



FOREIGN IMPACTS ON THE RELIGION OF THE KALASH

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctorate of Philosophy (PhD) in Comparative Religion

By

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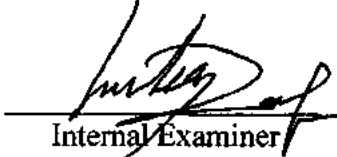
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Zaheer-ud-Din

ABSTRACT

INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY, ISLAMABAD
FACULTY OF ISLAMIC STUDIES (USULUDDIN)
DEPARTMENT OF COMPARATIVE RELIGION

ABSTRACT

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ABSTRACT

Kalash tribe is one of the most famous communities in the World for its ancient religion and unique culture. Enveloped in mystery the ancestry of the Kalash is the most interesting subject. There are many opinions about their origin including the most popular and romantic theory of Greek connection. Tsyam the mysterious homeland of the Kalash and Aryan origin of the Kalash are the other considerable theories. Most probably they belong to Aryan origin and their language Kalasha is included in Dardic group of Indo-Iranian languages.

The Kalash live in three small valleys (Bumburet, Rumboor and Birr) of Chitral in northern corner of Pakistan. Chitral is historically and strategically very importance region having its borders with Wakhan, Pamir, Badakhshan, Nuristan and Kunar territories of Afghanistan and Gilgit Agency, Dir and Swat district of Pakistan. The Central Asian states are easily accessible from here through Wakhan Corridor and China's Xingjian province along Karakoram Highway through Gilgit.

The Kalash have been living in Chitral since a long time and dominated most of that area for centuries. In the ^{14th} century C.E. they were defeated by Muslims. Despite the end of the Kalash rule, most of the southern parts of Chitral were populated by Kalash people for a number of decades, then they were restricted to their present dwelling, known as Kalash Valleys, and are still living there with their unique culture and ancient religion.

Centuries-old culture and traditions of the Kalash is the main reason of attraction towards them. They perform many unique and strange types of customs and traditions in different stages and aspects of life, like birth, baptism, marriage and funeral etc. Their way of life, dresses, music, social and family system, architecture, handicrafts, ceremonies and festivals distinguish them from other tribes of the region.

Kalash is a primitive infidel tribe, having unique and interesting religious ideas and practices. Mythology, animism and shamanism along with nature, animal and ancestor veneration are the main characteristics of Kalash religion. They believe in a supreme God whom they call *Dezao* or *Khoday*. He is believed to be the Creator of the universe and protector of life and property. There are many deities in Kalash mythology. The word “Malotsh” is used for these deities in general but every deity has its own name and character. Altars are set up for them in various places where offerings/sacrifices of goat, sheep, food, milk products and dry fruits are presented on different occasions. Nature, animal and ancestor veneration and animism can also be observed in Kalash religion. Shamanism plays very important part in this religion. There is no systematic form of daily, weekly or monthly rituals in Kalash religion. Sacrifice, supplication, offerings on certain occasions, cultural, traditional and seasonal customs, chant, dance and other cultural activities are performed as religious practices.

Influence of other religion on religious and cultural life of the Kalash is main subject of this research. Reflections of Hinduism, Shamanism and other neighbouring religions are identified in the Religion of the Kalash. They have also been influenced by Islamic beliefs and norms, but now they are facing modernisation as a big challenge for their identity and survival.

No clear evidence is found regarding the influence of Hinduism on the people of the Hindu Kush region. However, having Aryan ancestry background, many aspects of religious ideas and practices of early Aryan are reflected in religious thoughts of the Kalash and their customs and traditions, which are found in modern Hinduism as well.

Shamanism has profound impact on religious and cultural life of the Kalash. *Dehar* is the word used by the Kalash for their shaman who is the only source to link them with heavenly beings and get guidance about their religion.

The Kalash have long history of interaction with the inhabitants of ex-Kafiristan and the Khows, the residents of Chitral. All these three different ethnic groups had similar religious background. The Khow converted to Islam in early stages followed by majority of the Kalash then the Bashgali Kafirs but a small group of Kalash tribe uphold their old religion and culture till today. There were many ideological and practical similarities as well as mutual influences among these three religious groups.

Absolute dominance of Muslim in the area, for more than seven centuries, resulted in their religious and cultural influence on the subjugated minority community of the Kalash. Long history of Kalash Muslim interaction from rivalry to friendship has its own continuous impact, but the weaker religious position of the Kalash added by lacking in many fundamental aspects of religion paved the way for influence of Islam on them. Impact of Islam on the religion and culture of the Kalash should be seen in consequence of the historic Kalash-Muslim relations. Misunderstanding created by some "well-wishers" of the Kalash by considering Islam as the real threat for identity and survival of the Kalash, also needs clarification and critical Analysis.

Modernity and globalisation have emerged as the real challenge for Kalash culture, identity and survival. They are facing new challenges and threats in forms of un-controlled expansion of tourism, un-balanced commercialisation monopolised by the outsiders that is perilous for Kalash economy and mushroom growing NGOs with so-called agenda of "welfare and protection unique culture of the Kalash" but most of them are involved in controversial activities. All these things are changing the environment of Kalash valleys by creating a mixed culture, and disturbing the religious, cultural, social and economic life of this "endangered ethnic group". This situation is making the Kalash extremely unsafe to live with their cultural identity and practice their belief system independently and smoothly.

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PREFACE

PREFACE

All praises be to Allah, the Lord of the entire universe. Who said in the last revealed book, al-Quran: '*Human beings, We created you all from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another. Verily the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the most God-fearing of you. Surely Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware.*' (49:13). The peace and mercy of Allah be upon His last prophet, the mercy for the whole world, along with his descendants, his companions, and his best followers till the day of judgement (Aameen).

Kalash tribe is the most popular ethnic group living in majestic **Hindu Kush** mountain range. The members of this non-Muslim minority community live in overwhelming Muslim majority surroundings with their ancient religious and cultural traditions. The importance of the **Kalash** resides not in their number -not more than about 4000 today- but in their unique, ancient and attractive culture. Being the **Last Siah Posh Kafir** tribe of the Hindu Kush, the Kalash have great attraction for historians, anthropologists and social scientists, generally and researchers of ancient cultures and civilisations particularly. Religious ideas and practices of this unique tribe is another area of significance, especially for those who are interested in the field of comparative religion. In this research work the religion of the Kalash and impacts of other religions on their religion and culture is the main subject of discourse. Before going to the main matter of research an overview of the subject is given here, followed by description of the problem of thesis and objectives, methodology and strategy of research. Review of present literature on Kalash is also an important part of this preface.

INTRODUCTION TO THE SUBJECT:

In the late 19th century C.E. there was an area known as *Kafiristan* -Land of the Infidels- in the region of the *Hindu Kush* which extended to several valleys of present day Afghanistan. However, the inhabitants of these Afghan Kafir valleys, who were known as "*Red Kafirs*", have been converted to Islam around the invasion of the famous Afghan king Ameer Abd-ur-Rahman in 1896 C.E. The area since then became known as *Nuristan* -Land of the light.

On the Eastern side of the Hindu Kush Mountain Range, in the state of Chitral (district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province in present day Pakistan), there was another Kafir tribe known as *Kalash Kafirs* or *Siah Posh* (Wearers of the Black Robes) Kafirs. A number of these people are still living in three small and beautiful valleys of Chitral carrying on their centuries-old culture and religion. Although there were some religious and cultural similarities between the Kalash and other ex-Kafir tribes of the area, but the Kalash are distinguished by their origin and many other characteristics. Presently Kalash tribe is the only non-Muslim community living in whole region of the Hindu Kush.

Since 1896 C.E. when the name of Kafiristan was changed into Nuristan, there is no territory having the name of Kafiristan anywhere. The word *kafir* has lost its religious connection, except for the Kalash of Chitral, to some extent. It serves today only to define a linguistic entity corresponding to an area that was formerly Kafiristan. Despite the fact that the Kalash are called Kafirs (infidels or non-Muslims) by their Muslims neighbours, but the word Kafir as an academic term is specified for the inhabitants of ex-Kafiristan and its use for the Kalash is incorrect. Likewise the three valleys where the Kalash live never called

Kafiristan, but are known as *Kalashgoom* locally and **Kalash valleys** generally, having its respective names of Bumburet, Rumboor and Birr. However some writers, mostly Pakistanis authors, mistakenly used the name of Kafiristan for Kalash valleys of Chitral, rather made it title of their books as well, like *Kafiristan* by Mahmud Danishwar, *Kafiristan* by Parwaish Shaheen, *Chitral and Kafiristan* by M. Afzal Khan and so on. Nevertheless survival of this non-Muslim minority community with their ancient cultural and religious background in Muslim dominated region is the matter of interest for many people. Surrounded by Muslim tribes from all side this infidel ethnic group has been able to uphold their traditional ideas and practices, to manifest as the last Kafir (non-Muslim) tribe of the Hindu Kush, attracting the researchers of anthropology, sociology, philology, history and comparative religion, apart from the attraction for visitors and tourists from various parts of the globe. Their mysterious ideas, interesting shamanic traditions, fascinating customs, exciting festivals, unique lifestyle, and a lot of other things draw the attention of people towards them.

PROBLEM OF THESIS:

By the review of present reading material on the Kalash it can be concluded that there are quite enough studies on this unique ethnic group from historical, cultural, social and anthropological perspective. These studies provide valuable information on origin, history, culture as well as current social, political and economic situation of the Kalash. There are some partial, scattered and indirect information on the religion of the Kalash as well, but there are still a number of very important but unanswered questions in this regard. Question about the essence of their religious ideologies, rituals and customs is not discussed earlier

exclusively. Generally the reading materials and information about the religion of the Kalash is insufficient, disorganized and scattered. Some initial and indirect information in the form of general discussions made by non-specialized personalities in the field of comparative religion are available but religion was not the main topic of discussion in these studies.

Likewise the issue of similarities between the religion of the Kalash and world famous religions, as well as influence of other religions on their ideas and practices is not discussed earlier. Reflections of Hinduism, Islam, shamanism, and other neighbouring belief systems on religious and cultural traditions of Kalash can clearly be identified. Search for the roots of Kalash religious thoughts, rituals and customs as well as critical evaluation of the impacts of other religion on the religion of the Kalash with special focus on Kalash mythology and shamanism are the main targets of this research.

It can be concluded that the religion of Kalash needs due attention from scholars and researchers of comparative religion. An exclusive study on the Kalash concentrating on the religious perspective only is required. Collection of data related to their dogmas, rituals and customs, search for its roots and similarities in other religions, analysis of the influence of other belief systems on their religion and culture would be the main points of this study.

METHODOLOGY AND STRATEGY OF RESEARCH:

As stated earlier that very limited, disorganized and scattered information are available about religion of the Kalash in reading form. Due attention was required to collect, elaborate, analyze and compare many aspects of this religion. Some important information could not be found in readable format and to acquire that an exclusively field work was needed. To deal

with these issues a descriptive, analytic and comparative methodology has been adopted in this research. The following steps have been taken in this connection:

- Collection of information related to the religion of Kalash from available written sources.
- Scrutiny of the data with a systematic and academic classification.
- Elaboration, analysis and comparison of important aspects of Kalash religion.
- Study of Kalash culture highlighting its importance and distinction, with special focus on its similarities to other cultures and civilizations.
- Preference has been given to local writers, keeping in view the fact that local researchers have more opportunity to know about the historical, religious, cultural and linguistic background of a community than the outsiders. However the work of those foreign researchers, who spent time with the Kalash, learnt their language, took part in their cultural and religious activities and deeply observed their social life is regarded equivalent to those of indigenous writers.
- Use of locally known terminologies and idioms, especially for names and figures. Thus **Kalash** is used for the tribe instead of **Kalasha** which is used for the language only.
- Generally Nuristan is used for dwelling of converted Muslims of Afghanistan adjusting to Kalash valleys, but while referring to their pre-conversion period the words Kafir and Kafiristan is used.

- A particular point has been discussed in certain places according to its relevance which seems a sort of repetition. Actually despite of utmost efforts it could not be avoided because every section of the work has its own requirement and obligation. Anyhow the researcher apologise for these kinds of unavoidable repetitions.
- Use of normal and popular words and phrase for transliteration avoiding specific rather complicated phonetic system.
- Extensive field work to explore the information that is not available in reading material and to verify the existing data. Main features of the field work comprises the following steps:
 - Continuous visits to Kalash valleys, particularly to the places of religious, cultural and other importance.
 - Meeting with religious personalities, social figures, political leaders and other important characters of Kalash society to get original information from direct sources and to verify unauthentic information.
 - Personal observation of Kalash life through going native in their society and spending quite enough time there to examine various aspects of their life deeply and keenly.
 - Deep study of rituals, customs, festival and other religious social and cultural activities to know its essence and to find out its similarity or dissimilarity with other religions.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON THE KALASH

The region of Hindu Kush has been given due importance by the Western writers and visitors since the 19th century. Being the gateway to Afghanistan and Central Asian states, the geo-strategic position of this region had been a matter of concern for the high officials of the British Colonial Regime who had strengthened their hold over Indian sub-continent, at that time, and was trying to proceed to Afghanistan. Moreover the natural beauty of the area and presence of some tribes thriving with an ancient religious background and unique cultural traditions attracted the higher official of British colonial regime to visit that area and collect information about the people living there. Observations and views of the British officials were compiled and published as the earliest and basic source of information about the Hindu Kush region along with its surrounding areas and its inhabitants.

Later on many local as well as foreigner writers and researchers produced valuable literature on this region in general but the Kalash have also been discussed. There are a number of exclusive studies focused on the Kalash from different aspects e.g. origin, history, culture etc. Before going to the main topic of research a brief survey of the available reading material on the subject and its related topics, especially in the known languages of the area (English and Urdu), is made here.

The first book on this subject *Tribes the Hindu Kush* by John Biddulph was first printed in Calcutta – India in 1880, and then published from England in 1885 C.E. This book contains basic and general information about the origin, history, religion, culture and traditions of the tribes and dynasties living in the area. Some initial information on Kalash

can also be found in this book but there is nothing about their religion in particular. It seems that being an outsider the worthy author mostly depended on local people to collect the information. Some information and terminologies used by the author are seem to be strange and could not be verified.

Another very important book on the topic was published from England in 1896 C.E. titled as *The Kafirs of the Hindu Kush* by George Scott Robertson. The author worked as representative of British colonial regime in the area and collected information through his visits and close interaction with the people. This book is considered as the most important and authentic source in this subject, but it concentrates on the tribes living in Nuristan (formerly known as Kafiristan) region of Afghanistan in western parts of the Hindu Kush region. Information on Kalash and their religion can hardly be found in this book.

In the 20th century and onward many books were published on the Kalash tribe particularly or on the region of the Hindu Kush and Chitral in general but the Kalash were also discussed. For instance:

“Tareekh-e-Chitral” (History of Chitral) by Munshi Aziz-ud-Din, published in 1956, containing initial and brief information about Kalash and their religion.

One of the most important historical sources on the region *“Nayee Tareekh-e-Chitral” (New History of Chitral)* by Ghulam Murtaza was published in 1962, which provides valuable but brief information about Kalash and their religion. This was first time in the history that some data about the Kalash community was provided by a local historian.

In 1974 a compilation of selected papers presented at the "Hindu Kush Cultural Conference" held at Moesgard - Denmark (Nov. 11-18, 1970) edited by **Karl Jettmar** was published from Wiesbaden - Germany under the title of *Culture of the Hindu Kush*. In this book there are five very good articles on Kalash and their religion. Especially the articles *Kalash Mythology* by Shahzada Hisam-ul-Mulk and *Notes on Kalash Folklore* by Wazir Ali Shah provide basic and valuable but brief information on the religion of the Kalash. This book could be considered as one of the source book on the subject.

In 1975 C.E. *Chitral and Kafiristan* by Lt. Col. Muhammad Afzal Khan was published and reprinted in 1980. This book contains general information about Kalash but some basic information on their religion can also be found here.

In 1985 a wonderful book was published titled *Kalash Solstice* by Jean Yven Loude/Viviane Lievre. The two French authors of this book, along with the other team members, visited Kalash valleys several times as well as lived in Kalash society, observed the real Kalash lifestyle deeply and participated in their social, cultural and religious activities. Although the religion of Kalash is not the main concern of this book but it contains a lot of valuable information on cultural practices which are closely linked with religious ideas. Especially the discussions on shamanic traditions and mythological views of the Kalash provide bases for essential knowledge about their religion.

In the same year another book *Chitral Aik Ta'aruf* (An Introduction to Chitral) by Prof. Israr-ud-Din & Co (in Urdu) was published, containing some basic but brief information about the Kalash as an important racial group of Chitral.

The Religion of the Hindu Kush by Professor Karl Jettmar, published in 1998 in India, is another important and scholarly written book on the subject. The available first part this book titled *the Religion of the Kafirs*, translated from the German to English by Adam Nayyar, is the best exposition to the religious traditions of pre-Islamic Nuristan.

In 1991 *Chitral* by Inayatullah Faizi (in Urdu) was published providing very good but brief information on Kalash and their religion.

In 1992 *Kalash the Paradise Lost* by M. Alauddin was published, containing general information on Kalash, their history, culture and tradition, and current situation, but there are some brief and indirect information on their religion as well. The book also indicates some new trends in Kalash society.

Kafiristan by Parvesh Shaheen published in 1993 (in Urdu) contains general discourse on the origin, history, culture, current situation of Kalash. Religion of Kalash has also been sporadically discussed. Despite of the approach leading to create confusion between the ex-Kafirs of Nuristan and the Kalash as well as irrelevant details about the languages and societies of surrounding region, this book provides valuable information about different aspects of the Kalash.

Another book bearing the same title *Kafiristan* written by an Iranian writer Mahmud Danishwar in 1950s was translated into Urdu and published in 1993. It is more of a journalistic view of the Kalash based on vague information and interpretation. The work of Mr. Danishwar was the first attempt to use the name of Kafiristan for Kalash valleys which later on led to provide basis for misunderstanding about this area.

Proceedings of 2nd Hindu Kush Cultural Conference held at Chitral in 1990 were compiled and edited by Elena Bashir and Israr-ud-Din and published by Oxford University Press, Karachi, 1996. This book is one of basic sources of material on the region, in general, including 12 key articles on the Kalash. Some new dimensions of Kalash studies could be seen in this book, like *Tsyam Revised: A Study of Kalash Origin* by Gail H. Trail, *A Sad Legacy: Environmental Problems in the Kalash Valleys* by Maureen Lines and *The Kalasha of Southern Chitral* (Part I, II and III) by Alberto Cacopardo.

In 1996 a thesis (for Masters Degree) was written in the Department of Comparative Religion, Faculty of Islamic Studies (Usuluddin), International Islamic University Islamabad on *Religion of the Kalash (al-Dianah al-Kalashiah* in Arabic) by Zaheer-ud-Din (this researcher). Initial and basic information on the Kalash and their religion was presented in that research work including their history, beliefs, rituals, culture and traditions. It is a general description on Kalash culture and religion, but the roots of religion of the Kalash and impact of other religions on the Kalash has not been discussed in this work.

Proceedings of 3rd Hindu Kush Cultural Conference held at Chitral in 1995 were compiled and edited by Prof. Israr-ud-Din and published by Oxford University Press, Karachi in 2008. Besides other subject of the Hindu Kush region and its people at least 8 wonderful and exclusive articles on Kalash provide valuable information on different aspects of this unique tribe, especially their history, culture and religion.

Recently a book titled *Ishpata* by Muhammad Inayatullah has been published (in 2011).

The author lived in Kalash valleys as a school teacher and observed Kalash culture very closely, for a long period. Some basic information about the Kalash and their culture have been collected and presented in disorganised way with superficial analysis. Irrespective of the claim by the author that this could be a source book for the Kalash, this book can not be considered more than a life story of Muhammad Inayatullah in Kalash valleys.

A large number of articles and essays were published in various magazines, journals and newspapers at national and international levels on Kalash particularly, or on the region of Hindu Kush and Chitral in general but provide information on the origin, history, culture and current situation of Kalash. There are some limited and indirect information on the religion of Kalash as well in these articles.

A considerable work on the Kalash has been done in French and German languages but most of those valuable studies have not yet been translated into the known languages of the area i.e. Urdu or English and thus remained beyond the approach of the readers of these languages and the relevant people of the area.

The above review of sources available in English and Urdu languages indicates that most of these contents deal in general with the culture of the Kalash but do not look critically into their religious beliefs and practices particularly impact of foreign elements on their religion is not discussed earlier. This signifies the need and importance of an exclusive comparative study on religious ideas and practices of this unique tribe to indicate its roots and development as well as its survival in Muslim surroundings.

TOPICAL SCHEME:

The main research work, apart from this preface, is divided into five main chapters followed by a conclusion. Chapter 1 consists of basic information about the Kalash. It is an introductory and descriptive chapter so the information is presented mainly without any critical appraisal, analysis or comparison. This chapter has six sub headings. In the first part of this chapter origin of the Kalash is discussed, explaining three major theories of Greek connection, Tsyam as their mysterious homeland and Aryan origin. Geography of Kalash area, brief history of the Kalash and their unique culture is introduced in second part of the chapter. The next topic is Kalash perception of the religion and importance of religion in their society. 'Religious ideas of the Kalash' is the other main topic of this chapter. Concept of God, mythology, veneration, shamanism, hereafter and status of women according to Kalash thought are discussed with necessary details. In fifth part of the chapter religious practices of the Kalash have been discussed, explaining the forms of rituals, sacrifices, festivals, custom and traditions that are being performed with religious zeal. Religious and other places of importance and special respect have been described in the last section of this chapter.

In chapter 2 impact of Hinduism on the religion of the Kalash is taken into consideration. First part of this chapter is about the Aryan reflections in the region of the Hindu Kush. Records regarding the movements of the Aryan tribes with special respect to this region and their influence on its inhabitants are discussed. In next two sections of the chapter similarities between Kalash and Hindu mythological concepts as well as rituals are discussed respectively.

Chapter 3 discusses impact of shamanism and the neighbouring belief systems of the religion of the Kalash. Importance of shamanism in religious and social life of the Kalash is explained in beginning of this chapter. Among the neighbouring ethnic groups that have religious and cultural links with the Kalash are the ex Kafirs of Nuristan and the Khow of Chitral. Similarities between these three neighbouring religious groups and possibilities of mutual influence have been discussed in second part of this chapter.

Impact of Islam on the religion of the Kalash is the subject of chapter 4. In the beginning of this chapter a historical overview of Muslim Kalash interaction has been presented. It elaborates the age-old ideal environment of interfaith harmony between the these two communities and highlights the issues that have been disturbing the environment of Kalash valleys as well as the activities of those elements who work for creating misunderstandings between them. In next part of the chapter aspects of Muslim influence on religious and cultural life of the Kalash is discussed.

In fifth and last chapter impacts of modernity on religious and cultural life of the Kalash is discussed. Decline in Kalash population and its reasons are important points that have been discussed in first part of this chapter. Other main topics include uncontrolled tourism: a threat for Kalash culture, unbalanced commercialization: a challenge for Kalash economy and role of non governmental organizations (NGOs) in changing the environment of Kalash valleys and introducing new trends in this society.

The conclusion sums up the discussion and offers recommendations for further research.

No one, especially the researcher, can claim to cover all aspects of the subject, however it would be quite sufficient and satisfactory that utmost efforts have been made to fulfil the requirements of the research according to the prescribed objectives. Being a local person the researcher tried his best to provide authentic and real information on the subject. If this work achieves its goals, that is the blessing of Allah Almighty (سبحانه وتعالى) only, Who alone is requested and has the authority to forgive for the deficiencies and shortcomings. All praises to Him with the request for His blessings upon the best of His all creatures and the greatest among the entire human beings, Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) with all other messengers of Allah, May peace and mercy of Allah be upon them.

CHAPTER

1

INTRODUCTION TO THE RELIGION OF THE KALASH

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO RELIGION OF THE KALASH

Kalash appears a primitive infidel tribe, having unique cultural heritage along with interesting religious ideas and practices. Mythology, animism, shamanism as well as nature, animal and ancestor veneration are the main characteristics of Kalash religion. They perform many unique and strange types of customs and traditions in different stages and various aspects of life, like birth, rite of integration, marriage and funeral etc. These customs and traditions being spiritual and divine in nature are performed as religious obligations, to an extent that the Kalash do hardly differentiate between their cultural activities and religion practices. Being the only non-Muslim tribe of the region, since more than a century, they are the guardians of the infidel tradition of the region as “the Last Kafir Tribe of the Hindu Kush”. Besides their religious ideas and practices their way of life, dresses, music, social and family system, architecture, handicrafts, ceremonies and festivals also distinguish them from other tribes of the region.

In the first part of this chapter a general introduction to this fascinating tribe is made. We will discuss their origin, describe their beautiful dwelling, refer to their short history and briefly introduce their unique culture. In the later part some details about their religious ideas and practices will be provided.

1. ORIGIN OF THE KALASH

The ancestry of the Kalash and roots of their religious ideas and practices are shrouded in mystery and are subjects of controversy. There are three main theories about their origin. A critical analysis of all these theories with a comprehensive discourse on historical, ideological and cultural connection of Kalash with other known nations and small ethnic groups as well as their influence on the culture and religion of the Kalash is required to indicate the correct point of view about their origin. Moreover, a study based on religious perspective determining their ideological and ethical background will help to specify their ancestry and roots of their religion.

A. GREEK CONNECTION OF THE KALASH:

The most popular theory regarding the ancestry of this unique ethnic group is the Greek origin of the Kalash. The supporters of this theory claim that there are many similarities such as religion, culture, and language between them and the Hellenes of Alexander's time. Although the theory of Greek connection of the Kalash has never been claimed or supported by any serious or authentic source, however many local as well as foreign writers and historians mentioned the legend that the Kafirs descended from the Greek soldiers of Alexander who were left behind in these valleys during his march on Northern India through Eastern Afghanistan.¹ This baseless theory has been promoted by

¹ Wazir Ali Shah, *Notes on Kalash Folklore*, (*Cultures of the Hindukush*, Selected Papers from the Hindukush Cultural Conference held at Moesgard in 1970, Edited by Karl Jettmar in collaboration with Lennart Edelberg), Franz Steiner Verlag, Wiesbaden, 1974 (p. 69).

some non-academic elements with big exaggeration to the extent that it gives an impression of a historical truth. Tourist guide brochures, introductory booklets on culture, news papers, journals and websites are full of the views supporting this notion. Writings of some people on Greek connection of the Kalash give the impression of academic and research work, while the majority presented it as a universal fact that do not require any proof. To know the reality of this theory a critical analysis of the claim and its basis is needed.

Major J. Biddulph, the author of the very first book that has been written on this region and its people titled *Tribes of the Hindoo Koosh*, has mentioned the Greek ancestry of Siah Posh Kafirs as a mere speculation by saying: "Conjecture have been hazarded that the Siah Posh people are of Greek descent."² In his opinion the term of Siah Posh applies to many tribes of the Hindu Kush including the Kalash, to some extent. It must be borne in mind that the word Kafir is used for the Red Kafirs, the inhabitants of Nuristan, according to foreign writers, especially the Europeans. Although the Kalash of Chitral had close relations with Nuristan but they have neither considered part of the Kafir tribes nor was their language Kalasha included in Kafiri languages. Placing Kalasha among the Dardic languages along with Khowar of Chitralis, Shina of Gilgitis and other languages spoken by smaller ethnic groups of the area³ is a solid proof for their distinction from the Kafirs. Now the question remained unanswered whether the trend to

² Maj. J. Biddulph, *Tribes of the Hindoo Koosh*, Vanguard Books (PVT) Ltd, Lahore, 1999 -first edition of this book was published from Calcutta in 1880 then published from England in 1885 C.E. (p. 126).

³ George Morgenstierne, *Languages of Nuristan and Surrounding Regions*. (*Cultures of the Hindukush*, Selected Papers from the Hindukush Cultural Conference held at Moesgard in 1970, Edited by Karl Jettmar in collaboration with Lennart Edelberg), Franz Steiner Verlag, Wiesbaden, 1974 (p. 3-6).

insist on Greek origin of the Kalash, ignoring the Kafir and other people of the area, who claim the same origin, is a result of misunderstanding or there is any hidden agenda behind this stance?

Alexander's campaign in the Hindu Kush region itself is a matter of controversy. The legend says that during his march through Afghanistan towards Indian Sub-continent he heard about the spring of Aab-e-Hayat (water of life forever) in the valleys of the Hindu Kush. He wanted to gain eternal life by drinking this water, so he decided to go through the Hindu Kush valleys with a selected group of his army. Approaching the Hindu Kush from the west and north-west via the distant, inaccessible and dangerous route of mountain passes is almost impossible. There is a slight possibility in the tale which reveals that he left his army somewhere near Jalal Abad and entered the Hindu Kush region via Kunar valley, or he left it in Muhmand or Bajaur, tribal areas of present day Pakistan, and crossed the Nawa Pass into Kunar valley then proceeded northwards towards the Hindu Kush along Khow Aapas i.e. Chitral (Kunar) River.⁴

Despite the fact that there is evidence on the existence of pagan tribes in the Hindu Kush region, even before Alexander's invasion of the region, but the approach of referring all pagan heritage of the area to Greek invaders is a matter of concern. Records relating to the Alexander's campaign in the Hindu Kush region speak of skirmishes of his army with pagan tribes having custom and beliefs similar to those of the Kafirs. But it may be borne in mind that the Kalash alone were not the only pagan at that time. Almost

⁴ Gholam Murtaza, *Nayee Tarikh-e-Chitral* (New History of Chitral, translated into Urdu from Persian by Wazir Ali Shah), Public Art Press, Peshawar, 1962 (p. 25).

all regions of Afghanistan, particularly its eastern parts, were inhabited by pagan races, like the inhabitants of Kafiristan, the Khow tribes of Chitral and may be several other ethnic groups who were following a culture with custom and beliefs very similar to that of the Kalash and other pagan tribes at that time.⁵

Some writers mentioned the tale of Alexander's invasion of the Hindu Kush from the south via Kunar valley but no clear statement is available regarding his further movement when he reached Arandu, the Y-junction of Kunar valley with two major valleys of Chitral and Nuristan. Most probably he proceeded towards Nuristan as reports of his skirmish with a fierce pagan tribe indicate toward the Bashgali Kafirs, the most violent tribe of the region. However in his legendary campaign in the Hindu Kush, Alexander was accompanied by a selected and small group of his army, which almost rule out the fiction speaking about a few "deserters from the Greek army", or "exhausted Macedonians" who stayed in this region and mingled with the women of the area.⁶

How these few foreigners were able to maintain all their religious and cultural traditions and impose it on the inhabitants of the area instead of being influenced by the prevailing religion and culture, according to natural and historically established phenomenon? The small number of "the deserters from the Greek army" and the fact that they never conquered the area exposes the claim of their socio-religious supremacy over the strong and furious people living in the region of the Hindu Kush with their pagan religion and culture even before the campaign of Alexander.

⁵ Wazir Ali Shah, *op. cit.* (p. 69)

⁶ Jean-Yven Loude/ Viviane Lievre, *Kalash Solstice*, Loke Virsa Publishing House, Islamabad, 1985, (p. 10);

The claim of the Greek origin is not specific to the Kalash, but to claim Greek ancestry is a popular trend that runs through the valleys of the Pamir, and over the passes of the Hindu Kush, to the very borders of Karakoram. The Kafirs (Bashgali tribes) the inhabitants of Nuristan, the people of Gilgit, the Kinglets of Badakhshan and even the Rais dynasty of Chitral are believed to descend from the soldiers of Alexander. It would be hardly surprising for the Kalash to lay claim to the same ancestry.⁷ Now what may be the motive behind focussing on the Kalash for having Greek origin ignoring all other people and their claim? Presently the Kalash are the only non-Muslim (Kafir) people living in this region, probably this is the main reason to link them with the Greek army of Alexander. Otherwise the claims of so-called similarities are not limited to the Kalash only but in most of the cases the claims of similarity originally referred to the inhabitants of Nuristan from whom the Kalash have adopted certain ideas and practices.

The myth of Greek origin of the Kalash and the claim of similarities are therefore questionable, having no solid historical evidence behind it. Any possible linguistic, religious, or cultural similarities between the Kalash (or any other tribe of the region) and Greek people probably stem from the expansion of Proto-Indo-Europeans. Though it is generally established that the Kalash exhibit a distinctive racial entity because of their features, colour of hair and eyes. This adds to the romanticized notion of their European connection. Nevertheless the distinctive features of the Kafirs as well as colour of their eyes and hair have been mistakenly or deliberately ignored.

⁷ Ibid;

See also Gholam Murtaza *op. cit.* (p. 27).

Lifestyle of the Kalash has been compared to that of the Ancient Greeks by saying that Kalash are the only people in the East who make and use accessories such as chairs and stools that cannot be found anywhere else in the surrounding regions!⁸ This is an exaggerated and deceptive statement because these chairs, stools and many other accessories used by the Kalash, originally belong to the people of Nuristan⁹ (the close neighbours of the Kalash) who make and use these accessories till these days and the Kalash borrowed these customs from them long ago and even today they depend on them for these objects. To claim that the Kalash are the only tribe to use these accessories is a rather a journalistic approach based on no solid evidence. Some other aspects of Greek lifestyle and building structure introduced in Kalash valleys by Greek people recently were unknown to the Kalash during their long history in these valleys.

Another claim made to prove the connection between the Kalash and the Hellenic society is that 'the Kalash are the only people who produce and consume wine and indulge themselves in feasts'.¹⁰ Although presently the Kalash are the only people in this region who produce and consume wine at large scale, but many tribes of the Hindu Kush shared them in this habit before their conversion to Islam, and even after that, like the Red Kafirs and the Khow. Connecting the Kalash with the Greeks because of their consumption of wine, fondness for music and recklessness in matters of honour dose not appears a serious approach.

⁸ Aithon, *The Kalash: The Lost Tribe of Alexander the Great*,
<http://www.creternity.com/article.phtml?articleID=7&page=2&catID=3>

⁹ Maj. J. Biddulph, *op. cit.* (p. 130).

¹⁰ Aithon, *op. cit.*

The tale of Alexander campaign in the Hindu Kush also speaks about the fascinating beauty of Kalash valleys that attracted and impressed “the exhausted Macedonians” to the extent that resulted in their desertion from the army and permanent stay in the area.¹¹ This is another amazing statement, because historically the Kalash came to Chitral after a long period of the alleged campaign of Alexander. According to one opinion the first group of the Kalash came to Chitral in 2nd century C.E., almost six centuries later than the said campaign. Historically recorded arrival of the Kalash in Chitral was around 10th or 11th century C.E. i.e. fourteen or fifteen centuries after the alleged campaign of Alexander; nevertheless they were restricted to their present dwellings in these valleys in 17th or 18th century C.E. i.e. about twenty centuries after the said era. Moreover no evidence is found regarding advent of the Greek army to Kalash valleys, like their arrival in Chitral and other eastern parts of the Hindu Kush. Therefore their fascination due to the natural scenic beauty of the area (Kalash valleys particularly) appears nothing more than a myth.

It must be pointed out here that while discussing the Greek connection of the people of the Hindu Kush, many writers, mistakenly or deliberately, do not differentiate between the Kalash and the inhabitants of former Kafiristan. References and examples from Kafir (Nuristani) society are given to prove Greek connections of the Kalash, ignoring the fact that these two tribes belong to different ethnic origin. In spite of all efforts and exaggerations to establish this baseless theory as a historical fact the Greek ancestry of the Kalash is a speculation and no more than a myth.

¹¹ Pervaish Shaheen, *Kafiristan* (in Urdu), Gandhara Research Project, Swat, 1993 (p. 36-37).

B. TSYAM THE MYSTERIOUS HOMELAND OF THE KALASH:

Another view about the origin of the Kalash is that their ancestors migrated to Afghanistan from a distant place in South Asia, which the Kalash call "*Tsyam*" in their folk songs and epics. This was the mysterious homeland of the Kalash where they were settled permanently for the first time in their history. "According to Kalash tradition their people had wondered about without knowing where to go, where to settle at the beginning of the time. Then one man felt himself invested with the power to communicate with the Supreme Being, who showed that first shaman/Dehar the way to Tsyam, where he must lead his people. The shaman identified a light in the sky as a sign from God. The light stood still for five days over a virgin territory, then disappeared. The inspired man assembled the elders and declared: 'This place is Tsyam, revealed by God. Let us pray and offer sacrifice, we shall remain here.'¹² Thus Tsyam is the place where the first settlement of the Kalash was established according to their oral traditions but despite of being repeated in their folk traditions they are not definite about its location.¹³

The first phase of the Kalash migration to Chitral from Afghanistan is claimed to have taken place in the 2nd century C.E. but according to historically established reports they arrived in Chitral in 10th or 11th century C.E. (as stated earlier) and ruled a large part of present-day Chitral for centuries.¹⁴ It is still a mystery as to from where the Kalash came to Afghanistan, and Tsyam, a mysterious land from which the Kalash themselves

¹² Jean-Yven Loude/ Viviane Lievre, *op. cit.* (p. 186-187).

¹³ Muhammad Inayatullah, *Ishpata*, Humayon Printer, Peshawar, 2010 (p. 387).

¹⁴ Gholam Murtaza, *op. cit.* (p. 27).

claim to have come, is not been identified exactly but it is probably situated somewhere to the south of present day Nuristan province of Afghanistan.¹⁵

Tsyam is reflected in Kalash tradition of occasional emigration of Kalash women from the Kalash valleys as a protest against continuous rains.¹⁶ Whenever there are continuous rains in Kalash valleys, all Kalash women come out of their houses and gather in a particular place then start march toward down valley chanting their traditional songs: 'O our Lord! We can not live in these valleys due to continuous rains therefore we are going back to our homeland Tsyam.' It is said that rain stop immediately after this demonstration.¹⁷

Tsyam was revisited by Gail H. Trail, as Syria, a country in northern part of Arabic peninsula, which is called 'Sham' (شام) in Urdu, Persian, Pashto and other languages of this area. The Arabic word 'al-Sham' (الشام) was formerly used for the whole Northern regions of Arabic peninsula, which presently include Syria, Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon etc. Mr. Trail confidently says: 'Therefore Sham and Tsyam are very possible referring to the same place, the country called Syria in Greek and English. This gives us a linguistic basis for examining the Kalasha (he means the Kalash people not their language) as a people from Syria, also known as Aram from Aramaean people there.'¹⁸

¹⁵ Jean-Yven Loude/ Viviane Lievre, *op. cit.* (p. 13).

¹⁶ Wazir Ali Shah, *op. cit.* (p. 69).

¹⁷ Muhammad Inayatullah, *op. cit.* (p. 93-95).

¹⁸ Gail H. Trail, *Tsyam Revisited: A study of Kalash Origin*, (Paper presented at 2nd Hindu Kush Cultural Conference held at Chitral in 1990, compiled and edited by Elena Bashir and Israr-ud-Din), Oxford University Press, Karachi, 1996, (p. 360).

It seems that this is another attempt to establish Greek origin theory of the Kalash from a different angle. Referring to the Greek colonial era in Syria, Northern parts of Arabian Peninsula, the learned writer is trying to establish the possibility that some of these people might have travelled up to the region of the Hindu Kush. The claim of Greek elements' presence in the Hindu Kush region in form of the Kalash depending upon the possibility of migration of people from the Middle East to this area, which is the junction of Indian Subcontinent and Central Asia, is another romantic theory like the legend of presence of "deserters from Greek army of Alexander" in mountains of the Hindu Kush.

Whatever would be the interpretation, but Tsyam still prevail as a mystery in Kalash thought and reflected in their traditional songs and epics. They acknowledge it as their primary homeland irrespective of its location. These innocent people do not know much about these philosophical academic explanations. The possibility of reality or hidden agenda behind any of these theories can not be ruled out, but it has no effect on the stance and mentality of the Kalash regarding primary homeland.

C. ARYAN ORIGIN OF THE KALASH:

Another view regarding origin of the Kalash is that they are indigenous to Asia and probably are ancient Dard people who speak the Kalasha language which is included in Dardic group of Aryan (Indo-Iranian) languages. They came to Chitral from Nuristan (Bashgal in local terms) and Kunar areas of Afghanistan. It is important to note that there

is no current connection between the Kalash of Chitral and the Red Kafirs of former Kafiristan who were converted to Islam and their land was renamed as Nuristan (they themselves claim to be descended from the Quraysh of Arabia).¹⁹ These two populations descend from different branches of the Indo-Iranian, a division that goes back some 5,000 years. However ideological and cultural similarities between the Kalash and other tribes of the Hindu Kush region (including the inhabitants of former Kafiristan and Khow tribes of Chitral) at former times, support the theory that the Kalash, like other ethnic groups, are indigenous people belong to this region. The form of similarities between Kalash beliefs and Hindu Mythologies, which will be discussed in second chapter, is another important point in support of this view.

The Kalash are living in the region of the Hindu Kush since long time. They recount that at the beginning of the time their people were in a state of continuous migration without knowing the proper place to stay permanently. This tale may refer back to the migration of the Aryans, to whom the distant ancestors of the Kalash may have belonged. Their journey through Iranian plateau and across central Asia and interaction with the inhabitants of central Asia and Chinese Turkistan has its own impact upon these people.²⁰ But centuries-old links of Chitral with Afghanistan, Central Asian states and Eastern Turkistan is the most important point to determine the origin of the tribes and families living here. Chitral has been the main channel of connection between these areas and India at some stages of history. This was the real Silk Route according to

¹⁹ Maj. J. Biddulph, *op. cit.* (p. 132).

²⁰ Jean-Yven Loude/ Viviane Lievre, *op. cit.* (p. 13).

some historians. Therefore Chitral and its surrounding areas have certainly been the passage for Aryan nations to Indian sub-continent if not their real destination. The possibility of permanent or temporary stay of some of these emigrants in region of the Hindu Kush as well as their religious and cultural influence on the people of the region can not be ruled out.

Although Hinduism has emerged and developed as a religion and complete way of life when the Aryans were settled in Indian sub-continent permanently, but the beliefs and practices resembling Hinduism found in Chitral and other parts of the Hindu Kush seem to having link with the basic ideas, customs and practices of early Aryan nations where preliminary forms of nature, animals, and ancestor veneration along with other basic mythological thoughts and unique customs and rituals had been the main characteristic of religious traditions, which became the most important element for development of Hinduism in later stages.

The tribes and families having Shamanic beliefs coming to Chitral and the adjacent areas were probably those Aryan migrants who were influenced by Shamanism during their journeys or temporary stay in central Asia from where they crossed the hill tracks of Hindu Kush to reach Chitral and other region of the Hindu Kush. From here they proceeded to plain areas of Indian sub-continent. However all the Indo-Aryans did not proceeded to Indian plains, but some groups remained behind, without crossing the Indus or even the Hindu Kush.²¹ Probably the Kalash belong to one of those Aryan immigrant

²¹ Ibid (p. 12-13)

tribes who settled in the region of the Hindu Kush during their earliest movement or they were settled somewhere in Afghanistan and its adjacent areas then came to this region in later period.

2. KALASH TRIBE AND THEIR HABITATION: AN INTRODUCTION

Kalash people live in three beautiful valleys of Rumboor, Bumburet and Birr that lie to the south-west of Chitral town. To know the real position of the Kalash with their surrounding environment it is better to introduce the beautiful and historic district of Chitral and its inhabitants in general with special emphasis on the Kalash and their dwellings, Known as Kalash valleys. This will also be helpful while discussing the issue of impact of Islam and neighbouring religion on the religion of the Kalash.

A. GEOGRAPHY OF THE AREA:

In the isolated region of the Hindu Kush, in the upwards Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province -formerly known as North West Frontier Province (NWFP)- of Pakistan, there lies the beautiful and historic region of **Chitral**. Geographically and strategically it is very important region. It is situated at an altitude of 4,900 feet (1500m), between 35° 15' & 37° 8' N and 71° 22' & 74° 6' E,²² surrounded by different territories of Afghanistan from almost three sides i.e. Wakhan and Pamir in the north, Badakhshan in the west, Nuristan in the south-west and Kunar in the south. On its south-eastern boundary lies Dir district. In the east lies Gilgit Agency (Gilgit Baltistan Province now) and Swat Kohistan (Kalam Valley). The Central Asian states of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan are easily accessible from the area through Wakhan Corridor and China's Xingjian Autonomous Region (formerly known as Eastern Turkistan) along the legendary

²² *The encyclopaedia of Britannica* (15th Edition), Helen Hemingway Benton Publisher, 1973-74 (Vol. 11, p. 86).

Karakoram Highway through Gilgit.²³ The total area of Chitral is 14,850 sq km (the largest district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, comprising 1/5 of its total area) and total population is 318689 according to the 1998 census report (the last census held in Pakistan but now, after the gape of more than fifteen years, now the population of the district exceeded 500,000).²⁴

At the distance of 20 kilo meters from Chitral town (which is headquarter of Chitral district as well) to the south there is a big and beautiful village called Ayun which is considered as gateway to Kalash valleys. In western side of Ayun there is a narrow valley divided into two valleys after five kilo meters. One of them is called Bumburet (Mumuret in Kalasha) and the other is called Rumbur (Rukmu in Kalasha). There is another valley at the distance of six kilo meters from Ayun to the south-west called Birr (Biri in Kalasha). These three valleys are known as Kalash Valleys/Areas for being dwelling of the famous Kalash tribe, the last infidel tribe of the Hindu Kush. These valleys are linked with Afghan area of Nuristan (formerly known as Kafiristan) through mountain passes.²⁵

Chitral is probably the most romantic, captivating and enchanting place in the majestic Hindu Kush range. The landscape of Chitral is extremely mysterious, with its steep harsh mountains, lush green valleys, beautiful meadows and big glaciers, which have made it one of the most difficult and inaccessible areas of the world. Especially Kalash valleys are famous for its natural beauty. Small traditional villages surrounded by

²³ M. Alauddin, *Kalash The Paradise Lost*, Ushba Publishing International, Karachi, 2006 (p. 3).

²⁴ Jamal Haider Siddiqi, *Wadi-e-Chitral (in Urdu)*, PPA Publications, Islamabad, 1996 (p. 32).

²⁵ M. Alauddin, *op. cit* (p. 3).

high multicoloured mountains and green forests with flowing streams formulate wonderful natural beauty. At higher altitude a number of amazing mountain lakes, surrounded by green meadows exhibit another way of natural beauty. The powerful and dangerous streams and rivers that flow through the valleys have been harnessed to power grinding mills and to water the farm fields through the use of ingenious irrigation channels.

It is here in Chitral that the world's famous and highest Polo ground stands right on the very summit of the over 12,250 ft Shandur Pass. The high hills of Chitral preserve the huge caves that have been the familiar abode of giants and fairies. Its eight kilometres long under construction Lawari tunnel will be the longest tunnel in Asia, which will link Chitral with other parts of the world in all seasons. Its hot springs at Garam Chashma provide treatment to thousands patients of skin disease. It is here in Chitral that stands the majestic Terich Mir Peak, 5th highest mountain of the world, towering over 25,000 ft. into the sky along with other sister peaks throwing a challenge to adventure loving men of the world.

The climate of Chitral is distinctly continental. It is hot in summer, ranging from very hot in low lands to warm in the uplands and cool in the higher elevations. Spring weather is unpredictable with frequent rain and snowfall. Autumn has mild and pleasant temperature. In summer average temperature in lower part of Chitral is between 25° to 35° C. The extreme maximum temperature recorded in Chitral is 42° C for the month of July. The summer at high altitude is cold and windy with extremely cold nights. In winter

most of the valleys are in the grip of northerly wind and blizzards. The extreme minimum temperature recorded at Chitral stations have been -0.9°C for the months of January. Chitral receives rainfall between 250 to 1000 mm.²⁶

The climate of Kalash valleys is extremely cold and rainy in winter with heavy snowfall from December to March, and average minimum temperatures between 2° and 1°C (36° - 34°F). In summer rains are rare but the weather remain cold with average maximum temperatures between 23° and 27°C (73° - 81°F).²⁷

Agriculture is the main occupation of the Chitralis and irrigation is highly developed with gravity flow channels. All major crops and best kinds of fruits produced here. The winter crops are wheat and barley and the summer crops are maize, millet, rice and pulses, with best kinds and varieties of fruits (such as apples, apricots, peaches, grapes, pears, mulberries and walnuts) and vegetables (such as tomatoes, potatoes, onions, beans and pumpkins).²⁸ Wheat, corn, rice, pulses and other edible items are produced here but it do not fulfil the requirement of the population, thus most of these items are imported from other parts of the country. Cultivation lands in Kalash valleys are very limited but extremely rich and fertile, covering the mountainside in rich oak forests and allowing for intensive agriculture, despite the fact that most of the work is done not by machinery, but by hand till today.

