

GENDER IN TRANSITION: THE AFTERMATH OF DEVELOPMENT IN HUNZA
VALLEY

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by

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DEDICATION

To Aso, Neelo, and Sam!

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This paper attempts to analyze the gendered impact of the socio-economic transition in the Hunza valley, where the construction of the Karakoram Highway (KKH) and the influx of development organizations in early 1980s launched new economic trends. Owing to its fairytale reputation and its isolation from the rest of the world, Hunza valley has often been referred to as the Shangri-La of James Hilton's *Lost Horizon* (Rodale, 1948; Clark, 1956; Winn 1983). The fairytale land went through a drastic change after road construction, providing a unique case study for pre and post effect analysis.

There is some literature available on the impact of these economic changes (Kreutzmann 1993, 1995; Miller 2001, 2004; Malik and Piracha 2006), however, there is a lack of literature on a gendered approach to the economic change in Hunza.

My emphasis in this study is on two basic queries: What was the gendered impact of the socio-economic transition in the subsistence agrarian economy in Hunza and how did the new economic trends change existing gender roles in Hunza society? How effective was the role that non-governmental organizations played to reduce gender disparities in the area? The study is emic in nature, focusing on the situation and perspectives of the local people themselves, their voices and observations derived from various studies, books, writings and other sources of information that are publicly available. It also includes my own observations and learnings from interacting with local people for internal studies during my work for Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP).

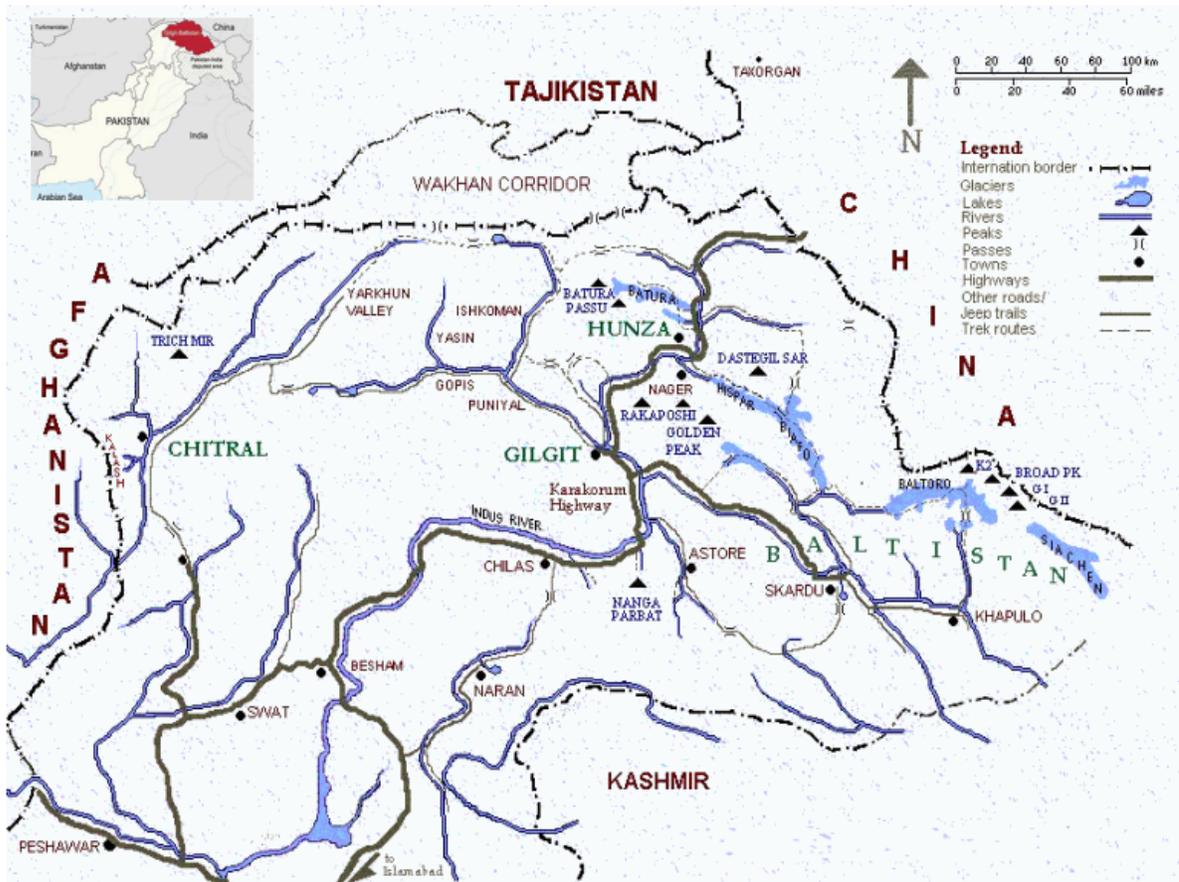
The observations have been segmented into pre and post KKH – the main gateway of transition. To get a vivid picture of the impact, findings of the gender situation prior to KKH are presented in Chapter 2. I investigate the onset of change within the household and the community in Chapter 3. I have tried to analyze the

response to the gender situation by the key development organization in the area – AKRSP – through critical analysis of its gender program in Chapter 4.

1.1 Introduction to Hunza

Hunza was a politically, socially and economically ‘self-contained’ princely state (Lorimer, 1939) until 1974 when the Government of Pakistan put an end to the prevailing governance system locally known as the ‘Thum’ (Mir) regime. It came under federally administered northern areas (FANA) through Gilgit being the regional capital until recently in 2009 when former Northern Areas was accepted as an autonomous province and renamed Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) and Hunza became a district of GB.

Because of its geographical location Hunza has politically been a significant area. It lies in the high mountain area where three mountain ranges Hindukush, Karakorum and Himalaya converge and borders Pakistan’s Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province to the west, Afghanistan to the north, China to the northeast, and Indian occupied Jammu and Kashmir to the east.



Source: https://www.caingram.info/Worldwide/eight_thousanders/karakorum_map.htm

There are four distinct ethno-linguistic groups in Hunza: a) Shen, who inhabit the lower part of Hunza from Nomal to Hindi. They speak Shina - an Indo-Aryan language; b) Hunzikutz, also called Burusho, who inhabit central Hunza from Murtazabad to Nazimabad, and speak Burushaski; c) Gujali inhabit upper Hunza from Gulmit to Passu. They speak Wakhi- an East-Iranian Pamir language; and d) Bericho/Dom inhabit Mominabad (former Berishal) in central Hunza. They speak Dumaki- also an Indo-Aryan language spoken in Kashmir. These groups are not only distinct in their languages but also differ in cultural values and traditions. This study focuses the Burushaski speaking Hunzikutz in central Hunza.

In the past, Hunza was characterized by subsistence agriculture, which, because of steep and barren mountain ridges and little rainfall, required hard labor. It is like a desert (Wilson, 1999; Miller, 2001), where agriculture was made possible

only by creating a system of irrigation and channeling glacier water into the fields and leveling steep slopes into staircases in the lap of mountains (Sidky, 1995). Hunzikutz population was merely around 2,606 households in the early-to-mid 80s, 58% of the total 32,000 population distributed among 52 Hunza villages (Sidky, 1994).

CHAPTER 2: A GLIMPSE HUNZA IN OLDER TIMES

This chapter gives a picture of a Hunzukutz society before the KKH intervention focusing power structures within the household, socio-cultural attributes associated with men and women, and gender division of labor in Hunza before the road construction and accelerated socio-economic transition.

The most historic text available on Hunza is by a British Political agent, David Lorimer, during his stay in Hunza in 1934-35. Lorimer's research focused on the Burushaski language, but his wife Emily O. Lorimer (1939) wrote about the daily lives of Hunzukutz, living closely with local inhabitants of central Hunza. Being a woman, she got a chance to participate and stay close to the local people and gave details in her book regarding Hunzukutz women's everyday life back in the 1930s. Tahir Ali has given Hunzukutz household structure during the early 80s in his research (1983). Qudratullah Beg (1968) has given a historical perspective of Hunza, whereby a glimpse of socio-political structure can be witnessed in detail. Some of the literature on the past comes through local residents' memories of the past in contemporary studies (Beg 2003; Miller 2001, 2004; Halvorson 2003).

