

Sociological Profile of Pakhtoon Community in Kashmir



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Pakhtoons original inhabitants Afghanistan and North Western Frontier Provinces of Pakistan constitute an important ethnic group of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Their distinct life style, culture and code of life popularly known as *Pashtunwali* (traditional set of ethics guiding the social conduct) add charm to diversity of the state.

Historical accounts reveal that the community was displaced from their original habitat due to violent political turmoil. Unlike many people in Afghanistan, the Pakhtoons of Kashmir preferred peaceful existence in Kashmir over the conflict which had engulfed Afghanistan. The geographical proximity and landscape of the valley besides Kashmiriyat motivated the community to settle in the valley and make it an alternative home- a home away from home.

The community has been living in the valley since more than 150 years now. They have preserved their identity and culture. Despite being away from their homeland for more than 150 years, they have been able to preserve *Pashtunwali*. There can be three probable factors for the preservation of a distinct socio-cultural identity by the Pakhtoons; -one strong belief and influence of the tradition on younger generation, the settlement of Pakhtoons in upper reaches of the valley mostly hilly terrains which made contact with the mainstream Kashmiri culture distant and Kashmiriyat (Kashmiriness) which includes tolerance, respect and hospitality towards other people and cultures accessed by the fact that in 1953 when State government gave citizenship rights (state subject) to one lakh Pakhtoons, the Kashmiri population never resisted. However, the fact is that the community has been experiencing the structural apathy. They are not "treated" as separate ethnic group. The official records of the government do not mention them as an ethnic group. The last census conducted in 2011, did not enumerate them as a separate group and were clubbed with local populace.

The community has also remained the "*Untouchables of Academia*". Till very recently not a single sociological study on the community has been carried out in Kashmir context despite the fact that the community has been area of interest for academic world all over the globe. The present study is aimed to visit a zone which according to Alfred Schultz is "zone of taken for granted".

By employing Triangulation method study was intended to prepare of sociological profile of the community.

Keywords: Pakhtoons, Sociological Profile, Kashmir, Pashtunwali, Ethnic Group

Introduction

Historical accounts reveal that the genealogy of Pashtuns goes back to an Iranian ethnic group who are dominantly living in Afghanistan and Pakistan (Sergey Andreyev, 2010). The exact population figures of the community are elusive as no census has been carried since 1979 due political turmoil in Afghanistan. However, it is estimated that there are 50 million Pashtuns globally (Lewis 2009). Pashtoon diaspora has global presence in recent times they have developed in Arab states of the Persian Gulf and smaller population of the community is found in European Union.

Review of Literature

It is estimated that Pakhtoon diaspora in India constitutes, 11,439,000 persons (Joshua, 2018). They are scattered over different parts of the country. The state of Jammu and Kashmir hosts a large population of Pakhtoon diaspora, who reside in different districts of the state. They are predominantly confined to two districts of Kashmir-Anantnag and Ganderbal. They are in minority in Kashmir have their own distinct culture and tradition. Their culture is mostly based on *Pashtunwali* (The Pashtun

E: ISSN No. 2349-9435

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Way of Life) and usage of *Pashtolanguage*.

Pashtunwali has regulated nearly all aspects of Pashtun's life ranging from community to personal level. The *Pashtunwali*'s most known tenets are *Melmastia* (hospitality), *Jirga* (council of elders), *Saritob* (Manhood), *Nanawatee* (asylum), *Namus* (honour) etc. The socio-cultural life of Kashmiri Pashtuns is main theme which will be illustrated in this essay (Qayoom,2018).

Pashtun are a heterogeneous ethnic group owing their makeup to the multitude of tribes and peoples who have passed through the region over the many centuries of Pashtun civilization. Most of their history and customs has been passed down through oral narratives and allegories rather than through written text. As a result, pre-modern Pakhtoon history is often the work of foreign transcription and has been relatively vague.