²⁶ Jamal Haider Siddiqi, *op. cit.* (59-61).

²⁷ M. Alauddin, *op. cit.* (p. 1-8);

M. Afzal Khan. *Chitral and Kafiristan*, Printing Corporation of Frontier Ltd, Peshawar, 1980 (p. 12).

²⁸ Jamal Haider Siddiqi, *op. cit.* (P. 37-38).

Livestock is also play an important role in the lives of Chitrali people, but its local production does not fulfil the requirements of the society. Goats, sheep, cows are popular farm animals in Chitral. Yaks are available in extreme north parts of Chitral, which are famous for its delicious meat and some time used for transportation of good in snow covered areas. Buffalos are imported from other parts of the country to fulfil the needs of meat in Chitral.

The Kalash, historically goat herding and subsistence farming people, are moving towards a cash-based economy whereas previously wealth was measured in livestock and crops. Like other parts of Chitral tourism now makes up a large portion of the economic activities of the Kalash. Small shops, hotels and guest houses have been erected, providing new luxury for visitors of the valleys on one hand and to gain money to strengthen local economy, on the other hand.²⁹

Market economy of Chitral is mainly dominated by the Pashtoon but nowadays many Chitrali/Khow people also actively taking part in business activities. Handicrafts are one the major sources of income; especially woollen products of Chitral are very popular at national and international levels. Government and private jobs also play important role in the economy of Chitral. A number of Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) are working for welfare and development of the area, and providing job to the people as well. In spite of difficult situation and lake of facilities in the field of education

²⁹ Personal observation of the researcher (Zaheer-ud-Din) and information collected during his field visits to Kalash valleys, through interviews/discussions with the known religious, social and political personalities of the area especially those who belong to Kalash community.

the literacy rate (both in male and female) is quite good in Chitral district with compare to other rural areas of Pakistan generally and parts of the Khyber Pokhtunkhwa Province particularly.³⁰

The majority of Chitrali people are Muslims who belong to the Sunni school of thought and follow the fiqh of Imam Abu Hanifa, although there are a number of Ismailis -followers of the Agha Khan- a sub sect of Shia Imamis. The Kalash Kafirs (Non-Muslim) are also living in Chitral with their centuries-old traditions and beliefs.³¹ There is no sectarianism or religious extremism in Chitral. Both communities of Sunnis and Ismailis are living here with peace and harmony, without any confrontation, except the only one incident of misunderstanding in 1980s, which was realized by intelligent, civilised and peace loving people of Chitral, and was resolved very soon. The attitude of the Muslim towards Kalash Kafirs is also best example of interfaith harmony that allowed this small group of non-Muslim people to survive with their centuries old religious and cultural identity, in spite of being surrounded by dominant Muslims from all sides.³²

The population of Chitral is a complex ethnological puzzle. A number of tribes and families are living in Chitral since time immemorial or having migrated from different areas to Chitral and became part of its society. Thus a heterogeneous society came into

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Gholam Murtaza, *op. cit.* (p. 21);
The encyclopaedia of Britannic, Vol. 11 (p. 86).

³² Zaheer-ud-Din, *op. cit.*

being combining the tribes of Khow, Kalash, Bashgali (Nuristani), Gawari, Dameli, Dangeric, Pokhtoon, Gujur, Wakhi, Badakhshi, Madaklashti (Tajik), Manji, Sariquali, Kyrghyz and others. Although the **Khow** dominate the society and make about 92% of whole population of Chitral, but the other tribes and families still exist with their own languages and traditional backgrounds.³³ **Kalash** are settled in southern Chitral. Their concentration is in the valleys of Bumburet, Birir and Rumbur. The Kalash are known for their unique religion and culture. Kalash are immigrants from Afghanistan. Their original homeland is believed to be in Tsyam. **Bashgali or Nuristani** people belong to Nuristan (formerly known as Kafiristan) province in present day Afghanistan. They migrated to Chitral around the end of 19th century C.E. and settled in upper parts of Bumburet, Rumbur and Gobor valleys. **Wakhi** tribe lives in the upper areas of Chitral bordering Afghanistan. They speak Wakhi language and have an agro-pastoral economy. Wakhis are immigrants from Wakhan. The **Tajiks** live in Madaklasht village of Shishi Kuh valley in Drosh Tehsil. They came from Tajikistan and Badakhshan in 1700 AD. They speak Persian. The nomadic **Gujars** from Dir and Afghanistan are settled in the southern valleys of Chitral. They came to Chitral during Katoor rule and were taxpayers (Qalang) on pastures. They were migratory herders who moved to the upper areas in spring and came back to down areas in winter season. With the passage of time Gujars are giving up their herding occupation, and becoming settled farmers and traders. **Dameli** tribe lives in southern Tehsil of Drosh. Their language is called Damia, which is related to Khowar and Gowarbat. They came from Afghanistan. **Gawari** live in southern valleys of Chitral.

³³ *Pakistan Encyclopaedia of Folklore, V. 1, Northern Area*, Folk Heritage Publication, Islamabad, 2004, (p. 320); Maj. J. Biddulph, *op. cit.* (p. 62).

They speak Gower Bati language. Their original homeland is in Afghanistan. **Sariquali** are immigrants from Chinese Turkistan who settled in the Boroghil valley in the north of Chitral in 1939. They speak Sariquali, a distinct Turk dialect, spoken in the Sariqual mountain area in Tashquraghon. The **Kyrgyz** immigrants live in Boroghil valley. Their ancestors migrated from Andijan Fargana valley western Turkistan, which is a part of the present Uzbekistan. The Kyrgyz belong to a famous Turk race of Central Asia and their language Kyrgyz is well known in the history. The **Pathans or Pokhtoos** came to Chitral from surrounding of Dir, Swat and Jandul areas around 1915. They speak Pashto and their main source of livelihood is trade and business. **Dangerik** (Tangirik, referring to Tangir) live mostly in Ashirat in Drosh Tehsil and speak Phalura. They are immigrants from Tangir area of Chilas and their language is a dialect of Shina. The present population of Chitral also includes the **Afghan** refugees who were uprooted from their homeland after Soviet invasion in 1979. Some of the Afghans are Persian speaking people from Panjsher and Badakhshan. Others belong to the Pashto speaking belt of Nangarhar, Qunduz and Kunar.

The known history of Chitral starts with the Iranian influence over major parts of the Hindu Kush in the 5th century B.C when this area was part of an Iranian province Balkh. It is said that famous Greek general Alexander invaded Chitral via Afghanistan in 4th century B.C but could not establish any authority over this area. No evidence is available about arrival of Alexander in any part of Chitral. In 56 B.C Chitral came under Chinese rule followed by Buddhist rule of Kunishk in the 2nd century C.E. In 7th century

Chinese once again invaded the area, but by the end of the same century Bahman Kohistani (a local Khow chief under Chinese regime) was defeated by Muslim Arab forces. No government was established by the Muslims in this period but the light of Islam spread in the area gradually.

In 11th century Kalash tribe ruled over southern parts of Chitral. Until the Islamization of the Khow tribes in northern Chitral, both Kalash and Khow tribes have had local chiefs known as "Asakal" (Aqsaqal in Turkish language) in the big villages, and there were no central authorities as king, neither among the Kalash nor the Khows. The only known chiefs are Bahman (Kohistani) and Su-Malik, among the Khow and Shalak Shah, Chief (Chew in Khowar), Bulising, Raja Wai and Kireez Nuk, among the Kalash.³⁴

In the beginning of 14th century C.E. Chitral became a unified independent kingdom when the first Muslim dynasty emerged under the leadership of Shah Nadir Rais.³⁵ He defeated the descendents of Khow Kafir king Sumalik in upper Chitral, and proceeded towards the south, to lower Chitral and defeated Kalash Kafir king Bulising in proper Chitral, his headquarter was in Balahisar area in southern part of present day Chitral town. Shah Nadir established an organised government in the region and got the title of Rais which continued in his descendents for about three centuries. During Rais

³⁴ Gholam Murtaza, *op. cit.* (p. 24-30);

Wazir Ali Shah, *Notes on Kalash Folklore*, (p. 70).

³⁵ Shah Nadir came to Chitral from Badakhshan province of Afghanistan. It is said that he belonged to the royal family of Badakhshan, who claim to be the descendents of Alexander, the Great. But no detailed information are available regarding the relation of Shah Nadir with the royal family of Badakhshan and their link with Alexander, the Great. (see Gholam Murtaza, *op. cit.* (p. 36-41).

rule this state consisted major parts of present day Chitral district with its boundaries expended to some parts of Wershigoom in Gilgit.³⁶

Towards the end of 16th century C.E. the long period (about three centuries) of Rais family rule over Chitral ended and was replaced by the Katoor dynasty (another Muslim dynasty). During the Katoor rule (the longest dynasty in the history of Chitral remaining in power for about four centuries 1595–1969)³⁷, the state of Chitral emerged as one of the most important kingdoms in the area and was known as **an independent princely state** having its borders expended to Ghizer and Yasin in present day Gilgit Baltistan; Kunar, Nuristan, Wakhan and Pamir in present day Afghanistan and some parts of Swat (Kalam valley) and Dir Kohistan.³⁸

In 1879 King Aman-ul-Mulk (the most prominent ruler in the history of Chitral who is known as Lot Mehtar i.e. Great King) signed an agreement with Maharaja of Kashmir against Afghan influence. British colonial regime of Indian sub-continent made

³⁶ Gholam Murtaza, *op. cit.* (p. 36-41);

³⁷ Mirza Ayub (known as Baba Ayub) son of prince Faridoon Husain and grandson of king Sultan Husain of Hirat in Afghanistan, who descended from Amir Timur (Tamerlane), was the first person of this dynasty who came to Chitral with a renowned religious personality Shah Shams-ud-Din in 1520 C.E. Mirza Ayub married with the daughter of Rais king Shah Akbar but spend his life as an ordinary religious person at a small village called "Lone" in northern Chitral. His grandson Sangeen Ali (I) got influence during the rule of Rais king Shah Nasir and married with his daughter in 1550. After the death of Shah Nasir Rais (in 1574) Muhtaram Shah and Shah Khoshwakht, grandsons of Sangeen Ali, took the advantage of weakness of Rais rulers and defeated last Rais ruler Shah Mahmud and emerged as the new rulers of Chitral in 1595. Having the title of Mehtar (king in Persian) Muhtaram Shah (known as Shah Katoor I) and his descendents established an organised and strong kingdom which continued for about four centuries. His brother Shah Koshwakht took the charge of upper parts of Chitral and some parts of Gilgit, but later on the area of upper Chitral was captured by the Katoor rulers to form the entire valleys of Chitral as one entity. (for further details see: Gholam Murtaza, *Nayee Tarikh-e-Chitral (New History of Chitral)* (p. 47-49) and Maj. J. Biddulph, *Tribes of the Hindoo Koosh* (p. 150-154).

³⁸ Maj. J. Biddulph, *op. cit.* (p. 148-151);

Gholam Murtaza, *op. cit.* (p. 21).

an agreement with the state of Chitral in 1888, which led to indirect British influence in Chitral, but the Katoor dynasty remained in power with full autonomy. After the Independence, Chitral was the first state to declare the accession to the newly established Islamic Republic of Pakistan in 1947 but stayed independent in its internal affairs. In 1969 C.E. Chitral State has formally been merged into Pakistan, as a district of NWFP (Khyber Pokhtunkhwa nowadays).³⁹

B. THE KALASH IN CHITRAL:

The Kalash have been living in Chitral since a long time. Their early history is obscure and enveloped in mystery. No authentic or detailed information is available about this period. There are some hypotheses that reflect in oral traditions of the Kalash (legend stories and traditional songs). The Kalash recount that at the beginning of the time their people had wandered about without knowing where to go, where to settle. This tale may hark back to the migration of the Aryans, to whom those distant ancestors may have belonged. Their wandering would have taken them over the Iranian plateau and across central Asia, along trek indeed. Then a shaman (Dehar is Kalash term for shaman), with his power to communicate with the Supreme Being, guided them to Tsyam, a mysterious land probably situated to the south-east of present day Afghanistan.⁴⁰ They inhabited the area between lower Bashgal (Nuristan) and Chaghan Sarai (Asad Abad) areas of Afghanistan for about three centuries. In 10th or 11th century C.E. they were pushed north ward into Chitral by the Bashgali Kafirs, who on their turn had been forced

³⁹ Jamal Haider Siddiqi, *op. cit.* (p. 47-52).

⁴⁰ Jean-Yven Loude/ Viviane Lievre, *op. cit.* (p. 186-187).

to leave their own dwellings during the invasions of Amir Subuktageen and Mahmud Ghaznavi from the West.⁴¹

They arrived in southern Chitral valleys via Bashgal (Nuristan) and Arandu and pushed the then resident the Khow tribes (also infidel at that time) further north and ruled most of that area for centuries.⁴² Shalak Shah was the famous Kalash ruler in their early period in Chitral who lead them from Tsyam to Chitral.⁴³ There are authentic indications on Kalash rule over Chitral up to Retshun (at the distance of about 40 miles from Chitral town to the north).⁴⁴ The famous “Luli” song of the Kalash mentions celebration of the “Joshi” festival in the Lotkuh valley.⁴⁵ There are some material evidences on the presence of Kalash in the valleys of Khuzara (Lotkuh, Arkari and Ojor) as crockery, jewellery, arms and ruinous of temples and houses related to the Kalash are found during digging.⁴⁶

As stated earlier that despite of Kalash rule over most parts of Chitral, there were no central authorities as king or kingship, in the area dominated by them. They have had local chiefs known as “Asakal” (Aqsaqal in Turkish language) in the big villages. The only known chiefs among Kalash are Chief (Chew in Khowar), Bulising, Raja Wai and Kireez Nuk. The famous Chew Bridge over Chitral River near the present Royal Fort in

⁴¹ Inayatullah Faizi, *Chitral*, Lok Virsa Ishaat Ghar (Folk Heritage Publishing House), Islamabad, 1991 (p. 36).

⁴² Wazir Ali Shah, *op. cit.* (p. 69-70).

⁴³ Jean-Yven Loude/ Viviane Lievre, *op. cit.* (p. 189).

⁴⁴ Gholam Murtaza, *op. cit.* (p. 32);

Gul Murad, *op. cit.* (p. 33).

⁴⁵ Wazir Ali Shah, *op. cit.* (p. 70).

⁴⁶ Zaheer-ud-Din, *op. cit.*

the district headquarter was built by Kalash ruler Chief and still referred to him by using his name for this bridge. Bulising had ruled the area from village Kari in northern part of Chitral to village Ayun in southern side. These Kalash rulers lived at Balahisar at the southern tip of present day Chitral town.⁴⁷ Raja Wai and Kiriz Nuk ruled over the southern parts of Chitral.

In the 14th century C.E. the fall of Kalash rule in Chitral started when the Raisy dynasty conquered proper Chitral, under the leadership of Shah Nadir Rais, the founder of the first Muslim (Rais) dynasty in Chitral, defeating Kalash ruler Bulising in 1320 C.E. With the defeat of Bulising, Kalash dominance over northern and central parts of Chitral came to an end. The southern areas of Drosh including Biori, Urtsun, Shishikooh, Suwir, Birr, Bumburet and Rumbur however were dominated by Kalash under the leadership of Kireez Nuk. His headquarter was in village Bitreek of Bumburet valley.⁴⁸ Kalash domination over lower Chitral has also come to an end in the 16th century C.E. when the last Kalash ruler Raja Wai of Bumburet was defeated by Muslims Rais rulers. Despite the end of the Kalash rule, most of the southern parts of Chitral were populated by Kalash people.⁴⁹

During the Katoor dynasty rule over Chitral (1575-1969) life, properties along with religious and cultural identity of the Kalash were protected by the ruler. In return they were however required to pay certain special taxes, for non-Muslim citizens of Islamic

⁴⁷ Wazir Ali Shah, *op. cit.* (p. 70).

⁴⁸ Gholam Murtaza, *op. cit.* (p. 29-30).

⁴⁹ *Ibid* (p. 40-41).

country, (called Thangi or Qalang in local language) as *Jizya*⁵⁰ and perform certain labour work. The Katoor rulers encouraged (never forced) the Kalash to embrace Islam by giving them some incentives and relaxation in labour work. As a result Islam penetrated in the Kalash dominated areas, so the entire southern Chitral including Urtsun and Shishikoooh converted to Islam and the Kalash were restricted to three valleys of Bumburet, Rumbur and Birr (known as Kalash Valleys) and they are still living there, but they are now became minority even in these valleys which are the last dwelling of the Kafirs of the Hindu Kush⁵¹. Despite of the decreasing population (from 14th to 20th century C.E.) the unique culture of the Kalash and their centuries-old religious and cultural tradition, their identity along with their shrines, altars and socio-cultural places and activities were well protected.

In 1947 C.E. the state of Chitral declared its affiliation with newly established Muslim country Pakistan, thus the Kalash also gained Pakistani nationality. They became free from heavy taxes and forced labour works, imposed on them by the state authorities of Chitral. After political reforms in 1954 C.E. the Kalash got more relaxations but they remained deprived of development projects of the government and basic rights as citizens of the country,⁵² like many other people of Pakistan who live in remote areas of the country.

⁵⁰ Jizyah is an Islamic term used for special tax on non-Muslim citizens of Muslim state instead of Zakat that is paid by Muslims only. (Syed Sabiq, *Fiqh al- Sunnah*, Dar al-Kitab al-Arabi, Beirut, 1985, (Vol. 2, P. 664).

⁵¹ Wazir Ali Shah, *op. cit.* (p. 70-71);
Gholam Murtaza,, *op. cit.* (p. 29-30).

⁵² Inayatullah Faizi, *op. cit.* (p. 36).

In the seventies of 20th century C.E. a revolution took place in the lives of the Kalash when Mr. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (the then Prime Minister of Pakistan) visited Kalash valleys and observed the worse condition in which the Kalash were struggling to survive. He paid due attention to this neglected area and ordered to launch development projects in fields of infrastructure, education and health. Mr. Bhutto also provided opportunity to the Kalash to participate in cultural events at local, national and international levels. Projection and introduction of the Kalash at global level attracted the tourist as well as researcher of social science and anthropological studies towards this unique community.⁵³

Nowadays many local and international Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) are working in Kalash valleys following different agendas. Construction of roads, irrigational channels, water supply and sanitation schemes are initiated in many places. Many schools provide education to the children of both Muslim and Kalash community in the area. Health facilities are also getting its way toward the area. The Kalash can also be found among the government employees. Many shops, hotels and guest houses etc. are run by the Kalash. Kalash youths migrate to big cities of Pakistan for education and jobs. A number of researchers in the fields of social, cultural and anthropological studies can also be seen in the area. Tourism now makes up a large portion of the economic activities of Kalash society. Small shops, hotels and guest houses have been erected, providing new luxury for visitors of the valleys. Some Kalash youths are working as tour guides as

⁵³ M. Alauddin, op. cit. (p. 98).

well. Market economy is mostly monopolised by outsiders and a small portion is belong to the Kalash community.⁵⁴

Recently, the Kalash have been able to stop their demographic and cultural spiral towards extinction and have, for the past 30 years, been on the rebound. Increased international awareness, a more tolerant Muslim society, and monetary assistance by the government of Pakistan and local as well as international NGOs has allowed them to continue their unique, old and traditional way of life. Their numbers remain stable at around 4,000-5,000.⁵⁵

C. KALASH CULTURE:

Centuries old culture and traditions of the Kalash is the main reason to attract other people towards them. They perform many unique and strange types of customs and traditions in different stages and aspects of life, like birth, baptism, marriage and funeral etc. Their way of life, dresses, music, social and family system, architecture, handicrafts, ceremonies and festivals distinguish them from other tribes of the region. They are always jovial, lively and agile especially in the celebration of their festivals. Simple in habits, lenient in dealing and conversation but very clever in practical matters they have high regard for their pristine culture. Main characteristics of Kalash culture are mentioned here but the features having religious characteristics are discussed with religious practice of the Kalash.

⁵⁴ Zaheer-ud-Din, *op. cit.*

⁵⁵ Ibid.

I. LIFESTYLE:

Double storey houses are the main characteristic of the Kalash settlements. The ground floor is generally used as a storeroom and a place for cattle (cow and sheep only, while sheds for goats are set up in upper sides of the village), and the people live on the upper floor. The upper floor is about five square meters, and two meters high. The fireplace is at the centre and the beds are located beside the walls. Windows and doors are made small and a simple smoke hole is made in the centre of the roof to permit smoke to escape. The inside of the house is ingrained with soot. In summer, people cook and sleep outside on the balcony attached to the upper floor. There are one or more completely wooden store-rooms for fruits and grain, called *Pesti/Birbam*.⁵⁶

The Kalash are known to be master architects and wood carvers of the region since time immemorial. Kalash houses and monuments show that the community has a rich background of skills in various arts and crafts, especially woodwork and woollen products. Artistic work on doors and pillars, effigies and paintings of human and animal figures in Kalash monuments are a testimony to their skill. The Kalash with their closest neighbours, the converted Bashgali Muslims, use small stools for sitting, contrary to the habit of all other tribes and races living in the Hindu Kush valleys.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Jean-Yven Loude/ Viviane Lievre, *op. cit.* (p. 70).

⁵⁷ Zaheer-ud-Din, *op. cit.*

II. SOCIAL SYSTEM

They have a joint family system with the eldest man (father or eldest brother) acting as head of the family.⁵⁸ Male have important and decisive role in the society. Most of the property left by the father (lands, trees and cattle) is divided equally among the sons, except that the eldest gets a little more than his share of these, plus, cattle shed, while the youngest inherits his father's house. Sometimes sons live together without dividing the property among them. The female children have no rights of inheritance and receive a limited quantity of cattle and some gifts on certain occasions.⁵⁹

All heavy works, like construction of houses, water channels and roads are the duty of male members of the society. They are also responsible for all affairs of cattle (especially goats) and dairy products. Their role in agriculture is very limited. Females are responsible for all internal affairs of the family like looking after children, cooking food, washing clothes, cleaning the house, collection of firewood and most of the work related to agriculture etc.⁶⁰

The Kalash tribe has the greatest social organization and socio-cultural norms. They respect each other especially the elders and women. Use of real names is mostly avoided and people are called by their surnames or by the reference of their

⁵⁸ Gul Murad Khan, *Hindu Kush Ka Aakhiri Kafir Qabeela* (in Urdu) Trichmir Magazine, Peshawar University, Peshawar, 1990, (p. 35).

⁵⁹ Pervaish Shaheen, *op. cit.* (p. 164).

⁶⁰ Ibid.

children or other relatives (i.e. father, mother, son, daughter, husband or wife of so and so). The Kalash cooperate with each other in performing daily chores. They also cooperate with each other in the arrangement of marriage and funeral ceremonies. Entire village contributes in the huge expenses of funeral, especially for those who are unable to arrange money and food items for that purpose. All Kalash frankly and frequently exchange visits of their houses and take food without any restriction or hesitation. Every Kalash belongs to his father's clan. Villages are associated by one or several clans. One clan always resides together. Every clan has its own handed down stories concerning its origin. The clan forms a unit when a ceremony takes place but they also have a sense of community in each village as a whole. Each valley in turn is also independent unit economically and religiously. Their operation as a community is discussed between representatives from each unit in a democratic way. One who is clever, reliable and knows the traditional customs has power and authority.⁶¹

III. ECONOMY:

Goats play an important role in the life of the Kalash. Some people keep hundreds of them. They supply milk from which butter and various kinds of cheese are made. Especially, he-goats are ritually sacrificed to the gods in ceremonies. Sheep are kept for wool and a few bulls are raised for agricultural purposes and cows for milk. From June to October, these cattle graze on highland alpine pastures near

⁶¹ Zaheer-ud-Din, *op. cit.*

the Afghan-border. The cattlemen stay with the cattle and bring them back in autumn. In winter, sheep and cows are fed hay and goats are fed leaves of Holm Oak. Grazing cattle is men's work but cows and sheep are sometimes looked after by women and children.

Cultivation lands in Kalash valleys are very limited but extremely rich and fertile, covering the mountainside in rich oak forests and allowing for intensive agriculture, despite the fact that most of the work is done not by machinery, but by hand till today. Formerly Kalash valleys use to produce wheat, beans, walnut and honey at large scale to contribute in providing edible items to many neighbouring villages and other parts of Chitral.

Historically goat herding and subsistence farming people of Kalash now moving towards a cash-based economy whereas previously wealth was measured in livestock and crops. Like other parts of Chitral tourism now makes up a large portion of the economic activities of the Kalash. Small shops, hotels and guest houses have been erected, providing new luxury for visitors of the valleys and few of these are run by the Kalash as well. Market economy is mostly monopolised by outsiders and a small portion is belong to the Kalash community. The Kalash can also be found among the government employees. A number of Kalash youth migrates to larger cities of Pakistan for education and jobs and some of them are working as tour guides as well.⁶²

⁶² Ibid.

IV. LANGUAGE:

Language of the Kalash is called **Kalasha** which is an archaic type of Indo-European language (Dardic subgroup).⁶³ Indo-Iranian branch of Indo-European can be divided into three main groups: Indo-Aryan (Indian), Iranian and Kafiri (the language of the Kafirs). Geographically Kalash valleys and Kafiristan are located in the middle of Indo-Aryan and Iranian groups and thus linguistically the group of languages has similarities with them. However, Kalasha, spoken by the last of the Kafir tribe, is not included in Kafiri languages but considered as part of the Indian group of languages with Khowar (Chitrali) which is spoken in Chitral District.⁶⁴ Kalasha is very similar to Khowar and even a small Kalash child can speak it frequently. Mixed in their language, we can identify Persian words used for abstract concept and modern Urdu -even English- for tools and articles etc. Although there are some letters in Kalasha and Khowar that have sound similar to Indian languages like "D" (ڊ) "T" (ٽ) "Rl" (ڙ), but the structure and grammar of these languages are very similar to Persian (Iranian) languages. The best example is that these languages have no inflexions distinctive of gender like Persian and unlike to Indian languages. If there are some letters having sound similar to Indian languages, there are many other letters having sound similar to other languages (Chinese, Arabic, Persian etc.) like "Tsh" (ٽش) "Tch" (ٽچ) "Jch" (جچ) "Zx" (ڙخ) "Tz" (ٽز). Despite of being a small local language, Kalasha has a rich tradition of folklore, epics, love songs and idioms

⁶³ M. Alauddin, *op. cit.* (p. 6).

⁶⁴ Jean-Yven Loude/ Viviane Lievre, *op. cit.* (p. 70).

demonstrating a high standard of indigenous wisdom and human experience. This knowledge is believed to be at the verge of extinction. The new generation of Kalash, especially the educated youth, do not know much about their non-material culture and heritage. The oral tradition of the Kalash is mostly monopolised by few elders and religious personalities only.⁶⁵

V. DRESSES:

Traditional male dress of the Kalash includes “Bore” (woollen overcoat), “Shualak” (woollen trousers) “Phakorl” (traditional woollen Chitrali cap), “Khone”, moccasin (handmade rough shoes), “Paitawa” (woollen bandage tied around legs for its protection) and “Taching” (peaces of rough leather tied around feet, as alternative for shoes, to easily climb in mountains). The last two is used by shepherds only while moving in bushed and climbing mountains. The older males put colourful feather into their caps to make their identity noticeable among the Muslims. In present days most of the Kalash men have given up their traditional dress and started using the common Chitrali dress. Now they can not be distinguished from the Khow by their dress and appearance. Religiously and culturally a Kalash must be worn in, above mentioned, traditional dress after death. The Kalash women are very strict in wearing their traditional dress, and without this dress no one can considered as a member of Kalash society.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Zaheer-ud-Din, *op. cit.*

⁶⁶ Ibid.

Traditional female Kalash dress includes an embroidered long gaudy headgear decorated with cowries, shells, ornaments and beads which is called “*Kopas*” or “*Kophesi*”, a black woollen robe called “*Sangach*” that covers almost all body from neck to ankle, a beautiful hand made belt called “*Chihari*” and traditional shoes made of rough leather called “*Khone*”, moccasin. Almost all these dresses are made by Kalash women themselves. This style of dress is still popular among local women despite its heavy cost, difficulty in its making and wearing, and the availability of a variety of modern clothes. Some significant changes that can be observed in respect to Kalash women dress, like the use of ordinary black cloth available in markets for making *Sangach* instead of woollen cloth, use of ordinary shoes by most of the Kalash women instead of *Khones* and use of some new kind of jewelleries available in the markets beside the traditional ones. But the over all appearance of Kalash women does not changed except the use of colourful embroidery in the dresses. They are distinguished among all women of the area by their dress and appearance.⁶⁷

VI. FOODS:

Traditional foods are bread, meat, milk, buttermilk, butter, cheese and walnut. Milk and its other products are very popular and easily available food in Kalash society. Traditional Kalash bread is thin round flat shape, made of liquid type dough of wheat and maize separately. Beans are important source of protein, produced and eaten by Kalash valleys at large scale. Meat is eaten only on special occasions, like

⁶⁷ Ibid.

See also, M. Alauddin, *op. cit.* (p. 87-89).

festivals and traditional feasts. The Kalash do not hesitate to eat the meat of dead animals and even wild animals, like bear, leopard and fox etc.⁶⁸ A sort of porridge is made with meat soup and wheat flour which is called *Jutsh*, is a popular food in Kalash valleys, which is originally belong to Nuristani society but adopted by the Kalash since long time. However nowadays bread made of wheat and corn, along with soup made of tomatoes, potatoes, and boiled vegetables are also eaten. Although onion is prohibited in Kalash society because its smell is disliked by the deities, but nowadays the use of onion is a common habit among the Kalash. These vegetables were introduced to the Kalash with tea (milk tea) about fifty years ago. The custom to eat rice at special occasions was also brought by the Muslim and adopted by the Kalash as well. Fruit is plentiful from summer to autumn and dried mulberries, apricots and their kernels and walnuts are eaten during the winter. Local wine is prepared from mulberries during summer and from grapes in autumn and drunk by every member of the society, male, female and even children sometimes. Formerly chicken and eggs were forbidden in Kalash culture but nowadays these taboos are broken by many them, influenced by their Muslim neighbours and flood of visitors and non-local hotel owners.⁶⁹

VII. HANDICRAFTS:

Due to their proximity to nature, the Kalash are fond of natural colours in handicrafts. Despite the lack of facilities and proper guidance, skills of Kalash

⁶⁸ Gholam Murtaza, *op. cit.* (p. 32).

⁶⁹ Zaheer-ud-Din, *op. cit.*

women in spinning, weaving and embroidery are exhibited in their various kinds of handicrafts like *Palesk* (rugs), *Qalin* (carpets), *Chehari* (belts), *Kophesi* (ornamental headgears decorated with cowries shells, small bells, buttons and brooches), *Gadula* (long necklace made of white and red coral or plastic beads, coiled many times around the necks), *Sangach* (long sack-like black woollen gown with colourful embroidery which reaches to their ankles and tie a woollen sash at the waist) and *Kapoo* (basket made from thin wooden sticks woven with thin cord, which is used by the Kalash women and carried by them on their back most of the time, even while working in the fields) etc. These handicrafts seem to be very rare especially in modern time when people depend on machineries and ready made items.⁷⁰

VIII. ARCHITECTURE:

Kalash houses and monuments show that the community has a rich background of skills in various arts and crafts, especially woodwork and woollen products. Effigies and paintings of human and animal figures in Kalash monuments are a testimony to their skill. Kalash architecture is a unique mixture of ancient wooden craft and medieval traditions of figure art. Multi-storied Kalash buildings present a spectacular view of beautifully carved wooden pillars and beams decorated with unmatched human and animal figures and effigies. Each one depicts certain myths and superstitions.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

IX. MUSIC:

The Kalash are fond of music and dance. Singing and dancing is not simply an amusement, nevertheless it has religious meanings for them and can never be parted from their life. On the occasions of festivals, weddings, feasts, even rituals and funerals the whole society of the Kalash gather and participate in grand performances of music consisting of song (*ghu*), dance (*nat*) flute (*ishpri*) and the drums (*dahu*, one sided open drum, *Tumburuk*, two sided small size drum, and *watch*, two sided big drum). Aside from the dance songs and chants that are monotonous and sang in free rhythm, there are also many rhythmical songs that are sung in fast duple beat and frequently clapping of the hands and dance take place. These songs are sung mainly in festivals and wedding party.

Kalash Music has a very old musical style and the relation of man and music is also of great interest. The harsh music of the Kalash is entirely different from the melodious ones of their neighbours (Khowas, Pathans, Persian and other tribes living in the Hindu Kush valleys). At the same time, like everything else in the life of the Kalash, "new music" is also invading but it seems that the music will be the last element to change.⁷²

⁷² Reiko Kojima, *Music and Dance of Kalash*, <http://www.site-shara.net/kalasha/eflm-kalasha.html>, 1983; See also, M. Afzal Khan, *op. cit.*, (P. 76-77).

3. RELIGION IN KALASH PERSPECTIVE

Religion of the Kalash is a primitive, tribal and traditional religion in its nature, and most of its ideas and practices are related to the nature. Mythology, animism and nature, animal and ancestor veneration are the main characteristics of Kalash religion. There is neither any prophet nor any sacred scripture in their religion, but a form of Shamanism plays very important part in this religion. The Kalash have ambiguous concept of hereafter, and there are so many contradictory ideas in this regard. There is no systematic form of rituals in their religion. They do not have any kind of daily, weekly or monthly rites. Sacrifice, supplication, offerings on certain occasions; cultural, traditional and seasonal customs; chant, dance and other cultural activities are considered and performed as religious practices.

A. KALASH CONCEPT OF RELIGION:

The word “Kafir” is used by Muslims of the area for the Kalash and their closest neighbours, the “Red Kafirs” of former Kafiristan (present day Nuristan) in Afghanistan. Actually this name was given to them by surrounding Muslim communities, which later on became their title. Although the Western writers use the title of Kafir for the inhabitants of Kafiristan only, but the Muslims use it for the Kalash as well. For Muslim all non-Muslims are called Kafirs.⁷³ The Arabic word “Kafir” can be translated as infidel or disbeliever⁷⁴ but the Kalash neither worship idols nor they are infidels in the sense of

⁷³ Ibn Manzoor, *Lisan-ul-Arab*, Nashr Adab al-hoza, Qum (Iran), 1405 H (vol. 5, p. 144)

⁷⁴ Muhammad Ibn Jareer al-Tabari, *Jami al-Bayan An Taweel Ayai Qur'an*, Darussalam, al-Qahira (Cairo • Egypt), 2009 (vol. 1, p. 194).

disbelieve in any god. They do believe in God but do associate with Him a number of deities, calling and considering them gods as well. So being non-Muslim the Kalash can be called Kafir, or Mushrik (who makes associate with God), by the Muslims but as an academic term the word Kafir is specified for the inhabitants of Kafiristan and its use for the Kalash is incorrect.

Kazi Braman, a famous religious personality of the Kalash in Rumbur valley, in his audio taped interview with the researcher described the concept and function of religion according to the Kalash:

*"The Kalash perception of religion is not so different from the concept of religion in other people, but there are some misunderstandings in this regard. When we speak to the Kalash according to their intellectual capacity and keeping in view their socio-religious background, the other people (non-Kalash) would not understand it with its true sense, unless it is explained to them in their own language and terminologies, keeping in view their cultural and religious perspectives. Like other religions, our Religion teaches us righteousness, good behaviour, fear of god and ways of his worship. The religion also guides us to the right path and forbids us from wrong one. The purpose of religion is ultimate glory of the mankind, which can be achieved through good deeds that ensure peace and prosperity in the society."*⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Kazi Braman of Rumbur, in his audio- taped interview by the researcher.

A critical analysis of Kalash religious ideas and a closer observation of their rituals and other religious practices clearly indicate that, although to gain the pleasure of the god/deities is the main purpose of religion, but happiness in this life is considered ultimate success of man. Religion works for of a welfare society, to ensure peace and prosperity in human life through good deeds and to avoid bad conducts. To seek the pleasure of god by adoration, sacrifices and offerings is the basic condition for the success of man both in this world and hereafter. The Kalash believe that their religion is the best one, which ensures happiness in their life in spite of poverty and bad conditions.

B. IMPORTANCE OF RELIGION IN KALASH SOCIETY:

Looking into the importance of the religion and its authority in the Kalash society one can realize that all social or cultural events are connected with religion in one or another form. There must be a particular thought or myth behind every custom or tradition that relates it to the religion. Mr. Wazir Ali Shan, (an indigenous writer) has clearly justified this point:

“In general ... the Kalash have managed to uphold their age-old customs of birth, marriage, death and all other aspects of life on the earth in spite of increasing Muslim influence from all sides. If the customs had not a religious basis, they would have modified them long ago to conform with the customs prevailing among their Muslim neighbours.”⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Wazir Ali Shah, *op. cit.* (p. 76).

Another significant aspect of the religion in the Kalash society is that some of them, specially the new generation, do not believe in the mythologies and unrealistic religious ideas and practices which are basis for many social and cultural activities. They consider it only cultural and traditional activities having no linkage with the religion. The researcher personally observed the best example of this during his field visit when he was sitting with his friend Barzangi (son of Katarsing, a famous Kalash political leader and social figure) in his house in Kalashgram (a historic and traditional Kalash village) in Rumbur valley. A person came in and Barzangi introduced him as "Roy", a person in the religious hierarchy of the Kalash who is responsible for some socio-religious matter and works as representative of civil society to assist Kazi and other religious personalities. The Roy said that there are continuous rains since more than a week, which indicates the displeasure of god or souls of ancestors, therefore we must present some offerings at the *Malotsh* (altar or sanctuary of the deity) to remove their anger. Mr. Barzangi gave him some money, but when he left the house he said:

*"We know that there is no relation between rains and anger of god or souls of forefathers, these are environmental and natural matters, the rains are not restricted to the Kalash valleys but radio, television and newspapers tell us that there are rains in other places as well, anyhow we don't want to quarrel with our elders over these things, so we act according to their wishes but consider it as parts of our custom and tradition only."*⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Barzangi, a young Kalash social figure from Birir valley, in his conversation with the researcher, during his field visit to Kalash valleys.

It is safe to say that the religion has strong hold over Kalash society which could not be shaken by contradictory views and practices of the new generation up till this day. The onslaught of modernism on every aspect of Kalash life a big challenge for their survival, especially in the matters related to their religion and culture.

4. RELIGIOUS IDEAS OF THE KALASH

As stated earlier that religion of the Kalash is a mixture of mythology, animism and nature, animal and ancestor veneration. Shamanism is one of the most important characteristics of the religion of Kalash. They have ambiguous concept of hereafter, with contradictory ideas. Kalash view of the man, especially status of women in Kalash though is another subject of interest. In the following we touch on some of the important religious ideas of the Kalash:

A. KALASH CONCEPT OF GOD:

The Kalash believe in a supreme god whom they call by the name of *Dezao* or *Khoday*. He is believed to be the creator and lord of the universe and protector of life and property.⁷⁸ He is supported by a number of *Parishita* (angels) who chiefly do the work. There is neither any altar nor sanctuary in his name, nor is any special ritual or sacrifice offered for him in any event or any place of the Kalash. The Kalash concept of god is best explained by Kazi Baraman (Kalash religious leader in Rumboor valley):

"We (the Kalash) are blamed by the Muslims that we worship idols of stones and woods. In fact we do not worship these things, but we go the places that are signs and symbols of our god where we offer sacrifice and pray to him by saying: 'O our god! You are our creator and our lord. There is no god

⁷⁸ Shahzada Hissam-ul-Mulk, *Kalash Mythology*, (Cultures of the Hindukush, Selected Papers from the Hindukush Cultural Conference held at Moesgard 1970, Edited by Karl Jettmar in collaboration with Lennart Edelberg), Franz Steiner Verlag, Wiesbaden, 1974 (p. 81);

Jean-Yves Loude/ Viviane Lievre, *op. cit.* (p. 348).

*except you. Accept our sacrifices and offering and forgive us for our evil deeds. Bestow upon us with your blessings and favours. Grant us happiness in our lives and success in hereafter.' So we are neither pagans nor atheists."*⁷⁹

Despite of the claim of Kalash that they believe in one god and worship him alone, their real perception as well as practical position is absolutely different from their theoretical stance in this regard. According to religious ideas of the Kalash there are a large number of deities, fairies, spirits and other supernatural beings having status and powers very similar to god and they are factually considered as god or associate with him in numerous matters. Beside mythology and animism, many forms of nature, animal and ancestor veneration can also be observed in the religion of Kalash. It seems that the Kalash borrowed the word "*Khoday*" for god from their Muslim neighbours (Khowas, Afghans and Pathans) who use this word for Allah in same context, but contrary to the Kalash they worship Him alone without making any associate with Him. The Kalash not only borrowed the name of *Khoday* from Muslims but their concept of god has also been influenced by Muslim in many aspects. (Details about Muslim influence on religion of the Kalash are given in chapter 4).

In general, the Kalash believe in a Supreme God (called *Dezao* or *Khoday*) as the creator of the universe, Lord and Protractor of life and property. They also believe in a large number of deities (mythological gods), souls, spirits, fairies and other supernatural beings having status and powers of god or associate with him in many matters. They

⁷⁹ Kazi Braman of Rumbur, in his audio-taped interview by the researcher.

venerate ancestors, some animals, birds and other natural things, like sun, fire, trees, mountains and lakes as well. It would be wrong to say that the Kalash really worship the thing other than God the form of respect and veneration, for most the things mentioned above, is definitely a kind of making associate with God.

B. KALASH MYTHOLOGY:

Mythology is the most important thing in the religion of the Kalash, because it is the central point for all their beliefs, rituals and customs. There are a number of deities in Kalash mythology who have the qualities and power of god or (some of them) supposed to be advisors or ministers to the creator. The word "Malotsh" or "Dow" is used for these deities in general but every deity has its own name and character. Altars/sanctuaries (that are also called Malotsh) have been set up for them in various places with wooden horse-head fixed on either side of a small walled structure. Here they present sacrifices and offerings of goat, sheep, food, milk products and dry fruits on different occasions and pray to the deity for protection against diseases, flood, and rains etc.⁸⁰ Important Kalash deities are:

I. DEZALIK:

A female divinity that has power over life and death, like *Dezao*, but her powers and functions are related to the women only. She also presides over the births and is revered exclusively by the women for difficulty in birth, sterility and all other matters related to the women. Sanctuary of *Dezalik* is a simple wooden plank in the

⁸⁰ Wazir Ali Shah, *op. cit.* (p. 71).

form of woman, with lozenge designs (◊) symbolizing the vulva, on the right lateral wall of every Bashali (house of menstruation and birth). During the child birth prayer and offering of walnuts to *Dezalik* is made for the health of the mother and her expected child, and for trouble-free childbirth, a woman is deputed to honour her with first one walnut, then two, then three, then five, and so on, until the child is born.⁸¹

II. BALUMAIN:

He is the most important and most powerful deity of the Kalash who resides in Tsyam (mythical native land of Kalash) or Bashgal (Nuristan) and comes to Kalash valleys once a year during the Chaumos festival, to collect and grant the wishes of the faithful. Whenever he comes he rides a horse and the group of angles who accompanying him also ride horses of different colours.⁸² There is no sanctuary or alter in the name of Balumain and sacrifices in his name is offered in open places or alters of other deities, like Sajigor in Rumbur, Warin and Praba in Birr and Ingao in Bumburet. He is called Indra in some Kalash chants, and there is a special place of his horse in Bumburet valley called Indre'in, approached by the Kalash during Chaumos and other festivals. The Kalash show great reverence to him during Chaumos, the winter solstice, with prayers, chants, wishes and massive sacrifice of he-goat.⁸³ According to Wazir Ali Shah (a famous local writer) "Balumain" is an

⁸¹ Jean-Yven Loude/ Viviane Lievre, *op. cit.* (p. 349).

⁸² Shahzada Hissam-ul-Mulk, *op. cit.* (p. 81).

⁸³ Jean-Yven Loude/ Viviane Lievre, *op. cit.* (p. 349).

advisor of god,⁸⁴ but other writers and the Kalash themselves consider him the most powerful deity, Malotsh or Dow. Being the eldest of the deities he is able to help in all matters like health, wealth, happiness and arable crops.⁸⁵

It is said that both Mahandev and Balumain roamed the Bashgal and Kalashgum (Kalash valleys) and had no specific area allocated to them.⁸⁶ Balumain summoned Naga Dehar (the most prominent and powerful shaman in the history of the Kalash) to Tsyam and ordered him to go and remain at Waitdesh (a village in present day Nuristan). Balumain brought Sajigor and Mahandev to that place, after which he returned to Tsyam. But two weeks later, Balumain recalled Naga Dehar to Tsyam and said to him: 'Now we are going to live in Bumburet, and we have to choose which of us, Mahandev or I, should stay in Bumburet. Go back there and wait for us.' The two gods decided to confront each other on the Durik Pass. During the contest, the Kalash lit fires of juniper and drank wine. The duel consisted in digging an irrigation canal, one each from Durik Pass to the valley of Jinjeret, in single night. It was decided that the winner should possess Bumburet. Mahandev won but Balumain refused to recognise his defeat and insisted on a return bout at the top of the Shuwala Pass. This pass separates Bashgal from Bumburet. They wagered that the one who awoke at the first light facing Bumburet should receive that valley; the loser should remain in Bashgal. This time Mahandev owed his victory to the complicity of Ingao, who turned Mahandev's face, during his sleep, towards

⁸⁴ Wazir Ali Shah, *op. cit.* (p. 78).

⁸⁵ Shahzada Hissam-ul-Mulk, *op. cit.* (p. 81).

⁸⁶ Wazir Ali Shah, *op. cit.* (p. 78).

Bumburet, and Balumain's, likewise during his sleep, towards Bashgal. Balumain accepted this decision with anger, but before departure he announced: 'This valley will be a source of problems, I shall come here only once in a year'. Since that time the Kalash celebrates his coming to Kalash valleys during the winter solstice, Chaumos.⁸⁷

Despite of loosing the contest against Mahandev, Balumain is still the most important and most powerful deity of the Kalash. Although he was compelled to reside in Tsyam, but this distance gave him another form of respect and uniqueness exhibits in enthusiasm shown by the Kalash when he comes to Kalash valleys once a year during the Chaumos festival.

III. MAHANDEV:

Mahandev is a powerful, the most favourite and fulltime available deity of the Kalash, who stays in the valleys. He is accepted in all three valleys and has two Malotsh (sanctuaries) in Bumburet and one each in Rumbur and Birr, symbolized by four wooden horse-heads fixed in stone walled structure. These Malotsh can be approached for all need; by offerings or sacrifices of he-goat any time; especially on occasions of prestige feasts, festivals and farming (animals and agriculture) activities.

Mahandev succeeded against Balumain to live permanently in Kalash valleys, as stated earlier. The Dehar, who disclosed to the people about Mahandev's

⁸⁷ Jean-Yven Loude/ Viviane Lievre, *op. cit.* (p. 189-192).

permanent stay in Bumburet, advised a wooden horse-head be affixed at a place near Gromun and a small stone also placed there. If Mahandev agreed to the spot the small stone would be replaced by a large one. In the next morning the small stone was found nearly a mile away and in its place a large stone was seen lying at the same spot.⁸⁸ Thus the first shrine of Mahandev was set up in Bumburet, followed by another in the same valley and one each in Rumbur and Birr. Irrespective of his lower status with compare to Balumain, Mahandev is the most popular deity in all Kalash valleys.

