Human Nature Research Publisher

Socio-cultural Transferal and Modernization: Communal Insight Concerning the *Hujra* and Hospitality

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ABSTRACT

Aim of the Study: Socio-cultural values contribute to the cultural identity of human beings and guarding their social institutions. The phenomenon of change is constant, although its pace may vary concerning time and place. The concept of modernization, wherein the society moves from simple to the complex mode of life, also alters the socio-cultural values. The primary goal of this research was to comprehend the influence of modernization on the socio-cultural values of Pakhtun culture in Swat, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The focus of the analysis is *Hujra* and hospitality.

Methodology: The researchers obtained the relevant information from the different nature of participants in the study area through research tools (in-depth interview and focus group discussion) based on non-probability sampling procedure. The collected information was analyzed on the analogy of qualitative research through thematic analysis.

Findings and Conclusion: The study findings depicted that modernization is drastically impacting the socio-cultural values of Pakhtun society. Hujra no longer exists in its proper form, especially in urban areas. Besides, the mode of hospitality is also impacted by modernization.

Keywords: Modernization, Hujra, Hospitality, Socio-cultural Values, Pakhtun Culture.

Introduction

Social scientists have long considered the change in value as essential to modernization, paying significant attention to the link between the modernization of society and the adopting of individualistic values (e.g., Inkeles and Smith, 1974; Greenfield, 2009; Hofstede, 2016). Classic theories of modernization maintain that a significant value change from traditionalism toward more liberal thought characterizes the process of societal modernization (Gu, 2011). The common perception of modernization describes the process of becoming new, involving the transition into a modern, industrialized society from a conventional or less economically developed society (Armer & Katsillis, 2002). Modernization is a phenomenon of multidimensional transitions marked by various complexities in all domains of social

existence and life, with interrelated expressions, both in quantitative metrics and in qualitative characteristics, and require focused management to synchronize shifts (Kasych, & Vochozka, 2019).

Individuals living in environments that are continually evolving face many threats to their conventional beliefs. Nevertheless, recent cross-cultural values studies have concentrated mainly on commonalities and discrepancies in the content and structure of values [see Smith & Schwartz, 1997; Segall, Lonner, & Berry, 1998)], and have made relatively little effort to explain how values develop in response to worldwide socio-cultural and economic changes. In shaping the impact of modernization, Hamamura (2012) showed that traditional cultural meanings and behavior play an important role in modeling the impacts of modernization.

The modernization phenomenon is not limited to a single aspect of human life alone; instead, it affects multiple aspects of human society (Imran et al., 2020). Society cares about the values as a group. It motivates people from inside. Values possess both features; it may be harmful or useful. Wrong values produce weak, unsustainable, and evil societies, while good societies produce sound, healthy, and sustainable societies. In some societies, values are facing extinction and challenges (Abubakar & Alama, 2015). Mering (1961) found that keeping in view the sociological perspective, the emergence of values due to social interaction setting results in progress/growth into other durable systems directing conduct. Determining the precise content of the valuation system is complicated, although persons might work as choosers, blocking, or controlling definite standards and liberating others. Sociologically speaking, there values as a union that associates folks in unity. Stewart and Glynn (1979) highlighted that "societies are held together by the fact that most of their citizens hold many opinions and values in common- in other words, they reach a consensus or agreement. They respect their society enough so that complaints are only minor compared to patriotic sentiments". In general, value is the bridging force through which society and individuals are linked with each other in society. It is the determiner of an individual, where an individual is expected to behave following the code of conduct (Alsuwailan, 2006).

