

# Composite Culture of Kashmir: A Reflection of Social Customs and Practices

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**Abstract:** Kashmir is famous for its rich culture since time immemorial, as it has been the home of some greatest civilizations of the world. During Ancient Kashmir there were, Hindus, Buddhists and Jains who live with their marvelous cultures that evolved from hundreds of years but with the coming of muslim educationists and thinkers during medieval Kashmir particularly from central Asian and Persia a substantial change was brought in the society. These people have brought with them new cultures and new styles of life that has fascinated the local people. From Hindu society to a muslim one, all the religious groups had influenced the culture of Kashmir by one way or the other. Each social group has its own characteristics based on its values and ethics. In the later year's merchants, soldiers, artisans, poets and scholars went outside Kashmir and stayed with some famous cultures of the world. Their arrival back in Kashmir had further enriched the local culture. There was an amalgamation of local and foreign cultures which gave birth to a new culture that was quite delicate, rich and unique. The Muslim nobles and rulers married with the Hindu women and allowed them to retain their Hindu names and also their faith. The two participated in each other's festivals and in this way made the society a composite one. There was an exchange of food habits, dress and ornaments, music, fairs and festivals etc. which further enriched the culture of Kashmir.

**Key Words:** Kashmir, culture, social customs, festivals, muslim, food, clothes, religious groups, Sufis, nobles, hindu, buddhist, music, central Asia, castes etc.

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

Kashmir has got a unique system of customs (Rewaj)<sup>1</sup> and practices. These customs don't resemble to any country of the world. From earliest times the population of Kashmir comprised of Hindu, Buddhist or Jains.<sup>2</sup> But with the influx of Muslim divines and philosophers from Persia and Central Asia in the valley during the 14<sup>th</sup> century and after, a material change was brought about in the composition of the population. The similarity in a number of social customs between the Muslims and the Non Muslims was no doubt due to their common ethnic descent.<sup>3</sup>

The fourteenth century Muslim rule in Kashmir had many consequences. It paved the way for the establishment of Islamic institutions. The process of cultural assimilations took place on a large scale, and in the Mughal period it took a definite shape. During the Sultanate period, the people of Kashmir were connected to the external world. In this period Kashmiri merchants, soldiers, artisans, poets and scholars went outside Kashmir. They not only spread to different parts of India but other regions as well.<sup>4</sup>

As the population of the people increased and due to the influence of Islamic message many people got converted into Islam, many people from old regime continued their customs and ceremonies. There were different classes of the people among Hindus and Buddhists. As the Muslims entered the valley, the whole population became a complex structure.<sup>5</sup> The position of Brahmans declined with the spread of Islam.<sup>6</sup> People from different places met in Kashmir. Many Brahmans and Kshatriyas got converted to Islam but they continued their surnames like *Bhattas*, *Pandits*, *Ganais*, *Kouls*, *Nayaks*, *Loans*, *Chaks*, *Dars*, *Magras* etc. when they got converted into Islam due to the rigidity of caste customs, they carried their own symbols. In this atmosphere of intermingling of castes, we see marriages between different groups took place which was a difficult task in the earlier times. The activities of Magras, Rainas, Chaks and Dars became close resemblance to those of the feudal lords of the later Hindu period.<sup>7</sup> During this period Iranians, Turanies, Afghans and Indians came to Kashmir and settled in different Subas. All this laid to social mobilisation and gave rise to existing social order.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Custom in Kashmiri is known as Rewaj and there are slight variations in the Rawaj of different parts of the Valley.

<sup>2</sup> Mirza Muhammad Haidair Dughlat, *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*, tr. N. Elias and Denison Ross, Sampson Low, (London, 1895), p. 424

<sup>3</sup> P N K Bamzai, *Cultural and Political History of Kashmir*, Vol. 2, M D Publications Pvt. Ltd., (New Delhi, 1994), p. 479

<sup>4</sup> Abdul Majid Matoo, *Kashmir Under the Mughals 1586-1752*, Golden Horde Enterprises Kashmir, p. 133

<sup>5</sup> P N K Bamzai, *Cultural and Political History of Kashmi*, pp. 478-480

<sup>6</sup> Mohibbul Hassan, *Kashmir Under Sultans*, Gulshan publishers, 2002, Srinagar, P. 356

