

## **Social Structure As Encoded In Language: A Study Among The Pakhtoons Of Jammu And Kashmir**

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**Abstract:** Pakhtoons are mountainous, tribal people comprising of around sixty tribes, each with its own particular region. They comprise the largest ethnic group in Afghanistan, constituting 42% of Afghanistan's population. They speaking an Eastern Iranian classified language known as Pakhto or Pashto and form an Ethnolinguistic group with populations essentially in eastern and southern Afghanistan. They are the world's biggest sedimentary lineage ethnic group. In the state of Jammu and Kashmir, there are about one lakh Pashto speaking Pakhtoons, as per the survey done by Pakhtoon Jarga .These Pakhtoons started coming as immigrants from around the 15<sup>th</sup> century, mainly as soldiers and commercial traders. Groups of Pakhtoons would travel to the valley of Kashmir and some of them started to settle in low hilly areas of Kashmir in close proximity to forests. Presently in the state of Jammu and Kashmir, the speakers of Pashto are mostly concentrated in the hilly areas of Ganderbal, Anantnag, Kupwara, Budgam, Baramulla and Kishtwar.

The present study is based on the pakhtoon community of Gutlibagh area of Ganderbal district ,in the state of Jammu and Kashmir.The paper aims to study the division of Pakhtoons society, how the society is interwoven, its organization, internal functioning and orientation of the community. The occupation of people, their housing patterns, family structure, division of labour, their judicial system, code of honour of the Pashto community and how these traditions are encoded in the language.

### **Introduction**

Culture is social in its essence because there is no culture beyond society. Culture is not possible without society as the factors promoting the growth of culture are traced in the social life. As the old saying goes man is a social animal and cannot live without society. Culture is not a time bound aspect it is always associated with the life of people. So, it is impossible to separate culture and people which is reflected through their customs. Customs may change due to different time, economic and social factors but do not change from the basic concepts of tradition. So we can define culture as a constant concept even though it depends on the customs, habits, beliefs, faiths, thoughts etc. of the people which may be variables. I.e. culture depends upon customs, habits, beliefs, etc. with the basic concepts of tradition. Thus we can say that whatever man possess, that is his culture. And it is this culture which is transmitted to the generations.

Social structure includes all the social patterns in which the society is interwoven. It includes all the customs and traditions, beliefs and attitudes of the community members, their perception about various social and cultural norms.

Customs and traditions form a part of social profile, through which social interactions are studied among the community members and between the community members and outsiders. Social interaction is a response of the participant in diverse social relations. Social interactions reflect the patterns of communication of a linguistic group.

According to Ginsberg<sup>1</sup> the study of social structure is concerned with the principle form of social organization i.e., types of groups, associations and institutions and the complex of these which constitute these societies.

Social structure refers to the enduring orderly and patterned relationships between the elements of a society. According to Raymond firth (1971) it makes no distinction between the ephemeral and the most enduring elements in social activity and it makes it almost impossible to distinguish the idea of the structure of society from that of the totality of the society itself. Since Pakhtoons living in Gutlibagh area of Ganderbal district have remained isolated for a long time, from the other communities of the valley, they have comparatively different customs and traditions and the dominance of 'tradition' in the social life is still intact comparatively. In actuality, all in-family and out-family situations in the community clearly reveal the features of customs and traditions. Thus, the customary life-style related to the family reflects in respect of and submission to the patriarchal authority by family members, established relationships between parents and married and unmarried children, male-female rights and responsibilities in and out of family life; patterns of gender discrimination and so on and so forth.

After undergoing the process of conversion peacefully, the Kashmir society at large developed the multi-religious character which, in the long run, has given rise to the 'composite – culture' in Kashmir. In this context there emerged the tolerance of and the respect for different religious (as well as non-religious) practices in Kashmir valley. This reality of the social life especially related to the local customs and traditions is still alive in the community.

Certain customs and traditions in Kashmir valley have developed in different epochs of its history and these have emerged in rural-urban background. Certain religious and cultural trends have also shaped these customs and traditions. All these societal features have become the component of the customs and traditions in the community. These cultural realities reflect in the guest-host relationship, material and other help to the neighbours, regard for and legitimacy of the elder-parents, for women and children their role, and help to children.

