CHAPTER – 2

KASHMIR IT’S CULTURAL MILIEAU
FROM 1947 TO 1966

J&K: An Introductory Profile

Introduction:

The picturesque state of Jammu and Kashmir is formed by the condensation of loftly snow clad mighty Himalayan mountain chain, the blue skies gazing through the chunks of clouds, the tall majestic Chinar trees dancing to the tune of gusts of wind.

The state is located in the northern part of the Indian Sub-continent in the Karakoram and western mountain ranges. It has snow-capped summits, a complex geological structure and rich temperate flora and fauna. Then forests of the state work as natural tonic for the stressed city folk from all over the country. Inside the heavily forested mountains, low lands and wetlands, we find endless varieties of trees and plants, numerous species of animals, birds and insects. While going through the forest floor, there is a treasure trove of insects and flowers. Apart from natural beauty, the state is majestic and attractive.
The water bodies of the state act as an unparalleled booster for the magnificent forest wealth. It has been rightly said “If there is one place on Earth that can be given the title of “Paradise on Earth”, it is perhaps Jammu and Kashmir, it is like the Jewel in India’s crown. It is a masterpiece of Earth’s Creation. It’s seasons put up lovely and charming patterns of beauty.

Jammu and Kashmir has a multifaceted and unique cultural blend. It is distinct from the rest of country not only from the point of view of different cultural forms and heritage but geographically and demographically too. Its three regions Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh, having diverse languages, religion and culture, intermingle continuously and show a clear cut specimen of Indian unity amidst diversity. Its different cultural forms, like art and architecture, fairs and festivals, rites and rituals, seers and sages languages and species, speak volumes of the unity in diversity with unmatched cultural cohesion and cultural service.

Article 370 of the Constitution of India, grants special status to Jammu & Kashmir, it specifies that apart from defence, Foreign Affairs and Communications, the Indian Parliament would require the State Government’s conformation for applying other laws. This implies that the people of the state live under a separate set of laws including those related to ownership of property, citizenship and fundamental rights, as
compared to other citizens of India. The Indira-Sheikh accord of 1974 clearly shows intact keeping the relationship between the Union and Jammu & Kashmir State within the range of Article 370. This accord also states that: “The state of Jammu and Kashmir, which is a constituent unit of the Union of India, shall, in its relation with the Union, continue to be governed by Article 370 of the Constitution of India”.

**Economic Profile:**

Agriculture: The natural resources of great economic potential are in abundance in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. In agriculture and allied sectors, there are a number of constraints due to the physiographic location. Initially the pattern of landuse was purely agricultural. But as the time passed it has changed to agri-horticultural – silvi - pastoral. Although the net area sown has remained same, the area under fruit and vegetable cultivation has marginally increased over the given period of time. It has gone up in respect of fruit, vegetables have shown a marginal increase. Rice, the staple crop, is planted in May and harvested in late September. Maize is the second most important crop. Other important summer crops are millet, pulses, peas, beans, lentils, cotton and tobacco. wheat and barley are the chief spring crops. In Kashmir valley large orchards produce apples, pears, peaches, walnuts, almonds and cherries. Also the valley is the largest producer of saffron in the Indian sub-
continent. For the cultivation of flowers and vegetables, artificial floating gardens on the lakes are favourable.

**Socio-Cultural Profile:**

This land, situated in the northernmost part of the Indian Union is famed for its bewitching natural beauty. It presents an interesting socio-cultural profile, it is a land inhabited by various religious and cultural groups. The foundation of Kashmir was laid by Kashyapa rishi. During his tenure, various wandering groups led a stable life. During the rule of Ashoka, Buddhism influenced Kashmir and he laid this foundation of the present town of ‘Srinagar’. The Mughals had a deep influence on his land and their various reforms in revenue sector and other areas led to the progress of Kashmir. The land was brought on the cultural map of the region only by Mughal. The foundation of Dogra dynasty was laid by Maharaja Gulab Singh, who got the Jagir of Jammu from Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Kashmir was sold to Maharaja Gulab Singh in 1846. This way the two areas of Jammu and Kashmir became a single political unit. Some ethnic groups, a few chieftains, alien races and various religions had a drastic influence on the cultural ethos and mode of life of the people of this state. The existing ethnicity of the people has been closely influenced by the Dards in the northwest, the Ladakhis in the east, Gujjars in the south and Paharis in the southeast. The mosaic of the ethnicity of
Jammu and Kashmir is complex. The immigrants from territories of Turkistan, Iraq, Afghanistan, Turkmenia, Tazakstan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Georgia and Azerbaizan influenced the racial composition of the state. According to Majid Hussain (in his book Geography of Jammu & Kashmir), the various ethnic groups of Jammu and Kashmir though intermingled have their areas of high concentration e.g. Kashmiris are mainly concentrated in the bottom section of the valley; Dards occupy the valley of Gurez, Hanjis are confined to water bodies of Kashmir; Gujjars and Bakarwals are living and oscillating in the Kandi areas; Dogras occupy the outskirts of the Punjab plain, while Chibhalis and Paharis live between Chenab and Jhelum rivers. Moreover, there are numerous small ethnic groups like Rhotas, Gaddis and Sikhs which have significant concentration in isolated pockets of the state.