<sup>7</sup> P N K Bamzai, *Cultural and Political History of Kashmir*, op. cit., p. 479

<sup>8</sup> Abdul Majid Matoo, *Kashmir Under the Mughals 1586-1752*, op cit., p. 133

Muhibul Hassan mentions that the society was divided into four classes, but the caste system was not rigid as it was in India. Low born person can rise to the highest position in the state.<sup>9</sup> Due to the four caste system India as well as in Kashmir, many Hindu people willingly and unwillingly got converted to Islam during the Sultanate period.<sup>10</sup>

The 14<sup>th</sup> century Kashmir has also witnessed the coming of Sayyids and nobles from Persia and Central Asia. These foreign elements were well received and well respected at the court. They brought with them new ideas and new customs. Their customs were mixed in the valley and they in turn were influenced by the Kashmiri social order. The elite class of the society like sultans and nobles entered into matrimonial relations with each other. They also got married at different places like Sindh, Jammu, Kashtiwari etc which lead to the dispersing of their social activities.<sup>11</sup> The Kashmiris assert that their national dress was to be found in Kashtiwari, and that it resembled the dress of a Kashmiri when he goes on a journey.<sup>12</sup>

The Muslim nobles and rulers married with the Hindu women and allowed them to retain their Hindu names and also their faith. The two participated in each others festivals and in this way made the society a composite one. Intermarriages between Hindus and Muslims were common.<sup>13</sup> The women of rich families cover themselves with the veil in order to protect themselves from the public gaze.<sup>14</sup>

When Islam spread in Kashmir many *ulemas* came to Kashmir from outside and taught some new things in Kashmir. The Kashmiri *ulema* after studying at the feet of some learned and pious men in Srinagar proceeded to Samarkand and Herat or Mecca and returned after having undergone a course of training abroad. The *ulemas* fought against any accretions and innovations in Islam.<sup>15</sup>

The influx of Chaks in Kashmir is in the reign of Suhadeva while the Baihaqi Sayyids came in the time of Sikender. There were some castes of indigenous origin like *Rainas, Magres, Dars* and others<sup>16</sup>. Sufis also played an important role in Kashmir. The Sufis who came from outside had a good role in mixing with the general masses of the Kashmir. It was an important characteristic feature of the spread of the 14<sup>th</sup> century Islam.<sup>17</sup>

It was by dint of Islamic message that the sufis tried to bridge the gap between the different classes but keeping in mind the economic disparities and the functional differences, real social equality could not be achieved.<sup>18</sup> The cities and towns became the hub of socio-cultural activities because besides Jagirdars, the provincial officials lived in these centers.

“These currents and cross current actions and interactions ultimately resulted in the assimilation of diverse cultures and a new social setup emerged out. However, links with the past were not broken altogether; but a new social order had taken birth from the debris of the old indigenous tradition.”<sup>19</sup>

## 2. FOOD AND DRINK:

Rice has been a staple food for the people of Kashmir. Rice was generally cooked by boiling it and it was left for cooling. Rice cooked at one time could be used for more than a single time.<sup>20</sup> Rice remained a staple food of Kashmiris throughout the Hindu and Muslim period as it is today<sup>21</sup>. With the passage of time we see evolution in the preparation of rice. The coming of Persian Sayyids and Central Asian nobles in the valley lead to the introduction of new rice called *pilau*<sup>22</sup>. Wheat and Barley was not popularly used. The important articles of diet during Hindu Kashmir were meat, vegetables and fish. Fish was an important component of Diet during Medieval Kashmir. Cooked fowl

<sup>9</sup> Mohibbul Hassan, *Kashmir Under Sultans*, P. 355

<sup>10</sup> Nizam-ud-din Wani, *Muslim Rule in Kashmir 1554-1586*, Anmol, New Delhi, p. 187

<sup>11</sup> P N K Bamzai, *Cultural and Political History of Kashmir*, p. 480

<sup>12</sup> Walter, R., Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, Gulshan Books, Second Edition, (Srinagar, 2005) p. 251

<sup>13</sup> Hashmatullah Khan, *Mukhtesar-i- Tarikh Jammu-wa- Kashmir* (Urdu), J.K. Book House, (Jammu Tawi, 1939), pp 151-152; see also Mohibbul Hassan, *Kashmir Under Sultans*, P. 373