2.1 Household Structure

In a Hunzukutz household, all the family members live together in a single household which consists of an extended patrilineal family, comprised of parents, their sons, daughters-in-law, grandchildren, and unmarried daughters, as large as up to twenty family members, and share property (Ali 1983). A hunzukutz *ha* (house) is a large room used by all of the family members for living, eating and sleeping. It consists of a small storage place with a separate door opening into *ha*; a hearth in the center and two *mun* (platforms) on either side of the hearth. Left side *mun* is reserved for men and right one for women and children (Ali 1983).

The household power structure is based upon hierarchies of age and gender. Head of the household is the senior-most male member of the family whereas the most authoritative female member, ideally the household head's wife, is entitled as *ruli gus* (women-of-authority).¹ The household head is responsible for all family matters including dealing cattle, land and property, community work and other public related affairs. *Ruli gus* is responsible for managing and distributing the yearly household food supply, issuing appropriate portions of food and also distributing food among all family members on a daily basis. She makes sure that men receive more food than women (Sidky 1995), because of the belief that men's bodies requires more food than women's (Lorimer 1939). She also has authority over other female members of the household: daughters and daughters-in-law. She exercises this authority by distributing domestic and farm work among them. A *ruli gus* is an important and respected figure in the family as she is responsible for distribution of food throughout the year which is an important task considering the scarcity of food supplies in Hunza in old times.

If a *ruli gus* is over-generous with her rationing during the post-harvest months of plenty the whole family may starve before next year; so a "competent woman" is highly valued, and incompetence is fair grounds for divorce. (Lorimer 1939: 117)

Age is a significant determinant of power distribution in the family and society, as it is believed that because of old age they are more experienced. A senior member of the family is perceived as more authoritative and respected than a junior member. Difference in age and gender are linked together. Authority within one

¹ Ali (1983) in his study of 105 households in 1980s found that in 76 cases, *ruli gus* was the wife of household-head, in other cases she was son's wife (9) or mother (6). However, the situation might have been different before 1980s.

gender group is based on differences in age, for instance female members have to obey *ruli gus*. Because of age seniority, both man and woman in the family hold authority over junior members within their own gender groups. Decision-making power in the family is held by the household-head, senior women also participate except for matters of land, property, and money (Ali 1983).

2.2 Socialization and Gender Identity

In his book on the history of the Hunza, Baig has mentioned that the primary occupation and source of livelihood of every household in Hunza was agriculture and farming (1968). Apart from the ruling class, everyone else lived below the poverty line. There were no class differences, however, a social order of precedent was created for governance to work efficiently. At the top of the social order was the Mirs, followed by Wazirs who handled military matters. Third rank was occupied by *Akabireen*, a small number of chosen men, who were involved in decision making within all state matters; followed by *Muqadimaan* – the heads of each clan/tribe. Other ranks assigned were associated with the tasks being carried out, such as load carriers, gold extractors. The lowest in the rank were the musicians, known as *Bericho*.

Kinship in Hunza is patrilineal, which automatically gives supremacy to men of the household. Male chauvinism can be witnessed in the household structure as well as in the social and cultural domain, where only sons inherit land and property (Stellrecht-Muller 1979). Sex discriminated attitude such as preference of male-child can be witnessed right from birth. “A boy will bring a wife to the house and children to the hearth, while a daughter will take her labor and children to her husband’s home (Lorimer 1939:123).” A hunzukutz girl is nurtured with this ideology and at an early age she is taught domestic and farming skills so that when she gets married she will behave like a good daughter-in-law and wife and hence keep her parents’ honor and pride. Besides domestic and fieldwork she is also taught embroidery and sewing, skills

that would add to her womanliness from an early age. On the other hand, a boy imitates his father and other men of the family who inspire him. He learns that the public domain is his property to explore and that domesticity is feminine. He recognizes his superiority compared to his sisters by the preferential treatment of his parents towards him.

Socially acceptable attributes are distinct for men and women. Marriages in Hunza are arranged by the parents (Lorimer, 1939). When parents look for a wife for their son, they choose a *daltas qabil* (beautiful and skillful) girl. Specific required sets of skills are efficiency in farm work as well as domestic work and prudence in managing household food stocks. Another attribute required of an ideal daughter-in-law as well as of a wife is *manokur* (politeness). As a new bride, a woman's role is submissive; she has to do her share of work efficiently and obey the elders specially the *ruli gus* to prove herself as a respectable member of the new family. Since the mother-in-law is one authoritative figure in the family, the new bride has to please her mother-in-law to win her husband's heart.

2.3 Religio-cultural Status

In the Burushaski language, groups of women and men are called *gus-giyas* (lit. woman-infant/children) and *hir-sis* (lit. man-person/people). Both words are used to refer to men and women groups with due respect (as in 'ladies and gentlemen'). Women's identity is recognized as their role as mothers, because of which they are highly respected. Biology and reproductive role is a significant factor in determining their position in the household and in society at large. There are religio-cultural beliefs associated with female biology.

When a woman's monthly affliction overtakes her, she dresses in her oldest clothes and lies immobile by the fire till she is well again. The others make *daudo* for her, a porridge of flour well boiled in water... after two days she is

herself again, takes a bath, washes her clothes, and sweeps the house (Lorimer 1939: 191).

It is considered inappropriate for a woman to do household and fieldwork during menstruation. It is believed that the discharged blood is impure, so unless after it is over when she washes herself and her clothes, she cannot get back to routine work. She also has to sweep the house to get rid of any contamination caused by menstruation.

After childbirth, a woman is confined to one portion of the house. Men of the household, including her husband (with a few exceptions in some families), do not visit her, since she, including the place where she has given birth, is considered impure. Women household members and close relatives visit her. On the seventh day she takes a bath and washes her clothes. She is finally open to visitors on the eighth day (Lorimer 1939). In her study of Hopar valley in Nager², Hewitt also found that women are considered impure because of menstruation and childbirth, because of which women are not allowed go to high pastures or milk yak and goat (1989). Association of impurity with menstruating or childbearing is not as explicit in Hunzukutz society, it applies only to that certain time period until they wash themselves. Once a Hunzukutz woman Zenaba asked Lorimer how English women respond to menstruation. When Lorimer tells her, Zenaba laughs and says “but I think our way is better (1939: 191).” Lorimer observes that other household women take care of the menstruating woman and “she is not banished as a pariah nor subject to any degrading superstitions nor to any taboo not imposed by nature (1939:191).”³

² Nager and Hunza lie facing each other in the mountains separated by a river.

³ Although, Lorimer did not see the practice as seclusion of women because of their biology, the concept of ‘impurity’ comes through my own understanding of what I heard about the practice from elderly Hunzukutz women, who considered menstrual blood highly impure.

Religion on the other hand, is not as hard on women as culture is. In Hunzukutz lives, religion plays a small part (Rodale 1948). According to Muller-Stellrecht, “they called Ali “God” and drank wine. They knew nothing more of religion (1979: 213)”

Hunzukutz has evolved for himself quite the most practical and admirable modification of Islam that I have ever seen or heard of. He does not veil his womenfolk nor banish them to separate quarters, but treats them as equal partners in field and home. His standard of morals is so high that when a young husband goes abroad, he trusts his young wife to the care of his father and brothers without misgiving. We heard no case of such a trust being abused. (Lorimer 1939: 146)

Their modest association with religion benefits Hunzukutz women; it does not put them behind the four walls of their homes. They are mobile and can go freely from one village to another without a male escort. They do not observe purdah, which is observed by women who are Shia Muslims living on the other side of the river in Nager.

The Nagyri women are not allowed to be seen by a man. They will crouch down, turn their backs and cover their faces. When approached they will run for dear life. They wear unsightly dark bonnets which entirely cover their hair. Contrast this with the Hunzas, whose womenfolk are cheerful and go about without restrictions. They are as happy in their manner as the menfolk are (Rodale 1948: 167).

Although Hunzukutz women are socially and politically deprived compared to their men but they are privileged compared to women in neighboring regions: “What the Nagir women and older girls look like I cannot say, for when they sight a man they

crouch down with their backs turned and either pull a cloth over their faces or bury their heads in their arms. Give me the Maulai variety of Islam every time!” (Lorimer 1939: 277).

Clark has narrated one such incident where a woman suffering from ringworm visits him. On her first visit her husband accompanies her but the second time she comes alone for medicine. Clark thinking it is inappropriate sends her back and asks her to come with her husband. When she brings her husband, he tells Clark not to be silly and that he is too busy to accompany her every time. For Clark this was unusual in a Muslim society. He writes, “If this had happened one hundred miles to the south, the woman and I would have both been killed. These people were much more sensible and truly moral than the rigidly fanatic Muslims... Hunzas were more liberal because they were more decent and almost never unfaithful to their mates” (1956: 102).

