
Socio-Cultural Life of the Kalasha People of Chitral: A Study of their Festivals

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The paper seeks to examine the cultural life of the Kalasha people and their festivals. It particularly focuses on *Joshi*, *Rat Nat* & *Uchaw*, *Pul* and Winter Solstice: the *Chawmos* festivals points out their role in the lives of the Kalasha tribe. Primarily, the study is based on documentary evidences recorded in secondary sources and combined with the data collected by the current researcher during various field visits and ethnographic surveys to the Kalashdesh (Kalasha valleys of Bumburet, Rumbur and Birir). The study probes the meanings of festivities and their cultural significance among the Kalasha tribe.

Kalasha; the sole pagan tribe of Pakistan and indigenous people, live in remote north-western part of Pakistan in Chitral district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The Kalasha people belong to Indo-Aryan stock and they speak the Kalasha language (it is also called Kalasha-mun and Kalashwar); a language of Dardic group. The total population of Kalasha tribe is approximately four thousand. The Kalasha are strongly attached to their culture and religion. However, during 1970's and 1980's the Kalasha people and the valleys observed drastic changes like: means of communication, tourism, religious conversion, demographic, values, burial practice, and change in social institutions like *bashali*¹ and *budalak*².

The Kalasha community of Chitral is considered the most festive community of Pakistan as the Kalasha *dastoor* rotates around the festivals, throughout the year. Primarily, the Kalasha celebrate two types of religious festivals; one type is of purely religious festivals with rituals only, while the other type is mixture of religious and cultural ceremonies; a combination of rituals, singing & dancing.

Joshi: The Spring Festival

The spring starts in moorlands of Chitral region of the Hindu Kush in May and to welcome the spring the Kalasha community celebrates the *Joshi* (also called *Zoshi*) festival for three days. The people start storing milk when elders of the community announce the dates for the festivals. They start to store milk in their barns before ten days of the festivals. Later, the collected milk is distributed among the tribe-fellows.³ The first preparing phase of Joshi festival consists of ten days; the shepherds live in goat-houses and do not visit their homes for nine days. During the said days the shepherds clean the goat-sheds and all utensils.⁴ After the first phase of (ten days) the festival, young boys and girls fetch yellow flowers (*Sophora Mollis*) from the pastures and branches of walnut to decorate their houses, doorways, walls and also decorate barns and the *Jestak han*;⁵ the temple of *Jestak*.⁶ Practically, this is the first day of the festival. On the said day the collected milk is distributed among the tribe-fellows to celebrate the festival. The ceremony of distributing and drinking the milk is called *chirik pipi*.⁷ On the first day men visit the shrine of *Shingmou*,⁸ they clean it, decorate it with new branches and offer some dried mulberries and walnuts to the shrine.⁹

During the Joshi festival the Kalasha women sing the melodic songs and they dance on the beats of the drums. Some songs are sung in the praise of Dramui who was a great hunter in past days¹⁰ while some songs represent affections and love. Second phase of *Joshi* represents the religious climax of respective festival. Many sacrifices are offered to *Mahandeo*¹¹ deity and the Kalasha people pray for welfare of the community.¹² With the start of second phase, celebrations of the festivals begin.

During the second phase of the festival a ceremony called *gulprik* is celebrated in which all those babies who born after the last *Joshi* are brought to highlands in each village with their mothers.¹³ They all are allowed to go even the most sacred place of the Kalasha; goat sheds or barns and an *onjesta suda* throws milk on them as a ritual to purify them. In this way in fact all the babies become the part of the Kalasha tribe.¹⁴ At the end of the celebration, the Kalasha elders sing the songs and dance. "The girls enjoy the *Cha*, an up-tempo dance in which groups of girls clasp each other's shoulders and dance in spinning circles."¹⁵

Joshi's third stage is celebrated for two days in the valleys. Different types of songs are sung and dances are performed during these two days. The songs attributed to love, tragedies and wars are sung by the community.¹⁶ The songs of Joshi festival reflect themes ranging from Kalasha history to romance.¹⁷ At the last day of the festival, elders sing Gatch: a very secret song, and all participants wave branches of walnut and they pray for abundance of milk of goats. Kalasha believe that fairies come to participate in this ritual and they also wave walnut branches.¹⁸

Indeed, the *Joshi* is very unique and fascinating festival which represents the religious and social behaviours of the community.

The Uchaw and Rat Nat Festivals

The thanks giving festival *Uchaw* (in Khowar spelled as *Uchal*) is celebrated in the month of August, each year. Before the celebration *Uchaw* another festival is celebrated for two months which is called *Rat Nat*, *Rat* denotes night while *Nat* the dance so, in this long festival, dance is performed in alternative nights.

The final dates of the festival are announced by the elders of the community. The *Uchaw* is held to ensure good crops of wheat. The first ceremony of the festival is performed at the sanctuary of *Sajigor*,¹⁹ in Rumbur valley. The shepherds climb down to the sanctuary from high pasture. They bring abundant cheese with them. Other Kalasha from the villages also gathered at the sanctuary and after religious rituals bread and cheese is distributed among the attendants, the food can only be eaten by males.²⁰ Wheat breads, walnut breads and cheese are not only given to family member and married females of clan but also to neighbouring Muslim families.²¹ After this the festival starts, and continues till late night or till the next morning. All the Kalasha community makes marry; they sing songs and dance²² at the open place, which is called *Gri*²³ in Kalasha and *Charsu* in Kho language.

Pul Festival

Pul (also spelled as *Pho*) the autumn festival is celebrated only in Kalasha valley of Birir in early October or sometimes in late September. The *Budalak*²⁴ had been the key trait of the *Pul* festival. The *Pul* was associated to return of *budalak* and to mate with the Kalasha women of Birir valley²⁵. The *budalak* is a lost institution of the Kalasha community.

According to history, *Budalak* had been used to gather his herd at the start of the summer season to left for the high pastures and returned in September/October at the time of *Pul* festival. The *budalak*, during the festival, was welcomed and he could choose any girl for himself.²⁶ No doubt, the *Pul* festival is still celebrated in Birir, but without *Budalak*. It is held at the time of the grape and walnut harvest. The virgin boys crush the grapes, this ceremony has a prominent place in local customs. A. Raziq Palwal unveiled that after the harvesting and collecting all the grains, a male goat is sacrifice to *Mahandeo*.²⁷

Another trait of this festival is fruit-picking rites; he said, “during my field visit in Birir Valley Mir Bacha Khan, *qazi*²⁸ of Birir valley, explained that at the

time of *Uchaw* (in mid of August), fruit picking is forbidden, for forbidding the term *nagha* is used. The *nagha* is lifted before the commencement of the *Pul* festival. The *nagha* is applicable on walnut, peach, grapes and pear, but not on apple because they grow apple in bulk. The watch-men are appointed to monitor and to prevent fruit picking before *Pul* until the *nagha* is called off. When *nagha* is called off a goat is sacrificed and all the people start fruit picking.²⁹

Biramor Festival

The *Biramor* is rare and optional type of festival of the Kalasha people which is celebrated in winter, especially in the months of November or December. During winter, the Kalasha people have nothing to do, so, they celebrate festivities. Only a male Kalasha member can offer the *Biramor*.

Biramor is, in fact, a feast of merit; it is very important feature of the Kalasha society. Although this feast of merit is expensive and feast giver has to spend expensive commodities: like goats, cows, wine, cheese etc., and sometimes feast giver gives the dowry or gifts to relatives, even *Biramor* has important place in the Kalasha culture. The status of the feast of merit giver rises, the feast of merit is a symbol of the prosperity and generosity.

If a Kalasha tribe fellow wants to offer a *Biramor*, he has to publicize it in any festival or at any great gathering; he shows his intentions sometimes couple of years before and even sometime a decade before the *Biramor*. Usually he shows his intentions in a *Biramor* organized by any Kalasha member. Before publicizing the *Biramor*, the host obtains the consensus from his clan fellows for economic and moral support for the whole festival.³⁰

Loude & Lievre describes the criteria for the host of *Biramor*

Wealth is generally inherited....But wealth is not all that is needed to be a giver of feasts, and a "rich man's son" is not necessarily a "distinguished man"; he must prove his worth. He must have the dynamism to produce surpluses,... In addition to this talent for developing his material heritage, he must prove his virility: engender sons,... He must also be able to impose his authority on his family and his ascendancy over his lineage brothers, from whom he will expect economic assistance.³¹

There are three types of *Biramor* in the Kalasha society as Muhammad Iqbal Kalasha³² categorized:

The small type of *Biramor* is such a way only male goats are sacrificed; one goat is divided among four families, but this time only males have privilege to eat the meat not females of the families. And in a smaller *Biramor* the performer does not keep *malery* symbol at *Sajigor* temple.

In the second type of *Biramor*, both male and female goats are sacrificed for all the Kalasha members; males and females, but the goats which are sacrificed at *Sajigor* are only for male members while the goats sacrificed in village are for both sexes; one goat is distributed among four families. It is a bigger *Biramor* and this time *malery* is installed at *Sajigor* as ritual.

The third type of *Biramor* is common like second one, but in this *Biramor* dowry is given to *jamili* of the feast giver. The goats are sacrificed and distributed among tribe fellows.

During the festival, food is distributed, the feast giver is praised by elders of the clan as Loude & Lievre pronounced that praise giving is an art of the Kalasha community and during the event each participant tries his level best to express himself and praise the feast giver in a different way. In praise giving speech, the participants recall the local history, social values of the tribe and virtues of the feast giver.³³

The Kalasha people seek chance to enjoy life, so, during the *Biramor* they dance enthusiastically on the drum beats and they sing the songs of different verities. The rituals of *Biramor* are performed at *Mahandeo* and sometime during performing the rituals (i.e. to burn holy juniper, sacrifice goats etc.) *dehar* enters into trance and “The god now spoke through the mouth of the shaman”³⁴ and *dehar* predicts the future.

Biramor is a socio-religious festival having some religious rituals and social aspects. Therefore, different games like tug of war, *tambuk*, *salom chatik* and *shil* are included.³⁵

The Chawmos Festival

According to Akiko Wada the *Chawmos* is the longest, the most complex and religious festival of the community as it is held in the month of December each year. The festival lasts for fourteen days, during this period the community makes merry while dancing and singing and many religious rituals are performed along with the sacrifices of goats and sheep. The community believes that the god Balumain visits the Kalashdesh during the festival from Tsyam, an unknown place in eastern Afghanistan.³⁶ This festival is a symbol of the end of the year's fieldwork and harvest; now people have nothing to do but celebration. People store cheese, fruits, vegetables and grains in bulk for this festival, because there are many stages in *Chawmos* and it requires many offerings. It is the last festival of the year, which is celebrated for two weeks. The festival has a long series of ceremonies, phases and rituals:

The Inauguration of Chawmos

The *Chawmos* starts with the celebration of *Sarazari*. In this celebration the young boys and girls of Bumburet valley under the leadership of elders go to the high scared place, which are considered the dwelling of gods, where this celebration is always celebrated, there they lit fire at two places, one for women and one for men,³⁷ but in Rumbur valley fragrant juniper branches are burnt on the roofs of the villages which is a consideration of purifying the villages.³⁸ Then the ceremony formally begins with the offerings and one of the participants washes hands for rituals and sacrifices. The boys and the girls sing different types of songs

of the festival, while singing and dancing they go house to house. They are offered fruits and food by the tribe-fellows.³⁹ This ceremony is celebrated for two days in some of the villages. Goats are slaughtered, while the men pray in this ceremony. Each day ends with a dance, during which dry fruit is distributed. Only songs are sung, however drum beating is forbidden in whole celebration.⁴⁰

The Ritual Clash

“The Third day *Chuwinari* is characterized by a ritual clash fought with insults, often a sexual nature, between nubile girls of the two sections of the community: up-valley and down-valley.”⁴¹ In this ceremony the Kalasha young boys and girls fetch the reeds from nearby mountains and draw pictures of sheep, goats, human etc. on the walls of *Jestak Han*.⁴² Meanwhile girls move towards river bank for singing competition and the Kalasha men cook beans in bulk, inside the *Jestak Han* for distributing among the all families in the valley.⁴³ However, Cacopardo and Cacopardo claim that, to cook the bean is exercised on the fourth day which is called *dau Pacek*.⁴⁴ All these activities show that they have nothing to do and they are returning to their leisure life. In fact in first four days of *Chawmos*, social ties are consolidated and strengthened. In these days the Kalasha society starts to turn into *onjesta* state from *pragata* state.⁴⁵

Rite of Fertility of Livestock

The ceremony of *Kutramu* ensures the fertility of domestic livestock and wild game (hunting).⁴⁶ For this ceremony the people grind the wheat and at night men make sculptures of goats and sheep with dough (of wheat), these animals are called *Sharabirayak* while women bake walnut bread.⁴⁷ Next morning, the Kalasha people wake up early and perform the ceremonial ritual of driving their animals away for mock hunting. Then the models of sheep and goats are given to the cows some time and sometimes given to Muslim children to play with them.⁴⁸ According to Cacopardo brothers, drawings and paintings on the wall of temples interpret the memory of a distant past when human beings, fairies, deities and animals were living altogether, but later on, there held a separation among them for some unknown reasons.⁴⁹

A Ritual Tribute to Dead One's

The *Mandaik* is the sixth day of the great festival, *Chawmos*. *Mandaik* is time to recall the souls of the dead people of the community. On the day of *Mandaik*: the Kalasha women bake walnut bread and pumpkin. As Akiko Wada writes, the *Mandaik* is communicational ritual among Kalasha with their ancestors' souls.⁵⁰ The Kalasha believe that during the ritual the dead come back to share their meals. The celebration of this day starts at the evening when all the food is amassed along with fruit in the *Jestak Han*, the doors of all the houses are kept closed while an elder calls loudly to the souls of the dead saying “Come and eat”.⁵¹

Some food is placed outside of the temple for ancestors and rest of the baskets full of food are put inside the *Jestak Han* for rest of the people. Akiko Wada observes that a signal of fire is lit to attract ancestors for sharing the food.⁵²

A Ritual of Turn into the Purified Life

The next day, everyone from the community washes him/herself to get purification for the whole year. The rite *Shishao Sutchek* to purify the women performed with walnut bread, water and fire.⁵³ The walnut breads are baked by men. The hands of men should be clean and men should not touch anything, even themselves. Each woman and girl receives five breads.⁵⁴ The day of the purification is considered as the most sacred time of the year. At this point the Kalasha society has to follow some obligations and restrictions. The kitchen utensils and other articles are replaced with new ones. The milk or tea is forbidden and imported goods are also illegal and not allowed to use. The Kalasha who have converted to Islam must leave the village and further sexual intercourse is banned for a week.⁵⁵

Loude & Lievre wrote that “The element of water”, “was believed to wash away the secular, the solid marks of one’s previous condition, which must be shed in order to be able to accede without danger to this period of suspended time filled with the presence of the divine.”⁵⁶

Purification of the Kalasha Men

Istongas is a rite of purification of the Kalasha tribe men, and this rite is performed on the tenth day of *Chawmos*. The men purification ceremony is held late in the evening at the goat sheds. This ritual is dedicated to *Dezau*: the Creator. On the terraced roofs a fire is lit and burning juniper branches are circled over the heads of the contributor.⁵⁷ A lamb is also sacrificed and its blood drops are sprinkled on the faces of men present there. This ceremony is held on the roofs of goat shed to ensure the fertility of the herds and unbeaten hunting. The same day the Kalasha men gathered on the open air sanctuary of *Sajigor* (in Birir valley) and sacrificed forty goats to *Balumain*, but these sacrifices are presented to *Pushao* an assistant of *Balumain*⁵⁸ as on this stage the Kalasha society is not completely purified, so *Balumain* is supposed to visit the valley yet. These goats are offered for prosperity and good health.