<sup>14</sup> Walter Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p.252; see also N M., Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i-Jahagiri*, Vol. II, trans. Alexander Rogers, (London, 1909), pp. 188-189

<sup>15</sup> Mohibbul Hassan, *Kashmir Under Sultans*, op. cit., p 355

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> P N K Bamzai, *Cultural and Political History of Kashmir*, p. 480

<sup>18</sup> Mohibbul Hassan, *Kashmir Under Sultans*, op. cit., p. 356

<sup>19</sup> Abdul Majid Matoo, *Kashmir Under the Mughals 1586-1752*, p. 133; see also P N K Bamzai, *History of Kashmir, Political, Social, Cultural From Earliest Times to the Present Day*, Metropolitan, (New Delhi, 1973), pp. 511-515

<sup>20</sup> P N K Bamzai, *Cultural and Political History of Kashmir*, op. cit., p. 521, see also *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, Vol. II, op. cit., p. 143

<sup>21</sup> Nizam-ud-din Wani, *Muslim Rule in Kashmir 1554-1586*, p. 187

<sup>22</sup> Pilau is a type of fried rice which is cooked into Ghee and mixed with dry fruits. In Kashmir there is not any addition of sugar with the Pilau. The Stomach of chicken is fried and cut into small pieces and added to the pilau in order to make it more delicious.

along with Brinjals was the favourite dish of Kashmiris. At ashrama records Srivara, “the King Zainul-abdin held the feast of rice, until flavour of the curries overcomes the scent of the saffron.” Fruits formed a part of the diet and these were not exported till the time of Mughals.<sup>23</sup> During the period of Mughals fish and vegetables were added to the staple food. In this way staple food of Mughals consisted of rice, fish and vegetables. The Mughals were epicurean, that is, they enjoyed food and drink of high quality.<sup>24</sup> Saffron and various kinds of ingredients remained a part of Kashmiri food.<sup>25</sup>

They introduced some new dishes and in this way Kashmiris learnt the preparation of *Goshtaba*<sup>26</sup>, *Kabab*<sup>27</sup>, and *Roganjosh*<sup>28</sup>. Afghans did not remain aloof from adding new varieties to the Kashmiri wazwan. Afghans added their *bread* and *Pilau* to their rich repertoires. During Muslim rule in Kashmir chewing of betel leaves went out of fashion.<sup>29</sup> The next dish called *Harisa* was sold in the market during winter months. It was a broth like dish of mutton, rice and spices. It was enjoyed by all sections of the society.<sup>30</sup>

The Persian influence on Kashmir has brought several kinds of *Pilavs* like *Zared Pilav* (*yellow pilau*) and *Shulla Pilav*.<sup>31</sup> Another kind of Pilav which they introduced was *Tursh Pilav*.<sup>32</sup> There was a practice operating in the medieval Kashmir that people used to dry up the vegetables and preserve for the winter which is prevalent even today. Spices were found in different forms. We have got spices like pepper, turmeric, ginger, cloves and saffron. They were used to increase the taste and flavour of the dishes. It has been mentioned that, they were imported from Agra.<sup>33</sup>

Kashmir has also its unique drinks. Tea came from three sources to Kashmir that is, Bombay tea from China, Hill tea from Kangra in the Punjab and green tea China via Lhasa and Ladakh. Kashmiris liked both sweet and salt tea. The former is known as *Kehawa*<sup>34</sup> and the latter as *shiri* which is always mixed with milk. Some fibres of saffron were added to khawa in order to have a nice flavor and which should also add to its taste.<sup>35</sup> On the festive occasions some different kinds of drinks were served and there was free consumption of liquor by the participants. *Anguri* and *Qand* were the cherished drinks of singers.<sup>36</sup> References have mentioned that wine was also taken both on ceremonial, and for recreation. Intoxicants like opium and bhang were also common among the people.<sup>37</sup>

As for the fruits- pears, mulberries, cherries (sweet) and sour cherries are met with, but the apples are particularly good. There are other fruits in plenty sufficient to make one break ones resolutions. Among the wonders of Kashmir are the quantities of mulberry trees, for their leaves silk is obtained. The people make a practice of eating the fruit, fruit is so plentiful that it is rarely brought and sold.<sup>38</sup>