It is interesting to read Hunzukutz at the time of Lorimer (1934-35) talk about their past and how culture has been changing. Culture is transitory even in an isolated place like Hunza in those times. Ideologies associated with men and women and their power relations have also been changing over time. In old times, culture in Hunza meant music, drinking and dancing. This merrymaking was an equal opportunity for men and women. Women used to dance and drink with their male counterparts. Lorimer narrates a local residence, Qudrat Ullah, remembering old times when men and women used to dance and get drunk together which was later banned by the Mir, hence taking away “women’s freedom” by “man-made restrictions” (1939: 160). Although music, drinking wine and dancing are still a larger part of Hunzukutz culture but now it is gendered masculine as it is restricted only to men. As men dance in public swirling around their male supremacy, women watch their performance as *manokur* audience.

Certain other practices vanished against women with the passage of time. Swimming for instance was a practice for both men and women before KKH when Hunza was still isolated from the rest of the world. During peak time in summers, women working in the fields would take a break and go swimming in phari (a local water pool) to fight the heat.⁴ Many of those pharimutz (pools) are still there but are solely used by men and male-children due to the intrusion of outsiders.⁵ It is also interesting to note changes in the dress code. Women and men both used to wear long open shirts, *chapan*, with caps. Caps for women and girls had colorful embroidery on them whereas men and boys wore white caps. Both used to wear *shuqa* (a hand-woven long coat) in winters. There was no concept of *doun* (Urdu, dupatta) - a cloth used to cover head and bosom. In later text, we find women wearing *doun*.

⁴ Pharimutz are built outside and shared by many households together so women used to go in groups for swimming. This was a common practice many elder would talk about.

⁵ Being a close knit community, Hunzukutz have a strong connection with each other, and hence anyone who is not a Hunzukutz is considered an 'outsider', including tourists, visitors, and people from neighborhood areas coming to Hunza for entrepreneurship purposes.



Figure 1: A glimpse of everyday Hunzukutz life in the 30s. (Lorimer, 1939)



Figure 2: Gus-giyas (Women and children). (Lorimer, 1939)

2.3 Household division of labor

Although work is shared by all the household members, there is a visible distinction between men's work and women's work and its allocation is highly gendered. Men and women are responsible for their respective set of chores in the household and outside. Work sphere in Hunza revolves around tasks associated with the farms and the household, being a subsistent agrarian society.

In Hunza, from ancient times, a man who is able to, does every kind of men's and women's work, and a woman who is able to, does both women's and men's work. So if a woman sits down, they say she is a man. There is this story that someone asked: "Are there more men or more women?" When someone replied: "No, there are more men," the hoopoe said: "Counting men who are like women, there are more women." That is to say, inferior men are to be reckoned on the women's side, and good women are reckoned on the men's side. There is the saying: "Is this female a man or is she a woman?" (Muller-Stellrecht 1979: 160).

Women's primary role as mothers confines them to home and children. Their work sphere is centered in their homes and work outside home is characterized by proximity to their houses (Hewitt 1989). Domestic work therefore falls upon women's shoulders, which includes cooking, feeding the family, cleaning, washing, taking care of infants and children and outside work such as construction of houses. Men are responsible for irrigation, preparing the fields, construction and repairing terrace walls and irrigation channels (Sidky, 1995). Men's work is characterized by notions of bravery, toughness and adventure such as slaughtering animals, hunting, carrying loads; whereas women's work characterizes lack of adventure, passive and time-consuming such as embroidery, weeding, cleaning etc.

Work is also differentiated by grading certain work too “low” to be done by men such as carrying manure and sand *giran*, a wooden basket used for carrying loads such as manure, firewood, fodder. At times men use *giran* to carry fodder for the livestock but a manure *giran* is considered as a disgrace to be carried by men degrading their sanctity.⁶ Likewise, there are sets of tasks; such as, washing clothes for household members, embroidery, carrying manure; that are solely associated with women that if done by the opposite sex does not only become an anomaly but also a threat to their sexual identity. It is considered disgraceful or shameful for the persons of the ‘wrong’ sex to perform the task (Ali 1983). However, if a woman constructs a house or carries a load, although an anomaly, it is not disgraceful for her sex.

As men’s work is considered superior and undoable by womankind, it is rather a credit earned by her kind. It is the ‘superior’ sex who is disgraced by doing improper undignified tasks assigned for the ‘inferior’ sex. Unlike in Nager, where only men milk goats and yak because of women’s “impurity” (Hewitt 1989), on the other hand in Hunza it is shameful for men to milk animals; milking is solely women’s responsibility.⁷ The stronger social taboos against women are, the weaker her position in society is. It also brings more rigidity in allocation of tasks based on sex differences. Felmy based on her fieldwork conducted in 1984-85 found that there is more flexibility in gender division of labor in Hunza compared to Nager where the division of labor is more rigid and men see women’s role as essentially that of childcare and food preparation (1995).

At night, while men enjoy wine, women would get busy with *dup chir* (spinning wool), which falls primarily into women’s sphere of work but is not

⁶ In her study, Cameron found that in Nepal carrying manure in high-caste women was prohibited and women from low-caste were hired for the task (1995).

⁷ However, men who take cattle to the high pastures, milk the cows, as well as cook and do all domestic chores themselves.

considered disgraceful if a man perform it. There are tasks that are predominantly done by women but at other occasions performed by men due to long distances from home. Firewood from the *basi* (orchard) for instance is collected by women and girls but only men or boys collect wood from *ter* (high pasture). Similarly, cattle are taken to the fields for grazing by both girls and boys but only boys and men take the cattle to *ter*. It is however evident from a historical account of “the burong girl’s lapse” by Lorimer (1935: 269-70) that in old times girls used to take cattle to *ter*.⁸

2.3.1 Gender Division of Labor in Agriculture

Agricultural work is laborious in Hunza, since it is a doubled-cropped zone due to scarcity of cultivable land and its low productivity (Sidky 1995). All household members including children work together as a team to fight hunger and low productivity of land. Some events such as summer harvest time require more teamwork than usual. Lorimer has captured one such September harvest in 1930s: “It is beautiful to see a party at work: father and mother, daughters, sons, and wives; they space themselves and keep their line as exactly as soldiers on parade, yet each works individually, each at his own pace and in his own way-without haste and without pause” (1939: 133).

⁸ He has talked about a girl who takes cattle to *ter* and there she meets a herdsman, got pregnant, delivers a baby-boy in *ter*, and on her return when her parents ask about the child, she makes up a story that she got pregnant by urine of ibex, and they believe her. Later, she names her son “bumbedi.” He has also mentioned that descendents of bumbedi are still in Hunza. *Burong* is a tribe of central Hunza.

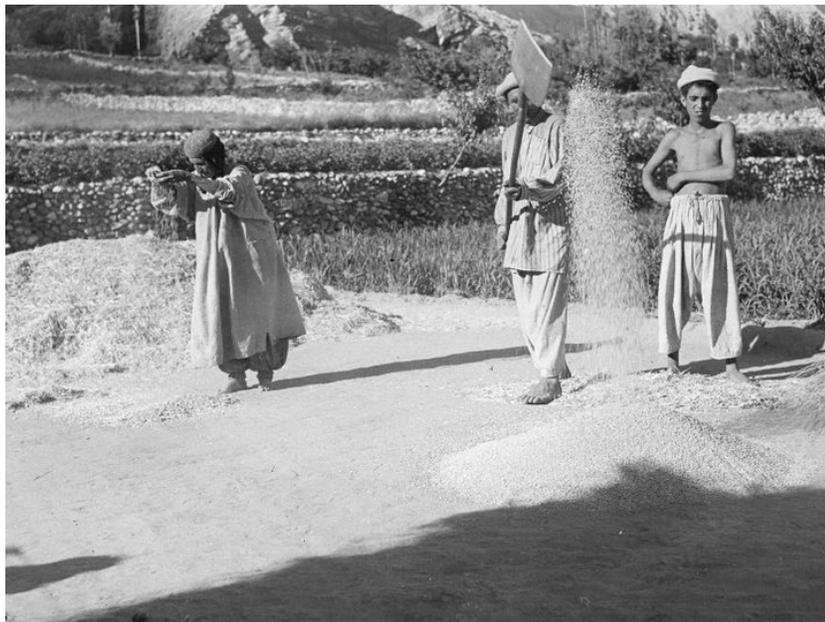


Figure 3 & 4: Household members working together in the field by Lorimer, 1939.