IV. JUSTEK:

Justek is a female deity who is responsible for domestic matters. She is the protector of family, children, lineage and home; the promoter of health, fecundity and prosperity. She presides over birth, marriage and integration rite etc. She also lives in each house represented by a small wooden plank with two horse-heads or goat horn, fixed on wall or a pillar and covered by the branches of Holm-oak and juniper.⁸⁹ Justek could be approached by prayers, sacrifices and offerings. She alone has roofed sanctuaries (Justek Han), as ceremonial houses for every clan. It is a big hall with four carved pillars, a shelf with a wooden plank with two goat horn or horse-head covered by the branches of Holm-oak (as alter). Walls of the hall are decorated with human and animal images, and wooden wild ram-heads are fixed on both sides of the beautiful carved door. All socio-religious ceremonies are organised here, like rite of

⁸⁸ Wazir Ali Shah, *op. cit.* (p. 78).

⁸⁹ Jean-Yven Loude/ Viviane Lievre, *op. cit.* (p. 352).

birth, rite of passage of the children, rite of consolidation a marriage, rite of funeral (in case of bad weather), prayers of the forefathers for prosperity, gathering of living and death etc.⁹⁰

V. SAJIGOR:

Sajigor is an important deity in Rumbur valley. He is the guardian and protector of the territory and the herds. He brings riches and fecundity and has the power to intervene over climate, especially the spring rains. He has only one sanctuary at Rumbur which is approached with prayers, sacrifice and offerings on the occasions of festivals, prestige feasts (Biramor), agrarian rites, departure and return of herds etc.⁹¹

VI. WARIN AND PRABA:

Warin and Praba are the two most important deities of the Kalash in Birr valley, having powers and attributes similar to that of Sajigor in Rumbur and Ingao in Bumburet. They are more powerful than Mahandev and have a great power to destroy. Kalash sacrifice he-goats in their sanctuaries on the occasion of Chaumos and hang the horns on the trees there. Sacrifices are also made there before departure of herds to summer pastures and return from there in autumn, and at time of sowing.⁹²

⁹⁰ Zaheer-ud-Din, *op. cit.*

⁹¹ Ibid (p. 351).

⁹² Shahzada Hissam-ul-Mulk, *op. cit.* (p. 82-83).

VII. INGAO:

Ingao is the most respected and popular deity in Bumburet valley, having powers and attributes similar to that of Sajigor in Rumbur and Warin in Birr. He has powers a little less than Mahandev but has power to destroy more than any Kalash deity. He is responsible for cattle and cereal crops along with other deities. He has no altar but rather a sanctuary on the hillside opposite Batrik village, where the Kalash offer sacrifices of one coloured animals on the occasions of Chaumos, before the departure of herds to summer pastures and return from there in autumn, and at time of sowing.⁹³

VIII. JATCH:

Jatch is a female deity who is responsible for prosperity and fertility of the lands and crops. She protects herds, keeps the diseases away and helps to find lost animals. Her sanctuaries/altars are set up in higher parts of the villages near to the stable of goats, represented by a wooden carving in the form of lozenge, drawing of horns and a hole. Prayers, sacrifices and offering are held in these sanctuaries in forms of occasional, agricultural and pastoral rites.⁹⁴ Sacrifices and offering of food, especially milk products, are offered to restore good weather, to stop babies from crying and while leaving of the herds for summer pastures and on its return to the villages in autumn.

⁹³ Ibid (p. 81).

⁹⁴ Jean-Yven Loude/ Viviane Lievre, *op. cit.* (p. 353).

A Kalash myth says that once a shepherd, named Masen, has lost his ram and while searching for it he found Jatch on the hillside led by a shadow. The shepherd did not see the actual person but followed the shadow to Veran village. There he came into a large room where all the Dew (deities) were sitting. When he named his ram, Saradanz, the deities did not return it to him but gave him a stone to be placed in a Malotsh and told him to entreat the stone if any goat was lost. Any one who offer sacrifice in this Malotsh will find his lost goats.⁹⁵ Jatch along with Justek and Kutshumai are the popular female deities of the Kalash who are responsible for domestic matters, especially the female issues apart from other function. There are other female deities like Surisan and Goshdoi who are responsible for protection and fecundity of cattle.

IX. KUTSHUMAI:

Kutshumai is a female divinity having power, functions and attributes similar to that of Jatch, but she is more powerful and important than Jatch. Like many other deities of the Kalash, she resides in Bashgal and refused to immigrate to Kalash valleys. She protects fruits and crops and has power to give a child to a barren woman. Kutshumai has also authority over the matters of environment having power to improve bad weather. Her sanctuary is placed in a fault in the mountain, represented by naturally carved stone, which is approached with sacrifice (of she-goat), offerings and prayers. She is entreated by the men individually on behalf of

⁹⁵ Shahzada Hissam-ul-Mulk, *op. cit.* (p. 82-83).

women for protection of pregnancy, difficulty in birth and to have a child.⁹⁶ This female deity was also acknowledged by the people of Prasun in Nuristan (former Kafiristan). She (Krumai by Robertson and Kushumai by Jettmar) appears as a wild goat and resides in Trich Mir, the highest mountain of the Hindu Kush lies in Chitral, having attributes and functions very similar to Kutshumai of the Kalash.⁹⁷

X. GRIMOR:

Importance and function Grimor can be understand through this story: "There was a wise man named Bagorai. Once he went astray with his goats and his daughter went in search of them. Finally she found the goats in a place called Awai, but his father was not with them. The shepherd told the girl that her father had concealed himself in the ear of a greenish goat.⁹⁸ She was annoyed and began to curse, and on account of this Bagorai turned into stone. He declared that anyone who lost his goats should make an offering to him addressing him as Grimor. He has a sanctuary in Birr valley. His shepherd name was Kasawer and he has another Malotsh were offerings are made."⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Jean-Yven Loude/ Viviane Lievre, *op. cit.* (p. 353);

Shahzada Hissam-ul-Mulk, *op. cit.* (p. 81).

⁹⁷ Karl Jettmar, *The Religion of the Hindu Kush (Vol. I The Religion of the Kafirs)*, Oxford & IBH Publishing Co. Pvt. LTD., New Delhi, 1986 (p. 40);

George Scott Robertson, *The Kafirs of the Hindu-Kush*, Oxford University Press, Karachi, 1985 -first published in England in 1896- (p. 384).

⁹⁸ It is commonly believed by the Kalash (as well as by the Khow before their enlightenment with Islamic beliefs) that some times fairies and other supernatural beings penetrate into the body of greenish goats.

⁹⁹ Shahzada Hissam-ul-Mulk, *op. cit.* (p. 82).

XI. SURISAN AND GOSHDOI:

Surisan and Goshdoi are the two important divinities who are responsible for protection and fecundity of cattle. Surisan, a female deity, comes to power in winter season, from winter solstice, *Chaumos* (December) to spring equinox, *Hamal* (March), and other female deity *Goshdoi* takes over for summer season, from *Hamal* to *Chaumos*. The influence of these divinities makes up for the absence of Balumain: it was as though that god had given over two attributes of himself so that the yearly cycle might be completed without hardship. They do not have any sanctuary or physical representation, so prayers and offerings for them are made in the stable of goats at the time of their arrival and departure, one succeeding the other to take over the charge for their respective period.¹⁰⁰ There are also sacrifice, special prayers and offering to Surisan or Goshdoi in the stables of goat at departure of the herds to the pastures in the spring and at its return in the autumn. Linked with the goat, the most important element of Kalash society, and with sacred seasons of *Chaumos* and *Hamal*, the two divinities have great importance in Kalash society.

XII. SHIGAN:

Shigan is a deity who is worshipped in Darazguru village of Bumburet valley. He is not so powerful divinity but is considered as a representative of Mahandev, the famous deity of the Kalash in all three valleys. He has a small altar

¹⁰⁰ Jean-Yven Loude/ Viviane Lievre, *op. cit.* (p. 210);

Wazir Ali Shah, *op. cit.* (p. 76).

symbolized with two horse heads in the wall. In the Kalash society when the *Jameli*¹⁰¹ (child/offspring of the daughter) are ill, then the shaman, Dehar, will offer sacrifice to Shigan for their health.¹⁰²

XIII. SUCHI:

Suchi is one of the important divine beings of the Kalash who is venerated in form of good fairy. In Kalash ideology there are fairies or supernatural beings with less power than the divinities. They are the guardians of wild sheep/goats and ibex, and they can assist hunters by allowing them to kill their charges. The fairies have authority over summer pastures and can favour those shepherd who seek their pleasure by granting them access to these pastures, and may harm those who make them angry. They may also secretly give their support to a human being by granting special powers, clairvoyance etc. They reside in remote and inaccessible natural sites like summits, high pastures, glaciers and mountain lakes etc. The famous Trichmer and Durik Mountains, Bahuk and Durik Lakes and many other remote places are known as the dwellings of fairies. The fairies are propitiated with offerings of milk and bread, prayers and smoke of juniper or butter, that is called Suchi Saras (prayers of the fairies) or Tshintchik (action to get pleasure of the fairies). A carved stake is planted or the horns of the hunt animal is hanged on a stake in alter of the fairies by

¹⁰¹ In Kalash society (as well as in Khow tradition) a lot of care, attention and respect is given to the children of daughters who are called *Jameli*. After their marriage the daughters are not restricted to their own parents only, but they considered as daughters of the whole respective clan and village, besides her parents every member of the clan and village shares responsibilities regarding the daughter and her children.

¹⁰² Shahzada Hissam-ul-Mulk, *op. cit.* (p. 82).

the heroes on their return from war or hunting.¹⁰³ Although the status and powers of the fairies are less than that of the deities but their respect and veneration is much than some deities in many occasions. The fairies are closer to human beings as compare to the deities. There are a number of legends where the fairies are linked with the deities to prove their importance and high status in Kalash ideology.

XIV. BHUT:

Demons or evil spirits that can terrify human beings and can kill them are called Bhut by the Kalash. These are spirits of the night or vague shadows that can not be seen, but some times take the forms of snakes. They dwell in the water (especially springs and lakes) and the underworld. Some remote areas, caves and mountain lakes are known as dwellings of evil spirits or demons. The Khow tribe of Chitral also share the Kalash in this idea. Evil spirits some times influence (hypnotise) human being, so that they act and talk in the way desired and directed by theses spirits. People approaching some specific remote areas that are known as dwellings of evil spirits may come into contact with them or, by error, stumble against them or trample their children, so they get angry and harm those people. Sacrifice of sheep, offerings or smoke of juniper, called Bhut Saras, is done as curative or propitiatory rites in the events of illness or fear caused by meeting with the demons.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Jean-Yven Loude/ Viviane Lievre, *op. cit.* (p. 354).

¹⁰⁴ Ibid (p. 355);

Wazir Ali Shah, *op. cit.* (p. 74).

C. ANCESTOR, ANIMAL, BIRD AND NATURE VENERATION IN KALASH THOUGHT:

Beside the beliefs of the Kalash in the supernatural beings, many forms of nature, animal and ancestor veneration also prevail in the religion of the Kalash. They express high regard, respect and devotion to these things, but that is not going beyond veneration to the stage of worship at all.

I. ANCESTOR VENERATION:

The dead ancestors play an essential role in the religion, society and everyday life of the Kalash. They honour them and hallow their memory, believing that the dead (especially leaders and heroes) can affect the life of the later generation. The dead ancestors protect the living, but insist also upon the maintenance of customs, punishing by sickness or misfortune those who breach it. Their goodwill is unfailingly sought by means of offerings during festivities. Ancestors normally enter into full status only after completion of various post-funerary rituals and customs.¹⁰⁵

The making of Gandao (large wooden carved effigy for the memory of the dead ancestors) or Gundurik (small wooden statue of ancestor resembled by a man seated or on horseback) and Mandaik (invitation of the living to the dead to share their hopes by taking part in festival feast, coming from their wooden coffins and from their cemeteries) are the best practical examples and climax of ancestor veneration in Kalash society.

¹⁰⁵ Jean-Yves Loude/ Viviane Lievre, *op. cit.* (p. 169-173).

Though the Kalash give great importance to showing consideration and respect to the souls of their ancestors and try to glorify the dead by giving feasts at their death and raising wooden effigies in their memory and also by giving food to people as well as sacrifices to gods on their behalf, and even keeping food in or near their coffins, however there are no definite instance of their worshipping the effigies of theses ancestors or asking for their aid in worldly matters. All their efforts are directed towards 'setting uneasy souls of the ancestors' and gain their pleasure by charity on their behalf.¹⁰⁶

The Kalash believe that the soul or spirit of the dead remains near his or her home for a long time, and would dwell in his or her wooden representation. Their beliefs and practice regarding ancestors have been influenced by the Bashgali Kafirs, which is reflected in various Kalash traditions (see the detail in chapter 3).

The Kalash do not fear the dead, but they avoid provoking them to anger. Their cult of dead aims rather at monopolising them, at involving them at every instant in the struggle of living. They offer sacrifices of animal on behalf of the dead ancestors but do not slaughter animals in the cemetery, however they may strew breads on an ancestor's tomb to pacify or propitiate him. They probably did so also at the foot of the statues in days when many such statues were aligned beside the coffins. If a man is stricken by an inexplicable illness, he will call upon a healer endowed with the power of discerning the root of the complaint by the oscillations of a bow, the *tum'kutchwao*. If he determines that the illness is due to the displeasure of an

¹⁰⁶ Wazir Ali Shah, *op. cit.* (p. 72).

ancestor, then the sick man or a member of his family will carry out a *Kushurik*, that is, break bread upon his tomb.¹⁰⁷ Nevertheless ancestor veneration is one of the main aspects of Kalash religious ideology.

II. ANIMAL VENERATION:

Beside ancestor veneration the Kalash also venerate some animals and birds. They are linked with deities and fairies to divinise their status and characteristics. According to Kalash myth:

“At the beginning of the time, the gods, sprits, men, animals and plans all lived together, communicated, and understood one another’s language. Then something happened that separated them all. There are several versions of the story:

In the first version, the Kalash belonged to a privileged but mortal human species, conscious of their difference from the divine and of the precariousness of each existence. This knowledge was intolerable; the humans refused it and separated from the gods on an amicable basis. In the second version, the Kalash invoke a conflict between men and spirits concerning bread, complicated by a gross error committed by a woman in connection with pure wheat. The golden age thus ended with a more violent break. Human found themselves deprived of the ideal condition of subsistence, like Adam and Eve in the version of paradise lost imported from Islam. In third version, other “Kalash” arrived and drove out the Kalash, a more realistic reference to unfortunate historical events transposed into myth.

¹⁰⁷ Jean-Yven Loude/ Viviane Lievre, *op. cit.* (p. 169-173).

Whatever the cause of the fall, the results were all the same: the animals and the humans (of that first "generation") separated from the fairies and gods were changed into rock drawings and stone status in an inaccessible place in the mountains. The present Kalash recall this primordial drama by drawing and by the bestiary in bread which they consider equally useful for the increase of their livestock."¹⁰⁸ Following are the most popular forms of animal veneration in Kalash thought:

a. THE HORSE:

The most prominent figure of animal veneration is **the horse** that possesses an important place in Kalash thought. They believe that the horse was created first of all animals.¹⁰⁹ The presence of divine is symbolised by wooden heads of this revered animal in the sanctuaries of Sajigor, Mahandev, Justek and others. Like many other mythologies, association of the horse with divine world is also reflected in many mythological stories of the Kalash where the deities use it for riding. According to Kalash tradition when Balumain, the greatest of all deities, came to the Kalash valleys for the first time, he was seated upon his horse. He also agreed to come and take part in the Chaumos each year, but he demanded that his horse be well fed. At Bumburet the Kalash offer wheat for Bulumain's horse during Chaumos in a place called Indre'in. The role of the horse also fits

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. (p. 234-236);

Peter Snoy, *Dizala Wat*, Franz Steiner Verlag, Wiesbaden, 1974 (p. 84).

¹⁰⁹ Wazir Ali Shah, *Notes on Kalash folklore* (p. 75).

into the shamanic context of Kalash society. It was indeed a shaman, a Dehar, transported on horseback, who threw light on the topography of the other world through his ecstatic experience. The function of the horse as a carrier of souls formulates another divine status of it in Kalash thought.¹¹⁰ Despite of the importance of the horse in Kalash mythology, it can hardly be seen in Kalash valleys.

b. IBEX/MARKHOR:

The Kalash respect **Ibex** (wild goat with large curved horns), **Markhor** (wild goat with big horns and long hairy skin) and **wild-sheep** considering them as goats and sheep of the fairies. Drawing the pictures of ibex and Markhor in the walls and pillars of Justek Han and fashioning its figurine with thick wheaten dough, during the Chaumos festival signify its sacred and important nature in Kalash society.¹¹¹

c. THE FOX:

Despite the bad reputation of the fox for its cowardice and shamelessness, sometimes a positive replica of this poor animal have been created in Kalash society as an invisible spirit whose grandeur is proportionate to the baseness of that prowler of the Holm-oak wood. This spirit is the Onjesta-Lawak, the pure fox of another kind, the fecundating envoy who makes love with the women

¹¹⁰ Jean-Yven Loude/ Viviane Lievre, *op. cit.* (p. 173-175).

¹¹¹ *Ibid* (p. 336).

during the period of sexual abstinence. The Kalash also observe Lawak Biik, in which the fox are been unearthed and frightened for good or bad omen, in the last days of Chaumos.¹¹²

III. BIRD VENERATION:

Besides animal the Kalash venerate some birds as well. Linked with the deities and other supernatural beings, some birds have great importance in Kalash mythological traditions. Popular forms of respect for birds in Kalash ideology and their society are:

a. THE EAGLE:

The Kalash respect the **eagle** with russet-coloured plumage, which they call "**Mandawar**" or "**Golden Eagle**". They distinguish it from the Goruelik whose plumage is light coloured and they shoot for its tasty meat. They also use its fat, skin and powdered bones as a medicine. But they never kill golden eagle, because some of the deities appear in form of eagle. According to a Kalash tradition:

"In the old days, a hunter wanted to shoot a golden eagle. But as he took aim, a man seated on a stool took the place of the bird. He lowered his rifle, and the bird reappeared. Three times this happened. As soon as he aimed again, he saw the man seated. Then he fell unconscious and became ill. The medium with

¹¹² Ibid (p. 301-302).

a bow was consulted, and he said that the Mandawar (golden eagle) was Mahandev's wife and that, to regain his health, the sick man must slaughter kid (small goat) in honour of the god he had offended."

Balumain gave his faithful the design of an eagle, one of his representations, a tangible presence. The tradition says:

"When Balumain came to the Kalash valleys for the first time, a bird - an eagle - bought from the sky two fresh round cheeses, decorated with designs of wing, which he placed on Balumain's horse. Balumain commanded the Kalash to reproduce those designs on galettes (big breads) during Chaumos festival. The Kalash conform exclusively to the orders of Balumain and make galettes with the design of eagle's wings, every year on the occasion of Chaumos." If one saw a pair of eagles whistling by playing their wings during the Chaumos, it could be considered as good omen for the year. That was also the case if one saw an eagle gliding over one's house or one's stable. Appearance of eagles during the Chaumos is clear sign for coming of gods, especially of Balumain.¹¹³

b. **THE CROW:**

The Kalash also respect the crow, but not the ordinary black one, rather they believe in the existence of an imaginary "**White Crow**" that would come to Kalash valley during the winter solstice, as a messenger of the Creator, to collect

¹¹³ Ibid (p. 267-269).

the wishes of the Kalash. As the final act of Chaumos festival the Kalash observe Kagayak, the night of the white crow. This is a long vigil, waiting for the white crow that would come at dawn and would carry off the wishes of the households. There is an interesting mythological tale about the idea of the white crow among the Kalash:

“In olden times, the Creator decided to divide luck equally among all human beings. He sent the spirits who served him throughout the world to check, in the course of a single night, that no one had dozed off, as he had demanded. But everywhere people were sleeping, with the exception of one Kalash, who was fashioning a figurine which kept him up until dawn. The spirits reported to God that only a Kalash had not slept all the night. So God decreed that each year he would send an assistant to gather up the desire of the Kalash. The following year, on the appointed night, the Kalash did not go to bed, and waited. But no one knew in what guise the spirit would come. They made their wishes, which were granted, but they were unable to discover the identity of the messenger. It was only much later, in the time of Naga Dehar, that Faizi of Birr was filled with overwhelming desire to see the messenger. The shaman advised him to attain a state of purity five nights before the long vigil. ‘Then you must kill a bull for the people of Birr who will be praying during this night, and share out the meat. After that you must go to the top of the very high mountain of Baliar and sacrifice a kid for the fairies.’ Faizi carried out his advice to the letter and

perceived a white crow descending from the heavens. At sight of this apparition, he fell unconscious and remained so until sunrise. In the stable, his son Pane was praying for his return before going off to find him. After they had met, they went home and sacrificed a goat. As they were fumigating the stable with juniper, Naga Dehar appeared. He fell into a trance and declared: 'Every year, you must sacrifice a kid (young goat) for fairies in the mountains and another first-born of a goat, at Shula Kui (mountain). If you do that, Faizi! your kid (offspring) will prosper, otherwise they will perish. You must remain at Shula Kui for three days, praying that your family may spread as the dew falls from the stars. You must eat nothing but seven grains of wheat and seven grapes.' Today, his lineage carries on this tradition."¹¹⁴

IV. NATURE VENERATION:

The Kalash respect and sanctify some feature of the environment. Some trees, mountains, lakes, stones, fire and other elements of nature are linked with deities, fairies and other super-natural beings to give them sacred nature. Here are some popular forms of nature veneration in Kalash thought apart from its importance in their socio-religious life:

a. THE FIRE:

The profound impact of environmental conditions on Kalash thought can be observed in every aspect of their life. Importance of the fire can be realised as

¹¹⁴ Ibid (p. 323).

the major means of protection against harsh and cold weather that continues in Kalash valleys round the year except few months of the summer. This might be the basis for respect of the Kalash for the fire and its place in the houses.¹¹⁵ But the vital role the fire during rituals sanctifies its status in Kalash society. Everything always began with a fire. While performing rituals fire is lit first, in the particular place, usually in front of the deities' symbols. Then branches of juniper, blood of sacrificed animal and crumbs of offerings is put in the fire as essential part of the rituals. Moving around the fire during special events of festivals and during confirmation rite of the marriage is another popular form of rituals.¹¹⁶

The night of torches/light, *Tchanja Rat*, in which the Kalash demonstrate lighting of gigantic torches made of light-wood, *Dow* (= Dew or Deva), and big bonfire during final nights of Chaumos, are the best examples of the respect for fire in Kalash society. Light-wood, fast burning wood of Chujin or Edible Nut Pine (Chalghoza) tree, is a priceless gift of the gods for the Kalash. Khoday revealed the power of this wood to men at the movement of Creation. He said: "I am giving you two legs, but you need a third, I give a stick to the old men. I am giving you two eyes, but you need a third, and I give you light-wood."¹¹⁷ *Dow* is used by the Khow as well but without any clear veneration, however they use the term of Dow-diro (affected by Dow) probably taken from the Kalash.

¹¹⁵ Gul Murad Khan, *op. cit.* (p. 35).

¹¹⁶ Zaheer-ud-Din, *op. cit.*

¹¹⁷ Jean-Yven Loude/ Viviane Lievre, *op. cit.* (p. 297-298).

b. TREES:

Many trees have great importance in Kalash society due to its significance in their daily life, but some of these trees are linked with their mythological concepts, traditional rites and the deities, and thus venerated in different form. Few examples of these kinds are presented in the following lines:

i. HOLM-OAK:

The Kalash revered the Holm-oak (Baloot) in the first place on account of the vital force it represented: its immortality, its astonishing power of disregarding the seasons by retaining its leaves. Because of this power, the tree ensured fodder for the goats even in winter; at Tsyam, the Kalash were probably closer to the mountains regions where goats replaced cattle in scale of economic values. The long-lasting fire of Holm-oak is another blessing for the people living in the mountain region where the winter season is always cold and harsh.

The juniper tree and the Holm-oak took on a sacred character in Kalash thought through their association with Balumain. These trees made it possible for life to continue, and that permanent gift could only be the expression of a divine generosity, attentive and near at hand. Balumain had revealed the sacred characteristics of this tree through shaman. According to Kalash tradition, "for seven years, a light appeared continuously in a Holm-

oak tree (when the Kalash were settled in Tsyam, their mysterious homeland). The people did not know what was happening. The shaman explained that this tree was sacred. A purified child must present offerings to it.¹¹⁸

The Holm-oak symbolises the life cycle; it is a gift of the gods, it feed the goats, which in turn feed humans, enabling them, in their turn, to feed the gods (in the form of sacrifices and offerings).¹¹⁹ Branches of this revered tree along with the branches of Juniper are placed on the symbols of deities in the sanctuaries and houses.

ii. JUNIPER:

Juniper is more sacred than Holm-oak. At Tsyam, Balumain had revealed the sacred properties of this shrub, through shaman who explained the beneficial action of flaming juniper. The fire of juniper lighted at the opening of rites and festivals signifies the coming of a great purity.¹²⁰ The fire and fumigation of juniper is done as the essential feature of rites and as best way of purification. The Kalash consider juniper as flower of the winter. They also believe that the gods and spirits like the scent of juniper.¹²¹ During funeral rites the shaman makes speech, to give praise to the dead,

¹¹⁸ Ibid (p. 189).

¹¹⁹ Ibid (p. 277).

¹²⁰ Ibid (p. 197).

¹²¹ Ibid (p. 248).

holding a branch juniper in his hands. A sprig of juniper is also placed in the dead man's turban, during funeral dances, and he keeps it with him in his coffin.¹²²

iii. WALNUT:

The Kalash respect walnut tree. Although walnut trees are one of the main resources of Kalash, but sometimes the use of its leaves and fruit during performing rituals gives it sacred nature. In the last day of Joshi festival, when the dance and song reaches its climax, during final session in the evening, small branches and leafs of walnut tree are brought and every body (male, female, old, young and even small kids carried by their mothers) holds and shake a sprig of it, which is called "Chhan Lengeik" (leaves moving ceremony). The Kalash believe in presence of deities and other super natural beings during these movements, as the Dehar/shaman declare their arrival and make prophesies depending upon his conversation with them. They would harm those persons who does not hold and shake the sprig of walnut tree. Zhorlai, the most popular walnut bread used by the Kalash at large scale especially in the winter season, is one of their sacred foods, this also indicates to the significance of walnut tree in Kalash society and its veneration of by them.¹²³

¹²² Ibid (p. 156-157).

¹²³ Zaheer-ud-Din, *op. cit.*

c. THE WHEAT:

In Kalash society the wheat and bread made of wheat flour is considered Oshniru, pure and sacred. According to Kalash tradition when the Dehar laid down the sacrificial acts for the first time and built the first sanctuary, the area was marked out by grains of wheat, as it was strewn all round the sanctuary.¹²⁴ In another story, when Naga Dehar went to welcome Balumain, on his first visit to Kalash valleys, he was carrying three seeds of wheat and three branches of juniper. Thus the association of wheat with divinities and rituals indicates its sacred nature.¹²⁵

d. THE SUN:

The sun is another important figure in Kalash thought. Good or bad omen related to the path of the sun reveals its sacred nature. At the end of autumn, the elders of Kalash community attentively observe the setting sun as it sinks behind the mountains, the last point touched by its rays before it disappear. They have long known its path, its coming and going from one solstice to the next, thanks to a series of landmarks they have noted on the peaks. Its yearly return over a particular tree, crest or rock enables them to ensure the strict periodicity of the rites. They say that the sun will enter its winter house for seven days.¹²⁶ The Kalash carve solar wheel on open coffins, always placing the body in the

¹²⁴ Jean-Yves Loude/ Viviane Lievre, *op. cit.* (p. 188).

¹²⁵ Ibid (p. 194).

¹²⁶ Ibid (p. 184).

cemetery in the axis of the sun's daily round. The tunics of the statues are also adorned with solar wheel.¹²⁷

e. **MOUNTAINS:**

The Kalash venerate some mountains for its association with fairies and the souls of ancestors. These mountains are considered as dwellings of fairies. The souls of the people of Birr, Bumburet and Rumbur go up to **Palar**, the white mountain above the Rumbur valley. It is said that heroes, the being associated with the fairies, are welcomed at the peak of **Trich Mir**, the highest point of Chitral.¹²⁸

f. **THE LAKES:**

There are a number of legendary and lakes in Kalash valleys and the Kalash venerate most of them. **Bahuk** is the most sacred lake of the Kalash that lies between the two picturesque Kalash valleys of Bumburet and Rumbur. The Kalash believe that after their death, their souls go to Bahuk Lake. The area is famous amongst both the Kalash and the Muslim Khow community as the resting place of fairies. The surrounding areas are the summer pastures of the Kalash community and villagers from Ayun. The area also has some magnificent cedars some 1,200 years old. **Lake Awazak** is situated in southwest of Bumburet valley, on the border of Pakistan and Afghanistan. Its water flows into the

¹²⁷ Ibid (p. 173-174).

¹²⁸ Ibid (p. 162).

Bashgal valley in the Nuristan. Considerable superstitions are associated with the lake. It is believed that when an ill-fortuned person looks into the lake, the lake looks blood-red, likely a bad omen illustrating his or her death. The flora around the lake attracts shepherds, who bring their herds up to the lake for grazing.¹²⁹ **Lake Durik** is situated on the top of the mountain *Durik*. It is considered to be the abode of sacred deities and fairies. People approaching are warned of their reception by the fact that those favoured find it calm and peaceful. But those in disfavour find it rough and they see a red bed in the middle with fairies or spirits on it. Such person may face some misfortune or die on the spot.¹³⁰

D. KALASH SHAMANISM:

There is neither any prophet nor any sacred scripture in the religion of the Kalash, but Shamanism plays a vital role in this regard. Shaman is the one whose supernormal powers as a practitioner of sacred (e.g. as healer, seer, or conductor of soul) are attributed to contact with spirits when in an ecstatic state. Shaman is the name given to such specialists by the Tungus of Siberia. The term is used more widely to denote anyone performing a similar role among other Arctic peoples (e.g. the Chukchi, Eskimos, and Lapps). By further extension, the term is employed as a technical one in the Science of Religion, and Shamanism is described as occurring in many cultures e.g. Africa, Indonesia and Japan. Sometimes it is the dominant form of religious experience;

¹²⁹ <http://www.camat.org.pk/link.b.php?goto=kalash>

¹³⁰ Wazir Ali Shah, *Notes on Kalash folklore* (p. 73)

elsewhere it may be an isolated or peripheral phenomenon. As intermediaries between the spirit-world and the people, Shamans claim direct contact with spirits, whether those of living persons, of plants, animals and other feature of the environment, with the master-spirits (e.g. of rivers or mountains) or with ghosts of the dead. The interaction occurs in a trance state, often induced by dancing and/or drumming. In ecstasy the shaman may become aware of things far off, be able to foretell the future or predict movements of game, and be capable of remarkable feat (swallowing hot embers, self-stabbing without wounding).¹³¹

The Kalash use the word “Dehar” or “Betan” for shaman. Their mythologies, dogmas, rituals, and all socio-religious customs can not be completed without the reference of “Dehar”. He is considered as spiritual leader and religious guide of the Kalash. His role in Kalash religion is comparable to the role of prophets in revealed religions, as stated by Kazi Braman: *‘You Muslims follow your prophet Muhammad (May peace and mercy of Allah be upon him) and the book revealed to him but we, the Kalash, neither have any prophet nor any book, we follow our Dehar/Betan who guides us in our religious matters’*.¹³²

Shamanism worked in Kalash society as permanent institution. In every generation of the Kalash there exist one or more Dehar who guide them regarding their religious matters, especially in the issues related to the supernatural world. As intermediary between the supernatural and the people, the Dehar claims direct contact with spirits,

¹³¹ *The Penguin Dictionary of Religion*, Penguin Book, Middlesex, 1987 (page: 293-4).

¹³² Kazi Braman of Rumbur valley in his audio-taped interview by the researcher.

fairies and other supernatural beings. The interaction occurs in a trance state, often induced in special events by the sight of sacrificed animal's blood and/or the odour of the juniper's smoke or some times by dancing and drumming. In ecstasy the Dehar, through his powers of communication with the divine world, may become aware of things far off, be able to make prophesy of the future or predict movements of game.

The Dehar 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. Shaman can also interact with fairies and get information through them. The fairies also convey instructions from gods to shamans. It was the Dehar who built the first altar and laid down the sacrificial acts and other related matters for the first time.

Naga Dehar was the greatest of all the shamans in the history of the Kalash, whose power invaded space and time and penetrated the tradition of the Kalash, who badly needed a guide at that time. It is said that a book was revealed to the Dehar Thanuk in Birr.¹³³ Some details on impact of shamanism on the Kalash will be given in chapter 3.

E. KALASH CONCEP OF HEREAFTER:

The question of hereafter or what will happen with a person after the death is one of the most important matters in every religion. Every religion has its own interpretation of the otherworld but the concept of hereafter is one of the most important aspects of human

¹³³ Kazi Adina of Birir valley in his audio- taped interview by the researcher.

concern and no one could ignore it. The Kalash have ambiguous concept of hereafter and there are many contradictory thoughts in this regard. In principle they believe in hereafter, hell and paradise. According to Kalash concept of hereafter any person who does good deeds will go to Behesht (Paradise) after death, while the wicked will be burnt in Duzhakh (Hell).¹³⁴ Kazi Baraman, the religious leader of the Kalash, elaborated the Kalash concept of hereafter:

*"God created men and granted him all resources to build the earth and ordered him to work for the betterment of the humanity. Man has been given freedom of choice to do good deeds or bad ones. He is accountable for his good or bad deeds in hereafter. Once I met a group of Muslim dignities who asked me about the Kalash concept of hereafter. Explaining the idea I told them: 'Neither you (the Muslims) nor we (the Kalash) experienced the hereafter, but we accept it as a matter of fact. We do not negate the Hell, which is (according to your opinion) ready for the Kalash, but we believe that the sinful one will go there. And the Paradise that (according to your opinion) is reserved for the Muslims only, we also do not deny its reality, and believe that any one does a good deed will enter there. We believe that there will be punishment or reward in hereafter according to the deeds of people in this world.'"*¹³⁵

Although the Kalash speak about Qiamat (hereafter) Arasat (day of resurrection and judgement), Behesht (paradise) and Duzhakh (hell), which indicate their belief in

¹³⁴ Shahzada Hissam-ul-Mulk, *Kalash Mythology* (p. 83).

¹³⁵ Kazi Baraman of Rumbur valley, in his audio- taped interview by the researcher.

hereafter, but their real and practical position is entirely different, as there are many contradictory ideas in this regards.

The terms “good” or “bad” have little meaning for the Kalash, the idea of punishment, of God’s avenging action, means nothing at all. Disturbing or litigious matters are settled, repaired and disposed of through the virtues of sacrifices, which imply an immediate sanction. And once purity has been restored, sins do not accumulate. Admittedly, the gods may turn upon a lineage because of an offence and strike its members with bad luck on earth, but the idea of hell does not exist. On the other hand, irreparable offence, such as the murder of another Kalash or insect, entail exclusion.

But setting aside the mental confusion about hereafter, the essential thing for the Kalash is to die in accordance with their tradition. The funeral ceremonies, the rite of passage, help the soul of the deceased towards the realm of survival. However, there exists a preferable form of immortality, that which a man seeks to achieve by his quest for glory: to be raised to a sort of divinisation, materialised by the personalised cult of the ancestors.

In former times, no one knew where a soul went. The Kalash used to think that it escaped from the body through the mouth and the eyes, which remain open for a few seconds after death. Then the shaman revealed it went to the intermediate world of the peaks, midway between the divine and the human. This was a sort of promotion, since it is at that altitude that the fairies live.

The souls of the people of Birr, Bumburet and Rumbur go up to Palar, the white mountain above the Rumbur valley. It is said that the souls of heroes, the beings associated with the fairies, are welcomed at the Peak of Trichmer, the highest peak of Hindu Kush Mountain situated in Chitral.

The souls go to "gilded houses" of after-life across an "invisible bridge" on horseback. As revealed by the shaman Bangutai:

Bangutai, a man inspired, fell ill. It was a long illness. On night, he became worse and fairies carried his soul on horseback to the top of the mountain of Palar. There Bangutai saw all the souls of the dead living in gilded houses shaped like the Kalash houses today. But they were of gold. When they got there, the fairies admitted that they had made a mistake, that it was not Bangutai hour, but Tamin's. They returned to collect Tamin, who was not sick at all. They carried back his soul on horseback. Six day later, Tamin died. Bangutai's soul was able to rejoin his body, which regained health. It was he who revealed to the Kalash the existence of the gilded houses, the homes of souls.¹³⁶

It seems that the Kalash concept of hereafter have gone through many phases. Originally hereafter have no meaning for them; rather they were concern with this world only. Happiness in this life is considered as ultimate success, while bad luck and difficulties on earth are regard as punishment by the gods. As the concept of hereafter was one of the most important aspects of human concern and no one could ignore it, the Kalash borrowed the ideas of hereafter from the Muslims who were ruling the area, and

¹³⁶ Jean-Yven Loude/ Viviane Lievre, *op. cit.* (p. 162-163).

the Kalash were living under their authority as a minority community. They started to use the terms of Qiamat (hereafter) Arasat (day of resurrection), Behesht (paradise) and Duzhakh (hell) in the context that the Muslims of the area use these terms with the same meaning and pronunciation. "Gilded houses" (of the paradise) and "invisible bridge" (Siraat), typical Islamic ideas and terminologies, could also be found in Kalash traditions.

F. STATUS OF WOMAN IN KALASH THOUGHT:

In contrast to the surrounding Muslim culture, the Kalash do not in general separate males and females or frown on contact between the both sexes. Female can freely interact with males in public and has the right to choose her husband, even after marriage and having children she can leave her husband and marry another person. Women can take part in the functions of music and dance in public without any hesitation or restriction; moreover Kalash husbands do not beat their wives contrary to the habit of surrounding tribe. All these, and the fact that there are no severe punishments on sexual crimes in Kalash society, have created a false impression among some that the Kalash culture is sexually promiscuous. In fact the Kalash don't believe in sexually free society, but they have their own social norms and traditions which are absolutely different from that of their Muslim neighbours who are very strict in observing *hijab* for women and conscious about chastity having severe punishment on sexual crimes. In this environment the above mentioned relaxations for Kalash women, seems very strange and creates this false impression about the Kalash tribe. Besides the above mentioned relaxation for women in

Kalash society, there are many religious and social matters in which the females are discriminated or even degraded. For instance:

- I. Females are not allowed to approach all “Oshniru” (pure and sacred) places, the sanctuaries, shrines, alters, grave yards, stables of goats etc. Justek Han (the shrine of goddess Justek), which is related to females, is the only sacred places where women are allowed to enter and participate in rituals, functions and customs.¹³⁷
- II. They are not allowed to participate in religious ceremonies, rituals and offering of sacrifices, but there are some special rituals for them.
- III. Women are not allowed to accompany the funeral processions.
- IV. Female, even little girls, can not eat “Oshniru” (pure and sacred) food, the meat of sacrificed animal, honey and all edible items of offerings.
- V. Females can not touch with their lips the crockery used by the males.
- VI. They are not allowed to take bath or brush their hairs in the house, for this purpose they have to go to riverside even in bad weather. To do one’s hair inside the house would bring on headaches and pain in the eyes, or some mishap to the family.
- VII. They are not allowed to go to upper valley from Chaumos, when a rite of purification takes place in the stables and gods are called upon to protect the herds, until the

¹³⁷ Ibid (p. 56).

spring equinox, so that the land, which was sullied by their presence during the summer season, may regain its purity.

- VIII. The Kalash seclude their women and girls during their menstruation periods, child-birth and post natal period by confining them to a place called "Bashaleni" or "Bashali" until they regain their "purity".¹³⁸ These women are allowed to work within prescribed limits but are not allowed to go home or inside the village because they are considered **untouchable and impure** during these days.
- IX. If a female dies during her stay in Bashali she is considered an evil or wicked and is taken directly to grave yard without serving any formal customs and buried in a side that is specified for this purpose.¹³⁹

¹³⁸ Ibid (p. 53).

¹³⁹ Zaheer-ud-Din, *op. cit.*

5. RELIGIOUS PRACTICES OF THE KALASH

There is no systematic form of rituals (patterned behaviour, often communal, consisting of prescribed actions performed periodically or respectively) in Kalash religion, except some rites on different stages and aspects of life. Sacrifices, offerings and supplication on various occasions like seasonal festivals, ploughing, seeding, threshing, collection of grapes and walnuts, leaving of cattle to the pasture and its return and other similar customs and traditions are the popular forms of the religious practices. The ceremonial chants and dances on festivals; rites on different stages of life like birth, integration, reaching puberty, marriage and death; the Bashali system; manners and taboos and other traditional, seasonal and cultural activities are also considered and performed as religious practices. It is therefore evident that right from the birth of a Kalash to his death he has to live in a particular way, dress in particular manner and perform in certain functions. Failure to do so takes him out of Kalash fold. One simple example would be that if a Kalash woman only gives up the traditional head-dress, *Kopas*, she leaves the Kalash fold. Similarly if she ceases to going to the Bashali (the menstruation house) during monthly courses or for child-birth she is no longer a Kalash.¹⁴⁰

It is, therefore, very difficult to differentiate between cultural activities and religious duties done by the Kalash, because they usually perform the cultural events as religious obligation and do the rituals as cultural event. Different forms of popular Kalash religious practices are described in following lines:

¹⁴⁰ Wazir Ali Shah, *op. cit.* (p. 72).

A. RITUALS:

As it said earlier that there is no systematic form of rituals in Kalash religion, comprising daily, weekly or monthly prayers or other prescribed actions, but some activities on various occasions can be considered as rituals. Most of the rituals are done by *Onjishta Much*, virgin boy who, before performing a ritual, must purify himself by washing his hands and arms with the water that has not crossed a village. Most of the rituals are performed in gatherings collectively but on few occasions people can do it individually. The most important aspect of these rituals is that everything always began with a fire. While performing rituals fire is lit first, in the particular place, usually in front of the deities' symbols. Then branches of juniper and Holm-oak, blood of sacrificed animal and crumbs of offerings is put in the fire as essential part of the rituals. Fumigation with the smoke of juniper is also important and regular feature of Kalash rituals. Moving around the fire during special events of festivals and during confirmation rite of the marriage is another popular form of rituals. Prayers and praise to gods and deities on various occasions are also done as ordinary type of Kalash rituals. Some actions on the occasions of festival and other special events also resemble rituals. For example 'leaves shaking ceremony' during spring festival, Joshi, and the integration rite of the woman with Shishao, pure bread and flaming juniper three times above their heads, during winter festival, Chaumos and all such things that might not be explained or justified by reason could be considered as forms of rituals.¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹ Zaheer-ud-Din, *op. cit.*

B. SACRIFICES AND OFFERINGS:

The most important religious activity of the Kalash is animal sacrifice. In fact during the days of pastoral nomadism the Kalash depended on stock-raising as the main resource, which can easily move with them. In these circumstances animal sacrifice was the most important way of worship that could link them with their gods. But their settlement in Tsyam implied a quite different type of relationship with nature and the divine. The modes of sacrifice took account of new activity in form of agriculture. Although, stock-raising remained the principal resource of the Kalash, vegetal offerings were combined with animal sacrifices.¹⁴²

Nowadays Kalash sacrifice animals, mostly goats but some time sheep and bull as well. They also make offering of edible item, like bread, honey, milk, cheese, butter, wine, dried and fresh fruits etc.

As the Kalash have not special class of priest-sacrificators, two strong youth are selected by the elders for this purpose on the spot. Both of the youth purify themselves by washing their hand and arms with the water that is not crossed a village. While performing rituals the fire is kindled first, in the particular place, usually in front of the deities' symbols. Then branches of juniper and Holm-oak are put into the fire. One of the youth hold the animal and the other seizes it by the beard, pulls its head back and cut its neck from the backside. The tip of its ear is cut and the bloody flesh thrown into the fire. Blood of sacrificed animal is also thrown into the fire, onto the symbols of the deities and

¹⁴² Jean-Yven Loude/ Viviane Lievre, *op. cit.* (p. 187).

onto the branches of Holm-oak on the alters.¹⁴³ Meat of the sacrificed animal is cooked and ate by the male members of the society only; usually stables of the goats are used for this purpose where entry of the women is prohibited. Meat of sacrificed animals is taken to the stables of the goats directly from altars without entering to houses and villages, where the men-folk enjoy this meat with their traditional home-made wine. Women are not allowed to eat most of the sacrificed animals' meat, except the meat of few special sacrifices of she-goat that are specified for the women.¹⁴⁴

The main purpose of sacrifices among the Kalash is to seek the pleasure of god and deities. Some sacrifices are done to please the souls of ancestors. Another purpose of the sacrifices is to gain honour and prestige in the society. There are sacrifices as repentance and fine for violation of religious and social norms. Popular forms of sacrifice in Kalash society are:

I. SACRIFICE ON THE OCCASION OF FESTIVAL:

The most important and popular form of animal sacrifice in Kalash society is the sacrifices of he-goats on the occasion of festivals. For instance, during the festival of Chaumos a large number of he-goats are slaughtered at the sanctuary of Sajigor in Rumbur valley, Warin in Birr and Ingao in Bumburet. Sacrifices are also done during Pool and Uchal festivals.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ Ibid (p. 276-278).

¹⁴⁴ Zaheer-ud-Din, *op. cit.*

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

II. SACRIFICE FOR VIOLATION OF NORMS:

In case of violation of religious or social norms of Kalash society, the person make sacrifice of goat at Malotsh, sanctuary of deities. For example if a man enters the specific area of Bashali or touched a woman staying there he becomes polluted and is not allowed to enter the village unless he takes bath, wear clean dress and sacrifice a he-goat at Malotsh. Likewise if a woman approaches a sacred place like Malotsh, stable of goat, and gave yard etc. sacrifice of an animal must be made otherwise the person, her family or even the whole village can face trouble.¹⁴⁶

III. SACRIFICE ON SPECIAL EVENTS:

There are many sacrifices related to some special events in the society of the Kalash. For instance:

a. SACRIFICE ON CHILD-BIRTH:

Sacrifice of a young goat is made at Justek Han, the house of goddess Justek, before taking the new-born baby to the home. As explained earlier that in Kalash society child-birth takes place at Bashali, the menstruation house. After completing natal and post-natal period of the mother at Bashali, the child is taken to Justek Han for special ceremony. Sacrifice of a young goat is the most important part of this ceremony.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid

b. SACRIFCE ON CONFIRMATION OF MARRIAGE:

A she-goat is sacrificed on the occasion of confirmation and formal approval of marriage at Justek Han. Blood of sacrificed animal is sprinkled on faces of the couple.

c. SACRIFCE FOR HEALTH:

In case of illness, sacrifice of goat is made at the roof of sick person's house, for his health.

d. SACRIFICE IN DIFFERENT STAGES OF MOURNING:

There is special mourning for couples in Kalash society. Wife or husband of deceased person (along with other requirements of mourning) is confined to a particular place of the house called "*Shome*" (the place near to the door) for seven days. After giving sacrifice of a young he-goat (almost one year old) he is allowed to move within the boundaries of the house for a month, after that another sacrifice of a young he-goat will make him able to move around the field within the village but he is not allowed to go beyond upper area of the village to the place of goats or to shrines and alters for three months. After offering final sacrifice of big he-goat, on the occasion either Uchal or Chaumos festival, the mourning period comes to an end and the person can live ordinary life after taking bath and shaving his head and face.

e. SACRIFICE RELATED TO GOATS:

Sacrifice and special prayers and offering are made in the stables at departure of the goat herds to the pastures in the spring and at its return in the autumn. Sacrifice are also done for the health and flourishing of the goats, especially in case of epidemics.

f. SACRIFICE RELATED TO FARMING:

At the time of seeding, a person known for being of good omen makes a sacrifice of a goat at the shrine of Mahandev, sprinkles blood on the seed, on himself and on others people present on this occasion, before seeding is done. Offerings are also made at the fields by farmers individually. At reaping and threshing too, offerings are made and the first five seers (kilograms approximately) of grain are kept aside for sacrifice purpose.¹⁴⁷

IV. SACRIFICE TO GAIN HONOUR AND PRESTIGE IN THE SOCIETY:

The Kalash are very keen to gain honour and prestige for themselves and their families or clans. They try their best to be prominent in the society at any cost. Sacrifices on some special ceremonies are done as the best way to gain honour and prestige among the Kalash. Some examples of these special ceremonies are mentioned below:

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

a. SACRIFICE ON FUNERAL CEREMONY:

The Kalash make sacrifice of a large number of goats and bulls on the occasion of funeral ceremony, to serve best quality of traditional feast to the people attending the ceremony. The feast includes mutton, butter, cheese, honey, wheaten bread and wine. The main purpose of these sacrifices is to gain honour in the society, beside to please god and souls of the ancestors. People from all three valleys of the Kalash are invited to attend these feasts because the main purpose of these sacrifices and feasts is to gain honour and prestige in the society.¹⁴⁸

b. SACRIFICE ON GANDAO MAKING CEREMONY:

Sacrifices of goats are made on the occasion of making the images of the ancestors. If a son wishes to honour the memory of his father he will choose the last day of November for the ceremony of making Gandao, a wooden carved effigy, in the name of his father. He will slaughter goats, as many as for the funeral ceremonies.

c. SACRIFICE ON BIRAMOR CEREMONY:

There is a very rare festival held only in November called Biramor, in which a man or a family wishing to gain honours in the society sacrifices a large number of his own goats and entertains a large majority of the Kalash. The goats

¹⁴⁸ Muhammad Inayatullah, *op. cit.* (p. 363- 364).

are slaughtered at the sanctuaries of different deities, on the roof of each of donor's stables, plus a bull, a goat inside each room of the house and another in the guest room. Some animals offered to Muslims to be slaughtered by themselves (because they do not eat the meat of animals slaughtered by the Kalash) and share the joy of their Kalash neighbours.

