



## Cultural Rights & Cultural Security of Kalash Community in Pakistan: An Appraisal

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**Abstract-** The concept of rights is very broad and comprehensive which is interpreted by different people according to their socio-cultural values and religious teachings. However, the global community has given some rights a common meaning and list to protect the rights of the weaker communities against the stronger majoritarian community from annihilation. Pakistan has pluralistic society divided into various communities on the basis of race, colour, language, caste, creed, sects and religion. The Kalash Community is socio-cultural and religious minority community in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. This study is mainly concerned with the Cultural rights and cultural security of this community.

**Key Words:** Cultural security, UNDP, Cultural Rights, Kalash Community

### I. INTRODUCTION

Alexander the Great conquered Kabul and then moved towards Chitral. The injured soldiers, pregnant women, and children were left in Chitral. With the passage of time these injured soldiers got well and the pregnant women delivered baby and the children grew up; which flourished a new cultural society because they started to live according to their own traditions (Younghusband, 1895). Kalash established control over Chitral and became the first ruler of Chitral. Some villages of Chitral are still associated with the name of some prominent Kalash people. *Khorkash* is the name of Kalash and (*Khorkashan Dah*) is the name of a village in Chitral associated with the name of Khorkash Kalash. Chew Bridge is also related with the name of a Kalash which links upper with lower Chitral. *Dawashish*, another village is associated with the name of Kalash (Khan, 2014-18). The Mughal families (Shahzada Lal) of Chitral defeated the Kalash and established their own government; and pushed back the Kalashes from Chitral town to the Hilly areas of Chitral popularly known as (*Bomburat, Rumbur and Birir*); and in 1972 Chitral was annexed to Pakistan (Pastakia, 2004; Shah, 1998; & Cobb O.B.E., 2011). Pakistan is divided on various geographical bases and into various administrative units. However, the tribal culture is mainly found in North West Frontier Province (now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) and Baluchistan. The Kalash in Chitral has received appropriate systematic ethnographic attention (Donnan & Werbner, 1991: 3).

The Kalash people are living in three distinct villages namely – Bomburat, Rombur, Birir – in the west side site of Chitral. They are very limited in number. From Chitral to these villages, jeeps are used for transportation due to steep and dangerous mountainous areas. In Ayun, three roads are overlapping each other – one straight road for Birir through Gahirat post along with the narrow stream; and the second road in right site leads to Bomburat; and from the left side it goes to Rumbur. In *Bomburate*, there are one higher secondary school, one middle school and five primary schools and as well as one Basic Health Unit (BHU) and one police station in *Bomburate*. In Birir, there is one higher secondary school and one middle school, and three primary schools and one dispensary. The total distance from Chitral town to Bomburte is 80 kilometers and to Rumbur is 85 kilometers and to Birir is 95 kilometers (Khan, 2014-18).

### II. METHODOLOGY

The study is mainly based upon qualitative approach. Data is mainly drawn from secondary sources – books and research articles. Analysis is based on content analysis. In addition to this, some interviews were also conducted from the local people so as to record the first-hand information.

### III. LITERATURE REVIEW

**Ghufran** (1962) illustrated the history of Chitral, the then Princely State and explained different dynasties ruled over Chitral. The first was Kalash dynasty, 2<sup>nd</sup> was Raise dynasty, and 3<sup>rd</sup> was Baba Ayyub dynasty. Baba Ayyub was the name of the father of five sons namely Kattor, Sangal, Khoswaqt, Khoshamd and Muhammad Baig. Later on five races came into being Kattora, Sangala, Khoswaqta, Khosh Amada and Muhammad Baiga popularly was collective known as Ayyubians of Chitral. The author give a small touch to the Kalash community not briefly unearth the facts about Kalash culture

**Tarar** (2012) elaborated the culture of Kalash in a novel shape. He explained all the ground realities about the Kalash culture from the way of dressing to the funeral custom and their and the visits of foreigners to Kalsh valley to enjoy the unique culture .The author explained the culture from different angle but did not discussed the primitive measures to protect the endanger culture from extinction.

**Robertson** (2016) mentioned the power turmoil between different rulers of Chitral when Chitral was princely state. He explained the role of different tribes – Kalasha Sangala, Katoora Riza, Muhmmad Baiga, Khoshwaqta and Khoshamada – in the princely state. Katoora were in power in Chitral; while Khoswaqta was in power in Gilgit Baltistan. Among these five tribes, Kalasha is a distinct tribe living in three different valleys of Chitral namely Bomburat, Rumboor and Birir. He narrated the different tribes in Chitral along with Kalasha but the Author has not highlighted the role of Kalash and their distinct culture.

**Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy** (2017) has lighted the human security in the light of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 1996 which expanded the horizon of security studies by bringing economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security, and political security under its purview.

**Sanaullah & Arab** (2018) has discussed the cultural and religious issues of the Kalash Community which affect its culture by applying ‘Resilience Development Model’

The aforementioned literature review reflects that this study is new with respect to the interconnection between cultural security and cultural rights of the Kalash Community.

### IV. DISCUSSION

The peculiar nature of socio-cultural norms and religious festivals of Kalash community gives a distinctive status to it among sister cultures in the world (Staley, 2012: 197). D. P. Khan said that the distinctive nature of culture of the Kalash Community attracted the attention and interest of people across the world; and this has made this valley a famous tourist place (Khan, 2014-18).<sup>1</sup>

#### **Kalash Language**

Language is one of the most fundamental pillars of a culture. The aboriginals of Kalash valley speak very unique and difficult language in addition to Chitrali and Urdu. The literate section of the community can also communicate in English. The Kalashes speak very difficult language that the general masses sometimes cannot understand it. They use the word *Ishpata* for *Salam* as a greeting; and for girl, they use the word *Istrexax*; for a boy they use the word *Inistrisho* (Ibid, 6).

#### **Dress of Kalash Community**

Another noteworthy feature of Kalsh Culture is its distinctive dress of clothes. The local ladies wear 25 meters long stylish patched dress, popularly known as *Singachi* with a traditional hat known as *Khopasi*. They put *Shushut* on this hat and well decorated with jewels in a very beautiful manner. Similarly, men wear Chitrali cap with feathers. In winter, they wear cloak known as *Chugah* (Ibid).

#### **Marriage Ceremony**

Kalash community is liberal in various ceremonies. For example, it prefers ‘love marriage’ instead of ‘arrange marriage’. There is no concept of *Nekah* – a religious-social wedding knot – as prevailing in the Muslim community. Marriage takes place when a boy takes a girl to his house; this custom is known as *Alashing*. The girl’s family receives 100 or 120 rounded silver plates, goats and ox. If the girl after marriage disliked the boy; and she establishes relation with other boy, then first husband will receive double of the goods or amount paid to the bride from the second husband of the bride; and this custom is known as (*Dhukun*) – the literal meaning of Dhukun is double – in local nomenclature (Ibid, 16-17).

#### **Religious Ceremonies**

The religious practices of the Kalash community also give it a distinctive place among other sister minority communities. The Kalash community worships in a particular place in pasture with a three feet high and four feet breadth wall; and the above of that wall, there is a triangular wood with hole in center; and above

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<sup>1</sup> D. P. Khan’s response to the Second Author’s interview on question of “*What is kalash culture*”. (Dated 5 August of 2018).

this wood three hockey-stick-shaped woods are placed vertically. Regarding religious practices, Tanveer Ullah quoted Bachara Khan (Ex-member of Village Council, Bombure Valley) who said: "Sacrifice of animals is one of the most important practices of the Kalash community. Six to seven people of the same tribe slaughter 20 to 25 goats in front of the triangular wood in the pasture and put one knife blood into the hole of the triangular wood; some meat of the goat is roasted there and will be eaten; while some meat is distributed among community (ibid, 19)."

**Ikram & Spear (1955)** discussed in details the works of various writers who have highlighted various regional literatures – Baluchi, Bengali, Punjabi and Pushto – along with national literature of Urdu. However, they did not discuss the literature and culture of Kalash people.

#### **Bashalani (Custom Related with Women)**

There are peculiar socio-cultural norms of Kalash community connected with menstrual period and pregnancy. Bashalani is a special place consisted of two to three rooms wherein they keep their females during menstruation days and delivery of child. Each village has its own Bashalani; and a female of other village is disallowed to Bashalani of other village. The female will return home seven days after delivery of a baby. During their stay at Bashalani, they are served with food sent from their homes. In case a female dies during delivery of a baby, then the new born baby will be handed over to a Muslim family; and the real father of that baby will support that family in bringing up the baby. In Kalash valley, a prominent Greek person known as *Athanasi* lived there for many years builds Bashalani, built schools, roads, canals and also used to make account for each new born baby.

#### **Festivals of Kalashes**

Kalash community celebrates four festivals – *Chelum Jusht*, *Dad Nat*, *Uchal*, and *Chetermass*. *Chelum Jusht* is a three days festival celebrated in the beginning of the spring every year on 15, 16, 17 of May with great zeal and zest just like the *Eids* (annual festivals) of Muslims and Christmas of the Christian. The people of Kalash made new dresses for themselves. They also store milk for this festival.

