Chapter 5

Conclusion
Culture is a unique human reality. Culture gives meaning to the life of people and relationship that they share in a society. In fact, there is no such thing in human world which is independent of culture. It is due to culture that animal instincts of a man are harnessed into the human and noble behavior.

Culture is the life of people as typified in contacts, institutions and equipments. It includes characteristic concepts and behavior, customs and traditions. It is a combined form of artificial objects, institutions and models of life or of thought which characterize a group life. It is believed that cultures evolved when groups of people living in specific ecological niches interacted with their environments over long periods of time. Given a certain degree of isolation, they developed adaptations to their environment, methods of survival and ways of 'organizing themselves socially' and came to share beliefs and symbols that explained their world. They also learned to communicate with each other through a set of symbols known as language. This language helped them to transfer what they learnt (Culture) to their next generation.

It is also believed that over a period of time, increased communication between early human groups broke down geographic isolation. Gradually through cultural diffusion, linkages were formed and many different specific cultures evolved into larger groupings called, 'culture area-regions' with shared cultural traits.

One of the characteristic features of the culture is that it changes, but a range of continuity is maintained over the period of time. Cultural continuities are not to be misconstrued as stagnation that is things remaining the same within societies, the rock-solid institutions like family, religion and law may change, but they still represent a good deal of continuity.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

However, in order for cultures to sustain without stagnation they ought to change. As said earlier, no culture is impervious to change; no culture is what is always has been. All cultures change and change for a variety of reasons. Fundamental to culture change is that it goes on continually, is systematic, and in many ways can be viewed as inevitable. With growing contacts between people of different cultures, it is inevitable that change will occur as they adjust and accommodate to each other. Culture change can result form existing activities or from deliberate attempts of people to respond to the perceived problems. It can occur as a result of simple contact and it can come by way of others who impose it. It can come as unplanned or unexpected consequence of people’s own activities, including their planned culture change efforts, and it can originate from groups attempts to avoid the same and through so many other similar things.

In the premises of social world, the idea of culture change emerged in the 18th and 19th century as part of, and largely as a reaction to the massive changes that were occurring in the structure and quality of social life mainly due to industrialization process. The changes brought by industrialization process were unprecedented in many respects. Industrialization led to decline of small traditional communities and expansion of personnel choice (Individualization), increased rationalization and a shift from Gemeinschaft to the Gesellschaft. Society was disenchanted because arrays of unquestioned truths of earlier times were contested by rational way of thinking and due to loss of the folk purity and traditional continuities.

However, massive and unprecedented amount of change has occurred with the shift from industrial stage to post-industrial stage known as the process of globalization. It is the inexorable integration of markets, nation-states and technologies to a degree never witnessed before — in a way that is enabling individuals, corporations and nation-States to reach round the world faster, deeper and cheaper than ever before. It is an integrated system where the political and the economic aspects intertwine, and both aspects compliment the cultural one. It involves rapidly developing and ever densening networks of interconnections and
interdependencies among human cultures through new economical policies, through communication and technology like, computers, emails, internet and satellite televisions.

Globalization due to its unique nature has motivated unique cultural changes. Cultures across globe have turned fluid. There is growing homogenization of cultures across the globe. People are developing similar patterns in consumption, in dress pattern, in terms of language and even in recreational and leisure activities. Globalization has given so many people a feeling of permission to tinker with traditional symbolic heritage of societies — mixing rituals and traditions like greens in salad, devising new personnel identities; above all, picking and choosing what to believe and follow and what not to. In fact, this liberty is natural corollary of the fact that roots are uprooted. In this era of globalization, as Anthony Giddens writes, “We have no choice but to choose” and choice is not permission but a necessity.

However, the homogenization of cultural patterns across globe has resulted in debasement of traditional cultural values and continuities and has brought about identity crisis to many cultures of the world. The concept of egalitarian society and removal of economic disparity is to most of the less developed countries of the world a euphemism for colonization on part of dominant and powerful countries of the world. It is seen as vital instrument of ‘cultural genocide’ especially for the non-modern /western cultures, who feel that there traditional cultures and values are being subverted and westernized through powerful lever of globalization. In fact in order to combat the westoxication, most of the nations of the world show strong resistance to retain the traditional moorings and their cultural identities, often resulting in fundamental and radical revolutionary movements to expel all western influence from their traditional cultures and civilizations.