Besides plums and mulberries, the fruits are numerous. Melons, apples, peaches, apricots are excellent. Though grapes are in plenty, the finer qualities are rare and the vines bear on mulberry trees. The mulberry is little eaten, its leaves being reserved for the silk worm. The food of the people is chiefly rice, fish and various vegetables and the later one is dried and preserved for the winters.<sup>39</sup>

### 3. DRESS AND ORNAMENTS:

<sup>23</sup> P N K Bamzai, *Cultural and Political History of Kashmir*, p. 523

<sup>24</sup> Abdul Majid Matoo, *Kashmir Under the Mughals 1586-1752*, op. cit., p. 134; see also P N K Bamzai, *History of Kashmir, Political, Social, Cultural From Earliest Times to the Present Day*, pp. 515-517

<sup>22</sup> Nizam-ud-din Wani, *Muslim Rule in Kashmir 1554-1586*, p. 209

<sup>26</sup> It is a type of dish in which meat of Sheep is cooked with boiled milk and added with dry fruits like Pista, Cashew, Almond and Coconut. Its preparation also needs some Khada Masala.

<sup>27</sup> Kabab is made by roasting the floured meat on an Iron rod. Kashmiri Kabab has got a high class preparation to which good quantity of spices is added. People in Kashmir are fond of Kabab.

<sup>28</sup> It is also a dish of meat (the variety of meat varies, it can be the meat of Sheep, Cow, Bull and rarely of Buffallow) prepared by adding high concentration of red Chillies and greater spices.

<sup>29</sup> P N K Bamzai, *Cultural and Political History of Kashmir*, op. cit., p. 521

<sup>30</sup> Abdul Majid Matoo, *Kashmir Under the Mughals 1586-1752*, p. 133

<sup>31</sup> Mohibbul Hassan, *Kashmir Under Sultans*, P. 369; see also P N K Bamzai, *History of Kashmir, Political, Social, Cultural From Earliest Times to the Present Day*, pp. 516-518

<sup>32</sup> Nizam-ud-din Wani, *Muslim Rule in Kashmir 1554-1586*, p. 209

<sup>33</sup> Abdul Majid Matoo, *Kashmir Under the Mughals 1586-1752*, p. 134

<sup>34</sup> Kehwa was made by boiling a small quantity of tea (sometimes tea was absent) in water and a little quantity of saffron till the water turned saffron colour. This solution was added with sugar and some dry fruits.

<sup>35</sup> Walter Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p. 254

<sup>36</sup> Abdul Majid Matoo, *Kashmir Under the Mughals 1586-1752*, op. cit., p. 135

<sup>37</sup> Nizam-ud-din Wani, *Muslim Rule in Kashmir 1554-1586*, op. cit., p. 209; see also P N K Bamzai, *History of Kashmir, Political, Social, Cultural From Earliest Times to the Present Day*, pp. 517-519

<sup>38</sup> Mirza Haidair Dughlat, *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*, p. 425, see also *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, Vol. II, pp. 144-146

<sup>39</sup> Abul Fazl, *Ain-i-Akbari*, tr. Colonel H.S Jarrett, Vol. II, 3<sup>rd</sup> eds., Calcutta, 1978, p. 353, see also *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, Vol. II, pp. 144-146.

The climate of a region gives rise to its dress code. Since the climate and geographic conditions of Kashmir had been different, so it has also a different wearing system. Cotton was an item of luxury and it was very costly. People used to wear a long gown known as *Pattu* which was the common dress of the people. Woolen blankets were used by all sections of the society during winters and it was difficult to distinguish a Hindu from a Muslim. Nature had made them to adopt the same dress code.<sup>40</sup>

The dress of Kashmir has its historical importance. It has undergone several changes during its long history. Before Harsha (1089-1101) mentions Kalhana that there was not any dress for head. People let it loose. It is mentioned that Harsha introduced the use of turban and short court due to the influence of Mohammadans. It was perhaps the dress of people at the time of foundation of sultanate. The sufi saints and Muslim theologians who came from Persia and Central Asia brought with them new things in Kashmir. With their advent in Kashmir people began to use long robe and round turban. The former is thus the forerunner of the *Pheran*, the present dress of Kashmir.<sup>41</sup> During winter season we also witness the use of bag shaped woolen cape like *Rusian Balaclva*.<sup>42</sup> Inside the *Pheran* they take *kangri*<sup>43</sup> for warmth. The kangir is a small earthen wear bowl of a quint shape, held in a frame of wicker work. In the winter, and even in the summer when rains chill the air, hot embers are put into the *kangar* and it is slipped under the voluminous gown which all Kashmiris wear.<sup>44</sup>

