Chapter VIII
Conclusion
The main aim of the thesis has been to examine and analyse the customs and habits of the Pandits and the Muslims of Kashmir. The two communities together constitute the majority of population of the Valley. Attempt has been made to determine the social relevance of these customs and habits. The thesis also takes care of several Reform Acts meant to secure betterment of the womenfolk. Most of these reforms, as would be observed, had become imperative in the best interests of the emerging values of an enlightened and progressive society. In addition to a discussion of the customs and ceremonies of these two communities, the project also deals with the food habits, use of dress, ornaments, linguistic patterns and general habits of the people. It also seeks to present the process of interaction and consequent integration in respect of these customs and habits of the two communities.

On the whole the customs of the Kashmiris, the Pandits and the Muslims, did not undergo much perceptible change. Many rituals and ceremonies connected with birth, marriage and death hardly underwent much change. However, there were ripples visible in the stream of people's thinking. Several reform movements were launched during the period under review. Of course, these movements did influence the socio-economic life of the
two communities. As such these movements together with the positive role of the government helped to usher in a period of change. The trend of change, thus set, helped to further the process of rationalization of customs and habits which eventually gave the society a semblance of modernity.

Infact the period under review forms a momentous stage in the evolution of Kashmiri society from the old to the new. The later Dogra rulers were, indeed, enlightened in their approach to the problems of the people in the Valley. They understood the spirit of the new age and with their hand on the pulse of the changing times they introduced reforms which went a long way in releasing the society from the evils of widowhood, child-marriage, 'sati' and infant-mortality. However, the people of the Valley also deserve credit for their humanism and nobility of heart, which induced them to accept and welcome some, if not all reforms. The evil customs of sati and female infanticide were prohibited in the whole state during Maharaja Ranbir Singh's time (which falls within the purview of our study).

The Dogra rulers also by a legislative act prevented infant marriages and enforced widow-remarriages— the latter being a need of the changing times among the young Pandit widows who became destitute and forlorn due to the death of their respective partners.
Several social reform organizations, primarily among the Pandits also made an effort to reform dowry system, the practice of widow-remarriage and other outdated and expensive social ceremonies. The feeling for wholesale social reform among the educated youth was becoming more intense.

This period did not witness much change in the conception of a female child. Economically, a daughter was looked upon as a drain on her parent's resources and, therefore, her birth was looked up on with disfavour. Despite their accomplishments and merits, it was not easy to find a suitable match for the girls. Parents had to pinch their bellies to save a sufficient amount for their dowries. In this way both, the Kashmiri Pandits and the Kashmiri Muslims would find a pall of gloom spreading over them on the occasion of a daughter's birth.

It may be stated that the villagers did not very much benefit from the reform movements and acts. They still continued following their conservative habits and customs. In this respect the Pandits and the Muslims in the villages were virtually alike and still pursued their age old customs and habits. The social set-up among the two communities--Muslims and the Kashmiri Pandits was almost similar. The division into castes and classes, entertainment of superstitions beliefs, prevalence of customs and habits were almost identical during the period under review.
The period witnessed, especially in its last phase, a considerable change in the habits of dress among the people.

The impact of modern westernized education particularly that imparted by the Christian Missionary Schools contributed a good deal in effecting a change in the dress of the Kashmiris.

The pheran and the long stretched muslin turban started getting discarded, mainly by the new generation that took to the use of coats, pants and the pugree would round their heads in the Punjabi style. The pandits took the lead in this direction. Another important change among the European influenced young men was the use of shoes which replaced almost all indigenous types of foot-wear used by the people in the past.

The sartorial habits of the villagers continued, more or less, to be the same as in the past. They still stuck to their pheran, daster, indigenous foot-wear and other forms of dress as in the past.

The construction or building of the Jhelum Valley Cart Road opened a new vista of ideas and fashions through the facilities of communication and transport between the virtually land-locked Valley and the plains. This phenomenon resulted in the import and use of cotton of various shades of colour, quality and design in the Valley. People started discarding the use of coarse and drab cloth woven by the indigenous artisan. The drabness
of colour in the dress of the Kashmiri population in general and Kashmiri Pandit women in particular got replaced by the newly bright cotton dresses.

Political, social and economic changes produced corresponding changes in the life of the Kashmiris. These changes in the direction of modernization had a healthier influence upon the people's way of life. This period also saw some changes in the food habits of the people. These changes, though slow, had started becoming perceptible in due course of time. In fact conditions undergo change from time to time. It is very desirable, therefore, that traditions and ceremonies should change with the changing times. Otherwise even good customs and practices corrupt, in course of time, due to lack of change.

During the period under review the use of jewellry and ornaments also underwent a great change due to the changing conception of fashions among the Kashmiri women. The women of upper stratum started using new designs of silver and gold ornaments which were almost always in vogue among the women.

The Dogra rulers were patrons of art, literature and language. This period witnessed the lyrical out-bursts of many poets bubbling with the spirit of the new age. The period also saw many prose writers who contributed to the improvement of

languages spoken by people in the Valley. In fact these rulers encouraged the progress of different languages in several ways. Kashmiri language also received much impetus during the period under review. All factors together contributed to the development of the spirit of the new age which eventually ushered in the era of independence. The Dogra rulers were in fact the men of the soil with their religious beliefs and even superstitions exactly like those of the people of this Valley. Effort has been made to illustrate this feature of the Dogra rulers in the illustrations about religious performances that they undertook on official level during times of such calamities as famines, epidemics and what not.

The two communities came nearer to each other through the process of mutual interaction and the influences of the one became perceptible in the social life of the other and the vice versa. Attempt has been made to trace and analyse the influences resulting from the interaction. In fact, the most prominent feature in the Valley during the period under study was the prevalence of mutual amity and fraternal ties between the two communities which have continued intact to date. The two communities together shared each other’s joys and sorrows in a spirit of brotherhood and mutual love and respect as also the appreciation of each other’s difficulties and problems.