Examining the concept of change and continuity in Indian culture, the traditional culture of India was based on hierarchy, holism, continuity and transcendence, which were undercurrent in all the elements of Indian social structure and culture. The Indian traditional culture assumed change through ‘orthogenetic’ as well as ‘heterogenetic’ sources. The
former comprised of the processes like 'Sanskritization,' 'reformatory movements' (aimed to expel the obsolete values from Indian social structure), 'differentiation in the orthogenetic structures' and later comprised the processes of 'Islamization', 'Modernization' and 'Westernization'.

The Islamization process in Indian social structure, despite its exogenous character, could not activate major changes in the value structures and themes of Indian society. However, unlike Islamization, modernization process in India succeeded to change and challenge the various value themes of Indian social structure. The modernization process in India led to the creation of various institutions based on western schemes of running the society. In addition, various other processes viz. universalilistic legal system, expansion of western form of education, urbanization, industrialization and new means of communication and transport, setting up of rational bureaucratic systems of administration, judiciary, army and industrial bureaucracy all led to a change which was never experienced in the history of India before.

The spectrum of change further broadened, when India decided to march on the road of globalization in early nineties. Although globalization process in India led to the rapid advancement in socio-cultural and economic aspects, it also led to the cultural homogenization and increased consumerism in India. Nevertheless, its influence in many dimensions of social, cultural and economic aspects has also led to uproar and discontent among the people to safeguard the cultural identity and value-themes of their tradition.

Coming to the evaluation of culture change and continuity in Kashmiri Society, the integrated approach has been referred to get a comprehensive perspective on this theme. The major theoretical perspectives which are included in this approach are functionalist, conflict/ Marxist perspective, and symbolic interactionist perspective.

As mentioned elsewhere, functionalism believes cultures as practical responses to the environmental conditions, values, beliefs and traditions of a nation or a society and are a product of consensus of social need, in which institutions are adapted to one another and operate in a system of
mutual interdependence to meet the requirements of a culture.

Functionalists (as Durkheim) view change from traditional type of society to modern society in terms of shift from mechanical solidarity to organic one. So far, contemporary age of cultural globalization is concerned it is seen by functionalists as a process of change characterized by growth of interdependence among different regions and countries in the world in terms of finance, trade and communication and new means of transactions, thus giving people an opportunity to integrate themselves with the global world.

Conflict perspective on the other hand, believes that at the top of the society some people (especially who have excess to material possessions) have disproportionate influence over culture and utilize it for their own gains. They charge that today's consumer culture is stupefying people, rather than invoking their intellectual awakening and time may come when people would fail to protest or even notice when their freedom disappeared.

Likewise among the symbolic interactionists particularly Weber, saw the dominance of rational action (Rationalization) as inextricable part of modern society. In the contemporary era of globalization, the major emphasis remains on the cultural and economic factors as the main determinants which affect the social and political conditions of nations. This viewpoint is similar to the 'comprehensive social school' of Weberian thought, which believes that the systems of values, beliefs and the patterns of identity of dominant and subordinate groups in the society are important elements to explain national characteristics in economic and social terms. This system from Weberian theory must apply to the present world conditions, especially in terms of diffusion and transference of cultural values through communication system that is increasingly affecting many social groups in all nations. The 'integration approach' has been formulated not strictly as the background assumption but to develop a vivid understanding of 'culture continuity and change' in Kashmir valley. The approach was taken only as a part of inquiry to analyze various dimensions of Kashmiri culture in contemporary era.