The dress of upper class in Kashmir resembles to the rich people in Arabia, Persia and Turkistan. The credit for the introduction of such dress in Kashmir goes to Sayyid Ali Hammadani who brought it during the reign of Sultan Qutub-ud-din and later Brahmins began to adopt it. The lower portion of the body was covered with white *trousers* (*Saravit*) of Persian origin. The upper portion had a chemise (*Qamis*) and full sleeves. Over this was a short vest (*Sadri*). The outer robe was called *choga* and descended to ankles.<sup>45</sup>

There was not much difference between the dress of men and women. The main difference was that Muslim women used to wear *Kasab*<sup>46</sup> as a head dress while as in case of Hindu women, it was called *Taranga*. Nose rings was not commonly used, it was generally used by the women of Rajouri, Baramullah and Noushera. There were differences in quality wearing. Shoes of hides were mainly used by rich people. It was considered as an item of luxury.<sup>47</sup> *Tsapli* was the foot wear of the common people. The lower people had to survive any way<sup>48</sup> *Pulhore* as a typical type of foot wear used by the common people, which was made from twisted rice staw. There was another kind of foot wear of wooden sandles called *Khrav*.<sup>49</sup>

The Mughals enriched the heritage of Kashmir. They introduced and encouraged many new things. They have encouraged the use of *Pheran* and *Kangri*-a portable firepot enclose in a wicker case, to effeminate the hardy Kashmiris and to break their martial spirit.<sup>50</sup>

Kashmiri culture has been influenced by the dress and ornaments of Central Asia during the reign of Hindu rulers. The foreign people were influenced by the Kashmiri culture since its early rulers. Kashmir is known for its geographic conditions. Mughals and Sultans enriched the jewellery design of the valley. Sultan Zain-ul-abidines regal robes and ornaments became famous for the various coloured threads that it contained.” Earing, nose drops and bangles were used by various women.<sup>51</sup>

The contribution of Mughals in the field of fashion and decoration is remarkable. Nur Jahan used to wear delicate varieties of jewellery and her visit to the valley had introduced these new designs in terms of fashion.<sup>52</sup> The love of Kashmiri towards beauty made them to copy these styles of Mughals who have borrowed these styles from Iran, Central Asia and surrounding areas beyond Kabul. “It appears that the beautiful *jumka*, bell shaped earrings, bracelets delicately traced with *Chinar* leaf designs, necklaces composed of plaques stung on head and set with uncut stones and other varieties of ornaments, are all the result of a synthesis of the art of jewelers from all these countries.

<sup>40</sup> Abdul Majid Matoo, *Kashmir Under the Mughals 1586-1752*, p 135

<sup>41</sup> P N K Bamzai, *Cultural and Political History of Kashmir*, p. 522

<sup>42</sup> Abdul Majid Matoo, *Kashmir Under the Mughals 1586-1752*, p. 135; see also P N K Bamzai, *History of Kashmir, Political, Social, Cultural From Earliest Times to the Present Day*, pp. 516-519

<sup>43</sup> Kangri or Kangdi is an Urdu word, and in Kashmiri it is called Kangir.

<sup>44</sup> Pelsaert, *Remonstrantie*, C. 1620, Trans. M. Gyle, Jahangirs India, pp. 34-35

<sup>45</sup> *The Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, Vol. II, op. cit., P. 148, see also Mohibbul Hassan, *Kashmir Under Sultans*, P. 368

<sup>46</sup> It was a kind of hard and heavy cap covered by a long cloth. The heads of such women seem bulky.