Although in the fields it looks like teamwork, tasks are allocated distinctly on the basis of gender, although there are a few tasks that are done by either sex. Men do the ‘physically hard work’ such as making fields and leveling ground, repairing irrigation channels and the walls of the field (Stellretch-Muller 1979). For land preparation, *harki* (plowing) is performed exclusively by men; it is done with the help of oxen.⁹ Women then take turns to bring sand and manure in *giran* and scatter it in the field. *Bo phau* (sowing) is considered one important event in agriculture and it is believed that crop yield is dependent upon *bou phao*, so to be on the safe side it is done by the superior sex. Watering the fields is predominantly man’s work but women equally take part. They may take turns to water the fields and one to guard the channel.

Weeding is exclusively women’s work. In summers women spend most of their day weeding the fields. Although *bisarkus* (harvesting) is done by both men and women, it is predominantly women’s work. In peak harvest season, women work collectively in fields and help each other in harvesting. *Dartch* (threshing) is men’s and women’s joint work (Muller-Stellretch 1979). However, Lorimer has narrated an account of a threshing ground where the driver is a ‘she’: “the driver carried always a flat bowl shoulder high in her left hand...when her (dung) dish was full went off and emptied it on a little heap of manure.”¹⁰ It is interesting to see that plowing which is done with the help of oxen is men’s job and threshing which is carried out with the help of cows is done by women as a woman driver can only “quickly anticipate her

⁹ In his study in South Asia, Mencher (1993) took local residents’ views about why plowing has to be done by men and found that it is not because of physical strength but the socio-cultural belief that they are sacred compared to women because those “who menstruate pollute the earth (1993: 104).”

¹⁰ “(dung)” added.

cows' needs (Lorimer 1979: 102).” Winnowing is predominantly men’s work. However, the cleaning part after winnowing is women’s work (Lorimer 1979). Women clean and save any piece of fallen grain that is left in the field. Men’s and women’s work can be characterized mainly by the embedded socio-cultural beliefs, which gives men physical superiority over women. It is interesting to see that agricultural work that involves tools is men’s work, such as plowing, winnowing, irrigation, ridging, land leveling. Women’s tool used is *giran* for carrying manure and *bisartch* for harvesting. Work that is considered low, like handling with manure including threshing, is done by women.

CHAPTER 3: HUNZA POST KKH SITUATION

Gender in the present is shaped by a rapid ongoing socio-economic transition before which more than 80 percent of the population lived below the absolute poverty line (Uddin et al. 2010). In this chapter, I have tried to show how new socio-economic livelihood sources are replacing subsistence agriculture; how the opportunities brought by that transformation effected men and women differently; and how that resulted in changes in household structure, gender roles and power structures in Hunzukutz society. There is some literature available on the impact of these economic changes (Kreutzmann 1993; Malik and Piracha 2006); impact of road construction and other external interests (Kreutzmann 1991, 1995); and perception of development change and modernity through the native eye (Miller 2001, 2004). One valuable synthesis of Hunza studies by more than 30 authors is *Karakoram in Transition*, which captures many aspects of socio-economic changes in Hunza (Ed. Kreutzmann 2006). However, there is a lack of literature on a gendered approach to the societal change and transition. Felmy (1995) has captured gendered roles in Hunza based on her fieldwork in 1984-85; Hewitt (1989) has given a description of gendered life in Hunza's sister valley Nager; and Halvorson (2002, 2003) has analyzed gendered health impacts of development in Gilgit.¹¹

3.1 Socio-economic Transition in Hunza

Thum Mohammad Jamal Khan once told an American visitor when asked how a jeep road to Baltit would affect Hunza:

It would reduce its remoteness, no doubt, but we are happy as we are. Each man is a farmer; he has his own house, his own land, his wife and children. As

¹¹ Hewitt's study (1989) is useful for a comparative analysis of transition in the two valleys, whereas Halvorson's study (2002) was although conducted in Oshikhandas in Gilgit but her respondents include many Hunzukutz migrants in her study area.

you visit my state you won't see a single beggar, you won't find anyone homeless, or without food or clothing. Everyone is in the same condition. We like it the way it is. Every woman is a farmer's wife. She cooks the meal, cares for the children, makes the family clothes, and helps in the fields. Everyone has just enough; every woman is on the same level (Henrickson 1960: 38).”

It is interesting to see how external interventions like construction of roads change the internal socio-economic structure (Kreutzmann 1993). The socio-economic transition in Hunza is too complex to credit only the construction of the road. The transformation was directed and accelerated mainly by three factors; a) the Thum regime was overthrown by the government of Pakistan in 1972; b) construction of metal road, i.e. the Karakorum Highway, in 1978 and; c) with the opening of KKH, development initiatives set out by government and national/international non-governmental organizations, resulting in a paradigm shift in the lives of the people.¹² Unlike the Thum-centered economic structure of agricultural labor, the new structure provided freedom of mobility in entering and exiting Hunza, which was very significant not only in exploring new sources of livelihoods and building economy, but also in accessing education for the newly liberated Hunzukutz. A flow of new market trends started with the road construction, because of connectivity with down cities of the country and also reduced travel time to its neighboring urban center, Gilgit.¹³ Goods from Rawalpindi and other cities of the country started to flow in, which made food items easily accessible for the local people.

¹² The KKH took 20 years for its completion and was officially opened in 1978. Built at an altitude of 4,693m /15,397ft; it is the highest paved road in the world, linking Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) with Pakistan's capital in its south and China to its north.

¹³ Contrary to the 3-dayed arduous travel on foot or horse on the former Silk route, it takes only 3 hours to Gilgit through KKH. Raza (1996: 111) recalls that it took him more than 16 hours to reach from Gilgit to Hunza in 1967 in a brand new jeep.

3.1.1 Agriculture and Economy

With enhanced linkages with market-oriented parts of the country, Hunzukutz gradually shifted from agriculture, as their primary source of income, to other non-agrarian sources of economy. The dependency on off-farm household income has been rising ever since the road construction. For instance, household incomes coming from off-farm employment increased from 43 percent in 1994 to 63 percent in 2005 in Gilgit-Baltistan (WB 2010). According to Malik et al., in Karimabad per capita cash incomes from primary non-farm occupations alone were estimated at Rs 10,891, while the corresponding figure for agriculture was a paltry Rs 738 in 2001 (2006: 361). Agriculture has been intensified by reducing the practice of leaving land fallow; switching to high yielding varieties of crops; and the use of fertilizers (Nitrogenous and Phosphatic) to increase productivity (Hemani and Warrington 1995). It has become highly market oriented, which led to increased production of cash crops and fruits. Potato became a major cash crop, and cherries, apple and apricots became the most commercially grown fruits.

Hemani and Warrington found that in Hunza several households no longer grow any cereal crops and grow only potatoes (1995). AKRSP's NAC Integrated Household Survey found that Hunzukutz are purchasing more grain from outside sources than producing. Their estimate showed that 87 percent of the total households in Hunza were facing deficit grain production, compared to only 13 percent who produce enough for the given year. Moreover, 96 percent of those having deficit reported purchasing grain from the market with money from off-farm earnings and sale of cash crops (NACIHS 2003). According to a local resident, "we have changed from growing wheat to growing potatoes because if we grow wheat in one field we will harvest 2 sacks of grain, but if we grow potatoes in the same field we can sell these and buy 5-6 sacks of flour (Hemani and Warrington 1995: 7)."

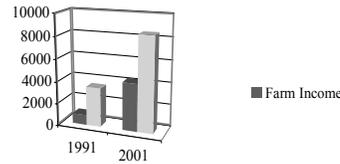


Fig. Growth in per capita income in Hunza

Data Source: Malik and Piracha (2006)

Figure 4: Growth in per capita income in Hunza

Sidky found that agricultural work is as time consuming and laborious as it was in the past (1994). As they are becoming increasingly dependent on staple food items purchased from outside, there is an increasing need for cash. A whole new world of non-farm activities has attracted Hunzukutz men. One of the sectors that flourished after KKH in Hunza is tourism, as there is a huge flow of tourists in summers especially from European countries. A lot of men avail the opportunity and get into small private business, hotel management and set up shops with traditional handicrafts, embroidery, jewelry, gems and stones. These shops are mostly seen in Karimabad, which, being the hub of Hunzukutz culture and traditions from the times of Thum, has become a tourist destination. Many men are also involved in trading, as the road to China is now open. Some men are permanently employed outside their villages and some leave seasonally. Because Gilgit is the administrative and trade center of GB, many Hunzukutz have migrated to Gilgit to avail themselves of new business opportunities. There is an influx of migrants in Gilgit from other parts of GB,

including Hunza to occupy jobs in civil and military and in the newly formed trade and business vogue.

