

## CHANGE AND CONTINUITY IN KASHMIRI CULTURE: KASHMIRI YOUTH'S PERCEPTION OF CONTEMPORARY CULTURAL ISSUES

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1. Cultural Encounters: Sociologically, it has been observed in all human societies that culture has most often faced other culture/s in the processes of cultural interaction, cultural assimilation, cultural domination and cultural antagonism. In this way, a particular culture has encountered other culture/s, especially in the modern times and during the western colonial rule in Asia and Africa. Though equitable and reciprocal relationship in the cultural life was possible in the colonized countries, the western powers treated them as their "colonies" and enforced their culture forcefully. At the global level, knowledge, science and technology and other factors were fully utilized to carry out the cultural domination. But, in the post-colonial period, though the local-indigenous cultures in Asia and Africa emerged, maintained and asserted, they faced serious challenges of modern life which had effected their youth significantly. In this situation, the youths had developed specific ideas, attitudes and behavior *vis-avis* modern way of life.

2. The Kashmir Situation: In this situational context, the Kashmiri youth also faced some challenges of modern life in the field of culture, especially from the initiation of the last century. These challenges were responded in a specific way and with a specific orientation. The positive and negative cultural ideas, attitudes and behavior pattern led to the evolution of youth's perception towards modern challenges related to knowledge, science, tech-

was drawn scientifically.

5. Some Sociological Findings: The respondents in this study conveyed the following particular messages of the Kashmiri culture:

**5.1. Kashmiri cultural Messages: Cultural messages about Kashmiri Culture**

		Table No. 1						
S.no.	The Cultural Messages	Response						Total
		A	B	B	K	P	S	
		[60]	[60]	[50]	[60]	[60]	[50]	[340]
01.	CM-01 [84.70%]	52	42	50	42	47	50	288
02.	CM-02 [91.76%]	53	46	48	46	49	48	290
03.	CM-03 [91.76%]	59	55	50	48	50	50	312
04.	CM-04 [75.29%]	42	40	46	36	48	44	256
05.	CM-05 [72.05%]	36	46	41	35	42	45	245
06.	CM-06 [75.88%]	49	42	42	40	43	42	258
07.	CM-07 [84.41%]	50	49	46	48	47	47	289
08.	CM-08 [79.70%]	45	48	43	42	49	44	271
09.	CM-09 [89.70%]	55	50	47	50	52	50	305
10.	CM-10 [91.17%]	54	52	50	51	53	50	310

- A stands for Anantnag  
 B stands for Baramulla  
 B stands for Budgam  
 K stands for Kupwara  
 P stands for Pulwama  
 S stands for Srinagar

- CM-01 You should maintain the Kashmiri identity.  
 CM-02 You should uphold the Kashmiri personality traits.  
 CM-03 You should study all about Kashmir, especially its past.  
 CM-04 You should use Kashmiri language at home and in school.  
 CM-05 You should emphasize oneness of the Kashmiri culture.  
 CM-06 It must help you to solve today's problems.  
 CM-07 It must help you to build a just and human social order.  
 CM-08 It must help you to understand the negative role of political leaders.  
 CM-09 It must help you to understand the plural nature of our society.  
 CM-10 It must give clear ideas about secular character of the Kashmiri society.

5.2 *Knowledge about composite character of Kashmiri Culture:* The respondents conveyed the responses regarding composite character of Kashmiri culture as reflects in the following table:

**Table No. 2**

Knowledge about composite character of Kashmiri culture								
S. No.	Response	A	B	B	K	P	S	Total
01.	Yes	45	41	37	35	40	38	236 [69.41%]
02.	No	15	19	13	25	20	12	140 [30.58%]

This response, especially at no.2, may be explained in terms of two factors. First, since most of these students belong to the age group of 10-16 years, they had hardly any opportunity to interact with Non-Muslim Kashmiri's, particularly the Kashmiri Pandits (KPs). Second, since they hardly visited areas outside Kashmir valley, they could not encounter the non-Muslim Kashmiris. Some of these youths are completely ignorant about KPs, their culture, society, and their belonging to the past and present of Kashmir.