<sup>47</sup> Pelsaert, *Remonstrantie*, op. cit., p. 35; see also Walter Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p. 251

<sup>48</sup> Abdul Majid Matoo, *Kashmir Under the Mughals 1586-1752*, op. cit., p. 137

<sup>49</sup> A type of footwear which has got a wooden base raised from the front and at the back and hollow in the middle. The wooden base had got three holes to which the rope of wooden straw was tied to adjust the feet. Walter Lawrence, p. 251

<sup>50</sup> P N K Bamzai, *Cultural and Political History of Kashmir*, op. cit., p. 523

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> G M D Sufi, *Kashir*, Vol. II, Light and Life Publishers, (New Delhi, 1974), p. 581

The Kashmir gold smiths are very ingenious and, though their work has not that lightness so charming in that of Delhi, it has a peculiar style of its own.<sup>53</sup>

#### 4. FAIRS AND FESTIVALS:

Every land is known for its fairs and festivals. Fairs and festivals are the backbone of a social structure. Kashmiris have also since time immemorial being observing the fairs and festivals which include both religious and secular. *Nilmatpurana* gives a good account of ancient fairs and festivals.<sup>54</sup>

A prominent festival celebrated both by Hinds and Muslims in Kashmir was *Nagayatra*. It was observed for thirteen days of the bright fortnight of *Bhadun* (August). Zain-ul-abidin used to participate in such activities every year. People in huge numbers take place in such a festival. Another important festival of note is *Vethruva* festival. It was commemorated on the day on which the source of the Jhelum was supposed to have been created by Siva. Kashmiri name *Veth* was given to river Jhelum and *Truvah* the thirteenth of month when the festival occurred. Zain-ul-abidin and the Mughal successors like Akbar, Jhangir participated in this festival. This festival as celebrated by all people irrespective of caste, religion they belonged to Srivara- a historian has also praised the festival.<sup>55</sup> The spread of Islam in Kashmir has introduced some new festivals. Among them the festival of *Iduz-Zuha* was of great importance. Hindu people used to greet Muslim brothers on this eve. Muslims celebrated with people of another community on such occasions.<sup>56</sup> Festivals of both Hindu and Muslims were celebrated with great pomp and show. These festivals include *Shab-i-barat*, *Nouroze*, *Diwali* and *Dussehra*. *Nouroz*, *Diwali* and *Idshad* virtually become the national holidays.<sup>57</sup> It has been mentioned that the hunting of the wild ducks and fowls was a common hobby. It is interesting to note that mock battles were fought among the youngsters of different wards of Srinagar in Miasuma ground. Tipcat, hopscotch and wrestling were some other games played during this period.<sup>58</sup> The music and dance received a great impetus under the Chak rule. Hussian Sahah Chak used to enjoy the company of musicians at his court on every Tuesday of the week.<sup>59</sup>

George Foster visited Kashmir in 1783, he found an interesting thing that when a Kashmiri even of lowest order, finds himself in the possession of ten shillings, he loses no time in assembling his party and launching into the lake, solace himself till the last fathering is lost.<sup>60</sup>

“The participation of Muslim kings in Hindu and Muslim festivals not only sows their enlightened outlook on religion but also their keen desire to identify themselves with the people in general. The fact that the festival of *Vethruva* was celebrated by all classes of people in as late a time as the reign of Jahangir when most of the population had already acceded Islam, shows the prevalence of religious and communal amity among the people of medieval Kashmir.<sup>61</sup>

People celebrated annual *ursers*<sup>62</sup> and *festivals*. The prominent among them were *urser* of Sheikh Noor-ud-din rishi at Chrar sharif, *Baba jan baz Wali* at Baramullah, *Rishi Maloo* at Islamabad. People from different corner of the valley assemble on the *urs* of Sayyid Ali Hamadani and Sheikh Hamza Makhdoomi in Srinagar. Hindus also celebrated the annual fairs of *Tullmulla*, *Amarnath*, *Sindh Berrari* and *Kokernag*.<sup>63</sup>

#### 5. PASTIMES:

There were varied kinds of games played in medieval Kashmir. There were different kinds of games played by different sections of society. *Polo* as a prominent game held a place of honour. The polo ground was known as *Chawgwn* which was found in every city and town. Sources have mentioned that the game was introduced from Gilgt in the valley. Ali shah was very fond of the game. The common people played the simpler version of the polo-hockey. A saying of the *Lalleshwari* gives us an idea about this game. The other games were single-sticks and fights with slings for the people to amuse them with.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> P N K Bamzai, *Cultural and Political History of Kashmir*, op. cit., p. 525

<sup>55</sup> See *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, Vol. II, pp. 167-68

<sup>56</sup> P N K Bamzai, *Cultural and Political History of Kashmir*, op. cit., p. 525