The Pashtuns are Muslims who follow Sunni Islam according to the Hanafi School of law. Tribal beliefs and behaviors, codified in *Pashtunwali*, predate Islam in Afghanistan and Pakistan and have been in existence for centuries (Johnson & Mason, 2007: 43). Customary law, as represented by *Pashtunwali* and *Hanafi* jurisprudence coexist, but historically when there is a conflict between the two; *Pashtunwali* takes precedence. Traditionally, tribal mullahs and clerics were subordinate to tribal leaders. They provided religious guidance to the community but their role at community meetings and *Jirgas* was simply to open and close the meetings with prayers.

The Pakhtoons came to Kashmir from Khyber Pakhtoon Khwa because of inter-tribal feuds. Some also came here during the Afghan rule, while others came as traders and never went back.

The area of present study is *Gutli Bagh* area of District Ganderbal commonly called as '*Little Swat of Kashmir*'. It was substantiated by fieldwork in Anantnag, Baramulla and Kupwara districts of Kashmir valley. As the community has been ignored by the academia here is very less material available on the community. The study is aimed to bring forth the sociological profile of the community which includes language, marriage, kinship, occupation, religion. The study shall be platform for what Bhat (2017) termed "*Ology of liquid social relations, organization and institutions*". As there is almost nothing available about the community the generation of sociological profile of the community is very imperative so that the liquid dynamics of the community can be undertaken.

Objective of the Study

1. The main objective of the paper is to know the sociological profile of the community which includes the following:
2. To know Linguistic profile of the community
3. To Know Religious profile of the community
4. To understand the Birth Rituals of the community
5. To understand the Death Rituals of the community
6. To know Marriage profile and practice of the community
7. To know the family profile and set up of the community

8. To know the food pattern of the community

9. To know the educational profile of the community

Research Design

The study adopted exploratory research design as the problem under study is least studied earlier. The focus is on gaining insights and familiarity with the socio-cultural life of the community.

Research Methodology

As the community is traditional the entry of unknown people is not welcomed. They are looked at with suspicion and there are apprehensions about the unknown. It is very difficult for an "outsider" to have a complete grasp and holistic view of the community especially for a male. An outside male person may very rarely have access to their home; though he may be served food etc. but he cannot intermingle and interact with people and never able to see and interact with the Pakhtoon women.

The entry and acceptance in the community was a big challenge for researchers in the group. However, the difference of sex of researchers proved very helpful. On the one hand being male proved handy to build rapport with the male members of community and on the other hand the company of female removed many apprehensions of the community towards researchers. Although, initially some reservations were displayed by the community, but the frequent visits of both male and female researchers helped to get entry and acceptance in the community. The attire of researchers which was deliberately adopted to remove suspicious and give a sense of confidence proved useful. The familiarity of one of the researcher with *Pashto* language helped exceptionally to build rapport.

The contacts were also developed with the educated persons of the community who helped a lot not only in getting entry and acceptance but to explain and elaborate many social phenomena.

Eleven months were spent in the field to take the research to a logical end. Although there is a lot of scope of further research on the community but this study was confined to put together the sociological profile of the community.

The research was carried out by adopting Triangulation method. The main techniques of data collection were participant observation and interviews. Researchers tried to observe things in natural setting without influencing the behavior of the group.

The focus of the study was Pashtun code of life like the institution of marriage, family, death, food habits, dress pattern, language, religion and education.

Sample of the Study

The sample size of the study was 200 households. From every household two elder members one each male and female were selected and two members of younger generation were also selected. The total number of respondents was 800 respondents.

Language Profile of the Community

Language is an important component of a culture and society. The promotion and preservation of culture is directly dominant on the language. It is

E: ISSN No. 2349-9435

through the medium of language not only ideas, views, and feelings are conveyed to another person but language is a vehicle of culture through which culture of community is transmitted to younger generations.

Although Pakhtoons (mainly males) can understand and speak local language i.e. *Kashmiri* besides Urdu but Pashto which is their mother tongue is used by the community at large. They only use other languages when they interact with others who can't speak and understand *Pashto*. *Pashto* is an Eastern Iranian language, belonging to the Indo-European family. *Pashto* is one of the two official languages of Afghanistan, and it is the second-largest regional language of Pakistan, mainly spoken in the west and northwest of the country. Tribal areas and Pakhtunkhwa are almost 100% Pashto-speaking, while it is the majority language of province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and northern districts of Balochistan. Pashto also happens to be the main language among the Pashtun diaspora across the world. The total number of Pashto-speakers is estimated to be 45–60 million people worldwide (Afridi, 2009).