### **Division of Society Organisation**

Pakhtoon society is organized on principle of descent and their social structure is based on a type of kinship structure termed as sedimentary lineage system. In this type of system there is a hierarchy of social grouping starting at local level and proceeding upward through various levels to an entire ethnic group. The basic group of the community consists of closely related people, living in close proximity. This is followed by another segment or level where people are

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.sociologydiscussion.com/social-structure/social-structure-meaning-elements-and-types/2224>

related remotely and live at some greater distance. These together comprise the higher segmental level of a tribe and these tribes then form the ethnic or language groups. Descent in Pakhtoons may be traced in one line (i.e. localized descent or lineage).

Grandfather → Father → Son

Also several lineages may make up the clan i.e. the non-localized unilineal descent. (for example the descendants of grandfather's brother living separately at different locations). These clans at higher levels make up the tribes.

Lineage → Clan → Tribe → Ethnic Group

Members of a segment have ideally descended from a common male ancestor. At the highest level all the Pakhtoons have a common source of ancestry from their progenitor Qais Abdur Rashid (7th century B.C.). Apart from the common ancestry speaking of Pashto and abiding by the principles of Pakhtoonwali are important to identify one as a Pakhtoon.

### Oral History

Gutlibagh is inhabited by almost more than twelve thousand Pashto speakers. The place is located at an altitude on Karewa land known as Wudur in Kashmiri. As per the Pakhtoon oral history the village got its name from an outsider. *Gutli* means the seed of an apricot and *Bagh* means orchids. As the place has an immense orchid of apricots. It came to be known as Gutlibagh. Also pronounced as Gutlibagh, Gutlibagh village is divided into several neighbourhoods (colonies) which are further divided in wards or sub-colonies (Mohalla) where Pakhtoons live in complete harmony with each other. The division is as follows:

1. Wuyl Wudr
2. Baba Wuyl
3. Chanahar
4. Nadar Bagh
5. Banjar Basti
6. Astan Mohalla

Wuyl Wudr has further six sub divisions where Pashto speaking people of different castes have settled.

1. Wuyl Wudr
  - i. Shah Mohalla
  - ii. Naqashband Mohalla (Beebal Mohalla)
  - iii. Khankhel Mohalla
  - iv. Khyber Mohalla (Shayaan/Shaal Mohalla)
  - v. Ahangar Mohalla
  - vi. Chaaan Mohalla
  - vii. Usman Mohalla
2. Baba Wuyl
3. Chanhaar
  - i. Rashang Mohalla
  - ii. Tandol Mohalla
  - iii. Jungdiwala Mohalla
4. Banjar Basti
  - i. Malakand

Ahangar Mohalla is inhabited by Chandan Khels. Khyber Mohalla by Shaliyaans. Naqashband Mohalla by Swatis who migrated from Swat. Baba Wuyl has a mixed population of Kashmiri and Pashto speaking people. Malakand is inhabited by Mula Khels. Usman Mohalla by Musa Khels. Chanhaar is inhabited by Madakhels. Rashanges, Tandols, and Jungidiwala belong to Madakhels but who have migrated from different villages of Peshawar (Rashang, Tangdol, and Jungidiwala) and got their names accordingly.