*5.3 Modern challenges to Kashmiri culture:* In response to our question regarding the modern challenges which Kashmiri culture, like other cultures, faces at present, the respondents gave the response which reveals in the following table:

**Table No. 3**

Response towards various modern challenges to Kashmiri culture

S.no.	Response	Yes/No	A	B	B	K	P	S	Total
01.	Sc. & Tech.	Yes	05	06	04	07	05	00	27 [07.94%]
		No	55	54	46	53	55	50	313 [92.05%]
02.	Plurality of relig.	Yes	03	05	05	06	77	02	28 [08.23%]
		No	57	55	45	54	53	48	312 [91.76%]
03.	Plura. of cultures	Yes	03	05	05	06	02	07	28 [08.23%]
		No	57	55	45	54	53	48	213 [91.76%]
04.	Human rights	Yes	05	06	03	07	04	02	27 [07.97%]
		No	55	54	47	53	56	48	313 [92.05%]

## 05. Gender Discrimina.

Yes	10	09	06	10	12	07	54	[15.88%]
No	50	51	44	50	48	43	286	[84.11%]

## 06. Social Justice

Yes	09	09	05	08	10	06	47	[15.88%]
No	51	51	45	52	50	44	293	[86.17%]

## 07. Environ.Preserva

Yes	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	[00.00]
No	60	60	50	60	60	50	340	[100.00]

The explanation of the above table follows:

5.1.3 Application of Science and Technology: The preceding table shows that dominant majority of 92.05% students held the opinion that there was no need to guard against the application of science and technology as it posed no threat for the local culture. They argued that since it stands must for scientific and material development in the present –day times, the local culture should not become hurdle in this grand process. They also held the view that if the local culture becomes a potential block in the scientific development, there should be deviation from that culture. This they considered desirable and preferable. A significant number of these respondents maintained that science and religion [and culture] are not conflictual, so the opposition to the former's application has no justification. However, a minority of 7.94% respondents opined that traditional culture [mostly religiously determined] must be guarded against the application of science and technology. It was primarily because they consider religion and science mutually antagonistic.

5.3.2. Plurality of Religions and Cultures: an overwhelming majority of 91.76% respondents conveyed that they must safeguard the plurality of religions and cultures in Kashmir. This was partly because this plural character stood as most distinguishing empiri-

cal social reality in Kashmir and partly because this character stood for essence and need of our time. Other important reasons for this response included the facts such as Kashmiri society has established a tradition of respect, tolerance and accommodation of various religions-cultures throughout its history; maintenance of plural character of Kashmiri identity in all situations; and efforts in the direction of establishing a modern and democratic society. Other considerations for maintaining the plural character of the Kashmiri society were to help in the scientific and other material developments; to reduce conflict to controllable limits; and to help in the process of restoration of peace.

5.3.3. Safeguarding the human rights: The maintenance of human rights way consensus based and desirable objective in Kashmir, a huge majority of 92.05% student respondents upheld the opinion that the culture has not to guard against these rights. In reality, the culture provides the required legitimacy to the practices directly and indirectly related to human rights. They said that these rights must be upheld for all groups, communities and classes and in all situations. This topic attains more importance in Kashmir where practices of human rights violations have been recorded in extreme form.

5.3.4. Practices of Gender Discrimination: As traditional practices related to gender discrimination are fast disappearing in Kashmir, the majority of 84.11% student respondents conveyed clearly that there prevails no cultural justification for these obsolete practices. Though there have been such practices in vogue even in the recent past, these have been reduced considerably now. The presently achieved status and role of women in present-day Kashmir confirms these propositions. However, a significant no. of student respondents, i.e.15.08%, upheld the view that practices of gender discrimination may continue in Kashmir, though they don't justify these practices absolutely. These conservative and lower socio-eco-

conomic respondents argued that men and women are not equal religiously and culturally and efforts to negate this inequality will prove futile.

5.3.5. The Ideals of Social Justice: The dominant majority of 96.17% respondents held the view that the Kashmiri culture has not to guard against ideas and ideals of social justice. They felt that in reality the local culture itself promotes these ideas and ideals in all sections of society, at all level, in all fields, and at all times.

5.3.6. Environmental Preservation: 100% student respondents revealed their opinion that the Kashmiri culture emphasizes on the total preservation of environment in the valley. It also opposes environmental pollution in all forms. In the context of heavy environmental pollution of lakes and rivers here, especially Dal Lake and Jhelum River, and deforestation is opposed strongly. The famous saying of Alamdare Kashmir—*an Poshe Tele Yeli Poshe Van* - is quoted repeatedly ever where in Kashmir in this regard.

## 6. Conclusion

The above-mentioned empirical findings lead us to formulate sociological conclusions that

- i. While modernity is increasing/ expanding, some aspects of tradition are maintained consciously. This situation may be characterized as continuity and change in the cultural context.
- ii. As has happened in the case of all cultures, the Kashmiri culture too was exposed to other cultures and other challenges and it has responded in a particular way. In actuality, this response was shaped by the pattern and intensity of the global or regional challenges and the socio-economic status, religious-political affiliation and nature of interaction between the Kashmiri culture and other cultures.

