Chapter 2
Research Methodology
2.1. Study of Culture and the Discipline of Sociology:

Before discussing the methodology and theoretical underpinnings of this study, it would be viable to briefly elucidate the study of 'culture' in the sociological discipline. Sociology as a discipline involves the systematic study of patterns of human interaction, which are often an outcome of diverse historical processes, beliefs, and social influences on an individual, family or for that matter on wider social groups. These patterns form the core of any culture. Now the question emerges how sociologists can study the culture and what specifically do sociologist have to contribute? As far other disciplines are concerned, for instance, the discipline of anthropology — which laid a central claim to the study of culture — has until the 1960s, and to somewhat lesser degree thereafter, concentrated on less developed societies. Historians also studied culture before the 1970s, however, earlier in the 20th century they turned their interest in 'intellectual history — the great ideas.'

Sociology too like other fields has a long but uneven history of engagement with the issues of culture.¹ The study of culture developed in the sociological traditions out of the soil of biological sciences. The impact of the discoveries of Darwin, particularly the evolution of man from the anthropoids, on social thought was tremendous. The ramifications of evolutionary doctrine were even seen in the interpretations of societies, as given by Spencer and Huxley.²

The achievements of man were seen as the direct outgrowth of his inherited capacities. The wasps build one type of house, the ants another, because of their different biological structures. The monkeys had no

civilization because they had not evolved far enough. Man, on the other hand, with his larger brain case had gone farther in biological progress and was capable of developing civilization. Social development was seen dependent upon biological evolution. 3

As Spencer remarked that "there was a time when there was no life on the earth. Everything was inorganic. In the course of time, inorganic matter evolved to a point when life appeared. Then the evolution of the organic matter began. When it reached the level of man, there appeared culture or as Spencer called it, the Super-organic which, in turn began its evolution." 4 In fact, the enthusiasm for biology was so high that there appeared two theories. These were 'recapitulation theory' and the 'successive stages theory'. According to former the individual recapitulated the history of the race, so that the less evolved primitive peoples were seen only as children; and latter theory hold that since social stages were determined by biological stages of evolution, they must follow in succession, as monogamy followed polygamy. For instance, Russia could not go from the household agricultural economy to socialism without passing through capitalism. As a result, the breaking up of succession of stages due to diffusion of culture traits was not appreciated. 5

However, latter, when the phenomena of cultural growth were studied, it was observed that social institutions evolved into new forms in periods of history too short for any biological evolution. Hence, correlation of cultural evolution and biological evolution was seen with skepticism. Peoples of the same race were noted to have different levels of civilization, and peoples of different racial types were observed to have the same social institutions. It was seen that the growth of a particular culture was not so much from inventions produced within that culture as from the traits diffused from other cultures. Thus, assumptions of successive stage theory were discarded. Culture cut the chains that tied sociology to biology and it was a sharp blow to the twin absurdities—the recapitulation theory and successive stage theory. 6

3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
As Darwinism and biology tended to give sociology a definition as the study of the group: culture, being in a way antithesis of biology has necessarily changed the definition of sociology and added to the tasks of sociology the study of cultural processes.\textsuperscript{7}

The founding fathers of the sociology were centrally concerned with culture. Karl Marx for example placed high importance to 'ideology and consciousness' in his theory of revolution; Durkheim explored both 'normlessness' and the importance of 'collective consciousness'; Weber analyzed 'religious validation of self-denying asceticism in relation to an increasingly rationally organized capitalist social order.' Some sociologists even sought to theorize culture on 'scientific' lines. For instance, Park and Burgess (1921) — 'as the stuff of transmissions from one generation to another', Cooley (1933) — 'as the effect of association or as societal adjustment to the environment. Others — like Schultz, Herbert Mead, Karl Mannheim, focused on cultural meanings and their interplay with the activities of social selves that emerge from interactions.\textsuperscript{8} Like wise, US sociologist Talcott Parsons described the frames of reference of action as based on three systems (Culture, Society and Personality) and culture in his scheme was an overarching system of meaning, which provided or failed to provide social norms of conduct that sustains society as a system by integrating personalities into it.\textsuperscript{9} However, after 1970's, holistic view (Parsonian) of culture as a 'totalized normative system' was replaced by sociologists who looked in more 'fine grained' ways at cultural processes in everyday life. Since then, there has been a radical shift in the culture as a subject of sociological inquiry.\textsuperscript{10}