3.1.2 Social Sector Development

The turning point in the history of Hunza is when His Highness Prince Karim Aga Khan visited for the first time in 1960 (Beg 2003). Under the leadership of the Aga Khan, religious institutions were set up to address health, education, economic, and religious issues in the Ismaili community. Education and health were two inaccessible and unaffordable segments of development for the Hunzukutz before the transition.¹⁴ Education started in the form of community-based literacy centers in the late 1940s in GB, known as Diamond Jubilee schools, under the guidance of the Aga Khan III (AKES 2004). There was less awareness and fewer opportunities for girls to access education in the *Shon* era.¹⁵ The first community-based girls' primary literacy center was initiated in Hyderabad in late 1950s. Boy-graduates of affordable families would be sent to Gilgit and then down cities for higher education but girls did not have that opportunity. After the establishment of Aga Khan Education Service (AKESP) in 1986, there was a rising awareness for girls' education as it set up a series of primary and secondary schools for both boys and girls. The Aga Khan Higher Secondary School for Girls, Karimabad was the first residential school of its kind in the region, established in 1986.¹⁶ According to the WB (2010), the ratio of female to male secondary enrollment is 63 for GB for the year 2005. The literacy ratio for both girls

¹⁴ Unaffordable because due to inaccessibility they had to travel down country to access health and education facilities, which due to poverty was not affordable for poor Hunzukutz.

¹⁵ *Shon* era is derived from Burushaski phrase '*Shon Mulk* ', which literally means 'blind country', used by Hunzukutz referring to old times of poverty and ignorance prior to 'development'. *Shon*, in this phrase, is used for lack of awareness and ignorance.

¹⁶ The school was formerly named as Aga Khan Academy. Hunzukutz still call it academy today.

and boys is comparatively better in Hunza than other regions. Hunzukutz girls and boys who are educated are more inclined towards finding office jobs often in down cities of the country. There is a huge number of young Hunzukutz seeking education or working in down cities. Considering the literacy rate in Hunza nowadays, which is considerably high, it is a question of great concern as to who will take care of the farm land, if development does not further exploit all the cultivable land and turn it into an industry or a market place.

3.2 Gender Roles in Transition

The new economic system introduced a diversified set of income-generating activities in the off-farm sector to increase incomes hence improving the socio-economic conditions from that of old times, which Miller explains as a journey from “darkness to light”; a journey from hunger and food scarcity to prosperity (2001, 2004). But the whole system also perpetuated changes in household structure and gender roles; and social hierarchies based on class and gender differences are being widened and strengthened.

3.2.1 Changes in Household Structure

The new household structure is characterized by dependency on the non-agricultural economy. Money has become the main actor in household consumption, which is used not only to purchase staple food but also to avail education and health services. Men control the monetary system in the household and in the market. With an increase in market dependency and women’s cultural and structural segregation from the market economy, women’s dependency on men to access resources has increased. Woman’s previous role as household food manager *ruli gus* the only legitimate power she had within the household, is no longer valued.

Although some of the Hunzukutz are still living in joint family units, the household structure is changing gradually. With the one-room traditional ha, extra

rooms have been attached for each son and his family (Felmy 1995). Nuclear family set-up is becoming popular as people are becoming economically secure enough to build their own houses. This in turn has changed the pattern of allocation of tasks in a single-family unit; some women feel somewhat relieved from the psychological work pressure they were under in traditional extended families.

“It was when we made a separate house and divided the family land. This was a happy day for me... Now I have no worries. I have freedom. I have done family planning. When my children are older they will do all of the work for me (Halvorson 2002: 269).”

In the case of nuclear family units where the husband migrates for off-farm employment, the unit becomes primarily the woman's responsibility and she takes decisions on behalf of her husband for her family, although not entirely independently but in consultation with her husband (Halvorson 2002). It is not easy for a woman to take outside responsibilities due to social restrictions connected to mobility and interactions with outside men. As women now recognize the importance of money in their lives, they value men's off-farm work. Consequently “work” has been redefined and restricted to those activities that add to the household capital. It is not uncommon if a Hunzukutz housewife is asked what she does, she would say, “I do not do anything, I am a housewife.” She values the work of her husband even when she is working longer hours than he is. The saying “*eti k hir gosham*” (lit. do it and I will call you a man) has now stronger grounds as men master the capital and public domain and women's access to that domain is through men. Many educated Hunzukutz women are now working for local NGOs and some are teaching in local schools. Considering the male dominant social structure, working in the male-dominant sphere brings a lot of constraints but their work is valued within the household as it adds to household income. Some Hunzukutz women are running business to earn extra income. Tailoring

has become one such popular business among women in Aliabad, however women having young children and elderly dependents to attend at home cannot spare time for such income generating activities (Dawar, 2018). Their primary responsibility remains home and outside work remains secondary.

Certain old practices, such as wool production, have vanished. During their research Hemani and Warrington (1995) found no families that make wool; most women said that wool production is an activity of the past, and now that they can buy things from the markets, they do not have to make it. Embroidery which was a recreational part time activity in the past, is now become another source of income generation. KADO, a local embroidery brand, is selling out embroidery products by local women in Hunza.¹⁷ It epitomizes the evolution of a traditional activity that used to be carried out by women for themselves in a subsistent agrarian society, now being carried out for the company, centered around the concept of generating cash to make their ends meet.

3.2.2 Feminization of Agricultural and other tasks

Male-out migration is the primary cause of women doing more agricultural work now compared to the past. According to Halvorson, about 80 percent of male household members over the age of fifteen were involved in off-farm employment (2002).

The number of Hunzukuts who live in Gilgit Town and its surroundings for long periods has been estimated at 14,000 persons, which is half the resident population of Hunza...Overall, for every 100 women there are 164 men which is typical for a migration target town where only men find occupations. They normally leave their families behind (Kreutzmann 1993).

¹⁷ <http://kado.org.pk/filters/embroidery/>

Because of such high rates of male-out migration, and absence of young and adult male members of the family to contribute in farming, the work is left on women. With increase in household income, women's workload has increased significantly (Felmy 1995). Age is another determinant in the labor pattern. Young men are increasingly employed in off-farm cash economy while older men remain in the village with women and help in farming.

Women are involved in work both inside and outside their homes including paying electricity bills and ensuring fuelwood supply to the household, so much so that a woman in Aliabad mentioned women in their area have become men and vice versa, indicating that men do not work as much as women do and that women do their part of work as well as do all the work men do outside home (Dawar 2018).

As children are in schools, women get less help in agriculture and other chores now. In many households children still provide significant labor contributions to their households. After school, girls help their mothers in domestic and other farming tasks while boys may also be asked to help but not as frequently (Hemani and Warrington 1995). Households often hire labor on contract seasonally to meet the labor shortage. Women also work collectively to address this labor shortage in harvest seasons. They take turns to work in each other's fields. Neighbor women, relatives as well as married daughters gather to work collectively. However these trends are not homogeneous. Some of the factors that significantly count and cause variations within households are: extent of off-farm income; distance from the main road and local markets; amount of land and agriculture owned; and availability of labor (Hemani and Warrington 1995).

Women's responsibility of domestic work confine them to certain labor pattern that is in certain proximity to their homes. However, collecting wood and water is women's job and at times they have to spend hours on these tasks. Women in upper

Hunza collect sea buckthorn bushes for cooking and heating, they travel to the nearby glacier an hour away to collect the bushes, spending at least three hours in the task (Dawar 2018). Weeding is still a women-only task. Use of fertilizers have increased the growth of weeds and increased their workload. Hemani and Warrington found that due to high levels of fertilizers in potato fields, women reported increased weeding in these fields as compared to other crops (1995). Weeding is only not carried out to ensure crop growth but also because it is used as fresh fodder to feed livestock. Feeding the family as well as the livestock is women's job.