Ritual of the Initiation

The most sacred element of the winter festival is *goshnik*. The Kalasha community does not consider a Kalasha kid as the member of the Kalasha society until or unless *goshnik* ritual is done for the specific kid. This ceremony is done when a boy becomes seven years old and a girl becomes four years old.⁵⁹ *Goshnik* in fact is rite of initiation or rite of passage. Rite of passage, in fact, is an important ritual which is performed when an individual (most probably a kid or young) from specific community enters from one phase of age to another, generally when he or she enters to adulthood.⁶⁰

Goshnik: the rite of passage of the Kalasha community, is held at Jestakhan, where all kids of about four years are brought and are given dresses to become the member of the community. Boys are given a white cap, while the little girls are given black woven dress and head-gear: the *kupas*.⁶¹ Without their *goshnik* the kids are not believed to be a part of the tribe. Shah Jawan: (legendary spokesperson from Rumbur valley) adds that the dress is given to young girls and boys by their *mama-gan*.⁶²

Tradition of Census of the Kalasha Tribe

This ceremony takes place at the shrine of *Sajigor*; the Kalasha deity. *Sajigor* is open air sanctuary, which is situated outside the village, where only men and boys can go.⁶³ The Kalasha, in old days, were instructed by great Nanga Dehar to take a willow branch in hands which would help Balumain to count them, according to tradition.⁶⁴ This ritual of counting of tribe-fellows by Balumain is called *chettai adua*. During the whole ceremony of *chettai adua* no sacrifice of sheep or goat is offered to Sajigor. However, juniper smoke and loafs of bread are offered as sacrifice while back at the village men and women sing the songs, they dance, and exchange sometimes crude sexual jokes⁶⁵ and improvised teasing songs.⁶⁶ The people keep dancing until *dehar* or the Kalasha elders start to make a pile of branches about 12 feet high for *Chanja Rat* and get back to home for a brief rest.⁶⁷

The Night of Torches

The above mentioned dance persisted in until the *dehar*⁶⁸ and other elder members of the Kalasha society have started heaping up the wood on the ground and mound of branches, which reaches at the level about twelve feet. This was for the huge bonfire of the approaching of the *Chanja Rat*.⁶⁹ During this ceremony, the night prayers are attributed to the *Balumain*. The *Balumain* is a god who lives in Bashagul, in Afghanistan. Some Kalasha traditions refer that *Balumain* lives in Tsyam: an unknown place in Afghanistan.⁷⁰ He comes in the Kalasha valleys only for two days, once in a year. All the offerings are made for this divine; all the songs are sung for him like:

Balimain is descending, he is arriving.
Make the males spread like shadows.
Balimain is descending, he is arriving.
Bring joy, multiply the people like stars in the heavens.
Chawmos is the feast of the gods.
We are going to meet the great Sajigor.
After you have brought us health, you can leave again.
Give us health, Balimain, we beseech it of you.
Take away our worries and our troubles.

You Balimain, give us cascades of milk.⁷¹

Late at night *qazi* leads a slow-paced procession while singing ritual songs. Each person holds a torch (*chanja*), several feet long. Indeed it is *Balumain*'s returning time, who is god of fertility. He stays with Kalasha for two days.⁷² The *changa* night is the most amazing picturesque scene of the winter festival in the Kalashdesh.

The Frightened Fox

When the guest god *Balumain* leaves the valley for Tsyam (in Bashagul Valley of Kafiristan, present Nuristan in Afghanistan), the *Lawak Biik* ceremony starts in the next morning. According to Loude & Lievre, French anthropologists) the *Lawak Biik* is practiced in one village of Bumburet valley. The people from village shout out and considered that the fox (virtually) is frightened.⁷³ It is said if the fox comes back in the village alive, it is sign of good luck for the New Year. However, in Rumbur valley, on the same day, the Kalasha people dance while men putting on the dress like women and vice versa.⁷⁴ Wada writes, "It does not have religious significance because Balimain is gone."⁷⁵ In fact this activity is extension of the Chawmos, it is not an integrated part of it. Secondly, it is not celebrated unanimously in all three Kalasha valleys.

The Forward March for Beans

The meaning of *dau tatu* is "forward march for beans." In this ceremony or custom the girls gather beans from all houses while singing songs, then the boys cook them at *Jestak Han*. The girls also collect dry fruits and thank the giver by singing the song and pray for abundant food for the household.⁷⁶

The Mythical Crows

The *kagayak* ceremony is also an extension of the winter festival. The ceremony of *kagayak* is considered the final activity of winter solstice; the night of the white mythical crow.⁷⁷ The *Kagayak* songs are sung by the community, songs in fact are like prayers, in which the people ask the crow to bring them the things they need. Traditionally, it is believed that the white mythical crow carried their wishes to gods.⁷⁸ They sing the songs for the abundant maize, for good earning, for the coming guests and the great increase in their goats.⁷⁹

Conclusion

The Kalasha festivals are a source of unity of the Kalasha tribe fellows and they are celebrating these festivals for centuries. These festivals are not only source of amusement, but have socio-cultural, socio-religious and socio-economic impacts for the community. These festivals and performing rituals enhance the

sense of belonging for culture, religion, society and for their own people. These festivals are the best source of sharing and learning the culture.

The Kalasha festivals and cultural events have potential economic impacts, many of the Kalasha fellows earn handsome amount during the festival seasons. The festivals fascinate and attract the world, and thousands of international tourists visit the valleys.

During the festivals the young Kalasha boys and girls come closer and in this way they select their life partners according to their likeliness. These festivals also serve as the platform to perfume the rites of passage. The feasts are also offered during festivals and the frequency of the feasts determined the rank of the feast giver.

However, now unfortunately, bad time is running for the Kalasha people as after 9/11; all three Kalasha valleys receive less international tourists. These valleys are located on Durand Line (Pak-Afghan border) and *Taliban* phenomenon has hit badly the tourism industry. During one of my field visits in 2008, I noticed a little number of participants in *Joshi* festival, because the Kalasha people were threatened and were afraid of terrorist threats, so about half of population stayed at home during *Joshi*. A Greek volunteer Athanasious Lerounis had been working for the welfare of the Kalasha people since 1993. He used to spend almost three months in the Kalasha valleys for the uplift of indigenous people every year. He also had a welfare organization, focusing on education and health of the Kalasha people. In 2009, he was kidnapped from Bumburet and was taken to Nuristan, Afghanistan. This was the first kidnapping in local history. Although, he came back after many months, but this incident raised many questions regarding security in the valleys. Another incident of kidnapping has been recorded in September 2010 in Bumburet valley. Ten labourers of Dir were working in jungle of Bumburet, they were kidnapped. According to updates by local internet based newspaper: The CHITRAL TIMES, four of them have been killed with a message that 'don't fight with *Taliban*'. Later in 2014, Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) threatened the Kalasha people to convert to Islam or be ready to homicide. This type of events badly hit the tourism industry and if such security threats continue, the Kalasha may hesitate to participate in their vibrant religious and cultural festivals and it would be a great loss of a unique culture of the world.

Glossary

Balumain

A god, lives in Bashagul (Afghanistan), but pays a visit to Kalasha valleys during Chawmos

bhut

Trousers

budalak

He was welcomed in Pul but now this social institution has been vanquished; his function was like a breeding bull

celik

Robe

cha

It is a type of a dance

<i>chanja</i>	Torch
<i>charsu</i>	See. Gri
<i>chawmos</i>	It is the great festival held in December for two weeks.
<i>chettai Adua</i>	A celebration of Chawmos held in remembrance of <i>Sajigor</i>
<i>chirik Pipi</i>	chirik=milk and pi=drink means drink the milk; it is a ritual of Joshi festival
<i>chitmas</i>	See. Chawmos
<i>chuwinari</i>	Celebration of Chawmos
<i>dastoor</i>	The Kalasha religion and culture
<i>dau Pacek</i>	To cook the beans
<i>dau tatu</i>	March for beans; a smaller festival held after some days of Uchaw
<i>dau</i>	Beans
<i>dehar</i>	Shaman; the spiritual figure of the Kalasha society
<i>dezau</i>	Creator in the Kalasha cosmology
<i>dramui</i>	Great Kalasha hunter; a legend
<i>ghona Chanja Rat</i>	Night of the great torches, a celebration of Chawmos
<i>ghona chawmos yat</i>	Memorial of great Chawmos
<i>ghona</i>	Great/Big
<i>goshnik</i>	The ritual of initiation
<i>gri</i>	It may be termed as community house, usually used for dance during festivals
<i>gulprik</i>	A ritual held in <i>Joshi</i> and in this celebration, women are allowed to go to most purist place; the goat shed
<i>istongas</i>	Purification of the Kalasha men; a celebration of Chawmos
<i>jamili</i>	Married sisters of the clan
<i>jestak Han</i>	Jestak=god and Han=place means temple of Jestak god.
<i>joshi</i>	Spring festival, held in May
<i>kagayak</i>	Crow
<i>kalasha-mun</i>	Language of the Kalasha people, it is also called Kalashwar
<i>kameez</i>	Shirts
<i>qazi</i>	A religious institution/leader of the Kalasha people
<i>kho</i>	Language of the people of Chitral, it is also called Khowar

<i>kupas</i>	Head-gears used by the Kalasha girls and women
<i>kutramu</i>	A celebration of Chawmos ensure the fertility of livestock
<i>lawak Biik</i>	It is a celebration of Chawmos and the locals virtually chased the fox
<i>lawak</i>	Fox
<i>mahandeo</i>	A Kalasha deity
<i>malery</i>	Carved and decorated wooden plank installed at <i>Sajigor</i>
<i>mama-gan</i>	Maternal uncles
<i>mandaik</i>	A celebration of Chawmos dedicated to dead ones
<i>nagha</i>	The fruits-picking is prohibited between Uchaw and Pul; this spell is called nagha
<i>nat</i>	Dance
<i>onjesta suda</i>	Virgin boy
<i>onjesta</i>	Pure/Virgin
<i>pacek</i>	To cook
<i>pho</i>	See. Pul
<i>pragata</i>	Impure
<i>pul</i>	A festival held in October in Birir valley only
<i>pushao</i>	An assistant of Balimain
<i>rat Nat</i>	The festival of dance (at nights), it is held many weeks before the Uchaw festival
<i>rat</i>	Night
<i>sajigor</i>	It was formerly warrior god but now it is guardian/protector of territory and herds, its alter is only in Rumbor valley
<i>salom chatik</i>	Wrestling
<i>sambiek</i>	To help some on to put on the dress
<i>sarazari</i>	First celebration of Chawmos
<i>shalwar</i>	Trousers
<i>sharabirayak</i>	Baked animal
<i>shil</i>	Stone throwing; a game
<i>shishao Sutcheck</i>	Removal of impurity; a celebration of Chawmos
<i>suda</i>	Boy
<i>tambuk</i>	It is a gun shooting game and participants try to split a fat pumpkin
<i>tshatak Joshi</i>	Tshatak means smaller, it is first day celebration of Joshi festival

tsyam

The mythical abode of the Kalasha, no
one knows about its location

uchaw

Harvesting festival, held in August

Notes and References

¹ *Bashali* is a house for menstruating women and for those going through the process of childbirth, in the valleys of pagan Kalasha people. The Kalasha women are considered impure during the process of child birth and in their periods. So they have to spend these days in *bashali*, out-side the village.

² See heading *Pul* Festivals to know about *Budalak*.

³ Muhammad Kashif Ali, "Transitions in Kalash Valleys (1947-2006)" (M.Phil dissertation, University of the Punjab, 2010), 69.

⁴ Halfdan Siiger, "The Joshi of the Kalash: Main Traits of the Spring Festival at Balanguru in 1948," in *Cultures of the Hindukush: Selected Papers from the Hindu-Kush Cultural Conference*, ed. Karl Jettmar and Lennart Edelberg (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1974), 89.

⁵ The temple of *Jestak* can be approached by both genders. *Jestak* is female divinity of the Kalasha cosmology.

⁶ Akiko Wada, *Kalasha: Their Life & Tradition* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publishers, 2005), 27.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁸ Shingmou is a smaller shrine in Grom village of Rumbur valley and the Kalasha believe that fairies, during festivities, sit there to see the festive activities.

⁹ Halfdan Siiger, *Ethnological Field Research in Chitral, Sikkim and Assam: A Preliminary Report*. Vol. 36. No. I Kommission Hos Munksgaard, 1956, 25, accessed June 7, 2017, http://www.royalacademy.dk/Publications/High/623_Siiger,%20Halfdan.pdf.

¹⁰ Halfdan Siiger, *The Joshi of the Kalash*, 89.

¹¹ Mahandeo is the great deity of the Kalasha tribe with the character of warrior god, protector of corps, herds and hunting.

¹² Halfdan Siiger, *The Joshi of the Kalash*, 89.

¹³ Imran Kabir and Luke Rehmat, "The Kalasha and the Kalash Traditions," accessed January 29, 2014, <https://thekalashatimes.wordpress.com/the-kalasha-and-the-kalasha-tradition>.

¹⁴ Shamim Kalash, interview by Muhammad Kashif Ali, 16 May 2008, Krakal village, Bumburet.

¹⁵ Akiko Wada, *Kalasha*, 30.

¹⁶ Halfdan Siiger, *The Joshi of the Kalash*, 90-91.

¹⁷ Akiko Wada, *Kalasha*, 31.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 33.

¹⁹ The sanctuary of *Sajigor* is in Rumbur valley, only. The *Sajigor* originally lives in *Bashagul* and his shrine or *nishani*, as Kalasha termed, was taken to Rumbur by the legend ruler of Kalasha, Raja Wai. See, Wazir Ali Shah, "Notes on Kalash Folklore," in *Cultures of the Hindukush: Selected Papers from the Hindu-Kush Cultural Conference*, ed. Karl Jettmar and Lennart Edelberg (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1974), 77. *Sajigor* was warrior god formerly, now it is considered the guardian and protector of territory and herds. It brings richness to Kalasha society. See, Jean Yves Loude and Viviane Lievre, *Kalash Solstice* (Islamabad: Lok Virsa, 1988), 351.

²⁰ Inyat Ullah Faizi, *Chitral* (Urdu), (Islamabad: Lok Virsa, n.d.), 71.

²¹ Akiko Wada, *Kalasha*, 48-49.

²² Kabir and Rehmat.

²³ *Gri* is communal place of the Kalasha community; this place is used for ritual dances.

²⁴ *Budalak* was a social institution of the Kalasha society for centuries. But now it has been vanished from the cultural landscape of Kalash. He was supposed to stay high in the mountains having goat milk for better health and strong stamina, after many weeks' stay in mountains and on his return he was allowed to mate woman. The purpose of the this institution was to get a healthy generation as the Kalasha people were poor and had less resources so the community was bound to provide good food to *Budalak* every year. For details see, Alaudin, *Kalash: The Paradise Lost* (Lahore: Progressive Publishers, 1992).