Pakhtoons of Gutlibagh belong to different clans (Khels) who migrated long back in past to Jammu and Kashmir for various reasons. They are Madakhel, Mulakhel, Musakhel, Chandan Khel, Khan khel, Shaliyaan, etc. As per the Pakhtoon oral history, Pakhtoon's fore fathers migrated from Pakistan zilai Hazara in Peshawar and Northern Frontier areas like Nogram, Batagram and Alai in groups to various parts of Jammu and Kashmir (Gutlibagh). Madey baba (madey khan), Mazu baba, Mulla baba (Arif ullah), Uaman baba, rehman baba etc migrated first and settled in different areas of Gutlibagh giving rise to different clans or Khels. Made khels claims their immediate descent from Madey Khan. They are settled in Chanhaar. Chandan Khels belong to Mazu baba. Mazu baba's son was chandan Khan. So they were known as Chandan Khels and the place where they settled first was known as Chandan Khel. Mulla Khels are associated with Arif ullah also known as Mulla baba as he was a priest (moulvi). His generation is known as Mula khel, they settled in an area known as Malakand. Malakand got its name from the area in Northern Frontier Province of Pakistan which has the same name. The generation of Usman baba was known as Musa Khels or Shah turi. Another ancestor Shaal baba, who was a Kashmiri, settled in Gutlibagh at the same time. His generation was known as Shaliyaan (meaning a non-Pakhtoon in descent). They live in Khyber Mohalla of Wuyl wudur area also known as Shaliyaan Mohalla.

So there were different Khels of Pakhtoons who belong to either same or different lineages like Yousuf Zai, Afridis, Duranis etc. and ultimately to the common ancestor Qais Abdul Rashid. There are 32 Qabilas of Pakhtoons registered in Pakhtoon Jirgas records living in Jammu and Kashmir. Out of these, seventeen are present in Gutlibagh. Khan/Pathan, Mada Khel, Khan khel, Swati (naqashbandi), Yousuf Zai, Kaka Khel, Khyberi, Mulla Khel, Musa Khel, Babel, Afridi, Durani, Shah Khan, Chandan Khel etc. when these Pakhtoons settled in Gutlibagh ,they named the areas either after their ancestors or after the places found in Pakistan. Hence the colony was established.

Gutlibagh Pakhtoons although being egalitarian also employed a hierarchical system of governance in the past. Even though there is no such visible class division but some clans consider themselves superior in particular sense. Mada Khels consider themselves superior in terms of power. Naqashbands are the Syeds and considered religiously superior. Hence the social hierarchy is prevalent in the community.

### **Dwellings and Housing Pattern**

Pakhtoons live in the extended families and each family owns its land and lives in a fortified residence called *Qala*. The communities housing pattern resembles with the Kashmiri speaking community indicating a common composite culture of which a community is a part. The internal and external structures reflect the outside influence on the community. The houses of Pakhtoons are usually one or two storey concrete structures with a lawn in the front and a

kitchen garden at the back. A typical rural house is a large two storey structure with non-plastered walls from outside and a shining roof that is pitched with one or more projections. The ground storey [əwəlne pɔr] it has approximately four rooms [kəmra] including a kitchen [nəgʰri gʰaərda] and a front verandah [vəraɪnə/dəb]. It has a central corridor stretching from the main entrance [gʰat war] in front to a washroom [tʰart ʃʱɔbe]. The upper storey [dʰɔem pɔr] has a similar arrangement of rooms and passage as found on the ground floor. It may also have stairs that lead to the attic [godam]. The number of storeys depends on the resources of the owner. The ground storey rooms are used as a sitting area [bɛtʰək], bedrooms [udakrɔ kəmra] and kitchen. While as upper storey rooms may be bedrooms or used for storage. In case of single storey houses, the attic space is often divided with light weight internal walls to create more useful space. The houses usually have sloping roofs. Roofs [tʰət] slope steeply in two directions which sheds away the snow. Now-a-days CGI sheets on timber supports have become the most common type of roofing. The walls are usually thick made up of bricks and stone with mud plaster. They provide excellent protection against cold.

The cow sheds [gʰuadzəl] are usually built on a lower level than the house. They are made up of flat stones held together by clay with flat roofs. The roofs are made of wood with a thick layer of clay covering them.