Pashtu language acts as a very important binding force which binds these people with others who speak the same language. They immediately associate with people who speak *Pashtu*. The ability to understand and speak a bit of *Pashtu* was appreciated by all Pakhtoons the researchers came in contact with in the course of this study. "The *Pashtuns living in Pakistan have let their Pashtu mix up with other languages, but we have preserved our language. Our Pashtu is pure*", says Wadood Khan (85) from Gutli Bagh. "We cannot associate with *Kashmiris; they do not speak our language. How do we belong to them ?*", said Khasta Khan (55).

Religious Profile

Pakhtoons follow Abrahamic monotheistic belief system of Islam. They belong to Suuni sect of Islam and adhere to *Hanfi* School of jurisprudence. It is interesting to observe that unlike local followers of *Hanfi* jurisprudence that have no disputes and disagreements. Moreover, unlike locals there has been no apparent influence of Salfism on the group. The religious influence in their daily life and discourse is quite observable. Even though some people of the community don't offer prayer five times which they call *Salaat* and *Nimaaz* which is obligatory for a Muslim but they refrain from what they call *Haraam* (prohibited) things and activities like consumption of alcohol, adultery etc. Despite the fact that local populace adhere to the same faith there is visible difference between the two like at the time of *Nikkah* (marriage) unlike locals they don't get things written and it appears that unlike locals their social life bears more religious imprints. They have great respect and regards for Imams of Masjids and Moulvis. Most of them pray regularly. The women pray at the homes and the men prefer to go to the mosques. Even small boys can be seen accompanying their fathers to the mosque regularly. They teach *Quran* to their children at an early age. Most of the children are sent to a Madrassa to learn the *Quran*. Most of the Pakhtoon households in *Gutli Bagh* have a *Pashtu* translation of

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the *Quran*. Their women not only cover their heads with long garments called Chaddri but also their faces in presence of elder male members of the family and non-Mahram men¹. Purdah is an important part of their daily life. They also maintain a strong system of seclusion of women from the strangers. They marry their children at young age and believe that this goes in line with the *Islamic* faith. "Marriage should be solemnized as soon as a boy or girl reaches maturity. It maintains the *Hayah* (moral order) of the society. A Muslim can't let his son or daughter wander freely. It amounts to *Besharmi* (Immorality or Shamelessness), says Anwara Khatoon, a lady in old age. They fast regularly during the month of Ramadhān (month of fasting). They prepare special dishes and show great respect towards Ramdan. They add ghee to the rice they take after opening the fast. The traditions related with birth and death (as elucidated above) in Pakhtoon society are a bit different than the locals.

Interactions and observation revealed that *Islamic Sharia* has a profound impact and influence on the community and governs the daily life. However, a critical examination uncovers that when it is about gender and rights of women like education and inheritance of property tradition is preferred over *Sharia*, which is termed as "*Islamic Lag*"² by Bhat (2018). It has been observed that there is sometimes clash between *Sharia* law and *Pashtunwali*. On such occasions it is *Pashtunwali* which prevails.

Birth Rituals

Birth and death rituals have apparent influence of Islam but again tradition comes to fore and gender bears the imprint on the rituals especially at birth rituals. The Pakhtoons do not observe any pre-delivery rituals for the pregnant women. But they restrict the expecting mother from venturing out at night, lifting heavy loads etc. Unlike many tribes, they do not observe any post-delivery pollution. Again unlike the local Kashmiris, the would be mother is not sent to her natal home for delivery and after the woman gives birth she is taken to the in-laws/husband's home where she rests for about 40 days. She may go to her natal home afterwards. Now the delivery usually takes place in the hospitals. Immediately at birth, the call for prayer (*Adhaan*) is whispered in the baby's ear. The mother after delivery avoids taking a bath for a fortnight. The Pakhtoons avoid leaving the mother and child alone in the house at least for forty days after birth for fear of evil spirits. It is commonly believed that both mother and child are susceptible to the influence of *Jinns* etc. during the first forty days. The mother refrains from doing any work for a week and she resumes her usual occupations after a lapse of 40 days. There is no ceremony to name the child. But they ensure that the child is named immediately after the birth as they believe it is as per the Islamic tradition. "It is not liked by Allah to keep a child unnamed. The child should be named immediately after birth and if that is not possible at the most in two days of the birth it should be named" says Shokeena (20) who gave birth to a female baby. When the child starts walking, they distribute *Ghee* and *GulGulli*³ amongst the neighbors and kins.