<sup>57</sup> Abdul Majid Matoo, *Kashmir Under the Mughals 1586-1752*, p. 136

<sup>58</sup> Walter Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p. 255

<sup>59</sup> Nizam-ud-din Wani, *Muslim Rule in Kashmir 1554-1586*, p. 210

<sup>60</sup> Abdul Majid Matoo, *Kashmir Under the Mughals 1586-1752*, p. 136

<sup>61</sup> P N K Bamzai, *Cultural and Political History of Kashmir*, p. 525

<sup>62</sup> These were the birthdays of some great sufis and the people used to celebrate such occasions. Both men and women visited the shrines on that day and pay homage to the sufi saint and also deposit some money in the box of the shrine. the deposited money of the people was spent on the maintenance of the shrine.

<sup>63</sup> Abdul Majid Matoo, *Kashmir Under the Mughals 1586-1752*, p. 136

<sup>64</sup> Hashmatullah, op. cit., pp. 151-152; see also P N K Bamzai, *Cultural and Political History of Kashmir*, op. cit., p. 528

Dice and chess comprised the indoor games, the out door games was polo (Persian chawgan) the game for common people was hockey.<sup>65</sup> The favourite pastime of the royalty and of the nobles was hunting. Shihab-ud-din was fond of hunting lions and tigers. Sultan Hasan Shah took special measures in the latter sport and his Hawks brought down many birds as presents to the king.<sup>66</sup>

There were many sources of entertaining the people. Jugglers, folk dancers and folk musicians entertained the people on festivals and social customs like marriage and child birth. Display of firework was also a source of enjoyment from Zain-ul-abdin's time. Musical events and occasional concerts form the part of the societal enjoyments. Open air dramas were composed which gave a more vivid form of city and village life. Political symposia were also held now and then; and minstrels recited verses to the accompaniment of the *guitar*.<sup>67</sup>

The Mughals who were given to the measures of life and who dressed up the beauty sports of the valley, encouraged by their example the eat-drink and be-merry habits among the people of Kashmir. Abul Fazl in his *Ain-i-Akbari* writes "the inhabitants go upon the lakes in the small boats to enjoy the diversion of hawking. They have partridges, the elk is also found here, and they train leopard to hunt them."<sup>68</sup>

## 6. HOUSES:

Kashmir due to its distinctive geographical conditions has a unique style of houses. In medieval Kashmir the ground floor was reserved for cattle. First floor was meant as family apartment, second & third floors were preserved for household *chattles*.<sup>69</sup> The thatch of the poor dwellings in the village or near the lake was usually of rice straw or of reeds and was subjected to fire any time. Instead of windows or glasses, they were ventilated with artistic work.<sup>70</sup>

The composition of building material varied from people to people. People of higher standard used stone, lime and baked bricks for the construction of their houses. Stone was not freely used owing to the geographical location.<sup>71</sup> The roofs were slanting so as to let the snow fall off during winter season. It is mentioned that roofs were covered with planks and birch bark covered with fine earth tulips, pink and white *lillies* were grown over it. On the ground floor the sheep and goat are penned, and sometimes the sheep are crowded into a wooden locker known as the *dangij*<sup>72</sup> where the children sit in the winter and where the guest is made to sleep.<sup>73</sup> Some houses of rich were attached with bathroom near the kitchen part. This was because a big earthen pot which Kashmiris called *Maet* was fixed to baths in such a way that it could be easily get heat from kitchens hearth.<sup>74</sup> An important component of Kashmiri mosques is the presence of *Hamam*. It was Mirza Haider Gughlat who introduced the construction of *Hamam* or Turkishbath as an adjunct to the mosque. People used to preffer and sit in the *Hamam* before prayers for half an hour which gave warmth to their bodies in the old winter.<sup>75</sup>

The custom of enclosure was in vogue, but with the passage of time habit developed and mud walls were built around the compounds. In Srinagar we see houses were mainly built on the Dal Lake and in other areas it was on the bank of river Jhelum. The exteriors of these mansions were decorated but the interiors were not equally beautiful. The lay out of the city of Srinagar was excellently. Paddy straw was used by the lower sections of the society and mats made from turf of lakes were called *pets*. The floor of the aristocratic class was covered by *dhurries*, *carpets*, *gabbas* and other texture floor coverings.<sup>76</sup>