²⁵ J.F. Staley, "The Pul Festival of the Kalash of Birir," *Folklore*, Vol. 75, No.3 (Autumn, 1964): 198, accessed 28 February 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1257977>.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ A. Raziq Palwal, "The Harvesting Festivals of the Kalash in the Birir Valley," in *Cultures of the Hindukush: Selected Papers from the Hindu-Kush Cultural Conference*, ed. Karl Jettmar and Lennart Edelberg (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1974), 93.

²⁸ Qazi is a religious institution of the Kalasha people; previously there are 5 Qazis in each valley (total 15 in three Kalasha valleys), now numbers are being increased by the government. These Qazis are appointed by DCO Chitral with the consultation of the Kalasha people.

²⁹ Qazi Mir Bacha Kalash, interview by Muhammad Kashif Ali, 24 August 2007, Aspar village, Birir.

³⁰ Elizabeth Gillian Darling, "Merit Feasting among the Kalash Kafirs of North Western Pakistan" (M.A Thesis, The University of British Columbia, 1975), 123 and Loude & Lievre, *Kalash Solstice*, 110.

³¹ Loude and Lievre, *Kalash Solstice*, 141-142.

³² Muhammad Iqbal Kalasha, email to Muhammad Kashif Ali, 12 November 2010, Bumburet Valley.

³³ Loude and Lievre, *Kalash Solstice*, 113.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 121-122.

³⁵ For details see Loude and Lievre, *Kalash Solstice*, 129.

³⁶ Akiko Wada, *Kalasha*, 70.

³⁷ Alberto Cacopardo and Augusto Cacopardo, "The Kalash (Pakistan) Winter Solstice", *Ethnology*, Vol. 28, No. 4. (Oct., 1989), 320, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3773537>; accessed 1 October 2007 and Kabir and Rehmat.

³⁸ Akiko Wada, *Kalasha*, 70.

³⁹ Kabir and Rehmat.

⁴⁰ Alberto and Augusto, *Winter Solstice*, 320.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 321.

⁴² Kabir and Rehmat.

⁴³ Akiko Wada, *Kalasha*, 70.

⁴⁴ Alberto and Augusto, *Winter Solstice*, 321.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Akiko Wada, *Kalasha*, 71.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 71.

⁴⁸ Loude and Lievre, *Kalash Solstice*, 231-239 and Kabir and Rehmat.

⁴⁹ Alberto and Augusto, *Winter Solstice*, 322.

⁵⁰ Akiko Wada, *Kalasha*, 72.

⁵¹ Loude and Lievre, *Kalash Solstice*, 241-242.

⁵² Akiko Wada, *Kalasha*, 73-75.

- ⁵³ Loude and Lievre, *Kalash Solstice*, 259.
- ⁵⁴ Akiko Wada, *Kalasha*, 76-77.
- ⁵⁵ Alberto and Augusto, *Winter Solstice*, 323.
- ⁵⁶ Loude and Lievre, *Kalash Solstice*, 259.
- ⁵⁷ Alberto and Cacopardo, *Winter Solstice*, 324.
- ⁵⁸ Akiko Wada, *Kalasha*, 79.
- ⁵⁹ Loude and Lievre, *Kalash Solstice*, 258.
- ⁶⁰ John W. Santrock, *Adolescence*, 12th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2008), 434.
- ⁶¹ Loude and Lievre, *Kalash Solstice*, 281.
- ⁶² Shah Jawan, interview by Muhammad Kashif Ali, 13 May 2008, Grom village, Rumbur.
- ⁶³ Mytte Fentz, *Natural Resources and Cosmology in Changing Kalasha Society*, (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 1996), 15.
- ⁶⁴ Akiko Wada, *Kalasha*, 84 and Loude and Lievre, *Kalash Solstice*, 290-91.
- ⁶⁵ Alberto and Augusto, *Winter Solstice*, 325.
- ⁶⁶ Akiko Wada, *Kalasha*, 86.
- ⁶⁷ Alberto and Augusto, *Winter Solstice*, 325.
- ⁶⁸ Shaman; the spiritual figure of the Kalasha society, in Khowar dehar is called *bitan/betan* as well.
- ⁶⁹ Akiko Wada, *Kalasha*, 87.
- ⁷⁰ Wazir Ali Shah, "Notes on Kalash Folklore," in *Cultures of the Hindukush: Selected Papers from the Hindu-Kush Cultural Conference*, ed. Karl Jettmar and Lennart Edelberg (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1974), 78.
- ⁷¹ Loude and Lievre, *Kalash Solstice*, 272.
- ⁷² Alberto and Augusto, *Winter Solstice*, 325.
- ⁷³ Loude and Lievre, *Kalash Solstice*, 301.
- ⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 302.
- ⁷⁵ Akiko Wada, *Kalasha*, 88.
- ⁷⁶ Loude and Lievre, *Kalash Solstice*, 311-317 and Kabir and Rehamt.
- ⁷⁷ Loude and Lievre, *Kalash Solstice*, 321.
- ⁷⁸ Alberto and Cacopardo, *Winter Solstice*, 326 and Kabir and Rehamt.
- ⁷⁹ Loude and Lievre, *Kalash Solstice*, 325-326.

A Historical Narrative of the Bashali: The Menstrual House as Cultural Identity of the Kalasha Women of the Hindu Kush (Chitral-Pakistan)

Dr. Muhammad Kashif Ali*

ABSTRACT

The Kalasha society (Pagan people of the District Chitral-KP) is divided into two spheres; onjesta (pure) and pragata (impure) by means of religion and culture (collectively called dastoor). According to the Kalasha dastoor the women falls in pragata sphere and most polluted during their specific days therefore they cannot stay at home during menstruation period each month and during giving the birth to child. This studies intend to explore and discuss bashali, the seclusion home for the Kalasha women with socio-cultural and religious perspectives. The bashali home is constructed exterior to villages, downwards of the valley as in the Kalasha dastoor upper valleys and villages are onjesta. A divinity of fertility is placed inside the bashali for blessing and comfort during the birth of child. This paper intends to trace the change in behaviours of the Kalasha women who, in limited numbers, are reluctant to attend bashali in their periods while majority enjoys to stay at bashali as they take it as the escape from routine life and spend a good leisure time there. This paper intends to discuss different rituals attached to bashali and the Kalasha women.

Keywords: Menstrual House, Kalasha People, Kalasha Women, Kalasha Culture, Kalasha Religion, Indigenous Culture, Dardistan

Chitral is the most north-western valley of Pakistan (Fig. 1-4) in the Hindu Kush and the Kalasha tribe, today, is limited to three sub-valleys of Chitral and collectively three sub-valleys (Rumbur, Bumburet and Birir (Fig. 5-7) are called Kalashdesh by the Kalasha people. Rumbur is the most northern valley of all, Bumburet is central and Birir the most southern valley. Kalashdesh is a part of the district Chitral in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. According to latest census of 2017 total population of Pakistan is more than 207 million while the Kalasha population people is approximately 4000.² Kalasha is micro ethnic and religious minority of Pakistan and possesses a pre-Islamic faith and culture. They are the sole pre-Islamic people of the whole Dardistan,³ once there were more pre-Islamic people, now all have been converted to Islam. They are the Indo-Dardic people and speak an endangered Dardic Kalashamun language.⁴ Chitral is to most remote region of Pakistan and is connected with Pakistan through 3200 meter high Lowari Pass (Fig. 8), the difficult geography of the region and inadequate infrastructure (Fig. 9) was not less than a blessing in disguise for the cultural survival of the micro ethnic minority and now the community is under the rapid change and transition. The Kalasha is an agro-pastoral community and depends upon their smaller fields and herds of goats and sheep, tourism industry is an addition to their economy.⁵ Due to non-availability of written recorded history least is known about the origin of the people or their early history. However, the Kalasha oral legends say that Kalasha were living in Tsyam, an unknown land, before migration to Kalashdesh.⁶

Research Methodology

To conduct the studies historical descriptive and analytical method was applied. For the qualitative studies of *bashali*, its myth, practices and rituals access was extended to primary and secondary sources and the current author had to spend plentiful time with the Kalasha people in all three practicing valleys (Bumburet, Rumbur ad

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¹ It is stated that a minor portion of this article is based upon my PhD dissertation which was submitted to Department of History & Pakistan Studies University of the Punjab.

² Muhammad Kashif Ali & Muhammad Iqbal Chawla "Socio-Cultural Life of the Kalasha People of Chitral: A Study of their Festivals," *Pakistan Vision* 20.2 (2019): 42.

³ The areas stretched from eastern Hindu Kush (Kafiristan & Chitral) to Ladakh including Dir, Swat, Indus Kohistans and Gilgit-Baltistan.

⁴ Muhammad Kashif Ali, "A History of the Kalasha in Pakistan: Its Origin, Change and Continuity" (Doctoral dissertation, University of the Punjab, 2019), 43-47.

⁵ Ali, 171-172.

⁶ Saifullah Jan, "History and the Development of the Kalasha," in *Proceeding of the Second International Hindu Kush Cultural Conference*, ed. Elena Bashir and Israr-ud-Din (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1996), 239.

Birir) to observe their daily and social life and to conduct interviews after developing very good rapport. To understand the Kalasha *dastoor* the Kalasha *qaizs* or religious leaders were preferred to conduct interviews.

The Bashali

Bashali (also called *bishalini* in Khowar; the lingua franca of Chitral) is the quarter or house (Fig. 10) for women who go there during the menstruation or before the childbirth. The women, in Kalasha society, are considered impure (*pragata*) and most polluted for certain days of menstruation and during the days for child birth, therefore in certain days the women go under the confinement in a quarter outside villages called *bashali*. The *bashali*, according to the Kalasha *dastoor* (religion and tradition), is the most *pragata* space.⁷ Schomberg records in 1930s that rules of living in segregation for women in Birir valley were much strict compare to Rumbur and Bumburet valleys, he writes confinement in Birir was three months while one month and fifteen days in Rumbur and Bumburet, respectively.⁸ Loude and Lievre record five days for menstrual period and twenty days for the process of childbirth.⁹ However, Alaudin reports in 1990s that the woman live in *bashali* for about three weeks.¹⁰ We can deduce that the time period can vary from valley to valley. Palao Graziosi surmises the segregation of the Kalasha women in a *bashali*:

The segregation of women during the menstrual period at the childbirth is of course practiced among many different peoples. The horror felt for their state, considered impure, leads primitive communities to take all the necessary precautions to avoid dangerous contacts between the impure women and all other members of the group. Thus, women in this state must not eat with the others, must not touch certain objects or common food or domestic animals, must abstain from certain kinds of food and must comply with other strict rules.¹¹

Myth of the Bashali

The myth of *bashali* is related with the great divinities of Kalasha pantheon; Sajigor, Warin and Praba. Wazir Ali Shah gives an account that Sajigor had predicted and told to *dehar* (also called *bitan* in Khowar, literally shaman) that the Bashagal (the abode of Kafirs) would soon to be Islamized. Raja Wai (the great Kalasha ruler) was informed by *dehar* to take Sajigor to Kalashgum (present day Kalash Valleys) and to construct her *nishani* (shrine). According to the legend, a bow and two arrows were offered to Raja Wai; one arrow was decorated with black thread and other with white. Raja Wai was instructed to throw both arrows and was directed to construct a shrine of Sajigor at the spot where red arrow fall and a *bashali* where arrow with black string fall.¹² Sahazada Hussam-ul-Mulk gives a slightly different account regarding myth of *bashali* that an old woman named Sondi was living in Bashgal valley (Afghanistan) with his nephew (Ratharie). They both were true devotees of Warin; a deity. Warin, one day, appeared in the personification of a man and he not only predicted a havoc earthquake but both were instructed by the Warin not to leave home. The havoc earthquake, the same night, hit the village to ruins. Sondi and Ratharie left the Bashgal valley for new destination. Warin, during the journey, again appeared and they were given three arrows with filaments of three colours; white, red and black. Warin instructed them to throw three arrows in the air and to build *bashali* where the black arrow would fall, a temple or a *malosh* at the place of red arrow while instructed to establish a village where the white arrow would fall.¹³ In this way the Warin was brought in Birir valley, in account of Schomberg Sajigor was brought in Rumbur from Bashgal. During the field visit the current author collected another version from Birir as Qazi Mir Bacha, a key informant, told different name of the boy and

⁷ Wynne Maggi, *Our Women Are Free: Gender and Ethnicity in the Hindukhus* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2001), 118.

⁸ R.C.F. Schomberg, *Kafirs and Glaciers: Travels in Chitral* (London, Martin Hopkinson Limited, 1938), 196.

⁹ Jean Yves Loude and Viviane Lievre, *Kalash Solstice: Winter Feasts of the Kalash of North Pakistan* (Islamabad: Lok Virsa, 1988). 53.

¹⁰ Alaudin, *Kalash: The Paradise Lost* (Lahore: Progressive Publishers, 1992), 150.

¹¹ Paolo Graziosi, "The Wooden Statue of Dezalik, a Kalash Divinity, Chitral, Pakistan," *Man*, Vol. 61, (Sep., 1961): 150.

¹² Wazir Ali Shah, "Notes on Kalash Folklore," in *Cultures of the Hindukush: Selected Papers from the Hindu-Kush Cultural Conference*, ed. Karl Jettmar and Lennart Edelberg (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1974), 77-78.

¹³ Shahzada Hussam-ul-Mulk, "Kalash Mythology," in *Cultures of the Hindukush: Selected Papers from the Hindu-Kush Cultural Conference*, ed. Karl Jettmar and Lennart Edelberg (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1974), 82-83.

he claims that from Bashgal Praba was brought to Birir valley instead of Warin, the rest of the legend remains the same.¹⁴

Traditions of the Bashali

At the age of puberty every Kalasha girl enters into the *bashali* for her first menstrual period and takes part in *tusulek*; a religious ritual, other women of the tribe, present in the *bashali*, also take part.¹⁵ Any female (who knows the traditions) there in the *bashali* washes her hands to elbow and then some bread is offered to Dezalik, a deity. Prayers for health of the girl are asked and finally food brought from her home is eaten among the women residing inside the *bashali*. Similarly, a woman who bears a child also undergoes the same custom and stay at *bashali* until the birth of the baby.¹⁶ Muhammad Parvaish Shaheen, an ethnographer from Swat, adds that first time *jamilis* (female relatives) go with the girl leave her at *bashali*.¹⁷ The Danish anthropologist, Sperber writes that for menstruation the period of stay is five days while twenty days after the delivery,¹⁸ in both conditions females are considered impure or *pragata*. The female relatives provide the food to mother of newly born baby at *bashali* but with intense care, they do not touch the mother or anything like dress or food dish etc. and at the sixth day of the birth of baby, a ritual called *Achanbi* (Fig. 11) is perfumed as described by a Japanese Kalasha Akiko Wada,¹⁹ “After sharing bread and cheese with young girls, one girl from the baby’s clan purifies the mother and infant with water and holly oak smoke. Leaving outside of the *bashali*, the girls walk to the Jeshtak temple carrying torches, carefully held so that the flames join, while chanting “Achanbi, Yo”. At the temple, a bonfire is made on which one girl jumps over.”²⁰ Shah Jawan (Fig. 12), a key informant of the present author adds that when mother and new born baby is brought to Jeshtak Han an arrow and a knife is put in the hands of boy baby otherwise the screwdriver in case of girl baby. The arrow and knife denotes the hunting and agricultural behaviour while the screwdriver symbolize the domestic skills.²¹ Shaheen reveals that if a girl or woman dies in a *bashali*, she is buried in specific and deserted corner of graveyard and in her burial ceremony only females take part, not males.²² The kids who die shortly after their birth are buried in the *bashali* compound.²³ If a man enters this building he is determined as guilty and gets a penalty. The *bashali* is prohibited place for males in any case.²⁴

Wynne Maggi gives a detailed account regarding the purification of the *bashali* as she records the twice *bashali* is purified in the spring. Once it is purified by the girls from upper valley and later by the girls from lower valley. The girls roam in the valley door to door to collect corn or wheat and later to purchase different articles for the *bashali* the corn is sold. Though now *bashali* gets some useful articles from the aids of the government or national and international NGOs. For ritual or ceremony of purification two naked girls run around the *bashali* while having the branches of holly oak in their hands. The smoke of holly oak purifies the *bashali*.²⁵

Bashali and its Architecture through History

¹⁴ Ali, 138.