E: ISSN No. 2349-9435

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Circumcision is usually performed in an early age preferably before the child turns one. Previously the circumcision was performed by a barber and now they prefer it to be done by a doctor. The occasion is called 'Khutna' and relatives and neighbors are invited on a grand feast. They also invite a few religious priests (Maulvis) who recite *Holy Quran* after the circumcision is performed.

Death Rituals

The Pakhtoons believe that Death is the will of Allah and it is predestined when a person will die. After a person breathes his last, the news is announced to the neighbours and others in the village usually by crying of the relatives of the deceased. The moment a person expires, his eyes are closed, toes tied, face turned towards *Kaaba*. The dead body is placed on a cot (charpaae) in the frontyard of the house. Females related to the deceased sit around the dead body in a circle and weep. The females of the neighborhood generally join the mourning and console the family members. The wailing also includes words in praise of the deceased. Such praises sometimes assume a rhythmical form. The dead is given a ritual bath called Ghushl and wrapped in a white cloth called Kafan. Previously, after Janaza, a ritual used to be practiced wherein the dead body would be placed on the ground and all the males present would encircle the body. Then the Holy Quran would be placed in the lap of every man present and he was asked to forgive the deceased. During this time the bereaved family would distribute some currency notes too. This ritual was called 'Doranay Quran'. Very recently the grand Mufti of the community has banned this practice on the ground that it is not in keeping with the laid down religious practices as observed by Muslims. However, this tradition is still followed by some families in *Gutli Bagh*. The grave is dug by close kins of the deceased. The grave is prepared in a slightly different manner than that by the local Muslim population to bury their kins after death. It is fitted with a box made of wooden planks (usually of Deodar Tree) and the body is placed in the box. They also have a ritual called *Shuma* wherein they feed small children with Halwa¹ usually on every Thursday falling before 40th day of the demise of the deceased. On the fortieth day of the death, they call a few elders and religious heads of the community who recite the Holy Quran to provide relief to the soul of the deceased.

Profile of Marriage

The Pakhtoons in tandem with the Islamic Law (Sharia) regard marriage as a Sacrament. The Pakhtoons are an exogamous group at clan level and consanguinity is practiced. Cousin marriage is thus a predominant form of marriage among them. Whenever and wherever possible they avoid marrying their daughters to the members of the local Kashmiri Muslim population, though they belong to the same faith as them (Sunni Islam). Their boys can however, procure brides from the local population without much opposition from the family. Adult marriage has not gained much ascendancy among them. Marriages are mostly arranged. Traces of Polygyny are found among them as it is allowed in Islam under certain

conditions, but the number of wives should not exceed four. In cases where Polygyny is practiced, the number of wives was found not to exceed two. Though sanctioned by religious laws, Pakhtoons abhor the idea of a Talaq or divorce. The word *Zantalaq* (one who has divorced his wife) is considered an abuse and against the Pakhtoon man's sense of honor. Divorce may be due to adultery and mal-adjustment, and is granted under religious laws. Divorce compensation is to be given by the husband to the wife and either party is at liberty to divorce. It is very rarely that a Pakhtoon woman has initiated divorce proceedings against her husband. Remarriage is permissible in case of either sex, be it a widow/widower or a divorcee. Many Pakhtoons of *Gutli Bagh* have established marriage alliances with their co-ethnics living in districts of Baramulla, Anantnag and Kupwara. "Since Pathans live in districts of Anantnag, Baramulla and Kupwara, we have brought brides from these places and given our daughters too in marriage there. This is not a new trend. It exists from old times. My mother who is about 70 years old is also from Anantnag district married way back in early 1960's", says Mohammad Sohraab Khan who works in the police department.