With the advent of capital oriented agriculture, women have become involved in the production of cash crops such as potatoes, new varieties of wheat and maize and vegetable and fruit processing. Technological innovations such as tractors and threshers have become a part of the modern agricultural system. Although technology has replaced cattle for plowing and threshing, women's work is still labor intensive. Plowing and threshing is carried out by men with the help of machines whereas the cleaning part after threshing is done by women which is still as time-consuming as before.¹⁸ Hemani and Warrington found that if the plowing is done with the help of animals women are more likely to help in terms of controlling animals but if the tractor is being used, women are less likely to be involved as the tractor driver could be a male stranger (1995).

Technology in agriculture is controlled by men whereas women have no control over it; it has reduced the workload only for men (Malik 2003). A study by AKRSP in 1987 (as cited by Felmy 1995: 204-5) showed in a valley in central Hunza that in peak season women work for 14-15 hours everyday in August and September (harvest season), whereas men work for eight hours in August and November (in land

¹⁸ Some still use animals for threshing because their fields are inaccessible for the threshing machines.

preparation and plowing). Provision of technology by the development organizations aim domestic related technology at women and farming technology at men (Hewitt 1989). Women are also losing control over resources because of lack of information. Men purchase and apply fertilizers, women neither have the knowledge to apply nor access to the market to buy it. Due to lack of market-related knowledge, women are not listened to in household decision-making. Following is an example from Salmanabad, Hunza:

“Last year we sold 20 sacks of potatoes and kept five sacks for the home and five for seed. My husband wants to sell more potatoes to get money and I want to keep more for my children and the men have more power... but what happened was that we ate six sacks so we had less for seed and had to buy one sack for seed which was very expensive Rs 1200. At the time of selling potatoes we get Rs 600-700 per sack but at this time in the year to buy them cost Rs 1200 per sack. It was his fault that we faced this problem and so this year I will not listen to him... (Hemani and Warrington 1995: 25).”

Farm wheelbarrows are now being used to carry manure instead of *giran*, the task is now carried out by hiring labor (Felmy 1995).¹⁹ Although it still remains women’s task to carry fodder, fruit, and wood, wheelbarrows are never handled by women. Carrying manure (*dilk*) by women today is considered disgraceful. Low status is associated with *giran*, which is evident in the fact that it is considered shameful for better off families if their women or girls carry manure *giran*. This ideology is also apparent in day-to-day language. Elder women in the family, usually the mothers, advise young girls to educate themselves so that they do not have to carry *giran*; “*da be giran goyayabana*”, in other words, if they do not educate themselves now, they

¹⁹ In her study, Cameron also found that in Nepal carrying manure in high-caste women was prohibited and women from low-caste were hired for the task (1995).

will have to carry *giran* in future.²⁰ *Giran* is connected with past suffering, poverty, and women's subordinate position in Hunzukutz society.

3.2.3 Religio-cultural Changes

Practice of women's seclusion during menstruation and childbirth have long been forgotten. However, with the inflow of migrant workers from down cities, the orthodox Islamic concept of *purdah* (veiling) has started seeping in (Seeley & Gloekler 2003; Miller 2004). Having many outsiders in the area, women do not feel secure going out without *doun*, (a piece of cloth wrapped around head and bosoms), a concept unknown to the Hunzukutz women in the past. This concept of *purdah* has arrived along with southern men whose women observe strict *purdah* and Hunzukutz women feel uncomfortable with their "male gaze" (Miller 2004). Their male counterparts are also sensitive to the issue and they "feel that they should protect their women from outsiders (Seeley & Gloekler 2003: 127)." Hunza is not only influenced by outside migrants but also by its surrounding area Shia and Sunni communities who practice Orthodox Islam. Ghulam Rasul, a local man from Baltistan expresses his views of gender equality: "It is in the Quran that all men are equal. So women are inferior. Men are men (Beg, Beg & AKRSP 2002: 04:20)."

Among Ismaili women, "there is a growing sense of self-consciousness about their dress, mobility, and social interactions as a result of the politicization of Islam and sectarian tensions (Halvorson 2002: 275)." In her study, Halvorson has included a photo of graffiti in Urdu that says 'Women without *purdah* are agents of Satan' written in Gilgit (2002: 274). These external forces have repressed women's mobility and secluded them from the public place and particularly from the market domain because

²⁰ Lit. meaning 'do you want us to make you carry *giran*!', it is more like an exclamation that the parents or elders would have to do something they are not supposed to in case the young girls do not study, their lives would be the same as their elders.

of the high concentration of outsiders in the markets. An old man in Aliabad talks about this issue: “in the old times, people in Hunza were like one family. Women were free to move around. Now because of outsiders in our area, women stay in their homes and don’t go around (Miller 2001: 87).”

‘My father and elder brothers do not like it when I go to the Aliabad market, ‘it is crowded with all kinds of outsiders’, they say, but since most of the everyday goods are not available in my village, me and many other women from my village have to travel when male members are not available. If we don’t do it who else will?’ (Dawar 2018: 06)

New social values have been attached to girls and women such as girls/women who go to the market with a male member of the household are considered respectable. According to a Hunzokutz woman: “Before, women worked alongside men and there was no problem. These days if a man and woman should sit together, people will make assumptions” (Miller 2001: 86). Such norms and social values are becoming a part of Hunzokutz society. Girls and women being influenced by such side effects of development are under psychological pressure. These newly emerged religio-cultural restrictions are the primary reason behind the growing number of suicide cases among young girls and married women in Hunza. Muller has mentioned ten suicide cases in Hunza, out of which five cases are of men (1979), but now it is only women.²¹ Suicide cases are also noticeable in other parts of GB, particularly in Ghizer district, where the rates among young well-educated girls are on the rise.

²¹ One major reason behind suicides among young girls is that girls are not allowed to make decision regarding marriage choices (<https://herald.dawn.com/news/1398672>). Muller has also given this reason for married women that those women who do not like their husbands jump into the river (1979).

Considering the socio-cultural conservative environment of GB, the situation in Hunza is comparatively flexible for women. They still have fewer restrictions compared to women of other sects. Hewitt also observed the same during her study in Nager.

About 200 years ago, their kin to the northwest, in Hunza, were converted to the Ismaili faith and became followers of the Aga Khan. There, women are more emancipated; they not only go to school (opened in all hunza villages on the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee of the former Aga Khan) but also appear before men, modestly, with covered heads. Some hunza women have become teachers and nurses (1989: 350).

Unlike in other sects where women do not go to mosques, Ismaili women go to *jamat khana* (Ismaili mosque) and pray alongside men. There are other opportunities under the Ismaili council where women serve as volunteers and work for the community in different capacities, thus *jamat khana* also serves as a socializing and training place for women. They prefer education for both boys and girls as being emphasized by their spiritual leader His Highness the Aga Khan

We are looking at a correct position for women in society, and education clearly is part of that positioning of women within society and yes we certainly are very concerned about the moral context in which that education is given and I think that is often an issue which is not very well understood outside the Islamic world, but the respect that is due to women is very important factor in the Islamic world and the history of Islam and the faith itself and my interpretation is that the better educated the woman is the more respect she is going to get in modern civil society (Aga Khan).

CHAPTER 4: GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT

This chapter critically views the development programs aimed to uplift the lives of Hunzukutz. Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) has been the main development player in Gilgit-Baltistan after the road construction. Emphasis has been given to its gender equality programs in Hunza.

4.1 Development Discourse

The fairytale land of Hunza was a traditional closed society dominated by agriculture. Learning from the early visitors to Hunza from the west, development has been introduced as a foreign element from the west. John Clark was the first American who came to Hunza with an aim to bring westernized ideology of development in 1940s. He collected about \$7000 funds in US through his private foundation – Central Research Foundation - and brought Hunza medical equipment for a dispensary (Beg 2003). His work was appreciated in Hunza. His writings reveal an ideology of development allied with Rostow's ideology of western style modernization. In the Cold War era, modernization meant anticommunism and acceptance of western values of modernity and capitalism.

More important, I would endeavor to teach the people of Hunza that within their own efforts lay their hope of the future, that they could (with a little guidance at first) lift themselves as high as they wished, and that they did not need Communism in order to do so. I knew, of course, that one man could not stop Communism in Asia, but I also knew that one properly managed project like mine could free several thousand Asians from its menace, and could act as a sort of pilot model for larger efforts (1956: 3).