¹⁵ Irum Sheikh, Hafeez-ur-Rehman Chaudhry and Anwaar Mohyuddin, “Religion as a Space for Kalash Identity: A Case Study of Village Bumburet in Kalash Valley, Chitral,” *World Applied Sciences Journal*, Vol 29, No. 3 (2014): 429, accessed March 26, 2015, [www.idosi.org/wasj/wasj29\(3\)14/17.pdf](http://www.idosi.org/wasj/wasj29(3)14/17.pdf).

¹⁶ Imran Kabir and Luke Rehmat, “The Kalasha and the Kalash Traditions,” accessed January 29, 2014, <https://thekalashatimes.wordpress.com/the-kalasha-and-the-kalasha-tradition>.

¹⁷ Muhammad Parvaish Shaheen, *Kafiristan: Trikh, Nasal, Zuban, Saqafat awr Siahati Jaizat* (Urdu), (1993: repr., Lahore: Maktaba-i-Jamal, 2014), 153.

¹⁸ Birgitte Glavind Sperber, “Nature in the Kalasha Perception of Life,” in Bruun, Ole and Arne Kalland eds. *Asian Perceptions of Nature: A Critical Approach* (London: Routledge, 1995), 134.

¹⁹ Akiko Wada by nation is a Japanese and by heart is the Kalasha, she is living in Rumbur valley since 1980s, and she has adopted the Kalasha culture and married a Kalasha man.

²⁰ Akiko Wada, *Kalasha: Their Life & Tradition* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publishers, 2005), 106-107.

²¹ Ali, 158.

²² Muhammad Parvaish Shaheen, 154 and Zaheer-ud-Din, “Foreign Impacts on the Religion of the Kalash” (Doctoral dissertation, International Islamic University Islamabad, 2011), 83.

²³ Kabir and Rehmat.

²⁴ Mahmood Danishwar, *Kafiristan: Chitral, Dir aur Swat ki Siahat* (Urdu) (1952; repr., Lahore: Book Home, 2006), 76.

²⁵ Maggi, 151.

In 1960s Paolo Graziosi, an Italian anthropologist, recorded five *bashalis* in three practicing Kalasha valleys; Birir, Bumburet and Rumbur. One in Rumbur and two each in Bumburet and Birir. He reported the locations as one between the villages Guru and Gas Guru (in Birir), one near Karakal village (in Bumburet), one between the villages Anish and Brun (in Bumburet), one but abandoned in Batrik village (Bumburet) and one in amid the villages Grom and Bethet in Rumbur valley. However, he claimed to visit only one which was between the villages Anish and Brun (Graziosi, 1961).²⁶ Urtsun is a converted Kalasha valley in the southern Chitral, approximately a century ago the valley has abandoned its pre-Islamic faith. The Urtsun valley was a halting station of George Scott Robertson when he on his way to Kafiristan from Chitral in 1889 and he reports that residence of the Urtsun were the Kalash Kafirs.²⁷ Augusto Cacopardo, the Italian Anthropologist, due to his and his brother's extensive fieldwork in the southern Chitral is convinced that the process of Islamization in Urtsun valley was started in early Twenties²⁸ and was completed in 1938, when the last Kalasha of Urtsun named Chanlu was converted.²⁹ He described different pre-Islamic sites in Urtsun including the ruins old houses and a *bashali*, in Grompisht village.³⁰ Local history reveals that once Upper Chitral and Chitral Proper were also ruled by the Kalasha chiefs therefore there are still some remains of the Kalasha past as Shahzada Tanveerul Mulk describes that, in near past, some villages in Mulkho (Upper Chitral) were called as the Kalashadur or homes of the Kalasha and he also writes that there is a field which is famous as *bishalini*³¹ and we know that *bishalini* is Khovar name of the Kalasha *bashali*. There is an abandoned *bashali* in Rumbur near the Palarog village when we travel towards Kunisht (new name Sheikandeh) in a cave above the ground level. One *bashali* was noticed by Schomberg in 1930s when he visited Red Kafirs' area in Rumbur³², obviously it was Sheikhandeh or Kunisht the village of Red Kafirs who had migrated from Kafiristan after it was Islamized.

The structure of the menstrual house is not much different from the Kalasha houses, in the Hindu Kush. Timber and stones are available resources to build the simple structure of the *bashali* which consists of one or two rooms with verandas around it. The stones are joint with mud and timber for the structure. Graziosi observed the structure of the *bashali* in 1960s and writes that general structure of *bashali* consists of 1 room and 2 verandas. There is no window or hole in room. The ceiling is supported by 4 wooden pillars. In centre of the room, there is a fireplace marked with some stones. In the right corner of the room, there is an un-plastered platform made up of stones. On this platform, goddess of Deزالik (Fig. 13) is placed. Deزالik is a pattern of woman in confinement and the wooden plank representing the goddess Deزالik was placed in the *bashali*. Deزالik is supposed to protect during childbirth. It is carved from a thick plank of deodar wood.³³

Now, obviously, with passage of time and comparatively better education and resources have brought changes in the general condition of *bashali*. For instance the *bashali* of Karakal (Bumburet valley) is considered the most hygienic having four rooms, one bathroom and one toilet, this *bashali* was constructed with the assistance of a Greek NGO. The old *bashali* had almost only one room now it has more than one rooms, old *bashali* had no bed, lawn and water pipelines etc. Now, the *bashali* is more comfortable compare to near past of the society.³⁴ Alaudin also notices in 1980s that the *bashali* eventually was converting into mother and child health care centre due to increasing a light comfort along with trivial health facilities like trained midwife and some medicines.³⁵

²⁶ Graziosi, 149.

²⁷ George Scott Robertson, *The Kafirs of the Hindukush* (London: Lawrence & Bullen Ltd., 1896.), 1-4.

²⁸ Augusto Cacopardo, "The Other Kalasha A Survey of Kalashamun-Speaking People in Southern Chitral: Part II: The Kalasha of Urtsun," *East and West*, Vol. 41, No. 1/4 (December 1991): 347, accessed March 15, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/29756981>.

²⁹ Shahzada Hussam-ul-Mulk, "The Cosmology of Red Kafirs," in *Cultures of the Hindukush: Selected Papers from the Hindu-Kush Cultural Conference*, ed. Karl Jettmar and Lennart Edelberg (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1974), 26.

³⁰ Augusto Cacopardo, "The Other Kalasha A Survey of Kalashamun-Speaking People in Southern Chitral: Part II, 321.

³¹ Shahzada Tanveerul Mulk, *Morkho: Tarikh kay Aieny Mein* (Peshawar: Directorate of Culture KPK, 2015), 13-14.

³² Schomberg, 45.

³³ Graziosi, 151.

³⁴ Qazi Mir Bacha Kalash, interview by Muhammad Kashif Ali, August 24, 2007, Aspar village, Birir.

³⁵ Alaudin, 10.

The *bashali* of Rumbur had been under reconstruction for various times. The anthropologist Elizabeth Darling records in his work that Katar Singh³⁶ had promised to rebuild the *bashali* of Rumbur during the feast of merit he offered to his community, in 1977.³⁷ The Rumbur *bashali* again in 1994 was rebuilt and upgraded to two rooms, one kitchen and toilet as well.³⁸

The Kalasha Dual Worlds of Onjesta and Pragata

It is of immense importance to understand the Kalasha *dastoor* in the context of *onjesta* (pure) and *pragata* (impure) spheres to understand that why the Kalasha women spend their copiously time of their lives in *bashali*. Peter Parkes explains the *onjesta* and *pragata* domains. The mountains, juniper, holly-oak, markhor, goat. Honey bees, altars, stables and men fall in the *onjesta* domain while lower valley, onions, garlic, cattle, sheep, hens, eggs, *bashali* graveyard and women are *pragata* according to the Kalasha *dastoor*. The Mountains are sacred in the Kalasha society because the high pastures and peaks are abode of gods and *suchi* (fairies). The *saras* (juniper³⁹) has most importance in the *onjesta* category, it grows at the high evergreen pastures and forests, and it provide fuel for everyday life while the branches are used during the performance of rituals.⁴⁰ The *bonj* (holly-oak⁴¹) is another sacred tree among the Kalasha people and its branches and smoke is also used during different rituals.⁴² Both trees are considered sacred or *onjesta* and are used for purity during performing different rituals. In the Kalasha society where markhor is more pure, goats are stronger and intelligent like men and women and sheep are weaker and senseless, writes Peter Parkes.⁴³

Dezalik as Custodian of the Bashali

The goddess Dezalik is considered protector of babies and their mothers, she is patron of the Kalasha women. The goddess of fertility and protector women is considered the sister of Dezau who is the Creator God of the Kalasha tribe and the Dezalik is only deity having anthropomorphic characteristics.⁴⁴ Tough Wynne Maggi is not convinced that the Dezalik is sister of Dezau⁴⁵ however when Sayed Gul Kalasha, an archaeologist from the Kalasha community, was approached by the present author and she asserted that Dezalik is considered sister of Dezau in the Kalasha pantheon.⁴⁶ Dezalik in the *bashali* is represented by a simple carved wooden plank. First ever it was observed in detail by an Italian Paolo Graziosi in his work which was published in 1961 and informed to the outer world that the statue of the Dezalik is installed in the *bashali*.⁴⁷ Before Graziosi it was the Danish Halfdan Siiger who describes⁴⁸ in a brief and he is convinced that it is representation of *yoni*.⁴⁹ The French anthropologist Lievre

³⁶ Katar Singh was one of the influential Kalasha from Rumbur valley who had offered on of the largest Biramore; the feast of merit in the Kalasha history in 20th century. For detail see, Elizabeth Gillian Darling, “Merit Feasting among the Kalash Kafirs of North Western Pakistan” (M.A Thesis, The University of British Columbia, 1979).

³⁷ Elizabeth Gillian Darling, “Merit Feasting among the Kalash Kafirs of North Western Pakistan” (M.A Thesis, The University of British Columbia, 1979), 142.

³⁸ Maggi, 123.

³⁹ Juniper (*Juniperus*) is an evergreen tree and locally it is called *saras* in the Kalashamun.

⁴⁰ Peter S. C. Parkes, “Alliance and Elopement: Economy, Social Order and Sexual Antagonism among the Kalasha (Kalash Kafirs) of Chitral” (Ph.D. diss., University of Oxford, 1983), 184-85.

⁴¹ Holly oak (*Quercus ilex*) is an evergreen tree and locally it is called *bonj* in the Kalashamun.

⁴² Parkes 185.

⁴³ Parkes, 189.

⁴⁴ Alberto M. Cacopardo and Augusto S. Cacopardo, *Gates of Peristan: History, Religion and Society in the Hindu Kush* (Rome: IsIAO, 2001), 70-71.

⁴⁵ Maggi, 140.

⁴⁶ Ali, 133.

⁴⁷ Graziosi, 149.

⁴⁸ Halfdan Siiger, *Ethnological Field Research in Chitral, Sikkim and Assam: A Preliminary Report*. Vol. 36. No. I Kommission Hos Munksgaard, 1956, 18, accessed June 7, 2017,

http://www.royalacademy.dk/Publications/High/623_Siiger,%20Halfdan.pdf. and Wynne Maggi, *Gender and Ethnicity*, 139.

⁴⁹ Yoni is a Hindi word used for female genitalia and its most literal meaning is womb and is associated with generative power. Yoni or a human vagina is worshipped directly in esoteric ritual in South Asia. The association of female genitals with the divine female principle, and the correlation of women’s reproductive and sexual cycles with the Earth’s seasonal and vegetative cycles, have given the yoni cosmological significance. For detail, Lochtefeld,

perhaps the first non Kalasha woman who penetrates into the bashali to give details about the house and the deity.⁵⁰ Wynne Maggi also supports the idea that the plank representing Dezalik in the *bashali* is symbol of vagina.⁵¹ Georg Morgenstierne compares the Dezalik with Nirmali goddess of Kafiristan and he is convinced that Dezalik is “the goddess of birth and the sexual functions of women”.⁵² For comparative studies the Murkum can also be studied from Dardistan in Haramosh valley of Gilgit region. Murkum was a deity of women protection especially during the birth of children. She was also considered protector of wild goats and ibexes,⁵³ the sanctity of goats and ibexes is a common trait of the whole Dardistan. Augusto Cacopardo clarifies that the Dezalik should not be confused with mother goddess but merely protector of the Kalasha mothers in the *bashali*.⁵⁴ Though the *bashali* is most *pragata* space of the Kalasha community but the Dezalik lives inside it and women never touch until they are cleaned after their periods.⁵⁵ The Kalasha women during the stay in the *bashali* to give birth a child offer one walnut to Dezalik and pray for ease in the process and next day one walnut is added until the baby is born.⁵⁶ “Once a year, in spring, two prepubescent girls sacrifice a lamb on the roof of Dezalik’s house to protect both the women giving birth and their babies.”⁵⁷

Women Socialization and Role of the Bashali

Bashali is the place where almost all the Kalasha are born; in far and near past. This is the most *pragata* space as we have discussed but almost all women share their best moments of life in *bashali* of their respective valley or village. This is the place where they have nothing to do but sharing all their thoughts, secrets and experiences of every walk of the life. Here, they have plenty of time until their circle of menstruation is completed or baby is born. We can compare it with *baithek*⁵⁸ or *dera*⁵⁹ where men of different ages share their experiences. Wynne Maggi writes that this is the place where the Kalasha women recognize themselves a community, where diverse positions and opinions can be shared and seen, where the space, work and knowledge is shared.⁶⁰ Further she discusses the privilege of the *bashali* that the Kalasha women enjoy their privacy here and never discuss the inner world of the *bashali* with the Kalasha men.⁶¹ The time the Kalasha women or girls spent in the *bashali* is not less than a treat where they can talk and gossip freely about their friends and foes.⁶² The isolation in the *bashali* brings feminine solidarity and the Kalasha women share their health problems especially related to pregnancy, fertility, barrenness and also discuss their desires and relations.⁶³

Development and Changes

Once the *bashali* was a gloomy having one room with less facilities however with passage of time the *bashali* is being upgraded to more rooms, separate kitchen and bathroom or toilet. Alaudin notes in 1980s that the status of the *bashali* was changing into a mother and child health care centre.⁶⁴ Once they had nothing as

James G. The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Hinduism, Vol. 2. (York: The Rosen Publishing Group, Inc, 2002), 784. and Constance A. Jones and James D. Ryan, Encyclopaedia of Hinduism (New York: Facts On File, 2007), 515-16.

⁵⁰ Loude and Lievre, 53.

⁵¹ Maggi, 139.

⁵² Ali, 132.