The historical imprints of Hujra are as old as the history of Afghan or Pakhtuns, and Hujra was considered as a public place. The term Hujra has varied connotations as it emanated from the Middle East to Pakistan, Afghanistan, and India. A noticeable Yousafzai Intellectual (Sheikh Milli Baba) labeled Hujra as rudimentary managing and development component, and it was usually grounded upon the property segment. The primary stockholders of Hujra nominated a *Khan* (frontrunner of Hujra) for 5-10 years. Hujra was a public asset and not an individual. Each individual had equal privileges since the possession was shared. Adequate couches permanently existed in Hujra, where the village spinsters, youths, guests, and passengers were permissible to stay and sleep. Mian Gul Abdul Wadood (Badshah Saheb, the ex-ruler of Swat state) permitted an enduring settlement in 1924 (Inam-ur-Rahim & Viaro, 2005). Henceforth, the condition altered, and the Malak or Khan became the government representative and acquired the authority to fine his associates (a member of the Hujra). Khan received a share of one-third, and the outstanding was given to the government. The directorial role of Khan was obliterated in 1950 AD and moved to Tehsil Administration, which squeezed the Hujra into a typical guesthouse and "Jirga." Currently, the position of the Hujra is crumbling (Khan, 1950). Hujra is crucial for keeping and mounting healthier neighborhoods (Khan et al., 2008).

Khayyam et al. (2018) highlighted in their study the findings of Ahmed (2011) about the concept of *Melmastia* wherein it is something wherein a host offers it to the guest and even a friend of a guest (da melma dost). *Melmastia* is the combination of bonds and an instant reward from the society on "giving regard to the traditional indigenous values, which is pushed to the sanctuary (*Panah*) provision, if endangered by opponents or demanded voluntarily. The main philosophy behind hospitality is to give deference and decency to the host. Congruently, the overseas development labors fit in the guests; nonetheless, they are required to confer their faithfulness, i.e., compliance with tribal traditions and customs. In response, the resident Pashtuns are accountable for safe delivery, which remains the most attractive enabling feature of *Pashtunwali* for development workforces. Pashtuns follow this social code to uphold their honor (*Namos*) and distinctiveness in the nastiest situation, and if not witnessed, it can

lead to difficulty and severe distress (Spain, 1963). Nowadays, socio-cultural practices are shaping under the umbrella of modernization (Imran and Iqbal, 2019).

The range of socio-cultural values in Pakhtun culture is much broader. However, in this paper, the researchers focused on a few values for investigating changes due to modernization. These values include *Melmestia* and the role of *Hujra* (typical guest house). The detailed description of the aforementioned cultural values of *Pakhtun* culture is given in the upcoming lines.

Research Methodology

The researchers carried out this research while incorporating the following research strategy.

Nature of the Study

The present study is grounded on a qualitative methodology wherein thematic analysis has been made as per the qualitative research analogy best suited to the current study.

The Study Locale

Given various factors, the researchers limited the study to seven *Tehsils* of Swat (a district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, Pakistan).

Sampling Strategy

To ensure maximum possible accuracy and quality of the required data, participants from different backgrounds were chosen for obtaining the relevant information on the topic at hand. For this purpose, different nature participants were selected while using a non-probability sampling approach. The participants were chosen purposively from different backgrounds like lawyers, politicians, intellectuals, community leaders, and literary persons. A sample size of n=35 was selected for conducting in-depth interviews, whereas a sample size of n=54 was taken onboard while conducting focus group discussions.

Research Tools

The participants were engaged during the data collection with the help of in-depth interviews and focus group discussions wherein a semi-structured interview guide was used for this purpose. In the study locale, five in-depth interviews were conducted in each *Tehsil* of district Swat. The philosophy behind using in-depth interviews (Bryman, 2016; Friese, 2019) was to provide a favorable environment to the interviewer and the interviewees for the sake of adding more information for getting a new direction.