As far Kashmiri Society is concerned, throughout history it has been
open to the rest of the other cultures of the World. Historical facts amply substantiate the fact that Kashmir since ages has been a hub of cultural exchanges; be they Nagas, Pisacas, Aryans or Buddhists. However, in 14th century, when Islam entered the valley, it was a unique experience in the socio-cultural history of Kashmir in so many ways. The Islam which entered in the valley during that period of time was itself influenced by 'Persian culture' and Kashmir society also could not remain inimical from its influence. It saw a diffusion of new culture traits which were visible in food, religion, dress patterns, architecture, language, in arts, crafts and in so many other variables of culture. So much was the influence of the Persian culture in Kashmir that it came to be known as Iran-i-Sagir (Little Iran).

Later, Kashmiri Culture also remained influenced by Mughals, Afghans and Dogras. The diffusion of traits from other cultures led to the development of rich cultural heritage of Kashmir. However, it also led to the extinction of many indigenous cultural traits and continuities.

The modernization period in Kashmir is said to begin in the 19th century when English missionaries stepped in the valley. Nevertheless, it began full-fledgedly after 1947. The allocation of funds from the state and centre governments on developmental schemes, augmentation of schools colleges and universities, establishment of democratic form of government and bureaucracy, judiciary, formulation of reformatory laws especially for the weaker sections of the society, contributed in the growth of modernization of Kashmir culture.

In the following discussion, concluding remarks about various dimensions of Kashmiri culture in terms of continuity and change would be drawn:

Food and food habits comprise an essential element of culture, so far the food habits of Kashmir is concerned, many traditional food recipes like rice, hoksun and Kashmiri Wazwan, are still retained in Kashmir, while as, Kashmiris are also accommodating new cuisines and recipes whose roots lie outside the indigenous dietary habits. In addition, fast foods, junk foods and different beverages which share the global links are consumed. However, their consumption pattern is more common in urban
areas, especially among the younger generations, particularly in Srinagar city. The reason for this phenomenon is the globalization process which has ushered Kashmiri society to new eating products and has also led to increase in consumerism in Kashmir.

Moreover, from last few decades in Kashmir, the consumption of animal proteins has increased. This trend shares a correlation with the economic development in Kashmir.

Besides, the traditional appliances and traditional ways of cooking and serving food are fast replaced by the modern means. It is due to increasing number of working women, especially educated one, who find little connectivity with the traditional ways of cooking food, mainly due to time constrains. In comparison, in many rural areas traditional means of cooking food is still in vogue mainly due to agricultural type of economy.

The religion as our study reveals, in Kashmir still holds a good deal of influence upon the behavior of the Kashmiris. The majority of the people in both urban and rural areas still follow the 'folk' and 'little traditions' of Islam viz. visiting of shrines, recitation of invocatory prayers aloud after every prayer, recitation of khatam sahrief, displaying relics, asking help of dead saints for day to day problems of life, visiting 'pirs' (pir muridi). It was also seen that most of these people become the victim of charlatanism and are being exploited by the 'mujjawirs' of these shrines, especially those who are educationally backward.

However, religious reformatory movements like Ahl-i-Hadith and Jamaat-e-Islami movements, modern education have more or less to a considerable extent influenced the folk religious and age-old practices of local traditions of Islam in Kashmir.

Besides, religious outlook of people in general, especially among youth has undergone secularization and bears a certain correlation with the education and rapid influence of western culture especially through the modern gadgets of globalization.

Moreover, number of people offering sallah (five time prayers) in urban areas especially in Srinagar is less, comparatively in rural areas who are still guided by traditional norms and are engaged in agricultural
type of economy which is more or less dependent upon nature.

Paradoxically, the religious identity of the Kashmiris is also sharpening, who associate themselves to the larger Islamic civilization across the globe. This is again due to increased communication and media exposure to various Islamic channels to the growing confrontation between Muslim and non-Muslim world.

While analyzing the dress pattern of Kashmir, the study indicated that traditional dress of Kashmir like wearing of Kasaabn, Dastaar, Kosh'ar Burqa, many traditional ornaments like Halqedandli, Kanewaje, Dck-tik which were in vogue few decades back are extinct today. Instead, Kashmiri people (especially men) prefer to wear western style of dressing and the dresses found in other states of India. The reason for this greater desirability for Western and other style of dressing is exposure to media and the greater amount of prestige that people associate to the wearing of these dresses.