⁵³ Karl Jettmar, “Ethnological Research in Dardistan 1958, *Preliminary Report*,” *Proceedings of American Philosophy Society*, Vol. 105, No. 1 (Feb. 28, 1961): 88-89, accessed January 09, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/985355>. and Karl Jettmar, *Bolor & Dardistan* (Islamabad: National Institute of Folk Heritage, 1980), 59.

⁵⁴ Augusto S. Cacopardo, *Pagan Christmas: Winter Feasts of the Kalasha of the Hindu Kush* (London: Ginko Library, 2016), 58.

⁵⁵ Maggi, 139.

⁵⁶ Loude and Lievre, 53.

⁵⁷ Viviane Lievre, “The Status of Kalasha Women in the Religious Sphere,” in *Proceeding of the Second International Hindu Kush Cultural Conference*, ed. Elena Bashir and Israr-ud-Din (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1996), 338.

⁵⁸ Guest/drawing or living room

⁵⁹ A community sitting place in the Punjabi villages where men of all ages used to gather and share their different experiences of life, though *dera* system due to modernization is an institution of decay.

⁶⁰ Maggi, 153.

⁶¹ Maggi, 153-54.

⁶² Anwaar Mohyuddin, Irum Sheikh, and Hafeez-ur-Rehman Chaudhry, “Bashalini a Place for Biological Gender Impurities Segregating Women during Menstruation in Kalsah,” *Sc.Int.* Vol.27, No.1 (Jan-Feb 2015): 552.

⁶³ Loude and Lievre, 53.

⁶⁴ Alaudin, 10.

Mohyuddin writes about new born baby and cut of umbilical cord, “Traditionally the cord is cut off with the sharp edged rock and then tied with a fringe broken from woman’s belt. But today they have scissors and other surgical supplies for cutting the cords, which is arranged by the Government of Pakistan and some NGO,s [Sic.]”.⁶⁵ Compare to near past now *bashali* is comfortable place to live, in older days the *bashali* has no beds, no direct water supply. Now almost all *bashalis* of three valleys have water supply through pipelines.⁶⁶ While being interviewed by BBC Nasira Bibi is convinced that *bashali* is a fun place to live if you have good friends there to gossip.⁶⁷

Meeta Gul (Fig. 14), a key informant of the current author, reveals that education is bringing the change in behaviour of the Kalasha women and some girls prefer to stay at home during their menstrual period. However, they eat or sleep separately at home.⁶⁸ Perhaps this trend was started by Lakshan Bibi, an educated and social worker from Rumbur, who has spent her most time out of the Kalashdesh, in Peshawar, Islamabad and these days living in the United States of America. Another informant Din Muhammad Kalash from Bumburet told the current author that she rarely attend the *bashali* in her menstrual period.⁶⁹ During an interview to present author Qazi Fal-i-Azam (aka Qazi Palawan) (Fig. 15) from Grom village of Rumbur admits that many girls or women do not go to *bashali* which is not according to the Kalasha *dastoor*. However, he reveals that in the Kalasha *dastoor* it is permissible to stay at home during the periods if the *bashali* is very far from the village or the girl/woman has important jobs at home.⁷⁰ However, Wazir Zada Kalash, key informant of the present author from Chath Guru and currently he is member of KP Assembly, sees it as *pragata* and is convinced that due to modern education many girls of new generation avoid to spend their menstrual periods in the *bashali*.⁷¹

Conclusion

The basic aims of the studies was to analyse the two religious spheres of the Kalasha people; *onjesta* and *pragata* and status of the women keeping in the view the most *pragata* space of the Kalashdesh; *bashali* or menstrual house. Though all the Kalasha males are born in the *bashali* but according to the local *dastoor* no male can enter or touch the *bashali*. Though *bashali* is the most *pragata* place in whole Kalashdesh but it is protected by a divinity of fertility called Deزالik and on the same time socially it is the place where the Kalasha girls and women can talk and share their experiences of any kind, from family matters to their relations. There at the *bashali* they have abundant time for gossips, shared cooking, culture learning and sharing, making headgears, dresses etc. The *bashali* is the sole place where the Kalasha women have no male supremacy and they can freely spend time as they desired.

⁶⁵ Mohyuddin, 551

⁶⁶ Qazi Mir Bacha Kalash.

⁶⁷ Chiade O’Shea, *Looking Forward to a Retreat*, available from http://www.news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/4580159.stm; accessed 26 April 2007.

⁶⁸ Meeta Gull, interview by Muhammad Kashif Ali, May 13, 2008, Grom village, Rumbur.

⁶⁹ Din Muhammad Kalash, interview by Muhammad Kashif Ali, Bumburet valley, August 23, 2007.

⁷⁰ Qazi Fal-i-Azam, interview by Muhammad Kashif Ali, 23 August 2007, Grom village, Rumbur.

⁷¹ Wazir Zada Kalash, Muhammad Kashif Ali by author, May 16, 2008, Batrik village, Bumburet.



FIGURES
 Fig. 1 Map of Pakistan (Adopted from <http://surveyofpakistan.gov.pk>)

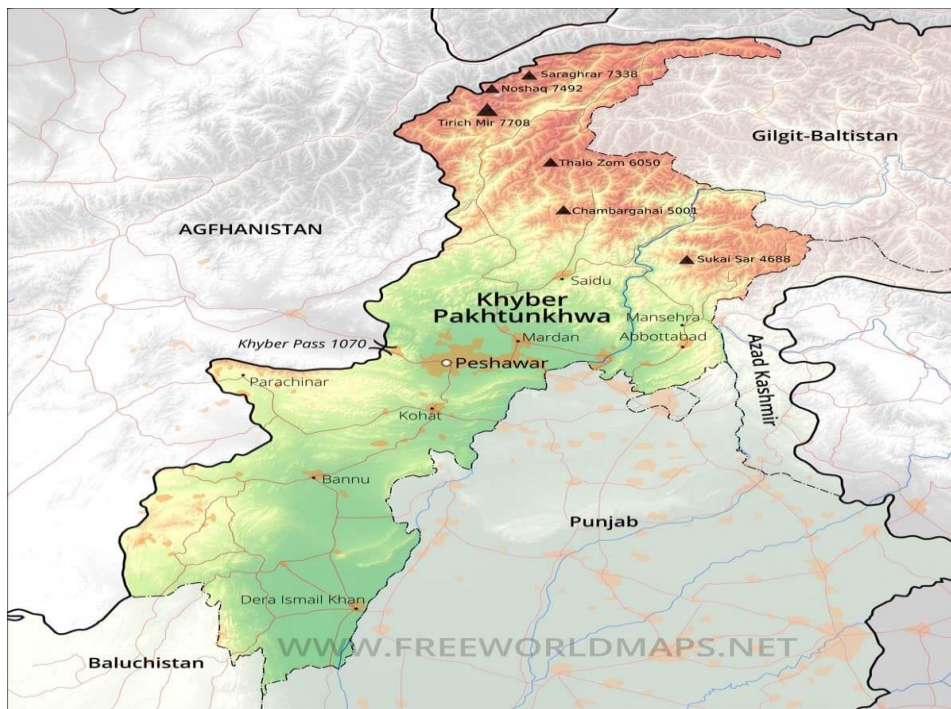


Fig. 2 Map of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Adopted from www.freeworldmaps.net)

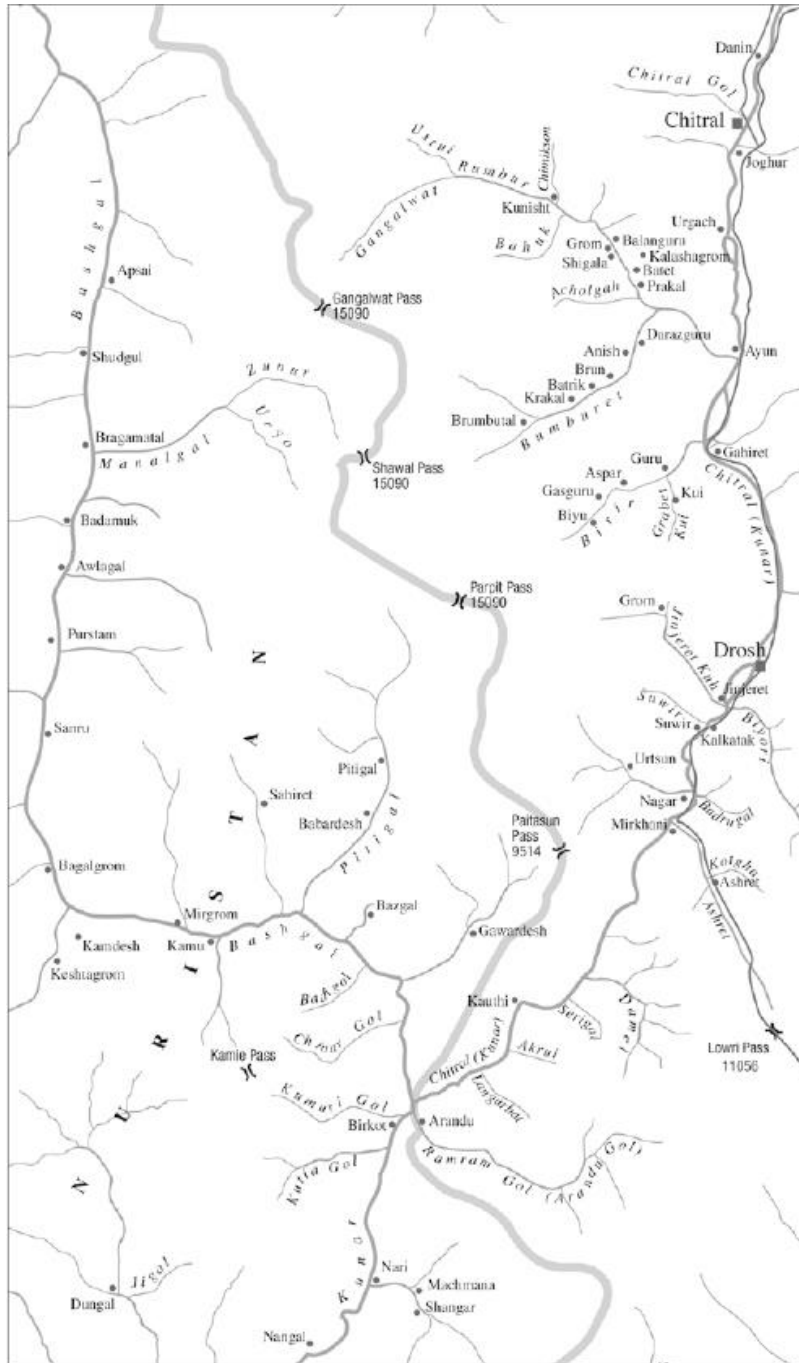


Fig. 3 Chitral valley and Nuristan, the thicker line in middle of the map is Durand Line, the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Adopted from *Pagan Christmas: Winter Feasts of the Kalasha of the Hindu Kush* (2016) with permission of the author. It was prepared by Alberto M. Cacopardo and drawn by Giovanni Mattioli.

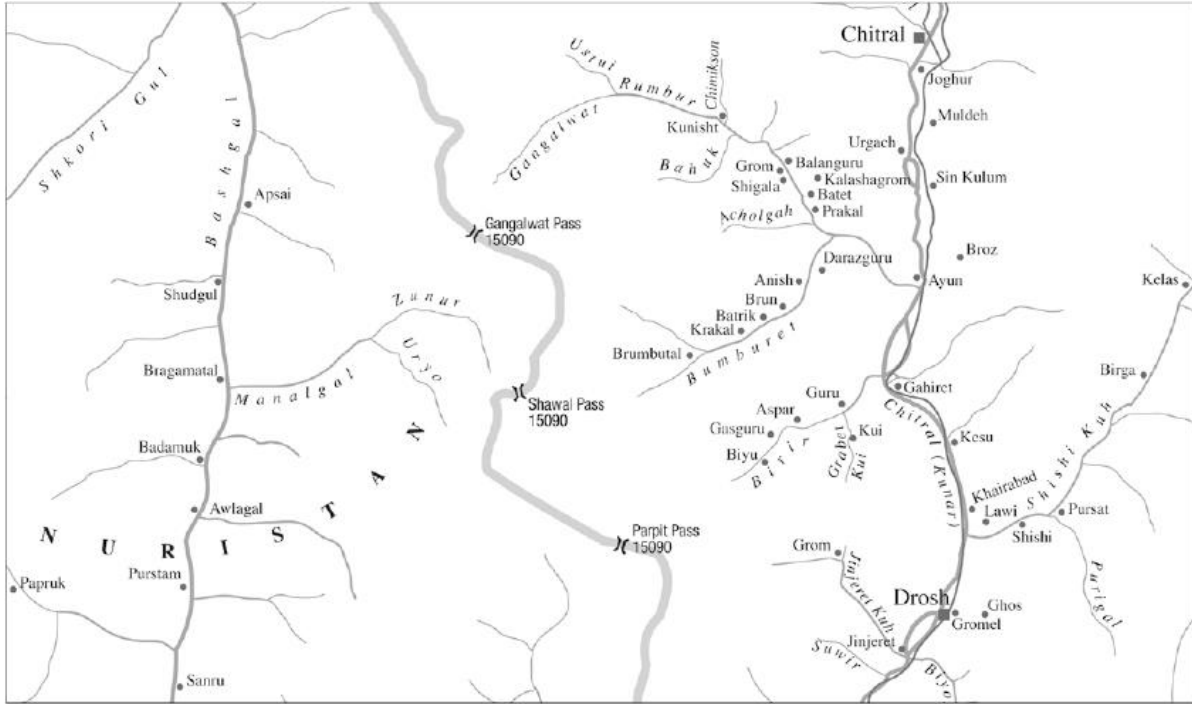


Fig. 4 Map of Kalashdesh

Adopted from *Pagan Christmas: Winter Feasts of the Kalasha of the Hindu Kush* (2016) with permission of the author. It was prepared by Alberto M. Cacopardo and drawn by Giovanni Mattioli



Fig. 5 Rumbur Valley (Photo: Muhammad Kashif Ali, 2015)



Fig. 6 Bumburet Valley (Photo: Muhammad Kashif Ali, 2017)



Fig. 7 Birir Valley (Photo: Muhammad Kashif Ali, 2017)



Fig. 8 Lowari Top (Photo: Muhammad Kashif Ali, 2008)



Fig. 9 Inadequate infrastructure in the Kalashdesh (Photo: Muhammad Kashif Ali, 2017)



Fig. 10 A Kalasha bashali from Bumburet (Photo: Muhammad Kashif Ali, 2017)

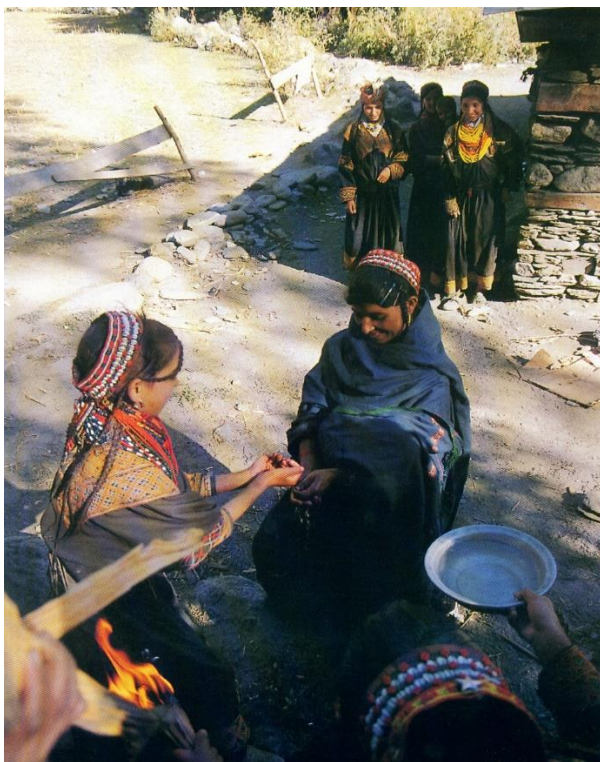


Fig. 11 Achanbi Ritual (Photo: Adopted from Akiko Wada, 2005)