The Pakhtoons call the bride as *Naavi* and the Groom as *Shwala*. Since the Pakhtoons marry their children at a young age, the search for a suitable marriage partner does not take much time. The marriages are predominantly arranged. After the bride is selected, it has to follow up with the formal tying of the knot i.e, Engagement which is called *Kojjdann*. After engagement the girl is called 'Changala' (betrothed). The period from the engagement to the actual wedding varies as per certain conditions depending upon the families of the bride and the groom.

To decide the date of the marriage, a few relatives from the groom's side visit the bride's side on a selected day. This practice is called Preekunn. A peculiar tradition prevalent among the Pathans is that on the day of Mehendi (Nakreeze Shpaa) i.e, evening before the wedding day, marriage the Pakhtoon girls do not stay in their natal home, but in the natal home of their mother i.e, their maternal uncle's house. The groom's side is called 'Jhanjaan' and the bride's side is called 'Maanjan'. Among the Pakhtoons of *Gutli Bagh*, the tradition is that the Bride and Groom do not board the same vehicle. The relatives from the bride's side take the bride to the groom's house. The men dance at the weddings. They light fire crackers. The women too sing Pashto songs, but only close relatives are allowed to enter the female quarters. They don't give gold ornaments to the bride unlike the local Kashmiri people. The wedding trousseau of a bride consists of some sets of clothes (Salwaar Kameez), a few shawls, sweaters, artificial jewellery and other such items. At the time of the marriage, friends and relatives gift the bride and the groom with money called *Naindra*. Many Pakhtoons believe that this money has a social significance. It lightens the financial burden on the two families contracting the marriage alliance. An amount equal or more to

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Naindra has to be repaid to the donors on similar occasions in their families.

The groom's party leaves for the bride's home early in the morning. To avoid conflict on *Mehar* in presence of the party accompanying the *Jhanja*, usually the *Nikah* is solemnized one day prior to the departure of the *Jhanja*. Unlike the local Muslims, no *Nikahnama* is written and the *Nikah* takes place orally in presence of witnesses. Again unlike the local Kashmiri tradition, the groom does not have a full course meal at his in-law's house, but only tea. After he finishes with the tea, he accompanied by a close relative of the bride goes to pay regards to his mother-in-law (*Khakhay*) and touches her feet. In turn, the mother-in-law offers him a dessert usually *Darbaish*, *sharbat*, *halwa*, *kheer* or like and he puts some money in her hand. She then gifts him and the relative accompanying him some gift usually clothes *Surma dani* (*Boskhakaii*) handkerchief. During this meeting, a few female relatives of the bride also meet the groom and exchange gifts in both cash and kind. While the *Jhanja* party is having tea, the relatives of the bride take her to her new home. On the arrival of the bride, she is made to sit in a room. The female relatives and only small boys and girls sit in that room. Men mostly prefer to stay outside. While the veil is still on her face, an aunt of the groom brings the *Holy Quran* and makes the bride read a few pages. Thereafter, a newborn male child is put in her lap and she is made to see him. The groom's sisters bring a big plate containing boiled rice and place it before the bride. She is then made to spread ghee and sugar on the rice and mix it. The mother in law feeds her with some of this rice and the rest is distributed amongst the relatives present in the house. After this, the bride goes to pay her respects to her father-in-law (*Sekharr*) who gives her some money. The veil from the newly married bride's face is not removed till the third day. On the third day of marriage, female relatives from the bride's side bring an assortment of *Gulgulli*, some local made bakery like cakes and *Darbaish* to her new home. Then they comb the bride's hair, remove her veil and she is then allowed to enter the kitchen and perform domestic chores. Both bride's and groom's side hire the local cooks called '*Wazas*' to prepare the traditional cuisine of Kashmir called *Wazwaan* for the guests. However unlike the locals they prefer beef to mutton in their *Wazwaan* feast.

