tajikistan is the only Persian/Tajik speaking country in Central Asia and is a part of the Persian speaking world which includes a significant number of people in Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq and many other countries.
Defining identity of the Tajik people has been very complex. There is long history of development of different identities in Tajikistan. Though the Tajik scholars claim Samanids as their first state, but till now there has been no literature which clearly claims that the Samanids themselves identified as the ‘Tajiks’. During the historical period identity of an individual was defined on the basis of religion, race and language. During the Soviet period national boundaries were drawn and identity was defined in geographical terms, those living in a particular territory were identified as one group.

After independence, Tajiks are seeking to redefine their identity on the basis of race, history, culture, language and heritage. Tajikistan has to accommodate a large population of other races, languages too and it has to tread carefully on the path of inclusive consolidation to form a strong, united and vibrant nation.

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