Fig. 12 Interviewing Qazi (Late) Shah Jawan from Grom village of Rumbur (Photo: Idrees Atif, 2008)



Fig. 13 Wooden planks represents Dezalik (Photo: adopted from Paolo Graziosi, 1961)



Fig. 14 Interviewing Meeta Gul Kalash (Photo: Idrees Atif, 2008)



Fig. 15 Interviewing Qazi Fal-i-Azam (Photo: Feeman Ali, 2017)



RESEARCH PAPER

Cultural Heritage and Extremism in Pakistan: Re-focusing on the Kalasha of (Chitral) Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

This study attempts to explore, investigate and analyse causes and consequences of the pliability of the cultural heritage of Pakistan which is showing the signs of disappearing on the eve of extremism in Pakistan particularly of the Kalasha by focusing on the Kalasha people. The Kalasha were raided by the Muslims in the 14th century. The demarcation of Durand Line (Pak-Afghan border) in 1893 became their lifeline when they fell to the British Indian government while their tribe fellows at the other side of the Pak-Afghan border in Afghanistan were forcefully converted as a whole in 1896. Somehow, the Kalasha of Pakistan were leading their life according to their dastoor (culture & religion) and then military coup of 1977 brought ill-fate for them under pseudo Islamization of military ruler Gen. Zia-ul-Haq. The Talibanization/extremism suppressed the Kalasha indigenous tribe. The event of 9/11 devastatingly hit the tribe for their faith and their strategic location. As reactions and chain reactions of War on Terror many extremists and terrorist groups mushroomed, especially in tribal agencies and in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan recently threatened the Kalasha to convert their faith or to be ready for genocide. The Kalasha people are seeking their survival through their unique identity. They could earn soft image trait for Pakistan, but unfortunately, extremism, terrorism and ill-governance of the state losing it for decades. If the government failed to protect them, we will lose a unique tribe and culture.

Introduction

The Kalasha is an indigenous tribe of Chitral, three mountainous valleys of Biriu, Rukmu and Mumuret (however these valleys are known to non-Kalasha as

Birir, Rumbur and Bumburet) of the Hindu Kush are their abode, in the foremost north-western district Chitral, KPK. The Kalasha community was living in isolation for centuries until the first jeep-able road was built in the region in the 1970s (Ahmed, 1986). The said road opened the door of the outer World to Kalasha and vice versa (Ali, 2010). The Kalasha are the Dardic people and speak the Indo-Dardic language; the Kalashamun (Ali, 2019). Different theories prevail regarding the origin of the Kalasha. These theories are based on myths, folklores, historical analysis, archaeological studies, linguistics and genetic studies. As the historical discussion is not my course to the current paper, so in short, the local claim that they are from an unknown land Tsyam (Saifullah Jan, 1996), some classical writers suggested them as Greek and genetic studies dispelled Greek ancestry hypothesis that the Kalasha people are from Aryan stock (Ayub, 2004). The Kalasha of Pakistan are practicing their unique culture and religion for centuries. Collectively, they call their religion and culture as *dastoor*. Their *dastoor* is distinctive to the rest of Pakistan.

Research Methodology

For the study, the historical descriptive method coupled with an analytical approach was adopted. This is a qualitative study, primary and secondary both type of source were consulted. For better understating the community, their culture and vulnerability it was required to stay with the community understudied. Therefore, ample time was spent in the Kalashdesh in different seasons and during festivals for observations and interviews, from 2007 to 2017.

Literature Review

Anthropological the Kalasha community is well studied however their history was neglected in-depth, the first doctoral dissertation (Parkes, 1983) on the community was produced in 1983 and its focus was anthropological study specifically the social order and marriages of elopement. Wynne Maggi, an American anthropologist, submitted her doctoral dissertation (Maggi, 1998) to Emory University and her dissertation purely deals with the status of the Kalasha women. Zaheer-ul-Din, a local Chitrali scholar, also has conducted his doctoral dissertation (Zaheer, 2011) on the community and he has studied their religion in-depth with the comparative approach and the dissertation was submitted to International Islamic University through the Department of Comparative Religions. Though his works discuss the Kalasha religion and impact of other religions and event of 1896 but the dissertation was submitted in 2011 so it was need of time to update the subject of extinction of the tribe. Irum Sheikh earned her PhD (Sheikh, 2013) in 2013 in anthropology but her area of study was only one valley; Bumburet. She discusses the culture and society of the community but the historical portion is weaker even there are some misunderstanding as well. Muhammad Kashif Ali has conducted his MPhil research in summers of 2007 and 2008 to study the cultural change of the community, though in the study (Ali, 2010) history of the tribe was discussed but very precisely and the major focus of the dissertation was the cultural change rather than in-depth historical studies of all practicing and converted

Kalasha valleys. There are handsome sources to study the culture and society of the community with least focus on their history from ancient to modern times, this study specifically is an attempt to explore the one aspect of the Kalasha history; extremism and conversion.

The Terrorism and Extremism is a universal phenomenon and no society is free from it. However, the nature of extremism and terrorism of each society or country may vary depending upon the local and international factors (Ahmar, 2011). Pakistan has also been affected by extremism in different eras for different factors. Umbreen Javaid narrates, "The mixture of extremism with militancy has brought about an explosive situation to Pakistan's internal as well as external security." (Javaid, 2011) She further adds that at the early phase of Pakistan the religion had the least impact on politics but later the religion was exploited widely by the political leadership of Pakistan and "Religion started playing a crucial role in Pakistan during the Zia regime and the Afghan war left grave social, economic, political and religious impact on Pakistan" (Javaid, 2011). The same can be applied to the micro ethno religious minority of Pakistan, the Kalasha were also hit by the religious extremism especially during the Zia regime and on the other hand, the Islamic Revolution of Iran boosted up the religious fanaticism in the region, later War on Terror badly hit the region and the Kalasha community.

The current study is divided into three major portions or phases of extremism in the history of the Kalasha from the late 19th century to the modern era:

Religious Conversion by Amir Abdur Rahman Khan

Until the 19th century the Red Kafirs or Kafirs (Lit. non-believers) were living in Kafiristan (Lit. the land of the non-believers); a north-eastern semi-autonomous region of Afghanistan. The Kafiristan was abode of animist tribe. The Red Kafirs (of Kafiristan) and Black Kafirs (of Chitral) had some ethnic and lingual similarities. Historian suggested that, once, all Kafirs (of the Hindu Kush) were one group, which later subdivided into two major groups; Kalasha Kafirs or Black Kafir and Kati or Red Kafirs. The Kafirs had continued to follow their unique faith and strongly resisted attempts by Afghan to conquer the Kafiristan. It was a crucial period of the Great Game when the British and the Russian imperial powers were competing with each other to engulf the Central Asia and Afghanistan. The region experienced three Anglo-Afghan Wars (1839-1842, 1878-1880 and 1919). In 1880, Abdur Rahman Khan (also known as the Iron Amir) became the Amir of Afghanistan in 1880 and he tried to settle the issues bilaterally with British. Amir Abdur Rahman signed the Durand Line Agreement with British in Kabul in 1893 which changed the destiny of Red Kafirs and Kalasha Kafirs as Kalasha Kafirs were in a better position in British India (Maggi, 2001). Now, the Afghan Amir was relaxed from the British side and it created an opportunity for Amir Abdur Rahman to declare a war against the pre-Islamic ethno religious group; the Red Kafirs of Kafiristan (Khan, 2009). The Kafiristan was invaded in 1896 and fell to Afghan kingdom. The Red Kafirs had limited choices; conversion, forced migration or genocide. Majority of them were converted and some fled across the Durand Line and settled in the British India, in

border villages of Kalasha Kafirs in Chitral (then Chitral state) (Ali, 2010). It was a forced conversion led by the state; however, Amir Abdur Rahman denied it in his autobiography (Khan, 1900).

So, this was the first major setback and threat to the indigenous people, to their unique cultural heritage and primitive traditions. As for the animist and pagan tribe, it was closing a chapter of history. Majority of the Kafirs converted to Islam and some took refuge in Kalasha valleys of Chitral. The Kalasha valleys were Jinjeret Kuh, Birir, Rumbur and Bumburet. The Kafiristan was given the new name Nuristan (Lit. the land of light) (Ahmed, 1986). The Durand Line became the blessing and fatal at the same time; fatal for the Red Kafirs and blessings for the Kalasha Kafirs (Loude & Lievre, 1988).

Islamization of Kalasha People during Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq's Regime

In mid of the 20th century, two sovereign states emerged; Baharat (India) and Pakistan from British India. Before the partition in British India, internal independent principalities were more than five hundred. Those princely states were ruled by local princes called Khan, Nawab, Mir etc. The states, internally, were independent with the acceptance of the superiority of the English Empire. Ch. Muhammad Ali writes that the states, at the time of partition, were made sure to annex Pakistan or India as it was decided in the famous 3rd June Plan. (Ali, 1988). Mehtar Muzaffar-ul-Mulk: ruler of Chitral, declared accession to Pakistan in August 1947, whereas the agreement of accession between the Chitral state and government of Pakistan was signed later in November 1947 (Baig, 1997 & Bangash, 2015). Chitral was the first state, according to historical records, to accede to Pakistan (Zaidi, 2003).

Once *Mehtars*: rulers of Chitral, were under direct influence of the British government through British Political Agent. Now, the Chitral State was administrated by Pakistan Government through a Political Agent since 1950. However, there was a shift in the status for Chitral state as an agency in 1966 and the political agent was entitled as *Wazir-i-Azam* (premier) by the Government of Pakistan (Khan, 2013). The early decades of Pakistan were a happy time for the Kalasha community. Although the said period was not good enough as socially and economically for the Kalasha community, however, their ethnic and religious identity was never threatened by the state or individual. Siafullah Jan Kalash credited Ayub Khan's government for providing some relief and the identity of the Kalasha community (Saifullah Jan, 1996). However, it was Zulfikar Ali Bhutto who realized the importance of indigenous tribe. He was the first Pakistani ruler who visited Bumburet Kalash valley and addressed to a pre-Islamic tribe, the tribe was encouraged to follow their ancient religion and traditions (Ibid).

During the despotic rule of Muhammad Zia the Kalasha tribe experienced the unfriendliness, vulnerability and drastic change in their society and *dastoor*, their *dastoor* went under pressure. During the said period the conversion cases of the tribe-fellows were speeded up. Kanwal believes that the Islamic Revolution of the Islamic

Republic of Iran and the US-Russian war in Afghanistan, during the 1980s, helped enormously Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq for Islamization in Pakistan (Kanwal, 2015). Zaidi claims that around 1981 a mosque was built forcefully on cultivable land of primitive tribe-fellow in Bumburet valley and it triggered conflict and Islamization in the Kalashdesh. He further claims that the Kalasha were badly affected by US-financed *jihad* in Afghanistan, as a great number of Afghans took refuge in Pakistan and Chitral, and some of the refugees seized the forests or pastures of the Kalasha people (Zaidi, 2001). The economy and society of the Kalasha is agro-pastoral which primarily rely upon their cattle and flocks for a larger portion of their income. Their herds, pastures and forests are lifeline not only for their economy but for their *dastoor* at the same. The Kalasha religious rituals revolve around their sheep and goats as they offer sacrifices of their animals in great numbers throughout the year. Therefore, if there is any loss of pastures or forests, it leads directly towards the decay of their *dastoor*. Zaidi claims, that 70 percent of Kafir (Kalasha) land was seized by the Afghan refugees in 1980s and 1990s, he also blamed Patahntablighi parties later known as Taliban (Zaidi, 2001).

One of the key informants: Din Muhammad Kalash verified that during the despotic rule of General (R) Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq some Kalasha tribe-fellows were provided the loans by *tablighis*, and later when they were unable to payback, they converted to seek the religious empathy. (Din Muhammad Kalash, personal communication August 23, 2007). Zaidi assumed it as forced conversion while Ahmed disagreed with Zaidi's claim of forced conversion, Ahmed (1986) writes, "Why does a Kalash become a Muslim? Sometimes to escape a ruinous debt, sometimes to gain employment, sometimes, as in the cases of many women, to find spouses and through them a higher standard of living. But rarely does he become a Muslim by physical force." The present author during various field visits to all three Kalasha valleys in the last decade never heard forced conversion cases. Local historian Prof. Mumtaz Hussain also verifies it that he never happened to hear forcefully conversion cases in the valleys, however, he claims that there had been small scale *tabligh* in the valleys (Mumtaz Hussain, personal communication March 16, 2018). Ishtiaq Ahmed, a contemporary political historian, writes that under the Zia regime there was a demand to declare the all non-Muslims as *zimmi* by some *ulema* and it was also added to collect the religious tax *jizya* from them; and it was a great shift towards policy (Ahmed, 2008).

There was instability on political grounds in Pakistan from 1988 to 1999, after Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq. In the said period four civil governments were dissolved. Therefore, none of the governments of the four could focus the minorities' rights, including the Kalasha of Chitral. During the first term of Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, one school for the Kalasha children was established by a minority representative of National Assembly, in 1991. The first time it happened that in the said school the teachers were hired from the Kalasha community (Ali & Rehman, 2001).

Threats to Kalasha Dastoor after 9/11 Era

The 21st century brought a real threat to the survival of the marginalized indigenous Kalasha tribe. In 1999, another military ruler, Pervez Musharraf, dissolved the democratic government. The Musharraf's regime is considered liberal, while another major characteristic of the said regime was extremism. By nature, Pervez Musharraf was a liberal, while extremism in the state has mushroomed as a by-product of War on Terror. After Zia, it was the second time that extremism was experienced in Pakistan. The general opinion of Chitral people was positive towards Musharraf for his relaunching the Lowari Tunnel project after suspension of a long time, on the other hand, it is fact Pakistani society had to experience extremism as the result of Musharraf's policies towards War on Terror.

Lakshan Bibi Kalash, a resident of Rukmu valley, was interviewed in 2007 by *The Washington Times*, she told during the interview that some of the Kalasha young men were brainwashed by their Muslims teachers and later they participated in the war in Afghanistan (Smucker, 2007b). She did not feel comfortable with government schools in the Kalashdesh. She spoke to *The New York Times* that her tribe fellows were surrounded by the Muslims and were being crushed by the Taliban in response to War on Terror motivated by the US President George Bush (Smucker, 2007a).

