Chapter -- I
(Introduction)
The course of human civilization is determined, to a fairly large extent, by the geo-physical conditions of the region, which the people inhabit. The environment influences and regulates the life of man and lends a distinct colour to the culture of man. In the course of becoming, civilized man acquires and develops certain customs and habits. These customs and habits become, with the passage of time, an integral part of his life process regulating his behaviour and attitude. Because of its profound influence on human life, habit has been called "Second Nature." There is a social behaviour, an economic behaviour a political behaviour and a religio-ethical attitude which men manifest in the respective fields during the course of various operations and activities. This behaviour constitutes the basis of socio-economic, political and religio-ethical relationship existing between man and man and between one group of men and the other. Be it as it may, this behaviour or attitude in its various aspects is governed by a set of identifiable customs and habits. The greater the antiquity of customs and habits the greater is their grip on the mind of man. However, a note of caution, in this regard, was sounded by Alfred Lord Tennyson in the 19th century in the following lines: "Old order change, the yielding place to new, and God fulfils Himself in many ways, lest one good customs should corrupt the whole world!" The suggestion conveyed in these lines is that there is always need to examine whether or not an
old custom or habit has become too corrupt and, therefore, too obsolete to be useful any longer. Customs and habits continue to survive and influence the all round human life inspite of progress.

Obviously, it would not be an exaggeration of the fact to say that the customs and habits are an index which largely help us to understand the lives of the people, reflecting various behaviours and attitudes. Each people of the world have their own customs and habits. And some of these customs and habits are so peculiar to those people that these tend to become features of their distinction. However, it must be admitted that these customs and habits evolve and grow over a long period of time.

A number of books have since been written on the History and Culture of Kashmir. But almost all of them have touched the customs and habits of the Kashmiris on the periphery. As a matter of fact, no serious attempt has been made, so far, to carry out an indepth study of the customs and habits of the Kashmiris. Obviously, it will be my endeavour to deal, at some length, and in a certain depth, with customs and habits of the people of Kashmir. It is hoped that the study will fulfil a long felt need in understanding of this aspect of the social life of Kashmiri people. Inevitably the present work shall cover a very important though hitherto neglected aspect of social history of Kashmir. Every effort has been made to draw on all important available sources. Thus this study is based on the source material comprising published and unpublished material. The material constitutes
official records available at the State Archives and the Research Library. Part of the material consists of non-official works, like travelogues and diaries. Then there are a number of reports, journals, magazines, newspapers, Census reports, Administration reports, Annual reports, Trade reports and Gazetteers. Besides these, the bulk of it is in vernacular (Urdu) and in Persian.

The thesis covers the customs and habits of the two main communities—the Pandits and the Muslims of the Valley. A certain paucity of material on customs and habits of the people of this state has been a great handicap. For the same reason, I have had to confine the scope of my subject to the Valley proper, though even here the lack of adequate source material comes in the way. Attempt has been made to highlight the important aspects of the social history during the period under review (1346—1947).

It was during this period that the social set-up underwent certain transformation and thereby absorbed the modern trends. Endeavour has been made to throw as much light as possible on important customs and ceremonies as also the habits of food, dress, ornaments and language of the people in the context of changes which this period witnessed.

The people of this Valley followed certain customs and ceremonies peculiarly their own. In this project an earnest effort has been made to analyse and determine, within reasonable limits, the relevance of the social and religious customs which are followed by the Kashmiris. Infact, the inhabitants of Kashmir
Valley are in no way behind their counterparts in the subcontinent in that they profess certain beliefs and practices which are associated with birth, marriage and death. These customs and traditions attain almost the position of sanctity and authority due to the illiteracy and ignorance of the masses of the Valley.

The project under study has been divided into seven chapters including an introduction as an opening chapter giving a brief review of the work, its importance and need. The Second Chapter entitled Physiography and Demography contains a general survey of environment, people and the historical background and deals with the antecedents to the advent of Dogra rule. The Third Chapter entitled Customs and habits—A general survey comprises a general review of customs and habits, as these obtained among the people of the Valley during our period of study.