The interplay between time, place and culture yield different social outcomes and these require different forms of sociological investigation. Even the topics that sociologists find interesting change as the context changes. Sociologists have been responsive to important historical events, while international, regional, national and local settings have influenced

\textsuperscript{7} Ibid., see also. L.L. Langness, The Study of Culture, Novato, CA, Chandler and Sharp, 1987.
\textsuperscript{8} John R. Hall, et.al. Sociology on Culture, op. cit. p.3.
\textsuperscript{9} Ibid. pp.3-4.
\textsuperscript{10} Ibid. p. 4.
the character of the discipline. For instance, up to 1945 most of the US and UK based sociologists were interested and remained critical observers of their own societies and cultures. There major concern remained the socio-cultural problems caused by the 'Great Depression'. However, sociologists developed an interest to study other societies too, especially, after world war two. For example, most sociologists remained intrigued by the fact that what were the elements present in Japanese culture, which even after faced by its worst of nightmares (atomic bombs dropped on two Japanese cities) propelled itself as one among first rank countries of industrial powers.

In addition, the founding fathers of the sociology viz. Marx, Durkheim and Weber—all envisioned a modern society in which particular or ascribed characteristics, things people are born with, such as skin color, family name, religion, or region of origin, would be least considered. There focus was a society of specialized knowledge, where positions were filled by individual merit, where impersonal bureaucracies ceased human freedom, where everything was clear and efficient, though possibly soulless as well. Nevertheless, such considerations (as race, ethnicity, religion etc.) cannot be ruled out11 and sociologists in contemporary era feel compelling to analyze societies in the manner, which earlier traditional sociology least considered. In present context, sociologists are to deal with the problems like how cultural ethos is responsible for making certain countries richer, and some are languishing under poverty, misery, stagnation and disorder, some adapt western values more smoothly (as in Singapore), while some show a stiff resilience (as in middle-east). They need to reply the nagging questions like what led to the incidents like Sep. 11, the growing cultural polarization and possible clash of civilization between Western and Muslim countries as manifested in Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, Palastine etc. They need to probe in the reasons behind why fundamentalism is becoming a watchword in every nation? And why the apprehension of cultural hegemony from developed nations towards under developed nations is looming large?

2.2. Theoretical Orientation:

Sociological thought is a combination of several schools of thought; each school has its own specific and unique formulation for understanding of any social process and phenomena. The major schools of thought are (i) Functional school (ii) Conflict/ Marxian school (iii) Symbolic Interactionist school. In fact, the founding fathers of sociology i.e. August Comte, Durkheim, Karl Marx, and Max Weber all had understood the society and social structure from a specific stand. They belonged, and in reality where the founding members of these different schools of thought. Each school, as mentioned earlier, emerged with a specific theoretical assumptions and formulations, and saw social reality through those unique formulations. These different thought schools, seemingly, quite contrary to each other, in fact contributed to the wide sociological understanding of the society in its own right.

Despite analyzing society and social phenomena in varied ways, nevertheless, no school could define it in its complete essence, when standing alone from the other schools of thought. It could be said that each school resembles to a group of blind men who touched different parts of an elephant and each described the elephant according to the part of body their hands touched. Each one of them was right in its own way; however, none was able to imagine what the whole animal was like.

Like other concepts, the concept of culture and culture change has been defined and discussed differently by these major schools of thought. Functionalism, for instance, which emerged in the mid-twentieth century, was proving enormously influential in the sociology of culture and elsewhere. If Marxism views human social life as a bitter struggle to the death, functionalism views it as a systematic tendency toward harmony. Functionalism believes that all cultures are, in part, practical responses to the environmental conditions, the values, beliefs and traditions of a nation or a society and are a product of consensus and social need. “A healthy society exists in a state of balance or equilibrium in which institutions are adapted to one another and operate in a system of mutual interdependence to meet the needs of a society.”