Likewise, seven focus group discussions were conducted. Each focus group discussion comprises 7-8 participants from different backgrounds, as discussed earlier in the sampling strategy section. Focus group discussion is a method where a scholar collects a set of persons to debate a particular subject, with the purpose to draw from the multifaceted individual know-hows, beliefs, insights, and approaches of the participants via moderated contact (Kitzinger, 1994; Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995; Morgan, 1996; Israel et al., 1998; Bloor et al., 2001; Hayward et al., 2004). The key techniques of information collection in a focus group discussion comprise note-taking, audio and tape recording, and participant observation (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2014). Sometimes, focus group discussion is understood as identical to interviews, mainly the "group interviews" and semi-structured "one-to-one" (Parker & Tritter, 2006). Resemblances between these methods relate to the propensity to expose the publics' opinions and values (e.g., Lacey, 1970; Ghaill, 1994; Sewell, 1997; Skeggs, 1997; Hargreaves, 2006). The reason behind the focus group discussions was to get more in-depth and diverse insights into the phenomenon under study. For this purpose, potential participants were selected from different society segments through a non-probability sampling procedure. The multidimensional categories of the sampled participants for the FGDs comprised lawyers, politicians, intellectuals (teachers), community leaders, and literary persons (poets, writers, etc.)

Data Analysis

After collection of the desired information, while keeping in view the ethical consideration of the research, the data was then analyzed at different levels and then coded, and themes were identified for thematic analysis of the obtained information (Tracy, 2019; Merriam, & Grenier, 2019).

Findings and Discussion

Impact of Modernization on Hujra

The majority of the study participants declared that from the centuries, Hujra was a central point for the entertainment of guests, both relatives, and strangers from the core of their hearts. It was a source of bridging the gap between community people. Apart from it, Hujra was very beneficial for the community and served multifaceted functions. Hujra was responsible for celebrating different functions of happiness and grief. In any marriage function, male family members, relatives, neighbours, guests, and even strangers came to Hujra. They stayed for many days to celebrate the marriage ceremony as Hujra was a communal place that did not belong to a specific person, so all members of the village bring the required stuff like *Katona* (wooden beds), *Bistaray* (mattresses), *Balakhtuna* (Cushions), etc. The provision of rooms for guests during marriages, circumcisions, funerals, and other ceremonies was also the main trait of Hujra. Entertainment like *tang takor of Rabab, Sittar, Shpelai, Mangay*, etc. (musical instruments) was a regular feature of Hujra. Likewise, Rome (2008) mentioned that Hujra was used for a wide range of purposes, like serving as a guest house and was a central place for collective actions and expressions of their viewpoints. Besides, it was a place for unmarried males to sleep. Nevertheless, over time now, the traditional role and function of Hujra are ruined with the emergence of new systems and advances.

They also pointed out that consultative meetings were another attribute of Hujra where inter and intrafamily meetings enhanced the solidarity and unity of the society. Further, the study participants also believed that Hujra enjoyed different social and cultural festivals like Eids, etc. Hujra was run by their permanent members. They facilitate the local masses in a collaborative effort to resolve their issues and provide an amicable, quick, cheap, and unbiased solution and honored by the community members. Besides, Hujra was a center for getting local wisdom and information from the elders. Unlike today, there were no such transportation and communication facilities available to the people. So, when someone visits the far-flung area or aboard, they share their travel events in Hujra, and the people enhance their knowledge from their experiences and information. It was an informal teaching center wherein the seniors polished the young in different aspects of life. Hujra was an excellent contact place for all types of visitors and a means of hospitality.

Mr. Abdul Qayum Balal depicted that;

> *"Hujra was the beauty and honor of Pakhtun culture. However, unfortunately, modernization altered it all together. Now people replaced Hujra with private guest rooms (Baitaks), which only serve to extend hospitality to the guests and relatives. Now, even the Baitaks usually remain closed as the frequency of visitors is getting lesser day by day".*

The majority of the participants further elaborated about the nexus of modernization and the Hujra system in the present age. In the past, as people were illiterate, the means of subsistence was agriculture, the mode of life was simple, and there was no competition concept in today's life. When they got back from their fields, they rushed to the communal place i.e., Hujra to make themselves relax and entertained. They were used to sitting in the Hujra for hours and hours with the elders and their age mates. The modern means of communication and transportation were not available. Life was confined to some specific functions i.e., awakening in the early morning, visits to fields for agriculture purpose, getting back to homes, offering five times prayer, and visiting Hujra for relaxation and ease.