Tanveer Ullah quoted Dayana (a prominent lady from Krakal Village, Bomborate) who stated that "they are very hospitable in serving their guests. Mixed dance of male and female, using and serving wine in high quantity, love marriage, trumpet of drum, and exchange of gifts are the most attractive features of this festival (Ibid).

*Tanveer Ullah quoted* Shushmito (a female student of 2<sup>nd</sup> Year of Mood Degree College, Village Bron, Bomburate) regarding festivals who stated: "*Dad Nat* is the second festival of Kalash people celebrated from 21 to 25 of June each at the time of harvesting crops in Kalash valley; wherein male and female gets together and performs collective dance at night time. *Uchal* is the third largest festival of Kalash which is celebrated from 21 to 27 September with a belief to please their idols so as to get access to their Lord. The characteristic that differentiate this festival from the rest of festivals of the valley is the belief that foxes will destroy them if they use grapes, walnut, and maze before this festival (Ibid)." Tanveer Ullah quoted Wazir Zada (Minority Member of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Provincial Assembly, from Rumbur valley of Chitral) on September 30, 2020 who also stated: "*Chetermas* is the fourth festival which starts from 15<sup>th</sup> of December to December 29 every year. In this festival, people forecasts prosperity of the village. Dance is also performed in this festival. Local elders use to get together at the top of hill to see the new rising sun of the New Year and sacrifices goats."

#### **Funeral and Burial Traditions**

The Kalash Community has also unique funeral and burial norms which give it a distinctive place in the rest of sub-cultures in Pakistan. Whenever someone dies in the community, his body is covered with a sewed cloth and wore him local shoes; and tightens local turban with a branch of *Saruu* (a local tree). The death body is placed at the center of a house. Gun is fired to invite the people for dancing around the dead body. On first day, relatives and local people performs dance for twenty-four hours; on second day people from *Rumbur* performs dance and fire guns; and on third day people from *Birir* come and do firing with guns while dancing. Mr. Shazda Khan further says: "The dancing people admire the deceased person for his gallantry. The family of the deceased people also serve the people with meal consisted of 60 goats, *desi* ghee, and wheat for three days. The dead body while taking to grave yard, a man holding a gun in his one hand and an axe in the other hand starts firing with a perception to clean the path from angels. This custom is known as *Madukjal*. Previously the Kalash community used to avoid to bury their deceased persons but to put in a wooden box with all his wealth. Now the trend has changed; and they bury dead bodies; and place food on their one side to eat in case of appetite and arrows on the other side for protection against the angels. In addition, the bereaved family will observe condolence; and the family members will avoid talking with the spouse of a deceased person for three months, who will sit inside home near the door where he or she will eat. After the lapse of three months, the grey-bearded people will

come and will cut four-to-five hair; and by this practice the condolence will come to an end (Khan, 2014-18: 19).”<sup>2</sup>

## V. SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

Kalash culture is one of the unique cultures of all over the world; however it is confronted with various issues which have endangered this primitive culture of this minority community. The prominent issues are given below.

### **Role of Madrasa**

Various *Madaris*<sup>3</sup> (religious seminaries) in Shekhan Dah in upper Bomburat and in the Shekhan Dah of Birir and Rombur have been established; and are functioning to spread the teachings of Islam in those areas. These seminaries are providing free Islamic education to the needy people in addition to *Zakat* (obligatory charity) and charity help the newly converted deserving people. It is also observed that the women in Kalash culture do not enjoy proper dignified status; while Islam guarantees the due rights of women. And this treatment of women in Muslim community influences the Kalashi woman who use to go for embracing Islam and to marry with a Muslim male.

### **No Religious Clerics**

It is also important to mention people of Kalash unlike other communities of the world has no religious clerics and religious seminaries wherein they have been imparted temporal and spiritual teachings about their socio-cultural values, moral ethos, and other matters.

### **Poor Role of NGOs**

The negligence on the part of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the protection of this historical unique culture is also noteworthy. These NGOs neither assist the people of this community financially nor in provision of rehabilitation and infrastructural work. The role of government is also unsatisfactory; because Public Health department and Education Department have also shown poor performance to deliver their respective services to this community.

### **Surrounding Environment**

The field study also shows that the Muslim community in surrounding and its way of living, customs, manner of treatment of each other, family structure, and philanthropy greatly influenced the Kalash community to embrace Islam; and to forfeit its own socio-cultural values. It is therefore can be said that environmental factor in extinction of this culture cannot be ignored.