C. CUSTOMS AND RITES:

The Kalash observe many unique custom and rites in different stages and aspects of life like birth, marriage and death etc. which are called Dastur. These custom and rites are the most important aspect of the Kalash society, to the extent that any infringement of the Dastur is considered negation of the religion and thus they continue to cling to their Dastur. The customs vary somewhat from valley to valley and from village to village but the principles are essentially the same. The Kalash do not differentiate between Dastur and religious practice, rather they say that we have no particular religious practices except our Dastur. Here is a brief introduction to some important customs and rites of the Kalash society:

I. BIRTH:

As mentioned earlier that the Kalash women spend natal and post natal period in *Bashali*. Usually the women living in Bashali work as midwife, but in case of unavailability of a mature lady in Bashali at time of child birth a close relative (i.e. mother, mother in law, elder sister or aunty etc.) of the woman will accompany her to

Bashali for this purpose. Offering of walnuts in the name of the deity *Dezalik* and special prayer is made for the health of the mother and her expected child. Alter of *Dezalik*, who presides over the births, is a simple wooden plank in the form of woman, with lozenge designs symbolizing the vulva, on the right lateral wall of every Bashali. One of the women present is deputed to honour *Dezalik* with first one walnut, then two, then three, then five, and so on, until the child is born. Birth of new child is announced by gun firing and drum beating at home. The father receives the customary congratulations, *Shaedar*, and offers bread and cheese to his visitors.

After completing post natal period and regaining her purity (usually 20 days for male and 40 days for female child) the mother, with her new born child, leaves the *Bashaleni*. Before entering the village they both must take bath and wear new or at least clean dress and then go to *Justek Han* for offering rituals and customs. Sacrifice of a young goat and distribution of offerings of food items are the main activities on this occasion. The child is then taken to home and there will be a formal celebration and special feast attend by relatives and common people of the village and surroundings.¹⁴⁹

II. GHOTSHNIK OR RITE OF INTEGRATION:

The Kalash celebrate the entry of young children of both sexes into the community. At the age of four, the baby becomes a child, *suda*, and on that day both

¹⁴⁹ Gul Murad Khan, *op. cit.* (p. 35);

Mahmud Danishwar, *Kafiristan* Aatish Fishan Publications, Lahore, 1993 (p. 105-106).

the little boys and the little girls receives a dress and appropriate headgear. The future man is dressed in a white woven dress and a black cap, the little girl in a black woollen dress (gown) with a belt, and the first *kupas (kophesi)*. This is only introductory ceremony for girls. There is no attempt to make a physical distinction between the sexes. In theory, the boys wear dresses until the age of seven, remaining in this informally androgynous situation, with their first trouser, until they accede to adolescence and the fabulous world of pastoral responsibilities. At the same time, the domain of the sacred is open up before them, they can become *Oshniru* "purified", take part in the rituals, have access to tradition and if they should die they are deserving of a man's burial.

During the festival of *Chaumos (Chitirmas)* the Kalash community gather at *Justek Han* (house of the female deity Justek) for the rite of integration, the *Gotshnik*. The children completing the age of four years during the year are presented for the *Tchalik Sambaik* and those reaching seventh years of their age are presented for *Bhut Sambiak*. It is the responsibility of maternal uncles to conduct the rite and to provide the necessary garments, like food for the guests and dress for the children. They lovingly dress the children in the insignia of its new status. Usually a long shirt takes the place of a dress for boys, together with a wild belt with a little bell. The cap is sewn with bear claws, marmot bones, partridge beaks, beads and shells, topped with a dyed tuft of wild sheep wool "to help him to become a hunter". The bigger boys are attired in the "image of ancestor", so as to resemble a funerary

status. They wear superb white woollen trousers adorned with embroidery and fringes, a shirt and a new pullover, with crossed woven bandoliers representing cartridge belts. On their heads they wear caps topped by white turbans.

Once the initiates are dressed, a purified adolescent boy throws grapes and walnuts into the fire, in honour of the goddess *Justek*, and then through the chimney hole, for the development of newly promoted. Then the women place multicoloured cotton bandoliers and necklaces of almonds round the necks of their guests. To the maternal uncle, the "dresser", the family of the father presents dishes and utensils, recognition of the bride's fecundity. This is a tribute to the maternal function, to the uncle's house. In exchange the uncle would give his nephew or niece a kid or a lamb, a young animal which would grow alongside the child and which would later swell the father's herd and still further cement the alliance between the families. Trays full of dried fruits (walnuts, almonds, mulberries, apricots etc.) and baskets containing fresh (grapes, apples, pears, pomegranates etc.) fruits brought by the family of each candidate out of its stores and intended especially for the relatives in marriage are presented at the end of the function.¹⁵⁰

III. GIRLS PUBERTY:

The Kalash seclude their women and girls during their menstruation periods, child-birth and post natal period by confining them to a place called "*Bashaleni*" or

¹⁵⁰ Jean-Yven Loude/ Viviane Lievre, *op. cit.* (p. 281-284)

Muhammad Inayatullah, *op. cit.* (p. 258-260).

"*Bashali*" until they regain their "purity". The women during their stay in the Bashali are considered impure and untouchable, that is why they are not allowed to go home or inside the village, but they are allowed to live and work within prescribed limits of Bashali only.

The Bashali is a special community house for the Kalash women. These houses are set up outside the settlement near watercourses in each big village of Kalash valleys. The isolation of women in the Bashali reinforces feminine solidarity; the senior members share their experiences with new generation; confidences are exchanged, about health problems connected with pregnancy, about fears of sterility, about marital relations, about love and desire.¹⁵¹ When a girl goes to the Bashaleni for the first time, her family members or friends take *Ishperi* (milk or its products and fruits) to her.¹⁵²

IV. MARRIAGE

Marriage is the essential part of Kalash social system. Usually marriage is done out of the family and cousin marriage is not allowed as marriageable descendents must be separated by over seven generations. If a married man marries with another woman, the first wife has the right to live with her husband or leave him, and the husband is bound to return to her all the things that he brought from her parent's home at the time of her marriage.

¹⁵¹ Ibid (p. 53).

¹⁵² Wazir Ali Shah, *op. cit.* (p. 76).

There are two kind of marriage in Kalash society, 1) Arranged marriage and 2) *Arlatshing* marriage. Although some marriages are arranged by families but usually Kalash boys and girls decide and arrange their own marriages. In cases of marriage arranged by the families, the engagement can take place earlier and the two families may have repeated negotiation on the bride price.¹⁵³ If a father decides to celebrate a marriage, *Sariek*, the great consecration of a durable union between his daughter and his son-in-law, he will carry out this decision in November, the period recognised by the Kalash as the "month of unions".¹⁵⁴ After the announcement of the marriage a delegation of the family members of the bridegroom along the other people of their lineage will visit the house of bride to present the gifts agreed upon at the engagement ceremony. The members of delegation coming for *Khaltabari* will be received with honour and served a lavish feast.

The base price for a first marriage is about 60 *mal*, "goods": a disparate collection of objects comprising tin dishes, *tchu tchu mal*, ("the dry price"), and black cast-iron pots, very heavy and expensive, the equivalent of five goats; iron tripods for fire; baskets woven of juniper roots; one or several rifles, perhaps some goats, and one or several bulls. Nowadays some people replace payment in kind by rupees. After the ceremony of *khaltabari* the girl would be considered as wife of her husband. She would continue to live in her father's house for an indefinite time, this depends upon how long it took her to make up his mind to go to live with her

¹⁵³ M. Alauddin, *op. cit.* (p. 41).

¹⁵⁴ Jean-Yven Loude/ Viviane Lievre, *op. cit.* (p. 72).

husband, but change of her status is marked by the new application when she resides in her husband's house.¹⁵⁵

There is no ritual or religious ceremony at the time of *khaltabari* or while shifting the bride to her husband's home. A ceremony will take place at the *Justek Han* "to mix the blood of the couple" some six month after the marriage when the wife is definitely settled in her husband's home. Smoking juniper is waved over the wife's head to purify her, and the blood of a kid (young goat) splashed on the husband's face rids him of all attain. A few drop of blood are then poured into their ears; this is the *shisha-istongas*, the only occasion for a woman to experience purification by the blood of kid, on the same footing as a man.¹⁵⁶

The other form of marriage in the Kalash society is called *Twali* or *Arlatshing*, which means elopement or "love marriage". Marriage by elopement is rather frequent and counted as one of the "great customs" (*ghōna dastūr*). In this form of marriage the couple decide their marriage themselves without consulting their elders. When a boy and girl agreed to marry each other, the girl will go to her "lover's" home and start her life as his wife without the consent of her parents. Then there will be exchange of delegations among the clans of both sides to settle the issue of bride price and other matters related to the marriage. Ceremony to confirm the marriage will take place, like arrange marriage, after six months.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid (p. 75-82).

¹⁵⁶ Ibid (p. 93).

In the Kalash society a married female also has the right to leave her husband and marry another person who is ready to pay *Duk*, double bride price. Although the Kalash society has its traditional way-out to settle the issue of wife-elopement, but it leads to a quasi-feud situation between clans until peace is negotiated by mediators, in the form of the double bride-price paid by the abductor to the ex-husband.¹⁵⁷ After the payment of *Duk*, the double bride-price, the woman will be legitimate wife of new husband and the ex-husband has no right of objection at this stage. The previous husband, or any other person, can remarry an eloped woman, if she agreed, on payment of "double *Duk*" (four times worth of bride-price) to her present husband, and so on. The value of increases in cases of elopement again and again.

V. DEATH

The Kalash have unique funeral rituals and traditions. There is a perception that the Kalash do not mourn their loved ones when they die, instead, they celebrate the death by singing and dancing. According to Kalash beliefs, the departed soul was excited to leave the body and meet other souls after a long separation. The farewell of the soul must be in proper way, otherwise the family and the area will face some tragedies.

In accordance with Kalash tradition the incident of death is announced in all three valleys by firing guns, beating drums and sending messages to other valleys.

¹⁵⁷ Pervaish Shaheen, *Kafiristan* (p. 119);

Mahmud Danishwar, *op. cit.* (p. 109);

Jean-Yven Loude/ Viviane Lievre, *op. cit.* (p. 93-101).

People rush to the house where the incident has taken place. When the people gather in the deceased house, activities of the funeral ceremony start. The dead body is prepared for funeral ceremony by washing and putting on new and clean traditional Kalash dress. The special thing to mention here is that the Kalash especially arrange traditional shoes "*Khone*", moccasin, earlier the incident of the death. The body is laid on a bed and placed in open place or in "Justek Han in case of bad weather and then music function is started in front of the dead body. There are special songs, dances and drum beating for this occasion but there is no dance for female deceased. The close relatives of the dead person start mourning, they put off their caps, open their hair and sit beside the dead body. The people attending the funeral ceremony continuously praise and pay tribute to departed soul and mention special qualities and honours for his/her with big exaggerations. The effected family serves best quality of traditional feast to all people attending the funereal ceremony. The feast includes mutton, butter, cheese, honey, wheaten bread and wine. The Kalash try their best to serve best quality and huge quantity of feast on the occasion of funereal and spend huge money and food item for this purpose.¹⁵⁸

The arrangement for funereal is a continuous activity of Kalash life. Every Kalash saves money and store most of the edible things for this purpose round the life. It is said in Chitral that "the dead is a big disaster for Kalash" it means the deceased not only leave his family members forever but also puts the burden of a huge expenses on them that deeply effect their lives for a long time.

¹⁵⁸ Jean-Yven Loude/ Viviane Lievre, *op. cit.* (p. 150-151).

On third day of funeral ceremony the dead body is laid in coffin, along with some food and personal arms of a man and jewellery of a woman. Usually the left hand of the dead is placed on his warrior's bow or rifle, and the right hand is dipped in a sack of flour to sustain him during the voyage and in his new existence. Then the coffin is taken to graveyard and placed in open area. Since 1970s the Kalash started burying these coffins, with the four banners at the four corners. The bed is placed upside down on the tomb and left for the dead man's use in the other world. On the day after funeral close relatives of deceased wash their faces to clean it of all sadness, and the male relatives wash their heads and shave off their hair, as well, in front of the door of the house. On that occasion they sacrifice a nanny goat and a he-goat or a bull, also in front of the door. Next morning they strew broken-up breads on the tomb, so that the crows may carry off the crumbs and feed the soul the deceased.¹⁵⁹

Mourning is an important part of funeral and it continues till the next festival following the incident of the death. During this period the close relatives of the deceased do not wear new or clean cloths, do not brush their hair, do not dance, do not express feeling happiness, the men do not shave and the women do not do make-up nor use the small cap under the *Kophesi*. There is special mourning for couples. Wife or husband of deceased person (along with other requirements of mourning) is bound to live in a particular place of the house called "*Shome*" (the place near to the

¹⁵⁹ Pervaish Shaheen, *op. cit.* (p. 119);

Jean-Yves Loude/ Viviane Lievre, *op. cit.* (p. 159).

door) for seven days. After giving sacrifice of a young (almost one year old) he-goat he is allowed to move within the boundaries of the house for a month, after that another sacrifice of a young he-goat will make him able to move around the field within the village but is not allowed to go beyond upper area of the village to the place of goats or to shrines and alters for three months. After offering final sacrifice of big he-goat, on the occasion either Uchal or Chaumos festival, the mourning period comes to an end. There will be special arrangement and celebration at eve of end of the mourning. The man will take bath and shave his head and beard, while the woman will wear new or at least clean cloth. She also start wearing Kophesi and make-up.¹⁶⁰

VI. GANDAO OR IMAGES OF ANCESTORS

Importance of the dead ancestors in Kalash thought is discussed earlier. The Kalash make a wooden carved effigy called *Gandao* for the memory of the dead ancestors. The ceremony of making Gandao is quite costly, only a few can afford them. Due to its heavy cost this ceremony was given up by the Kalash in last century, but recently has been revived by selected people. Now some new Gandao can be once again seen in various places of Kalash valleys. French researchers Jean-Yven Loude and Viviane Lievre illustrated this unique experience with its real prospect by their participation in the event and keen observation of its activities:

¹⁶⁰ Zaheer-ud-Din, *op. cit.*

See also: Muhammad Inayatullah, *op. cit.* (p. 361-371).

"If a son wishes to honour the memory of his father he will choose the last day of November for the ceremony of making Gandao. A year at least must pass between the funeral and the creation of Gandao. As soon as the decision is announced, the female relatives of the deceased start to bake bread: a basket full of wheaten galettes and a tray of walnut bread. The next day several men, woodcutters and carpenters, go off to the forest. There they look for the most suitable fir tree, and call upon the deceased by name, so that a link may be forged between them. When they find a tree with very fine knots, they will fell it down and then blow on it, so that the dead man's face may penetrate the wood. Once the tree has been felled, the men place a basket of cheese and galettes (large size wheaten bread) in front of the trunk, thereby inviting the soul of the deceased to take refuge within it. The woodcutters then cut the trunk down to the size of the dead man and carry it to a field, close to the cemetery, where they light a big fire. The family offers the guests pumpkins, cheese and dried mulberries.

Special carvers fashion the face: a domed forehead, the mouth outlined by clenched teeth, a round chin. They hollow out sockets for the eyes and insert in them two white pebbles or two cowries. The head is large and out of proportion with the body. It is decorated with an enormous conical turban with a rounded border. A heavy necklace encircles the neck. The arms hang free from the body, forming a regular curve from shoulder to hips. The costume differs little from one to another; it consists of a long tunic and ample trousers narrowing towards the ends to allow for

the representation of puttees. The chest is covered by crossed cartridge belt or protective bandoliers. Some of these may be adorned with cowries. A bow, a quiver or a rifle barrel may protrude over one shoulder. Generally, these statues have no feet. This type of standing statue is usually 160 cm to 180 cm high. The carvers use vegetable dyes to prepare red and black paints for the beard and the contour of eyes. Recently use of colours available in the market is also noticed.

At night falls, the praise-giving and the dances start. The statue is set up in the field, and the dancers turn around it. The sturdiest of them pick it up, carrying it on their backs as they dance with heavy steps. The hymns to the glory of the deceased say that he is moving and coming back to life. At dawn, the relatives proceed to slaughter goats, as many as for the funeral ceremonies. When the sun "confirms its light", the gathering eat the meat and the bread. Finally the *gandao* is carried to the cemetery and set up near the coffin of the ancestor, surrounded by the red banners".¹⁶¹

The day following the installation of the imposing statue in the cemetery, there would be further festivities to mark the creation of the *Gandurik*, a small statue of a man seated or on horseback. It would be hoisted on a decorated pole, placed in one of the dead man's fields or at the entrance of his village. The *Gundurik*, standing in various places, ensures the presence of the ancestor among the living and give

¹⁶¹ Jean-Yven Loude/ Viviane Lievre, *op. cit.* (p. 164-167);

See also: Pervaish Shaheen, *op. cit.* (p. 136-137);

Mahmud Danishwar, *op. cit.* (p. 82-84).

satisfaction and courage better than the *Gandao* in the cemetery, a place that is visited only for specific reasons.¹⁶²

VII. HEALTHCARE

The Kalash have traditional system of healthcare and treatment for diseases. The most popular treatment or protections against diseases are the amulets or charms made up of a number of threads joint together. The important part of them is the knot or knots at short spaces. These knots are tied by the amulet-maker for protection against evil spirit or particular diseases, and each knot requires a special *Izum*.

The *Izum* is acquired by the wise man in this manner: While sleep he see two animals or insects (or snack etc.) talking to each other. On waking up he remembers the talk and uttering it to himself he repeats it with his face and eyes towards the earth (not seeing nor talking with other people), and make up his mind to use this *Izum* against any particular ailment he may like. Therefore he can use the *Izum* against that particular ailment whenever required and utters these words under his breath while tying the knot.

In emergence of Small Pox in the house, *Ishperi* (offer of milk or its products) is served to all the children, and bread with butter is distributed among the elders. This is to welcome Small Pox so that it is mild and not fatal. At the end of a week, another *Ishperi* as a farewell to it is offered.

¹⁶² Jean-Yven Loude/ Viviane Lievre, *op. cit.* (p. 171-172).

The cure for barrenness among the Kalash is made by killing and skinning of a goat and putting the effected woman inside the skin while it is hot. More she-goats of sheep are killed to continue the process. These women are also taken to hot spring in Lotkooh.

The chief remedy for snack bite is the charm and amulet with particular Izum for snacks. Also blood-letting is usual remedy. A kid is killed and its bowels are placed over the bitten part of the person.¹⁶³

VIII. FARMING

A number of interesting customs related to the faming activities are also parts of the Kalash tradition.

A month before ploughing bulls or oxen are collected at a place where most ploughing is done. Milk is sprinkled on the oxen as well as plough, and prayer chanting "*Warash Kari*" (make the bulls strong as hawks) is done.

At seeding time a person known for being of good omen makes a sacrifice of a goat at the shrine of Mahandeo, sprinkles blood on the seed, his own and others, before seeding is done. Offerings are also made as the fields by farmers individually. At reaping and threshing too, offerings are made and the first five seers of grain are kept aside for sacrifice purpose.

¹⁶³ Wazir Ali Shah, *op. cit.* (p. 74-75).

Zaheer-ud-Din, *op. cit.*

When “*Katsh*” (granary) is opened, the first few seers (kilograms) known as “*Osion*” are purified at *Malotsh* and then eaten by the family and not given to outsiders.¹⁶⁴ The Kalash store their grain and fruits in open and underground storehouses called *Kastsh*, and they also use wooden storehouse called *Pesti* or *Birmal* for this purpose.

IX. CATTLE PROTECTION

As cattle, especially the goat, is the most important feature of Kalash culture, there are a number of tradition related to cattle. Protection and fecundity of cattle for winter period, from winter solstice, *Chaumos* (December) to spring equinox, *Hamal* (March) is the responsibility of *Surisan*, and for summer period, from *Hamal* to *Chaumos* is that of *Goshdoi*. Balumain, during his first visit to Kalash valleys, had revealed that *Surisan* and *Goshdoi* would take turns in protection of the herds. The influence of these divinities makes up for the absence of Balumain (who resides in Tsyam and comes to Kalash valleys once a year during *Chaumos* festival): it was as though that god had given over two attributes of himself so that the yearly cycle might be completed without hardship. Prayers and offerings are made at the time of arrival and departure of the two divinities, one succeeding the other.¹⁶⁵

Cattle epidemic is attributed to approach of men and women guilty of adultery to the sacred places or cattle houses. The Dehar goes into trance and point out the

¹⁶⁴ Ibid (p. 76).

¹⁶⁵ Jean-Yven Loude/ Viviane Lievre, *op. cit.* (p. 210);
Wazir Ali Shah, *op. cit.* (p. 76).

culprits. The culpable woman is required to touch a kid (baby goat), which is slaughtered and brunt then its ashes thrown away. Thus the epidemic is thus controlled.¹⁶⁶

D. FESTIVALS:

The Kalash have a number of festivals which are participated in by all members of the society, male, female and even children, with great zeal. They celebrate these festivals commemorating seasonal change and significant events in agro-pastoral life. The Kalash celebrate these festivals by offering sacrifices of animals (mainly he-goat) at altars to please gods and goddesses, cooking traditional meals and dancing to traditional music during the week-long events. In their festivals music and dance are performed not only as an entertainment item, but as a religious ritual as well. This religious ritual is performed with high regard for gods, fairies and other supernatural beings, according to the Kalash mythology. Important Kalash festivals are:

I. CHAUMOS OR CHITIRMAS:

Most important and the winter solstice festivals of the Kalash *Chaumos* is held in December. During this festival the Kalash keenly observe the position of the sun and make forecast for coming year. This festival is celebrated with great pump and show on the onset of New Year. Men leave their home and live in stables, strictly observe sexual abstinence. A number of interesting events mark this festival.

¹⁶⁶ Wazir Ali Shah, *op. cit.* (p. 73-74).

On 9th December the activities of the festival start. In the afternoon *Chaumos Gadeirak*, the great man of Chaumos and the only person who knows the exact date of Chaumos, runs through the villages making announcement that *Sarasari* will take place this evening. Boys and girls make bonfires and compete in the amount of smoke produced whilst they sing and dance. After that, they dance from house to house collecting walnuts and dried mulberries.

On 10th December bonfire, singing and dancing continued this night as well. All people take part in it with great enthusiasm. They sing and dance in separate groups of male and female. At midnight old baskets are burnt, as symbol of finishing the passing year and welcoming the new one.

On 11th -12th December ceremony of fumigation and purification of the stables (cattle sheds) is held. All clothes are washed and the houses are also cleaned on this day. 14th December is the day of reproduction of ibex. On this day the Kalash draw pictures and images of animals on the pillars and walls of Justek Han. Women make models of ibex in bread dough. This day also called *Sharabirayak*, the day of small ibex. On 15th December the livings invite the dead to share their hopes by taking part in sumptuous festival of meal. Special bread and fruit (fresh as well as dry) are offered to the dead.

On 16th – 17th December girls eat the offerings and throw the remainder into the river so that it will reach the dead. All houses without exception thoroughly

emptied, cleaned and fumigated with a branch of flaming juniper. Women also wash all the clothes. On 18th December *Balumain*, the most important deity of Kalash who lives in Tsyam or Bashgal (Nuristan), is coming to Kalash valley on annual visit. The society enters into a sacred sphere. The women go to riverside to take bath and wear new or clean clothes. Special purified bread (for women) *Shishao* are prepared by men at stables of goat. At night men offer prayer to *Balumain* in odour of juniper. *Mandawar Wastsh*, bread of the Golden Eagle, with eagle sign on it is made in every stable. Sacrifice a lamb is made in the name of the deity *Ishtongas Dew* and its blood is sprinkled on all male members of the village, which is called *Ishtongas* ceremony.

19th December is the day of great sacrifices. This is the most important day of Chaumos. *Balumain* arrives on this day. Men go to alter of *Sajigor*, (in Rumbur), *Ingao* (in Bumburet) and *Warin* (in Birr) with huge number of he-goats to sacrifice on the occasion of *Balumain's* arrival. On the same day *Ghotshnik*, the Initiation ceremony takes place at Justek Han for children to become independent Kalash (for boys and girls at the age of four, only boys undergo a second initiation at the age of seven).

20th December is the day of blessing. In Bumburet every man goes to *Idorein* (place of *Balimain's* horse). In Birr people go to sanctuary of *Warin* and in Rumbur to sanctuary of *Sajigor* to present themselves before *Balumain* for counting and to receive his blessings. This is the climax of the *Chaumos*. The details of this ceremony are kept secret from women. 21st December is the night of light and the

ceremony to see off Balumain. This night Kalash make gigantic torches, *Tchanja*, 3 metres high, out of poles of resinous wood, lit by women all over the villages. A ritual is held for the society to return to normal life.

On 22nd December an interesting ceremony of Lawak Biik, fox hunting, is held. Men go to the top of mountains and come down in search of the fox. If the fox is found they make shouts to frighten and try to hunt the poor animal. Failure in finding fox is regarded as a bad omen. According to the Kalash it is simply a joke a carnival episode in the unfolding of the festivities. Some men and women wear clothes of the opposite sex and dance with faces masked.

On 24th December processions of little girls go from house to house in the village dancing and singing to collect beans. At night the adolescent boys and girls gather in a house to cook the beans, and play games while cooking is in progress. Next day they divide the boiled beans and eat them. On January 2-3, festival of white crow takes place. Flat bread stuffed with meat is made. At midnight songs are sung to praise "the (mythical) white crows" that would carry off the wishes of house holds. Next morning they throw the beans to the first crow that is seen flying and sing songs to abuse it. 3rd January is the day of festival of little dolls. They make small dolls and give them to children. After a week they throw them outside the village.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁷ See: Jean-Yven Loude/ Viviane Lievre, *op. cit.*;
Inayatullah, *op. cit.* (159-201, 322-353).

II. JOSHI OR CHILIMJUSHT:

Joshi is the spring festival of the Kalash held 10th to 16th of May each year. During this festival flowers are plucked, dance sessions are held and exchange of dairy products takes place. People wear new dress and women decorate themselves. A ceremony to purify one year old babies and their mothers is held on 15th May. All the Kalash gather to dance and sing to express joys. On 16th May the main event of Joshi is celebrated. Dancing and singing continue at Charsu (the dancing place of the Kalash) for the whole day attended by every member of the society, male, female, elders and children. The elder members of the society, especially the religious leader, share their wisdom with the people and sing sacred songs.

Apart from dances and songs, some rituals also take place on this day. In the afternoon when the dance and song reaches its climax, branches and leafs of walnut tree are bough and every body (male, female, old, young and even small kids hold by their mothers) holds and shake a sprig of it, which is called "Chhan Lengeik" (leaves shaking ceremony). During this ceremony the Dehar (or Betan), the shaman enters into a state of trance, and relays the message of deities and make prophesy for the future. After that the men move to the Malotsh of Mahandev and perform rituals and present offerings of food and milk-products, while the women continue dancing till night.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁸ Muhammad Inayatullah, *op. cit.* (p. 256-274).

Zaheer-ud-Din, *op. cit.*

III. UCHAL:

This festival is held in mid July. It is celebrated to mark harvest season of agriculture and milk products with dancing, singing and feasting for two days. Herdsmen who live in the pastures come to villages to attend this festival and bring newly made cheese and other milk products with them. Rituals, sacrifice and offerings are made at Malotsh. People send gifts to their married daughters and sisters.¹⁶⁹

A Kalash tale explaining the background of Uchal says that when the Kalash were settled in Bashgal (Nuristan) the tribe faced a severe drought for a long period of time. Then a Dehar order them to prepare three thick and round peaces of cheese and cream. When these cheese and cream were offer at sanctuary of the deities, the situation of drought changed into abundance food, thus prosperity was restored through offerings to the deities. Uchal festival is celebrated in memory of this incident and to maintain the prosperity.¹⁷⁰

IV. POO/POOL:

This festival is held in Birr valley only during 20th to 25th September to celebrate the ripening of grapes and walnuts. The Kalash strictly and effectively control the grapes and walnuts harvest and no one is allowed to touch grapes and walnuts before this festival. But from the movement of the opening sacrifice of the

¹⁶⁹ Jamal Haider Siddiqi, *op. cit.* (p. 228).

¹⁷⁰ Muhammad Inayatullah, *op. cit.* (p. 374-375).

festival - two kids (young goats) offered to the god Praba, as well as branches of grapes sprinkled with blood - the grapes and the walnuts are allowed to be harvested, and especially the grapes are available for wine-making. Dancing and singing continue for four days. Finally, comes the afternoon of flowers. The little girls parade wearing coiffes decorated with fruits and flowers, which is then taken off by the boys to present to the god Praba. The women, in the background, murmur a sacred song.

It is alleged that during the last night of Poo, a special festival is held for the *Budalak*. The Kalash used to select a young herdsman having some special sexual power and send him to the pastures with flocks, in order to improve his diet and health, and remain totally inaccessible to the other sex. During the festival of Poo he returns from the pastures after long period of (sexual) abstinence. In that night, he has the right, and even the duty, to “mix” with any one of the woman/girls he takes in the dance area, and no woman is allowed to refuse.

Despite of the widespread confusion about the *Budalak* and big exaggerations raised by non-academic and non-serious people regarding his function, the Kalash deny any extraordinary habit during the Poo festival. They claim that this unusual sexual confusion has long since disappeared, but was perpetuated for a time in the form of symbolic dance seeking the same effects. All that now remains of *Budalak* is the mocking title given to would-be seducer, and a song glorifying the return of the herdsmen: “Oh, oh, oh, *Budalak* drinks cups of milk from the white goat of the

heights, oh, oh, oh, Budalak my child returned from the he-goats, oh, oh, oh, Budalak my child in the gardens of flowers...”¹⁷¹ Although the Kalash continuously deny the presence of Budalak, especially the unusual sexual confusion that is widely spread with big exaggerations, but the idea and function of Budalak can not ruled out completely.

V. OTHER RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL EVENTS:

- a. **KILASARAS:** (12th -13th April) A ceremony for cleansing the cattle shed is held, on the first night. Next night representatives of each village gather in the sanctuary of Ingao and eat newly made cheese. After Kila saras women can drink goat milk and the farming begins.
- b. **RAT NAT:** (July - August): Dancing and singing at night continue for one month, as warm up activity for Uchal festival.
- c. **UCHAO:** (Middle of August): Newly made cheese is brought from the pastures. Ceremony is held at the altar of Mahandev. Dancing and singing take place until dawn.
- d. **PRECHIAISHI:** (November): Goats are sacrificed to Mahandev by each clan in thanks for the harvest and health.

¹⁷¹ M. Alauddin, *op. cit.* (p. 14-17).

Jean-Yven Loude/ Viviane Lievre, *op. cit.* (p. 65-67);

Zaheer-ud-Din, *op. cit.*

- e. **BIRAMOR:** (November): Very rare festival held only in November in which a man wishing to gain honours in the society slaughters many of his own goats and entertains a large majority of the Kalash. It takes place once in several ten years.
- f. **SARIEK:** (November - December): It is wedding party at Justek Han. She-goats are sacrificed to goddess Justek and its blood is sprinkled on fire, on symbol of the goddess and on the faces of the couple, then prayers are offered for them. Dance and songs parties are arranged.¹⁷²

¹⁷² Zaheer-ud-Din, *op. cit.*

6. RELIGIOUS AND OTHER PLACES OF IMPORTANCE AND SPECIAL RESPECT IN KALASH VALLEYS:

There are many places in Kalash valley that have great importance and special respect for the community member, like shrines, alters, graveyards, community houses etc. Some of these places are briefly introduced here:

A. MALOTSH:

The term *Malotsh* literally means the great or holy and used for Kalash Deities, but also used for holy places related to these deities where sacrifices and other rituals are offered. These places are always built on the highest places on the outskirts of villages with wooden horse-head fixed on either side of a small walled structure. Malotsh are set up in the name of some important deities, like Warin and Praba in Birr, Sajigor in Rumbur, Ingao in Bumburet and Mahandev in all three valleys. Malotsh is the most important place in Kalash society which is considered "Oshniru" i.e. sacred and pure. Women are not allowed to go near the Malotsh and not even to look at them.¹⁷³

B. JUSTEK HAN:

Justek Han are big halls in the name of the Kalash deity *Justek*, set up as ceremonial houses or community centres for every lineage, in every big village decorated with effigies and animal figures. Every year the young Kalash decorate it during the *Chaumos* festival. Pictures of different creatures like Markhore, ibex, tiger, goat, sheep,

¹⁷³ Shahzada Hissam -ul- Mulk, *op. cit.* (p. 81-83);
Zaheer-ud-Din, *op. cit.*

ox, fish and stars etc. are made on the walls and pillars of the Justek Han and the previously made once are erased in order to make new pictures. Justek Hans are holy places where rituals are performed at the times of celebrating the birth or wedding ceremonies, funerals, sacrifices and some festival. These are the only sacred places where women are allowed to enter and participate in rituals, functions and customs. Most of these Justek Han are situated inside the villages contrary to the other sacred places that can be found in upper outskirts of villages.¹⁷⁴

C. BASHALI OR BASHALENI:

Bashali is the special community house for the Kalash women. These houses are set up outside the settlement near watercourses in each big village of Kalash valleys where women and girls live during their menstruation periods and during child-birth. The women during their stay in Bashali are considered untouchable and impure, that is why they are not allowed to go home or inside the village. Men are not allowed to enter the specific area of Bashali, known to every member of the society. If a man enters the area of Bashali or touched a woman staying there, he becomes polluted and is not allowed to enter the village unless he take bath, wear clean dress and sacrifice a he-goat at Malotsh. Recently most of the Bashalis are built with new building design and structures, using cement, aluminium sheets etc. but majority of the Kalash do not like this, rather prefer the traditional structure of the Bashalis.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ Alauddin, *op. cit.* (p. 10-11).

¹⁷⁵ Zaheer-ud-Din, *op. cit.*

D. MADOKJHAL:

The Kalash cemetery (graveyard) is called Madokjhal or Madojao. In the past, dead bodies of Kalash were put in wooden boxes (coffins) and placed in open air. In recent years (since 1970s), the Kalash have started burying their coffins in the same places, but the old and mostly broken coffins can be seen in Madokjhals in all three Kalash valleys.¹⁷⁶ There are a number of cemeteries in all valleys of the Kalash.

E. CHARSU:

This is the dancing place where the Kalash gather to perform dance and music on different occasion, like Chilimjusht, Rat Nat, Uchal and Poorl. Young Kalash couples also gather there to perform music and dance in commemoration of their love. Basically Charsus are open air places but recently some of these have been shaded over, by political representatives and Non Governmental Organisations.¹⁷⁷ Old and new style Charsus can be seen in different places of Kalash valleys.

This was an exclusive introduction to the Kalash and their religious idea and practices. Now we move to the most important part of our discussion, and that is the relation of other religions and belief systems with the religion and culture of the Kalash, with special emphasis on impact of these religions on the Kalash.

¹⁷⁶ Alauddin, *op. cit.* (p. 10-11).

¹⁷⁷ Zaheer-ud-Din, *op. cit.*

CHAPTER

2

IMPACTS OF HINDUISM ON THE RELIGION OF THE KALASH

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IMPACTS OF HINDUISM ON THE RELIGION OF THE KALASH

Hinduism is one of the most prominent religions of the World. This religion was introduced and developed in Indian sub-continent when the Aryans were settled in this region. Reflections of Hindu thought are found, in all Indian religions and in every part of the Indian sub-continent and its adjacent areas. Although presently Islam is the only dominant religion in the Hindu Kush region, but some reflection of Hinduism could also be seen in this areas. It is worth mentioning here that the impacts of Hinduism on Kalash tribe seem more profound and clear as compared to the Khow tribe of Chitral. Without any direct political or military influence of the Hindus over the region, how some ideas and norms similar to Hinduism are found in this remote and inaccessible region?

To deal with this issue, the basis of overall Hindu influence in this region will be discussed here, followed by the comparison between Kalash and Hindu mythologies, in second part of this chapter. Then similarities between the rituals and other religious practices of these two religious groups will be analysed, in third part of the chapter. In some cases the similarities between Hinduism and religion of the Kafir will also be discussed, especially in the cases where the Kalash and the Kafirs have common religious ideas and practices.

1. ARAYAN REFLECTIONS IN THE HINDU KUSH REGION

Chitral, the main region of the Hindu Kush valleys, and its other adjacent areas have never been under any direct or indirect Hindu religious nor political influence. Actually Chitral has remained separate from Indian territories historically and geographically. It had relations with Afghanistan and other Central Asian states from time immemorial. The people of Chitral were used to approach Badakhshan, Tajikistan, Yarkand (Eastern -Chinese-Turkistan), Samarqand and Bukhara, via northern mountain passes and narrow valleys for trade, education, political support and military assistance. The early forces to attack Chitral and the nations migrate here were also belong to these areas. Later on political and military encounters and social contacts of Chitral with the people of Gilgit, Nuristan and Kunar started which further expanded up to the areas of Dir and Swat. In the result of these contacts the process of migration of many tribes and families from these areas to Chitral and vice versa started. Iranian, Chinese and Buddhist rule over Chitral and its neighbouring areas has also been reported in the book of history.¹⁷⁸ Impacts of Badakhshani and the Central Asian culture and civilization on the culture, tradition and even languages of Chitral can clearly be recognized even today.

Early formal contacts between Chitral and India have taken place in the sixteenth century when King Sangeen Ali (I), the most important figure among the founders of Katoor dynasty, who descended from Amir Timur (Tamerlane), approached Moghul ruler in Delhi to seek his support against Rais dynasty to regain the control of Chitral at the end of 16th

¹⁷⁸ Gholam Murtaza, *op. cit.* (p. 25-265);

Maj. J. Biddulph, *op. cit.* (p. 63-64).

century C.E.¹⁷⁹ Later on the famous ruler of Chitral Aman-ul-Mulk sent his two sons in a delegation to Delhi in order to establish political ties in the last quarter of 19th century. But proper contacts have been established during the British colonial era, in the same reign of the Aman-ul-Mulk, when the state of Chitral through facilitation from the state of Kashmir entered into military and political agreements with British India. Since then the people of Chitral started giving preference to Indian cities over the central Asian states for trade and education. Some Hindu traders also extend their business activities towards Chitral.

The Hindu politico-military dominance as well as cultural and religious influence over the states of Gilgit, to the east of Chitral, is historically established. It is probably in this connection the name of "Hindu Raj" (Hindu dominated area) is used for the smaller mountain range (the sub range of Hindu Kush) on the eastern side of Chitral, starting from Gilgit, in north east, extending to Kohistan, Swat and Dir to further south.

Chitral for being the main area of the Hindu Kush range, as the highest peak of this range Terich Mir is located here, has remained safe from cultural and military expeditions of Hindus including other parts of the Hindu Kush. The Hindu invaders either could not reach this area or were terribly defeated and killed. This is what the name of "Hindu Kush" (killer of the Hindu) literally means.

Although this historical and geographic distance has kept Chitral almost safe from main Hindu influence as we cannot mention any specific religious belief or local tradition to have clear roots of Hindu teachings. However, it is worthy to mention that before the advent of

¹⁷⁹ Gholam Murtaza, *op. cit* (p. 47-49)

Islam and even afterwards there were some beliefs and local norms and traditions about which one may doubt to have link with the teachings of Hinduism. For instance:

A. A hazy reflection of transmigration has been found in minds of Chitrالي people. Some local oral traditions mention particular people talk about the thing that has no relation to their current life but can be attributed to some status or their previous life. Although, according to the Hindu belief of transmigration, a man's current life does not have any connection with his previous life and neither the memories of the previous life could continue in the current life, but in the case of Chitral we find same the idea of transmigration with some sort of relation between the current and previous life. Two reports can be produced in this reference:

- I. Chitrالي folktales mention of a lady who revealed about presence of some rare items in a shelf of a house in a far away place which she had neither visited herself in her entire life, nor was there any possibility of getting the information from someone else. When people showed their amazement and asked her about the matter, she told them that this was from remains and her memories of previous life, which people accepted without showing any further surprise. This indicates that the belief of Transmigration or some other similar idea was not strange for the people of Chitral.
- II. Until the recent past it was commonly heard among some people that good or bad human soul can transfer to another human body. The researcher himself has several times heard an old rural lady saying about a dog that, *'it seems that soul of some*

good human being has transferred to its body'. Transmigration or *Samsara* in terms of Indian religions is 'the continuing process of birth and death for life after life in many different forms and conditions of existence. This is usually seen as involving not only lives as a human being but also periods of time (sometimes very long), either in various pleasant states as a deity (*Deva*) in some kind of heaven, or in unpleasant states as an animal, spirit, or inhabitant of some kind of hell.'¹⁸⁰ So the concept of transfer of soul from one body to another after death in a new form and condition, depending on its good and bad deeds, is found in Hinduism and other Indian religion. This idea has remained in the minds of Chitrali people and their folktales, to some extent, without any detail or its related ideas.

- B. Cow is known to be useful animal in Chitral, but any ideological or practical form of respect or veneration for it has not been identified in this region. However up to the near past there have been some practices in different areas of Chitral, which had great similarities with the Hindu tradition of cow veneration. One of the practices was to mix the cow dung with water and spread it in threshing floor and second was putting pieces of dry cow dung over the heap of grain for blessings. In the same way the dry cow dung in powder form is placed between the legs of a child and wrapped with a cloth to keep him dry from urine, and it is still practiced in some places and nappy of children. Although it is very difficult to say these are totally Hindu practices however the Hindu influence cannot be ruled out for the very reason that why some thing other than the cow's dung

¹⁸⁰ *The Penguin Dictionary of Religion*, (page: 283).

have not been considered as alternative to these purpose, like easily available and long-lasting Tshutshk clay for plaster of threshing floor instead of cow dung mixture, or the goats/sheep's waste, which has better quality of absorbing, for placing in nappy of children instead of cow dung powder. Various intellectual, material or social interpretation and reasons may be given for some of these practices, but in the case of putting cow dung on grain heap for blessing seems to be in total resemblance to the Hindu belief of cow veneration.¹⁸¹

The reasons of Hindu influence on the thoughts, customs and traditions of the people living in Chitral and its surrounding areas of Hindu Kush are totally ambiguous. Hindu dominance over the neighbouring states and its political, military, cultural and religious influence on the people of these states might have affected the tribes of the Hindu Kush who had weak religious background. Ethnic groups from Gilgit and its adjacent areas, like *Dangerik* (inhabitants of Tangeer, Darel and other neighbouring areas), *Chok* and *Machoke* tribes, are settled in Chitral for centuries.¹⁸² Some of these groups were certainly influenced by Hinduism before their migration to Chitral, thus transfer of Hindu customs, traditions and beliefs to the Hindu Kush region through these tribes is possible, as there are obvious historical, geographical and social basis for this. But the main reason for presence of ideas and practices similar to Hinduism might be refer back to the strong centuries-old relations of Chitral with Afghanistan, Central Asian states and Eastern Turkistan, being pass way to Indian plains. As stated earlier that Chitral and its surrounding areas of the Hindu Kush has

¹⁸¹ Zaheer-ud-Din, *op. cit.*

¹⁸² Inayayullah Faizi, *Pakistan Encyclopaedia of Folklore, V. 1, Northern Area*, Folk Heritage Publication, Islamabad, 2004, (P. 320).

been the gateway to connect these countries with India in the past. This was the real Silk Route according to some historians. Therefore Chitral and its surrounding areas have certainly been the pass ways for Aryan tribes and families to Indian plains if not their real destination. Thus the possibility of permanent or temporary stay of some of these emigrants in region of the Hindu Kush as well as their religious and cultural influence on the people of the region can not be ruled out. Although Hinduism has emerged and developed as a religion and complete way of life after permanent settlement of the Aryan in India, but the ideas and practices resembling Hinduism found in Chitral and other part of the Hindu Kush seem to having link with the basic traditional ideas, customs and practices of early Aryan nations where preliminary forms of nature, animals, and ancestor veneration were the main characteristic of religious traditions and that played important role in development of Hinduism in later stages.

Another important point is the presence of Shamanic beliefs and traditions in Chitral and its surrounding areas. The main two ethnic groups of Chitral, the Khow and the Kalash have rich history of Shamanic ideas and traditions which is another instance of Central Asian influence on the region. Shamanism has also been very popular in Gilgit and Kafiristan, the adjacent areas of Chitral. After the advent of Islam, the Shamanic traditions gradually disappeared and now remain among the Kalash tribe only where it is still playing active role as an institution of religious guidance. The tribes and families having Shamanic beliefs coming to Chitral and the adjacent areas were probably those Aryan migrants who were influenced by Shamanism during their journeys or temporary stay in central Asia from where

they crossed the hill tracks of Hindu Kush to reach Chitral and other region of the Hindu Kush. From here they proceeded to plain areas of Indian sub-continent. But all the Indo-Aryans did not proceeded to Indian plains, but some groups remained behind, without crossing the Indus or even the Hindu Kush.¹⁸³ Probably the Kalash belong to one of those Aryan immigrant tribes who settled in the region of the Hindu Kush during their earliest movement or they were settled somewhere in Afghanistan and came to this area in later period. Another possibility is that they belong to local tribes of central Asia and surrounding areas, and came to Chitral in natural human migration process, like many other smaller tribes and ethnic groups. Nevertheless, whether they were indigenous people of the region or have settled here from somewhere else, but they came to Chitral from central Asian states and Afghanistan.

Putting aside the influence of Aryan civilization on Chitral, there are many other historical, geographical and social factors and realities that provide basis for the influence of Hindu thought on the beliefs, culture and tradition of Chitral. When the Hindus strengthened their political and military and even social dominance over the adjacent areas of Chitral on its eastern border (from Gilgit to Swat), they also wanted to extend their supremacy to Chitral and other areas of Hindu Kush but were badly defeated and massacred. This was the main reason for using the name of the Hindu Kush (Killer of the Hindus) for this region. Although the Hindus were defeated politically and militarily but travelling of many families and tribes from the Hindu dominated regions to Chitral continued. Thus there are solid historical, geographical and social basis for the transfer of Hindu customs, traditions and beliefs to the

¹⁸³ Jean-Yven Loude/ Viviane Lievre, *op. cit.* (p. 12-13)

Hindu Kush region through these tribes and families. Thus the people of Hindu Kush defeated the Hindus in the battle field but due to their weaker religious background they could not resist against ideological and cultural warfare of the Hindus to secure the region from their religious, cultural and social influence which kept on transferring from the neighbouring areas. But intensity of this influence was not so clear or at high level as compare to any conquered land.

2. SIMILARITIES BETWEEN HINDU AND KALASH MYTHOLOGIES

Mythology of the Kalash has great resemblance with Hindu mythology. Like others mythologies there is close relationship between the deities and natural elements in Hindu and Kalash mythologies as well. Similarity between the names, functions and characteristic of some deities (gods and goddesses) in these two mythologies is the most important point to be discussed here.