Due to the danger of earthquakes in Kashmir houses of stones were not made. Due to the abundance of wood, the houses were mostly made of wood.<sup>77</sup> Utensils of varied kinds were used. The peasant household consisted of a few earthen pots, some bowls and a pair of earthen pitchers. Brass copper and other metal wears were used by the upper classes. China wears, sapphire and jade dishes were and plates were also in use of the privileged class.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>65</sup> Mohibbul Hassan, *Kashmir Under Sultans*, P. 371

<sup>66</sup> P N K Bamzai, *Cultural and Political History of Kashmir*, p. 525

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 528

<sup>68</sup> Tarikh-i-Rashidi, op. cit., p. 425

<sup>69</sup> Abdul Majid Matoo, *Kashmir Under the Mughals 1586-1752*, p. 138' see also Pelsaert, *Remonstrantie*, p. 34

<sup>70</sup> Walter Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p. 249; see also P N K Bamzai, *History of Kashmir, Political, Social, Cultural From Earliest Times to the Present Day*, pp. 517-519

<sup>71</sup> Abdul Majid Matoo, *Kashmir Under the Mughals 1586-1752*, p. 138

<sup>72</sup> Actually the *Dangij* used to be the modern Viranda. It was a wooden locker generally made in the first story by wood and supported by logs of wood. Usually the elder people used to sit on this wooden platform to get sun light during the sunny days and also the vegetables were dried on it for the winter season.

<sup>73</sup> Walter Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p. 249

<sup>74</sup> Nizam-ud-din Wani, *Muslim Rule in Kashmir 1554-1586*, p. 210

<sup>75</sup> P N K Bamzai, *Cultural and Political History of Kashmir*, Vol. 2, p. 523

<sup>76</sup> Abdul Majid Matoo, *Kashmir Under the Mughals 1586-1752*, op. cit. p. 138

<sup>77</sup> Mohibbul Hassan, *Kashmir Under Sultans*, P. 372

<sup>78</sup> Abdul Majid Matoo, *Kashmir Under the Mughals 1586-1752*, op. cit., p. 139

## 7. TRADE:

The merchants of Kashmir scattered over its neighbouring countries like Patna, Banaras, Lhasa, Kathmandu, Sinning, Peking and in the towns of Bengal, the Punjab, Bhutan, Khurasan, Turkistan and on the Corromandal coast. For trade with Tibet, China and Turkistan the town of the Leh became the chief commercial depot of import and export. Through Zogila pass goods between Leh and Kashmir were carried.<sup>79</sup>

## 8. IMPORTS:

Salt and Shawl wool were most important items of import. Salt used to come from Punjab. Tibet shawl wool was exported only to Ladakh and similarly by ancient customs and engagements, their export items from Ladakh were confined to Kashmir alone.

Tibet exported to Kashmir gold and musk in addition to shawl wool, while as Ladakh exported woolen cloth. From Punjab the main items were salt, morocco, leather, broad cloth, embroidered cloth and Lac. From Gilgit and Baltistan we see silk worm eggs. We have links with Kashgar and it exported to Kashmir silk and musk. Iraq and Turkistan sent horses of superior quality. From China a variety of articles like musk, china wood, rhubarb, swallow wort, porcelain silk and tea.<sup>80</sup>

## 9. EXPORT:

The main items of Kashmir for export was Shawl sent to India, China, Asia, Tibet and China. The other articles were musk, crystals, silk, woolen cloth, sugar, saffron, dried resins, walnuts, paper, fresh fruit, timber and houses.<sup>81</sup>

## 10. CONCLUSION:

To conclude we can say that the culture in Kashmir from food habits up to the wearing of clothes is actually an agglomeration of cultures from different regions of the world mainly the Central Asian Countries. The culture developed and enriched due to the influx of foreigners who came from different areas of the world. They brought with them new ideas and new cultures which had enriched the culture of Kashmir and made it a composite culture. The rulers in Kashmir who came from outside left no stone unturned to enhance the culture of the valley and that is why the customs and traditions of Kashmir are unique as far as the whole sub-continent is concerned and resembles more or less to the Central Asian Countries.

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<sup>79</sup> Mohibbul Hassan, *Kashmir Under Sultans*, op. cit., p. 373

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., P. 389

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.