### **Terrorism, Migration and Acculturation**

The wave of terrorism and the global war on terror has severely affected the Kalash valley. Athanasias from Greek – living and helping the residents in Bomborat for many years in every field of life in building houses, museum, and schools for their Basalani and helping to get rid of poverty and to make their living standard better – was attacked and kidnapped for ransom in 2010. Later on, the government of Pakistan paid the terrorists ransom and succeeded to release him from their captivity. However, that incident severely affected the tourist industry in Kalash valley which exacerbated poverty in Kalash valley because the tourist stopped to visit that valley to live in hotels, buy the local goods and handicrafts. Additionally, the local people also started to shift to major urban areas like Peshawar, Karachi, Islamabad and Lahore to escape terrorism and to earn bread and butter for themselves. This also led to acculturation because the people of Kalash mingled with people of these advanced cities and will learn many new norms; so they eschewed their tradition and customs.

### **No Separate educational institution and syllabus**

Moreover, the schooling system and curriculum also played its role to die out the local culture of the Kalash community. The curriculum in school is common for both Muslim and Kalash community in which *Islamyat* (Islamic Studies) is also taught as a compulsory subject which influences the children. In addition, majority are the Muslim teachers in the local schools who have also great influence on their students. Moreover, the co-education system also plays its role to establish interaction among male and females in the schools. Females of Kalash community interact with male Muslims, so the former prefer to marry with the latter due to their natural beauty; and ultimately enter into the circle of Islam.

### **Recommendations**

Following are recommendation to protect the culture some from annihilation. First the government must take concrete steps to ensure advanced transportation system to Kalash and other parts of Chitral. Roads are considered as the back bone for development of any area. The roads to Kalash valley are in bad condition due to which smooth transportation is not carried out. The tourists also face problems to visit

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<sup>2</sup> Shazda Khan (a local person, Village Rombur, Chitral)

<sup>3</sup> Plurar of Madaras (religious Seminary).

this beautiful valley; which adversely affects the tourist industry and ultimately the financial status of the local dwellers of the Kalash community.

Secondly in Kalash valley, there is no separate education system to protect the culture, the educational institutions are playing pivotal role in the promotion of a culture. For this purpose, there should be a separate syllabus as well as separate educational institutions. The Kalash have no religious manuscripts, like Holy Quran of Muslims; and they have no religious clerics from whom they could seek guidance. There are no handbooks regarding their language, culture, history etc. This endangered culture can be saved by documentations of the language and culture. Such written materials should be taught in the educational-institutions which will be fruitful for the protection of this endangered culture.

Third noteworthy challenge to this culture is the non-stopped conversion rate of this community to Islam. The basic factors or reasons have already been highlighted in above discussion. However, if there is any forceful conversion then such conversion needs to be halted through proper legislation; this will help to ensure the implementation of global and national legal instruments on minority rights; and it will help to preserve this national cultural heritage.

Fourth, the government needs to take some steps to the archaeological sites of the valley like the building of Bashalanim; and also to establish separate schools, well-equipped hospital and a museum. The condition of Bashalani and different places such as house for funeral traditions and house for building should be re constructed in modern terms. In Kalash valley there is no well-equipped hospital for health care of Kalash people. They used to go to Chitral for a minute problem. The government of Pakistan should build a well-equipped hospital to carry out their health problems.

In Bomburate, it was a single Motel which was destroyed due to flood in 2016 and no reconstruction of motel is carried out yet. The government of Pakistan has to build a high-level restaurant in Kalash valley in order to attract the tourist. Secondly, print media, social media and electronic media play very less role in the preservation of the endangered culture. The department of media and telecommunication especially Pakistan Television should play its Role for the safe guard of the endangered culture.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Culture of any nation is considered as the back bone which plays a pivotal role in the identification of the people. Culture creates harmony and difference among people. Sympathy and brotherhood are the factors which explore the followers of a particular culture. Culture varies from place to place and time to time. The Kalash of Chitral is the most unique and distinct from rest of the world due to their peculiar characteristics. Kalash culture is the oldest and unique culture of the world. They are considered as the ancestors of Alexander the great. Now this unique culture is endangered which is near to extinction. Once a time the follower of this unique culture were used to rule over Chitral now they are restricted just in three valleys namely (Bomburat, Rumbur and BIRIR).

According to the recent census they are 3000 in total number. Various factors – rate of conversion to Islam, marriage with Muslims, lack of religious manuscripts, lack of religious clerics, lack of facilities e.g. education, health basic needs – have severely threatened the cultural security in Kalash Community, which needs the intention of federal and provincial governments to protect this culture from annihilation.

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