Customs and traditions are of great importance in the individual and collective life of every nation. This aspect has been discussed while tracing the impact of these customs and traditions on culture, moral life, religious beliefs, mental attitudes and ways of life of the people. The fact cannot be gain-said that the customs of a people are the most interesting subject as they cover birth, marriage and death of people. These three categories of customs are common to all countries civilized and uncivilized, and have been regarded as events of great importance for all the people.

The Fourth Chapter entitled Customs of Hindus (Pandits) pertaining to birth, marriage and death is devoted to the analysis of the customs of the Pandits dealing mainly with birth, marriage and death. This analysis has been substantiated with evidence...
from official records available in State Archives Repository Jammu. The customs and ceremonies associated with the birth, marriage and death during the period under review, continued to be very elaborate and interesting. These still continue to be such even today (among both the Pandits and the Muslims of the Valley).

The Fifth Chapter entitled Customs of Muslims relating to birth, marriage and death aims at similar analysis of the Muslim customs pertaining mainly to birth, marriage and death. We find some resemblances between the Pandits and the Muslim social customs. Both the communities follow certain common customs and rituals in these matters. Of course, it may be conceded that there were and still are certain differences in the customs of birth, marriage and death in the case of the Muslims and the Pandits of the Valley. There were certain peculiar customs and practices prevailing among the Kashmiri Pandits. These practices were not common among the Muslims of the Valley.

Some of the ceremonies and rituals do not seem to have undergone much change in spite of the impact of western ideas of modernism. The people of the Valley, by and large, continue to follow the age-old customs and traditions come down to them from preceding ages. Good customs exist side by side with bad ones in every community. These undergo change in course of time. It is necessary for the national advancement and social welfare to change and modify the customs and ceremonies in accordance with the
changing conditions of time. Good customs should be adopted and bad ones discarded. The Sixth Chapter entitled Habits of food, dress, ornaments and languages embraces a general discussion on habits of food, dress, ornaments and language of the people during the period under review. The Kashmiris—the Pandits and the Muslims—possessed certain peculiar habits of their own. As regards their dress—both the Pandits and the Muslims of the Valley wore more or less the same dress with some variations. We find that the two communities had so much in common in matter of dress. The same holds true about their food habits as well. We find no major difference in their food habits. The Kashmiri women during the period under review, (like those in ancient and medieval times), were very fond of ornaments. For centuries the Kashmiris both Pandits and Muslims have been having a common language. Thus the distinctions in customs, dress, food, language and ornaments were very few among the two communities.

But inspite of their common cultural heritage, there were certain points of difference in their customs, food habits, dress ornaments and language. In certain respects many beliefs and customs of the Pandits and the Muslims were altogether different during the period under review.

Besides, dress, there were certain remarkable points of difference in their general habits, there were some differences in the spoken language of the Pandits and Muslims of the Valley. Kashmiri spoken by the Muslims differed slightly from that spoken

by the Kashmiri Pandits. We also find several differences between the ornaments worn by a Kashmiri Pandit woman and those worn by a Muslim woman.

The Seventh Chapter entitled Interaction, Hindus (Pandits) and Muslims in respect of customs and habits throws light on the process of mutual interaction and integration between the two communities which evidently affected their customs and habits of the Pandits and the Muslims of the Valley. Obviously this chapter brings out the influence that the two communities had on each other. The aim has been to trace the process of mutual action and reaction that the two streams produced towards each other.

The Eighth Chapter entitled conclusion is virtually a summing up intended to show the path towards effecting a wholesale social reform. In this connection the impact of western education particularly in changing fashions of dress among the Kashmiri masses has been dealt with to the extent to which it reveals the process of change that has over taken the two communities. Effort has also been made to throw light upon how modernization has had its impact on the changing food habits of the people. The period has witnessed social reform movements which have resulted in the popularization of widow-remarriage, particularly among the Pandits. It has also witnessed elimination of the custom of early marriage, through awakening among the people, as also through the legislation of an enlightened government that has felt the pulse of the masses and understood the spirit of the new age.