**Physical Features:**

The total area of the state of Jammu and Kashmir is about 2,22,236 Sq Km of which 78,114 Sq Km area under the illegal occupation of Pakistan and 37,555 Sq Km under China. In addition to this, 5180 Sq Km of J&K were illegally ceded to China by Pakistan. The border with China is 465 Km long. Almost all the people in the Pak occupied part are Muslims. The Chinese held territory is called Aksai Chin (meaning uninhabited). According to the census of 2001, the size of the Jammu and Kashmir population is 10,069,917.
Administrative Divisions:

The State comprises of three natural divisions, Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh. It is divided into two main divisions i.e. Kashmir and Jammu provinces. The administration of each division is headed by a Divisional Commissioner. The two districts of Ladakh region, namely Leh and Kargil are part of the Kashmir Division for administrative purposes. At present, the Kashmir Province comprises the districts of Srinagar, Budgam, Pulwama, Anantnag, Kupwara, Baramulla, Leh and Kargil and the Jammu province comprises the districts of Jammu, Kathua, Poonch, Rajouri, Udhampur and Doda. A Deputy Commissioner who is also District Development Commissioner, heads each district. In the Ladakh region in 1995, the Autonomous Hill Development Council” was established as part of the decentralized administration. Administratively, the districts are divided into blocks for development purposes and into tehsils for revenue purposes. The state consists of 59 tehsils and 119 blocks spread over 14 districts.
Three Main Regions:

Jammu and Kashmir state is a multi racial, multi lingual and multi religious state and each group has its own distinct cultural ethos. It comprises, as said, three main regions, namely Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh.

Kashmir

It has been rightly said that Kashmir is Nature’s grand finale of beauty. In this masterpiece of earth’s creation, Nature has left an indelible mark on the folk performances of Kashmir as they are closely linked with the moods and movements of the seasons, since each seasons, puts up exquisite patterns of charm and loveliness.

According to one version, ‘ancient Kashmir is steeped in legend. It is said that the Kashmir valley was once the great lake Satisar (the lake of the goddess Sati, also known as Durga) home to ferocious demons. The gods destroyed the demon of the lake with a divinely cast pebble, which today is known as Hari Parbat, it is a hill upon which the fortress built by Mughal Emperor Akbar. According to Kalhan (the historian) Kashyapa rishi was the pioneer king of Kashmir and the region was known as “kashyapmar”, which gradually changed to “Kashmar” and Kashmir. In 3rd Century B.C., the State was incorporated into the Maurya
Empire under Ashok (founder of the city of Srinagar). Buddhism continued to flourish in the times of the Kushanas (1st and 2nd century AD). Several towns in the valley were named after several of the rulers of Kushanas and continue till today such as Kanispora (after Kanishka) and Hushkora (after Hurishka).

In the 8th century, Kashmir became the centre of a great kingdom under Lalitaditya Muktapida, who was the builder of Martand (Sun) temple, and founder of valley’s irrigation canal system which has survived for centuries, helping water rich harvests of the finest rice, different varieties of fruit and exotic crops such as saffron.

According to a version, ‘Kashmir passed into the hands of Muslim rulers in 1324 AD. The most notable Muslim rulers of Kashmir were Zain-ul-Abedin and Yusuf Shah Chak. The Mughal Akbar conquered Kashmir in 1587, but Aurangzeb’s successor was a weak ruler and in 1752 the Afghan ruler Ahmed Shah Abdali seized Kashmir. His reign is considered as one of the most terrible in the entire history of Kashmir. In 1819, the Sikh ruler of Punjab Maharaja Ranjit Singh evicted the Pathans from Kashmir with the help of Dogra Army of Jammu. Kashmir was ruled by Sikhs till their defeat by the British. After that under the “Treaty of Amritsar” Maharaja Gulab Singh exchanged Kashmir and some other areas for the amount of Rs.75 lakhs to the East India Company in 1846.
During epic times Kashmir was ruled by the Kambojas and there was a Republican system of government as described in Mahabharata. Udyan Dev was the last Hindu ruler of Kashmir. The defacto ruler of the kingdom was his chief queen Kota Rani. Kalhan the historian has given everything about the history of Kashmir in his book ‘Rajtarangini’. With the death of Queen Kota Rani in 1339, Kashmiri saw the end of the Hindu rule and thus Muslim rule in Kashmir under Sultan Shamas-ud-din was established, whose dynasty ruled the valley for 222 years. The greatest ruler of this dynasty was Sultan Zain-ul-Abdin Kashmir was culturally and politically at its zenith under his rule.