- A. The word *Deva* is a common term for the deities in Kalash mythology. Although Malotsh is a general name for altars and sanctuaries of deities, but the Kalash also use the term “*Deva Dur*” i.e. deity house, for Malotsh and “*Deva Saras*” i.e. service to deity, for rituals. Every prayer of the Kalash starts with saying “*Mulawa ta Deva*” that means “Lord is the deity.”

In Kalash thought *Dev* or *Deva* refers to divine being, but in Kalasha there is another word ‘*di*’ which refers to light and heaven. They use the word *Dow* (= *Dev* or *Deva*) for Light-wood, fast burning wood of *Chujin* or Edible Nut Pine (*Chalghoza*) tree, which is a priceless gift of the gods for the Kalash. *Khoday* revealed the power of this wood to men at the movement of creation. He said: “I am giving you two legs, but you need a third, I give a stick to the old men. I am giving you two eyes, but you need a third, and I give you light-wood.”¹⁸⁴ These are some examples for the use of the term *Deva* in Kalash religious traditions.

¹⁸⁴ Jean-Yven Loude/ Viviane Lievre, *op. cit.* (p. 297-298).

In Vedic mythology *Deva*, generally means gods or deities, come from the root 'div', 'to be resplendent,' 'to shine.'¹⁸⁵ In primeval India the idea of god was associated with the idea of light.

However, it safe to say that the words *Dev*, *Deva*, *Div*, *Diva* and *Dow* giving the meaning of 'divine being', 'supreme being', 'celestial god', 'heaven' 'to shine' and 'light' are used by both of the Hindus and the Kalash, refer to similarity between the to religions.

- B. According to Kalash concept of god *Dezao* (called *Khoday* as well) is the creator, lord of the universe and protector of life and property.¹⁸⁶

Dyaus is the god of the sky in Hindu mythology. In the Vedas this celestial god is a male deity, called *Dyaus-pitr*, 'heavenly father', and the earth (*Prithivi*) is being regarded as mother.¹⁸⁷

It looks that *Dezao* of the Kalash and *Dyaus* of the Hindus come from the same origin. There is no major difference in sound of the two words and its meaning or sense of usage. Concepts of being the creator, the one god and the lord of all the deities can be easily understood from *Dezao* and *Dyaus*, which indicates towards the same source of these two terms.

¹⁸⁵ J. Hakckin et al., *The Mythologies of the East*, Aryan Books International, New Delhi (India), 1996 (Vol. 1 p. 102).

¹⁸⁶ Jean-Yven Loude/ Viviane Lievre, *op. cit.* (p. 348);
Shahzada Hissam-ul-Mulk, *Kalash Mythology* (p. 81).

¹⁸⁷ Kalus K. Kalosternaier, *A Concise Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, Oneworld Publications, Oxford - England, (first South Asian Edition printed in India) 2006 (p. 63).

C. *Balumain* is the most important and most powerful deity of the Kalash, who is also called *Indra* in some Kalash chants. They show great reverence to him during *Chaumos*, the winter solstice, with prayers, chants, wishes and massive sacrifice of he-goat.¹⁸⁸ Being the eldest of the deities he is able to help in all matters like health, wealth, happiness and arable corps.¹⁸⁹

Although *Balumain* resides in Tsyam, after loosing a contest against Mahandev (due to conspiracy of *Ingav*), but this distance gave him another form of respect and uniqueness exhibits in enthusiasm shown by the Kalash when he comes to Kalash valleys once a year during the *Chaumos* festival, calling him god of the gods and considering him the most powerful deity, *Malotsh* or *Dow*.

In Hindu mythology *Indra* is king of gods, warrior of the gods and god of the rain.¹⁹⁰ Having the Firmament and the Atmosphere under his jurisdiction, *Indra* has his throne in the storm-cold laden with rain and thunder. The sky is his helmet. The earth lies in hollow of his hand; he moves it here and there as he wills.¹⁹¹

Characteristics and status of *Balumain* in Kalash mythology and that of *Indra* in Hindu mythology as well as great similarity in their names, referring to *Indra* as second name of *Balumain*, the relation between these two deities is apparent.

¹⁸⁸ Jean-Yven Loude/ Viviane Lievre, *op. cit.* (p. 349).

¹⁸⁹ Shahzada Hissam-ul-Mulk, *op. cit.* (p. 81).

¹⁹⁰ Wendy Doniger O'flaherty, *Hindu Myths*, Penguin Books, Middlesex – England, 1982 (p. 57).

¹⁹¹ J. Hakckin et al., *op. cit.* (Vol. 1 p. 108).

D. *Mahandev* is a powerful and the most favorite deity of the Kalash, who is commonly accepted in all three valleys. His Malotsh can be approached for all need; by prayers, offerings or sacrifices of he-goat any time; especially on occasions of prestige feasts (*Biramor*), festivals and farming activities. As stated earlier that the Kalash use the term *Deva*, (*Dev* or *Dow* sometimes) for their deities in general, but *Mahandev* along with *Ishtongoshdev* are the only deities having the word *Dev* as part of their names.

It seems that *Mahandev* is combination of two words, *Mahan* and *Dev* and may refer to its parallel in Sanskrit i.e. *Maha* or *Mahan* means great and *Deva* means god or deity. Thus Mahandev can be translated as great deity or god in Sanskrit and that is the actual concept of Mahandev in Kalash thought. Al-Beruni, in his famous book *Indica*, which is the first book written on India and Hinduism by any non-Indian person, has mentioned Mahadev as an important deity of the Hindus.¹⁹²

E. *Ingav* is the most important deity of the Kalash in Bumburet valley, having powers and attributes similar to that of Sajigor in Rumbur and Warin in Birir. His status is a little less than Mahandev and Balumain but has power to destroy.¹⁹³ The name *Ingav* may have derived for the word *Ingar* that means the fire in Kalasha and Khowar languages. The vital role of the fire during rituals sanctifies its high status in Kalash society. Everything always began with a fire. While performing rituals fire is lit first. Then branches of juniper, blood of sacrificed animal and crumbs of offerings is put in the fire as essential

¹⁹² Al-Beruni, *Kitab-ul-Hind* (Urdu translation of *Tahqeeq Ma Lil-Hind Min Maqulah Maqboolatin Fil Aqli Aow Marzulah* by Syed Asghar Ali), Al-Faisal Books, Lahore, 1994 (p. 144, 204-205).

¹⁹³ Shahzada Hissam-ul-Mulk, *op. cit.* (p. 81).

part of the rituals. Moving around the fire during special events of festivals and during confirmation rite of the marriage is another popular form of rituals.¹⁹⁴

Agni, the god of fire, is one of the most important Hindu gods, for it is who carries the sacrificial offerings to all of the gods, but his straightforward function somewhat circumscribed the range of his mythology.¹⁹⁵ Agni, the name for fire in all its forms in the heaven and the earth, is one of the greatest. He is the fire that lights in sky (sun), that streaks across the sky in storms (lightening), that burns forest. But his primary importance to Vedic ritualists appears in his occurrence as the hearth fire in household rituals and fires of the three great sacrificial ceremonies. Offerings of butter (ghee) are made to him, and sacrifices to other gods are given to his care so that he may convey them in his rising flames and smoke to their places in the heavens.¹⁹⁶ Thus Agni, the fire, has vital role in Hindu rituals. Almost every ritual starts with fire and many religious practices can not be performed without the function of fire.

Similarity between the name, character and function of *Agni* of the Hindus and *Ingav* of the Kalash, as well as importance of fire during rituals and sacrifices in Hinduism and religion of the Kalash indicate to some links between the mythologies of these two religions.

¹⁹⁴ Zaheer-ud-Din, *op. cit.*

¹⁹⁵ Wendy Doniger O'flaherty, *op. cit.* (p. 97).

See also: Abd-ur-Rahman Siddiqui, *Armughan-e-Ved*, Dar-ut-Tazkeer, Lahore, 1997 (p. 72-74).

¹⁹⁶ Archie J. Bahm, *The World Living Religions*, Asian Humanities Press, 1992 (p. 54-55).

F. *Varin* is one of the most important deities of the Kalash in Birir valley, having powers and attributes similar to that of *Sajigor* in Rumbur and *Ingav* in Bumburet. He is more powerful than the superior deity of Kalash *Mahandev* and has a great power to destroy. Kalash sacrifice he-goats in his sanctuary on the occasion of Chaumos and hang the horns on the trees there. Sacrifices are also made there before departure of herds to summer pastures and return from there in autumn, and at time of sowing.¹⁹⁷

In Vedic mythology *Varuna* is a prominent and powerful deity, associated with creation and the upholding of (cosmic) law. He is the ruler of the universe, controller of the destiny of humankind.¹⁹⁸ *Varuna* is the personification of the Sky and the god of waters, celestial and terrestrial.¹⁹⁹

Similarity between the names of *Varin* of the Kalash and *Varuna* of the Hindus is quite clear. The character and function of *Varin* as the guardian and protector of the territory and the herds as well as his power to intervene over climate, is also comparable with that of *Varuna* in Vedic mythology as the ruler of the universe, having authority over cosmic law and order and as the controller of the destiny of mankind.

It can be concluded that there is apparent resemblance between various aspects of Kalash and Hindu mythologies. Names of many deities in these two religions are quite similar in pronunciation and meaning, apart from resemblance in their characters and function.

¹⁹⁷ Shahzada Hissam-ul-Mulk, *op. cit.* (p. 82-83).

¹⁹⁸ Kalus K. Kalosternaier, *op. cit.* (p. 198).

¹⁹⁹ J. Hakckin et al., *op. cit.* (Vol. I p. 105).

3. SIMILARITIES BETWEEN HINDU AND KALASH RITUALS

Rituals and other religious practice of the Kalash have already been discussed earlier. In the light of that discussion it is clear that there is no systematic type of rituals in forms of prescribed actions performed daily, weekly or monthly prayers in religious traditions of the Kalash. However sacrifices, offerings and supplication on various occasions like seasonal festivals, ploughing, seeding, threshing, collection of grapes and walnuts, leaving of cattle to the pasture and its return and other similar customs and traditions are the popular forms of the religious practices. The ceremonial chants and dances on festivals; rites on different stages of life like birth, integration, reaching puberty, marriage and death; the Bashali system; manners and taboos and other traditional, seasonal and cultural activities are also considered and performed with religious zeal.

A number of religious practices of the Kalash have clear similarity with Hindu rituals. Without going to details of the philosophy and objectives of these rituals, some practical examples in this regard are given here:

- A. The most important aspect of rituals in the religion of the Kalash is that everything always began with a fire.²⁰⁰ While performing rituals fire is lit first, in the particular place, usually in front of the deities' symbols. Then branches of juniper and Holm-oak, blood of sacrificed animal (in case of sacrifice) and crumbs of offerings (wheat grains,

²⁰⁰ Jean-Yven Loude/ Viviane Lievre, *op. cit.* (p. 213).

gapes, walnuts, wine or milk and wheat bread) is put in the fire as essential part of the rituals.

Almost the same actions are done during the Hindu rituals. Lighting a fire before performing any ritual is an important and regular tradition in Hinduism as well. Likewise putting things in the fire is essential part of rituals. In case *Yajna* (Hindu term for sacrifice) blood and flesh are put in the fire, and in case of *Homa* (rituals of offerings into the fire) milk, clarified butter or *Ghee*, yogurt, rice or apple leaves, or *Soma* take the place of sacrifice.²⁰¹ This fire is ignited in a special fireplace called *Kund*, which literally means a "Pot".²⁰² Offerings of butter (*ghee*) are made to (*Agni*) the fire, and sacrifices to other gods are given to his care so that he may convey them in his rising flames and smoke to their places in the heavens.²⁰³

- B. Incense or fumigation with the smoke of juniper is essential and regular feature of Kalash rituals. The fire and fumigation of juniper is done as the essential feature of rites and as best way of purification. The Kalash consider juniper as flower of the winter. They also believe that the gods and spirits like the scent of juniper.²⁰⁴

Likewise in Hinduism incense with smoke is performed as important part of rituals. Usually incense (*Dhupa*) is waves before the image (of the deity), producing a fragrant smoke and aroma. But it is restricted to the image of the deities or temple as it quite

²⁰¹ Hillary P. Rodrigues, *Introducing Hinduism*, Routledge, New York, 2006 (p. 28-29).

²⁰² Navneet Dugar, *History of the Ancient Indian Rituals*, Cyber Tech Publications, New Delhi (India), 2008 (p. 23).

²⁰³ Archie J. Bahm, *op. cit.* (p. 54-55).

²⁰⁴ Jean-Yves Loude/ Viviane Lievre, *op. cit.* (p. 248).

common for a shopkeeper or a auto-rickshaw driver to simply wave the smoke from a few sticks of incense in front of the deity's image in his store or scooter-taxi, offer it a flower, and utter a brief prayer.²⁰⁵

Thus the items or substances of incense may differ (branches of juniper for the Kalash and *Sandalwood* or small black seed for the Hindus) but there is great similarity in action and objectives of this practice in both Kalash and Hindu religious traditions.

- C. In Kalash religious traditions most of the practical aspects of the rituals and other religious practices are done by *Onjishta Much*, virgin boy who is unaware of sexual affairs. The elders, especially the religious leaders, who supervise the events, take their responsibility for praying and chanting during the rituals. Only selected people among the Kalash memorise and recite the prescribed sacred verses and hymns for particular rituals. The general public mostly do not know about verses or phrase read by the religious leaders silently. They follow them only in the tune or some prayers and chanting that are performed loudly. Wazir Ali Shah (a renowned local writer) describes it interestingly:

'It may be mentioned that dances and songs which are part of the festivities have had important religious or Dastur basis in the past. In the course of time the Kalash have lost the real spirit of the particular dance, and respect of some of the so-called "sacred" ones it is only the tune which is sung while the actual text, the knowledge of which came down from a particular

²⁰⁵ Hillary P. Rodrigues, *op. cit.* (p. 28-29).

*person to his descendants, generation to generation, have been forgotten. However the “elders” still pretend to know it (and as they have to say it under their breath they can continue to pretend without fear of detection), while the tune is chanted by all.*²⁰⁶

Like the religion of the Kalash in Hinduism most of the rituals are done by the priests only. Especially the recitation of sacred verses (*mantras*) and chanting belong to the clergies, the *Pundits* or the *Brahmans*.²⁰⁷ The domestic worship of the Hindu or *Puja* does not typically need the ministrations of the priests. However, it entails three main components: invocation of the deity, devotional worship of that deity, and dismissal of the deity. Priests have come to play an indispensable role in all three of these processes particularly to deities in temples settings, and during the performance of elaborate *pujas*.²⁰⁸

Vital role the clergies and selected people and submissive position of common people during rituals or performing most of the religious activities, in Hindu and Kalash religious traditions shows clear similarity between the two religions.

- D. On the occasion of confirmation rite of the marriage a ceremony is arranged usually at *Justek Han*, but sometimes at the home of the groom. Like other rites of the Kalash, this ceremony also starts with lighting the fire and fumigation with the branches of Juniper tree. The married couple stands side by side and an animal (usually he-goat) is sacrificed

²⁰⁶ Wazir Ali Shah, *op. cit.* (p. 77).

²⁰⁷ Al-Beruni, *op. cit.* (p. 191-198).

²⁰⁸ Hillary P. Rodrigues, *op. cit.* (p. 227)

then prayers are made elders and religious leaders for their successful marriage. The blood of the sacrificed animal is sprinkled on the fire, on the symbol of the deity *Justek* and on the faces of the couples.²⁰⁹ The foreheads of the couples are marked by the blood as well.

Very similar to the Kalash society, in the Hindu wedding ceremony when the people gather on the main day of the marriage rite, a corner of the bride and groom's garments are knotted to each other, and a sacred fire is lit in a Vedic-styled fire pit. This will constitute their new household fire. The presiding priest is honoured and offerings of sandalwood, clarified butter, and other materials are made into the fire. The groom then takes the bride's hand. They then recite wishes for happiness, offspring, and the well-being of each other, and their relatives. The groom leads the bride around the sacred fire.²¹⁰

Thus a number of similarities can easily be seen in Kalash and Hindu marriage rites. Lighting fire, putting offering in the fire, sprinkling of blood or water on the faces of the couples, making red mark on the foreheads, moving around the fire and so on are some examples of these similarities.

E. Singing of chants and dance on certain cultural events and during festivals are also performed by the Kalash with religious zeal. Thus singing and dancing is not simply an

²⁰⁹ Pervaish Shaheen, *op. cit.* (p. 137);

Muhammad Inayatullah, *op. cit.* (p. 71, 283).

²¹⁰ Hillary P. Rodrigues, *op. cit.* (p. 83-84).

amusement but rather it has religious meanings and can never be parted from their life. 'It may be mentioned that dances and songs which are part of the festivities have had important religious or *Dastur* basis in the past. In the course of time the Kalash have lost the real spirit of the particular dance, and respect of some of the so-called "sacred" ones it is only the tune which is sung while the actual text, the knowledge of which came down from a particular person to his descendants, generation to generation, have been forgotten. However the "elders" still pretend to know it (and as they have to say it under their breath they can continue to pretend without fear of detection), while the tune is chanted by all.'²¹¹

Mantras and other sacred songs and dances are important aspects of rituals in Hinduism. Like the Kalash singing and dancing is not simply an amusement for Hindus rather it has religious meanings when linked with the *Devas* and *Devis*.

These are some examples that confirm the similarities between religious practices of the Kalash and Hindu rituals. Reasons behind these similarities, along with the similarities between Kalash and Hindu mythologies, may refer to the fact that the Kalash belong to those early Aryan immigrants who settled in the region of the Hindu Kush. All major ethnic groups of this region, including the Kalash, the Kafirs and the Khow have religious and cultural reflection of the early Aryans. Apart from that, impact of Hinduism in its complete form could also be identified in the region of the Hindu Kush in general, but there is no clear evidence on direct or indirect influence of Hinduism on the Kalash. The fact must be born in

²¹¹ Wazir Ali Shah, *op. cit.* (p. 77).

mind that there is a difference between the religious ideas and practices of the Aryans in initial stages of their migration and between Hinduism in its complete form of religion once they were settled in Indian subcontinent, but preliminary religious traditions of the early Aryan emigrants were the most important element for foundation of Hinduism and its development..

CHAPTER

3

IMPACTS OF SHAMANISM AND OTHER NEIGHBOURING BELIEF SYSTEMS ON THE RELIGION OF THE KALASH

Chapter 3

IMPECTS OF SHAMANISM AND OTHER NEIGHBOURING BELIEF SYSTEMS ON THE RELIGION OF THE KALASH

The Kalash are living in the region of the Hindu Kush since long time. Before coming to this area their early history is unclear and enveloped in mystery. They recount that at the beginning of the time their people were in a state of continuous migration without knowing the proper place to stay permanently. This tale may refer back to the migration of the Aryans, to whom those distant ancestors may have belonged. During their journey through Iranian plateau and across central Asia and interaction with the inhabitants of central Asia and Chinese Turkistan, an oasis famed for vines and the strength of shamanism, a sanctuary for the Scythian tribes they may have realise the taste of shamanism. From that moment they have been depended on shaman who, with his power to communicate with the Supreme Being, appeared as the only source of guidance for them throughout the history. Then a shaman guided them to Tsyam, a mysterious land probably situated to the south-east of present day Afghanistan. Although no details about socio-religious environment during the stay of the Kalash in Tsyam is available but the role of shaman as the only source of inspiration continued in that and even later staged of their history. Till these days shamanism is the only source of connection with supernatural world for the Kalash.

In the known period of their history the Kalash inhabited the area between lower Bashgal (Nuristan) and Chaghan Sarai (Asad Abad in Kunar province of Afghanistan now) for about three centuries. The profound impact of this era can be seen in socio-religious life of the Kalash till this day. It seems that the Kafirs and the Kalash belong to a common religious and cultural base, or at least the Kalash have extremely been impressed by religious traditions of the Kafirs.

In 10th or 11th century C.E. they were pushed north ward into Chitral by the Bashgali Kafirs, They arrived in southern Chitral valleys via Bashgal (Nuristan) and Arandu and pushed the then resident the Khow tribes further north and ruled most of that area for centuries. The interaction between the Kalash and the Khow resulted in many common religious ideas and practices among these two different ethnic groups.

Despite of the rivalry attitude between the Kalash, the inhabitants of Kafiristan (the Red Kafirs) and inhabitants of Chitral (the Khows another infidel tribe at that time) all these three major ethnic groups had many socio-religious similarities. It is difficult to decide that which tribe influenced the others but all of them had many common religious and cultural traditions before their conversion to Islam. In this chapter Impact of Shamanism and the neighbouring religious groups is the subject of discussion.

1. IMPACTS OF SHAMANISM ON THE RELIGION OF THE KALASH

During the discussion about the origin of the Kalash, their relation with Aryans and the reflections of Shamanism on their religious ideas and practices were indicated. "Shaman is the one whose supernatural powers as a practitioner of sacred (e.g. as healer, seer, or conductor of soul) are attributed to contact with spirits when in an ecstatic state. Shaman is the name given to such specialists by the Tungus of Siberia. The term is used more widely to denote anyone performing a similar role among other Arctic peoples (e.g. the Chukchi, Eskimos, and Lapps). By further extension, the term is employed as a technical one in the Science of Religion, and Shamanism is described as occurring in many cultures e.g. Africa, Indonesia and Japan. Sometimes it is the dominant form of religious experience; elsewhere it may be an isolated or peripheral phenomenon. As intermediaries between the spirit-world and the people, Shamans claim direct contact with spirits, whether those of living persons, of plants, animals and other feature of the environment, with the master-spirits (e.g. of rivers or mountains) or with ghosts of the dead. The interaction occurs in a trance state, often induced by dancing and/or drumming. In ecstasy the shaman may become aware of things far off, be able to foretell the future or predict movements of game, and be capable of remarkable feat (swallowing hot embers, self-stabbing without wounding)".²¹²

Shamanism is the major point in the religion of the Kalash around which all their dogmas, rituals and traditions are moving. It seems that the Kalash basically belong to shamanic tradition in their origin or at least they were influenced by this at any stage of their

²¹² *The Penguin Dictionary of Religion*, (p. 293-4).

history to the state that became integral part of their religious traditions. *Dehar* is the word used by the Kalash for their shaman. The shamanic traditions are basic source of Kalash religious ideologies and practices, because all these are known to the Kalash through *Dehar* who the only source to link them with heavenly beings. In every stage of their history the Kalash have been guided by *Dehar* to the extent that no religious activity can be expected without the reference of *Dehar*. In their history they have many prominent *Dehars* like Naga, Thanuk, Buda, Khan, Murad Baig, Rabadan, Budok, Azer Malik of Urtsun, Wirishik and many others. All these *Dehars* performed their duties as leaders and guides of the community in socio-religious matters through their traditional ways and powers of communication with Supreme Beings. Thanuk Dehar of the Birir valley was the only shaman who received revelation in form of a book.²¹³

Gradually the institution of Dehar became weak due to unavailability of competent Dehars, but this institution remained functional in Kalash society as the only reliable source of religious guidance and continued with the same zeal and admiration till now. Although majority of the Kalash admits, rather complain against, the absence of any capable Dehar nowadays, nevertheless they have no option but to depend on "incompetent Dehar" for guidance. The story which clarifies the status of shaman in the religion of the Kalash is also linked with their mysterious homeland Tsyam. Prominent religious personalities of the Kalash shared the details of this famous story with the researcher during his field visits to the

²¹³ Donook, Kalash Religious Teacher in a school run by the Government in Birir valley, in the interview with the researcher;

See also: Jean-Yves Loude, *The Kalasha Shamans' Practice of Exorcism*, Proceedings of the Second Hindukush Cultural Conference, Edited by Elena Bashir and Israr-ud-Din, Oxford University Press, Karachi, 1996 (p. 330).

area and provided valuable information about the vital institution of Dehar, but here rely on written reference will be preferred.

“According to Kalash tradition their people had wondered about without knowing where to go, where to settle at the beginning of the time. Then one man felt himself invested with the power to communicate with the Supreme Being, who showed that first shaman/Dehar the way to Tsyam, where he must lead his people. The shaman identified a light in the sky as a sign from God. The light stood still for five days over a virgin territory, then disappeared. The inspired man assembled the elders and declared: ‘This place is Tsyam, revealed by God. Let us pray and offer sacrifice, we shall remain here.’²¹⁴

From the beginning of the time the institution of shaman took its position as the only authentic source of religious guidance for the Kalash, especially in the most crucial stage of their history when they were in state of wonder. The Dehar not only guided them to their mysterious homeland where they were settled permanently for the first time in their history but he taught them how to pray and offer sacrifice as well. Thus religious ideas and practices of the Kalash are known through shaman.

“The Dehar laid down the sacrificial act. He had a wall built and bulls placed at each four corners, and three goats in the middle. Wheat was strewn all round the sanctuary. A seven years old child circled the sacred area. He was the first “purified one”. The shaman explained the virtue of washing hands and arms.²¹⁵

²¹⁴ Jean-Yves Loude/ Viviane Lievre, *Kalash Solstice* (p. 186-187).

²¹⁵ Ibid (p. 188).

Shamanic traditions of the Kalash have close connection with their mythological ideas. Dehar is the only human being who could see the deities along with all other super natural beings. He has the power to communicate with them and convey their commands to the people. Therefore, all mythological stories that are bases for Kalash religious dogmas and practices are known to the Kalash through Dehar. The only person who can interpret these legends to the people is Dehar, and the practices based on the Shamanic traditions are also explained by him. The story of shaman/Dehar continues;

“For seven years, a light appeared continuously in a Holm-oak tree (when the Kalash were settled in Tsyam). The people did not know what was happening. The shaman explained that this tree was sacred. A purified child must present offerings to it. He revealed the qualities of wine, water and milk, three pure liquids, and the beneficial action of flaming juniper.

Then Balumain appeared. The Dehar who alone could see the god, revealed his presence, on horseback. Balumain had waited seven years for the purification rites to be understood and for a place to be made ready for his coming on earth. Before, there had been no known place for his residence apart from the sacred Holm-oak. The Dehar dedicated the stone structure to him: ‘This altar belong to Balumain, you must honour here’. And the people prayed to Balumain in this place.”²¹⁶

Dehar was the first human who explained the un-known situation to the people and guided them to deal with this situation. Presence of god, means of purification, way and place

²¹⁶ Ibid.

of worship, all dogma and rituals related to mythology was revealed by the Dehar. Shamanic traditions of the Kalash along with all mythological concepts continued even then they were settled in Chitral:

“Shalak Shah came from Tsyam to Chitral. He waged war at the head of his army. The Kalash settled at Chitral, in the northern valleys. One clan, the Balalik, settled in Bumburet. It was among the Balalik that Naga Dehar appeared.

Balumain summoned Naga Dehar to Tsyam and ordered him to go to Waitdesh (a village in present-day Nuristan) and remain there. Balumain brought Sajigor and Mahandev to that place, after which he return to Tsyam. But two weeks later, Balumain recalled Naga Dehar to Tsyam and said to him: ‘Now we are going to live in Bumburet, and we have to choose which one of us, Mahandev or I, should stay in Bumburet. Go back there and wait for us!’

The two gods decided to confront each other in which Mahandev won to possess Bumburet permanently and Balumain returned to Tsyam, but before the departure he said: ‘I shall come to Kalash valleys only once a year’.²¹⁷

Naga Dehar is the most prominent shaman in the history of the Kalash who appeared among the Balalik clan when the Kalash were settled in Chitral. The greatest of all the shamans, Naga Dehar, whose power invaded space and time and penetrated the traditions the Kalash, who badly needed a guide. His omnipresence in Chitral, from Waigal to Tsyam, twice saved them from extinction through the construction of a dynamic myth: the pressure

²¹⁷ Ibid (p. 189-190).

upon them and the reverses they suffered were the expression of the will of the god himself. Thus, they were able to leave the responsibility to him – “We, the gods, are going to live in Bumburet” – and interpreted their retreat as divine advice.

“When Balumain came to the Kalash valleys for the first time, Naga Dehar was sleeping in his house. The fairies awakened him to warn that Balumain was coming to Bumburet: ‘Go and wait for him!’ And they showed him the place chosen for the meeting, the pasture of sculptured stones. He went there, carrying three seeds of wheat and three branches of juniper. The great god was seated upon his horse. Naga Dehar took hold of the reins. A bird appeared in the sky carrying two fresh round cheeses adorned with design of wings. He placed them on the horse and Balumain ordered him to tell the Kalash to make bread adorned with the same design as those on the two cheeses.”²¹⁸

The Dehar have the power to communicate with fairies as well. They sometime play role of mediators between gods and human beings. Dehar can communicate with gods directly but sometime the fairies transmit messages of gods to him to convey it to the people.

“Naga Dehar and Balumain went towards the first village of Bumburet valley. Balumain told Naga Dehar to follow his horse and to watch the hooves. The Dehar looked and saw embers glowing under the horse’s hooves. He tried to gather them up. They arrived at Krakal and stopped there. Naga Dehar called Shiarakat: ‘Balumain is there, pray to him and, and bring wine and branches of juniper.’ Then they went slowly down towards Kandirisar. There

²¹⁸ Ibid (p. 194-95).

lived the Dehar Buda. Naga and Buda climbed onto the roof of Buda's house, and the three of them had a discussion. Buda's son, who was inside the house, was worried and asked his father: 'Whom are you talking to?' His father, in a rage, came down from the roof and threw his son into the fire. The people of the village, seeing a great light, but ignorant of the presence of Balumain, set off their dogs towards the source of the light. The god, in anger, struck the village with his whip. The village caught fire and burned down.²¹⁹

The story also tells that there can be more than one Dehars at a time. Every village or certain area has its own Dehar, but some of them have more powers and qualities enabling them to supervise the entire area. These extra ordinary Dehars not only play their role as religious guides of the common people but have the authority to instruct and guide the other Dehars as well. Next part of the story refers to the ideas and practices related to Chaumos, the most important festival of the Kalash, and the role of Dehar in providing divine base to a social and cultural event:

"It was the time of Chaumos and Naga Dehar explained what Balumain had ordered. Balumain agreed to come and take part in the Chaumos each year, but he demanded that his horse be well fed. (At Bumburet the Kalash offer wheat for Bulumain's horse during Chaumos in a place called Indre'in).

Naga Dehar gathered the hot ashes which were appearing under the horse's hooves. They arrived at Batrik. Balumain taught Naga Dehar the secret song of the Chaumos. He asked him to spread the glowing embers from the horse's hooves here. An ember sprang from

²¹⁹ Ibid (p. 195).

Blumain's thumb and set fire to the top of the mountain of Batrik. The god said: 'Every year, for the Chaumos, you must light a great fire in this place.'

On the cheese brought by the bird there were designs of ibex and of goats: 'You must reproduce these designs on bread for each Chaumos and offer sacrifice at night. You must go to the forest and you will easily be able to hunt ibex.' The time of sacrifice arrived. Naga Dehar taught the Kalash: 'You must no longer sacrifice as you usually do. I shall communicate Balumain's wishes to you. Balumain has said: I have a servant called Pushao, who holds my horse's reins. You must sacrifice in his name. In remembrance of the fairies, you must make galettes (large size wheaten bread) and place them in upon the shelves of the stables.'²²⁰

As stated earlier that the story of wandering of the Kalash may hark back to the migration of the Aryans, to whom those distant ancestors may have belonged. Their wandering would have taken them over the Iranian plateau and across central Asia, a long trek indeed. Those days of pastoral nomadism were marked by the presence of a celestial Supreme Being. Only the shaman could link man to the transcendent Creator through their power of speaking with heaven, and interpret his intentions. So the Kalash let themselves be guided by the "first shaman", who could read the celestial signs. There was nothing surprising in that. They left central Asia, the territory of predilection of shamanism and established themselves in Tsyam.

²²⁰ Ibid (p. 195-196).

On the other hand Chitral have been in close relation with central Asia and Chinese Turkistan, an oasis famed for vines and the strength of shamanism, a sanctuary for the Scythian tribes. Some groups of these nomads appear to have crossed the passes of northern Chitral in order to reach the plains of India more directly, implanting on their way a taste for wine and for shamanic communication. Shamanism was to place its stamp on the tradition of the Kafirs and especially of the Kalash, who still remember Raik, the great shaman of Yarkand, a city of Chinese Turkistan, who introduced them to wine and drums. Given the importance of these innovations, Raik was incorporated in the Kalash myths, and even today the Kalash still refer to Yarkand as one of the sources of their customs.²²¹

This tradition not only indicates the origin of the Kalash and their early life but also clarifies the importance of shaman as a foundation of their religious ideas and practices. Shaman is the person who has power to communicate with Supreme Being. Nowadays the presence of competent shaman can hardly ensured in all three valleys of the Kalash,²²² but the institution of Dehar/shaman is working efficiently to provide religious leadership and guidance to the community. There are Dehars in all three Kalash valleys who perform their duties as a source of inspiration and link of the Kalash with the heavenly beings. As intermediaries between the spirit-world and the people, Dehars/shamans claim direct contact with spirits, myths, fairies or ghosts of the dead. The interaction occurs in a trance state, often induced by seeing the blood of sacrificed animal, smelling the smoke of flaming Juniper,

²²¹ Ibid (p. 19).

²²² Donook, Kalash Religious Teacher in a school run by the Government in Birir valley, in the interview with the researcher during field visit;

Muhammad Inayatullah, *op. cit.* (p. 136).

dancing and/or drumming. In ecstasy the shaman may become aware of things far off, be able to foretell the future or predict movements of game, and be capable of remarkable feat.

Irrespective of the competence of present day shamans the Kalash have no other choice but to follow these “incompetent Dehars”. There are clear statements from the Kalash community members and religious personalities that the institution of the Dehar became weakened due to unavailability of capable Dehars. Kazi Khosh Nawaz, Kazi Braman, Shah Juwan and Bakhtawar Shah of Rumbur, Donook, Adina and Bakhtawar Khan of Birr; and Qadirik and Wazir Kalash of Bumburet in their interviews with the researcher praised the renowned Dehars who had the talent to guide the Kalash in socio-religious matters, but all these personalities clearly admitted that presently competent Dehar could hardly be found in all three valleys of the Kalash.

2. IMPACTS OF NEIBOURING BELIEF SYSTEM ON THE RELIGIN OF THE KALASH

The Kalash have long history of interaction, mostly of rivalry, with the Red Kafirs (Bashgali Kafirs local term used by the Khow and the Kalash), the inhabitants of former Kafiristan and the Khows, the residents of Chitral. It looks that all these three different ethnic groups had similar religious background. The Khow converted to Islam in early stages followed by majority of the Kalash then the Bashgali Kafirs by the end of 19th century C.E. but a small group of Kalash tribe uphold their old religion and culture till today. Ideological and practical similarities as well as mutual influences among these three religious groups are under:

A. REFLECTIONS OF KHOWS IN THE RELIGION OF THE KALASH:

The Khows are the largest section of the population of Chitral who inhabited the whole district. Without going to the details of their origin they are descendents of those emigrants who sought refuge in the narrow valleys of Hindu Kush and Karakorum from the invaders of northern and southern countries thousands years ago and settled there permanently. Those who came from northern countries settled in some parts of Chitral, Hunza and Gilgit, while those who came from southern areas settled in southern regions of Chitral – at that time – in Arandu, Drosh, Bashqar Kohistan (Kalam valley of Swat now), Narsat and Asmar (in Kunar province of Afghanistan now)... All these tribes are known as Khows, their region as Khowistan and their language is called Khowar.²²³

Names of some important valleys and region also called Khow like Torkhow (Upper

²²³ Gholam Murtaza, *Nayee Tareekh-e-Chitral*, (p. 21).

Khov), Mulkhov (Lower Khov) Tehsil of Sub-division Mastooj. The names of Kooch and Lotkooch are also derived from the word Khov. Kooch is the main northern valley of lower Chitral from Kari to Barenis villages and Lotkooch (the Great Kooch) is the other important north-western valleys of lower Chitral formerly known as Khuzara, combining Ojor, Arkari and Injigan/Garam Chashma valleys. Major John Biddulph used the words Toorikho (Upper) Moolkho (Middle – the correct meaning is lower) and Ludkho (Great)²²⁴ without mentioning any difference between the two earlier Khovs that carry the same names till today and the third one that is called Lotkooch now. He also ignored the main and well known Kooch (most probably derived from the word Khov) valley, from Kari to Barenis in north of Chitral city.

Generally the Khovs had been the most important inhabitants of Chitral since long time. No detail information is available about their religion in the earliest part of their history in Chitral except that they originally were pagans or infidels like the Kalash, Bashgalis and other tribes of the region at that time. They follow their own tribal religious traditions dominated by mythology and shamanism. Some evidences ensure the presence of Buddhism in some parts of Chitral but no impact of Buddhism on the religion of Khovs could be indicated. They continued with their traditional religious ideas and practices till the advent of Islam in the region. As stated earlier that in 11th - 14th century C.E. Kalash tribe ruled over southern parts of Chitral. In the beginning of 14th century C.E. Chitral became a unified independent kingdom when the first Muslim dynasty emerged under the leadership of Shah Nadir Rais who defeated the descendents of Khov

²²⁴ Major John Biddulph, *op. cit.* (p. 62).

Kafir king Sumalik in upper Chitral, and proceeded to towards the south and defeated Kalash Kafir king Bulising in proper Chitral. Towards the end of 16th century the Rais dynasty ended and was replaced by the Katoor dynasty (another Muslim dynasty).²²⁵

Both Rais and Katoor dynasty were Muslim invaders but they were merged with the Khows who embraced Islam during this period along with those Kalash who also converted to Islam meanwhile. Thus the interaction between the Kalash and the Khow had taken place in two major stages. In the first stage when the Kalash invaded the Khow dominated areas, there were no major differences between them with respect to the religious ideas and practices. Both of tribes (The Kalash and the Khow) were infidels having mythology as a major religious tradition and depending on shamans for religious guidance. Impacts of this stage can be seen in forms of many common religious and cultural traditions. In the second stage when the Kalash were attacked and subjugated by the Muslim they experienced another form of relation with invaders. Religiously they were Muslims as the Khow embraced Islam and later on some Kalash joined them as well. Culturally they were Khow because Muslim outsiders and some Kalash (who converted to Islam with the passage of time) adopted Khow culture. Impacts of this period on socio-religious life of the Kalash will be discussed separately in chapter 4 under the title: "Impact of Islam on the religion of the Kalash". In this Chapter the issue of Khow reflection on religion of the Kalash and similarities between these two ethnic groups will continue in the coming pages:

²²⁵ Gholam Murtaza, *op. cit.* (p. 36-41);

I. SHAMANIC TRADITIONS:

Previously shamanism has been the most important aspect of religious practice in the region of the Hindu Kush and Karakoram. All tribes living in these areas had their own shamans. "Among the ex-Kafirs, the present Nuristan in Afghanistan, the shamans (called *pshur*, *wrear* or *deal*) were swept away by the monotheistic faith as early as the beginning of the twentieth century. Among Hunza and Gilgit people, the shamans (*bitan*, *dayial*) have been driven to the fringes of their society but they are still active in spite of the three great Islamic groups, Sunni, Shia and Ismaili. In Chitral area (dwelling of the Khow tribe), the Kalash's closest neighbours now have healers whose function has replaced that of the shaman (*betan*) they act as exorcists and are consulted for intervention in the action of evil spirits, and for deflection of spells cast by jealous enemies. They are called *perixan* (Pari Khwan): from *peri* 'fairy', and *xan* 'master', 'master of the fairies'."²²⁶

Taking the case of the Khow particularly regarding the shamanic traditions, Shahzada Hisam-ul-Mulk says:

"In older days (i.e. before Islamization of the Khow) there used to be persons who knew to communicate with fairies and spirits. They were called betans and could get into semi-unconscious state of trance accompanied by wild gestures. If asked any question while they were in this state, the fairy in them would make prophecies which were often correct. A betan could get

²²⁶ Jean-Yves Loude, *op. cit.*, (p. 330).

*into this semi-conscious state at will, although generally some ceremonial acts were performed before inducing him to go into that state. The trance state is termed betan ungeik (verbally meaning 'betan getting wild'). It is said that a betan cannot assume the state of trance in polluted place. So first of all the trance spot must be purified (Oshniru) by offering the sacrifice of a he-goat. After this juniper branches are burnt on a fire; flour and ghee (melted butter) are likewise burnt on the fire, as incense. Some water is sprinkled, out of a pot, on all sides by the betan himself. During these ceremonial acts the betan is engaged in reciting certain 'hymns' while the smoke from the sacrificed goat and ghee and the flour falls on his face. After this, amid wild gestures and utterance, he makes his prophecies."*²²⁷

As stated in the first part of this chapter that the Kalash shamanism is actively working till today having the concepts and practices very similar to that of the Khow, explained by Shahzada Hisam-ul-Mulk here. It seems that he mentioned the concepts and practices of the Khow regarding shamanism in its earlier stages. Later on, especially after conversion of the Khow to Islam, the name of *betan* had lost its importance and replaced by *pari khan* with necessary amendments to make it familiar with Islamic concept of *jins*, to some extent, but some traditions of pre-Islamic era in this connection continued.

²²⁷ Shahzada Hisam-ul-Mulk, *Chitral Folklore*, (Cultures of the Hindukush, Selected Papers from the Hindukush Cultural Conference held at Moesgard 1970, Edited by Karl Jettmar in collaboration with Lennart Edelberg), Franz Steiner Verlag, Wiesbaden, 1974 (p. 104-105).

II. CONCEPT OF FAIRIES:

The concepts regarding fairies are quite similar between the Kalash and Khow tribes. Both of the tribes believe that fairies stay in remote areas far from human habitation. Their stronghold is in Trich Mir (the highest peak in Chitral over 24000 ft. high) where the king of the fairies has a golden palace. On Booni Zoom (another peak in northern Chitral) and on all other high mountain peaks (like Aotshhore, Suratga, Gangawat and many other), they have their forts and palaces. All mountain lakes like Shandur Lake, Qurambara Lake, Mass Lake, Bahuk Lake, Awazak Lake, Shuwala Lake, Durik Lake are considered to be the abodes of fairies. The fairies are not ordinarily visible to people while they can see them. Having this advantage, they can visit villages secretly and carry away the nourishing part of different edibles and fruits, and for this reason one has to perform certain acts to safeguard one's interests, mostly by seeking their pleasure, but sometime by imposing some restriction on them through spiritual acts.

Sometimes they fall in love with other fairies of opposite sex and marriages often take place between them. Sometimes, unintentionally, a person may injure their children by walking over them, and just as among human beings they may enjoy teasing people and giving trouble to them. People possessed with fairies can foretell the future and make prophecies. There are a number of persons, male and female, in various parts of Chitral who claim to have contact with fairies and people approach them for numerous needs and remedy from different diseases and other problems.

Like human beings they are of both sexes. The daughters of high status fairy families are called *mer zury* and are supposed to be very beautiful. Giants are powerful than fairies but mostly work for them as servants.

Markhor (wild goat with big horns and long hairy skin) and Ibex (wild goat with large curved horns) are the cattle of the fairies. In each *gol* (ravine or narrow mountain valley) there is a shepherd called *tshawan* (*shawan*). Previously all *shikaris* (hunters) used to know their names, because without entering them they would not allow any *shikari* to shoot the goat of the fairies. The entreatment of a fairy was called *tshintjik* (*shinjik*). The fairies were addressed as *nangini* (mothers). One would say, "Oh mother adopt me as your son and I request you to give me one of your goats. Be kind and treat me as your guest."²²⁸

It was a common belief that the fairies also had control over the weather. They caused rain and gales. If it rained for many days then a kind of offering was made to the fairies: *ghee* (melted butter) was put on some pieces of bread which were covered by burning charcoal. The smoking dish was placed in the rain. This act is called *wor drek* ('perfume to give', incense').²²⁹

It is commonly believed by the Kalash (as well as by the Khaw before their enlightenment with Islamic beliefs) that some times fairies and other supernatural beings penetrate into the body of greenish goats. It is said that in case of any

²²⁸ Shahzada Hisam-ul-Mulk, *op. cit.* (p. 96-97);

Wazir Ali Shah, *Notes on Kalash Folklore*, (p. 73-74).

²²⁹ Ibid.

carelessness during first night after wedding, greenish goat will intervene and harm the bride and groom.²³⁰

III. MOON ECLIPSE:

The Kalash believe that eclipse of moon occurs when it is attacked by a tiger (*sher*) who is brother of the moon. The moon is said to have taken possession of *sher*'s property as result of which there is constant friction between them. According to the Khow the attacker is a dragon instead of a tiger. Both of the tribes, the Kalash and the Khow, believe that the eclipse of the sun is to forecast about the death of a notable person.²³¹

IV. CONCEPT OF MILKY WAY:

The Kalash share with the Khow, in their old concept that the Milky Way has been created by dust raised due to a race contested by the horse and the cow. The cow is said to have cursed the horse as result of which it cannot do *jugali*, i.e. ruminate, like the cow or camel. The horse also cursed the cow and therefore the feet of the cow were split in two.²³²

V. AMULETS AGAINST DISEASES:

Another common tradition among the Kalash and the Khow is that the amulets or charms against diseases etc. are made up of a number of threads joined together.

²³⁰ Zaheer-ud-Din, *op. cit.*

²³¹ Wazir Ali Shah, *op. cit.*, (p. 72);
Inayatullah, *op. cit.*, (p.301).

²³² *Ibid.*

The important part of them is the knots at short spaces. These knots are tied by the amulet-maker for protection against evil spirits or particular diseases, and each knot requires a special *izum*. The *izum* is required by the wise man in this manner: While asleep he sees two animals or insects (or snakes etc.) talking to each other. On waking up he remembers the talk and uttering it to himself he repeats it with his face and eyes towards the hearth (not seeing nor talking with other people), and makes up his mind to use this *izum* against any particular ailment whenever required and utters these words under his breath while tying the knot.²³³

VI. TREATMENT OF SMALL POX:

Both of the Kalash and the Khow tribes have similar reaction against Small Pox. In case of emergence of small pox in the house, *ishperi* (presentation of milk or milk products to celebrate certain happy occasions is a common tradition among the Khow and the Kalash) with milk is immediately offered, and bread and butter distributed among the elders. This is to welcome Small Pox so that it is mild and not fatal. At the end of a week, another *ishperi* as a farewell to it is offered.²³⁴

VII. CONCEPT AND REMEDY OF EVIL EYE:

Traditions regarding evil eye are the same among the Khow and the Kalash, from pre-Islamic period till these days. Some people are known, by experience, to have the evil eye and if they admiringly stare at a child or cattle then illness or other misfortune befalls them. The *dehar*, among the Kalash and *betan* or *pari khan*

²³³ Wazir Ali Shah, *op. cit.*, (p. 75)

²³⁴ *Ibid* (p. 74).

among the Khow, discovers it by going into trance and advises remedy. The remedy consists of smoke from a burnt portion of evil-eyed man's *ponoku* (rags round his feet). The earth under the feet of the evil-eyed is also obtained and thrown over the victim.²³⁵

These were some examples of the similarities between the Kalash and the Khow, the two close neighbouring ethnic groups of Chitral. Although after embracing Islam majority of the Khow have changed most of their views in accordance with Islamic beliefs, but a number of illiterate people do not feel any hesitation in upholding their traditional concept and act upon it till today. In some cases they unintentionally do these things, having its bases and tradition automatically continued from generations to generations. While in many other cases they do not consider it contrary to Islamic teachings. On the other hand no change had ever taken place in the idea and practices of the Kalash with respect to the fairies and many other things. Both of the communities, the Kalash and the Khow, had many common religious and cultural traditions before the advent of Islam in this region and some of them continued even after it.