Before the event of 9/11, the whole region beyond the Lowari Pass was remarkably peaceful territory. However, in later years due to its geography and due to sharing boundaries with Afghanistan the district Chitral had suffered a lot. Afghan President Hamid Karzai, a strong ally of US, alleged in December 2006 that Osama bin Laden: Al-Qaeda leader, had hidden himself among the Kalasha of Chitral (Zahiruddin, 2006). *The Hindu*, the Indian paper, also reported a story that Bin Laden was hidden in Chitral and was being searched by US drones on regular bases (Osama in Chitral, 2009). Even though the episode of Bin Laden's refuge in Kalashdesh or Chitral was not verified by any official source from the US or Pakistan, but it triggered the fear among the microscopic minority of Chitral. While comparing the peaceful situation in Chitral Farzana Shah (2009) reported that in the whole district of Chitral there were only 9 police stations while police posts were 20 till 2009 for the population of about three and a half lacs. In the latest visit to Kalashdesh, the current researcher counted six check posts in the small valley of Rumbur (of three thousand population) in summer of 2017. Once Urtsun and JinjiretKuh valleys were inhabited by the Kalasha people, now both valleys have been converted and not opened to the non-residents due to security sensitivity as both valleys are very close to Durand Line. Today, the Kalasha are living in only three valleys; Biri, Rukmu and Mumuret. However, non-residents are not allowed to visit whole valleys, upper valleys are banned for non-residents. The primary author planned, in the summer of 2015, to spend ample time with Kalasha herdsmen at Bahuk pasture, (of Rukmu, nearby the Pak-Afghan border) but the permission was not granted to hike towards Bahuk by army personnel stationed at

the western neck of the valley until the permission from higher authorities at Chitral town was granted, after a labour of a couple of days.

The Durand Line, once served as a lifeline for the Kalasha people in 1896 when Kafiristan (Afghanistan) was raided by Amir Abdur Rahman, many were killed (Azar, 2006) as Azar records and many of them were made slaves (Maraini, 1964). Almost all Red Kafirs of Kafiristan had to convert to Islam and the name of Kafiristan was changed to Nuristan by Amir (Khan, 1900). Only a little number of them could take refuge in Kalashdesh (in British India). The Kalasha of Chitral could survive from the raid of Afghan ruler because the Kalasha were subject of British India. Historically, 1896's event was the sole event when Durand Line became the lifeline for the Kalasha tribe, otherwise, the Durand Line had been an element of fear for this community. They had fear of raids of Red Kafirs (after conversion Nuristani) who were used to attack the Kalasha high pastures for their herds. The Post 9/11 era brought intense tension for the community. Now, across the border in Afghanistan Talibanization was intensity and it was relentless element of terror for the Kalasha and the Muslims of Kalashdesh. In every summer the local shepherds migrate from valleys to pastures nearby the Durand Line where their herds keep grazing for whole summer. In the summer season when the snow melts it adds the fear of raids from Taliban or Nuristanis across the border. For instance, according to Luke Rehmat key informant of the author, in September, ten workers were kidnapped from the forests of Bumburet valley and four of them were killed brutally with a message of not fight with Taliban (Ali, 2019).

In summer of 2012, another tragic incident happened during the field visit of the present researcher, in the high pasture of Bumburet valley adjacent to Afghanistan, a young herdsman from the Kalasha community was ruthlessly killed while about 700 goats were kidnapped which were taken to Afghanistan. Reportedly, thirty Afghan Taliban raided from Nuristan side (Mohakm-ud-Din, 2012). Then, in Kalashdesh, it was time to celebrate the great festival *Uchaw*. That young slain shepherd was from Bumburet valley, therefore, elders of the valley, the first time in recent history, cancelled the festival for the said year in Bumburet, however in other two valleys of Rumbur and Birir it was celebrated half-heartedly. The faces, expressions and feelings of the Kalasha participants during a celebration in Rumbur were gloomy, the present author personally observed it during *Uchaw*. Again in September 2016, two herdsman were ruthlessly killed by the Taliban from Afghanistan and about 300 goats were abducted to Afghanistan (The News, July 30, 2016).

This kind of incidents is alarming for the Kalasha community as goat and sheep are the backbone of their economy as well as very important for their *dastoor*. Due to frequent attacks from Nuristan the locals are losing their herds greatly. Muhammad Khan, my informant, told that before the event of 9/11 the local shepherds had weapons with them for their survival in high pastures, but now the security agencies of Pakistan do not allow them to take any kind of weapon with them. Therefore, at the time of attack from Nuristan the local shepherds feel helpless (Muhammad Khan, personal communication, July 28, 2015). Almost all major

pastures like Ostui, Gangalwat. Bahuk, Chimiksun etc. take one day hike from main valleys. If the local shepherds are raided across the border, it is not possible for security personnel to rescue them from valleys until the permanent security posts are established alongside the Durand Line or the local shepherds are permitted to take their weapon with them to the high pastures.

The locals are not the sole victims of the Afghan Taliban, they did not spare, in recent past, well-wisher of the community. A Greek volunteer and teacher by profession: Athanasious Lerounis, was greatly well-wisher of the Kalasha people and the community itself had great respect for him. In the early 1990s, he visited the valleys and decided to uplift the marginalized community by his welfare activities in the valleys. During a field visit, he was interviewed, in summer 2008, by the present author and told that he was used to spend his summer vacations in Kalash-Chitral. Till 2008 Lerounis had established five Kalasha schools and one ethnological museum: called Kalashadur in Brun village of Bumburet valley (Athanasious Lerounis, personal communication, May 15, 2008). One year after the interview with the present author, in September 2009 Afghan Taliban attacked the Kalashadur in the dark of night, the guard at the museum was killed, while Lerounis was kidnapped and shifted to Nuristan. The news was spread globally besides the national media. According to a story of *The Telegraph* the Afghan Taliban demanded from Pakistan Government £1.25 million along with the release of some Taliban commander (Nelson & Khan, 2009) The community was very touchy regarding Lerounis, therefore a Kalasha delegation led by Mr. Wazir Zada Kalasha, now MPA-KP assembly, went Afghanistan to meet the Taliban commander for negotiation (Ali, 2019). After the efforts of many months, though, Mr. Lerounis was released and he brought to Pakistan before leaving for Greece, but, this type of incident increased the sense of insecurity for the community and their well-wishers as well.

The recent major cultural and survival collision was faced by the community in February 2014, when they received a terrifying threat from Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). According to a national daily, the TTP released a videotape in the said month and threatened the Kalasha community to embrace Islam, by force. In the video, the international NGOs were alleged to preserve the polytheistic belief of the community. Further, in the video, the Ismaili community was also warned to change their beliefs, if failed the community was threatened for killing. (Pakistani Taliban threaten Kalash tribe, Ismailis in Chitral, February 12, 2014). Such kind of threat was a great source of fear for the marginalized minority of Chitral. However, it was a good gesture that such kind of threat was condemned by the different pillars of the state. First of all current Prime Minister Imran Khan, then as Chairman Pakistan Tehrik-i-Insaf condemned the message from TTP. (Imran flays TTP threat to Kalash tribe, Ismailis, February 15, 2014). The judiciary was second to condemn it after three weeks of the video was appeared. Tassaduq Hussain Jilani, the Chief Justice Supreme Court of Pakistan, reacted and timely *soumotu* notice was taken against the threat and he inquired from the Attorney General that what measures were being taken for the protection of both communities (The Dawn, February 20, 2014). He

further added that the threats were contrary to the Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, under the clauses 9, 20 and 36. He called it against Islam and tolerance (Nizamani, February 20, 2014).

Conclusion

It was a concise study and of extremism faced by the pre-Islamic and marginalized tribe of the Hindu Kush, as the by-product of 9/11 and War on Terror. From the inception of Pakistan till Zia's regime the whole region (alongside the Durand Line) was very tranquil and peaceful. However, the situation started to get worst after USSR invasion in Afghanistan and got worsen after US military intervention in the region. The tourism industry has been badly affected; the Kalasha valleys receive very least international tourists as compared to the past.

The Kalasha is the sole pagan tribe of Pakistan practicing its unique religion and culture in the mighty Hindukush for centuries. They are peaceful and content people through history. Before the arrival of Muslim rulers, they were ruler of the whole Chitral valley, from north to south. There was no major threat to their identity until the incident of Amir Abdur Rahman Khan in late 19th century, after that they lived in peace for a long time until US-Soviet war in Afghanistan, which promoted extremism in Pakistan as well. The War on Terror brought another wave of extremism and this time this wave badly hit the pagan tribe as well.

We should keep in mind that the Kalasha society revolves around their festivals. They celebrate many festivals (*Zoshi, Uchaw, Pul, Chowmos* etc.) round the year, their festivals are socio-religious in nature and survival of the festivals is on their herds. The goats and sheep in great number are sacrificed during festivals and for rituals of death, marriage and (Ali & Chawla, 2019). If we exclude the animals it means we are fading the festivals, we are putting their religion at risk. If the pastures, shepherds and herds are not protected, it means their culture is at stake, it is not protected. As it has been discussed that the community is anagro-pastoral society which chiefly relies upon their herds for their economy. Their second major source of income is tourism industry. Both sources are under threat for the same reason; extremism. I can recall the *Uchaw* festival of 2012 when I saw very least Kalasha tribe fellows at *charsu* (dancing floor) for ritual dance and asked the reason from Muhammad Khan: the key informant. He replied that the people were frightened and they preferred to stay at home. In fact, in August 2011 some Afghan militants attacked check posts of Pakistan in Chitral area, near Kalash valleys and 26 paramilitary soldiers and policemen lost their lives (The Dawn, August 27, 2011) which was alarming for the pagan tribe. After the incident, the security was increased in Chitral and on Pak-Afghan border the Durand Line. Urtsun and JinjiretKuh could be potential destinations for tourists, as about a century ago both valleys were the Kalasha and later converted, but both valleys are closed for visitors for security reasons. Although Bumburet, Rumbur and Birir are opened valleys for tourists, but only lower parts of the valleys, while upper portions and pastures are "closed" for tourists.

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**Library Sources Available on Pre-Islamic Religious Traditions of the Eastern Hindu Kush
and on Shamanism among the Kalasha People**

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Abstract

The shamanism is the oldest cult of human being, in Pakistan the Kalasha are the sole people in the (eastern) Hindu Kush region who have the tradition of shamanism alive though at the last breath. The Kalasha are Indo-Aryan people of Dardic branch and their religion has similarities with the religion of Vedic period. Shaman or dehar is one of the most significant institutions of the community and is the most spiritual in nature. However, for some decades the shamanism due to multiple reasons is towards the decline; impurity is the key reason. Though the Kalasha people does not have any prophet or the divine book therefore the dehar gets more importance which, according to the Kalasha traditions, is a coordinator among his people and the creator through supernatural beings like fairies. Recent times is not good for the community, there is no real dehar for some decades and community is without spiritual leadership.

Keywords: Kalasha tribe, Kalasha religion, Culture of the Hindu Kush, Shamanism, Dehar, Dardic People, Dardistan.

The Cultural Setting of the Kalasha People

Pakistan is a land of many cultures and people, this is much fertile land in the cultural diversity from the coastal areas of south to mountainous regions in the north and North West of the country. The Kalasha tribe of Chitral is unique in the culture and religion. The Kalasha belong to Dardic branch of Indo-Dardic people who are still observing and following their centuries old culture and belief and they speak the Kalashamun languages which belongs to Dardic group of languages (Ali and Chawla, 2019). Chitral is the most north-western district of Pakistan and the Kalasha people live on the western edges of the district Chitral, limited to three deep valleys named Rumbur, Birir and Bumburet (the Kalasha call collectively Kalashdesh). Bumburet is the largest and most progressive valley due to tourism exposure, Birir is the smallest valley and receives least tourists due to lack of the infrastructure while Rumbur is the more cultural valley and at least three chief cultural custodians were from Rumbur whom the primary author knows: Katar Sing, Qazi Khosh Nawaz and Shah Jawan. Primarily the Kalasha people rely upon their herds of goat and sheep and on small forms added with seasonal fruits. They keep large herds and small agrarian fields for seasonal crops. The tourism industry and employment in services is new addition in the Kalasha economy (Ali, 2019). The local myth says that the Kalasha are form Tsyam and nobody knows where the Tsyam is exactly. According to the French anthropologists Loude and Lievre Tsyam might be in the Eastern Afghanistan (Jean Yves Loude and Viviane Lievre, 1988) and later on migrated to the current valleys a long ago (Ali, 2019). Once the whole region was ruled by the Kalasha chiefs (Ali, 2019) and they were in greater numbers now the estimated population of the Kalasha people is about 4,000 (Kalash, 2017) to 4,100 (Rehmat, 2017) and they are being assimilated slowly and steadily.

Introduction

Prior to advent of Islam in the mountainous valleys of the Chitral including Kafiristan (now Nuristan in Afghanistan) was abode of Kafirs people who had their own belief, way of life and values later all converted to Islam gradually except Kalasha of Chitral who were strongly sticky to their ancient and indigenous beliefs. However, now their culture and religion commonly called *dastoor* is being assimilated and on way to decline for multiple reasons. The Kalasha religion is associated to the Early Vedic Period (1500 BCE to 1000 BCE) (Jamison and Witzel, 2003) and basically their religion is polytheistic in nature (Lines, 1996). As the result of field visits of a decade it has been, however, observed that now the religion of the Kalasha is under transitional phase and they claim to be monotheists and they claim that all their deities are in fact like messengers of Khudai or God towards the Kalasha people (Ali, 2019; Jan, 2007). Zaheer-ud-Din also gives an insight to the impact of the Muslims over the culture and religion of the Kalasha community (Din, 2016). If we study the Kalasha religion in depth we will find great similarities of rituals and deities with the Vedic religion of early phase especially shamanism (Witzel, 2004). Augusto Cacopardo, an Italian anthropologist, also in favour of the above-mentioned synopsis that the Kalasha religion and the cosmology of the ancient India was interconnected (Cacopardo, 2016). The last decade of 19th century was dreadful for the Kafirs of the Hindu Kush when the Kafiristan was raided by Amir Abdur Rehman, King of Afghanistan (Marx, 1999), and the region forcefully was converted to Islam and Kafiristan was renamed as Nuristan (Rehman, 1900) across the Durand Line which was demarcated in 1893 and signatories were Afghan king and the British government of India (Dodwell, 1932). However, the Durand Line was proven blessing for the Kalasha Kafirs of Chitral who were subject of Mehtar of Chitral in the British India and they remained to follower of their creed (Jean Yves Loude and Viviane Lievre, 1988) without any major pressure. Before the

conversion of Kafiristan almost whole region of the Hindu Kush had polytheist or pre-Islamic faith. However, now only the Kalasha people possesses the pre-Islamic faith in whole region of the Hindu Kush from Afghanistan to Chitral and Swat Kohistan. Once the Shamanism was a major religious trait of the region and of the Kalasha people as well and Fredrik Barth claims the existence of “priestly families in pagan times” (Barth, 1956). The Shaman or dehar, as the Kalasha call, was an important religious and spiritual institution of the Kalasha people this institution is taking its last breaths.

Shaman and Shamanism

Defining the shaman Michael Harner writes that a person who enters in state of trance, contacts with supernatural beings and has hidden knowledge is the shaman. He also adds that some supernatural being must be in the control of the shaman (Harner, 1980). Regarding the antiquity of the Shamanism Andreas Lommel believes that it was the cult of the early human of Stone Age to hunting communities (Lommel, 1967). Conard Philip Kottak claims and holds that a shaman is part-time religious entity and the shaman performs as the coordinator of his people and the super being or supernatural beings (Kottak, 2002) while defining the roles of a shaman Ferraro writes that a shaman may play multiple role like spiritual leader, oracle, witch doctor and spiritual healer (Ferraro, 2006). Margaret Stutley writes, “Shamans have long been associated with hunter-gatherers and members of nomadic societies. Shamans advise the community when hunting is unsuccessful, or whenever crises occur in the harsh climate of extreme cold and the ever-present risk of starvation and disease. These societies are the nearest one can get to a ‘classless’, loosely stratified society.” (Stutley, 2003) The shamanistic elements had been the prehistoric religious beliefs of our ancestors on the globe far in past. The evidences of the shamanism or shamanistic

elements can be traced in prehistoric and ancient societies of North Asia, Egypt, Iran, Celtic world, Europe (Walter and Fridman, 2004) and South Asia.