12. Ibid. pp.35-36.
Functionalists (Durkheim) have seen how societies change from 'shared moral sentiments' (mechanical solidarity) to 'mutual depending of people through specialized work' (organic solidarity). Functionalists also believe that the present age of globalization is leading to a greater level of interdependence and integration among different regions of the world. It believes, through global communications all nations are interacting much more frequently and easily, not only at governmental level, but also within citizenry. People from marginal groups in poor nations have accessibility to new means of communications and transactions, thus, getting an opportunity to tie up themselves with the global world. They believe that the current processes of change produce a new global-functional unity.  

Similarly, conflict perspective on the other hand believes that in all stratified societies, culture is highly complex, with many strains and contradictions that reflect conflicting group interests and needs. Because of their abundant resources, however, groups at the top of the society commonly have disproportionate influence over culture. Karl Marx, the pioneer of conflict perspective, whose historical materialism has given rise to a rich tradition of cultural research that continues to influence how sociologists think about culture. Marxists research always entails a social critique and implicitly or explicitly advocates change. As Marxists believe that "cultural objects either enhance or obstruct the understanding of social relations, potentially cultural objects are among the 'weapons of criticism', Marx called for, and thus can facilitate the historical movement toward socialist revolution. Indeed, this was the key aesthetic criterion for politically committed Marxists. In fact; members of the Frankfurt school advanced a new critical theory, which organized empirical cultural analysis with a goal of social reformation. In this spirit, a great deal of research was done on the authority and mass culture, seeing both leading to the growing helplessness of people in modern society. They blamed

above for reducing people's true positions and discourage them to protest for their true positions.\textsuperscript{16}

Likewise, Interactionist approach, focuses on, "how individuals and groups use symbols to define and interpret reality. This approach emphasizes that people everywhere live in symbolic world that are created and reproduced by diverse social groups."\textsuperscript{17} Interactionists believe that our daily lives are structured by the symbols and meanings of many groups. It is this symbolic world which constructs and shapes the reality and truths, whether they can be proved on scientific grounds or not.\textsuperscript{18} In fact, father of Interactionist school Max Weber was intrigued to see that to what extent religion (non-material culture) participated in the formation and expansion of spirit of capitalism. "He sought correlations between religious beliefs on the one hand and practical behavior and ethics on the other to see how religious movement might have influenced material culture."\textsuperscript{19} He also saw how societies are changing towards rationalization and how traditional world view is being replaced with a rational way of thinking.

Nevertheless, none of the above mentioned schools correspond to give a complete and comprehensive perspective on culture and culture change. In order to overcome the problem, an integration of above mentioned schools of thought has been taken in the background to analyze the culture continuity and change, in order to develop an overarching and complete view of the problem under study. As Yogendra Singh writes, "an integrated approach is an endeavor to find out the underlying similarities in the conceptual formulations of various approaches to [socio-cultural] change and then string them together on a systematic logical principle to achieve a fair degree of conceptual integration."\textsuperscript{20}

2.3. Universe of the Study:

The present study relates to the study of 'continuity and change in
Kashmiri culture, and for this purpose the study was carried out in the Kashmir province of J&K state. The valley of Kashmir is known as Kashmir to its native residents. It is well endowed in renewable — natural resources. Its mighty evergreen forests, snow covered mountains, and mesmerizing climate and human population is symbolic and unparalleled in the world. It stretches between 32° 17' N to 37° 6' N latitudes and 73° 26' E to 80° 30' E longitudes. It is perched securely among the Himalayas at an average height of about 6,000 ft. above the sea. The valley of Kashmir is 85 miles in length and 25 miles in width with Srinagar in the center.

