CHAPTER 3

SOCIOLOGICAL PROFILE OF GANDERBAL
In any sociological research, the discussion of the profile of the community to be studied was an essential work because it provided the study with a proper perspective, and brought out its various sociological features. Therefore, in the present chapter, an attempt was
being made to present a sociological profile of the block Ganderbal as under:

3.1. **Area and Population.** The total area of J&K state was 2,22,236 square kilometers while that of district Srinagar was 2,228.0 square kilometers and block Ganderbal had 269.3 square kilometers (census 2001). The same census revealed the population of J&K state as 10,069,917 persons out of which males constituted 5,300,574 (53%) and females 4,769,343 (47%) while the rural population was 7,564,608 (75 %) and urban 2,505,309 (24%). The population of block Ganderbal was 11,5,654 persons (11%) out of which males constitute 59,913(5.9%) and females 55,741(5.5%).

The block Ganderbal was located in the North-East of Srinagar city and was situated at a distance of 20 kilometers from Srinagar. It was a scenic place divided into two main zones of Ganderbal Proper and Gulabag which were very famous for Chinar trees. The block consisted of 125\(^1\) village's mostly 1 to 3 kilometers apart

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\(^1\) Census of India, 2001, Jammu & Kashmir, p. 6.
from each other. The villages consisted of cluster of houses and the land surrounding it. The owners and tenants cultivated approximately 90% and 10% of the land in Ganderbal respectively.\(^2\) The major crops cultivated were paddy, mustard, pea etc.; the major fruits were walnut, apple, cherry and grapes; the major seeds found were cabbage and radish. The surplus produced was taken to the local market or sold in Srinagar city.

3.2. Economy in Ganderbal. It consisted of agriculture, horticulture, sericulture, apiculture, handicrafts, tourism etc. Generally, one crop was cultivated in Kashmir as the land was cultivable from the month of March to November only. Paddy, maize, wheat, pulses, oil seed, vegetables (cabbage, potato, tomato, turnip, radish, onion etc. were the important agricultural products of valley. Agriculture was the main contributor to the economy of Kashmir Valley. This sector alone contributed 40% of the Gross Domestic Product (G.D.P) and provides employment to more than 60

\(^2\)Ibid.p.6
% of the working population. Horticulture had become more lucrative as it provided employment to various classes of society like transporters, packers, stockiest, fungicide and pesticide dealers etc. There was also less need of labour as compared to agriculture and was more profitable. The fruit production increased from 2.5 lakh metric tons in 1971-72 to 8.62 lakh metric tons in 1992-93. About 1.73 lakh hectares of land which was about 20% of total cultivated area in the valley was under apple orchards.

The handicraft sector was the largest employer of artisans of the valley of Kashmir. This sector provided employment to around two lack persons during 1988-89 and during this period, the total volume of production was estimated to be upto Rs. 154 crores. The contribution of

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3 Mishra, M.L. and Bhat, M.S. Poverty, Planning and Economic Change in J&K (New Delhi, Vikas, 1984) p.68

tourism to state economy was immense. It rose from Rs. 15.33 crores (including Rs. 2.17 crores in foreign exchange) in 1975-76 to Rs. 500 crore in 1988-89.\(^5\)

However, immediately after 1989, the tourist industry suffered because of disturbances in the valley of Kashmir.

In block Ganderbal, approximately 90% people were engaged in agriculture. These agriculturists were divided into three categories. First, those who solely depended upon cultivation of land; second, those who partly worked on their own land and partly worked as labourers and third, those who depended on agriculture as well as handicrafts. Besides above classification, there were black-smiths, carpenters, barbers, shoemakers, and potters etc. who were provided grains at the time of harvesting crops. There were other occupational groups such as weaver, mason, oilmen, shepherds and fishermen etc. who were paid for specific services. Orchards had been

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grown in which apple, cherry and walnut formed the major fruits.