Kashmir has been the highest centre of Sanskrit learning, and Persians where the early Indo-Aryan civilization not only originated but also flourished. Also, with the advent of Islam, it boasted of the finest traditions of Persian civilization, that of tolerance, brotherhood and sacrifice.

During the British era, people revolted against autocratic rule, as was of course happening in other parts of India too. This protest movement was led by Sher-i-Kashmir, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah.

Kashmir valley is a significant part of the state. It is an ancient lake basin 140 km long and 32 km wide. The average elevation of the valley is 5,300 feet above sea level. The tall mountains, rising upto 16,000 feet,
that surround the valley, ensure that the weather here is pleasant for most of the year. Its rich alluvial soil yields rice, saffron, vegetables and a variety of fruit. Its thick forests provide raw material for several industries, the details of which are as under:-

1. Wood of poplar and willow trees is used for making cricket bats and Bringi wood is used for making hockey sticks.

2. Walnut wood is suitable for wood-carving. Walnut trees are grown in abundance in Kashmir. The finished and carved goods are exported to foreign countries too. Walnut wood rifle-butts are manufactured in Baramulla.

3. Poplar wood is mainly used by match industry. A large match factory was established by the government at Baramulla but it has not been functional now for more than a decade or so.

4. At Pampore (Kashmir) plywood, hardboard and chipboard manufacturing factories have been established. For the manufacture of hand-made paper, strawboard and cardboard, the required pulp is obtained from the forests. Kashmiris are world renowned artisans. Srinagar is the chief centre of Kashmir industries, but other localities too are famous for their special crafts. Bijbihara is known for wood-carving. Kulgam is famous for its lacquered wood work. The basket industry too
is important and in most villages, artists make baskets for agricultural purposes. From the rural craft the other developed industries are, handloom weaving of local silk, cotton, carpet weaving and wood carving. The royal court gave tremendous patronage to such industries, including silver and copper work. The tourist trade too provided much impetus to similar industries. Kashmir is rich in water resources, which can generate electricity on a large scale. The other natural resource include fruit, timber, minerals and herbs which are found in abundance.

Kashmir has a major Institute of higher education namely university of Kashmir. The health sector, hospitals and dispensaries are scattered throughout the valley. Unani is popular in Srinagar. Srinagar has a highly specialized Institute of Medical Sciences, this was founded in 1982.

Kashmir is famous for its mouth-watering cuisines. Roganjosh, Kabargah, Yakhni, Kaliya, Kofta, Dum Alu, Shufta are some of the delicacies of the region, known for kashmiri’s cuisines sheer flavour and richness. In the past, almost every Kashmiri home in the plains had a professional Kashmiri cook in residence, the cooks were masters in their own art. These professional masters and cooks are known as ‘Wazas’. The delicacies mastered by the chefs at Kashmiri weddings can be
frequently tasted. Some of the scrumptious elements of the Mughal art of cooking influenced Kashmiri cuisine several centuries ago.

The staple food of the valley is rice and the majority of the population is engaged in its cultivation. Saffron, the king of plants and a costly spice, is grown only in Kashmir. A vital feature of the economy is cattle breeding. Many Kashmiris also breed goats for cashmere or pashmina textiles.

‘Kashmiri’ is a wide term loosely applied to several streams of immigrants mainly from Iran, Afghanistan, Turkey and central Asia and who settled in the valley. Of the racial composition of the Kashmiris, there is a close bearing to the Indo-Aryans. They are usually medium to tall of stature and broad-shouldered. They have a well-developed forehead, a long narrow face, regular features a prominent straight and finally cut nose. Their disposition is cheerful and humorous. They are talkative too. They make good craftsmen. The influence of Punjabis, Dards and Ladakhis has also moulded the culture of Kashmiris. Their major concentration is in the valley though they are now well spread in various parts of the state and country.

The Popular performing traditions of J&K.
(a) Rouf:- The dance form is always performed with a pleasant pathetic song. It is performed on all festive occasions, particularly on the evenings of Ramzan and Id days. Women in groups make a circle, face each other and do simple foot work having a sensuous appeal.

(b) Bhand Pather

It is a traditional folk theatre style combination of play and dance in a satirical style in which social traditions, and evils are enacted in various social and cultural functions. It is performed by a group of 10 to 15 artists in their traditional style done for the entertainment of people. It is accompanied by light music.

(c) Chakri

It is most popular form of Kashmir folk music, which somewhat resembles chakra of the mountainous regions of uttar Pradesh. The musical instruments used in it were Gada, Sarangi, Rabab and Tumbaknari in the part, but now the harmonium too has made its way into it.