Every American who has worked in Asia knows that if you take intelligent but unschooled young fellows who have not been too set in their own cultural

mold and raise them in a Western cultural environment, you produce nice average young Westerners who are usually rejected by their own people. On the other hand, an Eastern boy with a purely Eastern education all too frequently becomes a reactionary religio-political leader who complicates rather than clarifies the situation (1956:169).

Clark also thought that Hunza should “be transformed from an indolent, undifferentiated, uncleanly mass lacking appetite, hierarchy, taste, and cash, into wage labor and a market for metropolitan consumer goods” (1956:155).

He perceived Hunzukutz as traditional classless people who are uncivilized and practiced subsistence agriculture, unlike the ‘developed’ and ‘civilized’ West with social hierarchies, class (taste), and capital (cash, wage labor). Writings of many earlier visitors reveal similar ideologies of development. Western culture is set as a standard developed culture that the third world should follow in order to get civilized. Just like ‘gender (defined by Epstein),’ west - as a development model to be replicated elsewhere - has also been internalized and reinforced through socio-political and global forces and their impact on cognitive learning processes. Rodale is inspired by Hunzukutz’ “perfection of physique and great physical endurance” but thinks that what they eat is “unsophisticated foods of nature: milk, eggs, grains, fruits and vegetables” and is unlike the western sophisticated food “salmon, chocolate, patent infant food, sugar” (1948: 18-19), and the thought that a perfect civilized community has to have Christianity as their religion

We could not refrain from wishing at this grave that instead of chanting from Koran and prayer toward Mecca, there would have been reading from the Holy Scriptures, telling of the “blessed hope” of our Lord’s return and of the hope of the resurrection (Henrickson 1960: 91).²²

²² The author expressed such wishes after having attended a funeral in Hunza.

In colonial times, when western people perceived Hunza exactly like the Shangri-La of James Hilton's *Lost Horizon* (Michael 1983), they tried to discover the secret of Hunzukutz "health and longevity" amidst (so called) poverty (Rodale 1948; Taylor 1960). Eventually, they took Hunzukutz' tiny secrets such as "they do not scrape off the skin of their potatoes as we generally do" (Rodale 1948: 174). Today, many western people do not peel off the skin of potatoes but the Hunzukutz do. They no longer practice organic farming but follow the global practice of intensive cash production accelerated by harmful chemical fertilizers. As expressed by local residents about loss of traditional food and dependency on food available in the market: "We ate roasted kernels and apricot juice, which were pure foods. Now everywhere is chai chai chai [tea, tea, tea]!...we never sold our crops, vegetables, or other things... Now people sell their crops and apricot kernel oil and purchase Dalda [oil]. In other words, we sell the good things and purchase diseases" (Halvorson 2002: 275).

Women's loss of freedom is another effect of this "modern reflexivity" (Miller 2001: 88). Rigidity is being imposed by external as well as internal factors. All the blessings of modernity are gendered. Hunzukutz boys and men feel proud to walk in public wearing western outfits whereas girls and women cannot even imagine that for themselves. In fact, it is this fear of "westernization of women" that all the social sanctions of purdah have emerged and are being imposed on girls and women and is growing stronger as other western values of development are seeping in.

Hunzukutz realize that with more development coming in they are also losing the good aspects of their traditional, cultural, and moral values. "Hunza is not the same since the KKH invaded our quiet lives, before, no one even locked their doors. Theft was unheard of (Michael 1983: 33)." Facing and fighting with these side effects of

development, the Hunzukutz are still hopeful that with more education they would find a solution for these issues. In words of a Hunzukutz man:

I fear a little for Hunza culture. No one speaks in their mother tongue today, but everyone speaks English and Urdu... other aspects of our culture could be lost, with the influence of Indian television... people need to be educated to choose what is good and what is bad in outside our culture. They must be educated and told what needs to be done for the preservation of our culture (Miller 2001: 60).

Furthermore, an economy that grew from the influence of the wealthy is hardly a “model for equality” (Wolfgang 2006: 36). The experiences of western development through industrialization might not be equally helpful to alleviate poverty in the rest of the world specially when being planned *by* the west (Ferguson 1994). After years of failure to eradicate poverty, the beneficiaries were finally considered as partners in development practice (Bhasin 2003). Some projects that emerged from the developing world, planned, implemented, and managed by the poor communities proved to be highly successful participatory rural development models such as Orangi Pilot Project (OPP) in Pakistan, BRAC in Bangladesh and SEWA in India (Krishna, Uphoff and Esman 1997). Community-driven development emerged as a new model so that the poor communities can plan development projects for themselves. However, since the aid for the development projects comes from the developed countries, development is mainly driven by the donor and their sanctioned road map. As White mentions that development agencies “build up an approach – to the extent that it is virtually a requirement that a country have such a program in order to receive aid...(1999:111 cited in Mansuri and Rao 2004: 6).” The donor-driven ideology is a sophisticated form of John Clark’s western inspired notions of development.

Nevertheless, the community-driven development model is laden with many contextual concepts such as, social capital, empowerment, participation,” sustainability, self-reliance, and gender equality, which are poorly defined. Their “naïve application” in projects result in poor design and planning (Mansuri and Rao 2004).

These terms trickle down from the west through donor agencies to development organizations in poor countries and through hierarchies within the organization reach down to the field staff who actually interact with the poor communities. Since the language of ‘development’ is English, these terms are used in English by the staff in development organizations with or without conceptual clarity. These terms are widely used by these development organizations not only to make an impact on the poor communities but also in order to fulfill the expectations of their donor agencies for continuation of funds. No doubt these terms fill the organizations’ progress reports and impress the beneficiaries but to what extent they are applicable on practical grounds is a different story.

4.2 Role of AKRSP in Development

AKRSP was initially established in Gilgit in 1982, and later it progressively expanded its interventions through a process of action research and learning, currently it is working in 11 districts of Gilgit-Baltistan, and Chitral district of Khyber-Pakhtoonkhwan.²³ It started off with a very simple mandate: a) double the per capita income, b) develop a replicable model, c) and create sustainable local institutional mechanism. The World Bank’s evaluation of AKRSP says it has contributed to a more

²³ AKRSP has been receiving funding from various donors including Aga Khan Foundation -AKF, Canadian International Development Agency –CIDA, World Bank –WB, Norwegian Development Agency – NORAD, UK Department for International Development – DFID.

than doubling of per capita income in program villages (World Bank, 2002), and AKRSP as a model in integrated rural development has now been replicated by a number of rural support programs (RSPs) within the country and elsewhere.²⁴ The impact of AKRSP's projects on the economic development of the area described by Qudratullah, Hunzukutz from Aliabad:

“Ever since we have started working on these projects we have been transformed from helpless creatures into human beings. We were in pain. There was no link road. Today we have changed as from darkness to light (AKRSP 2002: 4:58).”

AKRSP's core strength of its overall programs is its local institutions, a network of community organizations, established through social mobilization. It has an outreach of nearly 85 per cent of the households in its program area, which it has mobilized and organized into Village Organizations (VOs)- village men forum, Women organizations (WOs)- village women forum, and Local Support Organizations (LSOs) – joint networks of VOs and WOs on union council level. Initially VOs were formed as a joint platform for both men and women. In 1984 women members of a VO in Gilgit demanded a separate platform for themselves and formed a WO, realizing their disadvantaged position in the VO (Malik and Kalleder 1996). Most of the development organizations working in the area channel their projects through these local organizations.

Although development initiatives brought significant improvements in all regions of Gilgit-Baltistan, “Hunza is exceptional because an early initiation of socio-economic change created an advance in development which exceeded that of surrounding regions (Nusser and Clemens 1996: 121).” Nusser and Clemens further

²⁴ A Network of 10 RSPs –RSPN- has been established, it is the most widespread organization working in 105 of 138 districts in the country.

explain that it is due to the “intra-regional disparities” like “lack of infrastructure and spatial distribution of resources (1996: 121).” However another element that highly counts is lack of internal collective will to accept and implement *development*, which was perceived initially as an external threat –mainly as a western agenda being imposed- upon the vigilant local people. AKRSP’s development program was best received in Hunza not only because of the locals’ religious affiliations with the Aga Khan and his institutions but also because of favorable social conditions compared to other regions such as social flexibility and women’s participation. It would not be wrong to say Hunzukutz are socio-culturally more liberal than Ismailis in other parts of Gilgit-Baltistan, although Ismailis in other parts are liberal compared to other sects in the area. Similarly, there was a lot of opposition from religious leaders of other sects in other regions when AKRSP started, preaching in mosques that it is un-Islamic, anticultural and a political plot to *westernize* local people (AKRSP 1984).