3.3. **Education in Ganderbal.** Rural reconstruction got a momentum when rural development programmes were backed by literary schemes. Census 2001 showed the overall literacy rate as 54.46% in which males constitute 65.75% and females 41.82%; and rural literacy rate as 48.22% and Urban as 72.17%. The same census showed the percentage of literacy in district Srinagar as 59.18 in which males constitute 68.85% and females 47.97%; while the literacy of block Ganderbal is 44.24% in which males constitute 57.10% and females 30.24%.\(^6\) As far as the education facilities in the block were concerned, there was 1 Govt. B.P.Ed. College, 3 Govt. Higher Secondary Schools, 1 Private Higher Secondary School, 10 High Schools, 80 Middle and Primary Schools. It was observed that children in the block were considered as an economic asset as soon as they reached 13 or 14 years of age, and was expected to assist the family by the

\(^6\)Census of India, Op Cit., p 130
way of helping in the agricultural fields, handicrafts or rearing of cattle, thereby effecting their achievement of education.

3.4. Social Institutions in Ganderbal. Institutions were the basic building blocks of a society and had an organizing role in maintaining the existence of societies. Family and marriage were important social institutions. Joint family system had deep roots in Kashmiri society. Although nuclear families were emerging fast in urban areas of district Srinagar, joint family system continued in block Ganderbal mainly for economic reasons.

In the event of a grief, sorrow or happiness, relatives, friends and neighbours were seen together. Old persons continued to be looked after well by families and they still enjoyed the status of decision-makers at home. Neighbours opinion was given sometimes more importance than the relatives. Marriages were arranged mostly by professional match makers commonly known as Manzimyor. The two parties interested for marriage made proper investigation about each other. Family background,
individual attributes, education, moral character, economic standing, social status, profession etc. were considered during marriage proposal. The consent of the boy and girl is taken. *Thaf-trawin* (to catch the hold of girl) was the first ceremony of marriage. Marriages are performed mostly after harvest season. It was an occasion of rejoicing and merriment. Singing of marriage songs continued for about a week before marriage. People exchanged gifts made of gold, silver, copper, etc. Dowry and Divorce had become a problem. It was observed during field study that a significant number of people (15%) received dowry in cash as well as in kind. The dowry included gold and silver ornaments, clothes, TV, beds and washing machines, refrigerator and furniture etc. There had been 45 cases of divorce and the main reasons found were feud between the husband and wife, daughter-in-law and her-in-laws.

3.5. Social Stratification in Ganderbal. In block Ganderbal, Muslims had two main castes—the so called *Aseels* and *Kameens*. *Aseels* were those who belonged to noble families and engaged in good professions while *kameens* belonged to low status families and were engaged
in jobs such as wood cutting, shoe making, fishing, etc. The block had further two divisions—Syeds and Non-Syeds. The Syeds claimed to be the descendants of prophet of Islam (pbuh) and Non-Syeds were latter converts from Hinduism and Buddhism. Similar to a process of Sanskritisation as discussed by M.N. Shrinivas, a process was taking place in block Ganderbal in which people changed their caste, because of social mobility, education and better social status. During marriage, caste played a vital role in mate selection. Aseels feel they were superior to the Kameens and maintained a distinct way of talking, food habits, dress etc. Kameens were mostly engaged in degraded jobs. Syeds preferred marriage with Syeds and this preference had created problems in finding good matches because of the limited choice available to them.

3.6. Dress in Ganderbal. The people used a long gown in winter called pheran and this was a heavy garment and full of buttons on the neck and fell to the feet. The winter garments were made of wool, while those of summer were made of cotton. Cotton skullcap was used by men and scarf or Dajh by women. The pheran was most suitable for using
It formed a most excellent tant, in fact a primitive Turkish bath. The men also used *Kameez shalwar* and women *Firock yazari* frequently. Some of the women covered their head with a thick turban cap called *kasab*. It was a thick cap studded with pins. There had been major changes and additions and alterations to the dress of Kashmiri people. These changes depicted the attitudinal changes and impact of other cultures and societies. Men used all types of modern dresses viz., suits, pants, jackets, woolen sweaters, leather-made jackets, overcoats, *pathan suits*, *Kurta pajama*, etc. Women used *Iranian Abaya* which covers the body and head but keeps the face open. Some young girls used *scarf* with the usual *Kurta-Pajama*.