(d) Sufiana Music

‘Sufiana musiqui’ came to Kashmir from Iran in the 15 the century. With the passing of time, it has established it self as the classical music form of
Kashmir. A number of Indian Ragas have been incorporated into it. Hafiz Nagma is based on the classical music of Kashmir, the sofiyana Kalam. It has its own ragas known as Muquam. The prominent instrument used in Hafiz Nagma is Santoor, a hundred stringed instrument played with sticks. The use of dance in this tradition is known as “Hafiza”. The other instruments used are Sitar, Kashmiri Saz, Wasool or Tabla. In Hafiz Nagma, the accompanists on various instruments are males.

There are only a few families in Kashmir who are practising this musical form in Kashmir. The tallest ustad Sh.Ghulam Mohd Qaleenbaft is unable to perform because of health problems, Ustad Ghulam Mohd Saznawaz and Ustad Ghani Namathali are the practising artists and are imparting training to their family members.

(e) Song of Habba Khatoon

This body was a renowned princess of Kashmir. Her feelings during her separation from the King “Yousuf” is depicted in this song. It is based on the folk renderings of Kashmiri Music.
(f) Arts & Crafts of Kashmir

Carpet weaving:- Kashmiri carpets are world renowned for two things (a) they are hand made (b) they are always knotted, never tufted. This art has not originated from Kashmir but has come in by way of Persia. Till today most designs are distinctly Persian with local variations typical Kashmiri design is the tree of life. The colours of Kashmiri carpets are more subtle and muted, only chemical dyes are used now as vegetable dyes are not available.

Basketry:- Willow trees that grow in abundance in marshes and lakes in Kashmir are used to make charming objects, ranging from shopping baskets and lampshades to tables and chairs. In order to increase their life span, unvarnished products are chosen and frequently sprayed with water, particularly in dry and hot climates to prevent them from brittleness.

Walnut wood:- Kashmir is perhaps the only part of India where walnut tree grown. It is unique in colour, grains and inherent sheen. The carving and fret work that is done on this wood is of a superior quality. There are two kinds of walnut trees – the fruit bearing species whose wood is well known and one which bears no fruit (Zangul).
Namdahs – These colourful floor coverings, are made from woolen and cotton fiber, manually pressed into shape are a less expensive, chain stitch embroidery in woolen, cotton thread being worked on these rugs.

Paper machie:- At a first look, all paper mashie object have the same look, but quality varies. The designs painted on objects of paper machie are brightly coloured. They vary in artistry and the choice of colours, varnish which is applied to the finished product, imparts a high gloss and smoothness which increases with every coat.

Shawls:- There are three fibers from which the Kashmiri Shawls are made – wool, pashmina and shahtoosh. Shahtoosh is expensive. three Woolen shawls are popular because of the embroidery worked on them, and which is special to Kashmir. Pashmina is known for its softness. Pashmina yarn is spun from the hair of Ibex. Shahtoosh, the ring shawl, is incredible for its lightness, softness and warmth.

Chain stitch and crewel furnishings:

Because of the high quality of embroidery done on wall hangings and rugs, Kashmiri crewel work is in great demand all over the world.

Chain stitch, be it in wool, silk or cotton is done by hook rather than any needle. The hook is referred to as ri.
Crewel is basically similar to chain stitch. It is also chain stitch done on white background. The motifs, mainly stylish flowers, do not cover the entire surface. Wool is almost invariably used in crewel work and its colours being not as elaborate as in chain stitch.

Saffron:- Pampore, outside Srinagar, is perhaps the only place in the world besides Spain where saffron is grown. The Crocks Sativus which blooms for a brief month in the year, has six golden stamens and one crimson one. It is the Crimson stamen which, dried after being collected, is referred to as the most expensive spice in the world.

Silks Tweeds:- Sericulture and tweed weaving are more important industries in Kashmir. State departments closely monitor the process. The cocoon reared in Kashmir is of a superior quality it yields extremely fine fiber.

Copper and silverware: The old city of Srinagar abounds in shops where objects of copper line the walls, the floor and even the ceiling made generally for the local market. Craftsmen can often be seen engraving objects of house- hold utility - Samovars, bowls, plates and trays. Floral, stylized, geometric, leaf and sometimes, calligraphic motifs are embossed on copper, engraved and with occasionally silver to cover the entire surface with intricate designs, and which are then oxidized.
Pheran:- This garment, somewhere between a coat and a cloak, is eminently suited to the Kashmiri way of life, being loose enough to admit the inevitable kangri of live coals, which is carried around in much the same way as a hot water bottle. Men’s pherans are made of tweed or coarse wool, women’s pherans, somewhat more stylized are most commonly made of raffle, with splashes of ri or hook embroidery at the throat, cuffs and edges. The quality of embroidery and thickness of the raffle determines the price.