B. REFLECTIONS OF THE KAFIRS IN RELIGION OF THE KALASH

The Kalash have close connection with the inhabitants of Kafiristan (Nuristan province of present day Afghanistan) since long time. They inhabited the area between lower Bashgal (Nuristan) and Chaghan Sarai (Asad Abad, the headquarters of Kunar province in Afghanistan) for about three centuries. In 10th or 11th century C.E. they were

²³⁵ Ibid.

pushed north ward into Chitral by the Bashgali Kafirs, who on their turn had been forced to leave their own dwellings during the invasions of Amir Subuktageen and Mahmud Ghaznavi from the West.²³⁶ Although the Kalash have been forcibly driven out from the region occupied by them for a long period of time but they could not finish their affiliation with this area, because most of their religious heritages were related to this area. In the following lines a description to the strong impact of the Kafirs and Kafiristan on the religious traditions of the Kalash is given:

I. IMPACT OF THE KAFIRS ON IDOLOGY THE KALASH:

Ideology of the Kalash had been influenced by the Kafirs apart from the close connection of Kafiristan with Kalash mythology. To differentiate between the Kafirs and the Kalash on ideological bases is really very difficult. Some examples are given here to explain the profound impact of the Kafirs and their area on the religious ideas of the Kalash:

a. RELATION OF KALASH DEITIES WITH KAFIRISTAN:

Almost all Kalash deities originally belong to Bashgal (Kalash term for Kafiristan) and many of them still live there and come to their present dwelling on certain occasions only, according to Kalash belief. There are a number of legends that explain importance and influence of Kafiristan on mythology of the Kalash. Some stories in this connection are narrated in the following lines:

²³⁶ Inayatullah Faizi, *op. cit.* (p. 36);

- i. Sajigor, the most important deity in Rumbur, had originally lived in Bashgal (Nuristan). During one of famous Kalash chief Raja Wai's raids into Bashgal he made it known through a traditional Dehar that, as Bashgal was soon to become Islamistan (the land of Islam); he should take Sajigor to Kalashgum (Kalash valleys). Raja Wai was provided with a bow and two arrows, one tied with a red string and the other with a black string. He was directed to throw the arrows and set up the shrine (in the name of Sajigor) at the spot where the red threaded arrow fell and to set up Bashaleni where the black threaded arrow fell. Raja Wai did accordingly and after long search by his men the spots were deducted in Rumbur and the shrine and the Bashaleni were set up near the small saplings where the red and black arrows were found stuck.²³⁷

According to Kazi Baraman, (a famous Kalash religious leader in Rumbur valley) the arrows were three, and the third one, tied with white string, was for the shrine of Mahandev.²³⁸

- ii. Shahzada Hisam-ul-Mulk (a famous local writer), narrates another mythological story with different characters but the subject of arrows and other details mentioned in previous paragraph are almost the same. This legend is about Warin and Praba, the two most important deities in Birr valley. This story reflects the relevance and importance of Bashgal and its

²³⁷ Wazir Ali Shah, *op. cit.* (p. 77-78).

²³⁸ Kazi Baraman of Rumboor in his interview with the researcher.

inhabitants in Kalash religious traditions. This interesting mythological story says that:

"Once there lived an old lady named Sondi in Bashgal, who had an only nephew named Ratharie. The inhabitants of that village were very wicked. They were sacrificing dogs and cats instead of goats. The old lady asked her nephew to borrow a small goat and make sacrifice, and plaster the Malotsh with leaven flour dipped in the blood of the sacrificed animal. Then Warin appeared in the form of a man and was well pleased with the nephew and told him that on that night a severe earthquake and storm would hit the village and that he should not come outside. When these events occurred, the boy and his aunt did not leave their house. On the next day found that the whole village had been destroyed. So they left the village and while they were crossing a pass Warin again appeared before them. He gave them three arrows: one was tied with red thread, the other with black thread and the third with white thread. They were told that where the white arrow hits the ground a village should be built, where the black hits the ground a Bashaleni, and where the red arrow strikes the ground a Malotsh should be erected. But this time the aunt was feeling thirsty and asked for water. When Warin poured out the

water it became golden sand. With this golden sand the nephew bought all the land in Birr valley. The aunt was given a ring; when he looked through the ring she could see Warin who gave direction for sacrifices. The nephew was given a bow. So even in these days when Mathrokaik (taking omens) is performed, the men use the bow and the women use the ring."²³⁹

- iii. Another very important and popular story regarding the reflection of ex-Kafiristan on Kalash mythology is about the confrontation between Mahandev and Balumain, two important deities of the Kalash. It is said that both Mahandev and Balumain roamed the Bashgal (Nuristan) and Kalashgum (Kalash valleys) and had no specific area allocated to them.²⁴⁰ Balumain summoned Naga Dehar (the most prominent and powerful shaman in the history of the Kalash) to Tsyam and ordered him to go and remain at Waitdesh (a village in present day Nuristan). Balumain brought Sajigor and Mahandev to that place, after which he return to Tsyam. But two weeks later, Balumain recalled Naga Dehar to Tsyam and said to him: 'Now we are going to live in Bumburet, and we have to choose which of us, Mahandev or I, should stay in Bumburet. Go back there and wait for us.' The two gods decided to confront each other on the Durik Pass. During the contest, the Kalash lit fires of juniper and drank wine. The duel consisted in digging as

²³⁹ Shahzada Hissam-ul-Mulk, *op. cit.* (p. 82-83).

²⁴⁰ Wazir Ali Shah, *op. cit.* (p. 78).

irrigation canal, one each from Durik Pass (in Kalash valley) to the valley of Jinjiret (in Drosh to the south of Chitral, at the distance of about 40 kilometre from Durik Pass), in single night. It was decided that the winner should possess Bumburet. Mahandev won but Balumain refused to recognise his defeat and insisted on a return bout at the top of the Shuwala Pass. This pass separates Bashgal from Bumburet. They wagered that the one who awoke at the first light facing Bumburet should receive that valley; the looser should remain in Bashgal. This time Mahandev owed his victory to the complicity of Ingao, who turned Mahandev's face, during his sleep, towards Bumburet, and Balumain's, likewise during his sleep, towards Bashgal. Balumain accepted this decision with anger, but before departure he announced: 'This valley will be a source of problems, I shall come here only once in a year'. Since that time the Kalash celebrates his coming to Kalash valleys during the winter solstice, Chaumos.²⁴¹

- iv. Kutshumai is a female divinity of the Kalash who resides in Bashgal and refused to immigrate to Kalash valleys. She protects fruits and crops and has power to give a child to a barren woman. Kutshumai also has power to improve bad weather. Her sanctuary is placed in a fault in the mountain, represented by naturally carved stone, which is approached with sacrifice (of she-goat), offerings and prayers. She is entreated by the men individually on behalf of women for protection of pregnancy, difficulty in birth and to have

²⁴¹ Jean-Yven Loude/ Viviane Lievre, *op. cit.* (p. 189-192).

a child.²⁴² This female deity was also acknowledged by the people of Prasun in Nuristan (former Kafiristan). She (Krumai by Robertson and Kushumai by Jettmar) appears as a wild goat and resides in Trich Mir, the highest mountain of the Hindu Kush lies in Chitral.²⁴³

Relation of the Kalash with the land of Bashgal (they use this name for Kafiristan which is called Nuristan in present day Afghanistan) and impact of that area on their religious ideas in general and on the concept of deities particularly, can be clearly seen in these different stories and many other legends of the Kalash. When the Kalash were forced to leave Bashgal they came to Chitral but their deities were left behind, because there were no particular places for them in new dwellings of the Kalash. Later on the idea of bringing the deities to Kalash valleys, permanently or on especial occasions, was introduced by the Dehar. So shrines were set up for them in Kalash valleys where they live now permanently or come to stay on particular events. Thus the Kalash can easily approach these shrines and remain in contact with their deities without going to Nuristan. Despite of the shifting of some deities, permanently or occasionally, to Kalash valleys, the impact of Nuristan on Kalash religious traditions, generally and on their mythology specially, remained intact till today.

²⁴² Jean-Yven Loude/ Viviane Lievre, *op. cit.* (p. 353);

Shahzada Hissam-ul-Mulk, *op. cit.* (p. 81).

²⁴³ Karl Jettmar, *The Religion of the Hindu Kush (Vol. I The Religion of the Kafirs)*, Oxford & IBH Publishing Co. Pvt. LTD., New Delhi, 1986 (p. 40);

George Scott Robertson, *The Kafirs of the Hindu-Kush*, Oxford University Press, Karachi, 1985 -first published in England in 1896- (p. 384).

b. ANCESTOR VENERATION: FROM THE KAFIRS TO THE KALASH:

The beliefs and practice of the Kalash regarding dead ancestors have also been influenced by the Bashgali Kafirs (the inhabitants of Kafiristan). As mentioned earlier that the Kalash believe that the soul of the dead ancestors remains near their home for a long time, and would dwell in their wooden representation. They make *Gandao*, large wooden carved effigy and *Gundurik*, small wooden statue resembled by a man seated or on horseback, for the memory of the dead ancestors.²⁴⁴ The history of these effigies and statues clearly shows that the idea and tradition of ancestor veneration basically belongs to Kafiristan from where the Kalash adopted it, which is reflected in Kalash traditions like:

*"At the death of Mumur, his son Kamaran wanted to bring his father back to life in a manner of the (Bashgali) Kafir statues. In those days, there were no Gandao at Birr, and no one knew how to make them. So he had an embroidered robe taken to Dumu, a Kafir of Kamdesh (a village in Kafiristan), and asked him to exchange to carve a miniature replica that would be easily to bring back and copy. A carpenter was thus able to make the statue. But the people of Birr refused to dance such a strange figure. Kamaran distributed twelve cows among all the participants to prompt them to dance."*²⁴⁵

²⁴⁴ Muhammad Inayatullah, *op. cit.* (p.390)

²⁴⁵ Jean-Yven Loude/ Viviane Lievre, *op. cit.* (p. 168).

Actually when the Kalash were defeated by Muslims in most parts of Chitral and restricted to the small valleys of Bumburet, Birir and Rumbur, they thought that their identity and lives were in danger. The notion of support of the gods to the Kalash community has already been shaken by their continuous defeat. The restoration of contact with gods and the dead ancestors required the strengthening of some custom or even the introduction of innovations, the sole alternative to definitive disaster. In these situations they borrow the tradition of Bashgali Kafirs to make images of ancestors in the shapes of Gandao and Gundurik to bring them back to life. Having the ancestors stand and watch at the cemetery or at the entrance to the village gave a sense of security to the living. The army of dead, with their air of warlike ferocity, protected the territory in the place of the fighter who had been defeated. In return, the statues facilitated communication and exchange with the ancestors. The anchoring of souls was part of the revitalisation of custom and the establishment of a system based on visible glory. The virtues of violence gave place to feats of generosity. Nevertheless, hunting and murder in ambush gave the young and the less wealthy access to recognition. Finally, the effigies served to resurrect the most deserving and strengthened the whole edifice.

It can be easily said that a number of concepts and traditions regarding ancestor veneration have been adopted by the Kalash from their Kafir neighbours for spiritual and moral support in crucial stage of their history.

II. IMPACT OF THE KAFIRS ON PRCTICAL LIFE OF THE KALASH:

There are a number of religious and cultural traditions in Kalash society that were practiced by the Bashgali Kafirs before their conversion to Islam. Some cultural similarities between the two ethnic groups can be point out. It can be said that the Kalash might have taken these things from the Kafirs, because the Kalash are weaker than the Kafirs in many aspects of life including religion, culture, military strength and politics. Some examples are given here to explain this point:

a. SEGRIGATION OF WOMEN DURING MENSTRUATION:

Segregation of women during monthly periods is an interesting social habit among the Kalash. The Kalash seclude their women and girls during their menstruation periods, child-birth and post natal period by confining them to a place called "Bashali" until they regain their "purity".²⁴⁶ These women are not allowed to go home or inside the village because they are considered untouchable and impure during these days.²⁴⁷

The inhabitant of Nuristan had the same habit in pre-Islamic period. It is even said that the Kalash had taken this habit. from the Kafirs who used to segregate their women during menstruation periods and child-birth, before their conversion to Islam.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁶ Jean-Yven Loude/ Viviane Lievre, *op. cit.* (p. 53).

²⁴⁷ Zaheer-ud-Din, *op. cit.*

²⁴⁸ Shahzada Hisam-ul-Mulk, *Kalash Mythology*, (p. 83)

b. FUNERAL CEREMONIES:

Traditions during funeral are the best examples of similarities between the two societies of the Kafirs and the Kalash. Preparation of the dead body with traditional dress, dance/music parties in front of the dead-body for a number of days, praising the departed soul with big exaggerations and mourning of the relatives are significance of funeral traditions among the Kalash.²⁴⁹ Robertson has narrated funeral traditions of the Kafirs²⁵⁰ quite similar to above mentioned funeral traditions of the Kalash. It definitely refers to historic relations between the Kalash and the Kafirs, and their affiliation with Nuristan even after their expulsion to Chitral. It is difficult to decide that whether the Kalash have been influenced by the Kafirs in this regard or it was a common tradition in the area.

c. DUK OR DOUBLE BRIDE PRICE:

In Kalash society marriage by elopement (*Arlatshing parik*) is counted as one of the "great customs" (*ghōna dastūr*). In this form of marriage the couple decide their marriage themselves without consulting their elders. Even a married female also has the right to leave her husband and marry another person who is ready to pay *Duk*, double bride price.²⁵¹

²⁴⁹ Jean-Yven Loude/ Viviane Lievre, *op. cit.* (p. 150-151)

²⁵⁰ George Scott Robertson, *op. cit.* (p. 630-636).

²⁵¹ Pervaish Shaheen, *op. cit.*, (p. 119);
Jean-Yven Loude/ Viviane Lievre, *op. cit.* (P. 93-101).

The habit of paying double bride price originally refers to the society of the Kafirs that has been in practice even after their conversion to Islam. The Kalash may have adopted this tradition from them, like many other Kafir ideas and practices that transferred to their society and became part of their religious or cultural life.²⁵²

d. ABOVE GROUND BURIAL IN COFFINS:

In the past, dead bodies of the Kalash were put in wooden boxes (coffins) and placed in graveyard above the ground instead of underground burial. Recently they have started burying their coffins under the ground, but the old ones can be seen in *Mandao Jao*, the Kalash cemetery, in all three Kalash valleys.²⁵³

Very similar to the Kalash, above ground burial in wooden coffins was a general practice in North Kafiristan. Food along with jewellery for woman and weapons for man is also placed in the coffin with the dead-body.²⁵⁴

e. UNUSUAL SOCIAL PRACTICE:

There is a widespread account about the Kalash that during the last night of Pool festival, an unusual ceremony is held for the *Budalak*. The Kalash used to

²⁵² Zaheer-ud-Din, *op. cit.*

²⁵³ M. Alauddin, *op. cit.* (p. 10-11);

M. Afzal Khan, *op. cit.*, (P. 74).

²⁵⁴ Karl Jettmar, *Religion of the Hindukush*, (p. 96).

select young herdsmen having some special sexual power and send them to the pastures with flocks, in order to improve their diet and health, and remain totally inaccessible to the other sex. During the festival of Pool these selected young men return from the pastures after long period of (sexual) abstinence. In that night, they "mix" with any woman/girls they takes in the dance area, and no woman is allowed to refuse.

The Kalash claim that this unusual sexual confusion has long since disappeared, but was perpetuated for a time in the form of symbolic dance seeking the same effects, until that too fell into disuse. All that now remains of Budalak is the mocking title given to would-be seducer, and a song glorifying the return of the herdsmen: "Oh, oh, oh, Budalak drinks cups of milk from the white goat of the heights, oh, oh, oh, Budalak my child returned from the he-goats, oh, oh, oh, Budalak my child in the gardens of flowers..."²⁵⁵

Although the Kalash continuously deny the presence of Budalak, especially the unusual sexual exercise that is widely spread with big exaggerations, but the idea and function of Budalak can not ruled out completely.

Very similar to alleged unusual sexual practice of the Kalash during Pool festival, in Kafir society liberty of the male participant during *Chilum Chuti*, sacred dance of Gish (very important deity of the Kafirs), to choose any

²⁵⁵ M. Alauddin, *op. cit.* (p. 14-17).

Jean-Yven Loude/ Viviane Lievre, *op. cit.* (p. 65-67);

Zaheer-ud-Din, *op. cit.*

woman/girl to take her away to some private place and retain her until the morning.²⁵⁶ Irrespective of the time and occasion of the two festivals or the reason and aim behind it, the unusual sexual practice indicates similarity between Kalash and Kafir societies.

The rivalry attitude between the Kalash and the inhabitants of Kafiristan prevailed throughout the history because the two communities belong to different ethnic origins. Moreover the Kalash have been defeated by the Kafirs and driven from the land that they inhabited for a long time having cultural, religious and emotional attachment with that land. On the other hand both of the tribes have many common socio-religious traditions. Both of the tribes have strong traditions of mythologies very similar to each other. Although the names of the deities differ from Kafiristan to Kalash valleys but main idea as well as functions of many deities were extremely similar. Similarly there are a number of common socio-religious traditions among the Kafirs and the Kalash. Thus it seems that the two tribes belong to the same religious background and reflection of the Kafirs on the religion of the Kalash is quite clear.

²⁵⁶ Karl Jettmar, *Religion of the Hindukush*, (p. 106).

CHAPTER

4

IMPACTS OF ISLAM ON THE RELIGION OF THE KALASH

Chapter 4

IMPACTS OF ISLAM ON THE RELIGION OF THE KALASH

Kalash people are the last tribe of the Kafirs of the Hindu Kush. In spite of being a small minority community surrounded by the Muslims from all sides they still are able to sustain their religious ideas and practices to display the most colourful way of living and celebrating their unique culture. They exhibit, perhaps, one of the oldest ancient primitive traditions and cultures. Kalash are lenient people and have survived centuries of challenges with regards to protect their culture. In the past conversion to Islam had been the only challenge faced by the Kalash, especially in their early encounter with the Muslims. When the Muslims were strengthening their authority over the area and the Kalash were loosing their power and influence day by day, in that moments thousands of the Kalash embraced Islam. Later on when all Kalash of southern Chitral embraced Islam and the remaining one were restricted to the valleys of Bumburet, Rumbur and Birr no major conversion took place, except that some Kalash individuals or families have embraced Islam from time to time, and Kalash population remained almost stable. Recently the conversion rate of the Kalash became very low but did not stopped completely. But since long time there had not been any serious threat for their identity and survival. Although the Kalash tolerated heavy taxes, unpaid labour work and discriminatory attitude from ex state authority of Chitral, but Muslim rulers

of Chitral and, as well as, tolerant and civilised Chitrali people had played their positive role to protect the identity of this weaker minority community and ensured its existence with its centuries old culture and religion up to this day. Population of the Kalash is almost stable since long time but their influence and authority are gradually decreasing in the area. This situation is portrayed by many "well-wishers of the Kalash" as a threat to identity and existence of this "endangered" community. Is Islam real threat for existence of the Kalash? Is Muslim influence can be easily blamed for stability in Kalash population or there are other reasons for low rate of population of the Kalash like tough condition of life with lack of health facilities in the region, high infant and maternal mortality rate in Kalash society, increasing trend of migration of many outsiders to Kalash valleys. Above all can the Kalash culture survive against the challenges of modernity? These issues will be discussed in the coming pages.

1. KALASH MUSLIM INTERACTION: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

In 8th century C.E. (185 Hijri) Muslim forces invaded northern part of Chitral and defeat the then Khow ruler Bahman Khowistani in Muxgole fort of Mulkhow region of upper Chitral, but no Muslims authority was established in the result of this early invasion.²⁵⁷ Meanwhile central and southern parts of Chitral were under Kalash dominance. The formal interaction between the Kalash and the Muslims starts in 14th century after the encounter between the Muslim invader Shah Nadir Rais (the founder of the first Muslim dynasty in Chitral, who originally belong to Badakhshan) and the Kalash ruler Bulising, in which the latter was defeated and killed. With the defeat of Bulising, Kalash dominance over northern and central parts of Chitral came to an end. One of Bulising's son with many other important Kalash personalities embraced Islam. Most of the Kalash sought refuge in southern Chitral and the rest were subjugated and labour work were imposed on them. The southern areas of Drosh including Biori, Urtsun, Shishikooh, Suwir, Birr, Bumburet and Rumbur valleys however were dominated by the Kalash under the leadership of Kireez Nuk. His headquarter was in village Batrik of Bumburet valley.

The Kalash dominance over lower Chitral has also come to an end in the 16th century C.E. when the descendent of last Kalash ruler Raja Wai of Bumburet were defeated by Muslims rulers Shah Nasir Rais. With the fall of Kalash authority, all southern area of Chitral came under Muslim rulers. Despite the end of the Kalash rule, most of the southern parts of

²⁵⁷ Gholam Murtaza, *op. cit.* (p. 27).

Chitral were populated by Kalash people. A large number of the Kalash embraced Islam and heavy taxes (Qalang or Thangi) and labour work were imposed on those who continued with their religion.²⁵⁸ No incident of forced conversion of the Kalash is reported during Rais rule, but many Kalash voluntarily embraced Islam.

During the Katoor dynasty rule over Chitral (1595-1969) life, property and religious and cultural identity of the Kalash were protected by the ruler. They were however required to pay certain special taxes as "*Jizya*"²⁵⁹ and perform certain labour works that were imposed at the time of Rais rulers. They also made obligatory for the male members of Kalash society to put colourful feather into their caps to make their identity noticeable among the Muslims. The Katoor rulers encouraged (never forced) the Kalash to embrace Islam by giving them some incentives and relaxation in labour work. As a result Islam penetrated in the Kalash dominated areas, and consequently the entire southern Chitral including Urtsun and Shishikoooh converted to Islam and the Kalash were restricted to three valleys of Bumburet, Rumbur and Birr (known as Kalash Valleys) and they are still living there, but they are now became minority even in these valleys which are the last dwelling of the Kafirs of the Hindu Kush²⁶⁰.

Despite of the decreasing population centuries-old religious and cultural identity of the Kalash with their shrines, altars and socio-cultural places and activities were protected. The

²⁵⁸ Ibid (p. 29-30).

²⁵⁹ Jizyah is an Islamic term used for special tax on non-Muslim citizens of Muslim state instead of Zakat and U'shr that are paid by Muslim citizens only. (Syed Sabiq, *Fiqh al- Sunnah*, Dar al-Kitab al-Arabi, Beirut, 1985, (Vol. 2, P. 664).

²⁶⁰ Wazir Ali Shah, *op. cit.* (p. 70-71); Gholam Murtaza, *op. cit.* (p. 29-30).

multi-ethnic society of Chitral and tolerant Chitrali Muslim community ensured that the Kalash were able to live in peace and harmony and practice their culture and religion with full liberty. This is the best example of the tolerance, acceptance and good behaviour of Muslim towards non-Muslim communities living in Muslim dominated areas. Muslim rulers as well as Muslim community of Chitral were keen to convert the Kalash to Islam but they never attempt any forcible conversion, despite of the allegation made by some Western writers.

In 1947 the state of Chitral declared its affiliation with newly established Islamic Republic of Pakistan, thus the Kalash also gained Pakistani nationality, having full rights of citizenship and became free from the heavy taxes and unpaid labour works that were imposed on them by the state authority of Chitral. After political reforms in 1954 the Kalash get more relaxations but they remained deprived of development projects of the government and basic rights as citizens of the country, like many other Muslims people living in remote, undeveloped and even ignored areas for being very far from the federal and provincial headquarters.²⁶¹

Although some representation was given to the Kalash as non-Muslim minority community under General Ayub Khan's (the then President of Pakistan) Basic Democracy (BD) system, but nothing has been done for the betterment and development of the Kalash. Meanwhile the restrictions imposed by state authority of Chitral regarding interference in Kalash areas were removed with the advent of the government of Pakistan's supremacy in the

²⁶¹ Inayatullah Faizi, *op. cit.* (p. 36).

region. This paved the way for the outsiders to enter in Kalash valleys and buy the property of the Kalash including precious walnut trees. With the coming of outsiders to Kalash valleys, a major change took place in form of mixed culture that badly affected the Kalash customs.²⁶²

In the seventies of last (20th) century the Kalash have gone through a positive revolution, when Mr. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (the then Prime Minister of Pakistan) visited Kalash valleys and observed the worse socio-economic condition in which the Kalash were struggling to survive, like other people of the area. He paid due attention to this neglected area and ordered to launch development projects in fields of infrastructure, education and health. The Kalash were also provided opportunity to participate in cultural events at local, national and international levels. Thus the Kalash were given projection in the media at national and global level that pave the way for attraction of the tourist and researcher of social and anthropological studies towards them.²⁶³

Although the region of the Hindu Kush had been a subject interest for the Western writers since 19th century CE, but the Kalash and their area get special status of focus for them in late 20th century, particularly after Bhutto era, when a number of Western anthropologists came to Kalash valleys and many of them stayed here to complete their researches on different aspects of Kalash life. As a result a considerable amount of books, articles and papers based on good research were produced by Western scholars in the 20th

²⁶² See: Saifullah Jan (Kalash), *History and development of the Kalasha* (presented at 2nd Hindu Kush Cultural Conference held at Chitral in 1990), Oxford University Press, Karachi, 1996, (P. 241).

²⁶³ M. Alauddin, op. cit. (p. 98).

century. Some Western people established institutions for the welfare of the Kalash. Then a large number of local and International Non Governmental Organisations extended their activities into Kalash valleys. But unfortunately some Western researchers and NGO workers had been involve in creating misunderstanding between the Kalash and their Muslims neighbours, through so-called notions of "threatened Kalash society" or "endangered Kalash culture", highlighting some minor issues in this regard.²⁶⁴

The most important aspect of Muslim Kalash relation is the absolute peace and harmony between these two communities. Both the communities are living in same area for about seven centuries without any confrontation, since the change of power from the Kalash to the Muslims. They have respected each other's religion and have developed mutual understanding on interfaith harmony. Credit goes, on one hand, to the moderate and caring Muslims community of Chitral who being the ruling power with overwhelming majority neither interfered in religious and cultural matters of the Kalash nor attempt to convert them to Islam by force, and, on the other hand, credit goes to the peaceful and lenient Kalash people who always avoided any form of confrontation with the Muslims.

The best example of peace and interfaith harmony between the Muslims and the Kalash can be seen in the case s of voluntarily conversion of the Kalash to Islam. When a Kalash embraces Islam no adverse reaction is seen from his family, relatives, clan or community as a whole. All relations remain intact and life continues as usual. A father converting to Islam will not compel his children to join him in his new faith, and likewise a Kalash father will

²⁶⁴ Zaheer-ud-Din, *op. cit.*

never stop his children to embrace Islam. Although a Kalash after his conversion to Islam will give up all customs and traditions that contradict with the teaching of Islam or which symbolise Kalash religion and culture, but he will continue to share social life in his family with his non-Muslim relatives as usual. There are numerous examples where Muslims and Kalash relatives live in the same family in the same house under one roof.²⁶⁵

Recently the conversion rate of the Kalash became very limited due to many reasons. The foreign elements, NGO workers, secular Pakistani writers and some government officials are creating environment very convenient to convince the Kalash that their culture is a unique one and it should continue with full protection. In their opinion Islam is a big threat for this unique culture. Establishment of Greek funded schools and cultural centres/museum in Kalash valleys; arrangement of visit of Kalash youth, both girls and boys, to Greece and other European countries; visits of important European personalities including high officials and diplomats, especially the Greeks, to Kalash valleys and such other activities are going on systematically to strengthen the notion of Greek origin of the Kalash. All such activities are done under agenda of so-called protection of the Kalash.²⁶⁶

A number of allegations have been launched against the Muslims of being threat for the Kalash. The most surprising of them is that "the jealous *mullahs* (Muslim religious leaders) organised armies to invade Kalash valleys and convert them to Islam by force".²⁶⁷ But no evidence or detailed information were presented in support of this allegation. It will be very

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Saifullah Jan (Kalash), *op. cit.*, (P. 240).

difficult to answer if somebody asked that who these mullahs were, when these armies were organised, when they invaded Kalash valleys, did they kill any Kalash and how many Kalash were forcibly converted to Islam. Actually nothing of these kinds had ever taken place historically. No one can mention the name of at least a single Kalash who was converted to Islam by force throughout the long history of the Kalash in Chitral. But, sorry to say that, so-called "well-wishers of the Kalash" have succeeded in their struggle to create misunderstanding between the Kalash and the Muslims and established the impression that Islam is real threat for the Kalash.

A recent incident the issue of a Kalash girl is portrayed as an example of Muslim offence against the Kalash. A report prepared by Mr. Wazir Zada (Kalash), Manager Ayun and Valleys Development Project (AVDP), a local Non Governmental Organisation, is presented here to know the reality about the issue with brief comment to clarify some misunderstandings:

REPORT ON ISSUE OF A KALASHA GIRL

Report Submitted to: LAPH Chitral

By: Wazir Zada Manager AVDP

Dated: 20th Jun 2011

BACKGROUND

Paisa Bibi a beautiful Kalash girl from Bumburet Valley Broon was married in her own village with a Kalasha Boy Zarin Mohd and had two girls from her EX.

Husband, In 2005 she got divorced from her husband and married with another man Nizargaye. After her divorce they children were compel to live with their father. Zarin Mohd was not mentally fit and started beating the children. That is why the innocent Children took shelter in their uncle house. The Muslim uncle of the children gave them Muslim dress to use but the innocent children had never thought that the mercy of their uncle would create problem for them one day.

In 2010 the elder sister Alsina 10 years old child was forbidden to wear her own dress (Kalasha Dress) and attend the festival. The girl escaped to her motherhouse to live a free life. Soon after the Family of her Muslim Uncle claimed that she had been converted to Islam and forced her to live with them by adopting the Muslim life style. The frightened mother (un-willingly) handed her over to them because she was threatened to be killed and burn her house. After few days when the mother came to know that her daughter was living a life like in imprison she requested the Police to help her.

The DSP Police Mr. Shams ur Rehman after investigation had declared her to be immature and advised the Muslim people to let her live independently. Although she got the right to live with her mother but was not allowed to live like her mother and forced to wear the Muslim dress and not to attend Kalasha religious festivals.

In 30th May her mother requested Social Organizer AVDP Mr. Javeed Ahmad and told him the whole story of her daughter. On his report AVDP decided to take up the issue. AVDP contacted LAPH Chitral and met the Khatib Shahi Jama e Masjid

Chitral Maulana Khaliq U Zaman. With the financial Support of LAPH a delegation of Religious scholar were taken to Bumburet to investigate and decided the issue.

Copy to

- 1. DCO Chitral*
- 2. DPO Chitral*
- 3. Commandant Chitral Scout*

Detail Report

The delegation consisted of three religious Scholars Moulana Khaliq U Zaman and his friends, Abdul Majid Chairman AVDP and Rehmat Ellahi Vice Chairman AVDP and X. UC Nzim, Wazir Zada Manager AVDP and other AVDP staff visit Bumburet and met the girl. Khatib Sahab after meeting the girl and her mother assured her to give her right of choice to live and advised her mother not to afraid. He said that Islam is a religion of peace and justice and if her daughter (being an immature) wants to live according to the Kalasha tradition no body was allowed to force her.

After that the delegation met the Muslim Uncle of the girl Mr. Rehmat Rahim and after knowing his point of view briefed him on Islamic Rule where in a un adult can not be Muslim or Kalash he/she has the right to live in her own way and can follow the way of the parents if they are Kalash. First Rehmat Rahim was aggressive but later said that he had no objection in the matter any more. The delegation also visited the female children Madrasa and discussed the issue with lady teaching there.

In the End once again the Delegation met the girl and her mother to tell them to be freed and not to be frightened all about the issue and advised the innocent girl to wear dress what ever she liked.

Recommendation

The Matter should be taken to the court to decide it formally because after a day I received a called from her mother that once again some Muslim people had visited and thread her. They were asking for any legal prove to wear her daughter Kalasha Dress. She has stopped going to school and her life can be mysteries if she is not helped in this stage.

Without going to details of the issue and commenting upon some controversial and negative remarks of the reporter, this report clearly shows the positive role of the Muslims and their religious leadership to protect the Kalash and their cultural identity. Despite the allegations against the Muslim uncle of the girl and some other Muslims of the area, for threatening the girl and her mother, the overall stance of the Muslim community was extremely positive. Every member of Muslim community, whether they are government officials, or political leaders, or NGO workers, or social personalities or even religious leaders, played a positive role to solve the issue in the light of Islamic teachings and in accordance with tradition of the Muslims. All of them seem to be well aware of the universal Islamic rule of *لا إكراه في الدين ... الآية (البقرة ٢٥٤)* (there is no compulsion in Islam).²⁶⁸ An action of a single Muslim person (the uncle of the girl, who may be supported by few other Muslims)

²⁶⁸ Al-Baqarah, 2/256.

must not be taken as a common attitude of the Muslims towards the Kalash. However it seems that this issue, like many other cases, has been taken as a good opportunity to launch a blame game against Islam and the Muslims, which is a popular phenomenon especially in modern world. Thus every minor issue is highlighted and used to blame Islam and Muslims. This attitude can easily be observed in the case of Kalash Muslim relation.

2. CHALLENGES TO KALASH MUSLIM RELATION

During field work and public consultations in the valleys some issues were identified by the researcher as dangerous to the peaceful environment of the region and harmful to the age old tradition of interfaith harmony between the Kalash and their Muslim neighbours. These issues must be dealt with seriously and sincerely. Personal opinion should never be dictated on the people, and short term solutions of issues must not overrule long lasting interests of the region.

A. EFFORTS TO PROVE THE KALSH ALIANS TO THE AREA:

The first issue is that a number of “Well wisher of the Kalash”, especially the Western people working in Kalash valleys, are trying to develop, or even enforce, the theory of Western/Greek origin of the Kalash, depending on an alleged tale of Alexander’s invasion of the Hindu Kush region and other baseless speculation (discussed in first part of Chapter 1). Some local people, mostly the Kalash, have also been influenced by this conjecture. Such theories, on one hand, can weekend the affiliation of the Kalash with their birthplace and its people, and on the other hand, may lead to create quarrel between the Kalash and the Muslims living in the valleys. Some indigenous people have already started to say that if the Kalash are Greeks so why do they live here and why they do not go back to their motherland Greece.

Kalash are living in this region for long period of time, and their stay in Chitral is exceeding at least nine centuries or eighteen centuries, according to some sources. They

are attached with this region historically, culturally, religiously and emotionally. All their customs, traditions, rituals and even deities are related with the same area. They only recount Tsyam as their motherland, which has no relation with Greece. Now imposition of a baseless theory (of Greek connection) on these innocent people will never be considered a wise approach. Elimination the age-old attachment of the Kalash with this region by proving them aliens for the area will ultimately shake the bases of their culture and religion. Then normal and smooth continuation of Kalash culture will not be guaranteed.

B. “UNDUE FAVOUR” GIVEN TO THE KALASH:

Another issue is that the government and most of the non governmental organizations focus on Kalash community, ignoring the Muslim community in the valleys and their development needs, requirements and problems, which can also lead to develop misunderstanding between the two communities and may cause jealousy among the Muslim against the Kalash.

The natural beauty of the area coupled with the uniqueness of Kalash culture attracts large numbers of domestic and foreign tourists. No doubt that the Kalash exhibit one of the ancient culture and display the most colourful and unique way of living. They must be given due pride and identity which they deserve being the son of the land and fellow citizens. On the other hand Khow people also possess very rich cultural traditions and there are many places in other parts of Chitral more beautiful than Kalash valleys,

but the “scenic beauty” of Kalash valleys and uniqueness of their culture is promoted in most of the books, booklets and brochures of tourist guide for Chitral, and even at national level, with big exaggerations, ignoring all other ethnic groups, particularly the Khows and their areas. Any outsider, foreigner or domestic, arrives in Chitral on private tour or official trip, his primary desire is to have a visit to Kalash valleys in the first available chance. The Chitralis (the Khows and other Muslim people other than the Kalash) may hate this attitude considering it insult for them, their culture and their beautiful area (Chitral) as a whole. Now a general perception has emerged among the Khows and all other Chitrali Muslims that despite of having rich historical and cultural heritage they have been ignored and the Kalash, with help of their “well-wishers”, hijacked the attention of the people, particularly the visitors coming to the region. Especially the Muslims living with the Kalash in the same valleys may feel this unbalanced position more seriously, when they observe the excessive interest of the government, NGOs, welfare organisations, visitors, and all other people towards their Kalash neighbours, ignoring them in most of the matters regarding development, requirements and problems. This is a sensitive issue due to its emotional and socio-cultural grounds. To avoid any situation of confrontation in the region this matter must be taken seriously. Confidence of the Muslims living in the valleys must be gained through a balanced approach regarding both of the communities. Requirements and problems of the Muslims should also be addressed through mutual consultation while designing any development programme in the region.

C. SENSITIVE CULTURAL ISSUES:

The third issue is that with the coming of foreign and domestic visitor to Kalash valleys some sensitive cultural issues between the Kalash and the Muslims are arising. There are many aspects in Kalash culture which are unacceptable in the culture of the Muslims living in the area, like participation of Kalash female with male in combine music and dance parties, liberty of Kalash women to interact and mix with male openly without any hesitation, use of wine at large scale, tours of the groups of Kalash women/girls to other countries etc. These matters are disliked by the Muslims but despite of their abhorrence for these habits they never try to put any ban on it nor interfere in personal life of the Kalash; however they think that these things may affect the society of Muslims living in this region, and that is unacceptable for them. These issues must be addressed seriously otherwise it may affect the peaceful relations between the Kalash and the Muslims and harm the ideal religious harmony between the two communities.

- I. Dance and music are integral part of Kalash culture. Singing and dancing is not simply an amusement but rather it has religious meanings as well. On the occasions of festivals, weddings, feasts, even rituals and funerals the whole society of the Kalash gather and participate in grand performances of music. The Kalash dislike the presence of non-Kalash in these occasions but being tolerant and lenient people they do not prevent anyone from attending these events and watching their dancing women. Taking the advantage of this relaxation many outsider, including some local Muslims, try to join the Kalash in theses movement, watch the dance and take

photographs. Likewise the Kalash do not confine their women in the houses and feel no harm in their interaction with men publicly. They allow the visitor to move in their villages, talk to their women and take photograph with them. Some of the visitors go to Kalash houses, sit with the family members, including women, take information about Kalash culture, enjoy the hospitality of the Kalash, take their foods and drinks, and even drink their wine sometimes.

The Muslims of the area recognize the importance of dance and music for the Kalash as well as liberty of Kalash woman, but the participation of outsiders in Kalash functions and their dealings with Kalash women freely, give bad impression about the Kalash particularly and about the area generally. The outsiders, especially the non-local Pakistanis, who participate in these “extraordinary” events, propagate it to other people with big exaggerations, and that creates misperception of sex free society in Kalash valleys. This situation is not only unacceptable for the Muslims of the area but the Kalash also dislike it.

- II. Likewise groups of Kalash women also take part in cultural activities at national and international levels. Recently a sense of dislike for the dance of Kalash women outside the valleys has developed among the Kalash, and they openly criticising this action:

"We are in Pakistan, and Pakistan is an honourable country. So we feel it wrong if our women are taken from our valley to dance for other

people elsewhere. We feel it shameful, for elsewhere in Pakistan women keep purdah. It is true that our women are free: they do not keep purdah. But they should not be taken freely outside the valleys."²⁶⁹

This is the view of an educated Kalash personality regarding the performance of Kalash women outside the Kalash valley, but even in Kalash valleys the overflow of the visitors, their presence during cultural activities, especially dance parties, and their attempt to interact with Kalash women publicly is disliked by the majority of the Kalash; however they, due to their generosity, do not show any strict resentment in this regard, which is wrongly considered by some people as their recognition to these actions.²⁷⁰

To protect the culture of the Kalash, involvement of outsider in their cultural activities must be discouraged otherwise it can effect the relation between the Kalash and their Muslim neighbours, on one hand, and will be harmful for the unique and beautiful culture of the Kalash on the other hand.

- III. The case of wine is more sensitive with respect to Muslim Kalash relations. The Kalash can produce and consume wine, enjoying the benefit of the limited permission given to them being non-Muslims citizens of the country, according law of Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Limited permission means that they can produce and consume the wine within their own community only and are not allowed to use it

²⁶⁹ Saifullah Jan (Kalash), *op. cit.* 1996, (P. 241-242).

²⁷⁰ Zaheer-ud-Din, *op. cit.*

openly or to sell it to Muslim citizens. Generally the Kalash do not violate this law but, for being easily available, there are numerous cases of wine traffic to outside the Kalash valleys apart from events where they provide wine to the visitors, including some Muslims as well. This is not only violation of the law but can be considered as an act of disturbing the environment of the area. The Muslims of the area are very much concerned about this issue. They think that easily accessibility of wine in Kalash valleys may cause penetration of this “*Ummul-khabais*” أم الخبائث (mother of all bad things)²⁷¹ into their society. They demand that if Kalash community and the government can not ensure the limited permission for the production and use of wine for non-Muslims and can not implement the law in this regard, then it should be banned for the Kalash as well.

On the other hand some secular elements defending these illegal and immoral thing in the name of protection of Kalash culture. More surprising thing is that most of the people promoting these things belong to such societies where no culture other than the prevailing and dominant one is tolerated. Moreover exercising other culture, even some minor features of that culture, is strictly prohibited and regarded as acts of extremism. Wearing of headscarf by Muslim women is banned in many Western countries considering it as an offence against the so-called secular culture. This is the worst example of double standard adopted by secular culture where the basic right of a community (which is integral part of their cultural and religious tradition as well) is banned in the name of culture. At the same time secular elements are promoting a

²⁷¹ Tradition of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and mercy of Allah be upon him) narrated by Nasayee.

number of things in Kalash valleys which are prohibited according law of the land and are against culture of the majority.

D. ROLE OF OUTSIDERS IN SPREADING HATRED IN KALASH VALLEYS:

Another issue is the growing trend of tourists flooding into the valleys without any check and their involvement in social affair of people living in Kalash valley. Among the tourists there are some miscreants who preach hatred in the valleys. Some outsiders have caused damaged to the historic environment of interfaith harmony and wonderful situation of mutual understanding between the Muslim and Kalash in Bumburet, Rumbur and Birr Valleys in the recent past. Among them are those secular outsiders who promote the idea that Islam is real threat for the Kalash and those Muslim outsiders who are keen to convert the Kalash to Islam at any cast.

Muslim outsiders are unaware about environment of the region and age-old relation between the Kalash and the Muslim of the area. They might be sincere in their desire to convert the Kalash to Islam, but if their activities are causing disturbance in the valleys by creating discordant environment in which the Kalash may feel themselves insecure, then these activities can be considered harmful to larger interest of the region and its inhabitants. This will provide opportunity to those secular outsider elements who are already trying to convince the Kalash that Islam is the real threat for their culture and identity. Thus the overflow of the visitors in Kalash valleys without any restrictions and their activities and involvement in some sensitive issues may create misunderstanding

between the Kalash and their Muslim neighbours. In this situation the historic and wonderful condition of interfaith harmony between the two communities will be at high risk. There must be a proper system of check and balance for the outsider coming to Kalash valleys.

It is really very interesting argument that culture and identity of the Kalash will perish due to increasing activities of Muslims in the area. In fact Islam or Muslims are not the real threat for the Kalash. They are living under Muslim dominance for centuries, but their culture, religion and identity were well protected and still alive actively. Their population is stable since long time. In spite of the increasing number of Masjids (Muslim places of worship) and Madrasas (Muslim institutions for religious education) with rising activities of Muslim preacher in the valleys, the rate of conversion (Kalash to Islam) is decreasing. In fact a considerable number of Muslims are living in all three Kalash Valleys and target of Masjids, Madrasas and activities of Muslim preachers (like Tablighee Jamaat) constrain to these Muslims like other parts of Chitral and Pakistan. If Islam was threat for them, than how could they survive against overwhelming majority of the Muslims, who have absolute political and social dominance over them? It is true that some Muslim neighbours of the Kalash had been involved in oppressing them and buying their lands, forests and other resources. This can be taken as a natural social phenomenon in which one section of the society tries to subdue the other section to fulfil their economic desire only. It has no relation with sectarianism or religious fanaticism.

Religion

However it is historically established that Islam had never been a threat for the Kalash and their culture. The real threat for the existence and identity of the Kalash is the situation of misunderstanding between the Kalash and their Muslim neighbours, overflow of visitor, mushroom growing NGOs and un-balanced commercialisation that are not only creating a mixed culture in Kalash valleys but disturbing the religious, cultural and social life of the Kalash as well. This important issue will be discussed separately in chapter 5 under the title of: **"Impacts of Modernity on the Religious and Cultural Identity of the Kalash."** In this Chapter the topic of impacts of Islam on the Kalash will continue and now the influence of Islam and Muslims on the religion and culture of the Kalash will be discussed in the coming pages.

3. MUSLIM INFLUENCE ON THE KALASH

The Kalash are living with the Muslims in this region for a long period of time, and had been under Muslim rule most of this period (since 14th century). Moreover the Kalash do not have any solid ideological foundations. Their religious practices and customs are based on some mythological ideas and nature, animal and ancestor veneration. Surrounding by the Muslims from all sides, with weaker religious foundation it was quite natural that the smallest non-Muslim minority community of the Kalash to have been influenced by Islamic ideology. Muslim Influence on the Kalash is visible in many aspects of life. With the start of Muslim rule in Chitral most of the Kalash embraced Islam gradually, except a small number who uphold their religion and customs till today, but they were restricted to Bumburet, Rumbur, and Birr, three small valleys known as the Kalash Valleys. Increasing Muslim population converted the majority of the Kalash to a minority even in these valleys as well. A number of changes are observed in Kalash ideas and practices due to influence of the Muslims. Ideological and practical impacts of the Muslims on the Kalash are discussed here separately:

A. MUSLIM IMPACT ON IDEOLOGY OF THE KALASH:

The dominant Islamic ideology has its significant impact on Kalash thought. A number of changes can be identified in religious ideas of the Kalash due to influence of the Muslims especially after the supremacy of the Muslims over the region and shift of political and social power from the Kalash to the Muslims. Some important examples in this regard are:

I. CONCEPT OF GOD:

The concept of god in Kalash religion is ambiguous. They believe in the existence of the Creator, which they call Dezao and Khoday, and they claim to worship him alone. A religious leader of the Kalash says:

*"We do not worship idols of stones and woods, but we go to the places that are signs and symbols of our gods where we offer sacrifice and pray to only one god. We are neither pagans nor atheists."*²⁷²

Despite of the claim of Kalash that they believe in one god and worship him alone, they accept a large number of deities, fairies, spirits and other supernatural beings as god or associate with him in numerous matters. Beside mythology and animism, many forms of nature, animal and ancestor veneration can also be observed in the religion of Kalash.

Belief of the Kalash in the Supreme God, Dezao, and claim to worship him alone is one of the best examples of Muslim influence on them. In his older form Dezao was obviously a distant God, who was seldom addressed in formal rites. He has no shrine, sacrifice is specifically dedicated to him in the whole ritual cycle.²⁷³ The Kalash concept of one god has also been stunned by the large number of mythological gods. During their interaction with the Muslims they comprehend one

²⁷² Kazi Braman of the Kalash in Rumbur valley, in his audio-taped interview with the researcher.

²⁷³ Augusto S. Cacopardo, *Gates of Paristan, History, Religion and Society in the Hindukush (Chitral)*, ISIAO, Rome, 2001: P. 70.

God who is the Creator and the Lord of the entire universe. They identified a great resemblance of the Supreme Being that is already known to them with the God of Islam, and started to claim to worship him alone with their mythological gods. They also borrowed the word "*Khoday*" for god from their Muslim neighbours who use this word for Allah in same context, (in Khowar, Pashto and Persian languages) but contrary to the Kalash they worship Him alone without making any associate with.

According to Islamic belief the claim of the Kalash to worship one god is very similar to that of *Mushrikeen* (disbelievers) of *Makkah* who considered their idols mediator between God and humans that may bring them near to the God. The Noble Qur'an narrated their view point and strongly criticised it:

"والذين اتخذوا من دونه أولياء ما نعبدهم إلا ليقربونا إلى الله زلفاً إن الله يحكم بينهم في ما هم فيه يختلفون إن الله لا يهدي من هو كاذب كفار" (الزمر ٣).