Contrary to the above scenario, they also believed that today in the age of modernization, the mode of life has undergone numerous changes like technological advancement, increasing ratio of education and employment, advanced means of communication and transportation, raise in income, etc. This created individualism and competition. The population has massively increased. The generation gap has now widened. Intolerance and lack of respect for elders due to the waves of so-called liberalism and human rights also distorted the social fabric wherein no one is ready to sit together in routine for long hours. Now media (especially social media), mobiles, and other electronic devices and gadgets alienated them even within the family. The young generation has no time for their parents to sit with them as practiced in the past. In this very scenario, the concept of Hujra, which was a communal place, not something personal, was changed into the private Hujra system, and now it got the shape of the *Baitak* system (guest room attached to the main house gate). In a nutshell, at the present day, the Hujra system has widely vanished and exists only in pure rural areas, but the ratio is much lesser.

Mr. Usman Olasyar believed that;

> *"Hujra has now become past. The huge impact of modernization defuncts the existence of Hujra in its pure form. It is very much important to revisit the system/structure of Hujra and to make it compatible with the needs and requirements of present-day life. Like in one Hujra, we can make separate rooms for different purposes like library, games, watching TV/cable, and council hall accordingly".*

Some of the study participants argued that the negative of modernization on Hujra is unavoidable. However, the Hujra system is still in practice. People used to sit in Hujra to get folk wisdom from their elders. They come for settlement of their disputes. They still celebrate their joys and griefs in Hujra. They go to sit in Hujra for entertainment and gossip with their age mates.

Impact of Modernization on Melmastia (Hospitality)

The majority of the study participants believed that *Melmastia* is both cultural and religious practice. Hospitality is not binding as law, but people cannot avoid it. Extending hospitality to people, whether strangers or one's circle, i.e., friends, relatives, etc., is considered a matter of honour and respect. Moreover, they feel obliged for that. In the past, hospitality was not limited to presenting food and staying for the night(s) and guaranteeing their security. The safety and guard of guests were so central that it takes superiority over all other assertions, including impartiality or reprisal. The practice is a point of national integrity for the *Pakhtunwali* that an individual who fails to fulfil this responsibility is not considered being a *Pakhtun*. *Panah* (asylum) was the dominant attribute of hospitality in the past. Nowadays, due to waves of terrorism and different other socio-cultural and economic pressures, one cannot afford to extend *Panah* to any relatives or mainly to the stranger.

Simultaneously, regardless of the differences based on race, economic status, national affiliation, or religion, the guests were treated and still treated with profound respect. One thing that is different between the stranger(s) and one's kin or tribesmen is that hospitality was/ is offered free to strangers without any expectation of reciprocity or remuneration. Nevertheless, hospitality, in the case of one's kin or tribesmen, puts the receiver under mutual responsibility. The presentation of food is also an essential aspect of hospitality. In the past, the guest would be served with simple food like *Da Jwaro Dodai* (bread), *Warbasho Dodai* (a type of hard bread having an odd taste), *Shomlay / Lassi* (Juice), *Koranay Charg* (domestic chicken), *Warjalay* (local rice dish) along with *Socha Ghwari* (Oil), *Pai* (Milk), *Karhi* (local dish), *Saaba* (local dish), *Paratay* in breakfast (oily bread) and *Koranai Agai* (eggs of domestic/local chickens), etc. In fruits, *Alocahai* (Plum)*, Khobanai* (Apricot)*, Enzaran* (Figs)*, Amlok* (persimmon)*, Nashpatai* (Pear), *Manray* (apple), *Shahtoot* (Mulberry) etc. were in practice.

The majority of the study participants highlighted that exchange of gifts is also a necessary part of *Melmastia*. In this regard, different gifts were/are to be presented to the guests, keeping in view the occasion's nature. Along with this, guests were/are entertained with *Gup Shup* (gossip), visit the local

scenic spot, etc. More time was allocated to sit with guests so that he/she does not mind it. If the guest were not given proper attention and time, that would be considered an odd one, and then resultantly, the guest would never revisit that person's house. Male guests were used to sitting outside the house in *Hujra* while female guests were/are entertained by the female inside the houses. In the past, due to many reasons like lack of transportation, availability of more leisure time, simple mode of life, love and homogeneity, etc. guests (sometimes large number) would stay for an extended period like two or three days and even longer. However, the response from the recipient side would always be warm and welcoming.

