Recent global developments have influenced the situation in Central Asia, and the region has become the centre of international activities affecting the region and beyond. All great and not-so-great international players have become active in this region trying to establish their influence and have a say. Central Asia has major deposit of the natural gas, mineral oil and other important minerals. During the Soviet period this region was an important source of the raw material for the industries as well as agricultural produce.

Tajikistan is one of the important countries of Central Asia, its strategic location gives it an edge over the other countries, it is just 18 kilometers away from Indian borders, this is the country which joins South Asia with Central Asia and has the potential to become a passage for India in reaching out to the Central Asian energy resources and markets. India and the present day Tajikistan have a long history of association since time immemorial. It has been a nice experience to work on an area which henceforth was unexplored through the language and culture perspective.

For my research on the theme of “Language, Culture and Identity in Tajikistan”, I got the opportunity to visit Tajikistan for field work and have the direct interface with its people and culture. I stayed there for one month, which was very useful in collecting many materials, meeting with people of different walks of life and interviewing them. I used the random sampling method. Visiting different cities and villages gave me an idea of the life of the Tajik people, their culture and also how they are trying to formalise their separate national identity. There I found out that people and academics in the capital are more concerned with the issues of culture and identity. People of other regions and especially of the northern Tajikistan do not bother much about these things. It was observed that they are more concerned about the economic problems faced by country.
My research work is divided into the five main chapters, the first one gives brief introduction of Central Asian countries, the geographical settings and importance of Central Asia in the region and the world. Here, Tajikistan has also been introduced in order to understand the historical, social, cultural and political as well the economic developments in Tajikistan. Gradual development and consolidation of Tajikistan as modern nation has also been discussed here. Maps of Tajikistan and its neighbouring countries have been put there, photos about different places and issues has also been made available which gives the information about the life of the people in Tajikistan.

The second chapter discusses about the languages spoken in Tajikistan, how the modern Tajiki evolved from the Parseek and Persian languages. There have been changes in its scripts for many times and once again there is intense debate currently going on in Tajikistan for once again changing it back to Arabic/Persian script. Two groups of different opinions are there, one saying we should change it from Cyrillic to Arabic based alphabets. Other group differs, citing many reasons like huge costs etc. Tajikistan is not a monolingual nation. Other than Tajiki, there are other languages being used by the Tajik people for communication. Those in Badakhshan use altogether different language which has its origin in the family of languages other than the Indo-European family of languages of which Tajiki/Farsi is a member.

The next chapter gives details about the literature in Tajikistan, from the earliest times to the present day. It is amazing to realise the fact the during the early phase of the propagation of Islam, many native speakers lost their languages when they came in contact with the Arabs and accepted Islam as their religion, like Egyptians lost their original language and adopted Arabic, but Arabs could not repeat the same in Central Asia, here people embraced the religion with open arms but fiercely defended their culture and language. In the historical times the literary materials were produced by a handful of courtiers, it was not available to the common masses. The issues dealt in those literatures were of no use for the general public, as these often dealt with the metaphorical subjects or topics of other world. During the medieval period many great literary works were produced in Tajikistan. Tajiki literature (in Arabic/Persian alphabets) has produced a number of master pieces which are still considered as the treasure of the world literature. The Shahnama by Firdausi
is an example of it. Tajiki literature reached its epitome during the Samanid period. The courts of Samanid rulers were full of the masters of literature. During this period both poetry and prose benefitted due the patronage provided by the Samanid rulers and their subordinates in their respective areas.

Chapter four deals with the 'culture in Tajikistan'. How the culture of Tajiks has taken shape, as it is at present. There are peoples of many nationalities and races living side by side in Tajikistan. There are Aryans, Uzbeks, Kyrgyzs. People of Badakhshan have developed their own culture which is distinct from others. There has been influence of different cultures, Uzbeks, Iranian, Islamic and in the recent times of the Russians. Modern Tajik culture begins with the coming of Russians, they brought ballet, cinema, drama and other forms of cultural expression.

The final chapter is about the issue of 'identity' in Tajikistan. The issue of identity has been a recent theme in academic researches on Tajikistan. There are different identities being found in the Republic of Tajikistan, which have historical, religious and geographical determinants. After independence in 1991, the government of Tajikistan has been continuously trying hard to create a separate national identity of its people. General populace of Tajikistan has different factors on with which they identify themselves like, regional, religion (different sects), residence- mountainous, plane, city dwellers, villagers etc. People from the Badakhshan region have their separate identity and in general call themselves as 'Pamiris' and not as Tajik.

There was a civil war which raged for five years from the period of 1992 – 1997. The country is still recovering from that war, which was basically fought on political basis, but later on took the overtones of regional identities. Now, people are developing their identity on national basis, regionalism is no longer the dividing force. During my interaction with the people from different regions, I found that they did not believe in regionalism, they increasingly feel themselves as Tajiks rather than Khujandi or Kulaybi etc. They are fast developing the consciousness of a 'nation'. The government of the Republic of Tajikistan very often organises several programmes remembering great Tajik personalities to infuse nationalism into the masses. Recently it celebrated 1150 years of Rudaki, and the year 2009 is being celebrated as the year of Imam Abu Hanifa. It increases awareness among the citizens
about their ancestors, and they start identifying themselves with such great personalities.

There is concluding chapter details the findings of my research. I am hopeful that gradually Tajikistan will develop to its full potential and will help in providing a safe and stable Central Asia free from religious or any kind of extremism. People of Tajikistan are more religious now than what they were before future but at the same time they believe in religious tolerance.

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