(But those who take for protectors other than Allah (say): 'We worship them only that they may bring us nearer to Allah.' Verily Allah will judge between them in that wherein they differ, but Allah guides not such as are false and ungrateful).²⁷⁴

The Kalash also use some Arabic and Persian words, for their god, these words are used by the Muslims for Allah, like *Khaliq* (the Creator), *Malik* (the Ruler/Master), *Raziq* (the Provider of sustenance), *Parwardigar* (the Provident), *Nigahban* (the Protector) etc. with the same pronunciation and meaning.

²⁷⁴ Zumar: 3 (39: 3).

II. PROPHETHOOD/ GUIDENCE FROM SUPERNATURAL WORLD:

As stated earlier that the Kalash neither believe in any prophet nor they have any sacred scripture. They have their traditional shamans whom they call Dehar. Shaman work as mediator between gods and human beings, his role in Kalash religion is like the role of prophets in the revealed religions. Messages of gods and other supreme beings are conveyed to the Kalash through theses shamans. Kazi Braman says: "You, the Muslims, follow your prophet Muhammad but we, the Kalash, follow our Dehar in all religious matters".²⁷⁵ In its golden age there were famous Dehar like Raik, Naga, Thanuk, Buda and others. But day by day Kalash shamanism is becoming weaker than the past. Today any competent Dehar/shaman can hardly found in all three Kalash valleys²⁷⁶ but this is the only institution to link them with their deities and other super natural beings.

However missing of a prophet remained a core issue along with the other main deficiencies of Kalash religion. Through their long interaction with the Muslims the Kalash gradually became familiar with Islamic concept of prophet-hood. Now they admit the prophet-hood of Muhammad and other prophets (May peace and mercy of Allah be upon them all), but deny their role in the religion of the Kalash by saying that those prophets have been sent to their respective communities and the Kalash do not need to obey them because they have their own Dehars for religious guidance.

²⁷⁵ Kazi Braman of Rumbur valley, in his audio-taped interviews with the researcher, during his field visits to Kalash valleys.

²⁷⁶ Bakhtawar Shah of Rumbur valley and Adina of Birir valley, in their audio-taped interviews with the researcher, during his field visits to Kalash valleys.

III. CONCEPT OF HEREAFTER:

Muslim influence on the Kalash concept of hereafter is quite clear. As stated earlier that the Kalash concept of hereafter have gone through many phases. Basically hereafter have no meaning for them; rather they are concern with this world only. For them happiness in this life is considered as ultimate success, while bad luck and difficulties on earth are regarded as punishment by the gods. As the concept of hereafter was one of the most important aspects of human concern and no religion could ignore it, they borrowed the ideas of hereafter from the Muslims who were ruling the area and the Kalash were living under their authority as a minority community. Influenced by Islamic concept of hereafter the Kalash started to use the terms of Qiamat (hereafter) Arasat (day of resurrection and judgement), Behesht (paradise) and Duzhakh (hell) in the context that the Muslims of the area use these terms with the same meaning and pronunciation. "Gilded houses" (of the paradise) and "invisible bridge" (Siraat), typical Islamic terms, can also be found in Kalash traditions, another indication of Muslim influence on the Kalash thought. But the Kalash do not have any detailed information in this regard, which proves that these are not their original concepts, rather adopted one from their Muslim neighbours.

B. MUSLIM IMPACT ON RELIGIOUS AND CUTURAL PRACTICES OF THE KALASH:

Besides the ideological impact, Muslim influence on practical life of the Kalash can also be pointed out. There are many religious and cultural practices of the Kalash that

have been changed or even disappeared in Kalash society due to influence of Islam and the Muslims. Some examples in this respect are given here:

I. SOCIAL NORMS:

“Perhaps our Kalasha custom is wrong, since other people say it is bad”.²⁷⁷

This is a general perception that has emerged among the members of Kalash community to think over many aspects of Kalash social norms as these are not good. Perhaps the continuous pressure of Muslim community on the Kalash regarding many socio-religious matters has changed Kalash thinking over these things.

The Kalash are not frowns on contact between the both sexes, and do not in general separate males and females. Women can freely interact with males in public and has the right to choose her husband, even after marriage and having children she can elope with her lover. Women can take part music and dance parties in public without any hesitation or restriction. There are no severe punishments on sexual crimes in Kalash society, and their social norms and traditions are absolutely different from that of their Muslim neighbours who are very strict in observing *hijab* for women and conscious about chastity and honour, having severe punishment on sexual crimes. Being a minority community surrounded by a vast majority Muslims, it was quite natural that the Kalash started to think over the false impression of sex free society about their valleys. Now a sense of honour is emerging among them.

²⁷⁷ Saifullah Jan (Kalash), *op. cit.* 1996 (P. 241).

Despite of their hospitality, kindness and lenient attitude in general, and especially towards the visitors, now they do not like free movement of the outsider in their villages. Recently some cases of aggression on sexual offences are reported, which could not be imagined in Kalash society in the past.

The unusual sexual confusion of *Budalak* (the details can be seen in chapter 2, page 39-40) has long since disappeared due to the pressure of Muslims, but was perpetuated for a time in the form of symbolic dance seeking the same effects, until that too fell into disuse.

II. MUSIC AND DANCE:

Music and dance are integral part of Kalash culture. Singing and dancing is not simply an amusement but rather it has religious meanings and can never be parted from their life. Kalash women actively take part in the functions of music and dance on the occasions of their festivals in their respective valleys. In 1970s, after the visit of Mr. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (the then Prime Minister of Pakistan) to Kalash valleys, a group of Kalash women was invited by local authorities to perform dance and other cultural activities on the occasion of Jashn-e-Chitral, (grand festival of Chitral) at polo ground. But strong resistance was shown from Muslim religious leadership and members of civil society declaring that this action is not only violation of Islamic injunctions but against the cultural values of the region as well. The authorities were forced to withdraw their decision and send back the Kalash women without

performing dance.²⁷⁸ Although the Muslims do not interfere in the private life of the Kalash to observe their socio-cultural activities freely even in cases of its contrary to the values of surrounding Muslim majority, however bringing Kalash women to perform dance in public gathering of Muslim majority was not only unacceptable for the Muslims but even sober and moderate Kalash also disliked it. But the elite class of the society, including government officials and their guests use to go to Kalash valleys to enjoy special arrangement of dance parties by the groups of Kalash women.²⁷⁹ Delegations of Kalash women also take part in cultural activities at national and international levels.

Recently a sense of dislike for the dance of Kalash women outside the valleys has developed among the Kalash, specially the orthodox class and some modern educated people, like Saifullah Jan of Rumbur in his clear statement:

*"We are in Pakistan, and Pakistan is an honourable country. So we feel it wrong if our women are taken from our valley to dance for other people elsewhere. We feel it shameful, for elsewhere in Pakistan women keep purdah. It is true that our women are free: they do not keep purdah. But they should not be taken freely outside the valleys."*²⁸⁰

This is the real feelings of educated, social and moderate Kalash personality regarding the performance of dance by Kalash women outside the Kalash valleys, but

²⁷⁸ Zaheer-ud-Din, *op. cit.*

²⁷⁹ M. Afzal Khan, *op. cit.*, (P. 76-77).

²⁸⁰ Saifullah Jan (Kalash), *op. cit.* 1996, (P. 241-242).

even in Kalash valleys the overflow of the visitors, their presence during cultural activities, especially dance parties, and their attempt to interact with Kalash women is disliked by the majority of the Kalash. Although the Kalash do not react harshly against these undesirable activities, but their hatred on such occasions can easily be observed.²⁸¹

III. MARRIAGE BY ELOPMENT:

In the Kalash society marriage by elopement (*Arlatshing parik*) is counted as one of the "great customs" (*ghōna dastūr*). In this form of marriage the couple decide their marriage themselves without consulting their elders. Even a married female also has the right to leave her husband and marry another person who is ready to pay *Duk*, double bride price.²⁸² The Muslims were criticizing the Kalash on their attitude regarding wife-elopement. Influenced by Muslims, now wife-elopement leads to a situation of tension between Kalash clans until peace is negotiated by mediators, in the form of the double bride-price paid by the abductor to the ex-husband. Recently many cases of aggression, in the cases of wife elopement, have been reported in which the abductors have been beaten by the effected husbands and members of their clan, and women were forced to return to his husband's house. Marriage by elopement for un-married female is still a popular practice in Kalash society.²⁸³

²⁸¹ Zaheer-ud-Din, *op. cit.*

²⁸² Pervaish Shaheen, *op. cit.*, (p. 119);
Jean-Yven Loude/ Viviane Lievre, *op. cit.* (P. 93-101).

²⁸³ Zaheer-ud-Din, *op. cit.*

IV. BURYING OF DEAD BODIES:

In the past, dead bodies of Kalash were put in wooden boxes (coffins) and placed in open air. In recent years (since 1970s), the Kalash have started burying their coffins, but the old ones can be seen in *Mandao Jao*, the Kalash cemetery, in all three Kalash valleys.²⁸⁴ In fact there was continuous pressure on the Kalash by their Muslim neighbours to stop placing the coffins in open air. Environmental problems caused by the bad odour of dead bodies and consumption of expensive alpine wood for the coffins were the main issues raised by the Muslim community of the area against open air placement of the dead bodies by the Kalash.²⁸⁵ Cases of stealing the weapons, jewellery and skeletal remains, which have been put in the coffins with the dead bodies at time of funeral, by the outsiders also mentioned as reason for burial of the coffins.²⁸⁶ However continuous pressure of the Muslims in this connection in addition to influence of the Muslim on Kalash thought and practices is the prime factor behind this phenomenon.

V. STATUES OF FOREFATHERS:

The Kalash used to erect big wooden carved effigy called *Gandao*, which is placed in the cemetery, for the memory of the dead ancestors.²⁸⁷ They also used to make *Gandurik*, a small statue of a man seated or on horseback, for the same

²⁸⁴ M. Alauddin, *op. cit.* (p. 10-11);

M. Afzal Khan, *op. cit.*, (P. 74).

²⁸⁵ Sultan Wali Khan, an influential Muslim personality of Bumburet valley, in his discussion with the researcher.

²⁸⁶ M. Alauddin, *op. cit.* (P. 11)

²⁸⁷ *Ibid* (P. 12)

purpose. It would be hoisted on a decorated pole, placed in one of the dead man's fields or at the entrance of his village.²⁸⁸ The ceremony of making Gandao and Gundurik is quite costly, only a few can afford them, but despite of its heavy cost many Gandao and Gundurik were erected by the influential Kalash in the past.²⁸⁹ These statues were made only to perpetuate the memory their ancestor, but the Muslims were blaming the Kalash of being idolatry due to these images.

During the course of the present century, the cemeteries have lost their standing and equestrian statues, which were either destroyed by iconoclasts or stolen in order to be sold to Westerners or to museums. Some, it is said, had even been sold by members of the Kalash community. Since November 1980, some new statues were reintroduced in the valleys.²⁹⁰

VI. TABOOS:

Changes in some taboo have taken place in Kalash society due to influence of the Muslims. For example:

a. USE OF CHICKEN AND EGGS:

Chicken and eggs were supposed to be deadly polluted, and were forbidden in the Kalash society. In the old days, no Kalash village ever permitted its presence. Going a chicken near altars or shrines is bad omen and can cause for some disaster in the valleys. But now chicken can easily found in Kalash villages

²⁸⁸ Jean-Yven Loude/ Viviane Lievre, *op. cit.* (P. 172).

²⁸⁹ M. Afzal Khan, *op. cit.* (P. 74).

²⁹⁰ Jean-Yven Loude/ Viviane Lievre, *op. cit.* (P. 176).

and it is, even, available in the houses and hotels run by the Kalash.²⁹¹ Some Kalash families started to breed chicken in their houses. Presence of the Muslims in Kalash valleys, who continuously breed chicken in their houses and flood of visitors, mostly the Muslims, that requires bringing poultry from outside the valleys are also playing role for availability of chicken products in Kalash society. Thus the Kalash are gradually becoming familiar with these forbidden things in their culture and religion, which ultimately resulting as unannounced relaxation for chicken and its products and change in this age-old taboo of the Kalash.²⁹²

b. USE OF ONION:

Similarly use of onion was forbidden in Kalash society, especially on the occasions of religious and cultural ceremonies. It was due to its bad smell that is disliked by Kalash deities according to Kalash tradition. But nowadays the Kalash do not feel any hesitation in use of onion. Although the onion was disliked by the Prophet Muhammad (may peace and mercy of Allah be upon him) who advised his followers to avoid the use of onion before attending the *Salat* congregations in *Masjid*,²⁹³ but it not strictly forbidden or *Haram* according to Islamic injunction. So Muslims freely use onion and influenced by

²⁹¹ M. Allauddin, *op. cit.* (P. 13).

²⁹² Zaheer-ud-Din, *op. cit.*

²⁹³ Muslim ibn al-Hujaj al-Qushairi, *Sahih Muslim* (Kitab-ul-Masajid, Bab Akl Thoman aow Basalan aow Kurrasan aow Nahviha, Hadith No. 67-78/48-56, p. 123), Dar al-Hadith, Cairo, 1412 Hijri/1991 C.E.

مسلم بن الحجاج القشيري، صحيح مسلم (كتاب المساجد ومواضع الصلاة، باب نهى من أكل ثوما أو بصلا أو كراثا أو نحوها، حديث رقم ٥٦١/٦٨ ... ٥٦٨/٧٨)، دار الحديث، القاهرة، ١٤١٢ هـ/١٩٩١ م.

them the Kalash also started to use it despite of being strictly forbidden religiously and culturally.

VII. MOURNING:

Mourning is an important part of funeral in Kalash society and it continues till the next festival following the incident of the death. There is special mourning for couples. During this period there are some restrictions on their movements, along with other requirements of mourning. After giving sacrifice of goats on different stages the mourning period comes to an end. In the past this period was about 5-6 months but nowadays it reduced to 2-3 months. Beside reduction in the period of mourning some relaxation in restriction of movement and taking part in social activities can also be observed. This change also seems due to the influence of Muslim majority who have no such tough restrictions.²⁹⁴

VIII. USE OF WINE:

Wine is used by Kalash at large scale especially on cultural and religious ceremonies, thus it can be considered as integral part of Kalash culture. They make wine locally and preserve it in cans, buckets and underground tanks. There are especial events to open preserved wines, usually in seasonal festivals and events of birth, marriage, death or feast for prestige these preserved wines are opened and use freely at large scale. In their ordinary life the Kalash use wine freely and frequently. Local brand wine of the Kalash sometimes smuggled to nearby Muslims areas

²⁹⁴ Zaheer-ud-Din, *op. cit.*

illegally. Moreover few non-practicing Muslims try to get wine from the Kalash. This phenomenon has lead to impose some restrictions on wine production of the Kalash by local Muslims through district government administration. The Kalash are now bound to produce wine for their own use only and they have to ensure that their wine must not travel to Muslim areas otherwise they will not be allowed to produce wine for themselves as well.²⁹⁵ It is apparent that this socio-religious activity of the Kalash i.e. production and use of wine is under severe restriction due to the influence of the Muslims.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

CHAPTER

5

IMPACTS OF MODERNITY ON THE RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL IDENTITY OF THE KALASH

Chapter 5

IMPACTS OF MODERNITY ON RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL LIFE OF THE KALASH

Surrounded by Muslim tribes from all sides, the smallest group of a minority community, the Kalash, has been able to protect their religious and cultural identity since long time. In the past conversion to Islam had been the only challenge faced by the Kalash, especially in their early encounter with the Muslims in which a significant number this community embraced Islam. But like many other societies, who uphold their old cultural and traditional values, the Kalash also influenced by modernity and globalisation. Now they are facing new challenges and threats in forms of uncontrolled arrival of tourists in large number without any proper orientation with the culture of the region, mushroom growing NGOs with so-called agenda of "welfare and protection of the Kalash with their unique culture" but most of them are involved in controversial activities and un-balanced commercialisation monopolised by the outsiders that is perilous for Kalash economy. All these things are, on one hand, changing the environment of Kalash valleys by creating a mixed culture, and disturbing the religious, cultural, social and economic life of the Kalash on the other hand. This situation is making the Kalash extremely unsafe to live with their cultural identity and practice their belief system independently. However, it is now the responsibility of everyone,

individual, society and state to actively contribute in giving them their due pride and identity which they deserve being the son of the land and fellow citizens. State needs to come forward and treat them as a special case to restore their confidence, put safeguards to protect their identity and create conditions in which they could fearlessly practice their culture and religion.

In the coming pages reason of decline in Kalash population and present religious, social and economic condition of the Kalash valleys will be discussed with special reference to new religious and cultural trends, as well as modern challenges and threats faced by this "endangered community" regarding their identity and survival.

1. REASONS OF DECLINE IN KALASH POPULATION

Population, influence and clout of the Kalash is slowly decreasing in the area due to their rate of conversion, tough condition of life with lack of health facilities in the region, high infant and maternal mortality rate in Kalash society and increasing trend of migration of many Muslim outsiders to Kalash valleys. The Kalash population decreased from 10,000 in 1951 to 3487 in 1998, motivating conservation expert workers and anthropologists to work to preserve and protect the Kalash culture. Despite conscious efforts from the government and a number of conservationist and voluntary organizations the population of Kalash is decreasing with the passage of time instead of flourishing. This situation is portrayed by many "well-wishers of the Kalash" as a threat to identity and existence of the Kalash and continuation of that situation as indication for that Kalash culture will be wiped out from the face of world. Some people introduced the notion that the Kalash are one of "the worlds endangered minority communities".

Conversion to Islam had been an important factor in decreasing Kalash population. During the long history of the Kalash, thousand of them converted to Islam. This phenomenon had started immediately after the defeat of Kalash ruler Bulising by the Muslims in early 14th century, when his own son along with a number of Kalash dignities embraced Islam. With the advent of Islamic influence to Kalash dominated areas, the light of Islam steadily spread there. Conversion rate had been accelerated after complete defeat of the Kalash with the fall of last Kalash ruler Raja Wai of Bumburet in 16th century, when all

southern parts of Chitral came under Muslim dominance. Later on all Kalash of southern Chitral embraced Islam and the remaining Kalash were restricted to the valleys of Bumburet, Rumbur and Birr. Since then no major conversion took place, except that some Kalash individuals or families has embraced Islam from time to time, and Kalash population remained almost stable. Recently the conversion rate of the Kalash became very low but did not stopped completely.²⁹⁶

Apart from this ordinary conversion there is a special form of conversion in which Kalash women convert to Islam when they marry Muslim men. Liberty of Kalash women to choose her husband, low status of women in Kalash society, poverty in the area and search for better standard of life are the major reason for conversion of Kalash women to Islam through marriage with Muslim men. In such cases a considerable number of Kalash women converted to Islam in all three valleys.²⁹⁷

A new kind of Kalash conversion has started recently with the coming of the Western people to Kalash valleys. Some of the Westerners staying in Kalash valleys are working on Kalash youth to convert them to Christianity. They are trying to convince the Kalash youth that conversion to Christianity does not requires negation of Kalash cultural and traditional values at all, instead one can continue his cultural and social life as a Kalash as usual and accept Christianity as religion only, unlike the case of conversion to Islam where one must leave all such activities that are linked with religion or culture of the Kalash. It seems quite

²⁹⁶ See the details in chapter I under "History of the Kalash".

²⁹⁷ Zaheer-ud-Din, *op. cit.*

appealing to a Kalash to become a member of the world famous religion without any change in his social and cultural life. This will be more dangerous for the Kalash in the future, when these converted people become complete part of Christianity and realise that whenever they are Christian there is no need to act upon Kalash culture and traditions, thus the idea of continuation of Kalash culture despite of the conversion to Christianity will cease.²⁹⁸

Access to health care is basic human right and an important measure of development. Lack of health care facilities is another important issue regarding Kalash survival. Kalash valleys being located in remote mountain gorges are almost deprived of basic health facilities. Independent research establishes high prevalence of infant and maternity mortality rates in Kalash valleys.²⁹⁹ This is further substantiated by relatively lean government run health programs with substandard facilities. There are a few dispensaries established in three Kalash valleys by local and provincial governments, where only minor health care facilities are available. There is a Basic Health Unit (BHU) at Bumburet valley but without a doctor and medicines are scarce. Similarly in Birr and Rumbur valleys there are dispensaries but the situation is worsening than Bumburet. For complete treatment the Kalash have to travel to Basic Health Unit at Ayun (at the distance of about twenty kilometres) or District Headquarters Hospital at Chitral city (at the distance of about forty kilometres), especially in the situation where transport facilities are not easily available, in addition to the harshness of bad weather and worse condition of roads that leads to continuous roadblocks. It is terrible to imagine the situation that when the roads remain blocked in prolong winter sessions and the

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ M. Allauddin, *op. cit.* (P. 79)

people have to bring patients, particularly in maternity and delivery cases, to Ayun putting them in wheel borrow or on back using local baskets and walked for more than two hours, but the people of Kalash valleys are quite used to face situations of these kind having no other option except this.³⁰⁰

There are issues of basic hygiene and cleanliness which are sources of permanent diseases in Kalash community. It is safe to say that their lifestyle do not ensure cleanliness. They do not have the habit of taking bath except in rare occasions. Many Kalash males spend most of their time with goats at stables. Some of the cultural rituals like sending so called impure girls and women during their menstruation and expecting mothers during childbirth to Bashali, the menstruation and maternity house, an isolated place in the village where they have to reside till their normal days come back, further deteriorate the status of health in the valley. There is need to come up with a holistic primary health care programming dealing with preventive and curative needs of the community through out the year in order to reverse this trend.³⁰¹

Most of people in three valleys of Kalash lack access to drinking water and sanitation facilities at their homes. This puts extra pressure on women's work and their health. They have to fetch water from streams flowing down the villages or from mountain springs very far from their houses, especially in the winter when the whole valley is covered by snow and narrow icy walking tracks become more dangerous. Many projects of water supply through pipe-lines have been initiated in different places by political representatives and Non

³⁰⁰ Zaheer-ud-Din, *op. cit.*

³⁰¹ Ibid.

Governmental Organisations, but most of them are either incomplete due lack of check and balance system, or not functional due to mismanagement and severe weather conditions.

Sanitation is even bigger issue in Kalash valleys. Less than ten percent of the families have latrine at their house. There is also no coherent solid waste management system and water sanitation existing at community level. Kalash low population and thin density in the valley have helped in containing the issue at least for present.

Severe weather conditions, low literacy rate and skills have made the livelihood options limited for Kalash valley people to have diverse livelihood opportunities and professions. Around ninety percent of the people depend on agriculture and livestock. The individual land holding is very small due mountainous nature of the area. In most of the cases, farmers sow one crop throughout the year, which is the main reason for food insufficiency in the region. Livestock, especially goat herding, is basic source of livelihood of the Kalash, but it is a very tough job that need full involvement and non-stop attention in harsh weather conditions. Harsh environmental conditions, lack of land, low income and continuous hard work to survive have made life very tough for the Kalash. These conditions have badly affected their average age rate, which is 45-55 years, while overall average age rate in Chitral is 70-80 years. This could be considered as a solid reason of decline in Kalash population.

Another important matter is that the population growth rate among the Kalash is very low with compare to their Muslim neighbours. There are numerous cases of childlessness among them as well. According to the elders of Chitral one of the basic reasons behind low

population growth rate and childlessness among the Kalash is that they do not circumcise. Sultan Wali Khan³⁰², an influential Muslim personality of Bumburet valley, in his conversation with the researcher explained his argument by referring to some practical examples, that not doing circumcision is one of the major reasons for low population growth rate among the Kalash in general and childlessness in particular cases.

Most probably the institution of *Budalak* had also been introduced by the Kalash to overcome this childlessness. A renowned social and political figure of Chitral, commenting on Kalash tradition of *Budalak* and the stance of the Kalash in this regard, said in his discussion with the researcher:

“A Kalash man from Birir valley used to work in my house and once he was absent from his work for a long time. On his return I found him with clean shaved face and head. When I asked him about his absence and return with new look, he was shy and hesitant in reply, but when I insist on my question he disclosed that he have been selected as a Budalak of the year by the Kalash. Then I asked him that why you, Kalash people, perform this shameful act? And his reply was very surprising: ‘O my master! You are well aware of the condition in which we, the Kalash, are living. Childlessness is a common feature of Kalash society. The institution of Budalak is the only legal way in our society to resolve this critical issue.’ But despite of the institution of Budalak I know a number of

³⁰² Sultan Wali Khan is an active Muslim social figure of Bumburet valley. He has excellent relation with the Kalash and accepted as leading personality and elder of the community among the Muslim and the Kalash of Bumburet. Being a keen observer he has sound knowledge about the Kalash and their cultural heritage.

*Kalash who remained childless. The ratio of childlessness is much higher among the Kalash with compare to their Muslim neighbours.*³⁰³

Nevertheless decreasing population of the Kalash is a matter of fact and an issue of apprehension for all concerned people, irrespective of its causes and reasons. Without indulging themselves in blaming game, the world community, the government of Pakistan, the people of Chitral and the Kalash themselves should realise this alarming situation and take necessary action to overcome the problem seriously.

³⁰³ Haji Fazel Qadir Khan son of Asfand Yar Khan, the Chief Commander of the state forces of Chitral, and grandson of Aman-ul-Mulk, the most prominent and famous ruler of Chitral. He himself commanded the state army, succeeding his father Asfand Yar Khan and his elder brother Abd-us-Samad Khan. He had sound knowledge and keen observation about the Kalash through his close connection with them having lands and other properties in Kalash valleys, continuous visits to these valleys and having some Kalash in his house for permanent labour work imposed on them by the state authorities of Chitral.

2. UNCONTROLLED TOURISM: A THREAT FOR KALASH CULTURE AND TRADITIONS

The scenic beauty of the area coupled with the uniqueness of Kalash culture attracts large numbers of domestic and foreign tourists who are not trained to respect the diversity of Kalash culture. Foreign tourists are introducing new trends in the society that had been confined since long time. Although some of them are trying to know Kalash culture or even to adopt it, but they ignore the overall culture and tradition of the region. This uncontrolled arrival of tourists in large number without any proper orientation with the culture of the area, especially Kalash culture, is making the Kalash extremely unsafe to practice their cultural and traditional activities according to their belief system independently. This on one hand makes them insecure over their identity and put a consistent social pressure on their unique culture, and makes them socially vulnerable to confront non-Kalash people in public space on the other. Such uncontrolled tourism and its related market can oppress local culture and its living standard.

Taking the issue of foreign visitors who come from various parts of the world, especially from Western countries, to Kalash valleys, it is safe to say that some of them are disturbing the peaceful environment of the Kalash valleys. These foreign visitors have different declared and hidden aims and agendas. A large number of them are simple visitors who come to see and enjoy the beauty of unique culture and traditions of the Kalash. They come on particular seasons or special occasions then go back within a

limited time. These tourists come to Kalash valleys, mostly without any proper orientation with the culture and tradition of the area, especially Kalash culture. They depend on the information provided in tourists guide books or brochures that contain incomplete and improper information with high exaggerations. Although some of them try to know the values of Kalash and show keenness to respect it, but sometime they unintentionally violate the traditions and values of the region due to ignorance. These tourists are eager to get more and more information about the Kalash and their unique culture within a limited time framework. Depending on superficial information given in tourists guide brochures when they try to interact with the Kalash most of their actions and behaviours are disliked by them but without showing any negative reaction the Kalash try to cooperate with them. Basically the Kalash are extremely polite, generous and cooperative people. They mostly tolerate negative and disliked attitudes of the visitors, which give the impression of their acceptance for that, but in fact it is harmful for them but due to their generosity endorse it. The problems arise when some hidden agenda play its part and values of the region are ignored, and when interference in cultural activities of the Kalash and setting up new trends disturb the peaceful environment of the area.

Another important issue is that with the coming of foreign and domestic visitor to Kalash valleys some sensitive cultural issues between the Kalash and the Muslims are arising. There are many aspects in Kalash culture which are unacceptable in the culture of the Muslims living in the area, like participation of Kalash female with male in

combine music and dance parties, liberty of Kalash women to interact and mix with male openly without any hesitation, use of wine at large scale, tours of the groups of Kalash women/girls to other countries etc. These matters are disliked by the Muslims but despite of their abhorrence for these habits they never try to put any ban on it nor interfere in personal life of the Kalash; however they think that these things may affect the society of Muslims living in this region, and that is unacceptable for them. These issues must be addressed seriously otherwise it may affect the peaceful relations between the Kalash and the Muslims and harm the ideal religious harmony between the two communities.

As discussed earlier that dance and music are integral part of Kalash culture. Singing and dancing is not simply an amusement but rather it has religious meanings as well. On the occasions of festivals, weddings, feasts, even rituals and funerals the whole society of the Kalash gather and participate in grand performances of music. The Kalash dislike the presence of non-Kalash in these occasions but being tolerant and lenient people they do not prevent anyone from attending these events and watching their dancing women. Taking the advantage of this relaxation many outsider, including some local Muslims, try to join the Kalash in these movement, watch the dance and take photographs. Likewise the Kalash do not confine their women in the houses and feel no harm in their interaction with men publicly. They allow the visitor to move in their villages, talk to their women and take photograph with them. Some of the visitors go to Kalash houses, sit with the family members, including women, take information about

Kalash culture, enjoy the hospitality of the Kalash, eat their traditional foods and drinks, and even drink their wine sometimes. The Muslims of the area recognize the importance of dance and music for the Kalash as well as liberty of Kalash woman, but the participation of outsiders in Kalash functions and their dealings with Kalash women freely, give bad impression about the Kalash particularly and about the area generally. The outsiders, especially the non-local Pakistanis, who participate in these extraordinary events, propagate it to other people with big exaggerations, and that creates misperception of sex free society in Kalash valleys. This situation is not only unacceptable for the Muslims of the area but the Kalash also dislike it. Recently a sense of dislike has emerged for involvement of outsiders in private matters of the Kalash. The overflow of the visitors to the valleys, their presence during cultural activities, especially dance parties, and their attempt to interact with Kalash women publicly is disliked by the majority of the Kalash; however they, due to their generosity, do not show any strict resentment in this regard, which is considered by some people as their recognition. To protect the culture of the Kalash, involvement of outsider in their cultural activities must be discouraged otherwise it can effect the relation between the Kalash and their Muslim neighbours, on one hand, and will be harmful for the unique and beautiful culture of the Kalash on the other hand.

The role of tourism in promoting the culture of wine is more sensitive issue with respect to Muslim Kalash relations. The Kalash can produce and consume wine, enjoying the benefit of the limited permission given to them being non-Muslims citizens

of the country, according law of Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Limited permission means that they can produce and consume the wine within their own community only and are not allowed to use it openly or to sell or gift it to Muslim citizens. Generally the Kalash do not violate this law but, for being easily available, there are numerous cases of wine traffic to outside the Kalash valleys apart from events where they provide wine to the visitors, including some Muslims as well. This is not only violation of the law but can be considered as an act of disturbing the environment of the area. The Muslims of the area are very much concerned about this issue. They think that overflow of the visitors and easily accessibility of wine in Kalash valleys are the main reasons for expanding the culture of wine in the area which may cause its penetration into their society as well.

Another issue is the ignorance of the outsiders about the tradition and values of the area and their involvement in creating misunderstanding between the Kalash and their Muslim neighbours and causing damage to the mutual harmony of the two communities. The growing trend of tourists flooding into the valleys without any check is a matter of great concern. Among the tourists there are miscreants who preach hatred in the valleys. Among them are those secular outsiders who promote the idea that Islam is real threat for the Kalash and those Muslim outsiders who try to convert the Kalash to Islam at any cost. Muslim outsiders are unaware about environment of the region and age-old relation between the Kalash and the Muslim of the area. They might be sincere in their desire to convert the Kalash to Islam, but if their activities are causing disturbance in the

valleys by creating discordant environment in which the Kalash may feel themselves insecure, then these activities can be considered harmful to larger interest of the region and its inhabitants. This will provide opportunity to those secular outsiders who are already trying to convince the Kalash that Islam is the real threat for their culture and identity. Thus the overflow of the visitors in Kalash valleys without any restrictions and their activities and involvement in some sensitive issues may create misunderstanding between the Kalash and their Muslim neighbours. In this situation the historic relation and wonderful condition of interfaith harmony between the two communities will be at high risk.

The case of Mr. Jodi is the worse example of negative result caused by ignorance of the cultural values of the region by an outsider. A Spanish young-man Mr. Jodi had arrived in Chitral in 1988 C.E. and lived here for a long time. In the beginning he was moving in remote areas in search of *Barbanu* (satyr), a mysterious wild man known for his huge sexual organ and ability. But finally he settled in Bumburet valley and declared that he adopted Kalash culture. As clarified earlier that there is no difference between the religion and culture of the Kalash, so adopting Kalash culture means accepting their religion as well. In 2004 C.E. he was killed by unknown criminals. According his declared will his funeral ceremony had been arranged in accordance with Kalash culture and tradition. A reliable personality of Bumburet, who was present on the occasion when the government official along with the elders of the community examined the residence of Mr. Jodi after his tragic death, told the researcher that there were solid

evidences on Mr. Jodi's involvement in immoral and unlawful activities that could never be imagined and tolerated in this region, even in comparatively free society of the Kalash.

There are a number of good examples of foreign visitor who worked for betterment of the Kalash. Athanasius Lerounis is a Greek volunteer who has been living and working in Kalash valleys to protect, preserve and develop Kalash culture, through his NGO called Greek Volunteer. He has done tremendous work for the Kalash, except his controversial stance for Greek origin of the Kalash, which leads to create misunderstanding between them and the other resident of the area. Athanasius first time came to Kalash valleys in 1994 and was fascinated by ancient civilization of the Kalash. He felt that this culture was facing the looming social and economic threats. He went back to Greece and managed to approve the multi sector project from Greeks ministry of foreign affairs section for foreign aid called Hellenic Aid. As of today Greek Volunteer has been able to complete 18 small community based projects in education and water supply, beside making of a full cultural complex naming *Kalasha Dur* (Kalash House) in Bumburet consisting of a very well developed Kalash museum, hospital, school, seminar hall and a wide community courtyard.

Mr. Athanasius was kidnapped and taken to Nuristan area of Afghanistan by unknown criminals, on September 08, 2009. This is the only one incident of its kind in the history of Chitral which badly disturbed the peaceful environment of the region. After long struggle of both the Muslim and the Kalash communities of the area through

continuous negotiations with the kidnapers, he was released and went back to Greece immediately after reaching Chitral.

A British lady social worker Maureen Lines, adopted by a Kalash family in Birr and a Japanese lady Akiko, married to a Kalash man in Rumbur valley, are the other examples of great interest shown by the foreigners in the Kalash and their culture. They have done tremendous development work for the welfare of the Kalash.

3. UNBALANCED COMMERCIALIZATION: A CHALLENGE FOR KALASH ECONOMY

Another important factor is the role of Chitral based and further down country rich traders and their commercial activities in Kalash valleys. Their control on local economy has further consolidated non-Kalash power in the valley. Although there are few hotel run by the Kalash but the number of hotels, guest houses and shops owned by outsiders increasing day by day. Most of the Kalash community members work in these hotels as labourers and other such positions which are considered socially low. In the past the Kalash survived due to the economic self sufficiency of their core valleys in times when the economic pressures were far less and market forces were not aggressively exposed to rural society of the Kalash. Now the conditions are entirely different. Their number is very low and market forces are far more aggressive. Traders from down country are coming and buying their land, forests and other resources. The inflow of outsiders is expected to increase in future as an all year running road connecting Chitral with other parts of the country will start working after the completion of under-construction Lawari tunnel. This will fasten the process of commercialization in Chitral and Kalash region and making its culture even more vulnerable.

Kalash Valleys are endowed with natural forests, pastures, surface water and wildlife. Coniferous forests are found on the upper slopes and their prevalence is determined by climatic factors. The upper tree line is limited by cold temperatures and

the lower perimeter is affected by aridity. The pastures found in Kalash valleys are sub-alpine woodlands at higher altitudes and dry temperate coniferous scrub and dry oak scrub at lower altitudes, which are grazed from mid-May to September.

The valleys have plentiful water resources. The stream, Bumburet Gol, is fed by two main tributaries, Zinor Gol and Lot Gol, which in turn are filled with snow and glacial melt in the summers. Each village of the valley also has a number of natural springs. 31 species of birds and 27 species of mammals have been recorded in the region. Trout fishes are also common in the waterways and streams in all the three valleys. Trout fish farms have been set up in Kalash valleys.

The people of Kalash Valleys rely mostly on their natural resources for survival. Most of the families own some land, cultivated by irrigation, on which to grow maize, wheat, red bean, potato, millet, vegetables, walnut and fruit. Wheat is considered superior to other crops, while potato and red beans are commercially important. Most families have to buy grain to meet their needs and virtually no one produces surplus grain. The valleys are heavily dependent on livestock for dairy products, skins/hides/hair, meat, religious purposes (sacrifice) and ploughing of land. Goats make up the majority of animals, followed by cows and sheep.

The animals are fattened on the alpine and lower elevation pastures; fodder/forage crops; hay; cereal and vegetable crop residues; and Holm-oak, willow, mulberry and apricot leaves. The area also has abundant timber resources and many of the

unemployed males work as small-scale timber contractors to extract wood against government permits. Rich timber resources of Kalash valleys are at high risk in hands of timber mafia that is involve in trade of timber at large scale, mostly illegal, depriving the inhabitants of the valley from their natural resources without giving them their due right and benefit. Additionally, *Chalghoza* pine nut, morels³⁰⁴ and '*salageet*'³⁰⁵ are extracted from the mountainside.

Off-farm income sources in Kalash valleys are tourism and employment. Over the last 20 years, Kalash Valleys have become the principal tourist attraction of the district, owing to the unique culture, traditions and festivals of the Kalash people. Hence, many locals, mostly Muslims, have become involved in hoteling and trade. Small shops, hotels and guest houses have been erected, providing new luxury for visitors of the valleys. Market economy is mostly monopolised by outsiders and a small portion is belong to the Kalash community as few shops, hotels and guest houses etc. are run by the Kalash. Some Kalash, mostly males but recently few female as well, are employed in government service such as with health department, department of forestry, police, border police and the Chitral Scouts. Some Kalash youths are working as tour guides as well.³⁰⁶

Livestock deserve special attention here because they are an integral part of Kalash culture. The meat and dairy products are a necessary component during births,

³⁰⁴ Morels are a type of mushroom of high economic and medicinal value.

³⁰⁵ Salageet is the local name for a black liquid that exudes from rocks and becomes hard after being exposed to air. It is used locally for arthritis and back pain and is also known for its aphrodisiac qualities.

³⁰⁶ Zaheer-ud-Din, *op. cit.*

marriages, festivals and funerals and thus the Kalash, who can afford to, keep large herds. To elucidate on one example, at the death of a Kalash man say in Bumburet valley, people from the other two valleys having Kalash inhabitants- Birr and Rumbur- are also called and for three days music and food abound. Between 40 and 70 animals are slaughtered (mostly goats) and an average of 160 kg cheese and 100 kg butter are consumed. When a Kalash woman passes away, the rites are shortened to one day, which include food but no music. The number of animals slaughtered is an attribute to the wealth of the deceased. However, a poor man is also departed ceremoniously by the community as a whole (the rich contribute more). Therefore, livestock are just as important for living as they are for dying. Looking at wealth perceptions of the people, those with more assets, in form of land, capital or livestock, are generally considered a part of the higher echelon of the community. However, in the Kalash valleys, wealth is strongly correlated with the number of animals, because livestock hold a special religious significance. A person with a small and poorly kept dwelling but a herd size of a hundred will be considered as 'rich'. Notwithstanding the fact that a large herd size brings in significant quantities of dairy products for the household, the financial value of these animals is little since they are kept for religious ceremonies and thus rarely sold. In contrast, the few Muslims who keep a large number of livestock are wealthy because these animals are a financial investment.

There are other important areas where the income level of Kalash people can be improved substantially. Livelihood programming has to be built on community's

strengths and the Kalash can offer their unique wood carving handicrafts, sewing skills and designs to set the basis for more sustainable long term livelihood programs. Recently few shops and centres for Kalash handicrafts and other products have been set by the Kalash at a minor scale. There are great opportunities and possibilities of progress in this field by adopting professional skills, marketing methods and advertisement on local as well as international levels. There is also need to regulate tourism in order to flatten its economic benefits for the larger use of Kalash communities. Consultation with the people living in Kalash valleys and their involvement in tourism activities will definitely enhance the tourism in the area, on one had, and provide more opportunities of its economic benefits to common people of the valleys on the other hand. Controlled land market, development of eco-tourism, and making Kalash culture more accessible to selected group of high paying tourists can become basis for a long term livelihood program in the area.

Unless a whole package of legal, administrative and financial measures is taken to actually protect and enact Kalash culture, the danger is that the social phenomenon in form of decreasing Kalash population in Muslim majority surroundings, lack of culturally sensitive education for Kalash children, increasing commercialism and consumerism and escalating activities of foreigners and foreign funded NGOs will eventually ravage the Kalash and perish them from the world scene. The Muslims of the area as a community, Chitral as a state, and Pakistan as a country have been able to protect the diverse populations and cultures, particularly the Kalash. It is a great honour

for Pakistan and its people to let the diverse culture to survive and flourish in its society. The presence of the smallest non-Muslim minority community of the Kalash, with centuries-old culture in overwhelming Muslim majority surroundings, is a slap of the face of those who blame the Muslims in general and Pakistan in particular for not being accommodative for diversity of cultures and for not protecting non-Muslim cultures. Certainly from an economic and tourism standpoint, disappearance of the Kalash would actually mean disaster of tourism in Chitral and Pakistan. That would take away much needed revenue and international image and reputation of Pakistan. However, the fact that the Kalash people can survive with their own belief systems and culture is far more important than any other economic concerns. The real reason for giving the status of “endangered specie” to the Kalash by their “well-wishers” is not referring to Pakistan and its people, but actually it refers to those who are introducing new trends in Kalash society. Pakistan is custodian of a heritage of thousand of years’ history and it should rise to the occasion to protect this unique culture. If Chitrali and Pakistani community, in particular, and the World community, in general can not save them from social, culture and commercial onslaughts, and then this will be the failure of all citizens of this world. It is really a difficult task to encourage development activities and to provide basic facilities to the people of Kalash valleys, but at the same time to save the unique culture of the Kalash from the impacts of modernity.

4. ROLE OF NON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATION (NGOs) IN CHANGING THE ENVIRONMENT OF KALASH VALLEYS

The unique culture of the Kalash and scenic beauty of their area attracted many people from different parts of Pakistan and from all over the world. A number of Western anthropologists came to Kalash valleys and spent time with them to complete their researches. A considerable amount of books, articles and papers based on good research were produced by Western scholars in the 20th century, especially after the independence of Pakistan and affiliation of Chitral with this newly established Islamic country. A number of Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) were also established by Western people with open agenda of the betterment of the Kalash and save their cultural and religious identity. Then a flood of local and International NGOs emerged using the name of Kalash in one way or the other. But unfortunately some Western scholars and NGO workers tried to create misunderstanding between the Kalash and the Muslims. They are trying their best to establish their so-called thesis of "threatened or endangered Kalash culture", highlighting some minor issues in this regard. At the same time some of them are working for Christianisation of the Kalash, and as a result a number of Kalash youth have been converted to Christianity.³⁰⁷

Many NGOs, deliberately or mistakenly, taking action above the heads of the Kalash without their consultation. In particular it is a problem when such actions interfere with their religious matters. Such activities adversely affect the unity of the

³⁰⁷ Zaheer-ud-Din, *op. cit.*

Kalash. The feeling of the Kalash regarding Western people and foreign funded NGOs is well expressed by Saifullah Jan Kalash:

*"These outsiders – I am not blaming them. They can com. They can stay for years. If they are coming as refugees from the Western countries, they should come to me, and I will give them a free room. I will give them free food. They can stay in the Kalash valleys free of cost. I will even send them back in a coffin, when they die – as long as they don't interfere with the Kalash society and politics of Pakistan. They are crying, 'We are saving the Kalash!' and, 'We want to protect them!' But we are well protected already! We have no difficulties from the Government of Pakistan. As long as the government allow us to live in accordance with our culture, we are completely free, we are facing no danger. We need no NGOs or any other thing to be brought here from outside, because we live in Pakistan. Of course we need some thing to be improved, like roads, paths, bridges, irrigation channels, and protection walls against the floods-some productive schemes which can be of benefit for most of the people-things that can be done by the community itself. I would like these things to be done either through the government or our local NGOs."*³⁰⁸

³⁰⁸ Saifullah Jan (Kalash), *Development and Self-Determination a Kalasha point of view* (Proceedings of 3rd Hindu Kush Cultural Conference held at Chitral in 1995, compiled and edited by Prof. Israr-ud-Din), Oxford University Press, Karachi, 2008, (P. 187-188).

New social as well as religious trends introduced by some NGO workers are disliked and opposed by the Kalash. Construction of Bashali with new building structure and use of modern construction materials like cement and iron sheets for this purpose do not match with the environment of the region according to the elders of the Kalash. The inside capacity of Bashali and age-old structure based on social experience and environmental need are being disturbed by new building setup. Construction of dancing places with fixed roofs of tin sheets and concrete pillars is also disliked by the Kalash and many of them consider it dangerous for their religious traditions as well. Mr. Saifullah Jan says:

“Now you can see that they have made these tin-roofed dancing shelters in our valleys. They make it difficult for dancing, for there are concrete pillars in the way. All Kalash think it is dangerous for their religion, for our deva also do not like it. So why did these new things appear in our religious places?”³⁰⁹

Some NGO workers, especially the Western people, involve themselves in controversial matters. For example some of them are trying to develop the theory of Greek origin of the Kalash. The Kalash and some other local people have also been influenced by this baseless theory. This stance can weaken the affiliation of the Kalash with their birthplace and its people. They are living in this area for long time and are attached with the region historically, culturally, religiously and emotionally. All their

³⁰⁹ Saifullah Jan Kalash, *History and Development of the Kalasha*, (p. 241).

customs, traditions, rituals and even gods/deities are related with the same area. They only recount Tsyam as their motherland, which has no relation with Greece. Now eliminating the age-old attachment of the Kalash with this region by proving them aliens for the area will ultimately shake the bases of their culture and religion. On the other hand the age-old relation of the Kalash with their close neighbours, i.e. the Khow and the Bashgali people, can also be effected by this stance and may lead to create quarrel between them.

Most of the NGOs working in Kalash valleys are focusing on the Kalash, ignoring the Muslim community living in the valleys and their development needs, requirements and problems, which can lead to develop misunderstanding between the two communities and may cause jealousy among the Muslim against the Kalash. Now a general perception has emerged among the Khows and all other Chitrali Muslims that despite of having rich historical and cultural heritage they have been ignored and the Kalash, with help of their “well-wishers”, hijacked the attention of the people, particularly the visitors coming to the region. No doubt that the Kalash exhibit one of the ancient culture and display the most colourful and unique way of living. They must be given due pride and identity which they deserve being the son of the land and fellow citizens. On the other hand Khow people also possess very rich cultural traditions and there are many places in other parts of Chitral more beautiful than Kalash valleys, but the “scenic beauty” of Kalash valleys and uniqueness of their culture is promoted in most of the books, booklets and brochures of tourist guide with big exaggerations,

ignoring the Khow and their areas. Especially the Muslims living with the Kalash in the same valleys may feel this unbalanced position more seriously, when they observe the excessive interest of the NGOs towards their Kalash neighbours, ignoring them in most of the matters regarding development, requirements and problems. This is a sensitive issue having emotional and socio-cultural grounds. To avoid any situation of confrontation in the region this matter must be taken seriously. Confidence of the Muslims living in the valleys must be gained through a balanced approach regarding the both communities. Requirements and problems of the Muslims should also be addressed through mutual consultation while designing any development programme in the region.

There are a number of local as well as international NGOs working for betterment of the people in Kalash valleys. Agha Khan Rural Supports Programme (AKRSP), Sarhad Rural Supports Programme (SRSP), Ayun and Valleys Development Project (AVDP), Greek Volunteers (GV) Kalash Indigenous Survival Programme (KISP), Kalash People's Development Network (KPDN), Chitral Association for Mountain Area Tourism (CAMAT) and many other NGOs have done remarkable development work in the area. Roads, bridges, irrigation channels, protection walls, small units of power production, schools, health care centres, community centres for women and other development projects have been completed by these NGOs. Some educated members of the Kalash community are also involved in NGOs works and have done tremendous job for welfare and development of their community. Saifullah Jan and Lekshan Bibi of Rumbur valley, Wazir Zada, Luke Rahmat and Shazda Khan of Bumburet valley and

many others are best examples of energetic and dynamic Kalash leadership of new generation.