The Institution of Family

The family among the Pakhtoons is predominantly patrilineal and patriarchal in nature. Men dominate most areas of the family life. The role of the females is very much confined to reproduction and rearing of children. Female education is yet to gain much ascendancy in them. Most of the Pakhtoons marry their children at a young age. The mean age of marriage of girls is much less than the boys. The system of residence among them is Neolocal, with a history of the nuclear type of family. Usually after marriage, the Pakhtoons encourage their sons to establish a new household. Old Pakhtoon couples can be usually seen living with their youngest sons, while the other sons establish separate households. The Pakhtoons prefer to have a number

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of children. Concept of family planning is little imbibed. Hence it is not much practiced among the members of this community.

Dress Pattern

The Pakhtoons are distinct from the locals when it comes to their dress pattern though with some hybridity which has resulted in mixing up of dress patterns of Pakhtoons and Kashmiris. The older men usually wear a Khan Dress (Pathan Suit). They are tall, well-built and have a muscular physique. The new generation has adopted the jeans culture but on special occasions like festivals and marriages, one can see them too wearing the traditional Khan dress. During winters, some of them wear the *Pheran*. The older generation of men usually wear a long woolen cloth called *Chaddar*. The men usually color their hair and beard with henna (*Nakreezay*). The women too are distinct when it comes to dress code. They use a long cloth to cover their head. It is called *Chaddar* or *Padunay*. The length of the *Padunay* is reduced now as previously. We were told that it used to be more than three meters long. The women can very rarely be seen without a close relative called *Mahram*. They wear a long shirt (*Kameez*) and a *Salwar*. It is considered against the *Namus* if the length of the shirt is small. The women regularly dye their hands, nails and feet with henna (*Nakreezay*).

Food Habits

The food habits of the community are greatly influenced by religion. They are non-vegetarian in food consumption. It was observed that living in non-home environment over a period of time has influenced the food habits of Pakhtoons. They have let go of the cuisine which was prevalent at their place of origin, with *roti* made of maize and *saag* as the staple food. Now they have switched on to rice like the locals. "*On weddings we do not invite the fellow Pakhtoons only, but also the local Kashmiris. The Shwala does not eat Wazwaan at his Sqrana (sasuraal or in-law's house) when he goes to get his bride. But the guests need to be served with food and thus Wazwaan⁴ is preferred. We use beef in its preparation unlike most of the Kashmirans*", says Naematullah Khan who got his son married during the course of this fieldwork. *Wazwaan* is also cooked on occasions like marriage. They prefer beef to mutton. They have adopted the food habits of the Kashmiri society. They hire *Wazas* (cooks) from the local Kashmiri population living in the vicinity.

They make *Malginn Chaay* (Salt Tea) as well as *Khokh Chaay* (Sugar Tea) they make a special dish of rice and beef on special occasions similar to the Kashmiri version of *Pulao* and call it *Bringeh*. One can see a *tandoor* in the outside of every Pakhtoon house and their women make *tandoori roti*. Sometimes two or three households share a *Tandoor*. They make different kinds of breads like *Darbaaish*, *Vaishshalay*, *Gul Gulli* and *Gunzakhee*. *Darbaaish* is a kind of sweet made up of flour, sugar ghee and dry fruit. On marriages *Darbaaish* is a must to be served and *Darbaaish* sent by the bride's family is usually distributed amongst close kins. *GulGulli* is round bread made of flour, Ghee, Jaggery, eggs and milk. It

E: ISSN No. 2349-9435

is presented to special guests and made on special occasions like Eid. Trays of *Gul Gulli* are sent by the newly married bride's natal home to her in-laws on the occasion of Eid for a few years after her marriage. *Vaishshalay* is a thinner version of *GulGulli*. It is made with milk, sugar and flour. They usually have *Vaishshalay* with *Khokh Chai* (Sugar Tea) *Gunzakhee* is similar to *Gul Gulli* but it is rectangular in shape. For everyday purpose the Pakhtoons prefer to have homemade bread which they have as an essential item of their breakfast in the morning and with the afternoon tea. The Pakhtoon women make rotis of wheat or maize. They prefer to make rotis in a *Tandoor* early morning or anytime suiting their convenience. Every house in GutliBagh has a *Tandoor* (Oven). The *Tandoor* is shared at places where many brothers live in a same compound.