Further, the study revealed that Kashmiri women especially younger generations do not wear typical western dresses mainly due to the threat perception of militants, and due to other social pressures. In addition, the dress pattern of women in rural areas is slightly modest, irrespective of which economical class they belong to, than the females of urban areas. The reason is, in rural areas wearing of delicate and modern dresses is still considered a taboo, as they are still guided by the traditional religious values than the people in urban localities, especially in Srinagar.

Besides, the traditional dress of Kashmir — pheran, is still most common dress ware among all the sections of Kashmir. The reason is that it is well suited to the needs and demands of the cold weather.

On analyzing the traditional architecture of housing patterns in Kashmir, the study revealed a steady change from past few decades. Projecting wooden bay (Dub), intricate lattice work (pinjrakari), Partition screens (varusis), open square pavilion covered with pyramidal roof (zoondub) are no more the part of modern architecture of Kashmiri houses. Instead of using mud plaster, bricks of mud and extensive use of wood, Kashmiri people prefer to use the cement, steel and iron. People especially from middle and upper class sections prefer to use the modern facilities
like ‘sinks’, ‘pour flush latrines’, ‘ceramic tiles’ and other conveniences of the day. The reason behind it is the perception that the modern type architecture project modernity, progress and status of a person. In addition, modern construction of houses is considered more comfortable than the traditional ways of constructing the houses. In fact, this phenomenon shares a correlation with the economy of the people. The higher the economic standard of the people, the more cozy and posh is the articulation of their houses.

On assessing the Kashmiri language, the study indicates that Kashmiri is still most commonly spoken language in Kashmir. However, its use is very limited in formal institutes like bureaucracy, mass-media, courts and in educational institutions. Since, Kashmiri language in comparison to other languages like English lack any market value in terms of providing secure and sustainable job, within and outside Kashmir, therefore, educated Kashmiris prefer to learn other languages, particularly the English language than the native Kashmiri language.

In addition, the amount of prestige associated to Kashmiri language is far less in comparison to other languages like English, Urdu and Hindi, which are also languages of modern technology, mass media and entertainment.

The study while analyzing the traditional music of Kashmir, which comprises of ‘Bhand-e-pather’, ‘Sufiyana Music’, ‘Ruf’, ‘Bachnagma’, ‘Chakri’ and ‘Wanwun’, revealed that some of its variants are declining, while as some are still popular among people. The Kashmiri ‘Sufiana music’ which is not only traditional, but also mystic in flavor, is loosing its importance. Similarly, ‘Bhand-e-pather’, ‘Ladishah’ and ‘Ruf dances’ too are diminishing from the traditional heritage of Kashmiri music and have a very limited audience. The main reasons are people’s exposure and easy availability of entertainment products, like Hindi, Punjabi and English pop music, film music and Ghazals through cable television, cell phones, CDs, MP3s. These entertainment products, used especially by youth, are considered far too glamorous than local indigenous music of Kashmir. The other reasons are government’s failure to develop proper policies and programmes to encourage and preserve traditional music.
and dance and its failure to provide economic security to the artists associated to the Kashmiri music.

Moreover, study revealed that Kashmiri music like 'Bachinagma', 'Chakri' and 'wunwun', are still popular among Kashmiris. The reason is that because they are still part of Kashmiri marriages and other celebrations.

The study revealed that the traditional arts of Kashmir viz. 'Papermachie', 'wood carving', 'embroidery' of floor coverings, 'zari work', 'shawl work' and 'metal work' are declining. The findings revealed that this phenomenon shares correlation with the economy and education. Due to poor economic returns and the lack of economic security of the artisans involved, most of them join other businesses. Contrary to the functionalist school of thought that globalization helps marginalized communities like artisans to integrate with the global market, Kashmiri artisans are gaining very little from the globalized market.

Moreover, among their next generation who aspire for upward mobility either after getting higher education or due to more prosperous avenues in other fields of earning livelihood pay little interest to follow the business of their forefathers.