Irrespective of the positive or negative character of the Non Governmental Organisations all these organisations played significant role in changing the environment of the Kalash valleys. Many new cultural as well as religious trends have been introduced in Kalash society due to continuous factions and multi dimensional activities of NGO workers. These new trends along with other factors of modernisation appeared as real threat for ancient and unique culture and civilisation of the Kalash. To protect the culture and identity of the Kalash there must be a comprehensive system of check and balance on the activities of NGOs. The activities of NGOs must be restricted to developmental and welfare work. They should perform their duties for improvement of the area and betterment of the people only, and their involvement in controversial and illegal activities must be banned for smooth continuity of this unique culture.

CONCLUSION

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Study of Kalash Tribe from different angles provided opportunity to acquire basic knowledge about these mysterious people and to explore some hidden parts of their life. Especially the discussion about their religion as well as link of their religious ideas and practices with other religion was basic aim of this work. Attempt to this task might have added some new information to the subject. At the end of this discussion some important points of study or summary of this research is presented here, followed by some recommendation for further work.

IMPORTANT POINTS OF THE STUDY:

The early history of the Kalash remains obscure and no comprehensive and authentic information are available in this regard, however some indications on their early history are found in the writings of local as well as foreign scholars depending on their folk-lore and oral traditional songs etc. Origin of the Kalash is the most interesting subject. Enveloped in mystery the ancestry this primitive tribe is still an issue of controversy. There are many opinions about their origin including the most popular and romantic theory of Greek connection. No solid grounds regarding Greek origin of the Kalash were found. The arguments and examples of similarities between the Kalash and the Greeks are based on superficial and erroneous statements and analysis. Tsyam, the mysterious homeland of the Kalash, is established in their thought and found in their folk tales as well. This was the first place where the Kalash were settled permanently after continuous state of migration from one place to another for long time. The location of Tsyam is still obscure and has

not been identified exactly but it is probably situated somewhere to the south of present day Nuristan province of Afghanistan. Aryan origin of the Kalash is the most considerable opinion to indicate their ancestry. The story of continuous migration of the Kalash may refer back to the migration of the Aryans, to whom the distant ancestors of the Kalash may have belonged. Centuries-old links of Chitral with Afghanistan, Central Asian states and Eastern Turkistan is the most important point to determine the origin of the tribes and families living here. Chitral has been the main channel of connection between these areas and India at some stages of history. Most of the earliest tribes and families coming to Chitral and the adjacent areas were probably those Aryan migrants who were influenced by Shamanism during their journeys or temporary stay in central Asia from where they crossed the hill tracks of Hindu Kush to reach Chitral and other region of the Hindu Kush. From here they proceeded to plain areas of Indian sub-continent. But all the Aryans did not proceed to Indian plains, but some groups remained behind, without crossing the Indus or even the Hindu Kush. Therefore Chitral and its surrounding areas have certainly been the pass ways for Aryan nations to Indian sub-continent if not their real destination. The possibility of permanent or temporary stay of some of these emigrants in region of the Hindu Kush can not be ruled out. Probably the Kalash belong to one of those Aryan immigrant tribes who settled in the region of the Hindu Kush during their earliest movement or they were settled somewhere in Afghanistan and came to this area in later period.

The Kalash have been living in Chitral (a region of historic and strategic importance) since a long time. Although authentic information about their arrival in Chitral is not available but depending on oral traditions some historians say that first phase of Kalash migration to Chitral

took place in 2nd century C.E. However according to historically accepted reports they came to Chitral in 10th of 11th century C.E. and dominated most of that area, especially its southern parts, for centuries. In the 14th century C.E. they were defeated by the Muslims. Despite the end of the Kalash rule, most of the southern parts of Chitral were populated by Kalash people for a number of further decades, but later on, due to decrease in their population and strength, they were restricted to three small valleys of Bumburet, Rumboor and Birir (known as Kalash Valleys, situated in south-west of Chitral town) and are still living there with their unique and ancient culture and religion.

Centuries-old culture and traditions of the Kalash is the main reason of attraction towards them. They perform many unique and strange types of customs and traditions in different stages and aspects of life, like birth, integration, marriage and funeral etc. Their way of life, dresses, music, social and family system, architecture, handicrafts, ceremonies and festivals distinguish them from other tribes of the region. Double storey houses are the main characteristic of the Kalash settlements. The Kalash are known to be master architects and wood carvers of the region since time immemorial. They have a joint family system with the eldest man acting as head of the family. The elders have full authority in social matters and receive high regard and prestige from the juniors. The older males put feather into their caps to make their identity noticeable among the Muslims. The Women folk put on black gown and gaudy headgear covered with cowries shells. Kalash girls and women during their monthly menstruation periods and during child birth are considered impure and untouchable, thus they are not allowed to stay at home or inside the village but are bound to live in the "Bashali" (special community house for the Kalash women

that are set up outside the settlement near watercourses in each big village of Kalash valleys for this particular purpose). This unique habit along with all interesting socio-religious traditions related to the institution of Bashali is performed in Kalash society with full religious and cultural zeal till today. In contrast to the surrounding Pakistani culture, the Kalash do not separate males and females in general nor are they frown on contact between the sexes. The Kalash women enjoy freedom and relaxation in many social matters, especially with compare to women in surrounding Muslim societies. Although some marriages are arranged by the families but Kalash boys and girls can also propose and arrange their marriages themselves. Elopements or “love flights” are popular form of marriages in Kalash society especially among the youth exercising the right given by their religion and culture to choose their life partner according to admired tradition. This, and the fact that females can freely interact with males in public, have created a false impression among some that the Kalash society is sexually promiscuous. The Kalash are fond of music and dance. Singing and dancing is not simply an amusement but rather it has religious meanings and can never be parted from their life. On the occasions of festivals, weddings, feasts, even rituals and funerals the whole society of the Kalash gather and participate in grand performances of music of song, dance, with simple and traditional musical instruments consisting of flute and the drums. They have a number of festivals which are participated in by both sexes with great zeal. Many socio-religious tradition and cultural activities are linked with these festivals.

The Kalash possess best human character and qualities. They are known for their politeness, leniency, courtesy, hospitality and many other good manners. They are ready-witted

and soft-spoken to the extent that no one can challenge them in conversation. Involvement of the Kalash in crime and unethical activities is almost impossible. Violence, thievery, fraud, lying, corruption, dishonesty and all other kind of immoral actions and attitudes can never be expected in Kalash society. They are always jovial, lively and agile especially in the celebration of their festivals. Simple in habits but very clever in practical matters they have high regard for their pristine culture. People call each other by surnames and appellations as the direct use of real names is disliked in Kalash manners. Some habits of the Kalash might be considered as deficiencies of character, especially in compare to their Muslim neighbours. Their lenient attitude which sometimes reaches to the state of cowardice, especially in the matters of chastity or flexibility in contact of man and woman or even sexual relations, is considered as *Be-ghairaty* (Urdu and Persian word that can be translated as cowardice but no exact word for *Ghairat* is found in English) in Eastern societies generally and among the Muslims of the region especially. Likewise eating of carcass (مردار) or dead body of animal without slaughtering properly) and meat of wild animals, dance of women in front of men, drink of wine bibulously, negligence in cleanliness are weaker aspects of Kalash character according to their Muslim neighbours.

Kalash is a primitive infidel tribe, having unique and interesting religious ideas and practices. Mythology, animism and shamanism along with nature, animal and ancestor veneration are the main characteristics of Kalash religion. They believe in a supreme God whom they call by the name of Dezao or Khoday. He is believed to be the Creator of the universe and protector of life and property. Below Dezao there are the other deities in Kalash mythology who are supposed to be advisors or ministers to the Creator. The word "Malotsh" is used for these deities in general

but every deity has its own name and character. Altars or shrines are set up for them in various places with wooden horse-head fixed on either side of a small walled structure. Here they offer sacrifices of goat, sheep, food, milk products and dry fruits on different occasions and pray to the deity for protection against diseases, flood, and rains etc. Beside these deities many form of nature, animal and ancestor veneration and animism can also be observed in Kalash religious traditions. Shamanism plays very important part in this religion. As intermediary between the supernatural and the people, the Dehar (Kalash term for shaman) claims direct contact with spirits, fairies and other supernatural beings, through which he guide the Kalash regarding their religious matters, especially in the issues related to the supernatural world. There is no systematic form of rituals (patterned behaviour, often communal, consisting of prescribed actions performed periodically or respectively) in Kalash religion. Daily, weekly or monthly religious services could not be identified in Kalash Society. Sacrifice, supplication, offerings on certain occasions, cultural, traditional and seasonal customs, chant, dance and other cultural activities are considered and performed as religious practices.

It must be kept in mind while discussing the religion of the Kalash that there is no difference between religion of the Kalash and their tradition which they call *Dastur*. All customs and traditions of the Kalash have religious backgrounds besides its cultural significance. Their Dastur is their religion and their religion is their Dastur. Any infringement of the Dastur is considered negation of the religion. Thus the ceremonial dances on festivals, the marriage rites, ceremonies on birth, rites on reaching puberty, ceremonies on death, the Bashali system, the sacrifices and offerings on various occasion like seasonal festivals, ploughing, seeding, threshing,

collection of grapes, making wine and other similar customs are at the same time Dastur and religious obligations of the Kalash. It is therefore evident that right from the birth of a Kalash to his death he has to live in a particular way, dress in a particular manner and perform certain functions. Failure to do so takes him out of Kalash fold. One simple example would be that if the Kalash woman only gives up the traditional head-dress (Kophesi) she leaves the Kalash fold. Similarly if she ceases going to Bashali during monthly courses or for child-birth she is no longer a Kalash.

Influence of other belief systems on religious and cultural life of the Kalash is main subject of this research work. Reflections of Hinduism, Shamanism and other neighbouring religions can easily be identified in the Religion of the Kalash. They have also been influenced by Islamic beliefs and norms in later stages of their history of interaction with the Muslims but now their religion and culture is facing modernisation or globalisation as a big challenge for their identity and survival.

The Hindu Kush region remained almost safe from Hindu dominance politically and culturally, thus no clear evidence is found regarding the influence of Hinduism, in its complete form, on the people of this area. However, having Aryan ancestry background, many aspects of religious ideas and practices of early Aryans are reflected in the religious thoughts of the Kalash and their customs and traditions. Although Hinduism has emerged and developed as a religion and complete way of life when the Aryan were settled in Indian sub-continent permanently, but the beliefs and practices resembling Hinduism found in Chitral and other parts of the Hindu Kush seem to having link with the basic ideas, customs and practices of early Aryan nations where

preliminary forms of nature, animals, and ancestor veneration along with other basic mythological thoughts and simple habits and initial forms of prayer or other religious services, had been the main characteristics of religious traditions, and that played important role in development of Hinduism in later stages. Aryan impact on the religion and culture of the Kalash is apparent in form of similarities between mythologies as well as rituals of the two ethnic groups, having sound historic grounds.

It seems that the Kalash basically belong to shamanic tradition in their origin or at least they were influenced by this at any stage of their history to the state that became integral part of their religious traditions. *Dehar* is the word used by the Kalash for their shaman who is the only source to link them with heavenly beings and get guidance about their religious ideologies and practices. The profound impact of shamanism on religious and cultural life of the Kalash can be observed clearly till today. Although shamanism had played important role among many religious and ethnic groups of the Hindu Kush region but presently the Kalash are the only guardians of shamanic traditions.

The Kalash have long history of interaction, mostly of rivalry, with the Red Kafirs (Bashgali Kafirs local term used by the Khow and the Kalash), the inhabitants of former Kafiristan and the Khows, the residents of Chitral. It looks that all these three different ethnic groups had similar religious background. The Khow converted to Islam in early stages followed by majority of the Kalash then the Bashgali Kafirs by the end of 19th century C.E. but a small group of Kalash tribe uphold their old religion and culture till today. Ideological and practical similarities as well as mutual influences among these three religious groups are matters of

interest. Although these three groups have different ethnic identities, but none of them could be easily differentiated from the others on the basis of religious background, especially when the word Kafir is commonly used for the inhabitants of Nuristan (before their conversion to Islam) and for the Kalash. The impact of the Red Kafirs on religious ideas and practices of the Kalash is evident as many aspects of their religion like mythological concepts, shamanic ideas, religious chants including various forms of customs and traditions are seem to have been taken from them. Although names of the deities and other religious aspects are different but the basic concepts of mythologies, characteristics of the deities along with many features of customs and traditions are almost similar in religion of the Kafirs and the Kalash.

After conversion of the entire Khow tribe to Islam along with a large number of the Kalash, the situation has changed completely for the rest of the Kalash who continued with their old religion. Absolute dominance of Muslim community in the area, for more than seven centuries, resulted in their religious and cultural influence on the subjugated minority community of the Kalash. Long history of Kalash-Muslim interaction from rivalry to friendship has its own continuous impact, but the weaker religious position of the Kalash added by lacking in many fundamental aspects of religion, like missing of prophet or religious founder as well as religious scriptures, vagueness in many dogma including the core concept of god, ambiguity in concept of hereafter, confusion between religious practice and cultural activities and many other deficiencies in the religion of the Kalash pave the way for influence of Islam, the greatest religion of the world, on them. Impact of Islam on the religion and culture of the Kalash obvious having grounds of historical Kalash-Muslim relations but the situation of misunderstanding initiated by some

“well-wishers” of the Kalash by considering Islam as the real threat for identity and survival of the Kalash through the notion of “Endangered Kalash Community” is looks to be based on inappropriate analysis, unfair stance and biased approach.

Modernity and globalisation have emerged as the real challenge for Kalash culture, identity and survival. Like many other societies, who uphold their old cultural and traditional values, the Kalash are also facing new challenges and threats in forms of un-controlled expansion of tourism, un-balanced commercialisation monopolised by the outsiders that is perilous for Kalash economy, and mushroom growing NGOs with so-called agenda of "welfare and protection unique culture of the Kalash" but most of them are involved in controversial activities. All these things along with the steady but hidden activities of secularisation and Christianisation of the Kalash are changing the environment of Kalash valleys by creating a mixed culture, and disturbing the religious, cultural, social and economic life of this “endangered ethnic group”. This situation is making the Kalash extremely unsafe to live with their cultural identity and practice their belief system independently and smoothly. These crucial issues and challenges faced by the Kalash as well as its impact on their culture and religion must be addressed seriously to safeguard them from impact of external elements and new forms of threats for their culture and religion.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Cultural changes and new tendencies in Kalash society can be considered as natural process and consequence of development, but its social as well as religious impacts will definitely be perilous for culture and identity of the Kalash ultimately. Although some new trends have been

identified in this work during the discussion about the impact of Modernisation on the Kalash, but the issue of new cultural as well as religious trends in Kalash society needs special attention and exclusive research. It is suggested that a comprehensive study may be carried out to highlight the changing environment of the Kalash valleys due to commencement new tendencies. This kind of studies may play positive role to protect the unique culture of the Kalash from the threats of modernity and globalisation.

External interference in private life of the Kalash and involvement of non-local people in their cultural activities and social matters is a serious issue. Most of the outsiders are unaware about environment of the region despite the fact that some of them might be sincere in their desire to work for welfare the Kalash and help them in the process of development, but if their activities are causing disturbance in the valleys by creating discordant environment in which the Kalash may feel themselves insecure or dependent on outsiders for their social as well religious requirements, then these activities can be considered harmful to larger interest of the region and its inhabitants. Thus the overflow of the visitors in Kalash valleys without any restrictions or proper check on their activities and involvement in some sensitive issues may create misunderstanding between the Kalash and their Muslim neighbours. In this situation the historic and wonderful condition of interfaith harmony between the two communities will be at high risk. An exclusive research on involvement of outsiders in cultural activities and social matters of the Kalash as well as their interference in private life this unique tribe will be helpful to avoid any situation of misunderstanding or confrontation in this region and to restore self confidence of the Kalash.

Impacts of the Red Kafirs on religious ideas and practices of the Kalash have been discussed briefly in this work, but the similarities between mythological concepts, characteristics of the deities, shamanic ideas, religious chants including various forms of customs and traditions of these two ethnic groups need more comprehensive research and critical analysis to determine their origin and to explore the roots of their religion.

A number of books and articles based on good research work on the Kalash have been written in French and German languages but most of those valuable studies have not yet been translated into the known languages in the area i.e. Urdu or English and thus remained beyond the approach of the readers of these languages and the concern people of the area. Likewise a lot reading material on this subject is available in Urdu as well but majority of world community do not have direct access to this work due to linguistic barriers. Translation of Urdu books and article into famous languages of the world and translation of French and German reading material into English and Urdu will very beneficial for broadening the horizon of knowledge on the Kalash.

With these recommendations we conclude our discussion on one of the most interesting ethnic group and last Kafir tribe of the Hindu Kush region, leaving the crucial question to be answered by the coming moment that for how long the Kalash can resist against the external onslaught on their religion and culture especially in the current age of globalisation and modernisation?

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E. Personalities (Consulted/Interviewed):

1. **Adina (Kazi):** A religious leader of the Kalash and one of the knowledgeable personalities in Birr valley. In his discussion and interview with the researcher he disclosed many aspects of Kalash traditional knowledge and folklore.
2. **Bakhtawar Shah:** A nice personality and social figure among the Kalash in Rumboor valley. He has good understanding of Kalash oral tradition and shared a lot of his information and experience with researcher during his field visits to Rumboor valley.
3. **Barzangi Khan:** He is a young social activist and representative of new generation among the Kalash. His Father Katar Sing is a prominent social figure and a political leader of Kalash community in Rumboor who has been member and representative of the Kalash in District Council of Chitral. Mr. Barzangi, and all other family member of Katar Sing, hosted the researcher during his field visits to the valley and provided best opportunity to closely observe the real Kalash lifestyle in addition to important information about the Kalash and their religion, culture, and history.
4. **Braman (Kazi):** He was a famous Kalash religious leader, who worked as chief Kazi and spoke person of the Kalash community in Rumboor valley. Kazi Braman provided valuable information and basic knowledge about the Kalash, especially with respect to their religious ideas and practices, to the researcher during his field visits to Kalash valleys.

5. **Donook**: A Young social activist and Kalash Religious Teacher in a school run by the Government in Birr valley.
6. **Jannah**: A well informed personality of Birir valley who has excellent understanding and practical experience about cultural and religious traditions of the Kalash.
7. **Haji Fazel Qadir Khan**: He was a son of Asfand Yar Khan, the Chief Commander of the state forces of Chitral, and grand son of Aman-ul-Mulk, the most prominent and famous ruler of Chitral. He himself commanded the state army, succeeding his father Asfand Yar Khan and his elder brother Abd-us-Samad Khan. He had sound knowledge and keen observation about the Kalash through his close connection with them having lands and other properties in Kalash valleys, continuous visits to these valleys and having some Kalash in his house for permanent labour work imposed on them by the state authorities of Chitral.
8. **Kadirik**: A Kalash social figure and knowledgeable personality of Bumburet valley. Mr. Kadirik has sound traditional knowledge about the historical development, cultural values and religious principles of the Kalash.
9. **Khosh Nawaz (Kazi)**: He is the most knowledgeable personality and famous religious leader of the Kalash in Rumboor valley. He is acknowledged as guardian of Kalash oral heritage and folklore. Many writers and researcher, especially the foreigners, got valuable information and oral traditions from him. The researcher, during his field visits to Kalash valleys, had good opportunity of interaction with

Kazi Khosh Nawaz to gain important knowledge and to verify a lot of information from him.

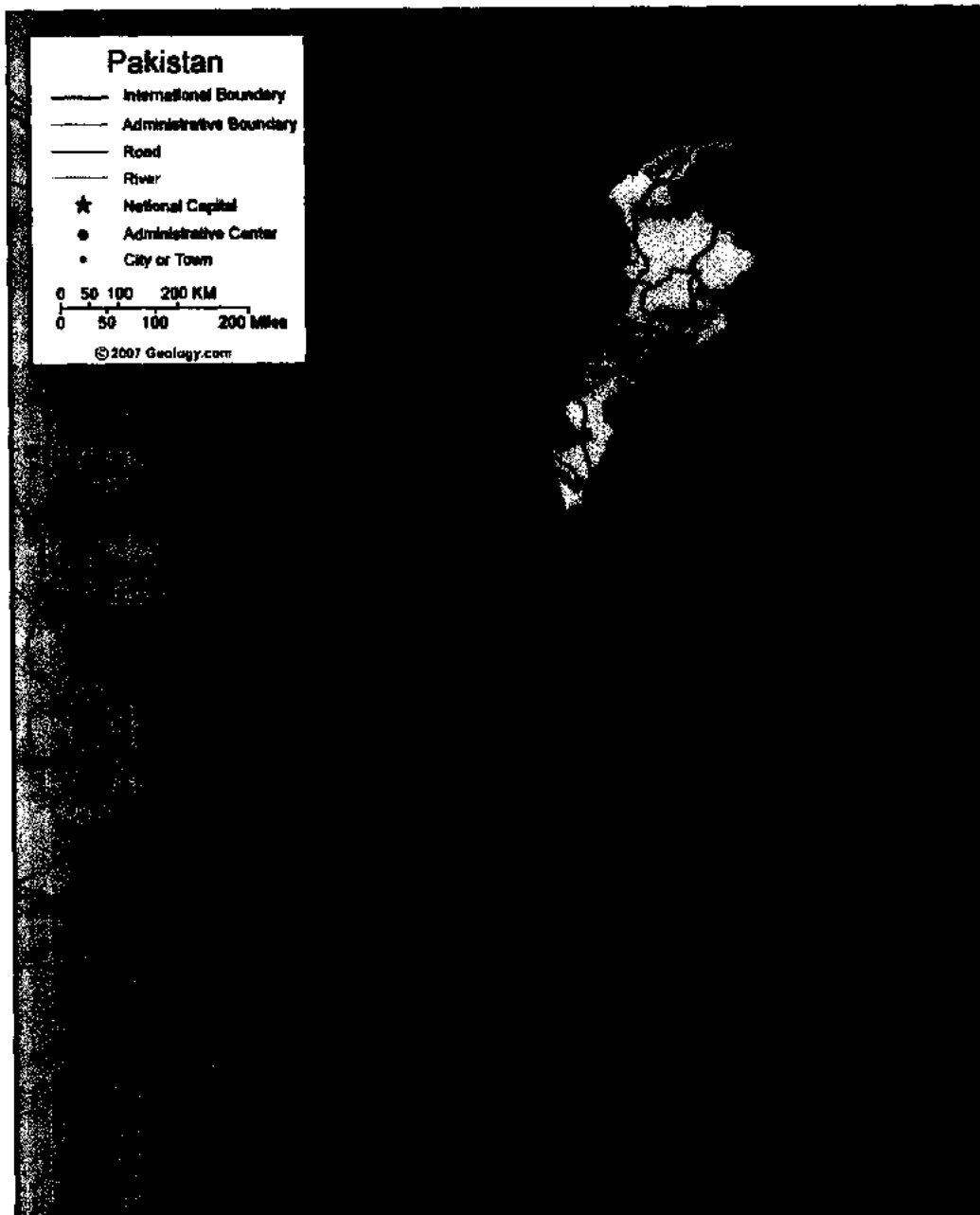
10. **Sultan Wali Khan:** He is an active social figure and influential Muslim personality of Bumburet valley. He has excellent relation with the Kalash and accepted as leading personality and elder of the community among the Muslim and the Kalash of Bumburet. Being a keen observer he has sound knowledge about the Kalash and their cultural heritage.
11. **Tsha Juwan:** He was the Chief Kazi and famous religious leader of the Kalash. Being a prominent socio-religious figure in Rumboor valley he was accepted as a real patriarch of Kalash tribe and guardian of their culture and tradition. Mr Tsha Juwan had rich knowledge and practical experience of Kalash traditions.

ANNEXTURES

ANNEXURE

1. Maps:

Map of Islamic Republic of Pakistan



**NORTH WEST
FRONTIER PROVINCE**

JAMMU & KASHMIR
(UNOFFICIAL RECORDS)

**NORTH WEST FRONTIER PROVINCE
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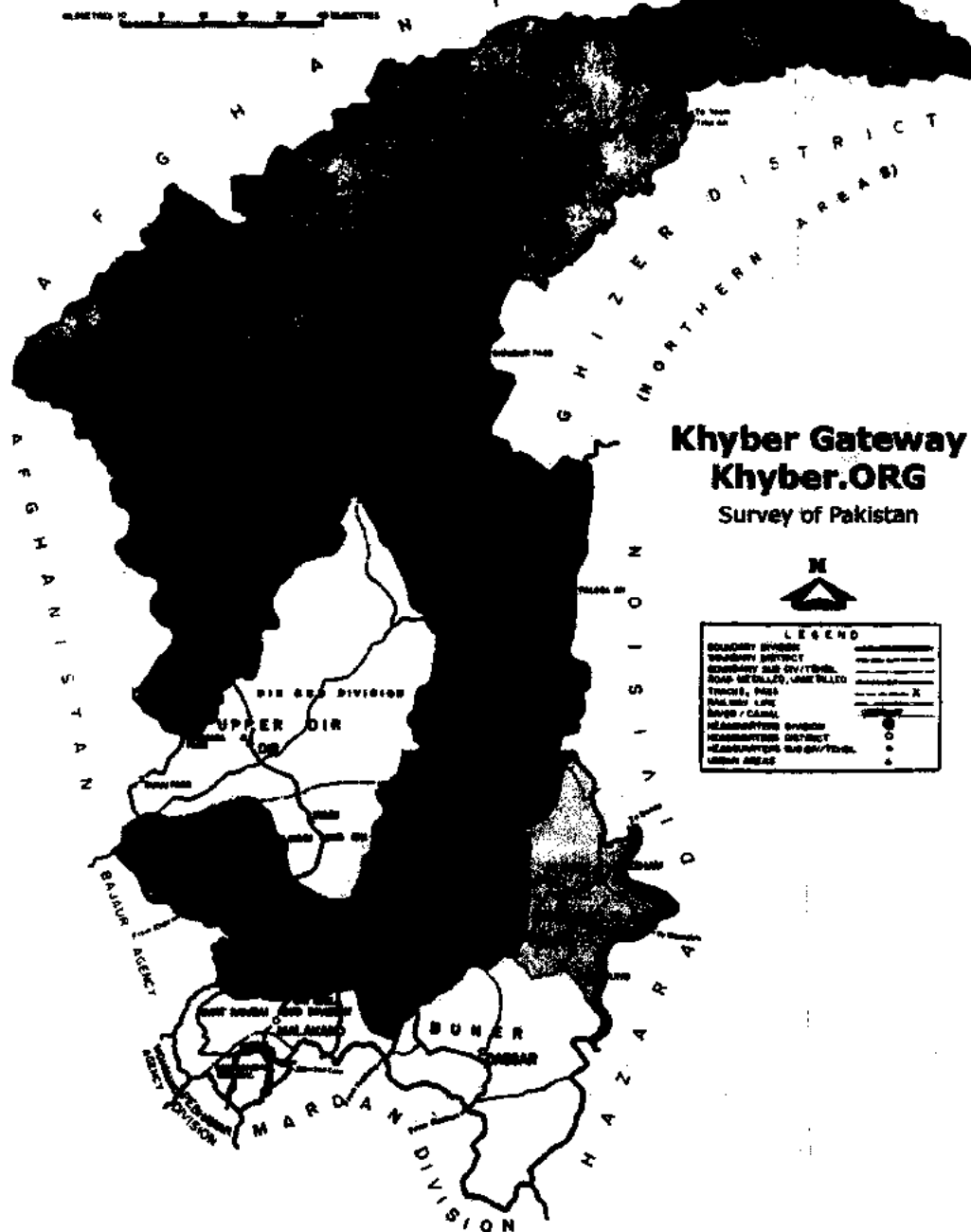
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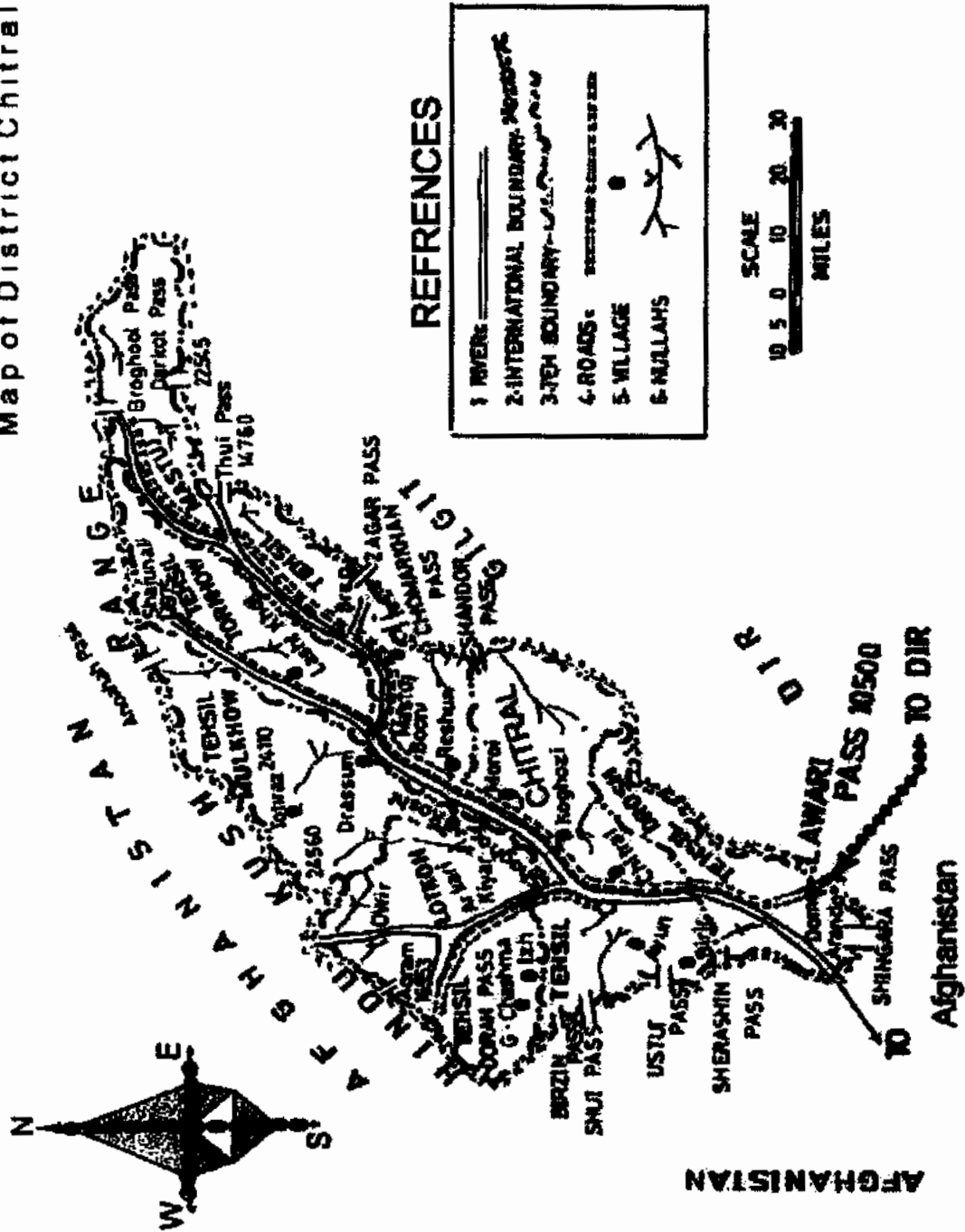
Map of Malakand Division

MALAKAND DIVISION NORTH WEST FRONTIER PROVINCE

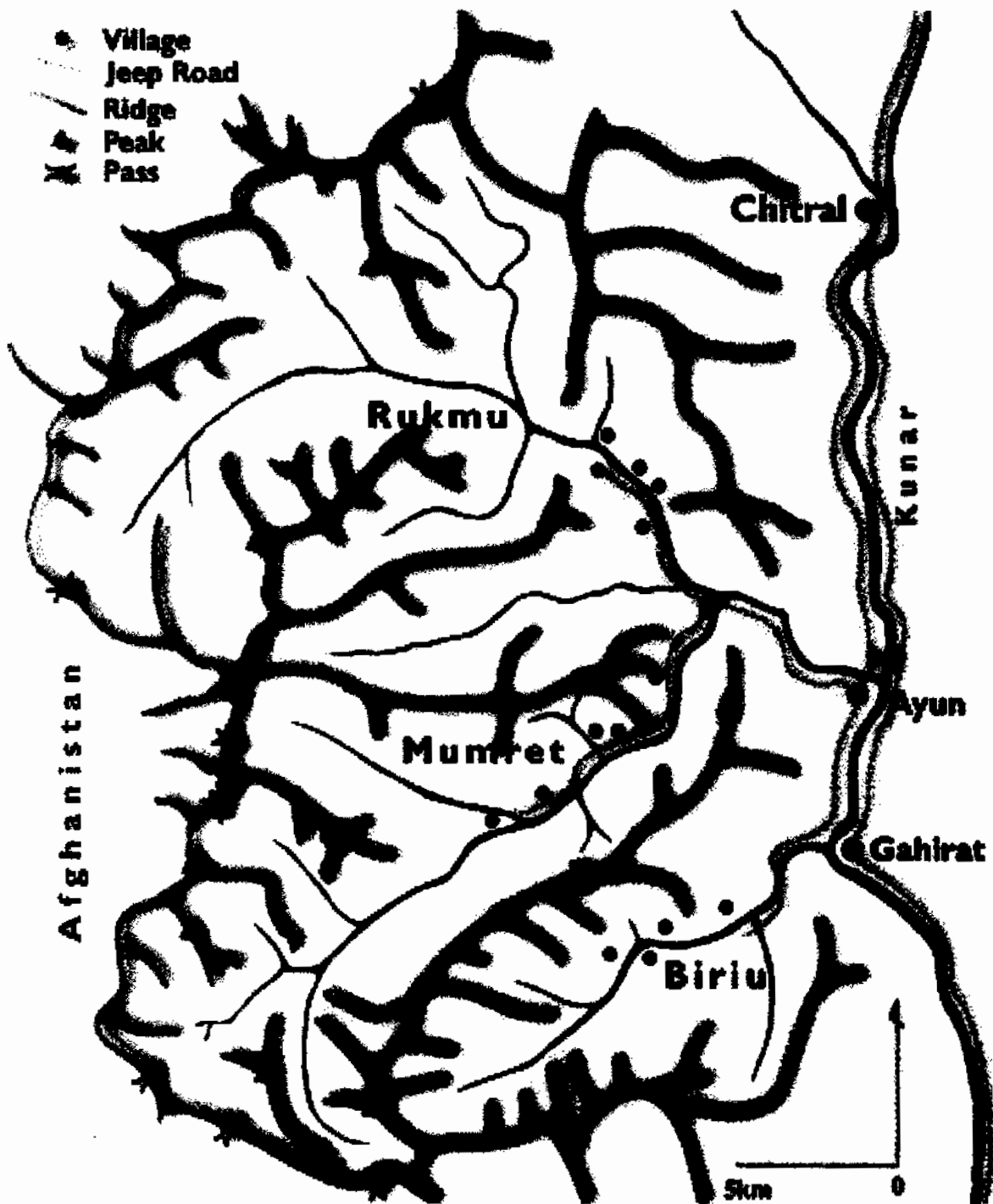


Map of Chitral District

Map of District Chitral



Map of Kalash Valleys



2. Pictures:

a. Field Work of the Researcher:

Picture No. 1



The researcher interviewing Kazi Khosh Nawaz in Rumboor Valley

Picture No. 2



In a Meeting with Chief Kazi Tsha Juwan and others in Rumboor Valley

Picture No. 3



Sitting with Female Family Members in a Traditional Kalash House

Picture No. 4



Observing Old Kalash Coffins

Picture No. 5



Sitting with Team Member in a Modern Kalash House

Picture No. 6



Observing Symbol and Art Work beside the Door of Justek Han in Bumburet Valley

Picture No. 7



Interviewing Kadirik Kalash in Bumburet valley with his team members

Picture No. 8



Sitting with Shazda Khan Kalash in his traditional Kalash house

Picture No. 9



Visiting Kalash Dancing Place (Chrsu) in Bumboret Valley

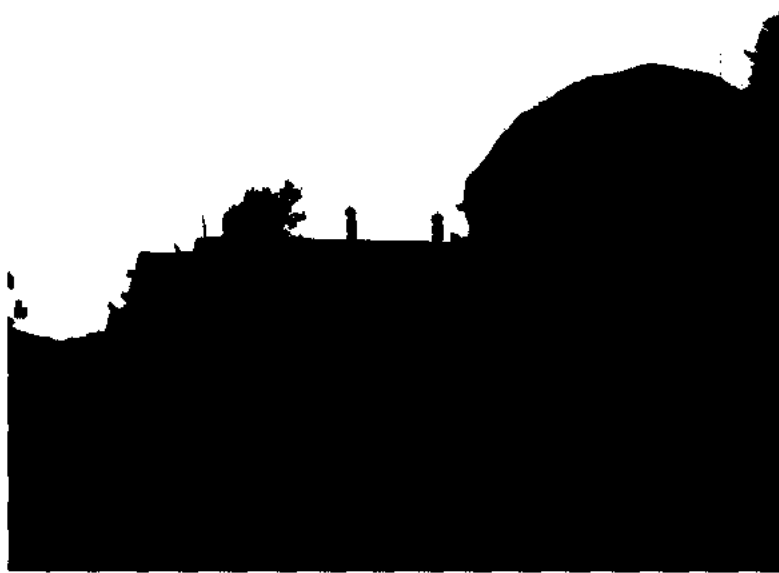
Picture No. 10



A Small Power House in Bumboret Valley

b. Sanctuaries of the Kalash Deities

Picture No. 11



Sanctuary of Mahandev in Rumboor Valley

Picture No. 12



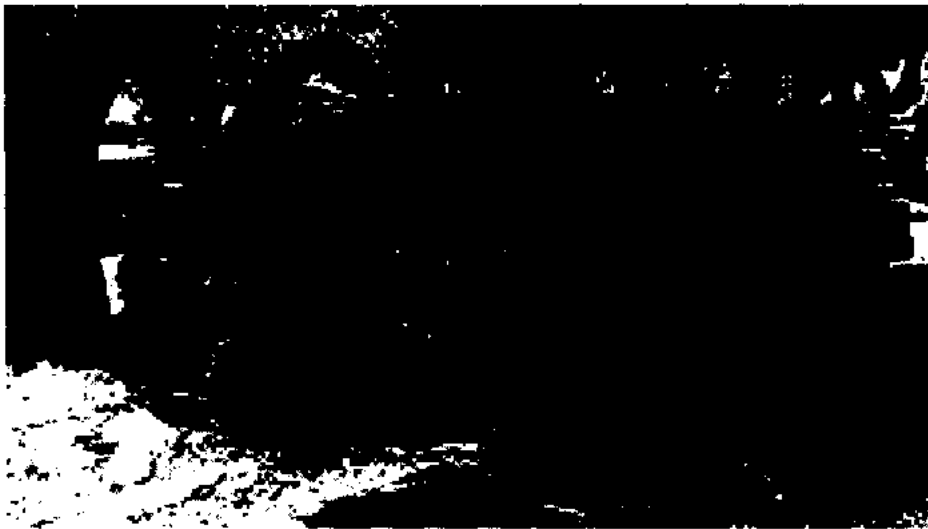
Sanctuary of Mahandev a closer view

Picture No. 14



Sanctuary of Mahandev in Bumboret Valley

Picture No. 13



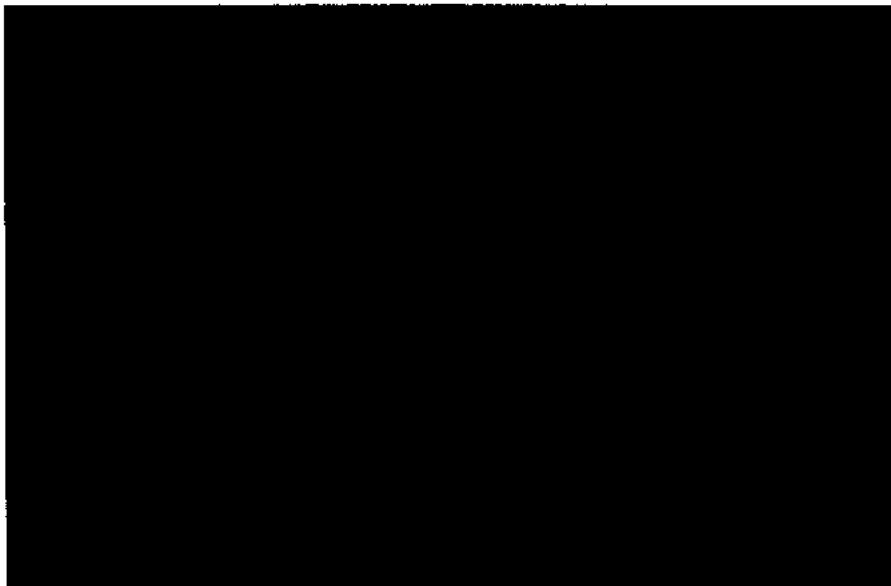
Sanctuary of Sajigor in Rumboor Valley

Picture No. 15



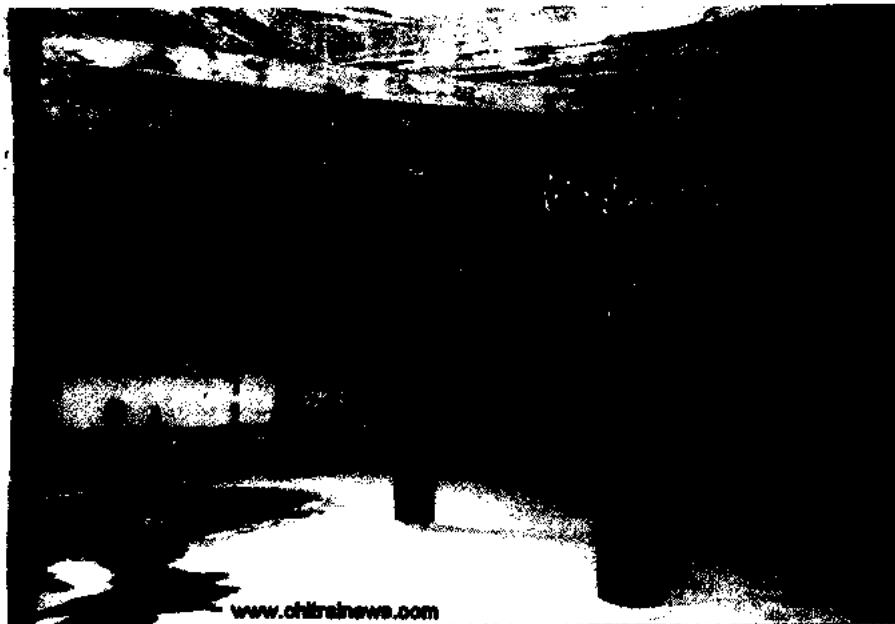
Wall Paining inside the Kalash Temple

Picture No. 15



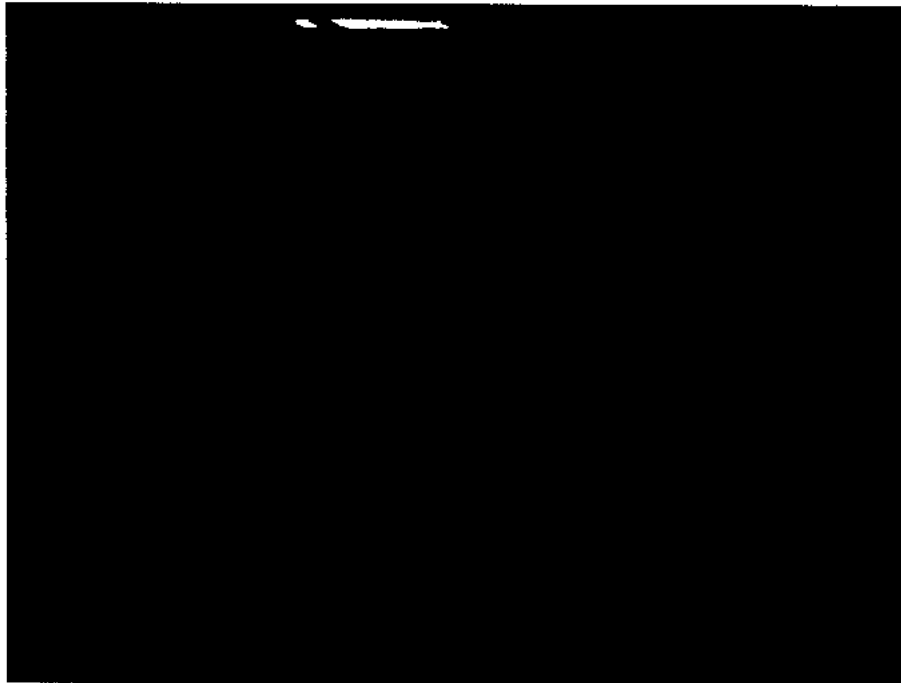
Wall Paining inside the Kalash Temple

Picture No. 17



Kalash Community Centre (Justikan) Interior View

Picture No. 18



Kalash Menstruation House (Bashali)

c. Miscellaneous:

Picture No. 19



Broken Coffins in an Old Kalash Cemetery

Picture No. 20



Woden Images of Kalash Ancestors

Picture No. 21



Dehar (Shaman) Religious Leader of the Kalash

Picture No. 22



Pahlawan Dehar (Religious Leader of the Kalash)

Picture No. 23



Sacrifice of Baby Goat

Picture No. 24



Shishao (Purified Sacred Bread for Kalash Women)

Picture No. 25



Kalash Women Mourning Around the Dead Body

Picture No. 26



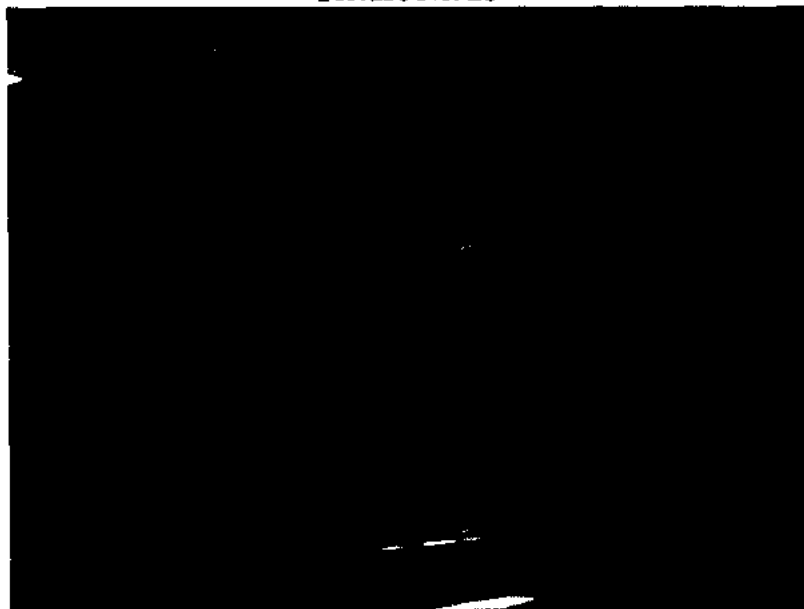
Kalash Feast During Feneral

Picture No. 27



Kalash Menstruation House (Bashali)

Picture No. 28



Women Standing Outside Kalash Menstruation House (Bashali)

Picture No. 29



Kalash Traditional Dance

Picture No. 30



Kalash Traditional Dance another Style

Picture No. 31



Kalash Girls Dancing in Full Traditional Dress During Joshi Festival

Picture No. 32



Kalash Girls in Real Traditional Dress (an old Photo)

Picture No. 33



Kalash Girls in Traditional Dress

Picture No. 34



Kalash Girls in Full Traditional Dress

Picture No. 35



Traditional Kalash Village in Birir Valley

Picture No. 36



Traditional Kalash Houses in Bumboret Valley