

Pakhtoonwali - Ethical Code of Honor among Pakhtoons

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Abstract

This paper aims to study the Pakhtoon culture and tradition through Pakhtoonwali. Pakhtoonwali is the code of ethics among the Pakhtoons. It is essentially the unwritten code controlling, guiding, and balancing the form, character, and discipline of the Pakhtoon way of life, passed from generation to generation. These traditions serve as a major foundation of Pakhtoon culture, norms, values and codes of conduct. The Pakhtoonwali or the Pakhtoon code of honor embraces all the activities from the cradle to the grave. Almost all the customs and cultural values of Pakhtoons revolve round this unwritten code of honor. Pashto society is an honor based society and they believe that a Pakhtoon's Izzat (honor) lies in adhering the principles of Pakhtoonwali. Thus Pakhtoonwali forms the major foundation of the Pakhtoon social fabric. The data for the study is collected from the Pakhtoon community located in Gutlibagh area of Ganderbal district. This study is based on ethno linguistic approach.

Keywords: Ethno linguistics, Ethical code, Ethno methodology, Pakhtoonwali.

Introduction

Pakhtoons are primarily tribal people and there are over a hundred tribes each with its own name and lineage. They speak a classified language known as Pashto/ Pakhto. They are known as Pathans by non-Pashto people and comprise the largest ethnic group in Afghanistan and Pakistan. There are a large number of Pakhtoons living in the state of Jammu & Kashmir who migrated from Afghanistan and Pakistan. The history of migration goes back at least to 1752 A.D. when due to the disintegration of Mughal Empire; Kashmir was passed into the hands of Afghans. During this period Afghans 'Subahdars' ruled Kashmir and Afghans groups settled in different parts of the subah especially in present districts of Ganderbal, Anantnag, Baramulla and Budgam.(Lawrence, 1895). Much later it was Maharaja Gulab Singh, the Dogra ruler of

Kashmir who offered them employment opportunities, especially for the purpose of guarding the frontiers of kingdom and in return granted them land Jagirs and settled them in colonies of their choice. In fact the Pakhtoon community is scattered all over Jammu and Kashmir. Pakhtoons also used to come to Kashmir for commercial purposes. This community is believed to have migrated in groups for business purposes and settled in low hilly areas of Kashmir in close proximity with forests wherefrom firewood could be easily had for cooking purposes.

Methodology

This study is based on ethno linguistic approach of data analysis which involves the techniques of participant observation and key informant interviewing. Participant observation allows a deeper emersion into culture studied, hence resulting in a deeper understanding of a culture. Intense open ended repeated interviews were conducted for the investigation of cultural patterns. Also well informed and reliable informants were chosen for the strict assurance of the representative sample. Both open and close end interviews were conducted. The close end interviews were based on properly formulated questionnaire. The data recorded was then analyzed carefully and formally written down. The data for the research was collected from the Gutlibagh area of Ganderbal district which is located along the river Sindh. This colony has maximum number of Pashto speakers.

Pakhtoons and Their Code of Honor

Pakhtoons living in Gutlibagh area of Ganderbal district are in lesser contact with other communities of the valley, they have comparatively different customs and traditions and the dominance of 'tradition' in the social life is still intact comparatively. It is specifically found that all the community members are highly conscious about their social and cultural identity and they strongly adhere to the principles of Pakhtoonwali - which is the unwritten code of ethics among Pakhtoons.

Pakhtoonwali is a non-written ethical code and traditional life style followed by the Pakhtoons. It is a system of law and governance from the prehistoric time passed from generation to generation. It guides both individual and communal conduct. It promotes self-respect, independence, justice, hospitality, forgiveness, etc. towards all (especially to strangers

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Principles

The following principles form the major components of Pakhtoonwali.