While analyzing traditional festivals, the study indicated festivals like 'Id-ul-Fitr', 'Id-ul-Duha', 'Urs-i-Nabi', 'Baisakhi', 'Shivratri', 'Raksha Bandan', 'Diwali', 'Har Nawam' are all celebrated with all enthusiasm and fervor. It signifies that these traditional festivals have same resonance for people in contemporary times as in the past. However, mass migration of Kashmiri pundits has influenced the celebration of Hindu festivals in Kashmir.

Similarly, marriage ceremonies as in the past go through similar elaborate customs. However, celebration of marriage is today a status symbol than a custom. Today, economically well off people spend huge amounts of money on the celebration of marriages to show their wealthy status and thus create negative trends of celebrating marriages, which often turns into an ordeal for the economically backward classes.

Further, the study indicated that death rituals, like marriages are also elaborate and are often vulgarized by spending huge amounts. The
reason behind it is to increase and maintain one's social status.

The findings of this study revealed that people's life style and recreational activities are changing. Most of the people spend their leisure time especially in and around Srinagar city watching television. Although, in rural areas, people spend their time in gossiping and interacting with each other, besides watching television, this trend especially in Srinagar city is fast declining.

Further, most of the urban youth spend their leisure time in gyms, pool halls, cafes and fast food joints. In addition, with the growth in internet facilities in valley, there is a growing number of youth especially from good environmental background, who prefer to spend their time in 'chatting' and 'browsing' on internet, which is fastly eroding their 'real-time' and 'real-space' bonds of communitarianism and replacing them with the 'virtual localities' and 'virtual neighborhoods'.

Moreover, younger generation of Kashmir today is exposed to 'de-humanizing and reetrogressive' cultural products which are affecting their life-styles. This phenomena is again related to the technological advancement especially, mobile phones, blue-tooth technology, MMS, GPRS and their uncensored use. The use of cellular phones has also enhanced the space for privacy and affected the traditional parental control on the children.

Besides, the practice of dating and acceptance of new values regarding sexual relationship and marriage are growing. Pre-marital affairs, celebration of 'valentine's day', 'friendship day' are very common and seen as a result of exposure to western culture and its other cultural products.

In addition, the institutions of family and marriage have experienced the change. The families are breaking away from the joint structure, and nuclear type families are increasing. this phenomenon is more common in urban settlements and mainly due to reasons like desire for better upbringing of children, lack of accommodation and growing materialistic outlook.

Besides, while contracting marriages, other than self-choice marriages, caste considerations are kept in mind. This is more prevalent
among upper castes (Pirzadas, Sayyids, Babzadas and others), who abhor marrying their children in the lower castes. This speaks of the fact that despite exposure to global cultures and modern education people still show a resilience to drop their age-old dogmas.

Late-marriages are also a growing trend in Kashmir, mainly due to pursuing of higher education and growing unemployment in Kashmir.

On ascertaining the position of women, the study revealed that the position of women has improved in both urban and rural areas. Most of the women are well aware of their rights and their education and employment is appreciated among all the sections of society. This reflects the change in the perception of people regarding the position of women in society, mainly due to growing education and awareness.

However, gender discrimination still exists in valley and women are still the victims of exploitation, torture and harassment.

While summing up, it came to the fore that in Kashmir both the forces of 'cultural continuity' and 'change' are in operation and are in constant and continuous struggle to dominate each other. It was observed that both change (which incorporate the elements of western life-style and culture) and continuity is reflected in the various areas of Kashmiri culture. For instance, in terms of food habits both traditional and modern dietary habits are accommodated, similarly, there is secularization of religion in Kashmir, however, religious authority is still enjoying a stronghold, in terms of dress, people accommodate both traditional and western dresses, the celebration of festivals, rituals still reflect a good deal of continuities, where as, the institution of family and marriage reflect a good deal change. It could be said that both the forces of change and continuity share a similar and mutual influence. In fact, both the forces of change and continuity share an inverse relationship. The forces of change were more visible in urban areas, where as, quite reverse was seen in rural areas, the change was also more conspicuous among younger generation. In addition, the forces of change and continuity share a correlation with the economy and the education.