The tradition goes that the valley was once a big lake called Statisar (lake of goddess Sati or Durga). It was inhabited by ferocious demon Jalodhbava. Kashyapa, a great sage, son of mariachi and grandson of God Brahma, practiced penances for a long time, to rid off the demon Jalodhbava who wreaked havoc in the valley, and killed the innocent people, the god felt compassion for him and the goddess Sharika disguised as a myna dropped on the demon the pebble that grew into a mountain (present Hariparvat), crushing demon underneath. Finally, the water was drained off and the land which emerged out of water came to be known as Kashmir, after the famous sage Kashyapa. Kashyapa invited people from plains and made them settle in the valley, and this way, human settlement began in Kashmir. 21

It is believed that the early rulers of Kashmir were Hindus, who began to rule roughly around 3121 B.C., then came the Buddhists in about 250 B.C., followed by Muslims in about 1325 A.D. Kashmir was later ruled by the Chaks, Moguls, Afghans, Sikhs and then by the Dogras, 22 and, since 1947, Kashmir has remained under Indian occupation, and some part of it is occupied by Pakistan also. The total population J&K state according to census 2001 is 10,069,917, of which 5441341 belongs to Kashmir province. The Kashmir province is divided into several districts. These are:


As far people of Kashmir are concerned, there is a close bearing of the Indo-Aryans on the racial composition of Kashmiris. In fact, the Indo-Aryan regions and languages have substantially affected the mode of life of the Kashmiris. In addition, they have also received racial impulses from the Indo-Greeks which have influenced the race structure of the people to a great extent.23 Most people of the valley are fair complexioned, with light brown hair, blue or grey eyes, also some people have whitish complexion with black hair and black almond eyes. They have a well developed forehead, a long narrow face, regular features and a prominent straight and fine cut nose. Kashmiris are broad shouldered and usually of medium to tall stature.

The intellect of the Kashmiris is usually considered superior to their neighbors. In disposition, they are talkative, cheerful and humorous. Kashmiris are mostly concentrated in rural areas and are engaged in agriculture for their livelihood. Paddy, orchards, saffron are the main crops grown by them. Those living in urban settlements, are engaged in business, tourism, hotel-management, handicrafts, and in government employment.24

Similarly, Kashmir valley has continental climate characterized with marked seasonality. In general, the valley’s climate could be divided into the following four seasons:

(i) Winter season (November to February)
(ii) Spring season (March to mid-May)
(iii) Summer season (mid-May to mid-September)
(iv) Autumn season (mid-September to October)

However, Kashmiris have recognized following six seasons:
(a) South (spring) mid-March to mid-May
(b) Grishm (summer) mid-May to mid-July
(c) Wahrat (rainy season) mid-July to September

(d) *Harud* (autumn season) mid-September to mid-November
(e) *Wand* (winter season) mid-November to mid-January
(f) *Sheshur* (season of severe cold) mid-January to mid-March.

Kashmir is also famous for its mountain ranges which have dense *Deodar, Pine,* and *Fir.* In addition, *Walnut, Willow, Almond* and *Cider* also add to the rich flora of Kashmir. However, most remarkable and magnificent of the Kashmir trees is *Chinar* which is found throughout the valley. It grows to giant size and girth. The tree presents itself in various lively colors through the cycle of the seasons, among which it's most enchanting and exquisite look appears in autumn.

The valley is also rich in fauna. In general *Leopard, Tiger, Wolf, Deer, wild-cats, Red bear, Black bear, Markhor* are the major wild beasts. In addition, *Snow partridge, Himalayan cock, Chikor (Kak), Cuckoo, Larks, Bulbuls, Quil, Storks, Parrots, Pigeons, Dove, Ducks, Teel, Vulture, Crow, Eagle and Owls* are the main birds of the valley. A wide variety of reptiles, snakes, fish and insects are also found in the state.

### 2.4. Selection of Respondents:

The topic of the study was such that it demanded the inclusion of respondents from different areas. In particular, it demanded that respondents should be resourceful persons who could specify the information in a much broader context. So, various intellectuals, academicians, journalists, architects, language and religious experts were selected for the same purpose. In addition, in order to get the pertinent information; author of this study met artists from different backgrounds viz. Papier machie, Wood carvers, Gabbha and Shawl weavers, Zari workers, Folk dancers (bhands), Folk singers. In addition, author also collected the relevant information from boutique owners, hotel and restaurant owners, owners of internet parlors, traditional cooks (wazas). Besides, author also met the common people especially the people from younger and older generation to get a vivid picture about culture change and continuity. The respondents were selected on the basis of stratified random sampling, the sample was firstly stratified and later selected.

randomly and representation was given to all the sections of the society in order to give the representative character to the sample.