Although AKRSP’s methodology to carry out development activities with the local people was a unique experiment in participatory rural development by mobilizing local people for collective action and ensuring their participation in implementation, management and sometimes also in planning of the projects, its strategy was influenced and shaped by the global trends in development which were also its donors’ interests. Traditionally its focus has been economic development so it started work focusing large-scale profitable agricultural production and labeled ‘valuable’ to food products that subsequently add to capital. Hunzukutz were being prepared to survive the new monetary system that had already taken place in Gilgit with opening of KKH; cash crops, fertilizers, high-yield wheat and maize hybrid varieties were introduced; villagers were trained in food processing techniques to produce export-quality products. According to Farm Household Income Expenditure Survey (FHIES) 1991, per household farm incomes in the area have increased almost

by 10 fold (Wood, Malik, S. 2006). The new agricultural system introduced is characterized by increased production of cash crops; increased varieties of crops such as wheat and maize up to 400 metric tons (World Bank 2002); and growth in vegetables, fruits, and livestock which visibly contributed to increased farm income.

4.2.1 AKRSP's Gender Program

Gender initiatives of AKRSP aimed at integrating, intersecting and catalyzing the equality perspective by giving due attention to women's interests and their participation in all aspects and at every level of its work. Conscious efforts are being made to match social and economic empowerment with gender equality to attain transformation in gender roles and relations. (AKRSP 2003: 1)

AKRSP has been striving to provide women economic and social opportunities for their empowerment to reduce the gap of gender roles that emerged as an aftermath of socio-economic transition. It emphasized the significance of economic interventions and mainly carried out activities that could add to household capital. Realizing the cultural sensitivity of the area, it introduced income-generating activities that well fit women's socio-cultural and traditional role in agriculture. Some of the programs became exclusively popular among women, such as, the vegetable packages, fruit orchards, fruit nurseries, honeybee keeping, and poultry package. Poultry specialists, a total of 3,634, trained between 1984-2001, were almost exclusively female (Wood, Malik, Sagheer 2006). All of these packages have contributed to the economic empowerment of women through sale of eggs, birds, vegetables and fruits within their traditionally defined roles. However, more recently, apart from introducing new income generating activities in agriculture, AKRSP is also supporting women in business opportunities. About 29 women's-only markets and several individual shops

have been established in GB including Hunza (Butt 2009).²⁵ Although such business opportunity provide income for women, in the long run it only keeps them in seclusion from mainstream market economy. Vocational training centers have been established for women where besides traditional skills non-conventional fields are being introduced but the utilization of such trainings is low. Many projects have been established for women, which are now working as independent entities: such projects include Jafakash Aurat, Agribusiness Support Fund, Mountain fruit Project, Regional Women Empowerment Project, Silsila Gems and Jewellery project, KADO embroidery project, CIQAM wood works project.

4.2.2 The Gender Predicament in AKRSP

At the time it started working on ‘Women in development’ in 1983, AKRSP lacked knowledge and tools to address gender dimensions of development (Hunzai 2006). As the globalized development shifted its interest from ‘Women in Development (WID)’ to ‘Gender and Development (GAD)’ in the 1990s, AKRSP also started integrating gender into its course of development planning. Although, AKRSP has been making tremendous efforts to promote women’s status in the region, the desired outcome could not be achieved, mainly because AKRSP’s focus has been improvement in women’s condition through economic empowerment within the existing gender roles. Real change is resisted by focusing only on women’s practical needs to fulfill their roles and responsibilities already defined (Kabeer 1991). The shift from WID to GAD could not be achieved in the real sense and women’s development program remained in seclusion. Staff’s capacity limitations in doing gender remained one major hurdle in transformation of gender relations. Capacity building of staff and

²⁵ These markets are run and managed by women groups trained by AKRSP. Customers are also only women.

learning on gender concepts and the ‘how to’ of gender analysis and gender planning have generally been done on an ad-hoc basis (AKRSP 2005). In 1996, Shakil and Usman found that AKRSP “staff is still confused about the definition and direction of gender” and that “ownership of gender policy has not been achieved (1996: 11)”. Ten years later, in a gender-analysis study it was still found that “gender concept is not clear” among more than 60 percent of staff and that there is a lack of understanding among staff majority that gender is a crosscutting issue (Dawar 2006: 14). Despite of a bulk of gender sensitivity trainings, clarity of ‘gender’ as a concept has always been an issue in AKRSP.²⁶ The majority of the staff including the middle management take ‘gender’ as a women-issue (Dawar 2006).

AKRSP formulated its gender policy in 2000. However, it was felt that the policy is not being implemented in its true spirit. As a result, in 2002 Gender Focus Committees (GFCs) were established in each area office to ensure effective implementation of the policy and to monitor gender issues in the organization. The role assigned to GFCs is significant in gender policy implementation but they are not functional.²⁷ There is a lack of commitment from the management side to ‘do gender’ in AKRSP (Gloekler and Seeley 2006). The reason is because there is a gender imbalance on the decision-making level. Staff composition patterns show that the percent of women in middle-management is very low, 20 percent in grade 5 and 10 percent in grade 6, and there is no female staff in senior management, i.e. grade 7 and 8 (Dawar 2006).²⁸ The general perception is that ‘to do gender’ means women

²⁶ It was also found that the senior/middle/lower management staff usually get more trainings opportunities than the professional (field) staff.

²⁷ 72 percent staff mentioned that the GFCs are not working (Dawar 2006).

²⁸ Grade 7 includes regional area managers and grade 8 is for CEO.

empowerment and the decision-makers – all men – are already empowered so there is a lack of interest and commitment.

Like in many other development organizations, gender as a concept, remains like an unsolved puzzle in AKRSP. One of the reasons is language. Both the policy and strategy is written in English- as it is the international as well as the donors' language- and the staffs' unfamiliarity with how to translate it further to the communities in the local terms is an issue. The gender sensitizing trainings includes western theories of sex and gender, make it sound like a new controversial concept being adapted from the west but has no roots in the program area. So 'gender' becomes more like a western phenomenon being imposed by the donors exclusively for women to liberate them just like the western women. With a shift to GAD, there is a need to move beyond distinguishing 'sex and gender' to develop a theory of social relations that enables us to see how our gender identities are rooted in physical bodies and in our historic context (El-Bushra 2000). There is a probability that if the gender sensitization training manuals are written in local languages with day to day examples from their lives, the staff as well as community people will be able to relate and eventually own the 'gender' phenomenon, as a clear understanding of the concept by the staff within the organization is crucial to do 'gender' rightly.

My experience of this 'gender' dilemma is not limited to my experience with AKRSP. I found the situation similar in some other development organizations that I am familiar with. During my internship with Sungi Development Foundation in Muzaffarabad, I often heard men Social Organizers (field staff) pronouncing 'gender' as 'danger', referring to something that does not make much sense to them, but still crucial to the development program as it is demanded by the donors. Women staff on the other hand feel offended and defend the term out of desperation for change and liberation that the term echoes.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The historical journey of socio-economic change in Hunza shows that ‘development’ being tickle down from the west mainly encompasses economic development and capital formation. After emerging out of poverty, Hunzukutz are busy in cash building and accumulating wealth, free from the laborious agricultural work of their ancestors. But development has its side effects. The fairytale land of a unique cultural treasure has been lost, the notions of *uyamkux*, lit. connectivity, love, and happiness, is not as strong as it was felt in the lap of poverty. Hunzukutz no longer have the same reputation they felt pride in in older times.

Like in many other parts of the world, the development process that took place in the area overlooked Hunzukutz women. Due to which the gender gap between men and women has widened over the course of the process. Besides, migration issues burdening women with workload, loss of freedom of mobility and purdah is a concern for Hunzukutz women, due to infiltration of orthodox religious practices from its surrounding regions. Such “conceptual and cultural walls” have limited them to progress equally like their male counterparts(Epstein 2007). On historical grounds, Hunzukutz society has the potential to take the lead in empowering its women compared to other parts of the region.

The development policies provide no solution to the increasing gender gaps in accessing resources and availing opportunities. The main focus in development organizations still remains women’s economic development, whereas the socio-culturally embedded cause of their subordinate position is not addressed. Although development organizations, including AKRSP, are working hard to overcome

women's marginalization in mainstream development but gender remains as a foreign agenda and its contextualization and localization of a strategy to-do-gender is lacking.

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