Education Profile

With the changing times, the Pakhtoons too have taken to education, but one can easily identify the orthodox and conservative attitude they have towards female education. Most of the girls I have found in GutliBagh are not sent to schools. Those sent are very rarely allowed to study in schools having a system of co-education i.e, where the boys and girls study together. Gutli Bagh has five government middle schools, five primary schools and one high school. There are three private schools too. Recently one more school has come up in the area. It has been started under the name of Kasturba Gandhi Ballika Vidhyalay. A study conducted by Indu Bala Dhar (1989) estimates the literacy among them to be at 15.33%. By these estimates illiteracy ratio among the females stood at 84.67%. A feeling that if a girl gets educated, she loses her traditions is imbibed deep down in the Pakhtoon psychology. This thinking has been found to stop them from empowering the girl child. They do not, therefore, appear to be making any serious attempt or investment in the education of a girl child. Three females in Gutli Bagh are teachers. Few of them work in other government jobs. "We do not work after marriage. Our parents get us married early. Even after getting educated, a girl has to take care of household and children. Education thus is not a priority for Pakhtoon women", says Gul Dannah, a Pakhtoon girl from Nagri Kupwara. Religious education is an important aspect of the Pakhtoon's life. Every family ensures that the children (both boys and girls) are taught the Holy Quran. The children go to a Madrassa to learn the Quran and in some cases are taught by the elders at home only.

Conclusion

Pathans or Pakhtoons are Afghan Diaspora which is scattered all over the globe maintain their own culture and identity. The Pakhtoon social structure is woven around the concept of Pashtunwali which is a highly male dominated code of behaviour. The Pashtunwali creates a clearly recognizable group boundary which the Pakhtoons make a point not to cross. The main tenants of *Pashtunwali* i.e. *Melmastia*, *Saritob*, *Ghariat*, *Namus*, *Jirga*, *Nanawatee* etc. reinforce and in a way are reinforced by it. Thus, for the Pakhtoons *Pashtunwali* becomes a means and an end in itself.

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The Pakhtoons generally view Islam as an integral part of their cultural identity. More conservative people amongst them perceive Kashmir society as a threat especially to their younger generation. There is a great deal of pressure from the elders on the young Pakhtoon children to behave as Pakhtoons and not as Kashmiris and not to cross the *Pakhtoon Limit*. An integral aspect of the Pakhtoon Identity is the concept of *Ghariat* i.e, courage. It's the *Ghariat* or the courage to protect one's honor which marks an important aspect of the Pakhtoon Limit. Pakhtoon values of respect to elders, obedience to family members especially to father's authority are emphasized upon. Boys are, however, given considerable freedom to deviate from what is thought to be proper conduct. Even there is less resistance to a boy preferring to marry outside the Pakhtoon community. Loyalty to roots and staying a Pathan is both an individual choice as well as a social pressure. The very important means ensuring this loyalty is the threat of '*Ghaiybat*' i.e, gossip and slander. No Pakhtoon admits that they can bear to be ostracized by their family and community. They believe that they can never belong to a Non-Pakhtoon (Kashmiri) society. Next to their preoccupation with preserving a distinct socio-cultural identity, most of them believe that even if they try their utmost to assimilate into Kashmiri culture, they will still always be perceived and treated as 'others' by them. They maintain a deep sense of belonging to their Watan. They at the same time are caught up in a continuous flux to fix their identity and situate themselves between two cultures that of the place they came from and the place they have settled in. The main tenants of Pashtunwali or the Pakhtoon way of life like *Melmastia*, *Saritob*, *Jirga*, *Nanawatee*, *Namus* etc. were seen to be an important aspect of their social world.

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Footnotes

1. Men who are not related to a woman by birth and marriage.
2. Islamic lag according to Bhat (2018), is a clash between practical and theoretical Islam. He maintains that when it is suppression of women rights in Muslim societies and communities Islam and Sharia is brought to defend and justify the things. When it is rights of women in theoretical Islam and they clash with local tradition and customs Islam and Sharia is kept away.
3. A bread made of ghee and jaggery. Local Kashmiris do not make this bread. It is typical of Pakhtoons.
4. Wazwaan is the traditional cuisine of Kashmir. Usually cooked at weddings