1. ***Aitbar***: Aitbar means trust, or guaranteed assurance. This forms the arch of society. All business including contracts relating to sale and mortgage or disposal of property, is transacted on the basis of trust or Aitbar. Such transactions are verbal and are entered into in the presence of the village elders or a few witnesses. The violation of Aitbar is considered to be dishonorable act and contrary to the norms of Pakhtoonwali.
2. ***Badal***: Badal means retaliation that is to seek justice or to take revenge against the wrong doer. No time limit restricts the period in which revenge can be taken. Self-respect and sensitivity to insult is another essential mark of Pakhtoon character. The poorest among them have their own sense of dignity and honor and refuse to submit to any insult. Even a mere taunt counts as an insult which can only be redressed by shedding the taunter's blood. It may lead to blood feuds that can last generations and involve whole tribes with a loss of hundreds of lives.
3. ***Melmastia***: Melmastia means hospitality. Pakhtoons have been described as one of the most hospitable peoples of the world. They consider Melmastia or generous hospitality as one of the finest virtues and greet their guest warmly with a broad smile on their faces. A Pakhtoon feels delighted to receive a guest regardless of his past, relations or acquaintance and prepares a delicious meal for him.
4. ***Nanawati***: Nanawati is derived from verb meaning 'to go in'. This refers to the custom of sending the marriage proposal indirectly to the bride's family. It is considered derogatory to send the marriage proposal directly.
5. ***Nang***: Nang means to support the right. A Pakhtoon must always hold on to truth and must support it in every situation. A Pakhtoon must defend the weak around him
6. ***Rogha***: Rogha means the settlement of dispute between the family members or friends.
7. ***Lokhe warkol***: Lokhe means "utensils" and warkol means "to give". Utensils made of copper (lokhe) are given to the bride at her wedding. Lokhe are also gifted to friends and relatives at different occasions. It implies the protection of an individual or the tribe.

8. **Tor:** Tor literally means 'black'. It is used for public disgrace and defamation of both men and women who are found guilty in immoral practices. Pakhtoons are sensitive about the honor of their women folk and slight molestation of women is considered a serious and an intolerable offence. The cases of adultery and illicit relations are put down with iron hand in and no quarter is given to culprits either male or female. Both sexes, therefore, scrupulously avoid indulgence in immoral practices.
9. **Turah:** Turah means bravery. A Pakhtoon must defend his land, property and family from incursions. He should always stand bravely against tyranny and be able to defend the honour of his name.
10. **Sabat:** Sabat mean loyalty. Pakhtoons owe loyalty to their family, friends and tribe members. Pakhtoons can never become disloyal as this would be a matter of shame for their families and themselves.
11. **Naamus:** It means protection. A Pakhtoon must defend the honour of women at all costs and must protect them from vocal and physical harm. *Namus* serves to maintain the gender segregation order of the society, which is embedded in *Pardah* (Veil), a curtain often being the boundary between men and women's physical space.
12. **Meerata:** Meerata means to help and condole. When somebody dies in the neighborhood it is mandatory among the Pakhtoons to take great care of the deceased's family and offer every possible help like serving food to them and condoling, etc.
13. **Hujra:** Hujra is a common sitting place for the community people, usually men. Hujra represents the sociable character of Pakhtoons. It serves as a centre for social activities and the platform for Jirga meeting where important decisions are made. Family quarrels and tribal disputes are settled here.
14. **Jirga:** Jirga is an assembly of tribal elders called for various purposes. Jirga is the parliament of Pakhtoons which plays an important role in solving the tribal matters. It is an authority for settling disputes and providing equal justice to all. Jirgas generally consist of persons who are known for their honesty and integrity.
15. **Mla tad:** Mla means back and Mla tad means to be ready to tackle every problem with great courage.
16. **Hamsaya:** The word Hamsaya in Pashto means neighbor. Neighbors should be treated with great care and hospitality.

17. **Badragga:** Badragga means to escort. It is the guarantee or escort provided for the safety of fugitive. An armed party accompanies or escorts the man who is pursued by his enemies or there is an apprehension of his being killed on his way home.
18. **Gundi:** Gundi is derived from the word Gund meaning political party. But it is used for an alliance. Gundi represents a classic case of balance of power in tribal areas.
19. **Lashkar:** Lashkar means the tribal army. It performs the functions of police and implements the decisions of Jirga.

However, various codes like Lashkar, Gundi, Badragga, etc. have vanished slowly among the Gutlibagh Pakhtoons and they are no more in practice. Even though Pakhtoons are persistent in maintaining their culture and customs, over a period of time there has been a gradual change.

Conclusion

These traditions serve as a major foundation of Pakhtoon culture, norms, values and codes of conduct, controlling, guiding, and balancing the form, character, and discipline of the Pakhtoon way of life. Thus Pakhtoonwali or the Pakhtoon code of honor embraces all the activities from the cradle to the grave. And almost all custom and cultural values revolved around the concept of Pakhtoonwali. Pashto society is an honor based society and they believe that a Pakhtoon's Izzat (honor) lies in adhering to the principles of Pakhtoonwali. Thus Pakhtoonwali forms the major foundation of the Pakhtoon social fabric.

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