2.5. Tools and Techniques of the Study:

There are various tools for data collection that a researcher can utilize; depending upon the suitability and need of a particular study. In present study, the tools that were used to collect data, with due consultation and consent of supervisor and other resourceful persons were: (i) Observation and (ii) Interview techniques.

Observation as a technique may be defined as, “systematic viewing, coupled with consideration of seen phenomena”\(^\text{26}\) and as Lindeman believes that if you really wish to know what a person is really doing, watch him do not ask him.\(^\text{27}\) Since, the problem was more a qualitative in nature, so the observation technique was utilized especially non-participant observation technique. Observation technique proved highly supportive in order to trace the cultural subtleties, and helped to get a spontaneous and unposed picture of cultural life of Kashmir.

In addition, author's already familiar orientation with Kashmiri culture, helped him to develop firm insights to understand the nuances of Kashmiri culture in change and continuity perspective.

Nevertheless, due to some inherent inadequacies of observation technique, it was supplemented by interview technique. A combination of non-directive, focused and depth-interview was used, depending upon the nature of respondents who were interviewed.

The combination of observation and interview technique made it possible to address the questions that motivated this study in a fashion that neither research technique, standing on its own, would have permitted.

In addition to above mentioned primary techniques of investigation, a literature review — including books, journals, reports, newspapers etc. was extensively used as a secondary source of data to collect the

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information about the concerned topic.

2.6. Field Work:

After finalizing the research techniques, the field-investigation was started. By utilizing observation technique, the present author made visit and physical documentation of all the districts of Kashmir, particularly looking at the change and continuity in the material and non-material aspects of Kashmiri culture. In addition, there were interviews with intellectuals, academicians, journalists, architects, language and religious experts. In addition, artisans, craftsmen, artists (dancers and singers), boutique and internet parlor owners, hotel owners and the common people were interviewed. For the convenience of the respondents (especially for common people), as and when need aroused, objectives were clarified to ward off their fear and suspicion. The author also used interview guide as a suggestive reference, which helped the author to stay focused on the salient features of the study. The major questions during field-investigation on which author remained focused were mainly to know how far global forces of change are affecting Kashmiri culture. How far people have succeeded to preserve their traditional cultural ethos? What factors are influencing the people's decision to adopt new life style, new modes of eating, dressing, new values, beliefs, customs and recreational activities?

In most of the cases, observations and brief notes during interview were noted in a research diary. Besides, in certain cases, during interview sessions, the author of the present study utilized mechanical aids particularly tape recorder, especially in lengthy interviews and when respondent described his own opinions and reactions about the problem under study. However, it was done only after the due consent of respondents.

2.7. Data Processing and Analysis:

After pertinent information was collected from the field, which was in raw form, the whole information was rechecked, given code numbers and kept in orderly fashion according to themes concerned. Similar
procedure was applied to the secondary data, and both primary and secondary was analyzed, interpreted systematically with logic, which resulted in the compilation and finalization of present work.

2.8. Difficulties Faced:

The first and foremost difficulty came up during the interview sessions with the local people, especially people from illiterate and from far-flung areas. Generally, when author start asking about various dimensions of Kashmiri culture, the respondents talked at greater length, often outside the content that author would intent to elicit, and it was at times difficult to keep interviewees hooked to the concerned topic.

Another limitation faced was that respondents would simply say, 'I don't know', out of fear, suspicion or due to other misconceptions. However, after some hard persuasion, author would manage to develop rapport with respondents, till their apprehensions would vanish, and after satisfying them that they were not interviewed with a nefarious intent or in an unfriendly and authoritarian setting, they would reply to the questions and share their experiences and opinions freely.

Since, the researcher needs to cultivate the habit of asking himself many questions about his project and data, and needs to play devil's advocate to his work. It holds truer when one is particularly relying on observation technique of scientific investigation. In addition, one has to immune oneself to the influences of the personal factor. During observation in the field, it was always a thrilling challenge for the author to stand vigil to every aspect for which observation was taken and to remain alert against any preconceived notions, biases and stereotypes. The author had to stand guard against any misguided step that would forfeit his purposes and goal, which is often easier, said than done.