### Family Structure

In the study of social interactions one of the most important aspects is family type. Family type controls various types of social interactions of an individual. For example it is observed that outside community marriages are mostly one by nuclear families as compared to joint families. Joint family system is prevalent which signifies great love for the family. Nuclear families are scarce in their societies. All the family members including married and unmarried children live jointly in a house under the authority of the father. He is the head of the family and manages all the family affairs. The family's income is contributed by pooling the share of income by the male members. All expenses on food, clothing, education, marriage, health etc are beard from the family's common funds. After the death of the father or in his old age, all the responsibilities are taken over by the eldest son. The mother manages the internal household affairs. Pakhtoons teach their children to respect their elders. They look after their parents in old age and provide them with all the possible comforts. Pakhtoons believe that parent's curses bring sorrows and hardships. So they refrain from incurring the displeasure of their parents. Pakhtoons consider it important to consult their elder's opinion in all the important matters. Youngsters are normally expected to talk less and not smoke in front of elders. They are expected to rise from their seats when an elderly person comes as a mark of respect. The Pakhtoons are very warm and hospitable people. They embrace their friends and relatives when they meet them and warmly receive each other by a hearty hand shake. They are known for their bravery and generosity. Traditionally inheritances are divided equally among all the sons.

### Division of labour

The household work among Pakhtoons is chiefly divided along the lines of age and gender. Pakhtooni woman enjoys a subordinate status as compared to the men in all walks of life. However, the women do participate in economic practices: agriculture, animal husbandry, fuel collection, drawing of water, cooking, cleaning, rearing children etc. But in the social and political spheres, these women do not play much role. Pakhtoon women are very shy. They

hesitate to talk or mix with other ethnic groups. Talking to strangers, especially men-folk, even today, is by and large very rare. Main role of these women is restricted to various domestic chores. Very insignificant contribution is made by Pakhtooni women towards direct income generation of the households. All the activities like earning money, agriculture, animal husbandry are usually male task. Even though certain jobs are strictly assigned to males and females, but there are many other activities which Pakhtoon men and women may perform jointly.

### **Judiciary**

The internal differences and disputes among Pakhtoons are settled by mutual consultation. An elected body 'Pakhtoon Jirga' settles all the disputes of the community. Jirga is an assembly of tribal elders called for various purposes. Jirga is the parliament of Pakhtoons which plays an important role in solving the tribal matters. It is an authority for settling disputes and providing equal justice to all. This community legislative council provides a complex and sophisticated means of governance and resolution of the conflicts including the administration of legal codes. Jirgas generally consist of person who is known for their honesty and integrity. Council members are selected for their honourable status within the community. And they are usually elder male members. Jirgas provide an advance conflict resolution process without involving formal system of justice like courts, prisons, lawyers and police. Justice is granted without the involvement of these bodies. However a formal legal system of law also prevails. But Pakhtoons prefer their own system (Jirga) over the formal system of law. Various disputes like divorce, elopement, property disputes, and other grievances are settled down by Jirga. Jirga forms the most important tenet of Pakhtoonwali, which is administered by the community council (Hujra).

### **Pakhtoonwali**

Pakhtoonwali is a non-written ethical code and traditional life style followed by the Pakhtoons. It is a system of law and governance from the prehistoric time passed from generation to generation. It promotes self-respect, independence, justice, hospitality and forgiveness etc towards all (especially to strangers and guests). Pashto society is an honour based society and they believe that a Pakhtoon's Izzat (honor) lies in adhering the principles of Pakhtoonwali. Thus Pakhtoonwali or the Pakhtoon code of honour embraces all the activities from the cradle to the grave. A few examples of principles which form the major components of Pakhtoonwali are:

**Aitbar:** Aitbar means trust, or guaranteed assurance. This forms the arch of society. All business including contracts relating to sale and mortgage or disposal of property, is transacted on the basis of trust or Aitbar..

**Badal:** Badal means retaliation that is to seek justice or to take revenge against the wrong doer. No time limit restricts the period in which revenge can be taken. Self-respect and sensitivity to insult is another essential mark of Pakhtoon character.

**Melmastia:** Melmastia means hospitality. Pakhtoons have been described as one of the most hospitable peoples of the world. They consider Melmastia or generous hospitality as one of the finest virtues and greet their guest warmly with a broad smile on their faces. A Pakhtoon feels delighted to receive a guest regardless of his past, relations or acquaintance and prepares a delicious meal for him.

**Turah:** Turah means bravery. A Pakhtoon must defend his land, property and family from incursions. He should always stand bravely against tyranny and be able to defend the honor of his name.

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