Dehar the Kalasha Shaman

At least two communities of Pakistan can be traced out associated with shamanism; the Kalasha of Chitral and Broshu people of Hunza. Both communities had been practicing the shamanistic rituals for a long. *Dehar* or shaman has enormous importance in the Kalasha religion. The locals have different words for shaman as the Kalasha call it *dehar* in Kalashamun while the Kho people and Shina people of Gilgit call it *bitan/betan* in Khowar and Shina languages, respectively. *Dehar* is spiritual and religious leader of the Kalasha community; he is approached for prophecies, avoiding evils, to cure of illness etc. The rank of *dehar* cannot be acquired by choice or struggle, it is considered the divine blessings. The *dehar* is revered in the Kalasha society and Halfdan Siiger considers him as ecstatic prophet (Siiger, 1956). Historical survey of the community and its faith affirms that it was the most revered spiritual institution of the community however now it is at brink of death for multiple reasons. R. C. F. Schomberg records, in 1930s, an alternative word *pshe* for *dehar* derived from Red Kafirs (Schomberg, 1938). The *dehar* was undoubtedly a source of unity and integration of the people. The *dastoor* of the Kalasha rotates around the *dehar* specifically two more powerful and revered *dehars*; Budha and Naga. Both are frequently discussed and mentioned in the legends. Halfdan Siiger, for their higher rank and esteem among the people, call them “ecstatic prophets” (Siiger, 1956) and they had been custodian of the Kalasha *dastoor*.

The tradition of shamanism among the Kalasha people in their religious sphere is stronger and important compare to priestly tradition, Peter Parkes believes it as he considered it the secret knowledge (Parkes, 1991). For example we can discuss the most celebrated Naga Dehar that how

he lead his people and settled in the current Kalasha valleys. The Kalasha legends read that Naga Dehar was called upon by the great deity Balumain in Tsyam¹ and ordered him to settle in the Kalasha valleys called Kalashdesh and he brought two deities of Sajigor and Mahandeo to Kalashdesh (Jean Yves Loude and Viviane Lievre, 1988) Naga Dehar was the first mentor of his people who taught them the *dastoor* and guided his people to perform the different rituals (Ali, 2019). Though, there is no prophet neither any divine book among the Kalasha but the Kalasha shaman "...alone could see the god and other supernatural beings and has the power to communicate with them. He could link man with Supreme Being through the power of speaking with heaven, and interpret their intentions." (Din, 2011)

Dehar its Nature, Phases and Roles

Jean-Yves Loude while discussing the nature of the Kaalsha shaman in *The Kalasha Shamans' Practices of Exorcism* writes:

The Kalasha oral tradition is full of stories of the ability of some men to enter into trance. At this time, those so inspired have asserted that they were able to communicate with the gods and spirits, who were using them to give advice for future and provide answers for any present community problems. The Kalasha society must have greatly respected and heeded these messages transmitted from the invisible world by these human go-betweens, whom they considered elected by those same powers. (Loude, 1996)

Possibly there may be thee stages during performance of a *dehar*:

¹ Tsyam is a mythical land which is considered the place of the origin of the Kalasha people, some scholars hold that it was situated somewhere in the eastern Afghanistan. For detail see Muhammad Kashif Ali, "A History of the Kalasha in Pakistan: Its Origin, Change and Continuity" (Doctoral dissertation, University of the Punjab, 2019), 49-51.

1. The dehar gets involve in parapsychological activates and he approaches the supernatural beings like fairies.
2. At the second phase the dehar is under control of supernatural beings and they communicates with each other.
3. At this stage the fairies or supernatural leave the dehar who gradually regain his normal state of mind and control.

Unquestionably, the second phase of all is the most important, in the second phase the Kalasha shaman is connected and communicate with divine forces of the Kalasha cosmology how a divine powers without trance also can communicate with dehar in his dreams (Siiger, 1967). Augusto Cacopardo writes about the becoming a *dehar*, “The call to be a *deh’ar* may come under any circumstance, but the more favourable time is held to be that o calendrical festivals when human beings are closer to the sacred.” (Cacopardo, 1999)

For the Kalasha shaman is mandatory to follow the indigenous *dastoor* in true spirit and if he fails to do so he won’t be the shaman of his community (Siiger, 1956). The Italian anthropologist Augusto S. Cacopardo, theoretically analysing the Kalasha shaman or *dehar* challenges it as shaman. Cacopardo writes, “The Kalasha *deh’ar* does not fully comply with some of the best known definitions of a shaman. There is no clear belief in departure of his soul from the body during a trance.” (Cacopardo, 1999) There are many famous the Kalasha shamans in the local history, Siiger records only three *dehars* in the Kalasha valleys in 1948 and smells the decline for the institution. Further he writes, “They act as ecstatic prophets, enjoy a general esteem, and are treated with sincere reverence, sometimes even awe”. (Siiger, 1956)

Based upon his field visit in the Kalasha valleys he recalls Rota *dehar* when he was at a funeral in Rumbur valley. Siiger records in his work that during the ceremonial dance at a funeral,

Rota was also entered in the dance arena while facing towards the west and shrine of Mahandeo (which is situated in Grom village) for praying in whispers. The *dehar* fell into trance after some time while dancing continually. In the trance, he was shivering and later running into the participants with least control over him and the participants were trying to save themselves from random blows of the *dehar*. He writes that the funeral dance was being performed and then Rota entered the dancing area and “turning his face towards the nearby Mahandeo and raising his arms ceremonially above his head, he murmured a long prayer.” Gradually he begun to enter in trance while his body was trembling. He, later, was running in trance all around and funeral participants were trying to secure themselves from punches of Rota Dehar, after some quarter of hour he was collapsed. Further he shares that the participants were trying to touch the back of Rota for gaining the spiritual share (Siiger, 1967).

Chitrali ethnographer and historian Wazir Ali Shah reports that the *dehar* had no fixed salary or any fixed amount acquiring from the community. He writes in his hand-written diary in 1948, “He is usually a landholder like other people and has goathouses or goat like the rest, and does not depend on the income he gets as the Dehar alone.” (Ali, 2019)

Prominent Kalasha Dehars

In the local and folk history of the people, Budha, Naga, Rota and Thanok are more famous and revered shamans. According to various field visits of the primary author from 2007 to 2017 in all three practicing Kalasha valleys (Birir, Rumbur and Bumburet) Qazi Khush Nawaz of Rumbur is considered the last known the Kalasha shaman. Qazi Khush Nawaz died after spending about a hundred good years in 2015. He was custodian of his *dastoor* and full of traditional knowledge as well as folk historian. As the *dehar* he was called the Kaga *dehar* (Ali, 2019). However, Akiko Wada, a Japanese who is leaving in Kalash from 1980s, does not believe that Khush Nawaz was a

shaman or *dehar*, she calls him *is'parap'shao* or raw *dehar*. She told to the primary author that no doubt Khush Nawaz was the most eldest person of the tribe but he was not respected as *dehar* neither he was acknowledged for the rank of shaman (Wada, Kalasha Dehar (Shaman), 2017). Another example of *is'parap'shao* is Watan Bibi from Bethet village of Rumbur valley. During a field visit the primary author visited Watan Bibi in her house. She communicated that she is not a full *dehar* but a raw *dehar* and sometimes she dreams which come true, later or sooner. The primary author is witness of the havoc flooding of 2015 in Kalash and Chitral. Watan Bibi told that a couple of days ago the first wave of the flood she was informed by divine forces about some great loss and threat. Next morning she conveyed to other tribe fellows to convince of the sacrifice but she was not taken serious and the next day whole region was hit by the most devastating flood (Bibi, 2015) of the region and near history. The primary author was stuck in Rumbur valleys for 22 days and in those days forty waves of flood hit the Rumbur valley. The jeep-able road was despatched and almost all bridges and watermills had been damaged. Due to continuous flooding and disconnecting Rumbur valley from Chitral town the shops got abandoned in couple of weeks and the valley was on brink to hunger when a chopper of Pakistan Army landed in valley to distribute relief ration provide by National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) (Ali, 2015). It was the most devastating flood after 2010, local told.

Decline of the Institution

For several decades, the *dehar* as institution is on decay for multiple reasons. According Shah Jawan, the key informant from Grom village of Rumbur valley, all *dehars* have been disappeared. During an interview he recalls the golden age of *dehars*. He recalls two great *dehars*

when he was young;² Bodok was greater shaman compare to Rota and both were from Bumburet valley though Rota's village was Palawandeh while Anish was the village of Bodok. He recalls another shaman named Jandoli from Rumbur valley and he was died in 1990s (Jawan, 2007). In another interview Shah Jawan told to the primary author that Jandoli Khan *dehar* was died in 2000s (Jawan, 2008). Discussion with Shah Jawan shows that his time was not much fertile in term of revered shamans and divine authorized spiritual leaders. Qazi Palawan (aka Fal-i-Azam) agrees upon that there is no pure shaman or dehar among the Kalasha these days. His father Baraman was also well praised Qazi or religious leader of Rumbur. Therefore, Fal-i-Azam has good folk history to share. He also recalls Rota, Khani and Bodok (from Bumburet) while Ango, Taktak Jaanak and Jandoli Khan from Rumbur as last proper *dehars* of his people (Fal-i-Azam, 2017). The most southern valley Birir seems more unfertile as both Qazis from Rumbur deny any shaman among the Kalasha of Birir in near past. Apart from the above-mentioned the Kalasha shamans Zaheer-ud-Din also lists some famous *dehars*: Murad Baig, Azer Malik, Rabadan and Wirishik (Din, 2011).

Studying the cosmology and religion of the Kalasha people we deduce that the concept of purity and impurity is very strict and important. The word *onjesta* is being used for purity while *pragata* for impurity. The whole Kalasha society is divided in two broader religious spheres; pure and impure. For instance men, upper valleys, stables, shrines, temples etc. are pure while women, *bashali*³ and lower valleys fall in the impure sphere. The upper valleys and high pastures of the Kalasha people are abode of fairies and fairies are pure. Therefore, according to their dastoor the Kalasha women are not allowed to visit the high pastures and stables because women are not

² He was born in 1937 as it was mentioned on his Nation Identity Card while died in 2011.

³ *Bashali* is a separate quarter out of the main village, the Kalasha women according to their *dastoor* spend their menstrual period in *bashali* moreover the lady who goes under labour pain stay some days in *bashali* until she gives birth and leave the *bashali* after some day when she gets purity through certain rituals.

considered *onjesta* (Ali, 2019). Wynne Maggi, American anthropologist, also notes that higher places are more pure while the places in the downstream and near the Muslims' settlement are *pragata* (Maggi, 2001). The concept of purity and impurity among the Kalasha can be compared with the Vedic religion as Witzel writes, "Purity is very much stressed, just as in the Veda or Hinduism. In Kalash religion it is centered around altars, goat stables, the space between the hearth and the back wall of houses" (Witzel, 2004). Peter Parkes gives a list of "pure" and "impure"; mountains, markhor, goats, honeybees, juniper, holly oak, goat stables, men and shrines are pure while lower valleys, garlic, onion, cattle, sheep, eggs, hens, *bashali*, cemetery and women are impure (Parkes, 1983). The purity is a serious matter in the Kalasha religion especially during the festivities and at the time of performing the rituals, if not comply properly the divine powers may get angry and may refuse to accept and acknowledged the sacrifices and prayers (Wada, Kalasha: Their Life & Tradition, 2005). Hence the belief of purity is utmost significant and in the Kalasha society to gain the spirituality and revered rank of shaman is associated with purity. For to be *dehar* it is mandatory to observe the *dastoor* in true spirit and complete comply the norms of purity. Annoyingly, Palawan told that with the change of time and exposure to the world the Kalasha people are least concerned towards the purity which lead the community towards infertility of *dehar*. Poultry or chicken is considered impure among the Kalasha but now, especially after exposure to the outer world due to tourism and infrastructure, they frequently consume the chicken which resulted impurity. Viviane Lievre brings into light the sole female *dehar* and legend of impurity of the chicken among the Kalasha people:

There has been one exception within the Kalasha oral tradition: a female Dehar called Mali. She lived in Drosh (south of Chitral) at the time preceding the first wave of Islamic conversion in Chitral area (thirteen or fourteen centuries)...She delivered prophecies: "in three years a materialized spirit will come with a bird. If

you accept this bird, it will mark the beginning of your decline and the community will vanish.” Three years later her prophecy came true. The Kalasha, having paid no attention to Mali’s advice, accepted the bird. From this time the Muslims assault and conversions. When they realized their mistake, the Kalasha declared a taboo on poultry, hens and considered them impure.” (Lievre, 1996)

During a field visit of summer 2015 the primary author came to know through the key informant Muhammad Khan that a young boy from Rumbur valley was potential shaman as he was dreaming frequently regarding his people and society but his educated father was not interested to have a shaman in his house. Therefore, one day he killed a hen over the head of his son, poured all blood on his head to make him maximum impure.⁴

Apart from disobeying the *dastoor* he claims that poverty is another reason behind the decline of this institution. In the Kalasha society *istongas* is ritual to get purity in different cases. For the potential shaman *istongas* is required and a male goat is sacrificed. Marshal Khan a potential *dehar* from Rumbur was not able offer the sacrifice due to his poverty so could not arrange the *istongas* for becoming the *dehar* (Fal-i-Azam, 2017). Luke Rehmat (aka Rustam Khan), a social activist and the CEO of sole media house of his community, adds Kalasha-Muslims jointly living model in the valleys as reason of the decline, according to the indigenous *dastoor* for a potential *dehar* the compliance of purity is essential which is not possible in joint living model (Rehmat, 2017; Ali, 2019).

Unfortunately, the revitalisation of the Kalasha shaman is a challenging and a hard job when we see that the Kalasha in all three valleys are about 4,100 and the Muslims are in greater number (about 8,000) (Ali, 2019) and both communities are living in jointly and in such model to

⁴ Though the primary author has met with the guy and his father but his father does not like to public the fact about his son. Therefore, ethically the primary author is bound not to share their identity.

acquire the ideal purity is impossible. Luckily, Kashkari, Morayok, Marshal Khan, Watan Bibi and Akbar Nawaz are *is'prap'shao*. *Is'prap'shao* is a person who dreams, which later become reality, unlike *dehar* the *is'prap'shao* never experience trance and communication with supernatural beings.

Conclusion

The institution of the *dehar* for the community has immense importance for their *dastoor*, psychic relief and source of inspiration, indeed he was source of unity as well as he was respected and acknowledged by the whole community. The non-existence of this spiritual institution in fact is a great loss for the community and for their future. He was the main body to announce and lead the festivals and different rituals from birth to death throughout the year. He was a unity symbol, the institution of *dehar* has been elapsed and his community is being assimilated. The Kalasha and the Muslims no doubt are living in co-existence but purity is impossible for the Kalasha in this mixture living model. The purity is the essential element for to be a *dehar*. The revival of the real *dehar* seems a gruelling job.

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Authors declare no potential conflict of interest for this study.

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