Mr. Sultanat Khan pinpointed his views as;

> *"Melmastia is obligatory in Pakhtuns culture as it is part of our cultural and religious norms. Modernization distorted the real face of hospitality, which existed in the past for a long time. Those days when guests were entertained with simplicity and open heartedness no more exist. Although hospitality still exists in our culture, the hospitality mode has altered in many ways, which is not good for our cultural values".*

The majority of the participants revealed that hospitality is changed/changing due to the impacts of modernization. *Panah* is nor more in practice. Melmastia is now limited to a cultural norm somewhat religious one. The presentation of food has altogether changed. Now, both the guests and the hosts are used to eating fast food (BarBQ, spicy food), carbonated drinks (Pepsi, Coca-Cola, Mountain Dew, and Sprite, etc.), and different kinds of new fruits and confectionaries which were rare or even not known in the past.

Further, the guests were entertained at the houses. Now, due to lack of time, preparation of meal at home, increase in income, exposure to the outer world, the impact of media, etc.; the host(s) and even the guest(s) prefers to be entertained outside the houses like in restaurants, riverside hotel on Bypass, etc. This sort of practice did not exist in the past. Modernization boosts hospitality as the host can manage to arrange several items/dishes for the guests. However, spending more time with guests is no more visible as both the guests and hosts cannot afford due to their fast-moving busy scheduled life. Due to the materialistic and individualistic lifestyle, those days are gone when guests spend days and nights with their relatives' houses.

Mr. Shah Nawaz Khan expressed that;

> *"Modernization is not a bad thing until and unless that lies within the umbrella of our socio-cultural norms and values. I think hospitality in both times, whether today or in the past, are of equal importance. At that time, hospitality trends were good but are not compatible with today's world, where every person is trying to compete in a challenging environment. How come one can sit for hours and days to entertain guests? It is impossible. Positive and negative traits do exist in every era. The important thing is that we shall make ourselves compatible with the prevailing traits of hospitality and try to make it on par with our socio-economic status".*

Some of the participants of the study opined that hospitality is weakened due to modernization. The nuclear family system is the outcome of modernization and weekend hospitality from different perspectives. It means that the nuclearization of family negatively contributed to hospitality. Some of them rejected this notion that it is a misperception that nuclearization of family strengthens hospitality as few people can entertain their guests as per their ease and choices.

Conclusion

Socio-cultural values are closely interlinked with the social fabric of *Pakhtun* society. Owing to the emergence of new trends under the umbrella of modernization gives way to add new traits in Pakhtun culture. The participants of this study opined that like other social facets, *Hujra* and *Melmastia* (hospitality) is also fronting the challenges of modern-day advancements. The fundamental structure of

Hujra has now changed from traditional to modern *Baitaks* (guest room adjacent to one's house). Previously, there was a communal place used for different purposes at that time. In its real sense, the practice of Hujra remains very rare in rural areas, whereas in urban areas, it is almost converted into *Deras* and *Baitaks.* Hujra was once a central component of Pakhtun's social structure. Several functions were associated with *Hujra* like setting with elders get insights about their life experiences, place of entertainment (use of traditional instruments like *Rabab*, *Sitaar*, etc. which are rare today) arrangement of different ceremonies like Nikah, wedding, funerals, and above all conflict resolution, On the other hand, the nature of *Melmastia* is on continuous change. In the past, people were more available to serve their guests with more sincerity and rejoice. The guest was entertained with a simple meal. Nevertheless, now the scenario is rapidly changing as people are in the grip of a technologically advanced era. Unlike in the past, they are now busy getting an education, searching for employment, and struggling to achieve more in one's life. Today, people can present different kinds of foodstuffs, beverages, and tea, along with a wide range of confectioneries.

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