3.7. Food Habits in Ganderbal. The inhabitants of block Ganderbal ate a variety of foods viz., rice, wheat, barley, maize etc. Among vegetables, cabbage, turnip, radish, spinach and cucumber were common in use. Dried

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7 Tyndale, Biscoe, C.E., Kashmir in Sunlight and Shade (New Delhi, Mittal, 1955), p.13
vegetables and fruits were an important food item. Meet, fish, chicken and some water plants were in used. *Wazwan* was eaten by the people at special occasions. *Wazwan* consisted of a number of recipes cooked by a *waza* (cook). Most of the preparations were of meat. The people took *noon chaai* (salt tea) abundantly. It was a green variety of Assam tea boiled with a pinch of baking powder for several minutes. The tea was mostly served in *Samavar* (Kashmiri tea pot made of copper used for serving tea hot). *Sout* (a finely grinded flour of Rice and maize) was commonly used. Food and tea were taken while sitting on the floor. *Tash Nari* (used for washing hands before eating) and *Daster Khan* (a piece of cloth laid on the floor before eating food) were essential culture traits of block Gander Bal.

3.8. Religion in Ganderbal. There was absolutely no doubt that Islam was practiced in Kashmir in accordance with its basic tenants and principles. It as a religion was being observed as per Quranic instructions and dictates. However, there was a strong impact of local tradition and
customs on Islam. The people in Ganderbal had a strong faith in *Pirs* (saint) and *Asthans* (a pilgrimage center). The beliefs in *Pirs* and *Asthans* depicted the folk religious tradition of the people. When a holy saint died people believed him to be *Hayat* (a person who attained salvation) and his tomb became a pilgrimage center to which people resorted for the cure of a disease or the exorcism of evil spirits or to fulfill some wish such as the birth of the child, cure of any family member etc. The people gave alms to the beggars or needy and felt pleasure in helping them by rice or paddy. During sowing and harvesting of crops, people took *Nata Tahur* (meat and rice cooked and mixed together) to the seedbed and distributed it among children, men and women. This was done to eradicate a number of evil things. Now this custom was not practiced by the new generation.

3.9. Pattern of Entertainment in Ganderbal. The traditional recreational programmes had given place to new

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recreational programmes viz., radio, television, cricket, volleyball and football, etc. In this sense, it was observed that majority of the respondents in block Gander Bal (80%) possessed Radio Sets and 20% did not possess them. Again 50% of the respondents possessed both Radio and T.V. Sets. It was a common source of entertainment in block Gander Bal. Radio and Television was an item of luxury for many villagers. The people did not listen the programmes regularly. Outdoor amusement and entertainment was not a regular feature in the life of an average villager. However, the villagers visited the melas, rouza, dargah and participated in urs. Reading habit was not found common among educated people. Reading of newspaper, magazines, books etc. had not yet become the regular feature of village life in block Gander Bal.

3.10. Medical Facilities in Ganderbal. In rural areas, where qualified medical practitioners were reluctant to go, the government opened units of medical facilities called Health Centers which were headed by a qualified Medical Officer aided by a nurse and a Medical Assistant. There was no Hospital in block Ganderbal. It had only one Health
Center and five Sub-Health Centers. The residents of the block go to Hospitals in Srinagar for curing of diseases. However, in recent past local Medical Assistants run medical shops in the villages. The people of the block Ganderbal believed in herbal treatment and took herbs as a medicine on the advice of a Saint or a Local Hakim.

3.11. Status of Women in Ganderbal. The women did mostly their traditional practices of cooking, mending and rearing of children. They also helped men in agriculture fields at the time of sowing and harvesting of crops. They helped in handicrafts and make Shawls on which they did embroidery work. The women in Ganderbal did not take part in decision-making and decisions were taken by males. They worked within the four walls of the house and did the work of cooking, washing, mending and rearing of children. However, in recent past a minor number of young girls worked outside their homes on regular basis. Also, they worked in handicrafts on individual basis.